

John B. Gongwer

Collaborative Systems Architect • International Policy Strategist • Social Innovator

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International policy strategist and organizational innovator with 25+ years of executive experience building government partnerships, civil-society coalitions, and program architectures that translate policy intent into delivered impact in emerging markets. Personally represented organizations to ministers, directors-general, and UN officials across six continents. Cambridge MPhil research on periphery-first innovation architecture applied to AI governance strategy; findings grounded in peer-reviewed study of legislative decision-making (*Policy Sciences*, 2018). Cross-cultural fluency developed through living and working in 70+ countries.

Gov't & Multilateral Engagement • Emerging Markets Programs • AI Policy & Implementation • Coalition & Platform Building • Collaborative Systems Design • Cross-cultural Leadership

EXPERIENCE

iCatalyst CKS (Collaborative Knowledge Solutions)

2008 – Present

Founding Principal

Washington, D.C. • icatalyst.org • linkedin.com/company/icatalyst-cks

Joint venture practice partnering with governments, civil society, and mission-driven organizations to prototype collaborative social innovations for public and private sectors.

- **United States Senate — AI Policy & Decision-Making:** Senate policy research advisor on information framing and legislative decision-making. Partnered with former U.S. Asst. Secretary of the Interior to design an integrated situational awareness model for flood control policymakers using AI/ML. Patented component co-developed with Microsoft Azure and Esri. Co-authored two peer-reviewed journal articles.
- **Center for Innovation in Local Development, Bucharest:** Developed prototypes and scalable pilots for nonprofit partnering with local governments on community-based social innovation. Designed and led EU-funded conferences in five Romanian cities on collaborative innovation in change-resistant institutions.
- **Nigeria Strategic Analytics Program (2019–2020):** Initiated, designed, and secured signed contracts with Oxford Analytica and CIJA/Groundscout — world-class organizations in analytical tradecraft and international justice accountability — to build an applied analytics program addressing human rights violations and security threats in Nigeria. Assembled a multi-partner program architecture integrating investigations, analysis, and strategic communications; secured program funding. Program suspended and subsequently terminated due to COVID-19.
- **Romania — Public WAN Wireless Network (2012):** Developed and deployed Romania's first free public wide-area wireless network in a remote mountain village — working with the Romanian National Park Service and local mayor. Personally helped design, install, and test the system and equipment, providing internet access to economically disadvantaged mountain communities for the first time.
- **Romania — National Cultural Heritage Geospatial Platform (2011–2012):** Negotiated and designed a partnership with the Romanian Cultural Institute (icr.ro) and led a volunteer software development team to build a national web-based cultural heritage geospatial visualization platform. Initiated concept, formed official institutional partnership, recruited designers and volunteers, designed software architecture, and supervised the team. Program terminated by a last-minute government change at ICR before launch; the concept was later adopted by another Romanian organization.
- **Romania — Ushahidi Crowdsourced Flood Application (2012):** Responding to extensive flooding in Romania, adapted the Ushahidi open-source crowdsourcing platform to collect, analyze, and visualize real-time flood and community impact data — an early application of crowdsourced crisis intelligence tools in Eastern Europe.
- **StarLight Geospatial Intelligence Platform:** Designed collaborative content modules for a public safety situational awareness platform. Deployed at the 2008 Presidential Inauguration across the DC Metropolitan Police Operations Center coordinating 12+ federal, state, and local agencies.

- **NeuroTeach Atlas & Neuroformation™ (in development):** Building two AI-powered platforms mapping peer-reviewed neuroscience to executive leadership development and organizational transformation, with 3D brain network visualizations and evidence-graded intervention libraries.

21Wilberforce Global Freedom Center

Jan 2018 – Sep 2024

Executive Director

Washington, D.C. • 21wfreedom.center

International human rights organization advancing the universal right to freedom of religion, belief, and conscience worldwide.

- **United Nations Representative** (New York & Geneva) for the Baptist World Alliance — a 51-million-member, 130-country international federation — engaged the UN Human Rights Council and the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief.
- **University of Stirling Research Partnership — Director:** Directed research partnership with the University of Stirling Human Rights Program — partnering with the Program's head — examining civil society strategies for influencing implementation of Freedom of Religion and Belief recommendations through the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.
- **UN Civil Society Platform:** Built collaborative online platform (un.globalfreedom.center) for civil society engagement in the UPR process; published research findings providing actionable models and strategies for organizations working to advance FoRB recommendations globally.
- **Global Freedom Network — Program Architect & Director:** Built regionally-based religious freedom intervention system in partnership with worldwide alliance and diverse coalition partners across faith communities and civil society; Africa regional pilot.
- **Emerging Leaders Global FoRB Action Summit — Chair:** Directed summit drawing university and young professional leaders from 11 countries to develop practical advocacy campaigns for prisoners of conscience.
- **Online advocacy platforms:** Built collaborative online platforms to equip human rights advocates, academics, and practitioners worldwide — including un.globalfreedom.center, an active platform for civil society engagement in the UN Universal Periodic Review process.
- **Multifaith Coalitions & Institutional Partnerships:** Initiated and directed conferences and training programs with leading human rights institutions including the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the International Religious Freedom Roundtable. Personally initiated and helped launch the first multifaith religious freedom roundtable in Nigeria in 2019 — bringing together Christian, Muslim, and civil society leaders to address shared threats to religious freedom.
- **U.S. State Department Annual Ministerials:** Designed online event management platform and helped coordinate logistics for 80+ civil society events across three Annual Ministerials to Advance International Religious Freedom.

