

**THE STATES AT REGIONAL RISK PROJECT**

**(SARR)**

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to

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Having fully met and in many ways exceeded its core objectives The States at Regional Risk Project (SARR) was successfully completed on February 28, 2013. Originally beginning January 1, 2008, this project has addressed the regional significance of patterns of state risk and its contagion across some twenty countries clustered in key world areas of states at risk, including West Africa, East Africa, the northern Andes; South Asia, and Inner Asia. As originally anticipated and proposed, a signal contribution of the project has been to bring policy-makers, civil society leaders, and expert scholars together for open learning dialogue *in situ, within each of these regions of conflict and risk themselves*. Accordingly, the SARR project has held a range of very successful conferences and workshops that include the following:

- West Africa: Monrovia, Liberia, January 13-14, 2009
  - “Mano River Region at Risk? Post-Conflict Conversations Within and Across Border”
  - Implementing partner: Liberia Democracy Watch
  - Keynoted by the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf
- East Africa: Bujumbura, Burundi, June 4-5, 2009
  - “The Great Lakes [Region of East Africa]: Beyond Emergency”
  - Implementing partner: The University of Burundi. Bujumbura
  - Keynoted by Alan Doss, Head of MONUC [the UN’s largest peacekeeping mission, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo]
- Northern Andes: Quito, Ecuador, May 27-29, 2010
  - “Off-Centered States: State Formation and Deformation in the Andes”
  - Co-organized with FLACSO (the Latin American Association of Social Scientists)
  - Keynoted by Christopher Krupa, Emory University
- Inner Asia: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, June 27-29, 2010
  - “Mongolians After Socialism: Economic Aspiration, Political Development, and Cultural Identity”
  - Keynoted by the U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Hon. Jonathan Addleton
  - Implementing partner and Co-organizer: Open Society Forum, Mongolia [Mongolian branch of the Soros Foundation]
- South Asia/The Himalayas: Lumbini, Nepal, November 23-24, 2011
  - International Conference on the Contemporary Regional Significance of Himalayan Buddhism
  - Keynoted by the Gaden Tripa [The head of the Gelupk Order of Tibetan Buddhism] & the Deputy Home Minister of Nepal
  - Co-organized with the Nepali Buddhist Association and the Conservancy for Trans-Himalaya Art and Culture (CTAC)
- Global comparisons: Emory University, Atlanta; October 5-6, 2012
  - “Engaged Anthropology as Scholarship”
  - Keynoted by Bruce M. Knauft, SARR PI

Additional major SARR workshops were held concerning professionalization of indigenous NGO's in Monrovia, Liberia and concerning challenges to peace and security in three major population centers of East Congo, Butembo, Bukavu, and Goma. All the above activities were predicated on pilot, fact-finding, and assessment trips to the regions in question made by the SARR PI and SARR associates.

### Background

States at risk occur in distinctive regional patterns across different world areas as configured through cultural, political, and religious histories of statebuilding or its absence and by patterns of external influence or intervention. The SARR project was designed to address the relationship of regional to national state risk in parts of West Africa, Central-East Africa, South Asia, and the Americas. During the course of the project, this emphasis was maintained and refined to focus on specific regions within each world area as follows:

- The Mano River countries of West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast
- The Great Lakes countries of East Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda
- The northern Andes countries of Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, and parts of Venezuela
- Inner Asia, especially Mongolia in relation to Russia and China
- The Himalayas, including northern India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet/China.

The regional perspectives of this project oriented the SARR field toward a practical goal: to cultivate networks of positive influence in regions of state risk. This goal was developed by bringing together policy makers, practitioners, and relevant academics concerning states at risk within and across geographic areas. As envisaged, this generated fresh networks of influence as well as new insights concerning the causes and consequences of state risk and recovery. The project workshops and conferences hence emphasized discussion and dialogue among academics, practitioners, and policy makers concerning states at risk within and across relevant world regions. It also emphasized the inclusion of influential policy makers who could learn and benefit from the pragmatic understandings and insights of practitioners and scholars.

