

# FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

ANSWERED ON THE LINK BETWEEN

# PEACE & RELIGION

A GLOBAL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS ON THE EMPIRICAL LINK  
BETWEEN PEACE AND RELIGION

INSTITUTE FOR  
ECONOMICS  
& PEACE



## QUANTIFYING PEACE AND ITS BENEFITS

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents empirical research conducted by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in conjunction with the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation<sup>1</sup> that aims to get beyond ideology to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how religion interacts with peace. Quantitative analysis has revealed that many of the commonly made statements surrounding the relationship between peace and religion are not supported by the analysis contained in this study.

This report answers five common questions relating to religion and violence. To determine the list of questions the most common themes of discussion and opinions expressed in the media were identified. The scope of the research highlights key relationships between peace and religion and provides a platform and opportunities for further research.

## The five questions addressed in this report are:

- **Question 1** — Is religion the main cause of conflict today?
- **Question 2** — Does the proportion of religious belief or atheism in a country determine the peace of the country?
- **Question 3** — In Muslim countries, does the demographic spread of Sunni and Shia determine peace?
- **Question 4** — Is religion key to understanding what drives peace?
- **Question 5** — Can religion play a positive role in peacebuilding?

Global peace as measured by the Global Peace Index (GPI) has been steadily deteriorating over the last seven years; with 111 countries deteriorating and 51 improving. One of the main reasons for the global decline in peace has been increased terrorist activity, which has been driven by high profile Islamic terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State (IS), Boko Haram and Al-Qaida. Both the scale and the intensity of terrorism has substantially increased. In 2011, 13 countries recorded more than 50 deaths from terrorist activity; by 2013 the number had jumped to 24 countries.

It is easy to draw simple conclusions about the link between religion and violence today. While there has been high profile terrorist conflict involving religious fundamentalism this is distinct from the broader relationship between religion and peace. Recurrent sectarian violence between Muslims and religious aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict are undoubtedly a major feature of seemingly intractable conflicts in the Middle East. But focusing only on the extremes does not provide a clear view of the role that religion plays in peace and conflict nor inform our understanding of the extent to which these events are the exception rather than the rule.

Current events stand in contrast to the positive role that religion and religious leaders have played in building peace over the course of past 100 years. Some of the greatest peace builders of the 20th century have also been religious leaders; Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King are names synonymous with the practice of non-violence. Many non-violent movements have been based on religious principles and the major religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam all have forms of non-violence and peace as part of their religious traditions. This highlights a contradiction which has been played out through history; on the one hand religion has been a motivator of conflict, yet it has also been pivotal in developing key concepts of peace and non-violence as well as creating peace.

Hence the role and relationship between religion, peace and conflict is a contentious and polarising subject, attracting a wide array of arguments and contrasting opinion, often grounded in popular belief rather than empirical fact.

Despite the contentiousness of these debates and the perceived importance that is placed on religion there have been few truly global cross-country statistical analyses conducted to empirically examine the link between religion, conflict and peace. Hence, the role of religion in creating or undermining peace is more often than not presumed rather than systematically studied.

## FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

### QUESTION 1

#### IS RELIGION THE MAIN CAUSE OF CONFLICT TODAY?

Religion is not the main cause of conflicts today. Whilst religion has evidently been a cause of many conflicts throughout history it is by no means the only reason for conflict. Surveying the state of 35 armed conflicts from 2013, religious elements did not play a role in 14, or 40 per cent.

It is notable that religion did not stand as a single cause in any conflict; however 14 per cent did have religion and the establishment of an Islamic state as driving causes. Religion was only one of three or more reasons for 67 per cent of the conflicts where religion featured as a factor to the conflict.

### QUESTION 2

#### DOES THE PROPORTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR ATHEISM IN A COUNTRY DETERMINE THE PEACE OF THE COUNTRY?

There is no clear statistical relationship between either the presence or the absence of religious belief and conflict. Even at the extremes, the least peaceful countries are not necessarily the most religious and vice versa. For example, when looking at the ten most peaceful countries three would be described as highly religious, and when looking at the ten least peaceful nations two would be described as the least religious. Conversely, the absence of religious belief, as manifested by atheism, also sees no significant link to broader societal peacefulness.

### QUESTION 3

#### IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES, DOES THE DEMOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF SUNNI AND SHIA DETERMINE PEACE?

Despite the apparent role of Sunni and Shia sectarian violence in parts of the Middle East today, when reviewed globally, countries with high proportions of Sunni and Shia are not necessarily violent or plagued with conflict. What distinguishes Muslim-majority countries is differing performance in the Pillars of Peace, a framework developed by IEP to assess the positive peace factors that create peaceful societies. Specifically, countries that have lower corruption, well-functioning government and better relations with neighbours are more peaceful regardless of the particular levels of Sunni and Shia.

This report acknowledges the sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia that is a major feature of conflicts in the Middle East today, but highlights that Sunni and Shia

conflicts are not inevitable. Although there are numerous religious divides, the paper focuses on the Sunni and Shia divide due to the high profile it is currently receiving in the media.

### QUESTION 4

#### IS RELIGION KEY TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT DRIVES PEACE?

There are many other socio-economic characteristics that have more significant explanatory power in understanding why conflict and peace occurs than religion does. There are however some religious factors that are significantly related to peace.

Multivariate regression analysis reveals that there is a consistent relationship between factors such as corruption, political terror, gender and economic inequality and political instability which determine poor peace scores as measured by the Global Peace Index (GPI). The research clearly indicates that these factors are globally more significant determinants in driving violence and conflict in society than the presence of religious belief.

