

Country Fragility Assessments in Brief A Primer for Analysts

September 2006

Undertaken on behalf of the Government of Canada
through the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Copyright © Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP)
Not to be cited, duplicated or circulated without
permission of the authors and CIFP

Feedback is welcome, and may be sent to cifp@carleton.ca
<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp>

A. The Challenge:

Integrating strategic and operational information into organizational decision-making structures because:

- Managers/field officers responsible for day-to-day operations generally must work without a thorough understanding of the potential impact on economic, political, security, and socio-cultural situation;
- Strategic decisions are often taken without sufficient knowledge and consideration of practical realities constraining programs at the operational level;
- Crucial opportunities are missed and new problems created because complete and current information did not reach the places and people that needed it most.

B. Needs:

Government departments have both operational and strategic needs:

Operational needs include:

- Implementing programs;
- Managing personnel, logistics, financial flows;
- Evaluating programs;
- Operating in rapidly shifting environments;
- Coordinating activities in multiple theatres in concert with a variety of domestic and international actors.

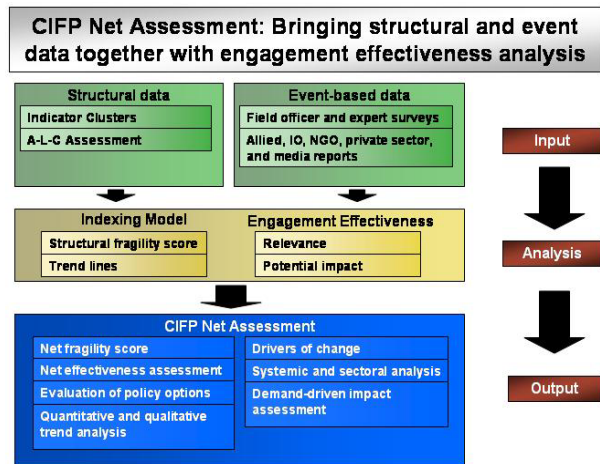
Strategic needs include:

- Apportioning scarce resources across unlimited needs;
- Understanding key vulnerabilities of states, including likely drivers of future crises;
- Analyzing political, economic, socio-cultural and security implications of current and potential programming activities;
- Understanding of organizational capabilities and limitations.

C. How do CIPP products address these challenges and needs?

CIPP has produced a failed and fragile states concept paper for CIDA. It is a 100 page document specifying a CIPP Net Assessment (CNA) framework for:

- Identifying country risk;
- Identifying trends and changes in country performance;
- Specifying appropriate entry points;
- Evaluating the impact of policy on country performance.



The CNA methodology:

- Identifies the relative risks that each state faces internally and poses externally;
- Combines real time dynamic analysis with structural information;
- Provides policy relevant diagnosis;
- Matches the analysis to the operational capacity of the end user; and
- Provides an evaluative framework for assessing policy impact.

Specific products include:

1. Identification and Ranking of Structural Country Risk, produced in a standalone country watch report with minimal narrative or regional report with narrative to provide a meaningful comparative context. These reports take a minimum of 2 months to prepare. They draw on structural risk data.

2. Events-based country performance monitoring incorporated into a country brief or set of country briefs that include – conflict and peace generating factors, stakeholder interests and scenario development. The events based monitoring system looks like this and can be drawn up into a country brief produced on a monthly, quarterly or more regular basis. Monitoring requires a minimum of 6-8 month initial investment of time.

3. Impact and Relevance Assessment. Relevance and impact refer to the task of identifying criteria and laying out a framework for identifying where Canada can engage and how it can evaluate that engagement. Given the difficulty in conclusively identifying Canadian interests and values in any given situation, attempts to assess a potential engagement's relevance to Canadian foreign policy will inevitably be only approximate. Relevance and impact assessments are provided in standalone reports and can only be produced when sufficient country information both structural and event-based is collected and analyzed. They are complementary products.

Key goals of relevance assessment include:

- The promotion of consistent and non-partisan decision-making;
- The harmonization of engagements with explicit Canadian interests, values and past behavior;
- The enabling of expeditious decision-making in situations requiring rapid response; and
- The encouragement of rigorous, results-oriented cost-benefit analysis.