During international project trips to all the included regions, the SARR PI and selected other associates conducted extensive fact-finding and were then able to draw upon extensive interviews and meetings with a wide range of persons up and down a scale of power – from Presidents, ministers, and other national and international leaders to the local experience of NGO workers, and citizens from rural and urban locations. The diversity and importance of connecting these constituencies galvanized SARR conferences and workshops, and brought together a

scintillating mix of persons for short presentations and long discussions – transcending the typical pattern of international conference activities, including within the world regions themselves.

### Distinctive Features

As stated the original SARR project proposal, SARR has attempted to create a level playing field and neutral forum for bringing together within each country of focus fresh conversation and frank dialogue between and among policy-makers, civic leaders, and expert scholars within the country and more widely concerning sociopolitical conflict and violence, its causes, and its prospects for resolution or amelioration.

Of course, workshops and conferences of various kinds, including those that bring together various constituencies to consider conflict, had a long history that was well established by a range of organizations within all our countries and regions of focus. Indeed, in almost all countries, we could identify a cadre of what might be called professional or semi-professional in-country conference-goers. This included nationals with some advanced education who regularly received catered conference meals and transportation costs in addition to “sitting fees” paid to them by sponsoring international organizations to attend the event. For underfunded students and meagerly paid professionals in-country, these activities could be a major dimension of income and professional lifestyle – quite apart from the content or any personal interest they have, or don’t have, in the specifics of the conference itself.

However, very few conferences or workshop activities were funded and organized by a group or organization – be it an aid organization, government agency, or UN office – that did not also have a vested interest in the country and region. The great majority of these events were in effect paid promotional efforts to explore but also promulgate and assert the validity and value of the sponsoring organization’s mission and project in the country or region. In-country participants learned quickly and easily how to benefit from and reinforce this cycle of internationally supported self-referential and/or promotional events within their country.

The SARR project carried the same risk. In our case, however, our goal was not to forecast or promote a given point of view but rather to facilitate an open consideration of different perspectives that could complement and make their own case for counterbalancing and enlarging each other. For better as well as for worse, we had little long-term financial, institutional, or organizational interest or investment in the country, at least in structural or financial terms.

We tried to structure equivalence by offering simultaneous translation when appropriate between major languages, by allowing the majority of the time for open roundtable discussion between points of view rather than for speaker presentations, by keeping presentations short, and by carefully choosing in-country,

regional, and selected international presenters with different viewpoints who seemed genuinely interested in dialogue concerning the conflict and recovery at hand. To forestall presentations that were simply recycled from previous conferences and meetings, we often requested participants address specific questions related to specific conference themes.

At least at a “meta-level,” our project was itself still asserting and propounding its own agenda. But we did feel, and sense from others, that the kinds of discussions about civil conflict and its resolution that we were often able to facilitate, and the kind of spontaneous excitement, debate, and enthusiasm that they appeared to generate, were novel and in many instances quite special or unique, including in many cases as described by participants themselves.

Amid this general aim, the diversity of our world area project initiatives has been as revealing – and rewarding – as the threads of connection that link them as a single project. For each world area, the project began with pilot trips and fact-finding visits to the capital and then outlying areas of a core key country. For three of the world areas – West Africa, Inner Asia, and the Himalayas – the SARR PI conducted the initial pilot trips and took the lead in establishing contacts and developing connections with in-country and in-region host institutions.<sup>1</sup> In each case, the circumstances, opportunities, and challenges to the project were different. In Liberia, decades and then recent intensified years of war devastation left the physical and institutional infrastructure of the entire country in a shambles; in East Congo– which is still in the throes of conflict– killing zones were interspersed with surprisingly robust towns and cities, a thriving horticultural economy, and a large population. Mongolia had turned from a near-basket case of post-Soviet economic and political catastrophe to a robust parliamentary democracy and free market economy based on skyrocketing mining profits; the capital of Ulaanbaatar booms with new money and elite consumption even as the pastoralists in the countryside give up herding and becoming impoverished squatters in town. The Himalayas (our “States of Buddhism at Risk” component) has had its own enormous diversity, from Nepal and Northern India to Bhutan and Tibet, all of which I was able to visit and establish contacts within.

