

Emory University
States at Regional Risk (SARR)
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Emory University's "States at Regional Risk" (SARR) project is pleased to report major further successes during its penultimate year, including a very successful high-level initiative in Mongolia and facilitating a major conference declaration of social, civil, and religious rights among politicians, officials, and Buddhist representatives across five south and central Asian countries in Lumbini, Nepal. Per SARR's northern Andes component, the project's important conference volume concerning "Off-Centered States" is progressing toward English and Spanish language publication. As described in previous annual reports, our important work in Africa has comprised effective programs involving the Mano River countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast, and the Great Lake nations of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda.

A sequel project to SARR following its scheduled completion in February 2013 would allow us to build upon our demonstrated accomplishments and successes, and to intensify and extend them much further.

Inner Asia

On June 27-29 2011, the States at Regional Risk (SARR) project held its three-day Inner Asia component conference, "Mongolians After Socialism: Economic Aspiration, Political Development, and Cultural Identity."

The conference was co-organized with the Open Society Forum of Mongolia (OSF) and with Dr. Richard Taupier of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with additional support provided by the Rubin Foundation of New York. The U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar hosted a major reception on the first night of the conference, and the U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Jonathan Addleton, was also a major speaker and participant at the conference. The conference itself was held in the OSF conference facility in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar.

The thirty-four invited conference participants included the Mongolian National Security Advisor, the head of the Mongolian Planning Commission, a senior advisor to the Mongolian President, a member of the Mongolian Parliament, the US Ambassador to Mongolia, the Presidents of two leading Mongolian universities, the head Buddhist Lama of Mongolia, five further Buddhist and Christian leaders, four leading figures of Mongolian civil society organizations, five major Mongolian academics, and nine international scholars of Mongolia. Participants came from eight countries and included spokespersons concerning Mongolians in regional contexts outside Mongolia per se.

All of the above persons not only attended the conference as a presenter or session chair but stayed for one or more of the conference's discussion sessions, during which presentations were subject to lively commentary and debate from diverse viewpoints. Expert simultaneous translation reciprocating between English and Mongolian throughout the entire conference facilitated robust conversation and equalized discussion among participants

from different professional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Energetic engagement, critical discussion, and significant broadening of perspective across business/economic, governmental, civil society, academic, and religious points of view was palpable for participants, and was, at times, frankly breathtaking. In facilitating conversation, expanded dialogue, and practical understanding across important networks of policy makers, civil society leaders, and scholars, the conference was a striking success as well as being highly distinctive in the regional context of Inner Asia.

As a landlocked territory sandwiched between China and Russia, Mongolia has, since the fall of the Mongol Empire, been largely a nation at risk, including during its extended period of Soviet domination and repression during the bulk of the 20th century and its ensuing period of fledgling ex-Socialist democracy and opening of markets during the 1990s. Prior to Soviet domination, Mongolia was under the control of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, in part or in whole, from 1691 to 1911. Viewed historically, then, with the partial exception of a brief period from 1911 to the early 1920s, the newly independent Mongolia of the early 1990s was reemerging from three centuries of foreign domination.

During the past two decades, however, Mongolian national wealth has grown from a very modest socialist baseline and is now poised to boom exponentially based on exploitation of extensive Mongolian natural resources, including especially coal, copper, fluorite, gold, iron ore, lead, molybdenum, oil, phosphates, tin, uranium, and wolfram. Some influential projections estimate that annual growth in Mongolian GDP will increase to 23% by 2013. This growth is intensifying a very large increase in Mongolian economic development, infrastructural construction, and urbanization that has already taken place during the last decade.

As emerged thematically in our conference, potentially severe stresses are surfacing through very rapid economic growth projected primarily on the basis of expropriation of Mongolian mineral wealth through mining. The larger question is whether the previous “state at risk” in the wake of Soviet control and oppression is in danger of being replaced by a neo-liberal state of fragility or risk fueled by capitalist exploitation of enormous natural resources. This exploitation has the potential to outstrip national and governmental wherewithal to monitor, manage, and harness economic growth and profit-taking for the national good -- as opposed to what conference participants identified as ballooning wealth disparities and associated problems of rural livelihood, urbanization, and poverty.

