

Indicators of Instability

The Failed States Index, published annually by joint effort between Foreign Policy magazine and the United States think-tank Fund for Peace considers these twelve indicators of state vulnerability – four social, two economic and six political.

The indicators are not designed to forecast when states may experience violence or collapse. Instead, they are meant to measure a state's vulnerability to collapse or conflict.

Security apparatus as “state within a state”

↳ An emergence of elite guards or officials who operate with impunity. Emergence of state-sponsored or state-supported private militias that terrorize political opponents, suspected "enemies," or civilians seen to be sympathetic to the opposition. An "army within an army" that serves the interests of the dominant military or political clique. Emergence of rival militias, guerilla forces or private armies in an armed struggle or protracted violent campaigns against state security forces

Questions to consider may include*:

Monopoly on the Use of Force

- Is the military under civilian control?
- Do private militias exist against the state?
- Is there paramilitary activity?
- Do private armies exist to protect assets?
- Are there guerilla forces operating in the state? Do they control territory?

Relationship Between Security and Citizenry

- Are the police considered to be professional?
- Is violence often state-sponsored and politically motivated?
- Is the government dealing well with any insurgency or security situation?

Force

- Does the military and police maintain proper use of force?
- Are there accusations of police brutality?

Arms

- Is there a high availability of weapons?
- If in reconstruction, is there an adequate plan for demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of former combatants?

Rise of factionalized elites

↳ a fragmentation of ruling elites and state institutions along group lines. Use of aggressive nationalistic rhetoric by ruling elites, especially destructive forms of communal irredentism (annexation of territory on grounds of common ethnicity or prior historical possession) or communal solidarity

Questions to consider may include*:

Representative Leadership

- Is leadership fairly elected? Is leadership representative of the population?
- Are there factionalized elites, tribal elites and/or fringe groups? How powerful are they?
- Is there a political reconciliation process?
- Is the military representative of the population?

Identity

- Is there a sense of national identity? Are there strong feelings of nationalism? Or are there calls for separatism?
- Does hate speech via radio and media exist?
- Is religious, ethnic, or other stereotyping prevalent and is there scape-goating?
- Does cross-cultural respect exist?

Resource Distribution

- Is wealth concentrated in hands of a few?
- Is there a burgeoning middle class?
- Does any one group control the majority of resources?
- Are resources fairly distributed? Does the government adequately distribute wealth through taxes?

Equality and Equity

- Are the laws democratic or reasonable?
- Is the system representative of the population?

Legacy of vengeance-seeking group grievance

↳ Based on recent or past injustices, which could date back centuries. Including atrocities committed with impunity against communal groups and/or specific groups singled out by state authorities, or by dominant groups, for persecution or repression. Institutionalized political exclusion. Public scapegoating of groups believed to have acquired wealth, status or power as evidenced in the emergence of "hate" radio, pamphleteering and stereotypical or nationalistic political rhetoric

Questions to consider may include*:

Post-Conflict Response

- Does a Truth & Reconciliation process exist or is one needed?
- Have groups been reintegrated?
- Is there a plan for reconstruction and development?
- Are victims of past atrocities compensated (or is there a plan to)?
- Are war criminals apprehended and prosecuted?
- Has amnesty been granted?

Equality

- Is there an equitable and efficient distribution of resources?

Divisions

- Are there feelings/reports of ethnic and/or religious intolerance and/or violence?
- Are groups oppressed or do they feel oppressed?
- Is there history of violence against a group or group grievance?
- How are intertribal and/or interethnic relations?
- Is there freedom of religion according to laws and practiced by society? Are there reports of religiously motivated violence?

Communal Violence

- Is vigilante justice reported?
- Are there reports of mass violence and/or killings?

Chronic and sustained human flight

- ↳ both the "brain drain" of professionals, intellectuals and political dissidents and voluntary emigration of "the middle class."
Growth of exile/expatriate communities are also used as part of this indicator

Questions to consider may include*:

Retention of Technical and Intellectual Capital

- Are professionals leaving the country?
- Are politicians or political elites leaving the country?
- Is there a relatively high proportion of higher educated people leaving the country?
- Is the middle class beginning to return to the country?

Economics

- Are there a large amount of remittances coming to families from relatives overseas?

Diaspora

- Is there growth of a country's exiled communities or diasporas abroad?
- Does the diaspora have an impact on the home state economy, or on politics in the home state?