Nevertheless, there are two religious characteristics which are associated with peace; restrictions on religious behaviour as well as hostilities towards religion. Countries without a dominant religious group are, on average, more peaceful and have less restrictions or social hostilities around religion than countries with a dominant religious group. However, government type has much greater explanatory power than religion in understanding differing levels of peace.

### QUESTION 5

#### CAN RELIGION PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING?

While a lot of analysis may focus on the negative role of religion it is important to acknowledge the potential positive role of religion in peacebuilding through inter-faith dialogue and other religiously-motivated movements. It was found that countries that had higher membership of religious groups tended to be slightly more peaceful.

Religion can be the motivator or catalyst for bringing about peace through ending conflict as well as helping to build strong social cohesion. Furthermore, religion can act as a form of social cohesion and, like membership of other groups, greater involvement in society can strengthen the bonds between citizens strengthening the bonds of peace.

## KEY FINDINGS

# THERE IS NO CLEAR STATISTICAL LINK BETWEEN RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PEACE.

- Many countries with Sunni and Shia demographic mixes are relatively peaceful such as Qatar and Kuwait. The main factors which differ between peaceful coexistence and non-peaceful coexistence relate to well functioning governments, lower levels of corruption and better relations with neighbouring countries.
- Factors associated with Positive Peace, the broader set of attitudes, institutions and structures have a greater explanatory power for the level of peace than simply the demographic split between Sunni and Shia.
- Factors other than religious differences are more significant in determining the levels of peace. These factors are corruption, political terror, gender and economic inequality as well as political instability. Statistically speaking religion has only limited explanatory power for outbreaks of violence.
- Countries with greater religious freedoms are generally more peaceful, whereas countries with less religious freedom are generally less peaceful.
- The most influential factor affecting religious freedom is the government type. Full democracies are the most peaceful and have the greatest level of religious freedom, regardless of the type of religious belief or various religious characteristics.
- The most peaceful countries are not necessarily the least religious, and the least peaceful countries are not necessarily highly religious.
- There is not a statistically meaningful relationship between the levels of atheism or religious belief in a country and its levels of peace.
- Four out of the ten countries with the highest levels of atheism are less peaceful than the global average.
- Other than New Zealand, countries with high levels of atheism are communist or ex-communist countries.
- Two thirds of countries in the world have greater than 95 per cent of the population holding a religious belief. Therefore high levels of religious belief can be found at either end of the GPI.
- Of the ten most peaceful countries in the 2013 GPI, only two countries have greater than ten per cent atheists. These countries are New Zealand and Belgium.
- The twenty-first century has not been marked by the clash of civilisations but rather intra-group conflict. Of the 15 armed conflicts motivated in part by Islamist groups in 2013, all but five occurred in countries where Muslims were in the majority.
- Many of the least peaceful countries do not have high levels of religious diversity.

# INTRODUCTION

This report investigates the empirical relationships between peace, as measured by the Global Peace Index (GPI), and various religious measures related to levels of religious belief, restrictions and hostilities towards religion, combined with a number of other socio-economic factors, to statistically explain the relationship between religion, peace and conflict.

A key source of information are two indices created by Pew Research which measure government restrictions on religion and social hostility towards religious groups referred to in the report as religious restrictions and religious hostilities. These indices have been generated by relying on published reports

from 18 publicly available cross-national sources, including the U.S. State Department and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Explanation of the multivariate regression analysis which has been used to determine the leading factors that are most important to peace is also detailed in Appendix D. Over 100 socio-economic factors were used in the analysis. This study was conducted to determine what other factors were more important to peace than religion.

The paper is separated into three parts, each exploring a particular part of the relationship between religion and peace.

## The five main data sources used are:

- **The Global Peace Index** from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)
- **Two Pew Research Indices:**
  - the **Government Restrictions Index (GRI)** which measures government actions which restricts religious practices;
  - the **Social Hostilities Index (SHI)** which measures religious hostilities by private individuals, organisations or groups within the country.
- Religion demographics by country from the **World Religion Project**.
- **World Values Survey** information on attitudes towards religion, as well as group membership.
- **Religious Diversity Index** as measured by IEP, measuring diversity of different types of religious groups, sects and denominations in a country and their size. This is similar methodologically to the Pew Religious Diversity Index. However, it relies on religion demographics as supplied by the World Religion Project which allows for a more nuanced view of different sects or denominations within a religion.

The full methodology and detail of data sources for the report are detailed in Appendix A.

## The study seeks to address five key questions about religion and peace:

- **Question 1** — Is religion the main cause of conflict today?
- **Question 2** — Does the proportion of religious belief or atheism in a country determine the peace of the country?
- **Question 3** — In Muslim countries, does the demographic spread of Sunni and Shia determine peace?
- **Question 4** — Is religion key to understanding what drives peace?
- **Question 5** — Can religion play a positive role in peacebuilding?

## RELIGION AND CONFLICT

This section catalogues 35 different major conflicts that occurred in 2013 to assess how many conflicts had a religious aspect to them. It analyses whether religion is the primary cause of conflict, or if other factors are also involved in recent conflicts. The Global Peace Index has been chosen because it uses a multidimensional framework to measure peace. This allows for a more holistic understanding of peace and its relationship with religion.

The relationship between religion and peace has often been framed as to whether religion is a cause or cure for war. On the one hand, some suggest religion is one of the greatest justifications for war.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, others view religion as a force for resolving war and civil unrest.<sup>3</sup> The major religions of the world; Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam have concepts of personal and societal peace at the heart of their religious discourses.