Against this less optimistic scenario is the anticipated bulwark of Mongolian democracy. Democracy is hoped to provide for nationally balanced and sustainable growth and development for Mongolians. Challenges in this regard include acknowledged high levels of nepotism, favoritism, and cronyism, high and increasing levels of wealth disparity, and evidence of growing popular disaffection with government irrespective of party affiliation. In relative and regional terms, it should be noted, these trends are far less than they are in most other countries of central and inner Asia. But the particular context of Mongolia, the stresses of catapulting internationalization and economic growth, which impact both pastoral and urban livelihood, could have special significance.

The cultural context of these developments is distinctive and influential – and the relation of cultural and religious influences to economic and political ones was a distinctive and important dimension of the conference. Historically, Mongolians have dovetailed flexibility of political organization, migratory movement, and strong respect if not reverence for the natural environment. Today, such proclivities are crosscut by post-socialist

desires for economic development, western modernity, travel and experience outside Mongolia, constitutional rather than clerical government, and growing senses of Mongolian national or nationalist identity.

Public officials along with academics and civil society leaders became intently interested and interactive in exploring new aspects and angles of perception concerning Mongolian trajectory and development – in ways that seldom occurred previously. This was a signal contribution of the conference. A conference volume on “Mongolians After Socialism” is presently in preparation for joint publication in Mongolian and in English. Given the high literacy, education, and print culture orientation of Mongolians, and the paucity of interwoven political, civil society, and scholarly contributions in Mongolia, this publication project should make an important contribution to both scholarly and public understanding and debate concerning the present trajectory and future challenges confronting Mongolia.

Northern Andes

The SARR conference “Off-Centered States,” concerning the northern Andes, took place in Quito, Ecuador in spring, 2010, co-organized with the Organization of Latin American Social Scientists (FLACSO). The conference concerned major hemispheric conflicts concerning political change, socialism, natural resource exploitation, and paramilitary operations in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. A Spanish language and English language edition of the edited conference papers is being produced for publication in Ecuador and in the US, respectively. The volume is being co-edited by Drs. David Nugent of Emory University and Dr. Christopher Krupa of the University of Toronto.

The findings and contributions of the volume may be summarized as follows:

- The definitive tasks of the State have not been monopolized by the central government in any of the northern Andean countries. Other powerful actors, local and trans-national, have long appropriated or been delegated the capacity to act as state proxies in various contexts. This diffusion of state functions among diverse actors is integral to what the state has been and continues to be in the region.
- This historic diversification and privatization of state functions makes it difficult to discern zones of strong versus weak state control or to map political centers and margins in conventional terms in much of the northern Andes.
- The ‘relative autonomy’ of the state from other structures of power – based on class, race, region, and so on — is very weak.
- The near inability of Andean states to convincingly present themselves as universal and disinterested easily leads to crises of legitimacy in these countries.

The above cycle comes full circle in that local or trans-national actors may be able to legitimize their rule more easily than the central state by providing populations with services long promised but rarely realized by the state -- or by circumventing national-political conflicts between elite factions.

Inner Asia

We are pleased to announce an important declaration supported unanimously at the conclusion of a large international gathering of eminent Trans-Himalayan Buddhist leaders, policy makers, scholars, and civil society leaders at Lumbini, Nepal on November 23-24, 2011.

This first International Conference on Trans-Himalayan Buddhism included seventeen members of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal (MPs), major present and past members of government from both India and Nepal, eleven Buddhist Tulkus and Rinpoches, Western scholars of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism, and many of the most eminent Buddhist scholars from the Himalayan region. Senior Buddhist leaders from Nepal, India, Mongolia, Russia, and Bhutan participated, and the Gaden Tripa gave the keynote address. The conference thus included active participation by senior representatives across the entire free Himalayas, and was convened at the birthplace of Buddha Shakyamuni in southern Nepal. The conference included forty presentations and was attended by approximately 175 persons. His Excellency Vijay Kumar Gachhadhar, the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal, gave opening remarks.