So, too, our in-region and in-country SARR workshops and conferences have been diverse. In two cases (Burundi per the project’s African Great Lakes component, and Ecuador per its northern Andean component) we partnered with a university or academic institution as our co-organizer and implementing partner. In the three other cases we partnered with a civic organization – Liberia Democracy Watch in West Africa, the Open Society Forum (a branch of the Soros Foundation) in Mongolia, and the Conservancy for Tibetan Art and Culture (CTAC) in the Himalayas. The composition of ensuing SARR workshops and conferences, the degree of official and civic society involvement, and the level of academic involvement were also

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<sup>1</sup> SARR post-doctoral fellows Chris Krupa and Patience Kabamba took the lead in developing the northern Andes and Central-East African components of the project respectively.

variable – though all of these were surprisingly high in most cases – in addition to obviously different conference and meeting conditions and politics in each world region and country.

The pace of these activities – initiatives culminating in major in-country workshops and conferences in five different world areas over five years – was at once exhilarating, challenging, and exhausting, especially in leaving less time than is academically normal to digest and process experience and write up and publish results across widely different cultural contexts. However, our activities have been widely reported, including in Emory publications as well as on our robust SARR website. Full conference programs, many verbatim papers, and the entire English and Mongolian language edition of our published Asian component SARR volume are available via our website at [www.sarr.emory.edu](http://www.sarr.emory.edu).

### SARR World Area Project Components

The specific activities of the SARR project in each of its world areas of project engagement are summarized below. As specific activities have been otherwise delineated in our annual interim progress reports, the present remarks are intended as a frank descriptive overview of how the various world area project components have developed and progressed. Following this, in conclusion, the project's larger significance and implications are assessed.

#### West Africa: Epicenter Liberia

At the beginning of SARR, in 2008, the ravages of the Liberian civil war were evident almost everywhere in the country, the situation was sometimes tense, and overland travel was heavily checkpointed by armed UN troops stationed in machine-gun nests, with armor-plated vehicles close beside. Six project trips to the country, lasting between two and three weeks each, included interviews with many top government, UN, and NGO officials as well as travel and preliminary ethnography that traced the flow of money, power, and aid projects from the capital of Monrovia to rural parts of the country, including near its borders with Guinea and Sierra Leone. As peace was considered established, a tsunami of foreign aid money poured in and the infrastructure of Liberia was being rapidly rebuilt – and controlled by external entities and organizations. The powerful struggle, and resilience, of Liberians themselves to maintain and expand beachheads of their own civil order, humanitarianism, and what could be called progressive organic knowledge were both palpable and at times heart-wrenching.

In the process, however, Liberia quickly became something of an uncontrolled “Wild West,” not for the previous militias, but for the International Development Industry. The country was awash not so much with either business or government or military activity as with NGOs in mushrooming variety, including INGOs (International NGOs), BONGOS (Business organized NGOs), and even GONGO's (Government organized NGO's). In the ensuing two years, as international donor fatigue set in

and the partial “success” of Liberia’s recovery allowed international funds to be diverted elsewhere, the unsustainability of externally funded shot-in-the-arm development projects became painfully evident. As these initiatives were mostly being handed over to the fledgling and understaffed or incompetent ministerial programs of the Liberian government – health, education, infrastructure, security, and so forth – dissatisfaction and cynicism concerning the fruits of peace, and concerning their government in particular, became strong among Liberians.

The SARR project work entailed fact-finding meetings and visits in Monrovia and in the northern countryside, a wide range of interviews and interviews with civil society leaders and officials at different levels and scales, including in government and the NGO industries. For organizational purposes, our SARR project partnered with the Monrovia-based Liberian NGO, Liberia Democracy Watch (LDW). Working with LDW, our SARR project organized, funded, and ran a Monrovia workshop on the professionalization of Liberian NGOs, and followed this later with a regional conference on “Mano River Region at Risk?: Post-conflict Conversations Within and Across Borders.”

The President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, opened the conference and herself presented a policy analysis of the security and development situation in the region, followed by brief presentations and robust discussion over two days among a diverse range of UN officials, local civil society and civic leaders, NGO heads, government officials, activist spokespersons, and selected Western academic scholars concerning current developments in the four countries of the region.

