



COUNTRY INDICATORS FOR FOREIGN POLICY

www.carleton.ca/cifp

CIFP DEMO:

<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp/getstarted/gstart.html>

CAUCASUS DEMO:

<http://www.carleton.ca/~dcarment/presents/icca/index.htm>

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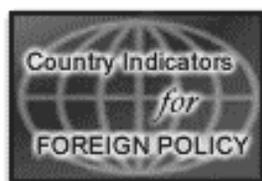
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment was conducted for the purposes of determining the needs of CIFP clients as the project begins to expand its capabilities and partnerships. This feedback has clarified both the positive and negative aspects of users perceptions of the database and its purpose. This information is critical for making informed decisions about future directions for the CIFP.

Two sets of surveys were conducted during March and April 2000. To gain a micro perspective telephone interviews were conducted with selected key users. To gain a macro perspective, an email survey was sent to all 312 known registered CIFP users as of April 15, 2000.

General trends:

- There is interest and enthusiasm for the CIFP project.
- There is a wide range of expectations for the CIFP database.
- Many users expressed a desire for qualitative assessments to complement the qualitative data.

Recommendations include:

- CIFP should continue to develop its partnerships with FEWER and SIPRI.
- CIFP should expand carefully.
- Some functional and technical issues remain.
- Further web links should be developed.
- More partnerships should be explored.

In sum, users found that the easy access to information afforded by CIFP can save users a good deal of time and effort in their research and analysis. This is clearly the “niche” that CIFP has found, and must continue to exploit.

COUNTRY INDICATORS FOR FOREIGN POLICY (CIFP) NEEDS ASSESSMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

The Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project became a core member of the Forum for Early Warning and Response (FEWER) initiative in January 2000. It has also recently established a working partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). In this context, the Secretariat of FEWER and the CIFP project have been exploring ways to integrate CIFP into FEWER's early warning and response network.

CIFP could bring to FEWER, through its indicators database, structural data to complement their current information inputs. The risk assessment mechanisms provided by the country performance analyses of CIFP will be employed under the auspices of FEWER as a supplement to the other types of information required for early warning, such as events data and local analysis.

In addition, CIFP will take the lead role in developing analytical reports based on the integration of all the information to meet both the knowledge needs of local analysts involved in early warning and the need of policy options for relevant decision makers.

CIFP is in the process of examining ways of expanding and enhancing its database. In order to do this effectively, CIFP's current and potential users were surveyed to determine their needs and how CIFP, FEWER, SIPRI and other potential partners could best meet those needs.

II BACKGROUND

The CIFP project, initiated by the *Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade* (DFAIT) and the *Norman Paterson School of International Affairs* (NPSIA), represents an on-going effort to identify and assemble statistical information conveying the key features of the economic, political, social and cultural environments of countries around the world. The database was originally conceived to develop a database of indicators to assist in identifying the factors that affected the distribution of DFAIT human and financial resources abroad. The principal aim was to clarify certain foreign policy priorities for decision makers.

The *CIFP* project was initiated in the summer of 1997 in response to requests from senior policy-makers within DFAIT, DND and CSIS, as well as from NGOs and the private sector, to identify key factors influencing Canada's international relations.

Earlier Projects

The *CIFP* project expands on two earlier initiatives of DFAIT's Trade and Economic Analysis (EET) division. The first project involved the collection of economic and international trade indicators to identify priority countries for international business development. The analysis resulting from this initial project was well received by the International Business Development Branch and throughout the Government. Subsequently, the Corporate Services Branch tasked EET to extend the database to conform to the wider mandate of DFAIT.

Some of the applications initially envisioned included:

- 1) A risk analysis instrument for clients such as: ministries, private enterprises and non-governmental organizations, thereby fulfilling some of the recommendations of the Canada 2005 research study regarding horizontal management and the future agenda for research.

The Canada 2005 study highlighted research questions such as: identification of potential high-intensity conflicts where Canada will want to, or will be expected to contribute; developing and overview of which low-intensity conflicts might emerge, and where indigenous peace-keeping capacity can be engendered; determining which alliances could usefully be formed with other countries, in particular non-traditional allies, in the pursuit of common goals; threats to Canada and potential policy implications of intra- and inter-state conflict

- 2) Determining how indicators of Canada's social resiliency and cohesion, safety, identity and security compare with those of its major competitors.
- 3) Developing an instrument for soft power projection of a Canadian-focused information tool. In this respect, the proposed database would provide an analytical tool that might be exchanged with other allies for additional information systems.
- 4) The precursor of an early-warning system which might enable analysts to target certain states for peace-building intervention.

