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SPOTLIGHT ON R2P

New Research Project on Security and Justice in West Africa

Dr. Charles Hunt, AP R2P Lecturer in International Security, is part of a team led by Chief Investigator Dr. Anne Brown, including Dr. Volker Boege and Ms. Anna Nolan (all from the School of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland). They were recently awarded an Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Research Awards Scheme (ADRAS) grant covering the period from April 2013 to February 2015.



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Entitled 'Understanding and Working with Local Sources of Peace, Security and Justice in West Africa: an investigation of selected rural and urban environments in Ghana and Liberia', the project seeks to investigate the nature and scope of non-state actors' contribution to peace, security and justice in Ghana and Liberia, as well as their interaction with state and international actors and institutions. It will explore the potential for constructive engagement or positive acknowledgement among these different parties, asking whether greater acknowledgement of and linkage with non-state sources (that are actually underpinning local peace) contributes to state formation and to

more effective and legitimate security services.

In addition to contributing to research in this domain, the project also aims to stimulate discussion around an issue directly relevant to regional human and political security. It will not only investigate non-state security and justice providers and their interaction with state bodies, but will also bring them together to discuss their relationships. The project will provide AusAID, national policy bodies in Ghana and Liberia and relevant regional organisations with information, policy briefs and opportunities for exchange on the matters addressed.

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In particular, researchers will engage with policy-makers at regional arrangements such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) through appropriate fora.

Design

The project is a partnership between academics in the School of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland and senior researchers at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana. The KAIPTC is a Centre of Excellence for training, education and research with a reputation for delivering high quality research and training – working with partners there is central to this project. It is the leading centre for peacekeeping training in West Africa and functions as part of a network of national, regional, African and international security exchanges regarding security policy and practice. As a training centre, it is excellently situated for engaging and sharing knowledge about the intersections of non-state and state sources of peace and security with practitioners and policy-makers at a national, regional and international level. The team will also work closely with and provide mentorship for both male and female junior researchers from research institutions in Ghana and Liberia. It is therefore hoped that the project will contribute to the capacity of academic institutions and individual researchers in both locations.

Fieldwork will employ a multi-sited case study approach using qualitative, ethnographic research methods in two rural areas and two urban areas of Liberia and Ghana, respectively. They provide a strong basis for investigation and comparison. Both countries have long histories of customary governance systems; in both states customary authority is formally recognised, however relations between customary and state bodies are weak and highly problematic. Relations between populations and state security



Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre

institutions on the ground are often tense. In both states a range of non-state providers of security have also emerged, creating complex pictures of peace, security and justice provision. The modern histories of the two states also provide strong contrasts, with Liberia suffering protracted civil conflict and Ghana broadly stable and growing economically; peace, security and justice, however, are pressing and core issues in both places.

Relevance

Understanding the actual dynamics that support or hinder security, justice and ultimately peaceful societies is a prerequisite for achieving the policy goals of effective governance and sustainable economic and social development. If most people rely on local non-state sources of peace/security, then it is important to grasp who these bodies are and what they do and to investigate effective ways of supporting more constructive interaction between state and non-state security providers, without jeopardising human rights concerns, particularly as they bear on the most vulnerable (e.g. women and children). While the research is focussed on Ghana and Liberia, the investigation has relevance beyond these loci. It is expected to generate insights and findings regarding sustainable peace, security and justice processes with broader West African, and to some extent sub-Saharan African, relevance.

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Such insights can inform and facilitate more effective conflict prevention efforts and peacebuilding strategies in conflict-affected countries as well as reduce the risk of systematic and widespread human rights abuses and mass atrocity crimes. Therefore, the project has clear linkages to AP R2P research programs including capacity-building (e.g. enhancing state resilience), prevention and early warning (e.g. supporting existing strengths and focusing on vulnerable populations) and doctrine, concepts and inter-agency coordination (e.g. role of international/regional organisations and relationship to non-state and civil society actors).

Outputs/Outcomes

The research process is expected to lead to a range of outputs, such as:

- Academic publications: edited book, peer-reviewed journal articles
- Series of workshops in the region bringing together a cross-section of stakeholders
- Collection of policy briefs tailored to the needs of different audiences
- Dissemination and sharing of research findings at international conferences
- Engagements with the local and international media
- Final overview report of findings and conclusions for AusAID

Furthermore, the project includes an outreach, research communication and engagement strategy that will guide efforts to stimulate discussion and exchange within and among three key constituencies:

1. Relevant national policy communities, including government policy makers and practitioners, advisors and scholars, in Ghana and Liberia;



Meeting at Women's Peace Hut in Bong County, Liberia

2. Non-state providers of security and justice, particularly those sources active in the fieldwork sites; and,
3. Relevant international 'knowledge' and policy communities, including donor agencies, government officials and scholars.

Summary

Ultimately, this ADRAS project will explore the interactions of state and non-state providers and investigate how their collaboration in the provision of peace, security and justice might be facilitated by myriad stakeholders to enhance benefit for all, including marginalised members of society. In doing so, it hopes to identify context-sensitive yet pragmatic approaches for engaging effectively with hybridity in the provision of peace, security and justice in sub-Saharan Africa.

For more information about the project, please contact:

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