A highlight of our Liberia conference was frank and open discussion by UN and other officials, on the one hand, and by civil society and academic participants, on the other, concerning the practical challenges they saw from their respective vantage points for establishing peace, security, and especially economic development across the region. We had the encouraging sense that new understandings and awareness were being developed between constituencies that had had little open contact or dialogue with each other. On the other hand, the contributions of the conference seemed to leave our local co-organizing partner, LDW, somewhat behind – not as closely linked to conference participation or our perception of its value as we would have liked.

Though we felt the conference to be a signal success, and though we had high hopes of publishing a volume or series of collaborative papers combining West African and Western perspectives on the Liberian conflict in regional perspective, the severe lack of professional and logistical infrastructural capacity in Liberia and neighboring countries – including at the university and at relevant government and NGO offices – combined with the lack of stable professional positions, and employment, among Liberians themselves to forestall this possibility.

## Central-East Africa: Epicenter East Congo

The SARR Central-East Africa component focused on the conflict in the Kivu provinces in the east of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This conflict has now claimed more than six million lives and continues to persist without major abatement. Our initial project work involved large workshops that the SARR PI led in three major towns and cities of East Congo (Butembo, Goma, and Bukavu) at which local academics, NGO leaders, officials, and civil society leaders were brought together to adduce what they thought were the largest challenges that their locale faced as a result of the war, and what they thought could be done to tangibly address and ameliorate these.

In the course of these scintillating events, and travel between them, we received a crash course in the dynamics and difficulties, but also the potentials and resilience, of town and rural life in East Congo, including in IDP (internally displaced person) refugee camps of tens of thousands of Congolese. An enormously populous and fertile horticultural region, as well as having the curse of incredible mineral wealth, the Kivu Provinces of Eastern Congo region also have important universities, vibrant intellectual life, and civic and humanitarian organizations – homegrown – that complement and, in our own opinion, greatly upstage the large operations and overpowered funding of the international NGOs that are also stationed in the region (especially at Goma).

In a subsequent trip, we were able to tour “restricted” parts of East Congo under the ostensible protection of an armed UN escort, and we became much more familiar with (and critical of) the tangible impact of UN presence. We went with UN personnel to visit – both they and us for the first time – an agglomeration of some 17,000 Congolese internal refugees (IDPs). Self-organizing and self-governed, they had physically settled themselves in rows of nearly-identical tarpaper huts on a hilltop in the layout and camp organization of an IDP camp. Their goal was to become such a camp “for real,” and to thereby attract health, educational, and economic services and programs that were regularly provided by the UN and a range of international aid organizations to officially-recognized IDPs. Given the work they had already done, the efforts of this massive self-organized camp quickly achieved its objective.

Our SARR formal conference was held at Bujumbura, Burundi, with the University of Burundi as our implementing partner. Burundi was chosen as a neutral location given that the East Congo conflict is irreducibly regional and we wanted participation by scholars and officials from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi as well as East Congo. (Rwandan scholars could not viably travel directly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, nor vice-versa.) Our SARR conference, “The Great Lakes: Beyond Emergency,” was keynoted by Alan Doss, the head of MONUC, the world’s largest UN peacekeeping operation, and had among our participants and presenters a wide range of university professors and administrators, officers from government ministries, and civil society leaders. It was our largest single event, drawing well

over one hundred persons, including government officials, faculty and students, civil society leaders, plus local television and radio coverage.

The level of academic and also non-academic presentation by Congolese, Burundian, and Ugandan scholars and other professionals was impressive. As stated in our East Africa project report, the conference was “the first time regional and international experts met under independent auspices within the region itself to understand root causes of the conflict and to facilitate long-range perspective for a more productive future for the region.” It was surprising not only how robust the discussion was concerning the causes and consequences of the East Congo conflict – the curse of mineral wealth, of militia competition, of competing national governments, and of the UN – but how novel, fresh, and open this public airing of analysis and of points of view seemed to participants and members of the audience.