General Logistics LLC & American Group, Inc.

1999 – 2006

Senior Advisor / Director, Technology Solutions

Washington, D.C.

Organizational transformation, performance improvement, and IT solutions for U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Army clients.

- **\$80B U.S. Department of Defense Logistics Transformation — Primary Author:** Wrote the Handbook/Manual for the Defense Business Operations Fund, consolidating nine Services and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) revolving funds. Letter of commendation from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- **U.S. Army Single Stock Fund — Senior Business Analyst:** Worked directly with transformation executive team; received certificate of recognition for automating Army-wide transformation scorecard benchmarking.
- **IT Workforce Analysis, West Point — Senior Consultant:** Led team analyzing 17 IT/computing work centers; recommended reorganizations and process-reengineering to the U.S. Army Manpower Analysis Agency.

Renaissance Initiative

1999 – 2004

President and Chairman

Bucharest / Jiu Valley, Romania • jiuvalley.org

Co-founded and directed a nonprofit foundation in one of Europe's poorest and most socially unstable post-communist regions, prototyping social innovation and community revitalization programs. Co-founded with Florin Lupu, then national Executive Director of Pro Democracy Association (Romania's largest civil society organization). Programs engaged 300+ volunteers. Lived with local coal mining families for extended residential periods totaling approximately 1.5 years on-site — working in underground mines, conducting environmental field surveys, and building trust with the communities the programs were designed to serve.

- **Raised international funding** from World Bank Romania, USAID, U.S. Embassy (Bucharest), and Balkan Stability Pact.
- **Received official endorsements** from the Romanian President's Office and five government ministries (Education, Youth & Sport, Tourism, Parliament, Senate).

- **West Virginia University Partnership:** Developed formal academic partnership with WVU — working with the president, dean, and faculty program heads — to train and pilot a regional team of experts working with community leadership in multiple localities on environmental remediation, restoration, and community revitalization strategies.
- **Environmental remediation field programs:** Conducted on-site programs addressing widespread hazmat contamination, acid mine drainage polluting local rivers and groundwater, and industrial pollution. Teams conducted scientific testing, analysis, and community interviews and surveys across the region.
- **Roma community engagement:** Led outreach to the marginalized Roma community in the Jiu Valley — recruiting, training, and facilitating political engagement for one of Europe's most excluded populations.
- **International media campaigns:** Recruited international film crews from France, National Geographic, and BBC Special Programs to document conditions and raise global awareness of the region's social and environmental challenges.
- **Jiu Valley Regional Web Portal (jiuvalley.org):** Persuaded the mayors and city councils of six Jiu Valley cities to develop their own official websites and online services — built by local web teams trained through the Renaissance program, largely from young coal miners. Directed the development of the regional portal (jiuvalley.org) as the hub for all six city sites and a regional information resource. Redesigned in 2015 with collaborative Web 2.0 technologies. Continues to host and maintain the portal as a volunteer nonprofit community service through iCatalyst to the present day.

Export-Import Bank of the United States

c. 1999

Senior E-Commerce Consultant

Washington, D.C.

- **Lead author** of ExIm Bank's first e-commerce strategy; co-designed prototype for the Working Capital Credit Guarantee Program, working directly with the CIO and CTO as a subcontractor to a prime contractor.

Industrial Defender (formerly Verano)

1996 – 1999

Director of Finance & Operations

Mountain View, CA

Founding member of a Silicon Valley software startup (funded by Chase Capital Partners, Charter Ventures, Techfund Capital) that grew into a global leader in critical infrastructure cybersecurity.

- **Stood up and managed incubator facility** for three successful high-tech startups; managed all operational and financial aspects of Verano under mentorship of Techfund Managing Director.

Braddock Technologies / Braddock Group

1994 – 1995

Director

Washington, D.C. / Middle East

Co-led strategy and negotiations for a proposed \$5M joint venture in the Middle East and North Africa with a Silicon Valley semiconductor manufacturer (later acquired by Intel).

- **Together with joint venture lead, conducted concession negotiations** with government agencies in Bahrain and Jordan; authored strategic business plans and financial models for systems design, PC/networking assembly, and software engineering operations.

Coopers & Lybrand (now PwC)

c.1991 – 1993

Consultant, U.S. Agency for International Development

Washington, D.C.

Continued USAID emerging markets advisory work following the team's transition from Ernst & Young; same clients, same program focus.