Evolution of CIFP

The *CIFP* project revises and adds new country indicators to the existing databank created by the two previous EET endeavors. In particular, indicators of security and risk supplement and enhance the database. The result is an expanded collection of indicators with a broader scope. Themes include security, culture and values, prosperity and the environment.

DFAIT tasked a research team from NPSIA to undertake the cross-national study. A systematic approach was used, dating back 10 years, to identify key indicators relevant to the international environment, and to gather and analyze large amounts of data on demographic patterns, economic activity, political factors, religious and ethnic diversity, and environmental and resource issues for 122 countries.

As outlined, the original purpose of the CIFP was to serve as a tool to assist Canadian policy makers and to assist them in better understanding Canadian perspectives on a range of international issues, through the use of indicators that are sensitive to the Canadian economic and policy context. However, the CIFP has evolved beyond this and now serves a broader international constituency.

The CIFP project currently encompasses over 80 indicators for 120 countries. These indicators provide global overviews, country performance measures and issue-based perspectives on economic, political, military, social and environmental factors influencing each country's performance. The selected country data provides a core set of indicators covering a wide range of interrelated development themes: macroeconomic and trade performance, international relations and global links, government stability and domestic conflict, militarization, social and human development and environmental sustainability. Data was collected for the period 1985-2000. A summary of the indicators is in Appendix C.

A pilot project currently under development will consist of two regional concentrations (parts of East Africa and South East Asia), and will begin the integration of CIFP into the FEWER network. This new work will also emphasize the participation of local analysts¹, and will include analytical training and capacity building for these partners. The intention is to build upon the existing FEWER network, and upon successful completion it is anticipated that the established framework will be expanded to other areas.

III. DESCRIPTION OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

Now that the CIFP project is a core member of the FEWER initiative, CIFP is currently in the process of expanding the scope and capability of the database. As the FEWER partnership grows, it will be useful for the CIFP project to have an accurate sense of the needs of its various constituents.

To facilitate this, project staff conducted an assessment of the needs of CIFP end users in March and April 2000.

Evaluating Needs

"Needs assessment is the process of evaluating the problems and solutions identified for a target population. Assessing needs moves beyond the information gathering of need identification, requiring evaluative judgments about problems and their solutions."²

What are needs? "A need is a value judgment that *some group has a problem that can*

¹ FEWER members who provide events analysis and news monitoring, such as: Africa Peace Forum, Inter Africa Group, and The Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute.

² Jack McKillip, *Need Analysis*. Applied Social Research Methods Series, Volume 10. London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1990. p.20.

*be solved.*³ In identifying and evaluating needs, it is therefore important to bear in mind who our target population is and how the needs of this group are or are not being met as perceived by members of this group. It is worth noting, as McKillip states, that: “The expectations of the target population are critical to use of the services but may be self-serving and unrealistic.”⁴ Criticism can reflect an outstanding and unmet need for certain specific types of information. However, while it may be useful to know what the needs of a target population are, it is not possible to meet every need perfectly. It is particularly important for a project such as CIFP, which is still in its early stages, to be conscious of this.

Why analyze needs? The systematic evaluation of needs serves to reduce uncertainty for decision-makers as they make decisions about future programming. This needs assessment will therefore be useful in advocating funding requests, defining budget priorities, and in planning the CIFP projects future scale of implementation.

Needs Assessment Methodology

What is the precedent for this needs assessment methodology? SIPRI together with the International Relations and Security Network (ISN) and other partners including CIFP, have developed an online *federated fact database system*. In establishing the priorities for this database, an ongoing online survey is conducted.⁵ In order to facilitate the purposes of this needs assessment, we sought to uncover similar, but more general types of information. The questions asked allowed the respondents flexibility in answering in order to gain as much unique information about each user as possible.

Survey methods are the norm for needs assessment, usually including interviews, mailed surveys, and sampling. In this case due to the size of the user base, rather than sampling, an attempt was made to contact as many known users as possible. In order to capture both the micro and macro perspectives, two sets of surveys were conducted.

Micro Perspective

Twenty selected people were contacted, and telephone interviews were conducted in March and April of 2000. These interviews allowed CIFP staff to focus on individuals who were familiar with the project and its history, and who also have the capacity to mobilize resources.