Social and Cross-Cutting Indicators

Demographic pressure

↳ Including the pressures deriving from high population density relative to food supply and other life-sustaining resources. The pressure from a population's settlement patterns and physical settings, including border disputes, ownership or occupancy of land, access to transportation outlets, control of religious or historical sites, and proximity to environmental hazards

Questions to consider may include:*

Population

- Is the population growth rate sustainable? Is the current and projected distribution reasonable?
- Is population density putting pressure on areas of the state?
- What is the infant mortality rate – actual and projected?
- Is there a high orphan population?

Public Health

- Is there a system for controlling spreading of diseases, pandemics?
- Is there a high likelihood or existence of diseases of epidemics?

Food and Nutrition

- Is the food supply adequate to deal with potential interruption?
- Is there are likelihood of droughts?

- Is there a short-term food shortage or longer-term starvation?
- Are there long-term food shortages affecting health?

Environment

- Do sound environmental policies exist and are current practices sustainable?
- Is natural disaster likely, recurring?
- If a natural disaster occurs, is there an adequate response plan?
- Has deforestation taken place or are there laws to protect forests?

Resources

- Does resource competition exist?
- Does land competition exist and are there laws to arbitrate disputes?
- Is there access to an adequate potable water supply?

Social and Cross-Cutting Indicators

Massive movement of refugees and internally-displaced persons

↳ Forced uprooting of large communities as a result of random or targeted violence and/or repression, causing food shortages, disease, lack of clean water, land competition, lack of public housing, and turmoil that can spiral into larger humanitarian and security problems, both within and between countries

Questions to consider may include*:

Refugees

- Are refugees likely to come from neighboring countries?
- Are there resources to provide for projected and actual refugees?
- Are there sufficient refugee camps or are refugees integrated into communities?
- Are there reports of violence against refugees?
- Are conditions safe in refugee camps?

Internally Displaced Persons

- How many IDPs are there in relation to population?
- Are IDPs likely to increase in the near future?
- Are there resources to provide for projected and actual IDPs?

Response to Displacement

- Is there access to additional resources from international community for refugees and/or IDPs?
- Are there plans for relocation and settlement of current IDPs and/or refugees?

Social and Cross-Cutting Indicators

External intervention

↳ military or paramilitary (same as military, but not part of a state; ie. militias, insurgents) engagement in the internal affairs of the state at risk by outside armies, states, identity groups or entities that affect the internal balance of power or resolution of the conflict. Intervention by donors, especially if there is a tendency towards over-dependence on foreign aid or peacekeeping missions

Questions to consider may include*:

Political Intervention

- Is there external support for factions opposed to the government?

Force Intervention

- Are foreign troops present?
- Are military attacks from other countries occurring?
- Is there external military assistance?
- Are there military training exercises with other nations or support of military training from other states?
- Is there a peacekeeping operation on the ground?
- Is there external support for police training?
- Are covert operations taking place?

Economic Intervention

- Is the country receiving economic intervention or aid?
- Is the country dependent on economic aid?

Sharp and/or severe economic decline

↳ measured by a progressive economic decline of the society as a whole (using: per capita income, GNP, debt, child mortality rates, poverty levels, business failures.) A sudden drop in commodity prices, trade revenue, foreign investment or debt payments.

Collapse or devaluation of the national currency and a growth of hidden economies, including the drug trade, smuggling, and capital flight. Failure of the state to pay salaries of government employees and armed forces or to meet other financial obligations to its citizens, such as pension payments

Questions to consider may include*:

Public Finances

- What level is the government debt?

Economic Conditions

- How are the interest rates – actual and projected?
- How is the inflation rate – actual and projected?
- What is the level of productivity?
- What is the GDP – actual and projected?
- How is the unemployment – current and rate of unemployment?

Economic Climate

- Consumer Confidence: How do people view the economy?
- How do experts view the economy?
- Is the business climate attractive to Foreign Direct Investment?
- Do the laws and access to capital allow for internal entrepreneurship?

Economic Diversification

- Economic Focus: Does one product make up the majority of the economy?

Uneven economic development along group lines

- ↳ determined by group-based inequality, or perceived inequality, in education, jobs, and economic status. Also measured by group-based poverty levels, infant mortality rates, education levels

Questions to consider may include*:

Economic Equality

- Economic Equality: Is there a large economic gap?
- Is the economic system discriminatory?
- Does economic justice exist?
- Are hiring practices generally fair – legally and perceived?
- Do equal rights exist in the society?
- Are there laws protecting equal rights?