To fully understand the relationship between religion and peace a more comprehensive understanding of peace than simply the absence of war is needed. This is necessary to prevent simplistic 'first cause' analysis or confusing correlation with causation. Whilst war is very destructive, the absence of major conflict is necessary before human potential can flourish. The Pillars of Peace, which is further elaborated in this report, describes an optimum environment for peace to flourish.

## RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PEACE

The relationship between religion and peace often includes discussion about whether more religious countries are less peaceful, and whether countries with higher levels of atheism are more peaceful. Religious belief refers to the numbers of people in a country who have any type of religious belief. In this study atheism is defined as people who have no belief in the supernatural and do not identify with any religious belief. This part explores the key correlations and common features between religious belief and peace and highlights the key features of these relationships.

Another area of religious belief which has been analysed in this report is how significant the religious divide between Sunni and Shia Muslims is in determining peace. Ongoing sectarian conflict in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, among other places, has placed further emphasis on tension between Sunni and Shia groups.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS RELIGION TO UNDERSTANDING PEACE?

This part seeks to explore what explanatory power religion has to peace. This is done first through multivariate regression analysis, a statistical tool which enables comparison against multiple datasets. Multivariate regression analysis reveals the interplay between religion and different factors, such as gender and economic inequality, demonstrating the nature of the relationship between various indicators. The limiting factor in this analysis is the datasets which have been selected for inclusion in the analysis. Other factors may also feature strongly if included.

Other statistical techniques are used to analyse if certain religious characteristics have a relationship with peace. These include the size of religious groups and levels of religious diversity in a country. Religious diversity is a measure of the different types of religious groups, sects and denominations in a country and their size. Statistical analysis is used to assess whether government restrictions towards religion and social hostilities arising from religion also have a relationship with peace. The correlation between particular characteristics or traits and government restrictions or social hostilities towards religion is also examined.

The report concludes with a brief evaluation of some of the more positive connections between religion and peace. This analyses how religion corresponds with the general benefits of group membership resulting in greater social cohesion. There is also a brief overview of some of the successes of religious and inter-faith movements in creating more peaceful societies.



# RELIGION & CONFLICT



## QUESTION 1 IS RELIGION THE MAIN CAUSE OF CONFLICT TODAY?

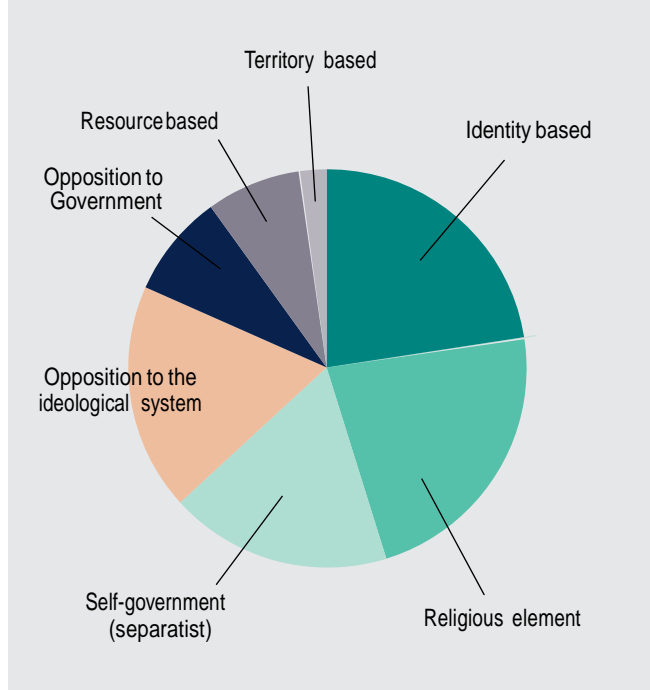
To better understand the role of religion it is important to understand how many conflicts actually involve religion and how many have religion as the sole or main motivator. Many conflicts throughout history have been attributed to religion. To better understand the role of religion in conflict, 35 armed conflicts in 2013 were analysed to determine the role of religious characteristics in these conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Many conflicts which involve religion also have many other grievances associated with the conflict.

There were many causes of conflict for the 35 recorded armed conflicts from around the world in 2013. The definition of armed conflict here is from the Escola de Cultura de Pau and is “the continuous and organised use of force causing either at least 100 fatalities in a year or has a serious impact on human security, infrastructure or natural resources and has different objectives from those of common crime.”<sup>5</sup> The majority of these conflicts had multiple background causes, with different elements simultaneously featuring as motivating factors to disputes.

Of the 35 conflicts in 2013, 86 per cent had more than one cause. Nearly two thirds of conflicts in 2013 had among their main cause opposition to a particular government, or opposition to the economic, ideological, political or social system of a state. Identity was a feature in most conflicts in 2013, with 21 conflicts involving clashes of identity as a main cause of conflict. When analysing the motivation for these conflicts the desire for identity and self-government was a part of 60 per cent of the conflicts. Whilst religious elements

**FIGURE 1 CAUSES OF CONFLICT FOR THE 35 ARMED CONFLICTS IN 2013**

Religious elements and Identity were factors in many of the conflicts in 2013. However, conflict was driven by a variety of other factors as well. 30 of the 35 armed conflicts fought last year had more than one cause.



Source: Escola de Cultura de Pau. Alert 2014!

\* Refer to Appendix B for conflict category definitions.

may have a significant impact, there are many other motivators of armed conflict.