The RAS does not claim to provide a definitive measure for such a broad and indeed contested concept as national interest; rather, it specifies several major dimensions that feature prominently in all discussions of Canadian foreign policy. The goal is not to pre-empt discussion, but to support it with transparent, objective, and comparable information. Key measures include:

Through the CIFP Impact Assessment, policy-makers identify a problem, assess its consequences, determine its relevant stakeholders, and find corresponding opportunities for action, producing a policy prescription to address the problem with a maximum impact. The IA involves early warning, cost-benefit, and stakeholder analysis, as well as risk and feasibility assessments.

Operational Impact Assessment

Is the proposed engagement:

- Supported by the resources necessary to accomplish its mandate? Will such resources remain in place over a period of time sufficient to accomplish the mandate?
- Occurring within a valid window of opportunity?
- Endorsed and supported by all relevant departments and agencies of the Canadian Government?
- Likely to result in substantial Canadian casualties? Host country casualties?
- Cost effective when compared with other policy options?
- Taking place in a region or sector in which Canada has previous experience?
- Defined by a clear and achievable mandate?
- Regulated by direct and transparent lines of policy responsibility?
- Organized to enable, encourage and, when necessary, demand coordination among all Canadian departments and agencies working in theatre?
- Equipped with viable "entry points" in the host country, both literal (e.g. ports, airstrips, etc.), and figurative (reliable local partners in government and civil society)?
- Supported politically in Canada?
- In a country in which Canada has a history of engagement?
- Designed to capitalize on areas of comparative Canadian expertise?
- Occurring in a member of a culturally or geographically significant international organization, such as the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, CARICOM, MERCUSOR, or ECOWAS?

D. What is the intended purpose and value-added of each product?

1. As an aid to policymakers at the strategic level CIFP regional and country risk assessments identify and monitor fragile states of interest to Canada using a diverse and comprehensive methodology that:

- Evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of each state;
- Specifies entry points where Canada can direct its policies;
- Measures state performance over time in comparison to itself and others.

2. As an aid to policymakers at the operational level country briefs and events monitoring can help Canada **make a measurable difference in the quality of policies at the sectoral and operational level by:**

- Providing a monitoring capability that informs operations;
- Measure policy effectiveness;
- Implementing a desktop software solution that assists decision making;
- Integrating the desk officers in the analysis.

E. How are they expected to inform policy/be used?

1. Identifying where a state is on the state failure spectrum serves to contextualize it for policy-makers and thus informs their decisions regarding response options. A country

on a rapidly declining path towards failure will likely require a more robust response, such as a military or diplomatic operation.

2. A response more heavily weighted towards development and diplomatic efforts is likely to be more appropriate, and thus successful, in stagnating or recovering states.
3. The methodology is also intended to identify not only failing states, but also to highlight the sectors of a state that are particularly weak and any factors, either exogenous or endogenous to the state, that contribute to the potential for instability and collapse. These high risk areas constitute potential entry points for action.
4. Response options can be evaluated and formulated on the basis of their impact on elements that constitute a significant destabilizing influence. In this way, those elements that pose the greatest risk to a country's stability, and thus contribute greatly to the potential for state failure, can receive priority attention. Addressing these high risk areas is the most expedient and efficient method for reducing a country's risk of instability.

F. How long would the analysis take?

To satisfy these objectives there is a minimal investment of 5-6 months in order to collect the necessary information. An integrated but phased approach would be best. This approach would begin with a regional risk assessment report of 4-6 countries that could be completed within a 3-4 month frame and the simultaneous collection of events-based information for specific country briefs. Relevance assessment could be conducted at the outset and impact assessment after an initial six month period.

G. What have you already produced? Are your tools already being used by government? If so, by whom? Who in government is involved in this? (How) Are they using your work?

1. CIFI reports and data are used by the UN system, the HSN, the EU, the OSCE and our methodology has contributed to conflict analysis initiatives at the WB, USAID and NGO networks (through CIDA funded training programmes).
2. CIFI partners and end users
 - Canadian International Development Agency;
 - Policy Research on Fragile States Canadian Network of Researchers;
 - The European Union – Crisis Unit;
 - Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada/RCMP – Strategic Early Warning System;
 - Department of National Defence – Canadian Forces Experimental Centre;
 - Petro-Canada MNCs and Conflict Risk and Impact Assessment;
 - Global Development Group/Care Canada
 - CIFI Registration Database:
 - Over 3000 current registrants – investments firms, government agencies, NGOs, Universities and Think Tanks.