As most of the proceedings were in French, it unfortunately proved difficult to get presentations effectively edited and published in either French or English. (The contributions were posted and remain bilingually available on the SARR website.) Another signal drawback, and critical finding, was the inability of Rwandan scholars, professionals, or government members to attend, participate in, or present at the conference – notwithstanding all prior official and unofficial assurances and arrangements to the contrary.

A subsequent visit to Rwanda revealed the very heavy censorship and limits to academic work, and the striking lack of civil engagement, critical scholarship, or regional historical understanding in that country. This formed a surprising contrast to the active and often vibrant intellectual openness in East Congo, which is so often considered a “basket case” of conflict by the international community in asserted *contrast* to socioeconomic development in Rwanda. Our conference findings, in tandem with the results of fact-finding trips to East Congo and Rwanda – including evidence of active and subversive collaboration between Rwandan factions, rank and file UN soldiers, and many UN officials – provoked the SARR PI to write and circulate to selected high officials a confidential report that documented our findings concerning the complicitousness of the Rwandan government and Rwandan-affiliated factions in continuing the East Congo conflict, including, often, with UN complicity and even active support.

We hoped to gain funds that would allow us to mount a follow-up conference at which Rwandan scholars, officials, and civil society leaders could attend and present their points of view alongside those of Congolese, Burundian, and Ugandan counterparts. Over time, however, this proved unfeasible.

#### Northern Andes: Epicenter Ecuador

The northern Andes component conference, held in Quito, Ecuador, was SARR’s most “academic” and least publically engaged component insofar as almost all of its activity presenters were academic faculty members (in significant part from the

region) rather than policy makers, civil society leaders, or other non-academics. However, and not coincidentally, the initiative was highly successful in critically addressing a key set of collaborative intellectual issues – and also in bringing these together toward publication, both in Spanish and in English. David Nugent (from Emory University) and especially Christopher Krupa (now at The University of Toronto) had a dominant role in conceptualizing and organizing the conference, which was co-organized with the Association of Latin American Social Science Faculty (FLACSO). Conference participants considered developments in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Columbia.

The title of the conference and its core idea was “Off-Centered States: Political Formation and Deformation in the Andes.” Individually and collectively, the conference participants effectively presented and elaborated case studies of quasi-state / pseudo-state / para-state / proxy-state power and influence in northern Andean countries. These myriad developments often if not typically occurred at or near the margins of the official state in institutional if not geographic terms. Often inverting received notions of strong state core and weak state periphery, the conference showed how the State across northern Andes countries – both historically and in the present – has rarely been monopolized by central governments. The diffusion of state functions among diverse actors and sectors is hence not an exception to how political power normally works in the Andes but is integral to what the state has long been and continues to be in the region, including in its recent “lean to the left” socialist politics and policies.

As such, the ‘relative autonomy’ of Andean States from other structures of power – based on class, race, region, and so on – is decidedly weak. This informs the frequent inability of Andean states to convincingly present themselves as universal and disinterested modes of government with a natural monopoly on the right to rule – which in turn fuels periodic crises of State legitimacy. This cycle comes full circle in that local or transnational actors can often to legitimize their influence more easily than the central state can, including by providing populations with services long promised but rarely realized by the state itself.

#### The Himalayas: Multi-country focus

The Himalayan component of SARR was at the other end of its internal political - academic spectrum. The original SARR project plan to develop a South-Central Asian component with a focus on Pakistan became nonviable for a combination of security and logistical reasons. Via connections at Emory and more widely, the SARR PI became privy to intriguing organizational meetings concerning the challenges of Buddhist populations across the Himalayas and concerning the influence and personal trajectory of leadership by the XIVth Dalai Lama, including in the wake of his divesting political authority to an elected Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile (The Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA). This component of SARR might be labeled, “States of Tibetan Buddhism at Risk” – including the challenges faced by historically Tibetan Buddhist peoples in regional

risk across northern India, Nepal, Bhutan, and adjacent areas, in addition to within Tibet itself.

Amid fact-finding trips and pilot work in selected parts of the above-mentioned countries and regions, the SARR PI had the fortune to interview the heads of three ministries (departments) of the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India and also to attend three private organizational meetings – two in the U.S., one in Nepal. In this latter, senior Buddhist lamas and *rinpoches* (reincarnates) from across the region considered the challenges faced by Tibetan Buddhists and discussed the regional organizational future of Tibetan Buddhism, including vis-à-vis the Dalai Lama, who himself attended one of the meetings.