When analysing the detail of the conflicts which involved religion, there were other elements driving the conflict as

solely driven by religious elements. There were, however, 15 conflicts where the system based conflict was driven by a movement to shift to an Islamic system of government. These conflicts are coded as both system and religious based conflicts. Often studies look at the influence of religion in the onset of armed conflict, with the noticeable exception of a study by Lindberg which looks at the influence of religion on the intensity and duration of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Of the 21 conflicts involving religion, seven involved one other cause, four involved two other causes and ten involved three or more other causes. Therefore, although religion is a factor

in conflict it is not the major factor, albeit 14 per cent did have the religion and the specific establishment of an Islamic state as driving causes. Notably, religion alone was not the sole cause of conflict for any armed conflicts in 2013.

There were 14 conflicts which did not have a significant religious element, of which five had only one cause of conflict. Two conflicts, Burundi and Libya, were solely driven by Government concerns. Conflict in Burundi was mainly about the power and military distribution between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups. Libya continues to face conflict stemming from political uncertainty

**TABLE 1 CAUSE OF CONFLICTS IN THE 35 ARMED CONFLICTS IN 2013**

30 of the 35 conflicts in 2013 had more than one cause.

	IDENTITY	RELIGIOUS ELEMENT	SELF-GOVERNMENT (SEPARATIST)	OPPOSITION TO THE SYSTEM (IDEOLOGICAL)	OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT	RESOURCE-BASED	TERRITORY-BASED
Afghanistan		●		●			
Algeria (AQIM)		●		●			
Burundi					●		
Central Africa (LRA)		●				●	
Central African Republic		●			●		
Colombia				●			
DR Congo (east)	●				●	●	
Ethiopia (Ogaden)	●		●				
India (Assam)	●		●				
India (CPI-M)				●			
India (Jammu and Kashmir)	●		●				
India (Manipur)	●		●				
Iraq	●	●		●	●		
Israel-Palestine	●	●	●				●
Libya					●		
Mali (north)	●	●	●	●			
Myanmar	●		●				
Nigeria (Boko Haram)		●		●			
Pakistan		●		●			
Pakistan (Balochistan)	●	●	●			●	
Philippines (Mindanao-Abu Sayyaf)	●	●	●	●		●	
Philippines (NPA)				●			
Russia (Chechnya)	●	●	●	●			
Russia (Dagestan)	●	●	●	●			
Russia (Ingushetia)	●	●	●	●			
Russia (Kabardino-Balkaria)	●	●	●	●			
Somalia		●		●	●		
South Sudan	●				●	●	
Sudan (Darfur)	●		●			●	
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	●		●			●	
Syria		●		●			●
Thailand (south)	●	●	●				
Turkey (southeast)	●	●	●				
Yemen (AQAP)	●	●		●	●		
Yemen (Houthis)		●		●			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Escola de Cultura de Pau. Alert 2014!

after the overthrow of former Prime Minister Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Three armed conflicts were primarily driven by ideology, or the desire to change the political system. All three were motivated by communism, with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Maoists in India (CPI-M) and the armed branch of the Communist party of the Philippines (NPA).

The other nine armed conflicts without a significant religious element all featured multiple causes, but identity was a common feature of them all. These conflicts included coups such as in DR Congo (east) and South Sudan, as well as the tension over the allocation of resources and territory such as in Sudan (Darfur, as well as South Kordofan and Blue Nile) and secessionist movements like in Ethiopia (Ogaden) and India (Assam, Jammu, Kashmir and Manipur).

Religion was only one of three or more reasons for 67 per cent of the conflicts where it was a factor in the conflict. Religion has played a significant role in several countries through the desire to create a new system of Islamist government particularly in North and West African countries and Middle Eastern countries. For example, Boko Haram in Nigeria has stated they intend to depose the government and introduce sharia law.<sup>7</sup>

Notably, the goal of creating a new system of government was not just linked to religion. Armed conflict based on communist ideology was a feature in three conflicts in 2013 with Colombia, India (Communist Party of India - Marxist) and the Philippines (New People's Army). Opposition to the government, rather than a desire for a new system of government, was a major feature in the conflicts in countries like Burundi, Central African Republic, Somalia and Syria.

There are many difficulties in simplistically determining what the causes of a conflict are. Conflicts with religious elements are not necessarily primarily driven by religious objectives or identification. In many instances armed groups focused more on overthrowing the government or eroding government power and use religion as a rallying cry in religious societies. It has been argued that religion is rarely a foundational cause for conflict.<sup>8</sup> It "does not ordinarily lead to violence", but it is generally only "when religion becomes fused with violent expressions of social tensions, personal pride, and movements for political change."<sup>9</sup>

When parties to a conflict are divided on religious adherence, the conflict often becomes framed as religious even though the parties have originally fought over other issues.<sup>10</sup> As the majority of people in the world adhere to some religious beliefs it is unsurprising that many conflicts are interpreted as having a religious element. It thus does not always follow that religion is the cause for conflict.

## BOX 1 METHODOLOGY NOTE

Focusing solely on the absence of armed conflict to determine peace provides a very limited understanding of peace. Furthermore, it does not allow for the complexities of the relationship between religion and peace to be examined in detail. Negative Peace, defined as the absence of violence or fear of violence, includes more than simply the lack of armed conflict. Rather, it also includes the size of the state's security apparatus, levels of violent crime and availability of small arms. The Global Peace Index (GPI) measures violence in its full extent, providing a more holistic view of peace. The GPI is a multidimensional view of peace allowing for a more quantitative evaluation of the relationship between peace and religion.