The interviewees fell into two general categories—“key informants” and end users. *Key Informants*⁶ were, for the most part, people who had already been involved in the project in some capacity, and were thus more familiar with it. These people tended to be more senior decision-makers—those who could, for example, make decisions on policy questions and commitments of resources. *End users*, as their name implies, were

³ *ibid.* p. 10.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 15.

⁵ The results are available at: <http://www.sipri.se/projects/database/survey.html>

⁶ “Key informants”, as defined in the literature on needs assessment, “are opportunistically connected individuals with the knowledge and ability to report on community needs.” McKillip, p.81. The key informants are identified in Appendix D

simply those who either currently use the database or were identified as potential future users. There is obviously a certain amount of overlap between the two, as the interest of the key informants usually stemmed from a perceived need for the CIFP and the type of information that it would provide.

The interviews were based on the following questions:

1. What is your current institutional affiliation?
2. What informational needs did your organization have that led to your interest in the CIFP database?
3. In what way could or does the CIFP database complement your needs?
4. Would your organization have a need for integrated capabilities within the data-set, such as:
 - i. mapping;
 - ii. field reports from FEWER;
 - iii. staff training
5. Do you have any comments regarding the data presentation and the functionality of the CIFP database (quantity/quality of indicators, additional outputs that may be desired)
6. Do you have any other suggestions for improvement in the CIFP database?

Macro Perspective

The user base of the CIFP has expanded greatly over the course of this study, particularly since it was mentioned in two online publications: Technology in Government (<http://www.plesman.com/tg>) and "Really Useful Business Sites", an email list serve⁷. It is interesting to note that 80 new requests for passwords have been received since May 5, 2000.

Email surveys were sent to all 312 registered users as of April 15, 2000. Fifty-four responses were received for a response rate of 17%. The email survey was based on questions similar to those asked of the *key informants*:

1. What is your current institutional affiliation?
2. What informational needs did your organization have that led to your interest in the CIFP database?
3. In what way could or does the CIFP database complement your needs?
4. Do you have a use for integrated capabilities within the data-set, such as:
 - i. mapping;
 - ii. field reports from FEWER;
 - iii. training
5. Do you have any comments regarding the data presentation and the functionality of the CIFP database?
6. Do you have any other suggestions for improvement in the CIFP database?

⁷ listserv administrator: John McDonnell (jaymack@ix.netcom.com)

IV. RESULTS

1. Institutional Affiliation

The anticipated target population consisted largely of policy analysts at government agencies and non-governmental organizations and academic researchers.

Most users who responded to the survey were either employees of a government department (Canadian or foreign), or worked within an academic setting (as professors, researchers, or students). There were also respondents who were military personnel, staff of non-governmental organizations, staff of international organizations, independent consultants or contractors, and private sector actors.

Some examples of institutional affiliations drawn from both the email and telephone surveys are listed in Appendix B.

2. Informational Needs

The reasons' cited by the respondents for their interest in the CIFP database varied widely. Many respondents identified a need to measure and observe trends and make comparisons, many for the purpose of either clarifying and illuminating current problems or identifying future ones. However, there were a number of different types of problems into which the respondents hoped to gain insight, and a number of different uses envisioned for the data from CIFP. We have included a sample of the responses given to demonstrate the breadth of need identified.⁸

Some respondents cited very general needs. These included:

- analyzing problems over a long time horizon;
- early warning;
- development of risk assessment tools;
- research and teaching; social indicators;
- research for student essays;
- socio-economic data;
- marketing research;
- environmental information;
- staying abreast of international events;
- quick indicators for comparisons;
- basic information on development;
- understanding the human rights situation in a given country;

Other users, meanwhile, cited very specific, focused needs. These included:

- research on Southeast Asia;

⁸ This is a sample of responses. The raw data collected during the course of this study is available from Dr. David Carment: dcarment@ccs.carleton.ca

- analyzing geo-political and geo-strategic differences between 12 MENA countries;
- monitoring international developments, Canadian foreign policy, Canada-EU relations;
- supporting research needs of government and diplomatic posts abroad;
- data measuring ethnic and religious tensions throughout the world;
- tracking of actual or potential environment problems;
- observing trends of income distribution, poverty, democracy and corruption;
- research on arms trade and military spending;
- internal stability indicators;
- tracking key global issues likely to affect Canadian interests;
- index on human rights abuses;
- research on conflicts or turmoil that may affect visits to a country and/or operations of an embassy or chancery in that country;
- foreign governments understanding of Canadian perspective on relations with other countries;
- data relating to issues on freshwater;
- data on cross-national security indicators;
- factors affecting international science policy;
- level of transparency;
- state of government regimes;
- indicators to see whether government has achieved its goals;
- social conditions that may affect crime rates

3. How database complemented needs

Many respondents seemed to find the data and its presentation helpful. The ready access to information was cited as a key strength of the database, as was the presentation of the data in comparative form. One user commented that it made him aware of sources that he had not yet explored on his own. Another user liked the links to other information providers such as SIPRI. Another observed that it was helpful to collect many disparate indicators which take a number of factors into account, and to provide summarized data by countries.