- **\$150M Emerging Markets Portfolio** — strategic and financial consultant for loans and guarantees promoting businesses in developing economies; designed new investment programs including export financing, franchise guarantees, and lease financing.
- **\$20M USAID Global Franchise Guarantee Program** — primary architect and onsite advisor to the division director for the worldwide program and Eastern Europe pilot project, designing financial instruments to develop private enterprise in emerging economies.
- **USAID Annual Reports (1990, 1991)** — Key consultant responsible for researching, writing, and publishing the 1990 and 1991 Annual Reports for USAID's Emerging Markets / private sector investment program. Distributed to the White House, Congress, and the general public.
- **Hungary field consultations** — Traveled to Hungary and consulted directly with Hungarian banks and banking associations on USAID financial assistance programs and emerging market financial instruments — engaging in-country institutions the programs were designed to serve.

Ernst & Young

1989 – c.1991

Consultant, U.S. Agency for International Development

Washington, D.C.

Promoted private enterprise in emerging markets as part of USAID advisory engagements.

- **Program Performance Assessment** — Lead researcher and author of the comprehensive 'What Works' impact assessment of USAID's private sector development programs since 1961.
- **Financial Services Volunteer Corps** — helped launch fsvc.org; recruited senior executives from leading Wall Street firms as founding volunteers through personal network.
- **Polish-Hungarian-American Enterprise Funds** — Drafted grant applications for the U.S. Congressionally-established \$300M Polish-Hungarian-American Enterprise Funds — among the first investment funds established following the fall of the Berlin Wall to support democratic and market transitions in Eastern Europe.

Chicago Research & Trading Group, Ltd.

1984 – 1988

Research Assistant

Chicago / London

Mentored by the Senior Managing Partner of a leading international commodity futures, options, and arbitrage firm (\$2B+ contracts traded daily; later acquired by Bank of America). Worked part-time during academic terms and full-time during summers. CRT sponsored graduate studies at Oxford University.

- **Facilitated CRT's Middle East market strategy** and initiated trading partner relationships with Arab banks and financial institutions across the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East.
- **Trained as a bond trader** on the floor of the London International Futures Exchange.

EDUCATION

University of Cambridge | Judge Business School

MPhil, Innovation, Strategy & Organization

Cambridge, England

Research focus: Strategies for disruptive innovation using collaborative technologies in emergent networks.

Primary contribution: modified model of intersement proposing periphery-first innovation architecture — reversing ANT's traditional bias toward the centre. Applied to AI governance strategy in emerging markets: LinkedIn article series 'Why AI Governance Fails in Emerging Markets' (Article 1) and 'The Wrong Model for AI Diffusion' (Article 2).

Oxford University | St. Antony's College

MPhil, Modern Middle Eastern Studies

Oxford, England

Director-supervised research at the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies.

- **Founded and directed graduate research forum** on commodity derivatives as a sovereign income stabilization mechanism for emerging market economies dependent on extractive resources. Convened senior leadership from the London Metals Exchange, London International Financial Futures Exchange, London Petroleum Exchange, London Stock Exchange, Moscow Narodny Bank, and leading commodity trading firms. The policy model developed by the forum — using futures and options to hedge commodity-dependent national income portfolios — was subsequently implemented by the International Monetary Fund in a nearly identical form within two years of the forum's work.
- **Foreign Affairs legislative intern** for the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

PUBLICATIONS (PEER-REVIEWED)

Petty, T.R., J.B. Gongwer, and W.E. Schnabel (2018). *Bridging policy and science action boundaries: information influences on US congressional legislative key staff decision making in natural resources*. Policy Sciences. DOI:10.1007/s11077-018-9311-y. [Lead researcher and primary writer]

RCL framework (Relevance, Credibility, Legitimacy) applied to AI governance strategy in emerging markets. Applied analysis series (LinkedIn): "Why AI Governance Fails in Emerging Markets" (Article 1) and "The Wrong Model for AI Diffusion" (Article 2, drawing on Cambridge MPhil research).

Petty, T.R., N. Noman, D. Ding, and J.B. Gongwer (2016). *Flood Forecasting GIS Water-Flow Visualization Enhancement (WaVE): A Case Study*. Journal of Geographic Information System, 8, 692–728. [Primary writer and coordinating editor]

CROSS-CULTURAL & INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

- **Lived, studied, and worked** in England, Egypt, and Romania (including extended residential time with coal mining families and shepherds in remote mountain villages); traveled across 70+ countries on six continents.
- **Studied Bedouin and nomadic cultures** across the Middle East; explored comparative health systems in China, Pakistan, the Czech Republic, and Poland.
- **Arabic language training, Cairo (1986–1987)**: Two summers of intensive study at the Arabic Language Centre, International Language Institute in Cairo, funded by Chicago Research & Trading Group; passed Oxford University Arabic proficiency examinations. Language not currently maintained at functional level.
- **Extensive on-the-ground experience** operating in low-infrastructure, high-ambiguity environments across emerging markets in Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.