Economic Opportunity

- Does free education exist and if so, to which grade?
- Is the education provided relatively equal?
- Fair Housing: Is there a housing system for the poor?
- Do programs for job training exist?
- Do people know about the job training and is it available based on qualification and need?

Socio-Economic Dynamics

- Do ghettos and slums exist?

Political Indicators

State legitimacy.

Criminalization and/or de-legitimization of the state

↳ endemic corruption or profiteering by ruling elites and resistance to transparency, accountability and political representation. Includes any widespread loss of popular confidence in state institutions and processes

Questions to consider may include*:

Confidence in the Political Process

- Does the government have the confidence of the people?

Political Opposition

- Have demonstrations occurred?
- Have riots or uprisings occurred?

Transparency

- Is there evidence of corruption on the part of government officials?
- Are national and/or local officials considered to be corrupt?

Openness and Fairness of the

Political Process

- Do all parties enjoy political rights?
- Is the government representative of the population?
- Have there been recent peaceful transitions of power?
- What is the longer term history of power transitions?
- Are elections perceived free and fair?
- Have elections been monitored and reported as free and fair?

Political Violence

- Are there reports of politically motivated attacks, assassinations?
- Are there reports of armed insurgents and attacks?
- Have there been terrorist attacks and how likely are they?

Progressive deterioration of public services

↳ a disappearance of basic state functions that serve the people, including failure to protect citizens from terrorism and violence and to provide essential services, such as health, education, sanitation, public transportation. Also using the state apparatus for agencies that serve the ruling elites, such as the security forces, presidential staff, central bank, diplomatic service, customs and collection agencies

Questions to consider may include*:

General Provision of Public Services

- Is there equal access to public services?
- What are the general conditions of public services?

Health

- Is there adequate access to medicines?
- Are there an adequate number of medical facilities for all people?
- Are there an adequate number of medical professionals for the population?
- What is the infant mortality rate – actual and projected?
- Is there access to an adequate potable water supply?
- Is sanitation system adequate?

Education

- What is the level of school enrollment? Is it different by gender?
- What are the literacy rates? Is it different by gender?

Shelter

- Do the poor have access to housing?
- Are housing costs in line with economy?

Infrastructure

- Are roads adequate and safe?
- Are there adequate airports for sustainable development?
- Are there adequate railroads for sustainable development?
- Is there an adequate supply of fuel?

Widespread violation of human rights

↳ an emergence of authoritarian, dictatorial or military rule in which constitutional and democratic institutions and processes are suspended or manipulated. Outbreaks of politically inspired (as opposed to criminal) violence against innocent civilians. A rising number of political prisoners or dissidents who are denied due process consistent with international norms and practices. Any widespread abuse of legal, political and social rights, including those of individuals, groups or cultural institutions (e.g., harassment of the press, politicization of the judiciary, internal use of military for political ends, public repression of political opponents, religious or cultural persecution.)

Questions to consider may include:*

Civil and Political Rights and Freedoms

- Do communal, labor, political, and/or minority rights exist and are they protected?
- Are there civil rights laws and are civil rights protected?
- Is the right to life protected for all?
- Is freedom of speech protected?
- Is there freedom of movement?
- Does religious freedom exist?

Violation of Rights

- Is there a history of systemic violation of rights by the government or others?
- Are there reports of state- or group-sponsored torture?
- Are there labor laws or reports of forced labor or child labor?
- Are groups forced to relocate? Is there proper compensation?

Openness

- Does independent media exist?
- Do reporters feel free to publish accusations against those in power?
- Is there equal access to information?

Justice

- If rights aren't protected, is there a legal system in which they can be addressed?
- Do accused receive a fair and timely trial? Is this equal for all?
- Are there accusations or reports of arbitrary arrests? Are these state-sponsored?
- Are there accusations or reports of illegal detention?
- How are the prison conditions?

Equality

- Is there a process and system that encourages political power sharing?