Some users, however, did not find the database quite so helpful in meeting their needs. Several users noted that they would have liked more historical data beyond the ten years that is available, in order to perform more comprehensive time series analysis. Another found that the data does not appear to be as current as he/she had hoped. Another noted that the specific data that he was seeking—information on freshwater—was nowhere to be found in the database.

Still, it is important to note that the users who did not find the database useful tended to criticize it for specific reasons. The general, overall reaction was positive.

It should be noted that several users who responded to the e-mail survey were new to CIFP, and thus had not used the database enough to feel comfortable critically assessing the quality of the CIFP.

4. Need for Integrated Capabilities

Respondents were divided on this question, and no clear trend was observable. Some respondents expressed no interest in any type of integrated capabilities. The majority did, however, suggest that mapping and, in particular, field reports would be helpful as a way of improving or complementing the overall database scheme.

It should be noted, though, that those who expressed interest in integrated capabilities raised some qualifiers. One user noted that field reports might be helpful, but “only if they covered the world”. Another suspected that field reports might be useful, but could not say for certain without examples. Another said that the usefulness of field reports would depend on the subjects reviewed, but that they might be helpful if they were timely and gave a demonstrably better insight than the qualitative data alone.

One user suggested that CIFP use an online Geographic Information Systems (GIS) server such as MapGuide or the new ARC IMS to allow for comprehensive geographic querying and visualizing of the data. The screen display format utilized in the Department of National Defence’s GEOPOL system (colour coding of high risk states on a “stoplight” system) is another option for visual presentation. In this system, countries that score between 1-3 are coded green, 4-6 are coded yellow, and 7-9 are coded red. A system such as this would allow for quick *analysis at a glance*.

5. Data Presentation & Functionality & Suggestions for Improvement

The responses to survey questions 5 and 6 are aggregated here. Again, a number of respondents said that it was too early for them to judge the types of improvements needed. However, numerous suggestions were raised, and once again, these ranged from the very general to the very specific.

The comments fell into three general categories:

i. Quality of Indicators and Data

The CIFP contains 80 indicators for 120 countries over a 10 year period, and so it is not unusual to find that some errors exist. Quality control needs to be improved. Data cleansing should be an immediate priority as soon as resources are available to fund research assistants.

One user found that some indexes do not correspond with raw data. Another user claimed that the regional data contains inconsistencies (for example, Ireland is listed as being in Middle East, and Turkey is placed in Western Europe). In addition, the issue of up-to-date information was raised—as one user noted, the data on the Czech Republic is two years old.

ii. Functional and Technical Suggestions

One user suggested that, in order for the quantitative rankings to be useful to decision-makers, narrative text analysis should be offered in order to provide the rationale for the scale rankings. A point and click based window-based system for entering successive layers of data would be useful. This type of text could be made keyword-searchable for maximum accessibility. A number of web-based systems of this type

make use of graphic "quick reference" screens to initiate searches. For example, a map-based overall coding system is visually appealing and easy to use. All data should be visibly identified by source and date for maximum utility.

One user who had some difficulty navigating the site also picked up on the idea of a clear point-and-click method associated with a brief description in a short menu format. This would make it easier for the user to return to useful locations within the database. Frames were also cited as an impediment to easy navigation, as some users employing older and slower systems have difficulty loading frames-based pages.

For optimum utility, it might be worth using a wide variety of reporting formats in order to make the data as useful as possible to different agencies. Ideally, agencies could create their own report form structures from searches in order that they could choose which variables to combine and the required output. If text analysis is included, the entire system should ideally be key word searchable as well as field-searchable.

One respondent requested that users be able to compare more than two countries at a time. The respondent did not cite a specific number.

Several users asked for downloadable data. One respondent suggested providing data in a format which can be readily transferred into a statistics program. Another suggested providing the ability to download data into Excel or another spreadsheet program.

iii. Types of Indicators

Again, it is important to underline that a wide variety of needs were cited by respondents. As such there was a great range of suggestions for indicators, as well. One of the more dominant themes in both the interview and e-mail responses was a request for more time series data and time trends in important variables.