### MEASURING PEACE

Peace is a complicated concept; but also a concept which is universally recognised as important to measure and define. The GPI is the world's preeminent measure of peacefulness at the national level. The GPI is comprised of 22 indicators which measure the existence or absence of violence or the fear of violence. The indicators were originally selected with the assistance of an international panel of independent experts in 2007 and have been reviewed and improved by the GPI expert panel on an annual basis.

In attempting to gauge peacefulness, the GPI investigates the extent to which countries are involved in ongoing domestic and international conflicts, the level of societal safety and security, and the extent to which a society is militarised. Five indicators measure domestic and international conflicts, which includes indicators of both total deaths from conflict and the total number of conflicts a country is involved in. The level of safety and security within a nation is captured by ten indicators. Low crime rates, minimal terrorist activity and violent demonstrations, harmonious relations with neighbouring countries, a stable political scene and a small proportion of the population being internally displaced or made refugees can be equated with peacefulness. The remaining indicators are related to a country's military build-up—reflecting the assertion that the level of militarisation and access to weapons is directly linked to peace.

For full indicator detail see Appendix A.

# RELIGIOUS BELIEF & PEACE



The statistical analysis detailed in this report reveals that there is not a significant relationship between religious belief and peace. The extent of religious belief in a country has no correlation with the level of peace in that country. Furthermore, connecting higher levels of atheism and peace may be spurious as the numbers of atheists are generally low. Of the small set of countries with the highest levels of atheism, they tended to be less peaceful. Whilst there are some trends, overall they are too weak to suggest any definitive and linear connection between levels of religious belief, atheism and peace when measured at the country level.

Within particular religious groupings, demographic distribution of religious groupings does not correlate to peace. Specifically, the Sunni and Shia demographic breakdown in countries with Muslim-majority populations does not correlate to peace. Many relatively peaceful countries have Sunni and Shia cohabitating peacefully.

Notably, Muslim-majority countries that perform well in peace generally have a stronger performance in the Pillars of Peace, a framework developed by IEP to assess the positive peace factors that create peaceful societies. In particular, countries with low levels of corruption, well-functioning government and good relations with neighbours are more peaceful. This does not deny that Sunni and Shia divides are a feature of conflicts in the Middle East today, but rather to highlight they are not inevitable.

## The key findings of this part of the report are:

- The extent of religious belief in a country has no correlation with the level of peace of a country. Countries with the highest levels of atheism are not necessarily the most peaceful.
- Focusing on the outliers skews the understanding of the overall connection between atheism and peace. There are certain traits which the most peaceful countries have independent of their levels of atheism or religious belief which make them peaceful.
- Communist or former communist countries have the highest levels of atheism, but not necessarily higher or lower peace.
- The Sunni and Shia divide has little explanatory power for differences in peace between Muslim-majority countries. Less peaceful countries tend to have higher levels of corruption and poorly functioning government regardless of the particular Sunni and Shia divide.

## QUESTION 2 DOES THE PROPORTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR ATHEISM IN A COUNTRY DETERMINE THE PEACE OF THE COUNTRY?

The most peaceful countries are a mixture of both religious and less religious countries. For instance, three out of the ten most peaceful countries in the 2013 GPI are more religious than the international average. At the other end of the scale two out of the ten least peaceful countries have some of the lowest rates of religion attendance in the world, notably North Korea.

Contrary to common belief, there is not a significant correlation between levels of religious belief and peace with an  $r=0.14$ . Generally IEP considers a measure of at least  $r=0.5$  to be significant. All correlations in Table 2 are extremely low, to the extent that no relationship was uncovered. Furthermore, the results are in divergent directions meaning that a linear connection between the presence of religion and peace is highly unlikely. While 15 of the 20 most peaceful countries in the world have less religion than the international average, it does not follow that all peaceful countries have low religious levels. Iceland, for example, is the most peaceful country in the 2013 GPI but has relatively high levels of religious belief. In fact, 11 of the top 20 countries on the GPI have more than 90 per cent of their population identifying with religious beliefs.

**TABLE 2 CORRELATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FACTORS AND THE GPI**

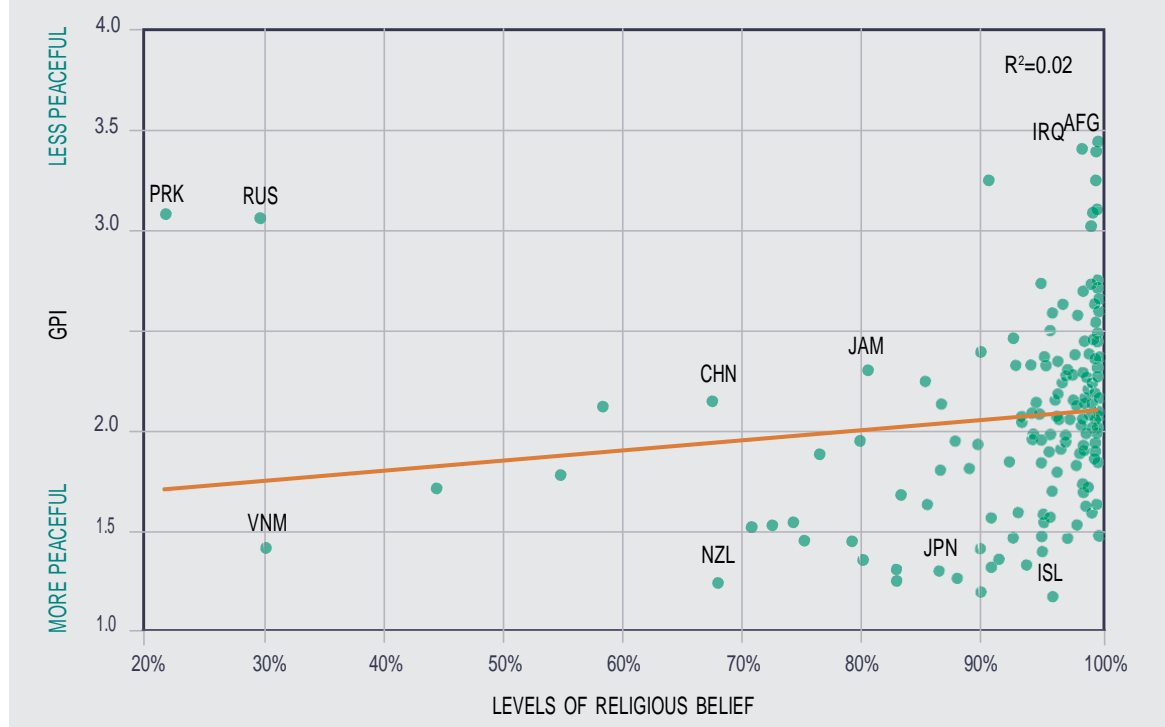
The level of religious belief in a country is not correlated with peace, religious restrictions or religious hostilities.

