6. ASSESSING RISKS OF GENOCIDE AND POLITICIDE: A GLOBAL WATCH LIST FOR 2012

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In 1994, in response to a request by senior U.S. policymakers, the State Failure (now Political Instability) Task Force was established to design and carry out a data-driven study of the preconditions of state failure, defined to include ethnic and revolutionary wars, adverse or disruptive regime transitions, and genocides and politicides. In 1998, in response to President Clinton's policy initiative on genocide early warning and prevention, I was asked to design and carry out a study that would use my data and other available data to establish a workable and theoretically sound data-based system for risk assessment and early warning of genocidal violence. This effort was recommended as a basis for systematic risk assessment in a 2008 report by Madeleine Albright and William Cohen (Albright and Cohen 2008).

The following definition is used to identify historical and future cases. Genocides and politicides are the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents—or, in the case of civil war, either of the contending authorities—that are intended to destroy, in whole or part, a communal, political, or politicized ethnic group. In genocides the victimized groups are defined by the perpetrators primarily in terms of their communal characteristics. In politicides, by contrast, groups are defined primarily in terms of their political opposition to the regime and dominant groups.

The results of this effort were published in 2003 (Harff 2003). The structural model developed in that analysis identified six causal factors that jointly differentiate with 74 percent accuracy the 36 serious civil conflicts that led to episodes of genocidal violence between 1955 and 2002 and 93 others that did not. Case-by-case inspection of false negatives and false positives suggested, first, that several false positives could easily have escalated into genocide or politicide, as in Mozambique in 1976, where widespread killings were carried out by Renamo rebels but did not target specific communal groups. Second, most of the false negatives were due to ambiguity about when to date the onset of genocide, or problems with the lag structure used to estimate the model. Accuracy increased to nearly 90 percent when temporal inconsistencies in the data were taken into account.

Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide

Box 6.1 presents a descriptive overview of seven distinct factors that influence the risk of genocide and politicide. In addition, the box provides detail about the weighting assigned to each factor in the overall risk assessment. All risk factors are weighted based on empirical results. For example, past genocide was a more important factor than exclusionary ideology by a ratio of 3.5 to

Box 6.1   Factors Influencing the Risk of Genocide or Politicide

Factor	Description
Prior Genocides and Politicides	The assessment utilizes a dichotomous variable indicative of whether a genocide or politicide has occurred in the country since 1945. Three cases have been added to Harff's original data set and are taken into account in the current risk assessment. The cases are: Nigeria during the Biafran civil war (1967–1969), where the federal government's deliberate blocking of international aid and basic foodstuffs led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians; Zimbabwe, state-sponsored killings of thousands of Ndbele in the mid-1980s; and in Eastern Congo in 1997 where Laurent Kabila's revolutionary movement systematically killed tens of thousands of Hutu refugees. A previous genocide or politicide adds 3.5 points to the index.
Ethnic Character of the Ruling Elite	This dichotomous variable indicates whether the ruling elite represents a minority communal group, such as the Tigrean-dominated regime of Ethiopia (2.5 points).
Ideological Character of the Ruling Elite	This dichotomous variable indicates whether leaders adhere to a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people. Although Somalia has no effective central government, Islamist groups have imposed strict Shari'ah-based directives on the people they control (2.5 points).
Type of Regime	Autocracy and democracy were indexed using the Polity global data set's 0-to-10 scales based on coded information on political institutions. Full autocracies have a democracy-minus-autocracy score of -7 to -10, and partial autocracies have a score from +1 to -6. A full autocracy adds 3.5 points to the index; a partial autocracy adds 2 points, and a partial democracy or mixed regime adds 0 points.
Trade Openness	Trade openness serves as a highly sensitive indicator of state and elite willingness to maintain the rules of law and fair practices in the economic sphere (measured as the total value of exports plus imports as a percentage of GDP). Risks have been highest in countries with the lowest openness scores, 45 or less (2.5 points in the index). Medium scores are 46 to 70, which adds 1 point to the index.
State-Led Discrimination	Although not used in the original analysis, this indicator proved to be more significant than the magnitude of political upheaval used previously. Here state policies and practices deliberately restrict the economic and/or political rights of specific minority groups (2 points). This indicator was developed by Ted R. Gurr and its significance established from analyses by scholars using the Minorities at Risk data (see http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar).
Instability Risks	Major instances of instability, either internal war or abrupt regime changes, preceded almost all historical episodes of geno/politicide. Therefore I use Hewitt's estimates of the likelihood of future instability in a country. In Chapter 2, the variable is described in greater detail. Here countries with scores greater than 20 are assigned 3 points, those between 10-20 are assigned 2 points, and those between 5-10 are assigned 1 point.

