

Chapter 5

Country Indicators for Foreign Policy

*Developing an Indicators-Based User Friendly Risk Assessment
and Early Warning Capability*

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1 INTRODUCTION

The CIFP project was initiated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in partnership the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, in Ottawa Canada. The project represents an on-going effort to identify and assemble statistical information conveying the key features of the political, economic, social and cultural environments of countries around the world.

The cross-national data generated through CIFP was intended to have a variety of applications in government departments, NGOs, and by users in the private sector. The data set provides at-a-glance global overviews, issue-based perspectives and country performance measures. Currently, the data set includes measures of domestic armed conflict, governance and political instability, militarization, religious and ethnic diversity, demographic stress, economic performance, human development, environmental stress, and international linkages. In an effort to address the need for a dynamic and comprehensive capability CIFP developed an innovative approach that emphasizes the need for transparent, easy to interpret, open source early warning information. The foundation upon which CIFP's methodology is based is the use of structural indicators of latent conflict potential. CIFP analysts complement structural indicator analysis with global overviews, country performance measures, and issue-based perspectives on political, military,

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demographic, social, economic and environmental factors. In doing so, CIFP's methodology offers an accessible quantitative and qualitative approach to conducting early warning reporting and analysis. This type of information can be included in best practice early warning analysis together with events data and local field analysis, making it a very effective, and methodologically sound approach to early warning and conflict risk analysis.

The CIFP database currently includes statistical data in the above issue areas, in the form of over one hundred performance indicators for 196 countries, spanning fifteen years (1985 to 2003) for most indicators. These indicators are drawn from a variety of open sources, including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and the Minorities at Risk and Polity IV data sets from the University of Maryland.

2 EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: A GOOD PRACTICE

The Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) was initiated in 1997 in response to the genocide in Rwanda and ceased to exist in 2004. During its brief lifetime a number of pilot early warning activities were undertaken around the globe. In addition, research was carried out to survey and define "good" practice in the conflict early warning field. From its applied experience and research, FEWER arrived at the assessment that effective early warning requires the use of a range of data sources and analytical methods, including (i) local analysis (i.e. analysis of events and perceptions not covered by the media), (ii) monitoring of newswire reports (or "events data") and (iii) structural data (such as economic and developmental indicators of country performance).

The "good practice" early warning system underscores the role played and value added by different organizations participating in the FEWER network. CIFP was identified as playing an important role in providing structural data and analysis on both conflict and peace generating factors. Events data monitoring systems, such as those provided by FAST at the Swiss Peace Foundation (see Chapter 4 in this volume), can provide real-time perspectives on the flow of events. Local member organizations in regions of concern are in a position to assess the importance of different indicators and understand