



JEFFERSON

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY




THE WIDER WORLD



Fragile States and Global Resilience

By Diane Chido

September 2024



In May 2006, the Zurich-based Center for Security Studies published my master's thesis on predicting genocide as part of a partnership with Mercyhurst University's Department of Intelligence Studies. As a result of

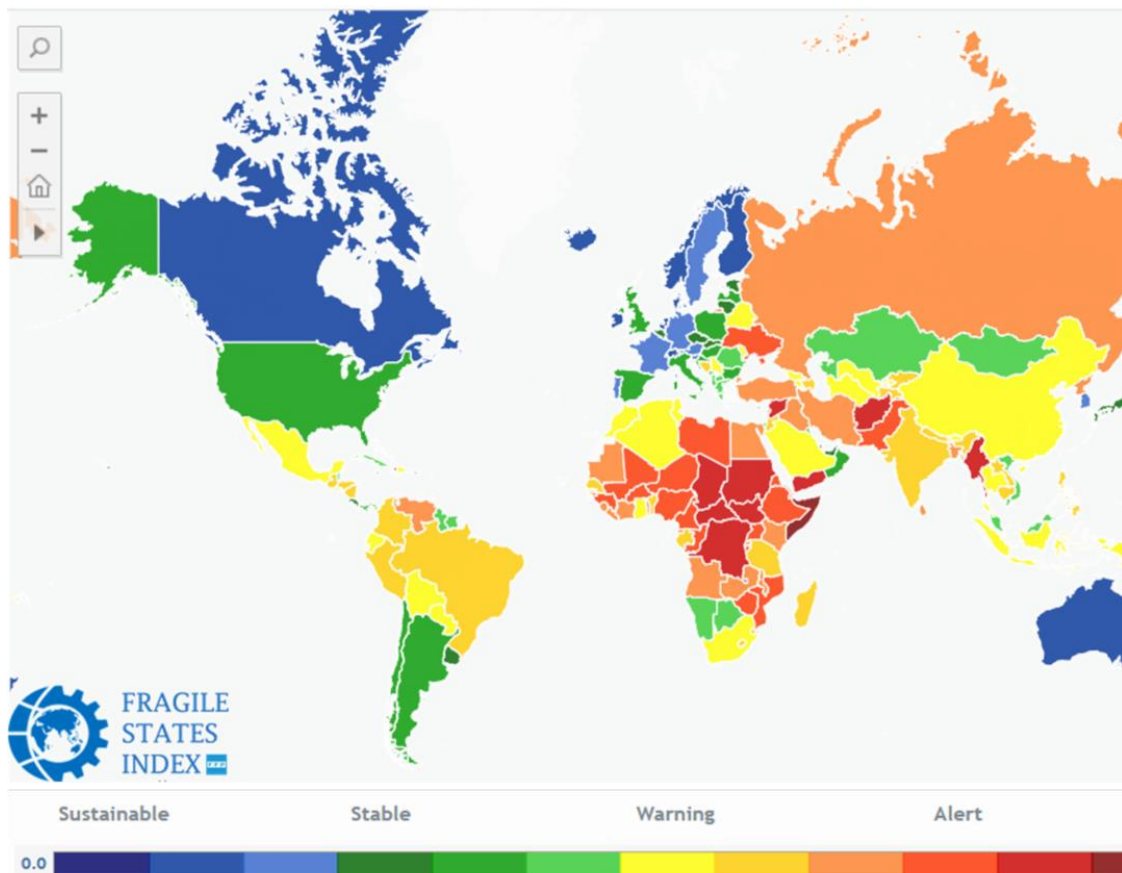
that relationship, I also published a number of articles on various aspects of international affairs.

In that thesis, I looked at the four major cases of 20th century ethnic genocide to identify the kinds of populations, social and political environments, and leaders who had visited these heinous acts upon 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, six million Jews and other groups in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis in six weeks in 1994, and 100,000 Bosnians in the disintegrating Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

I tried to discover whether these different cases, which were taking place mainly in different decades and in very disparate geographical areas, had similar environmental conditions that set the stage for these cataclysms. I also tried to determine whether there was common symbolic language used to prepare both the perpetrator and victim populations. The research and analysis suggested that the answer to both questions was “yes.”