2.5. Each country's risk index score is the sum of the weights of all seven risk factors.

Table 6.1 shows the seven risk factors for genocide in summary form for each high risk country, and they are listed in descending order of risk scores. Burma, Syria, China, Sudan, and Pakistan top the list. Neither Burma nor Sudan is a surprise, either because they committed recent genocides and/or engaged in extreme repression. China is less worrisome because of its low potential for future instability, a factor that in its absence is likely

Table 6.1 Country Risks of Genocide and Politicide in 2011								
Country	Geno/Politicides	Minority Ethnic Elite	Exclusionary Ideology	Regime Type	Trade Openness	Targets of State-Led Discrimination	Risks of Future Instability	Risk Index Score
Myanmar	Yes (1978)	Yes (Burmans)	Yes (Burman nationalism)	Full autocracy	Very low	Kachin, Karen, others	Low	16.5
Syria	Yes (1981-82)	Yes (Alwaites)	No	Full autocracy	Low	Political opponents, Kurds	Very high	15.5
China	Yes (1950-51, 1959, 1956-75)	No	Yes (Marxist)	Full autocracy	High	Turkomen Tibetans	Very low	15.0
Sudan	Yes (1956-72, 1983-present)	Yes (Arabs)	Yes (Islamist)	Partial autocracy	Very Low	Darfuri	Low	14.5
Pakistan	Yes (1971, 1973-77)	Yes (Punjabis)	No	Partial democracy	Low	Ahmadis, Hindus, Baluch	Very high	13.5
Ethiopia	Yes (1976-79)	Yes (Tigreans)	No	Mixed regime	Low	Oromo, Anuak	Very high	13.5
Zimbabwe	Yes (1983-87)	Yes (Shona)	No	Partial autocracy	High	Shona, Europeans	High	12.0
Rwanda	Yes (1963-65, 1994)	Yes (Tutsis)	No	Partial autocracy	Very low	Hutus	Low	12.0
Iran	Yes (1981-92)	No	Yes (Islamic theocracy)	Full autocracy	High	Kurds, Baha'is, Turkomen	Very low	11.5
Congo, Dem. Rep.	Yes (1964-65, 1977, 1999)	No	No	Partial Democracy	Very low	Tutsis	Very high	11.0
Somalia	Yes (1988-91)	No	Yes (Islamists)	No regime	Very low	None	High	10.5
Saudi Arabia	No	Yes (Sudairi clan)	Yes (Wahabism)	Full autocracy	High	Shi'is	Very low	10.5
Sri Lanka	Yes (1989-90)	No	Yes (Sinhalese nationalism)	Partial democracy	Low	Tamils	Medium	10.0
Nigeria	Yes (1967-69)	No	No	Partial democracy	Medium low	Ogani, Ejaw	Very high	9.5
Cameroon	No	Yes (Christian southerners)	No	Partial autocracy	Medium low	Westerners, Bamileke	High	9.5
Central African Rep.	No	Yes (Baya)	No	Partial autocracy	Very low	None	High	9.0
Uganda	Yes (1971-79, 1980-86)	No	No	Partial autocracy	Medium low	None	High	8.5
North Korea	No	No	Yes (Communism)	Full autocracy	Very low	None	Very Low	8.5
Guatemala	Yes (1978-90)	Yes (Ladinos)	No	Full democracy	Medium low	None	Medium	8.0
Uzbekistan	No	No	Yes (Uzbek nationalism)	Full autocracy	High	Tajiks, Islamists	Very low	8.0

to offset future genocidal risks. We consider internal war or abrupt regime change a partial trigger for genocidal violence. Hewitt's instability scores do not address the major upheavals throughout the Arab world, which may also affect non-Arab Muslim countries such as Pakistan. Syria is representative of the convulsions that have gripped the Maghreb, Levant, and the Arabian Peninsula as well as Bahrain and Jordan. In the present study, Syria is coded as highly unstable but, unlike previous coding, its ideological position is not exclusionary, given its secular and mixed socialist system and its support for Shi'a causes (Hezbollah/Iran). The current situation and a review of Syria's history (e.g., unrestrained attacks against the opposition Muslim Brotherhood and civilians in 1981–1982, should put us on high alert). Rwanda is still at risk, an example of countries in which the greatest threat comes from the exclusionary ideology of challenging groups—in this case the anti-Tutsi ideology of armed Hutu militants.

Risk Assessment, Early Warning, and Early Response

Whereas systematic risk assessment is better than what we had before, it is not enough to indicate more precisely when genocidal violence is likely to begin. What high risk profiles tell us is that a country is in the latter stages of upheaval that may result in genocide. This alone should be enough to focus on preventing escalation. Given risk assessments, less costly approaches may still work, such as financial or humanitarian aid or rescue operations combined with subtle or not so subtle political pressures. For Syria that time has passed. In Bahrain and Yemen international actors may yet have a chance to offset the worst, provided the current regimes either relinquish power or introduce major reforms that would include equal rights for all minorities—or majorities, as is the case in Bahrain.

Early warning efforts should be revived, along the lines of one designed for monitoring countries identified at high risk. The theoretical underpinnings of this study were published in Harff and Gurr (1998). We eventually used 12 factors and triggers that are measured by observing political events. It required us to track roughly 70 indicators on a daily basis. International organizations and NGO's could develop simplified tracking devices based on this model that would help to analyze diverse information and provide early warnings in specific situations. A less complex version of this approach should prove effective.

What is most needed now are preventive tools that are tailored to the specific needs of particular communities at a particular time. The next big challenge for early warning research is to learn more about what works to prevent genocidal violence in which kind of situations and at which time.