Correlation between GPI and PEW indices	
	PRESENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF
GPI	0.14
EXTERNAL GPI	-0.12
INTERNAL GPI	0.22
GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (GRI)	-0.03
SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX (SHI)	0.03
Correlation between GPI sub-domains	
SAFETY AND SECURITY	0.21
MILITARIZATION	-0.08
ONGOING CONFLICT	0.06

Source: IEP, World Religion Project

**FIGURE 2 GPI (2013) VS PRESENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF (2010)**

There is a no overall trend between higher levels of religious beliefs and lower peace.



Source: IEP, World Religion Project

The overwhelming majority of people in most countries, including the most peaceful, have religious attendance rates of over 80 per cent. Atheists are a small minority globally, and only a majority in five of the 162 countries analysed, thereby limiting any explanatory effect on a society as a whole.

For over two thirds of countries in the world greater than 95 per cent of the population hold religious beliefs and high levels of religious belief can be found at either end of the GPI. Countries with the highest presence of religious belief also have vast differences in peace.

Rather than religious similarities, the least peaceful countries have political and regional similarities. The least peaceful countries are on average authoritarian countries and are located in the three least peaceful regions in the world: the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

There are vast disparities between countries with authoritarian and those with democratic governance. Democracies tend to be more peaceful even if there are similar levels of religion. For example, Malaysia is considerably more peaceful than neighbouring country Myanmar. A major difference between these countries is that Malaysia is more democratic, whereas Myanmar is in its early stages of democratisation process.

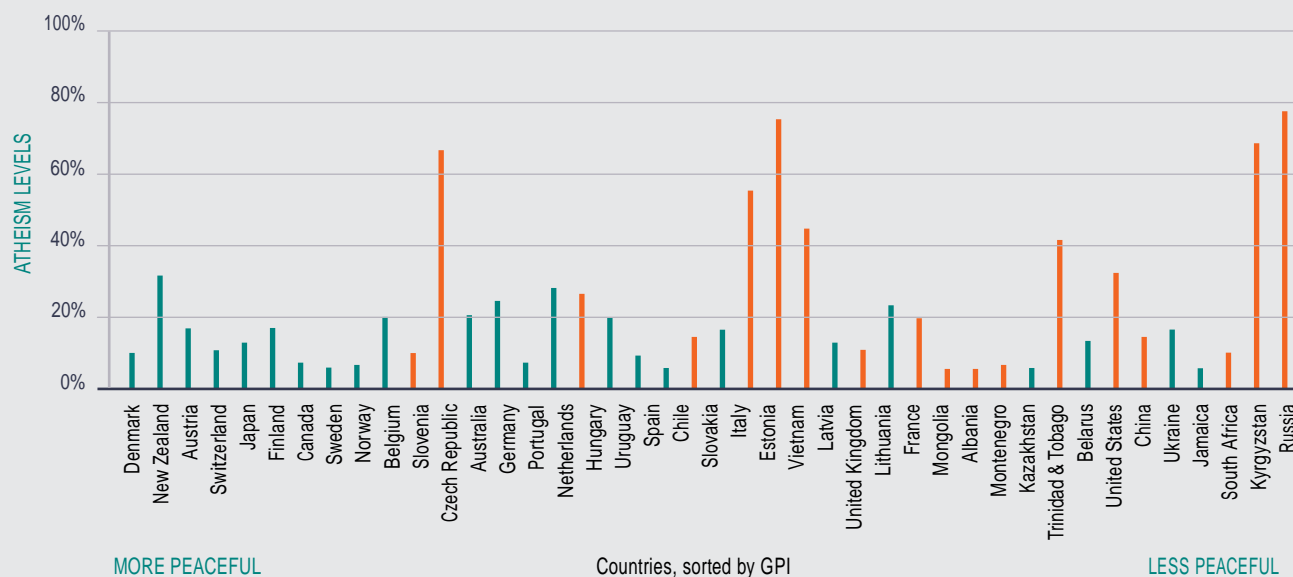
### LOWER LEVELS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF DO NOT CORRESPOND WITH PEACE