In essence, this group, with facilitation by senior emissaries of the Dalai Lama, was auguring to form and launch a new organization, what one participant described as a “cultural state,” to represent the interests of Tibetan Buddhism across the Himalayan-Altai region. At the group’s most recent and largest gathering, in Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of Buddha, a “Lumbini Declaration” was passed by unanimous voice vote at the conclusion of the proceedings (see <http://www.sarr.emory.edu/documents/Himalayas/LumbiniDeclaration.pdf>). This document declares the civic, political, and economic as well as cultural and religious rights of Tibetan Buddhists across the region. These are asserted not with the aim of establishing political autonomy or government in any area (including in Tibet) but by constituents as civil and democratic stakeholders within their existing countries of residence – and as majority stakeholders in any decisions or plans with respect to Buddhist heritage sites and issues that impact Buddhist practices and institutions generally.

Attended by seventeen members of the Nepali parliament and government administrators from Nepal and India as well as lamas, monks, nuns, and *rinpoches* from across the region, the conference was bold in publicly and formally declaring Tibetan Buddhist rights – and economic control over heritage sites – in the wake of the multi-billion dollar bid by a Chinese front organization to the Nepali government to develop a major tourist and economic development site at Buddha’s birthplace – the very commemorative site at which the conference was itself held.

SARR has helped support discussions and meetings of the group (which has not yet declared an official collective name or organizational identity) including in relation to insights and analysis by international academic scholars. The Himalayan component of SARR has been perhaps its least purely academic in materially facilitating the project of an interest-group organization. This group actively engages in and facilitates open dialogue between policy makers, civil society leaders, and expert scholars both in-region and internationally. But this occurs largely within activist human rights parameters that have a stated general larger agenda, that is, to assert and protect the rights of Buddhist minority populations within countries of the Himalayan region.

## Inner Asia: Epicenter Mongolia

The Inner Asian component of SARR has focused on Mongolia, including its relationship to China and Russia, between which the country is sandwiched and landlocked. This project component has presented SARR with its most successful case study as viewed from a neoliberal vantage point: a nation that has undergone tumultuous political and sociocultural transition – and great economic privation – to emerge as a robust and economically successful parliamentary democracy based on an avidly free-market economy.

Following seven decades of heavy Soviet control – including brutal Stalinist purges during which tens of thousands of Mongolians were slaughtered, and virtually all Buddhist institutions in the country destroyed and their leaders killed – Mongolia emerged in the 1990s as a fledging open democracy and then as a mining-boom country which presently has one of the highest GDP growth rates in the world – projected to be over 20% annually in the near future.

Our project work in Mongolia included fact-finding and pilot work that has triangulated between government officials, civil society leaders, and cultural leaders, including Buddhist lamas who have emerged in facilitating spiritual rejuvenation after decades of Soviet propaganda and, presently, the secularism of neoliberal mining money profiteering, government graft, and growing wealth disparity, poverty, and political disillusionment.

Partnering with the Open Society Foundation of Mongolia, which is funded by the Soros Foundation, the SARR project held what we considered to be a highly successful three-day conference in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar concerning the trajectory and dynamics of Mongolian sociopolitical, economic, and also religious and cultural development. In this, we worked with the US Embassy in Mongolia, a range of prominently progressive Mongolian NGOs, high ranking Mongolian government officials, the two major Mongolian universities (including the department of Anthropology at the National University of Mongolia) and civil society and Buddhist leaders, all of whom attended – and presented at – the conference. The SARR PI also worked with Dr. Richard Taupier of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who secured funding from the Rubin Foundation of New York to expand the cultural, religious, and historical dimensions of the conference.