United States rank (of 179 countries)

	TOTAL SCORE	SECURITY APPARATUS	FACTIONALIZED ELITES	GROUP GRIEVANCES	ECONOMY	ECONOMIC EQUALITY	HUMAN FLOIGHT BRAIN DRAIN	STATE LEGITIMACY	PUBLIC SERVICES	HUMAN RIGHTS	DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES	REFUGEES	EXTERNAL INTERVENTION
2024 –													
2023 – ranked 141 st	45.3	4.7	7.3	6.5	2.1	4.0	1.7	4.2	2.2	4.2	5.2	2.2	1.0
2022 – ranked 140 th	46.6	5.0	7.3	6.8	1.8	3.7	1.8	4.5	2.5	4.5	5.5	2.5	0.7
2021 – ranked 144 th	46.6	4.3	7.3	6.5	2.1	3.7	1.8	3.5	2.7	4.4	5.0	2.3	1.0
2020 – ranked 149 th	38.3	3.8	6.8	6.2	1.8	3.4	1.8	2.9	1.2	3.9	3.0	2.1	1.3
2019 – ranked 153 rd	38.0	3.5	5.8	6.1	2.1	3.7	1.9	2.6	1.2	3.8	3.3	2.4	1.6
2018 – ranked 154 th	37.7	3.5	5.8	6.1	2.3	4.0	2.2	2.4	1.3	3.3	3.3	2.1	1.5
2017 – ranked 158 th	35.6	3.2	5.3	6.0	2.4	4.3	1.7	1.9	1.6	3.2	2.8	2.0	1.2
2016 – ranked 159 th	34.0	2.9	4.3	5.1	2.5	4.5	1.4	2.1	1.8	3.4	3.0	2.1	0.9
2015 – ranked 159 th	35.4	2.8	4.0	5.0	2.8	4.8	1.5	2.4	2.1	3.7	3.0	2.1	1.1
2014 – ranked 159 th	35.4	2.7	4.0	4.5	3.1	4.5	1.2	2.4	2.5	3.5	3.3	2.4	1.3
2013 – ranked 159 th	33.5	2.2	3.9	4.2	3.2	4.8	1.0	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.0	2.3	1.0
2012 – ranked 159 th	34.8	1.9	3.6	3.9	3.4	5.1	1.3	2.6	2.7	3.5	3.3	2.6	1.0
2011 – ranked 158 th	34.8	1.6	3.6	3.6	3.7	5.4	1.1	2.2	2.7	3.3	3.4	2.9	1.3
2010 – ranked 158 th	35.3	1.6	3.3	3.4	4.0	5.4	1.1	2.5	2.5	3.7	3.1	3.2	1.5
2009 – ranked 159 th	34.0	1.4	2.5	3.3	2.9	5.3	1.0	3.0	2.3	4.0	3.1	3.7	1.5
2008 – ranked 161 st	32.8	1.3	2.0	3.2	2.3	5.5	1.0	3.0	1.8	4.2	3.5	4.0	1.0
2007 – ranked 159 th	33.6	1.3	1.7	3.2	1.8	5.8	1.0	2.8	1.4	4.6	3.5	5.5	1.0

2023 Rankings (chart 1 of 2)

VERY SUSTAINABLE		MORE STABLE		WARNING	
14.5	Norway (179)	40.2	Czechia (151)	60.1	Cabo Verde (114)
15.7	Iceland (178)	40.4	Costa Rica (150)	60.3	North Macedonia (112)
16.0	Finland (177)	40.5	Qatar (149)	60.3	Namibia (112)
16.7	New Zealand (176)	41.9	United Kingdom (148)	60.6	Kazakhstan (111)
17.8	Switzerland (175)	42.2	Chile (147)	60.8	Dominican Republic (110)
17.9	Denmark (174)	42.6	Italy (146)	61.6	Guyana (109)
18.9	Canada (173)	43.3	Latvia (145)	61.9	Jamaica (108)
19.5	Ireland (171)	43.5	Spain (144)	62.3	Ghana (107)
19.5	Luxembourg (171)	44.1	Israel (143)	62.9	Maldives (106)
SUSTAINABLE		45.2	Poland (142)	63.7	Paraguay (105)
20.6	Sweden (170)	45.3	United States (141)	64.5	Turkmenistan (104)
21.0	Netherlands (169)	45.4	Barbados (140)	65.1	Bahrain (101)
22.0	Australia (168)	46.4	Argentina (139)	65.1	China (101)
24.4	Austria (167)	48.7	Croatia (136)	65.1	Samoa (101)
24.6	Germany (166)	48.7	Oman (136)	65.3	Saudi Arabia (100)
25.5	Singapore (165)	48.7	Panama (136)	65.5	Gabon (99)
25.7	Portugal (164)	48.8	Hungary (135)	65.6	Indonesia (98)
27.3	Slovenia (163)	49.2	Bahamas (134)	66.4	Tunisia (96)
28.8	France (162)	STABLE		66.4	Bhutan (96)
VERY STABLE		51.2	Kuwait (133)	66.8	Uzbekistan (95)
30.5	Japan (161)	51.3	Mongolia (132)	67.4	Moldova (94)
31.4	Belgium (160)	51.8	Bulgaria (131)	67.5	Armenia (93)
31.5	South Korea (159)	52.9	Trinidad and Tobago (130)	67.9	Serbia (92)
33.0	Malta (158)	53	Romania (129)	68.0	Thailand (91)
34.4	Uruguay (157)	53.3	Seychelles (128)	68.2	Morocco (90)
37.0	United Arab Emirates (156)	53.7	Grenada (127)	69.3	El Salvador (88)
37.8	Slovakia (155)	53.8	Antigua and Barbuda (126)	69.3	Micronesia (88)
38.0	Mauritius (154)	54.7	Brunei Darussalam (125)	69.4	Ecuador (87)
38.6	Estonia (153)	55.0	Malaysia (124)	69.7	Sao Tome and Principe (86)
39.4	Lithuania (152)	55.1	Greece (123)	69.8	Mexico (85)
		55.3	Botswana (122)	69.9	Belarus (84)
		56.8	Albania (121)	70.0	Algeria (83)
		57.0	Cyprus (120)		
		58.0	Montenegro (119)		
		58.3	Vietnam (118)		
		59.5	Cuba (117)		
		59.7	Suriname (116)		
		59.8	Belize (115)		

