

Disturbing 2008 Global Peace Index Report

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Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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The Global Peace Index (GPI) was launched in May 2007 and claims to be the first study of its kind ranking nations according to their peacefulness. Last year's report covered 121 countries. The latest increased it to 140. Australian entrepreneur Steve Killelea conceived the idea and won some dubious endorsements. Among them, the Dalai Lama.

He served as a CIA asset from the late 1950s until 1974 and may again be in tow if the Bush administration's awarding him a Congressional Gold Medal last year and closeness to him now is an indication. Other endorsers include Jordan's Queen Noor; another member of her royal family; four members of the British House of Lords; Ted Turner; Virgin Group's Richard Branson; other business and community leaders; Australia's former Prime Minister JM Fraser; other former high-ranking government officials; academics; a former BBC war correspondent and MP; plus six Nobel Laureates, including Jimmy Carter. In fairness, a few distinguished names join them, including Helen Caldicott and economics professor James Galbraith.

These organizations prepare GPI's report - The Economist Intelligence Unit, an international panel of peace experts from peace institutes and think tanks, and the University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Their stated purpose is to "highlight the relationship between Global Peace and Sustainability (stressing that) unless we can achieve" a peaceful world, humanity's major challenges won't be solved. No argument there, but does GPI's statement belie its real interest?

GPI uses 24 indicators to rank nations according to their relative internal and external peacefulness. They include their:

- military expenditures as a percent of GDP and number of armed service personnel per 100,000 population;
- relations with other countries;
- respect for human rights;
- potential for terrorist acts;
- number of homicides per 100,000 population, including infanticide;
- level of violent crime;
- aggregate number of heavy weapons per 100,000 population and ease of access to small arms and light weapons;
- number of jailed population per 100,000 population; and

— number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 population.

Conspicuously absent is a measure of outside influence causing internal violence, instability and/or disruption. Venezuela ranked an implausible 123rd behind America at 97th. Something is amiss, and the above rating raises suspicions that angered Venezuelan National Assemblyman Jose Albornos. He stated:

“Sometimes things tip over into irrationality just like they’re doing just now....(it’s) part of a plan....there are sectors who decide that they want to get rid of Chavez, who have seen that they cannot (do it by) coup d’etat and are trying to penalize the whole country in a campaign of attrition.”

He then added that the 2008 GPI “doesn’t correspond with the truth,” and plenty of evidence backs him. It’s examined below.

By GPI’s criteria, scoring Venezuela high and America lowest should be no-brainers. The US hands down is the world’s most violent nation and primary reason for Iraq, Afghanistan and Israel’s bottom rankings. The same holds for Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, Colombia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uganda, the Philippines and a host of other nations.

By comparison, Venezuela is placid and tranquil but GPI’s criteria don’t show it. It certainly ranks above Rwanda, Albania, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Bangladesh, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Turkmenistan, Ethiopia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, China, Jordan, and other countries outscoring it. Why not is the question? Think politics for an answer in spite of America’s low ranking and Israel near the bottom. It’s not low enough. It should be last hands down.

The US alone endangers global stability, world peace and the planet’s survival. It alone wages permanent war, targets peaceful nations, and claims a unilateral right to use first strike nuclear weapons preemptively. It also has over 800 military bases (perhaps 1000 or more with secret ones) in 130 or more countries, hundreds more at home, and still more troops deployed in other countries throughout the world. It further spends more on its military than all other nations combined. It uses it aggressively, supports Israeli repression against Palestinians, assassinates foreign leaders, installs more “friendly” ones, and backs despots like Colombia’s Uribe, Egypt’s Mubarak, the Saudi royal family, Mexico’s Calderon, and various installed stooges like Afghanistan’s Karzai and Iraq’s al-Maliki.

America ranks lowest on peace. It keeps sinking lower. It alone threatens planetary survival. Failure to register that in a “peace index” is unimaginable. It makes the entire project suspect.

Under Chavez in contrast, Venezuela’s record is envious. It embraces its neighbors, offers no-strings aid, and engages in mutually beneficial trade, political relations, and other alliances; it also:

— assassinates no other leaders;

— doesn’t seek regime changes abroad;

— has no nuclear weapons and seeks none; and

— spends less than one-half of one percent of the Pentagon’s (grossly understated) military

budget (around \$1 to \$2 billion) and less half of that, in fact, of America's total defense spending – in FY 2008: a conservatively estimated \$1.1 trillion with all military, homeland security, veterans, NASA, debt service and miscellaneous related allocations included; according to Chalmers Johnson, it's not only "morally obscene," it's "fiscally unsustainable" and is heading the nation for probable "insolvency and (the world for) a long depression," or potentially worse.

— In addition, Venezuela doesn't export weapons to neighbors or incite conflict; in contrast, America is the world's leading arms and munitions supplier by far – and to many belligerent states with disturbing records of using them internally and/or against neighbors; Colombia, Mexico, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Israel to cite five;

— Chavez is socially responsible at home;

— doesn't practice torture;

— has no secret prisons;

— threatens no other nation;

— wages no wars;

— is a model democracy;

— governs peacefully;

— supports human rights and social justice;

— affirms free speech;

— bans discrimination; and

— uses his resources responsibly – for his people, yet is friendly to business as well. He's earned world class stature and immense popularity at home as a result. Under George Bush in contrast, America is feared and hated worldwide. Growing numbers don't trust him at home either, and it shows in his poll ratings – some of the lowest ever for a US president with vice-president Cheney and Congress scraping rock bottom.