Working with OSF and with a managing in-country editor from the Mongolian Academy of Science, Lkham Purevjav, we congealed twenty-three of the conference papers into what I think is a quite fascinating and in some ways unique edited volume. Our edited and revised conference volume, *Mongolians After Socialism*, was published in August 2012 by Admon Press in Ulaanbaatar in simultaneous English language and Mongolian language editions – one of the very first books to have been so-published in Mongolia. This work includes opinions, analyses, and portrayals of Mongolian development, history, politics, economics, and religion, including by the former US Ambassador, the head of the Mongolian planning commission, the

Mongolian national security advisor, and also religious leaders (Buddhist and Christian), internationally acclaimed scholars of Mongolia, plus civil society and academic leaders, and a royal Mongolian shaman. Two-thirds of the contributors are by Mongolian nationals, and all were translated into English just as the English contributions, and the SARR PI's headnotes to each of the chapters, were reciprocally translated into Mongolian.

The Inner Asian project component of SARR was distinctive in three ways. First, the level and caliber of engagement and excitement – and private commitment as well as public dialogue – was exceptionally high during and after the conference. This was further reflected in the timely submission of written conference papers for review, editing, and publication by the vast majority of conference participants, including many who I had assumed would be too busy or otherwise unable to effectively do so.

Second, Mongolian interest in the intersection and cross-fertilization between the political, economic, cultural historical, and religious presentations of the conference was greater than I had realistically hoped. Among other things, there was robust interest in debates over Mongolian history and its relation to current values of Mongolian-ness and national identity, which are now emerging after decades of Soviet repression.

Third, the SARR PI found himself in the unanticipated position of making frontal policy recommendations in his opening contributions to the book, including concerning the development of a sustainable national development Mongolian trust fund, electoral campaign finance reform, rural administrative reorganization, and expansion of Mongolian cultural and historical self-awareness.

The Mongolian component of SARR seemed particularly successful in pursuing the SARR project goals of cultivating open dialogue between policy makers, scholars, and civil society leaders *and* of bringing much of this dialogue into a published format that has generated a measure of in-country interest as well as international scholarly credential.

### Assessment

The SARR project has been unusually diverse in its world area engagements while employing an innovative methodology throughout that has worked fairly well, and in some cases extremely well, in facilitating open dialogue and understanding of regional state risk issues among diverse in-region constituencies. In this sense, there is high integrity and coherence in the project amid its diversity. By any reasonable set of criteria, the SARR project has been highly successful in carrying out if not exceeding its original mandate.

Given structural changes at Emory University during the course of the project, SARR's institutional basis altered within the university in 2008 and again more

definitively in 2009. The SARR budget and its relation to Emory remained unchanged, but reduced contextual support for Emory staff, faculty, and students lead the latter world area components of SARR project to be carried out more fully on an individual basis within Emory by the SARR PI and his remaining half-time staff associate. In this context, the project received a no-cost extension from the Carnegie Corporation and from Emory University, providing for its continuing without budget increase through February 2013. The administrative and professional context of the SARR project in combination with its size and scope – and the continuing teaching and other academic duties of the PI at Emory University – meant that scholarly publication of results and active follow-up within each world area have been less than might otherwise have been possible.

Based on the SARR project, the following generalizations concerning methodological practice may be forwarded as hypotheses for further consideration:

- Though the size and scale of project work funded by Foundations is typically dwarfed by the size and budgets of governmental and large INGO initiatives and interventions, the organic and cultural responsiveness of smaller projects is often greater as a result – as well as being less beholden to specific political and commercial interests, including those of the international development industry.
- It can be particularly useful and important to cultivate the participation of and engagement with junior and mid-career in-country professionals who are in the course of actively developing their careers. Identifying within the cadre of young professionals those who are genuinely and personally engaged, responsible, and committed to honestly addressing their country's challenges is often key to establishing richer and longer networks of progressive influence in states and regions at risk.
- Special attention must be paid to level the linguistic and cultural playing field since strong status distinctions typically inhere in the power and privilege of conference organization and participation. Privileging English language presentations and the reading or presentation of long papers is conducive for academics but reduces effective and organic discussion and participation. The assumptions of power that INGO project work carries in developing countries can be strong, though concrete and flexible methods can be developed, as in the present project, to effectively counteract these.
- The import and significance of practical results and findings are often inversely proportional to the practical “turnover” of governmental and INGO staff in these countries and regions. However, the awareness of changing personnel and organizational priorities in developing countries during return trips can provide a better and more realistic view of discontinuities over time than large-scale intervention projects that are ultimately more “directive” than “responsive.”