Some users asked for more indicators of a specific type. These included environmental indicators, data related to levels of internal violence, cross-referencing of events (for example, data and textual reports, and links to other database), and indicators for regions and sub-national bodies. Another user suggested that the database measure the influence of multinationals on political decisions. The user admitted that this is difficult to measure, but suggested measuring the proportion of multi-national trade in a country's trade (imports plus exports/ volume and dollar value)

Other users had suggestions for the ways in which data was measured or presented. One user questioned the usefulness of Freedom House data, noting that it does not represent the critiques of democracy which have been raised in such fora as the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle. The user seems to feel that a broader concept of democracy needs to be used. Another user suggested making some of the data more precise—for example, measuring not just which countries suffer from water scarcity and in what order, but the level of water scarcity as well. Another example: measuring not just which countries have largest populations of displaced persons, but how many people are displaced.

Another user suggested that data gaps for developing countries be filled in as best as

possible using embassy, arms dealers and other sources—some estimate, in this respondent's words, is better than nothing. As an example, this person cited SIPRI, which puts a disclaimer by sketchy data but still gives a number.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Several clear trends emerged from both the interviews and responses to the e-mail surveys.

□ **Interest and enthusiasm for the CIFP are growing.**

This is the most basic, but still the most important point to make. The wide range of needs identified is a good sign. In fact, the user base is much broader than anticipated, which is indicative of the broad international appeal of the CIFP project.

Virtually all of the raw data contained in the CIFP is available in various forms from a broad range of commercial databases. However, there is a very strong “value-added” for a CIFP-type project: the methodology used to filter and aggregate this data in a format which will prove useful to policy makers and other users who do not have the time or resources to aggregate and distil such data on a case-by-case, ad hoc basis.

This was mentioned by several users: CIFP can be a valuable time-saving device for those who do not have the time to do heavy research and analysis themselves. The concept of “information at your fingertips” is also appealing to many users, particularly for comparative data. One enthusiastic respondent found the data available on the CIFP to be “unusually interesting”, and actually requested to purchase a copy of the dataset on CD-Rom.

□ **There is a wide range of expectations for CIFP.**

As the needs assessment clearly demonstrates, there are in fact a wide range of users. The information provided by the CIFP is thus clearly useful to a wide range of clients. The extensive data collected and presented in database format can be used in varying ways by different agencies to serve their objectives.

However, CIFP obviously cannot be all things to all of its constituents. Indeed, it was never intended to be. It is important to stress that CIFP was never intended to be used in isolation as an instrument of prediction. Rather, CIFP should form one component of a much wider range of information resources available to planners.

□ **Quantitative Indicators vs Qualitative Assessment:**

The web-based CIFP data is intended to be a complement to qualitative risk-assessment. While quantitative indicators are relatively easy to collect and calculate, measurability alone does not necessarily make an indicator useful. What matters is how well the indicator measures the impact of a given factor on a society's stability, its propensity to conflict, and so on. Indeed, social and political institutions and

processes—such as history, cultural values, and political culture—are complex and fluid, and cannot always be reduced to numbers.⁹

As a previous report on CIFP has noted, “the age-old battle over the merits of quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method approaches to political risk analysis remains unresolved”. While qualitative analysis has its obvious problems (being rather subjective, and vulnerable to the biases and errors of the analyst), purely quantitative methods have also produced widely ranging results. Indeed, of more than a dozen commercially available political risk tools surveyed, none relied exclusively on quantitative indicators, instead choosing to combine quantitative data with analytical judgments or Delphi-type ratings.¹⁰ The point, as made by Ilan Kapoor, is not so much to create a flawless set of indicators as it is to identify the most suitable indicators and to use a range of them.¹¹

This certainly appears to be the preferred approach for CIFP’s users. In general, respondents felt that qualitative analyses need to be added to complement the quantitative data. Not only would such analyses help fill in the gaps left by the numerical data, but they would further aid the user in providing “information at a glance”, which has been identified as one of the key advantages of this database. This seems to be a natural role for FEWER field reports or field summaries.¹²

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term

- CIFP should continue to develop its partnerships with FEWER and SIPRI.

As noted above, there seem to be to be several ways in which CIFP’s capabilities can complement those of its partners. CIFP appears to be on the right track.

- CIFP should expand carefully.