2023 Rankings

(chart 2 of 2)

ELEVATED WARNING

70.2 Fiji (82)
70.7 Bolivia (81)
71.5 Senegal (80)
71.9 Georgia (79)
72.0 South Africa (78)
72.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina (77)
72.7 Azerbaijan (76)
73.1 Peru (75)
73.3 Benin (74)
74.1 India (73)
74.2 Tajikistan (72)
74.5 Brazil (71)
74.7 Laos (70)
75.6 Kyrgyzstan (69)
75.7 Jordan (68)
76.1 Gambia (67)
76.3 Lesotho (66)
76.6 Tanzania (65)
77.3 Guatemala (64)
77.5 Timor-Leste (63)
77.7 Nicaragua (62)
77.8 Philippines (61)
78.1 Colombia (59)
78.1 Papua New Guinea (59)
79.1 Eswatini (58)
79.6 Honduras (56)
79.6 Solomon Islands (56)

HIGH WARNING

80.2 Nepal (55)
80.3 Cambodia (54)
80.7 Russia (53)
81.2 Türkiye (52)
81.4 Sierra Leone (51)
81.6 Egypt (50)
81.7 Madagascar (49)
81.8 Zambia (48)
82.1 Togo (47)
82.2 Djibouti (45)
82.2 Comoros (45)
82.3 Rwanda (44)
83.2 Malawi (43)
84.4 Equatorial Guinea (42)
85.2 Bangladesh (41)
85.4 Iran (40)
86.9 Angola (39)
87.0 Mauritania (37)
87.0 North Korea (37)
87.1 Côte d'Ivoire (36)
87.8 Kenya (35)
87.9 Palestine (34)
88.9 Liberia (33)
89.9 Pakistan (31)
89.9 Guinea Bissau (31)

ALERT

90.3 Sri Lanka (30)
90.5 Venezuela (29)
90.7 Congo Republic (28)
91.4 Iraq (27)
91.5 Uganda (26)
91.8 Lebanon (25)
93.4 Niger (24)
94.0 Cameroon (21)
94.0 Mozambique (21)
94.0 Burkina Faso (21)
94.2 Burundi (20)
94.5 Eritrea (19)
95.9 Ukraine (18)
96.1 Libya (17)
96.9 Zimbabwe (16)
98.0 Nigeria (15)
98.5 Guinea (14)
99.5 Mali (13)

HIGH ALERT













100.2 Myanmar (12)
100.4 Ethiopia (11)
102.9 Haiti (10)
104.6 Chad (9)
105.7 Central African Republic (8)
106.2 Sudan (7)
106.6 Afghanistan (6)
107.1 Syria (5)
107.2 Congo Democratic Republic (4)
108.5 South Sudan (3)
108.9 Yemen (2)