- SARR afforded significant opportunities for observing and experiencing how power works at middle and higher hierarchical levels – and comparatively across situations and regions. This awareness is a crucial complement to high-level diplomatic and national policy negotiations, on the one hand, and to organic local understandings of practices, orientations, and cultural context on the other. In terms of practical understanding and especially implementation, the “excluded middle” of practitioners who mediate high level policy with the “grass roots” action is key to facilitating practical viability and implementation.
- Foundation-supported project work can highlight, dramatize, and facilitate the scintillating ability of in-country professionals and academics to effectively understand and analyze the problems of their own country even if they presently lack the means and control to resolve these.
- Though the present project focused on regional dimensions of state risk, these continue to be primarily understood, operationalized, and responded to at the national level within the countries themselves.
- Given its relationship to bureaucracy and administration, project work of the present nature is generally easier to conduct (all else being equal), in small countries. With a few initial contacts and strong legwork and communicational outreach, it is not difficult for a university professional directing a project to access relatively high government officials, civic leaders, and international organizations in relatively small countries. This is more difficult to accomplish relatively quickly in larger countries.
- Unless the aims and commitments of academic and non-academic orientations are highly consistent and highly coordinated, even genuine partnership in project work will not produce publications that are at once dialogic, with potential for public impact, and academically credentialed or credentialing. For SARR, the world area initiative that best satisfied these joint criteria was the Inner Asia component, focused on Mongolia.
- Project work is greatly influenced by the extent or absence of within-country infrastructure and information technology. It is challenging to accomplish larger and more enduring project objectives without a realistic follow-up and support structure of continuing communication and presence over time. The SARR project was highly successful in implementing and carrying out it workshops and conferences in all world areas, but follow-up publications and galvanizing of results was most successful in countries with the most robust electronic and communicational infrastructure, such as Mongolia and Ecuador.

## Conclusion

The SARR project has successfully employed a novel and organic methodology of bringing together engaged expert scholars with policy makers and civil society leaders and practitioners within five key and diverse world areas of regional state risk across three continents. In the process, the project developed and facilitated extensive networks of contact and influence through pilot trips and workshops as well as in in-region conferences that were novel, organic, and influential, including with high-level professionals and policy makers. Reports, publications, and findings have been widely disseminated, including in publications and in the robust SARR project website at [www.sarr.emory.edu](http://www.sarr.emory.edu).

The large scope and scale of SARR, along with its slim administrative base, leaves more work to be done concerning contact and facilitation of results in its world areas of engagement. The project PI has been especially fortunate to have retained the services of the indefatigable half-time SARR Program Associate, Helen Simmons. Final follow-up trips were able to be arranged to Liberia and Guinea in West Africa (January 2013) as well as to India (November 2012) and Mongolia (August 2012, at which the *Mongolians After Socialism* volume was launched and distributed in English-language and Mongolian-language editions free of charge). The global comparative implications of the project may be further developed based on the final wrap-up SARR workshop, which was held at Emory in October, 2012.

The contributions and results of the SARR project are being actively drawn upon and extended in our new Comparative Postconflict Recovery Project (CPRP) which has recently been funded in the Carnegie Corporation's "States in Transition" program. The CPRP initiative began March 1, 2013 – following directly on the completion of SARR – and will continue for two years, through February 28, 2015. The new CPRP project assesses statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding and identifies key young professional individuals in West African Mano River countries in relation to their counterparts in selected countries of interior and Southeast Asia that have already undergone a significant degree of postconflict recovery. The mutual learning through "south-south" dialogues that will result from physically bringing together influential young practitioners from different parts of the "global south" will have important implications for the practical development of peacebuilding in relation to statebuilding in West Africa and comparatively. This initiative builds materially and directly on the preceding activities and accomplishments of SARR.

We thank The Carnegie Corporation not only for its indispensable support but for the larger progressive program visions within which the SARR project, and now our new CPRP project, have been cultivated.