As the database expands, the demands on the database will not only increase, but will also diversify. The needs of the policy community for quick, snapshot analyses of current “hot” issues are not the same as those of the academic community, which tends to take a longer-term, more theoretical view of issues. Commercial clients, meanwhile, tend to be interested in financial and economic data above all else.

As noted above, the database cannot reasonably expect to be all things to all users. It

⁹ Ilan Kapoor, Indicators for Programming in Human Rights and Democratic Development: A Preliminary Study (Canadian International Development Agency, 1996), p. 7

¹⁰ Heather Jeffries, Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP): A Review of Current Progress, Existing Instruments and Future Options, (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1997), p. 12

¹¹ Kapoor, p.9

¹² This complements the findings of SIPRI’s survey, which found that 54% of respondents were either “somewhat interested” or “very interested” in information in the form of country profiles, in addition to statistics and structured hard data. See http://www.sipri.se:8020/IRSI/owa/statistics_1_test_del_1

is one of many sources that users will consult in the course of their research, and should complement these sources. As stated above, the “value-added” element of CIFP is its ability to filter and rank information for users who do not have the time to engage in heavy research.

In principle, therefore, adding more indicators and functions is a good idea, and seems to be desired by a number of users. However, CIFP will need to choose these indicators and functions carefully, and ensure that these new indicators and functions still meet CIFP’s core mandate and are within its capacity.

- Some functional and technical issues remain to be addressed.

This will, of course, be an on-going issue, as it is for any such project. Overall, users found the database to be functionally and technically sound, which is a very good sign for future development.

There will always be functional and technical problems and glitches, some of which can be foreseen, some of which can only be dealt with when they arise. Some matters which have already been identified include:

a. Maintenance

Special attention must be paid to quality control and updating. This must be a priority for both financial and human resources. In order to retain its users, the database must give them confidence in the data, and that errors can be corrected and problems fixed promptly.

b. Navigation.

Some less computer-savvy users may find the site difficult to navigate. Users need a site that is not only complete and reliable, but is easy to use. The “point-and-click” suggestions outlined above are worth considering. A “back to previous page” button or link on every page could also be useful.

c. Firewall Problems.

One survey respondent was unable to access the database because of an apparent conflict with the firewall employed by his organization’s system. This does not appear to be a widespread problem, but it is worth noting, as it may occur again.

d. Password Access.

A password-based system is essentially designed for individual use. However, some institutions that wish to make the system available to multiple users (such as university libraries who wish to use the system with their students) have found the password system inappropriate. It may be worth exploring alternatives to the password system, particularly for institutional users.

The addition of a simple online form, accompanied by a CGI script to process the inputs into a database, would not be too difficult to implement given existing institutional and resource constraints. This can be developed rapidly, and could provide important way of enabling simple and quick access for potential users.

It is very important to note, however, that most of these are normal maintenance and

development issues, particularly for a database that is reaching out to new users whose needs and abilities differ from those of the traditional client base. Again, it is important to emphasize that the overwhelming reaction to the database was positive.

Medium to Long-Term

The utility of the CIFP project can be enhanced over the longer term in two key ways:

□ Web Links

This is a deceptively simple, efficient way to increase the use of a website. Many users will bookmark a page of links that can serve as a good research resource, and CIFP should use this to its maximum potential. It is possible to link the CIFP with other on-line WWW databases, thereby increasing the amount of related information which could be presented and, therefore, its overall utility as a research tool. Over time, CIFP could become a type of “portal” for research on risk assessment and early warning.

□ Furthering Partnerships

One avenue which may aid in the development is partnership with other, like-minded organizations, such as the type currently in effect with FEWER and SIPRI. Some groups that are worth exploring might include the Institute for Security Studies (South Africa), the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, and the Brookings Institution (USA). It was also suggested by one respondent to further the relationship with GEDS, Maryland, as planned in the proposed pilot project. These would not only open up sources of additional expertise, but also possible new sources of funding.

Future Directions

As noted above, full collaboration with FEWER is essential. Through partnerships such as this, it may even be possible to expand CIFP well beyond the Web database to include such activities as capacity-building training for NGOs and policy analysts in less developed countries, and a stand alone CD-Rom product that would allow those without access to the Internet to access CIFP's data. It may even be possible for CIFP and its partners to eventually reach into the private sector. As Canada has recently seen in the case of Sudan's oil fields, private companies will need political data in making investment decisions in risk-prone areas.

In order for this to happen, however, certain organizational changes may be needed over the long term. The creation of an Advisory Board to provide CIFP staff with overall policy guidance could be very useful.