For the first question, the four cases suggested that “genocide is more likely to occur during a time of war or revolution (or an invented case of either; think Orwell’s “1984”).”^[1] In the Armenian case, the Ottoman Empire was struggling internally with forces that sought to overturn the sultanate and enemies abroad that encouraged them and otherwise undermined the state. In Germany, the aftereffects of reparations, deaths, and destruction of World War I still reverberated in society, which was also suffering from an economic crisis. At the time, Rwanda was the most densely populated country in the world and the divisions between the Hutus and Tutsis had been brewing for centuries as a result of Dutch colonialism, which gave preference to the Tutsis for racist phrenological reasons that make no sense today. The largely Muslim Bosnians were painted as “invading Turks” by the Orthodox Christian Serbs who pushed an agenda of “replacement theory” fearing their loss of power with the end of Soviet patronage in the multi-cultural Yugoslavia. Turbulent times bring dangerous fissures to societies.

With the communist threat and the Global War on Terror seeming to be behind us, many Americans increasingly see each other as the enemy. There are many Americans who feel left behind by the massive disruptions of the past 25 years, including the mortgage crisis, which still has economic repercussions for many families, seemingly endless wars, the pandemic, its resulting inflation as the world came back online coupled with disparities wrought from globalization. Fears for the future are understandable as the cost of higher education becomes unattainable for many families, technological change like automation and artificial intelligence may seem to be conspiring to create enormous employment dislocation and social stratification. Often, finding the facts in a world awash with information and disinformation is daunting.



Fragile State Index heat map for 2024

To add a systematic study with standardized data, I used aspects of the “Fragile States Index,” a series of measures produced annually by the Fund for Peace, a nonprofit organization today dedicated to “developing practical tools and approaches for reducing conflict” and founded in San Francisco in 1957. I know these tools are applied wholesale to nation-states and may not fully reflect subnational or regional realities, but I love them anyway. They give us a snapshot of what is happening in the world and allow us to see trends over time and compare various countries and areas of the world on their stability and resilience.

The 2024 index analysis results are illustrated in the map indicating the fragility estimated for each country. The colors indicate stability and fragility with Australia, Canada, the Scandinavian countries, and New Zealand in blue, being the most sustainably resilient, and the U.S. in a lightish green indicating stability but a little too close to the warning yellow for full comfort. Somalia, at the tip of the Horn of Africa, is the darkest red showing concern for its sustainability. Russia, in orange, has gone past the warning phase and is heading toward an alert for instability.

To calculate the index, the fund uses three data streams:

Content analysis: “media articles, research reports, and other qualitative data points collected from over 10,000 different English-language sources around the world;”

Quantitative data: “pre-existing quantitative data sets, from international and multilateral statistical agencies (such as the United Nations, World

Bank, and the World Health Organization) to statistically represent key aspects of the indicators;”

Qualitative review: a team of social science researchers independently reviewed each of the 179 countries included, providing assessments based on key events from that year, compared to the previous one.”

These three data streams are then integrated with a weighting system to develop the final results, which are then further analyzed in several accompanying articles describing longitudinal trends and specific topics by theme, country, and region.^[ii]

As the graphic illustrates, the United States was on a path toward increasing fragility from 2016 until it hit its peak of 46.5 in 2022 but has since begun a trend toward greater resilience with a 2024 score of 44.4. “The rank order of the states is based on the total scores of 12 separate indicators. For each indicator, the ratings are placed on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest intensity of fragility (most stable) and 10 being the most fragile (least stable).”

The total score is the sum of the 12 indicators and is on a scale of 0-120. Thus, the U.S. score of 44.4 ranks it as the 141st most stable of 179 countries. Canada, in comparison, has a score of 18.6 and a rank of 172 (a lower score is better, and a higher rank is better). Somalia, by contrast is the most fragile state with a score of 111.3 and is ranked number one of 179.