The data shows that the level of atheists in a country is not significantly correlated with peace. Multivariate regression analysis shows that neither atheism nor the presence of religious belief has a significant relationship with peace.<sup>11</sup> As there are only five countries which have atheists accounting for more than half the population it is possible that the levels of non-religious belief are simply not large enough to determine any significant link between atheism and peace. Further information is contained in Appendix E. Countries with similar levels of non-religious beliefs have widely varying peace.<sup>12</sup>

**RATHER THAN RELIGIOUS SIMILARITIES, THE LEAST PEACEFUL COUNTRIES HAVE POLITICAL AND REGIONAL SIMILARITIES.**

**FIGURE 3 COUNTRIES WITH GREATER THAN FIVE PER CENT ATHEISM SORTED BY 2013 GPI SCORE. COMMUNIST OR FORMER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES IN RED.**

There is not a statistical meaningful relationship between the GPI and the proportion of atheists in a country. The most peaceful country with high atheism is Denmark. It has similar atheists levels as Kyrgyzstan, the third least peaceful country with high atheism.



Source: IEP, World Religion Project

Countries with more atheists are not more peaceful.

The countries with the first and third highest percentage of atheists, North Korea and Russia, performed in the bottom ten for the 2013 GPI. If a country has greater than five per cent of its population as atheist then it's likely to be either a communist or former communist state or from Europe.

Of the ten most peaceful countries in the 2013 GPI, only two countries have greater than ten per cent atheists. These countries are New Zealand with around 32 per cent and Belgium at approximately 20 per cent. Most analysis regarding the connection between atheism and peace relies on extreme cases. However, extrapolating from the extremes can result in contradictory results. For example, the 20 least religious countries outperform the international average in the GPI whereas the 20 most religious countries are less peaceful than the international average. The government type appears to be a more significant distinguishing characteristic of peace, with full democracies and especially member states of the European Union having the best measures in peace, regardless of the levels of religion beliefs.

## BOX 2 THE EFFECT OF COMMUNISM ON RELIGION

As can be seen in Figure 3, the countries with the highest levels of atheism are all communist or former communist countries.

North Korea and Russia, two of the ten least peaceful countries in the world, have two of the three highest levels of atheism in the world. Russia and North Korea are not the only outliers with a communist history. There are 17 countries with atheism levels above five per cent that are not in the top quartile of the GPI. Of these, 65 per cent have a communist history and score eight per cent worse than the 35 per cent of the countries which do not have a communist history.

Many expressions of communism have included an anti-religious element where it was illegal to express any religious beliefs, notably, the Soviet Union, China and North Korea. This included suppression of religious freedom and practice. Russia is the only former communist country that saw a significant increase in the levels of atheism after the fall of communism. In 1990 close to 61 per cent of Russian citizens were non-religious. This level rose two per cent every five years to 69 per cent in 2010. This is in contrast to countries like Albania and Kazakhstan, which saw non-religious levels fall from 80 per cent and 73 per cent respectively to around six per cent from 1990 to 2010.

### QUESTION 3 IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES, DOES THE DEMOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF SUNNI AND SHIA DETERMINE PEACE?

The breakdown of Sunni and Shia in a country is not necessarily a key determinant of peace. Qatar is the most peaceful country in the Middle East and North Africa region, ranking 19 in the 2013 GPI, and has the same Sunni/Shia breakdown as the least peaceful country in the 2013 GPI, Afghanistan.

Iran also has a similar proportional breakdown, except it has a Shia instead of Sunni majority. This suggests the religious demographic breakdown is not necessarily a deterministic factor to peace. Similarly, there are differing peace levels for countries where Sunni and Shia have similar proportions of a population. Bahrain is significantly more peaceful than other countries with a similar proportional Sunni/Shia split such as Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. There are many relatively peaceful countries which have a significant proportion of Sunni and Shia.

However, it is important to note that based on a perception survey from Pew Research the Sunni and Shia divide is considered significant by Muslims with 73 per cent of countries with significant numbers of Muslims believing that friction between religious groups is a moderately or very big problem for their country. Undoubtedly, sectarian violence has been a major feature of armed conflict in the Middle East today. This is evidenced by the fact that when countries with majority Muslim populations have engaged in armed conflict it is generally civil or inter-religious conflict.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the twenty-first century has not been marked by the clash of civilisations but rather intra-group conflict. Of the 15 armed conflicts motivated in part by Islamist groups in 2013, all but five occurred in countries where Muslims were in the majority.

**FIGURE 4** SUNNI AND SHIA AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION, SORTED BY GPI

The different levels of Sunni and Shia in a country does not explain differing performance in peace. Graph covers Muslim countries with greater than five per cent of both Sunni and Shia.



Source: IEP, World Religion Project



Given that there are only 11 countries which met the criteria of greater than five per cent Sunni/Shia minority there were not enough countries to perform a through statistical analysis. However, certain observations can still be made.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to analyse the exact causes of intra-religious conflict, this does suggest that demographic aspects of sectarian differences does not make conflict and violence inevitable.

Further research on the positive factors associated with Sunni/Shia relations in these relatively peaceful Muslim states is important to better understand approaches for peacebuilding and to help avoid inter-religious conflict. The Pillars of Peace provide an insight into what features differentiate the peace performance of countries with high levels of Sunni and Shia. Three of the eight Pillars of Peace correlate with the GPI for the most Muslim countries.

This is a very strong correlation, however given the small sample size it cannot be seen as being statistically significant, but is indicative of factors that are known to lead to peace.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly the Pillars of Peace *Low Levels of Corruption* and *Well-Functioning Governments* are more likely to result in outcomes where minorities are better included and *Good Relations with Neighbours* lowers the likelihood of foreign countries destabilising a country. This demonstrates that countries with a majority of Muslims which perform well in the three Pillars, as well as the Positive Peace Index tend to be more peaceful.

