

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lawrence-wittner/the-united-states-is-no-1_b_5974516.html?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000592

The United States Is Number 1 -- But in What?

10/13/2014

American politicians are fond of telling their audiences that the United States is the greatest country in the world. Is there any evidence for this claim?

Well, yes. When it comes to violence and preparations for violence, the United States is, indeed, No. 1. In 2013, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the U.S. government accounted for 37 percent of world military expenditures, putting it far ahead of all other nations. (The two closest competitors, China and Russia, accounted for 11 percent and 5 percent respectively.) From 2004 to 2013, the United States was also the No. 1 weapons exporter in the world. Moreover, given the U.S. government's almost unbroken series of wars and acts of military intervention since 1941, it also seems likely that it surpasses all rivals when it comes to international violence.

This record is paralleled on the domestic front, where the United States has more guns and gun deaths than any other country. A study released in late 2013 reported that the United States had 88 guns for every 100 people, and 40 gun-related deaths for every 400,000 people—more than any of the 27 economically developed countries studied. By contrast, in Britain there were 6 guns per 100 people and 1 gun-related death per 400,000 people.

Yet, in a great many other areas, the United States is not No. 1 at all.

Take education. In late 2013, the Program for International Student Assessment released a ranking of how 15-year old students from 65 nations performed on its tests. It showed that U.S. students ranked 17th in reading and 21st in math. An international survey a bit earlier that year by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that the ranking was roughly the same among American adults. In 2014, Pearson, a multinational educational company, placed the United States 20th in the world in "educational attainment" — well behind Poland and Slovakia.

American health care and health fare even worse. In a 2014 study of health care (including infant mortality, healthy life expectancy, and mortality from preventable conditions) in 11 advanced industrial countries, the Commonwealth Fund concluded that the United States ranked last among them. According to the World Health Organization, the U.S. health care system ranks 37th in the world. Other studies reach somewhat different conclusions, but all are very unflattering to the United States, as are studies of American health. The United States, for example, has one of the world's worst cancer rates (the seventh highest), and life expectancy is declining compared to other nations. An article in the *Washington Post* in late 2013 reported that the United States ranked 26th among nations in life expectancy, and that the average American lifespan had fallen a year behind the international average.

And what about the environment? Specialists at Yale University have developed a highly sophisticated Environmental Performance Index to examine the behavior of nations. In the area of protection of human health from environmental harm, their 2014 index placed the United States 35th in health impacts, 36th in water and sanitation, and 38th in air quality. In the other area studied—protection of ecosystems—the United States ranked 32nd in water resources, 49th in climate and energy, 86th in biodiversity and habitat, 96th in fisheries, 107th in forests, and 109th in agriculture.

These and other areas of interest are dealt with by the Social Progress Index, which was developed by Michael Porter, an eminent professor of business (and Republican) at Harvard. According to Porter and his team, in 2014 the United States ranked 23rd in access to information and communications, 24th in nutrition and basic medical care, 31st in personal safety, 34th in water and sanitation, 39th in access to basic knowledge, 69th in ecosystem sustainability, and 70th in health and wellness.

Poverty, especially among children, remains a disgrace in one of the world's wealthiest nations. A 2013 report by the United Nations Children's Fund noted that, of the 35 economically advanced countries that had been studied, only Romania had a higher percentage of children living in poverty than did the United States.

Of course, the United States is not locked into these dismal rankings and the sad situation they reveal about the health, education, and welfare of its citizens. It could do much better if its vast wealth, resources, and technology were utilized differently than they are at present. Ultimately, it's a matter of priorities. When most U.S. government discretionary spending goes for war and preparations for war, it should come as no surprise that the United States emerges No. 1 among nations in the capacity for violence and falls far behind other nations in providing for the well-being of its people.

Americans might want to keep this in mind as their nation embarks upon yet another costly military crusade.