The 12 indicators are grouped into four categories with the following sub-indicators:

SOCIETAL

- **Security Apparatus**
 - State monopoly on violence (or militias, criminals or others) – essentially assessing whether the police “own the night” or some other illicit group does, evaluating if people can sleep securely
 - Relationship between security forces and population
 - Proper use of force
 - Arms proliferation
- **Factionalized Elites**
 - Representative government
 - Identity security and cross-cultural respect or existence of extremism
 - Equitable resource distribution
 - Equity and equality
- **Group Grievance**
 - Post-conflict response
 - Equality of resource distribution
 - Societal divisions: ethnic, religious, racial, other
 - Communal violence: vigilantism, mass violence or killings

ECONOMIC DECLINE AND POVERTY

- **Economic Decline**
 - Public finances/Government debt
 - Economic conditions: inflation, high interest rates, unemployment, productivity
 - Economic climate: Consumer and business confidence, support for entrepreneurship and business
 - Economic diversification: overreliance on one industry or product
- **Uneven Economic Development**
 - Economic equality
 - Economic opportunity

- Socio-economic dynamics: ghettos or slums coupled with elite housing
- **Human Flight and Brain Drain**
 - Retention of technical and intellectual capital: loss or gains, strong middle class
 - Remittances, as discussed in a previous [essay](#): level of such funds coming into and leaving the country

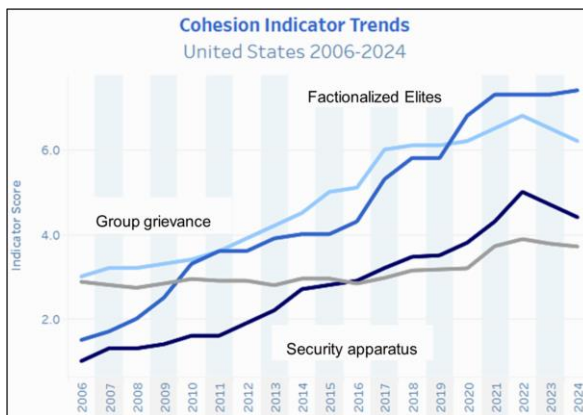
POLITICAL

- **State Legitimacy**
 - Confidence in the political process
 - Political opposition
 - Transparency
 - Openness and fairness of the political process
 - Political violence
- **Public Services**
 - Sufficient and equitable provision of public services
 - Health
 - Education
 - Infrastructure
- **Human Rights and Rule of Law**
 - Civil and political rights
 - Civil and political freedoms: of speech, movement, and religion
 - Violation of rights
 - Openness: including independence of media, equal access to information
 - Justice: fair trials and legal system, arbitrary arrests, illegal detention
 - Equality of power sharing

Let's look at each of these measures for the United States to get an idea of how they are all aggregated to get to the total score and rank. It is data-heavy, so the charts for each measure should help to paint the picture. NB:

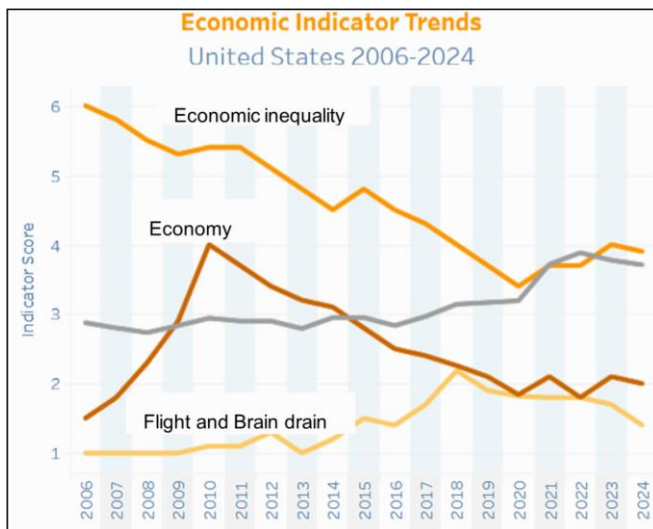
in all following charts, the lines in gray indicate an average of the given indicators.[iii]

Social Cohesion



In the U.S., group grievance has risen dramatically from a low of 3.0 in 2006 to 6.2 in 2024, which is manifested in the appeal of former President Trump’s claims of an “American carnage” for many Americans who feel their social and economic status is threatened. The indicator for factionalized elites measures inequality, which has quadrupled from 1.5 in 2006 to 7.4 today, mainly resulting from the rise of the super-wealthy, often called the 1%, as the majority of people feel their paychecks may purchase less than they did in the past, which is likely untrue given the rise in wages is higher than the rise in inflation. Trust in the police and judiciary has gone from a very positive 1.0 in 2006 to 4.4 today.