A stunning (but long known) fact came out as well. It's in a US Justice Department Inspector General's 370 page report. It revealed that the FBI opened a "War Crimes" file documenting witnessed systemic Guantanamo Bay torture. It's so inflammatory that the administration suppressed it. It asserts that orders came from the top, including the White House, Pentagon, DOJ and NSC. It implies but doesn't state that this practice goes on in all US military prisons plus ones outsourced to in rogue states for some of the most barbaric treatment anywhere – and mostly to innocent victims.

Some GPI-Reported Comparisons – America v. Venezuela

Prisons everywhere are harsh, and Venezuela's are no exception. But consider America. It has the largest prison population in the world by far at 2.3 million, greater than in China with four times the population. It also adds over a 1000 new prisoners a week. It's justifiably called a gulag, so imagine what goes on offshore. No remediating efforts are planned.

Reforms are off the table. America's prison-industrial complex is burgeoning. Prisons are being privatized. Profiting on human beings is big business, and consider who they are. Most are black, hispanic, poor, unempowered, nonviolent, and imprisoned for offenses like drugs possession.

In contrast, Venezuela is humanizing its prisons. It's no simple task, and no miracle cures are expected. Nonetheless, positive steps are being taken for a prison population numbering 20,000 that's down from its 1992 31,400 high. The National Assembly is "committed to giv(ing) priority to (revising) the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code." It's to make it more just and improve prison conditions in health care, food, access to education and more. Reducing incarceration lengths is also planned as well as tackling root causes of crime such as poverty and lack of opportunity. Doing this in America is impossible. Things keep worsening. The nation is uncaring. It shows across the board. That highlights the problem, but GPI didn't notice.

Number of homicides per 100,000 population is another category. GPI ranks America low (in number) and Venezuela high. It's unjustified. From it's beginning, America has been violent at home and abroad. It's been at war with one or more adversaries every year in its history without exception. It's called a "gun" and "rape culture" and has the highest homicide rate among all western nations. Violence is endemic, pacifism sinful, legal and illegal drug use out of control, young children introduced to violence through films, television and video games that should be outlawed. They're exported everywhere to make all societies like America. Venezuela is no exception but nowhere near to matching the US.

Implausibly, America also scores well on the following:

- its number of internal security officers and police; it refers to "civil police" only; omitted are National Guard forces, Coast Guard, Homeland Security, FBI, CIA, 16 spy agencies, drug enforcement, and since October 2002 the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) that preempts Posse Comitatus limitations that no longer apply; no nation on earth has more internal (or external) security, spends more for it, and no country uses it more aggressively;

- ease of access to "weapons of minor destruction;" Venezuela ranks below America; impossible as guns in the US are as accessible as chewing gum even in cities where they're banned; the Second Amendment (on right to bear arms) practically equates it with religion even though the law's original intent bears no relation to its current interpretation that's promoted by the gun lobby;

- "likelihood of violent demonstrations;" Venezuela scores high; unconsidered is why any take place and who's behind them - America, not Venezuelans except for those recruited and well-paid to cause trouble to destabilize an otherwise peaceful country;

- violent crime; Venezuela scores high again and America low; wrong as violence in the US is endemic; GPI understates it;

- political instability; Venezuela scores moderately high; again no mention why there's any or who instigates it;

- human rights; America and Venezuela get equal scores; preposterous again and insulting to Venezuelans; America's disdain for human rights is unmatched; Venezuela's is excellent by comparison; the Constitution mandates it; GPI ignores it;