The Declaration of this gathering emerged during two days of intense presentations and open discussion of diverse points of view concerning the following issues, among others:

- The history of Trans-Himalayan Buddhism is deeply shared and strongly rooted in the Nalanda tradition.
- The challenges now faced by Trans-Himalayan Buddhism are now collective, including with respect to economic hardship, political pressure or repression, and demographic stress posed by larger adjacent non-Buddhist populations. Special emphasis was placed on the key importance of education, both modern education for Buddhist peoples and education in the Tibetan or Bhoti language, and on integration of monastic and western-style education.
- Women are now key to Himalayan Buddhist populations at the highest levels as well as in domestic and intermediate-level roles. The challenges that women face both as nuns and as lay persons need to be overcome if the peoples of the region are to thrive culturally and socially in their respective political climates.
- Social, cultural, and spiritual development across the region, in the Nalanda-Tibetan tradition, does not depend on issues of political independence but rather on cultural and religious rights as afforded by secular state and local governments in the countries where Buddhist populations now live.

At the end of the conference, members supported a collective declaration. This was read by Kenpo Nyima Dorje, Chair of the Buddhist Academic Foundation of Nepal, moved for adoption by Telo Tulku, spiritual leader of Kalmykia, seconded by Namgzye Dorje, and adopted by the general membership of the conference by voice consent. The Declaration hence has consensual agreement by senior leadership and a broad general constituency across the Himalayas.

The approved "Lumbini Declaration" contains several articles that assert (a) the collective commitment of Himalayan Buddhist organizations to full and equal rights and full participation without distinction based on

religion or country of residence; (b) that Himalayan Buddhists are primary stakeholders in decisions concerning their cultural heritage and communities; (c) that attainment of Monastic education alongside secular education should be recognized and supported by governments; (c) Nepali Buddhists are the primary stakeholders of Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha Shakyamuni and must constitute the majority of representatives to decide the management and development of the Lumbini site; (d) a Lumbini General Council will convene a Global Conference of the followers of the Nalanda-Tibetan tradition within one year at a location in India near to where Buddha Shakyamuni delivered his first teaching.

The Lumbini Declaration was adopted by the collected assembly of Trans-Himalayan Buddhist leaders at Lumbini on November 24, 2011 (see sarr.emory.edu for full text and details).

This conference was co-organized by the Buddhist Academic Foundation of Nepal and the Conservancy for Trans-Himalayan Arts and Culture. We are very pleased that SARR was able to play a material and strategic role in enabling the important results of this conference, which are significant in regional political as well as social and political perspective, including with respect to the relationship between the 14th Dalai Lama and China.

During 2012, we will be following up with the Conservancy for Trans-Himalayan Art and Culture (CTAC) concerning further activities, perhaps including an additional workshop or conference in Nepal or in Northern India, to conclude the Himalayan component of SARR.

Project conclusion and assessment

The combination of world area breadth and in-depth regional awareness puts SARR in a strong position to make robust assessments of the respective role of academics, civil society leaders, and policy makers in influencing the understanding, trajectory and development of political states in transition. The final SARR workshop, to be held at Emory University in fall, 2012, will discuss and analyze these issues. The anticipated results will have important practical implications for understanding and effecting policies concerning state risk, socio-political development, and societal recovery.

Comparative understanding highlights the key and variable relationship in different world areas between expert understanding and policy intervention. This relationship is influenced by the character and strength of regional and global international organizations, including NGOs, as well as the degree and type of state weakness or strength in regional context. The concluding SARR conference will consider these relationships in comparative terms, including in relation to international influences and strategic interests.

Drawing on the significant accomplishments of SARR, we hope expand, continue, and intensify our work in new directions beyond the present project's conclusion in February 2013. To this end, we will be actively exploring the possibility of configuring a new project proposal in relation to "States in Transition" or an analogous theme in future months. We thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for their key role in making such initiatives possible and look forward to the prospect of being in further contact.