Economic



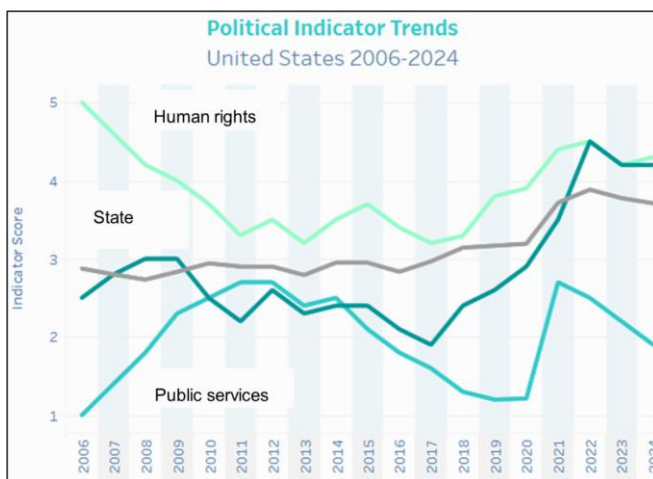
Economic inequality, which in 2006 was at a high of 6.0, is now down to 3.9, which is a significant improvement. This feeds into the Factionalized elites score in the social cohesion data above. CNBC recently reported that the average corporate CEO makes 200 times more than their average employee does.^[iv]

Most Americans perceive the current *economic conditions* to be less favorable than they once were, with inflation slowing but still apparent in the marketplace since the pandemic. Most Americans also do not realize that they benefitted from nearly 40 years of historically low inflation before this point, so economists keep telling them that this is a normal correction. Families seeing higher grocery bills do not tend to care about “normal economic corrections.” In 2006 the index score was a low 1.5 and spiked in 2010 as a result of the mortgage crisis to 4.0 and today has settled back down to half that at 2.0, despite the economic gloom expressed by some.

Human flight and “brain drain” have increased in this period from 1.0 in 2006 to a still modest 1.4 today. Americans are less likely than people from many other countries to move abroad for more economic opportunities, the measure normally followed by the index. But they are likely to move to another part of the country, traditionally from rural to urban areas, for

improved opportunities, which causes “brain drain” in the rural areas. However, since the pandemic, many people who can now work remotely move to rural and suburban areas to take advantage of lower costs of living. This has helped even out the brain drain score since its spike to 2.2 in 2018.

Political

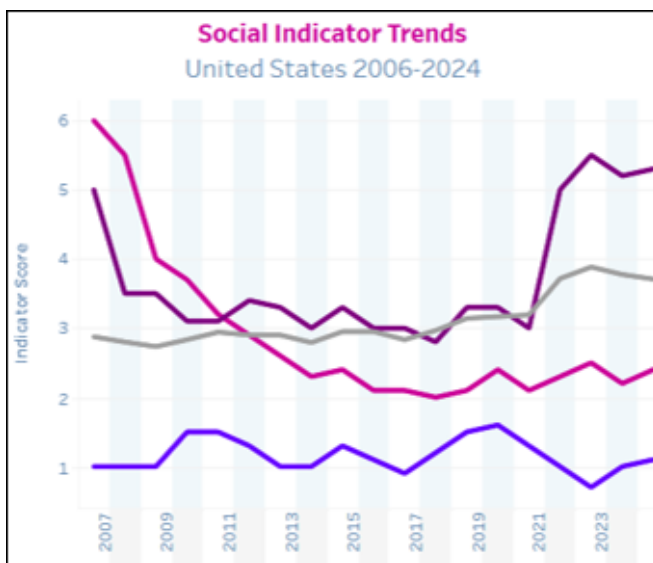


The U.S. human rights score in 2006 was at a high of 5.0, suggesting that Americans had fewer human rights, likely as a result of concerns over security restrictions and privacy intrusions caused by the USAPATRIOT and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Acts permitting legal surveillance of American citizens by the National Security Agency.^[v] Today this measure has improved modestly to 4.3.