- political democracy; America outranking Venezuela is impossible; the US's democracy is illusory; in Venezuela it's real and should be highest rated relative to other countries;
- the electoral process; America besting Venezuela is false and insulting; Venezuela has a model participatory democracy; all Venezuelans are enfranchised; the Constitution's Article 56 mandates it; it affirms that "All persons have the right to be registered free of charge....after birth, and to obtain public documents" so stating;
- US elections, in contrast, are deeply corrupted; big money runs them; candidates are pre-selected; machines do our voting; no recounts are possible; losers are declared winners; independent candidates are shut out; the media ignore them; they keep people uninformed; issues aren't addressed; just "horserace" theater ad nauseam; voter disenfranchisement is rife; election theft common; mountains of evidence document it; none reported in the mainstream; it's why half or more of the electorate opts out; it mocks democracy in a nation having little; it's exemplary in Venezuela; not according to GPI;
- "functioning of government" defined to mean freely electing representatives and effective checks and balances; the US wins again completely belying the facts; America's democratic governance is a sham; Venezuela's is real; GPI has things backwards;
- civil liberties; America on top here, too; it's outrageous in a growing police state climate; post-9/11 repressive laws, executive and military orders, directives and other measures are in force that would make any despot proud; presidential authority is unchallenged; Congress is mere rubber-stamp; Homeland Security is a national Gestapo; FBI and CIA also; internal spying is pervasive; dissent stifled; human rights disdained; and the rule of law is now consigned to the dustbin of history; Venezuelan society is mirror opposite; GPI failed to notice;
- "corruption perceptions;" America scores high and Venezuela low, and indeed there is a problem; yet it's minor compared to the US's all-pervasive kind – in government, business and throughout high levels in society; it involves trillions of dollars; again it didn't register;
- Reporters Without Borders (RWB) is the source for GPI's comparative "freedom of the press" assessment; RWB no longer publishes an index with assigned country rankings; instead it rates them: No. 1 good, No. 2 satisfactory, No. 3 noticeable problems, No. 4 difficult situation, and No. 5 very noticeable problems;
- RSW's reputation is tainted; it lacks credibility; it disgraced itself last year by baselessly criticizing Chavez's justifiable decision not to renew RCTV's VHF license and accusing him of violating free speech and press standards; not surprisingly, it showed in its 2007 survey with rankings still used; it rated America somewhat low at 48th but Venezuela far lower at 114th – below Chad, Morocco, Uganda, Indonesia, Albania, Congo, Liberia, Kuwait, the Central African Republic and numerous other questionable higher-ranked choices; in 2008, Venezuela jumped considerably; GPI scored it 36.9 (an apparent 37th in the world); the US fared much better at 14.5; tops were Iceland and Norway at 0.8;
- GPI and RSW should be embarrassed; consider the facts; no country outranks Venezuela in press freedom; outlandish dissent is tolerated; censorship banned, and the law affirms it; RCTV lost its VHF license for backing insurrection against the government; its officials avoided prison for their lawlessness; they were merely slapped on the wrist instead;

— America is mirror opposite; RCTV type broadcasting would be illegal, an act of sedition or treason; those responsible would be prosecuted; but it's not how major media operate in the US; they "filter" news; one-sidedly support a state and corporate agenda; shut out opposition to it; keep the electorate uninformed by operating no differently than a state-controlled ministry of information and propaganda; RSW approves; so does GPI;

Its data is suspect throughout. Adult literacy (unrelated to violence) is another example. It scores America at 99%. It's laughable. Even the US Department of Education estimates it at 80% tops, and their number way overstates it. It's far lower based on inner-city math and English test scores plus painfully low computer literacy levels.

Other Questionable Rankings

GPI isn't alone in targeting Venezuela. Transparency International (TI) does as well. It calls itself "politically non-partisan" and a "global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption (with a) mission....to create change toward a world free of corruption." Consider its 2007 "Corruption Perceptions Index." To achieve its aim, it better tighten its standards that fall far short of "transparency."

America easily outscores other nations in corruption. It's broad, deep and extends throughout government, business, and high levels of society in the trillions of dollars. But it's not how TI sees it. It ranks the US No. 20, just behind France and ahead of Chile. In contrast, Venezuela scrapes bottom at 162nd – behind Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kazakhstan, Congo, Pakistan and dozens of other dubious choices. Venezuela (like all countries) has corruption problems. But nowhere to the degree TI suggests. Its April 2008 report is rife with errors and why not. According to Calvin Tucker in a May 22 article, it was prepared by "an anti-Chavez activist who backed the 2002 military coup against democracy." His full account can be accessed by the following link: http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/calvin_tucker/2008/05/seeing_through_transparency_in.html

The Fraser Institute is a right wing, business-backed, Canadian-based think tank. It prepares an annual Economic Freedom of the World Index that has nothing to do with freedom. It's not kind to Venezuela and sidesteps facts in its assessment. Following the country's 2002-03 oil management lockout, growth has been impressive and remains so. Business has profited hugely. All economic measures are strong and improving except for inflation. It remains stubbornly high, but efforts are being made to curb it.

Nonetheless, Fraser reports with blinders. It ranked Venezuela practically at the bottom – 126th out of 130 nations, only besting Congo, Zimbabwe and two other countries. It's the sixth consecutive bottom-scraping rating and mirror opposite those for pre-Chavez years. Since then, Venezuela prospered. Chavez is friendly to business. Fraser turns a blind eye. It's part of a corporate-led conspiracy to crush democracy and reempower capital. It raises questions on whether GPI, RWB, TI, Fraser and others are part of a larger scheme.

Iran is America's top target. Venezuela is next. Both countries are nominated for regime change. Continued efforts work toward it. It's no secret why. Each is oil rich, their leaders independent, and they refuse to be US clients. For Washington, that's sinful and unforgivable. The media are on board. They relentlessly bash both countries and report fiction as fact. Destabilization efforts continue. Anything may erupt anytime. GPI and the others may be helping.

Their low Venezuelan rankings are suspect. Washington may be behind them. Corporate backers as well. They get what they pay for. In this case, vilifying Chavez. GPI's facts are bogus. So are RWB's, TI's and Fraser's. It discredits their Venezuela v. America's rankings. Their entire reports as well. View them with caution. Understand what's likely going on. Part of a greater scheme to destabilize Venezuela and end its model democracy. Exposing them is the best way to prevent it.

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