Reports

Security Regimens in Africa

Report on the International Policy Dialogue Conference, Bamako, Mali

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From 28 to 29 September 2016, CODESRIA, in partnership with the Université des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Bamako, organized an international policy dialogue conference on the theme 'Security Regimens in Africa' in Bamako, Mali. The conference was a central plank of CODESRIA's project on security regiments in Africa, which is motivated by the rash of security measures that are being designed and implemented in various African countries today in response to a myriad of threats to human security. While recent attacks by fundamentalist groups in many African countries have captured the popular imagination, threats to human security also include civil wars and intercommunal violence, electoral crises, transnational organized crime, human rights abuses, etc. combined with forms of structural violence, including poverty, rising inequality and the marginalization of groups based on gender and citizenship to endanger lives and communities.

Discussions of the security measures taken to deal with these threats always bring up the issue of effectiveness. But also important are their impacts on the rule of law, human rights and democratic governance, their conformity with and reinforcement of good governance norms and the extent to which they increase the resilience of individuals and societies in the long run. So are the differential impacts of these measures on marginalized communities including women, 'strangers', ethnic and religious minorities, children and youth as well as the poor.

The Choice of Bamako, Mali

The choice of Bamako, Mali as venue for the conference had three related motivations. First, Mali is a country affected by interrelated threats, including fundamentalist violence, inter- communal conflicts and regional tensions that have implications for West and North Africa and beyond. Discussing these issues in Bamako allowed us to dwell on issues that are in obvious evidence in that country and involved scholars and policymakers whose quotidian work focuses on these issues. Second, using Mali as host country went to reinforce Mali's

centuries-long history as a leading site of higher education and knowledge production in Africa. Finally, bringing Africa and the world to Bamako for this conference demonstrated solidarity with scholars and practitioners in that country that are under increasing pressure of isolation due to the security problems faced by that country.

Issues Discussed

The Bamako conference was preceded by a pre-conference briefing on the project that was held in Dakar on 29 August 2016. The conference brought together around 60 researchers, policy makers and practitioners from twenty African countries, the US, the UK, France, Haiti and Jamaica to discuss these issues in a set of seven panels and two roundtable discussions. About 30 presentations were made over two days that addressed a multiplicity of issues. These included the financing of terrorism, the militarization of many societies in response to threats, the problematic role of the great powers in questions of security in African countries and the challenges of coordinating the multiple levels of responses to security threats. The role that African intellectuals can and are playing in these security challenges and responses to them as well as how states are shaping and being shaped by these security challenges were all discussed.

Panels included those on local, national and regional level interventions, the privatization of security and the links between security measures and human rights, good governance and the rule of law. The sustainability of these interventions and their impact on level of resilience of the communities impacted were also discussed. Cross cutting issues such as gender, poverty, inequality and the relationship between local, national and international interventions were debated. Cases were drawn from the Lake Chad Basin (Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger), Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, DRC, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, etc. The situation in Mali received particular attention during discussions.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the roundtable on 'Cross-cutting Issues in Making and Implementing Security Measures in Africa: Gender, Inequality and Poverty.' The question of gender received particular attention with an animated debate on the integration of women in the security forces, including national and regional forces.

Bridging the Research-Policy Divide

The conference succeeded in promoting dialogue between researchers and policy makers. Scholars came from universities and research centers in multiple countries. The 22 scholars selected through CODESRIA's competitive processes were of a high quality and constituted the 17 percent of applicants retained after two rounds of evaluations of the 131 applications received for the conference. Over the two days of the conference, these scholars interacted with policy makers from state structures, including Nigeria, Mali and Rwanda, staff of international organizations like UNOWAS, the AU and ECOWAS, UNWomen, MINUSMA and the Afro-Arab Institute. Senior police and military officials from multiple countries

interacted with staff of human rights organizations. High profile participants included a former president, senior police and military officials from Mali and Nigeria and high level scholars from universities in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, the US and the UK. With this rich mix of participants, discussions focused on practical measures but located these in sound knowledge rooted in an understanding of both local and global processes.

Next Steps

Next steps in the pursuit of CODESRIA's project on security regimens in Africa are the following:

1. Policy briefs: A series of policy briefs are being written which focus on security regimens in Africa to be launched in December 2016.

2. Journal issue: A special issue of the CODESRIA journal Africa Develop-ment will be published with the best papers from the conference in 2017.

3. Partnership for future work: CODESRIA is continuing talks with various institutions to create partnerships that will continue work on this project.

For further information on CODESRIA's project on security regimens in Africa please contact Mamay JAH by email at mamay.jah@codesrial.org .