Most important, however, is stable funding, which would enable CIFP to engage staff on an ongoing basis. This will be essential if data is to be researched and entered in a timely fashion.

It is important to remember that CIFP is not alone in the field of risk assessment and conflict analysis. There are many data sets and analytical tools currently available to both public-sector and private-sector clients, many of them at relatively low cost (see Appendix B). In 1997, Jeffries suggested that, if the CIFP project was to proceed as a potential commercial instrument for risk analysis, it would have to be precisely targeted in order to provide cost-effective and unique data. The value-added for such a tool might lie in the consolidation of a wide range of information with some Canadian-focused content, the use of a methodologically precise filter or model to evaluate states which is also flexible in its ability to adapt to changing needs, and finally in the development of a user-friendly interface to easily permit data manipulation.¹³

This assessment confirmed many of Jeffries' observations. However, as CIFP develops, it appears to be developing a capacity to deliver something that products such as Oxford Analytica and the Economist Intelligence Unit cannot. It can provide quick, easy access to information in a format that can be easily plugged in to a report or presentation. For the most part is not necessary to dig or analyze. The product is more or less ready to use.

CIFP also has the potential to go a step further, and develop a capability for "research on demand". The CIFP project was recently commissioned to give a presentation on indicators for the Central Asia/Caucasus region before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the House of Commons. While the complete data for this region was not available in the database at that point, project staff were able to compile the necessary, up-to-date information quickly and efficiently.

The tasks for running and maintaining such a database are clear. The database must be properly kept up to date. The raw data must be well defined and transparent, and preferably available in an application that can be easily downloaded for data manipulation. The site must be easily accessible and simple to use.

If some of the recommendations mentioned in this report are implemented, however, the potential remains very strong as the CIFP moves into its second phase. The survey indicates that there is both a need and a good deal of enthusiasm for this product. Users have found that easy access to this information can save a good deal of time and effort. That is clearly the "niche" that CIFP has found, and must continue to exploit.

¹³ Jeffries, p. 9

Appendix A

Overview of Institutional Affiliations of CIFP Users

International Organizations

United Nations

World Health Organization

European Commission Joint Research Centre, Space Applications Unit

Delegation of the European Commission, Ottawa

Governmental Organizations

Canada

Canadian International Development Agency

Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Environment Canada

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Department of National Defence

Human Resources Development Canada

Manitoba Provincial Government

Yukon Department of Justice

Natural Resources Canada

Privy Council Office

Other

U.S. Military

Italian Department of Defence, Military Centre for Strategic Studies

Ministry of the Flemish Community in Belgium

Australian Institute of Criminology, J.V. Barry Library

Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense

Academic and Research Institutions

Canada

North-South Institute

Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre

Royal Military College of Canada

University of British Columbia

Simon Fraser University

Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies

University of Ottawa

University of Victoria

Other

Columbia University, Lehman Library

St. Ambrose University, O'Keefe Library

Vilnius University, Institute of International Relations (Lithuania)
University of Nijmegen (Netherlands)
Goteborg University, Dept. of Peace and Development Research (Sweden)
University of Kent at Canterbury
Secondary School in Belgium University of Kentucky
University of Essex
Tulane University Institute for International Development
University of Playa Ancha, Valparaiso, Chile

Private Sector

Nesbitt Burns
Private Consultants (numerous)

Appendix B

Selected Internet Political Risk Resources and Costs¹⁴

Service	Location	Focus	Cost*
Political Risk Services	http://www.prsgrp.com	Security threats, political stability, political forecasts	CD-Rom - Complete Package US\$8,995/year
Control Risks Information Services	(found in FSRI) http://www.businessmonitor.co.uk	Security threats, political stability, political forecasts	Internet Country Risk Profiles (117 states) US\$7,600/year
Business Environment Risk Intelligence	By trial subscription only	Sociopolitical change, business operating risk, risk to remittances	N.A.
Economist Intelligence Unit	http://www.eiu.com Also via Silver Platter CD-Rom, among others.	Country reports, economic forecasts, political background	CD-Rom Country Reports for all Regions US\$32,270/year
Euromoney	http://www.oyster.co.uk/EuroMoney/ewl/index.html	Interactive map, Economic performance, political risk (ie. risk of non-payment), debt, access to international finance	US\$12,000/year (approximate - varies according to customer needs)
Relief Web (UN-DHA)	http://www.reliefweb.int/	Humanitarian relief situation reports - information sharing (no ratings)	Free
HazardNet	http://hoshi.cic.sfu.ca/hazard/hazardnet.intro	Prototype - natural and technological hazard information sharing	Free

*Commercial List cost.