VERY HIGH ALERT













111.9 Somalia (1)

2023 Rankings

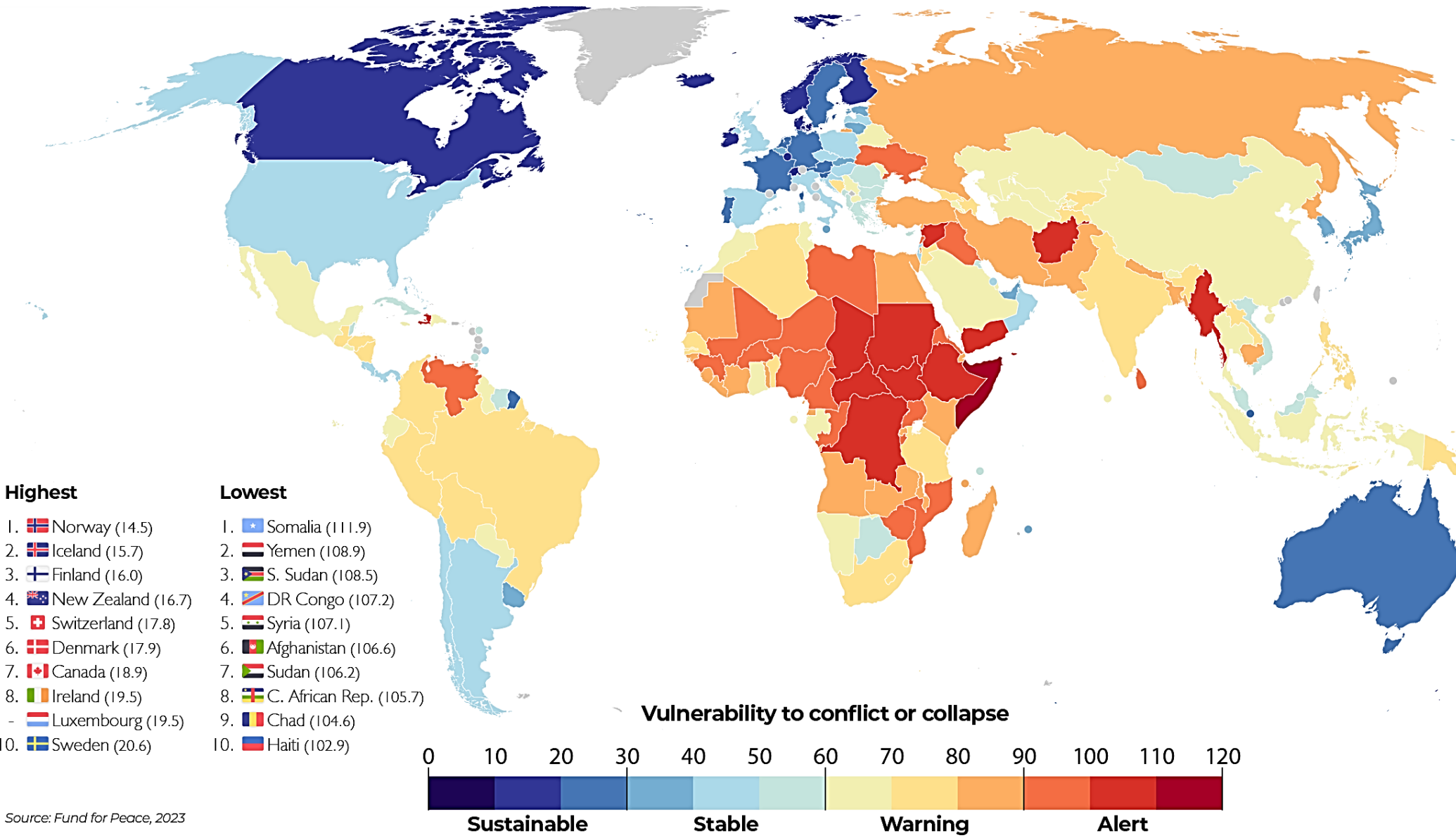
12 MOST WORSENEDED COUNTRIES 2023

+27.3		Ukraine	+3.1		Türkiye
+11.0		Sri Lanka	+3.0		Poland
+8.1		Russia	+2.9		Moldova
+3.5		Burkina Faso	+2.3		Palestine
+3.3		Peru	+2.2		Romania
+3.2		Haiti	+1.8		Libya

12 MOST IMPROVED COUNTRIES 2023

-2.8		Yemen	-2.6		Vietnam
-2.8		Uzbekistan	-2.5		Côte d'Ivoire
-2.7		Bolivia	-2.5		Gambia
-2.7		Philippines	-2.4		Iraq
-2.6		Guyana	-2.4		Central African Republic
-2.6		Namibia	-2.3		North Macedonia

2023 Rankings



Source: Fund for Peace, 2023