In 2006, the index noted that the U.S. score for state legitimacy was 2.5 and is now at 4.2, reflecting a lack of confidence many citizens have in the effectiveness and trustworthiness of government institutions. This was particularly evident at the disarray in the House of Representatives since early 2023 from the Republican majority’s difficulty in selection a Speaker of the House, then deposing the one selected, then slogging through another long election to select a replacement, which brought the nation’s legislative

business to a complete halt at times. Americans were highly satisfied with the level of public services at 1.0 in 2006, but today are less so at 1.9, an improvement from the worst score of 2.7 in 2021, likely related to concerns about the pandemic response.

Social and Cross-Cutting



The refugees and internally displaced people figure for 2006 was high at 6.0. This is likely due to heightened concerns of terrorists and other criminals crossing through the U.S. southern border, resulting in the passage of the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act the same year. Requests for asylum increased exponentially in the intervening period until President Joe Biden changed this process in June 2024 by executive order to ensure asylum requests are made in third-party countries. Immigration at the southern border is a key issue for both parties in the upcoming November 2024 presidential election.

The demographic score in 2006 was also high at 5.0 and has risen to 5.9 today. It dropped until 2021 when it began to spike sharply to a new high of

5.5 in 2022. This is likely due to some communities' dissatisfaction with government response to the pandemic, the rise in both childhood obesity and children going hungry and living in food deserts, as well as lowered confidence in public school education, which has increased with strong disagreements about issues related to LGBTQ+ students.

The external intervention score remains relatively low at 1.0 in 2006 to 1.1 today. Even though there are concerns about China meddling in U.S. affairs and Russia interfering with elections, there has been no overt invasion or easily identifiable intrusions that affect most people's daily lives.

Some indices like the Corruption Perception Index, discussed in a previous essay, measure public perceptions. The Fragile States Index is meant to reflect realities that may not match perceptions, such as widespread belief that the U.S. economy is weak, even though inflation has been lowered, interest rates are higher than they were earlier in the decade but are expected to be lowered in the near term, consumer and business spending is up, and unemployment, while beginning to rise slowly, remains near historic lows.

This essay was data and indicator heavy, but such measures are useful ways of looking at our own and other countries to get annual snapshots and trends over time about what is happening and how governments and citizens react to it. Sometimes perceptions, however valid, can become reality, but it is important to understand the real metrics of whether national policies and their execution are improving or undermining the quality of life for their citizens and their national neighbors.



References

[i] DE Chido, “Images Of Twentieth Century Genocide: Decoding Images and Heeding Warnings,” *Center for Security Studies*, 2006, available [here](#), accessed on September 1, 2024

[ii] “Fragile States Index: Methodology,” *Fund for Peace*, 2024, available [here](#), accessed on September 1, 2024

[iii] “Fragile States Index, 2006-24 Country Data,” *Fund for Peace*, 2024 available [here](#), accessed on September 1, 2024

[iv] “The typical CEO makes nearly 200 times more than their workers.” *CNBC*, June 5, 2024, available [here](#), accessed on September 3, 2024

[v] “Surveillance Under the Patriot Act,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, available [here](#), accessed on September 3, 2024



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Chido is an Erie native who spent her early career in Washington, D.C, returning to found DC Analytics, a research and analysis firm. She has taught Intelligence Studies at Mercyhurst University, Political Science at Gannon University, and Cultural Analysis at the US Army War College and has conducted research for numerous US defense agencies. She holds an MS in Applied Intelligence Analysis, an MA in Russian Language, and a BA in International Relations and Soviet Studies.

[Subscribe to JES Publications
Mailing List!](#)

[Support JES | Donate](#)

In Case You Missed It

[Too Many Erie Infants, Toddlers Lack Child Care: Profound Opportunity Awaits in Solving Enduring Problem](#) written by **Michelle Harkins**

[The Wider World | Venezuela's Meltdown](#) written by President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Life Without Voice: Constitution and Amendments Did Not Change White Minds or Hearts](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Be Well | Magnesium Matters](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Classic Book Notes #111 | 1968/2022: The Seeds of Our Discontents \(Last of 9 Parts\): The Fusion Thread](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[On the Waterfront | What Were They Thinking? St. Lawrence Seaway Was Big News in 1950s](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**