¹⁴ Source: Jeffries, Appendix 4.

APPENDIX C

Summary of CIFP Indicators¹⁵

A. Internal Stability

Democracy Index
Autocracy Index
Number of Coups

Population Heterogeneity

Ethnic Diversity Rank
Ethnic Diversity Index
Religious Diversity Rank
Religious Diversity Index
Total Cultural Diversity Rank
Total Cultural Diversity Index
Ethnic Cleavage—Political Status
Ethnic Cleavage—Cohesion

Political Violence/Refugees

Political Violence Index
Number of Refugees
Refugee Index

Crime

Terrorist Incidents (by location, Group Homeland, Victim's Nationality)
Terrorism Index
Corruption Index
 Transparency International
 Knack & Keefer 1980-89
 Mauro 1981-83
Drug Activity
Black Market Index

B. Local Geopolitical Stability

Arms Imports—Volume
Arms Imports—Index
Arms Exports—Volume
Arms Exports—Index
Resource/Territorial Disputes—Number
Resource/Territorial Disputes—Index
Political/Cultural Disputes—Number
Political/Cultural Disputes—Index
Canadians Living Abroad—Number
Canadians Living Abroad—Index

¹⁵ Each indicator is indexed on a nine-point scale according to its relevance to foreign policy.

Regional Balance of Power & Security Influence

Fraction of Regional GDP
 Regional Balance of Power Index
 Regional Security Index

C. National Power/Influence

Population Index
 GDP Index
 GDP Per Capita Index
 Inequality Index

Military/Security Arrangement

Economic Organizations Index
 Fraction of World GDP Economic Organizations
 Economic Membership Index
 Military/Security Alliances Index
 Fraction World Armed Forces in Military Alliances
 Military/Security Alliance Index
 UN Organizations Index
 Miscellaneous Organizations Index

Militarization Indicators

Total Military Expenditure—Average
 Total Military Expenditure—Index
 Military Expenditure as a % of GDP—Average
 Military Expenditure as a % of GDP—Index
 Total Armed Forces—1995
 Total armed Forces—Index
 Armed Forces Per 1000—Average
 Armed Forces Per 1000—Index

International Trade Indicators

Exposure—Rank
 Exposure—Index
 Self-Sufficiency—Rank
 Self-Sufficiency—Index
 Dependency—Rank
 Dependency—Index
 International Trade Measures
 Exports
 Imports
 Primary Commodities—Exports
 Primary Commodities—Imports
 Exports to Most Important Partner
 Exposure Measure
 Self-Sufficiency Measure

Dependency Measure

Accessibility Indicators

Sea Distance from Canadian Port
 Coast/Port Rating
 Port Facilities Rating
 Rail Link Rating
 Inland Transportation (road, rail) Rating
 Composite Seaport Rating
 Air Distance Rating
 Number of Airports Rating
 Overall Accessibility Rating

D. Social Development

Human Development Index
 HDI Rank
 HDI Index
 Gender Development Index
 GDI Rank
 GDI Index
 Gender Empowerment Measure
 GEM Rank
 GEM Index

Health Indicators

Life Expectancy Rank & Index
 Maternal Mortality Rank & Index
 Infant Mortality Rank & Index

E. The Environment

Absolute Environmental Impacts

CO₂ Emissions—Rank & Index
 Fishery Landings—Rank & Index
 Forest Area—Rank & Index
 Number of Threatened Species—Rank & Index
 Energy Consumption—Rank & Index
 Average Environmental Score
 Environmental Rank
 Absolute Environmental Index

Per Capita Environmental Indices

CO₂ Emissions Per Capita—Rank & Index
 Fish Consumption Per Capita—Rank & Index
 Energy Consumption Per Capita—Rank & Index
 Average Per Capita Environmental Score
 Per Capita Environmental Rank
 Per Capita Environment Index

APPENDIX D

The following were the *key informants* interviewed by telephone during the course of this assessment:

NAME	AFFILIATION	ROLE
Susan Brown	CIDA	Chief, Peacebuilding
Chris Cushing	DFAIT	Sr. Policy Advisor, Multilateral Peacebuilding
Tony Kellett	DND	Directorate of Strategic Analysis
Andre Ouellette	DFAIT	Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Minister for International Cooperation
John Patterson	CSIS	

The Authors

Needs Assessment Consultants

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