The *Good Relations with Neighbours* Pillar refers to relations between communities as well as to crossborder relations. *Low Levels of Corruption* is linked with a *Well Functioning Government*. See Box 3 for more information on the Pillars of Peace.

Religious restrictions do not correlate very strongly with peace at only 0.24, whereas religious hostilities do at 0.61. This suggests that for the majority of Muslim countries government restrictions towards religion has less of an impact on peace than religious hostilities do. Seventy per cent of Muslim-majority countries are authoritarian regimes, with 23 per cent hybrid regimes. There are only three flawed democracies, and no full democracies. As such it is unsurprising that Muslim-majority countries have high levels of government restrictions.

### TABLE 3 CORRELATION OF GPI VS POSITIVE PEACE INDEX FOR COUNTRIES WITH MAJORITY ISLAMIC DENOMINATIONS OR SECTS

There is a strong correlation between peace and the three Pillars; Well-Functioning Government, Good Relations with Neighbours and Low Levels of Corruption. However, as the sample size is small with only 33 countries results are being treated as indicative.

Correlation between GPI and Pillars for majority Muslim countries	
	GPI
OVERALL POSITIVE PEACE INDEX	0.71
WELL FUNCTIONING GOVERNMENT	0.61
GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS	0.71
LOW LEVELS OF CORRUPTION	0.70

Source: IEP, World Religion Project

Note: The Pillars of Peace only includes 126 countries.

MANY MUSLIM MAJORITY COUNTRIES WITH SUNNI AND SHIA DEMOGRAPHIC MIXES ARE RELATIVELY PEACEFUL.

## BOX 3 THE PILLARS OF PEACE

The Pillars of Peace provides a framework for assessing the 'positive peace' factors that create and sustain peaceful societies. The framework also forms an ideal basis for measuring a society's propensity for sustaining peace.

Countries which perform well on the Pillars of Peace also perform well on many developmental and environment measures. The Pillars of Peace provides the ideal benchmark against which to measure the performance of the broader aspects of societal development and a country's overall resilience when confronted with social upheaval; therefore they describe an ideal environment for human potential to thrive.

These factors are intuitively understood and visualised through an eight-part taxonomy. As examples, three of the eight Pillars are:

### ■ Well-Functioning Government

Based on several factors, from how governments are elected and the political culture they engender, to the quality of the public services they deliver and their political stability. Strong relationships across a number of these indicators and sub-indicators demonstrate the interdependent nature of the various governance indicators. These measures are consistently linked to peace.

### ■ Good Relations with Neighbours

Refers to the relations between individuals and communities as well as to cross-border relations. Countries with positive external relations are more peaceful and tend to be more politically stable, have better functioning governments, are regionally integrated and have low levels of organised internal conflict.

### ■ Low Levels of Corruption

In societies with high corruption resources are inefficiently allocated, making business inefficient and often leading to a lack of funding for essential services. The resulting inequality can lead to civil unrest and in extreme situations can be the catalyst for more violence. Low levels of corruption, by contrast, can enhance business confidence and trust in institutions, which in turn helps to create informal institutions that enhance peace.

These attitudes, institutions and structures can also help promote resilience in society, enabling nations to overcome adversity and resolve internal economic, cultural, and political conflict through peaceful methods. They can be seen as interconnected and interacting in varied and complex ways, forming either virtuous cycles which improve peace or vicious cycles which destroy peace. Causality can run in either direction depending on individual circumstances.

The complex and multidimensional nature of peace can be observed, underlining the need for pluralist and multidisciplinary approaches to understand the interrelationships between economic, political, and cultural factors that affect peace. Therefore peace is seen as a socio-system where interactions and causality vary depending on individual circumstances. Building the strength of the overall system is the best method of building sustainable peace.



More can be read on the Pillars of Peace here:  
<http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Pillars-of-Peace-Report-IEP.pdf>

# HOW IMPORTANT IS RELIGION TO UNDERSTANDING PEACE?



Religion does not have a significant statistical explanatory power for peace. While religion undoubtedly plays a significant role in many conflicts and is a feature of many violent confrontations, when analysing the global statistical determinants of peace, there are other factors which are more strongly associated to peace than religion. Multivariate regression analysis reveals that economic inequality, corruption, political terror, gender and political instability have a much more significant connection with the levels of peace in a country than any of the tested religious traits.

The multivariate analysis was run against over 100 factors that are known to be associated with peace as well as the religious measures used in this study. This analysis was not aimed at uncovering all of the factors that are associated with peace; rather the aim was to determine whether these factors were more important than religion in creating or destroying peace. These factors include the Pillars of Peace, a holistic and rigorous methodology aimed at arriving at a full understanding of the factors that create and sustain peaceful societies. Over 4,700 factors were analysed to arrive at the Pillars of Peace.

The results of the multivariate analysis do not mean that there is not a relationship between religion and conflict. In the Middle East today sectarian violence amongst Muslims is a key feature of major conflicts. However when analysed against the 162 countries of the GPI, the measured characteristics and traits of religion have only limited explanatory power.

For instance, religious diversity has some influence on peace. Many of the least peaceful countries do not have high levels of religious diversity. While discussions are often focused on the negative role of religion, it is important to highlight the potential positive role that religion can play for peacebuilding, with inter-faith dialogue and other religiously-motivated movements having a positive impact on peace.

## The key findings of this section are:

- Multivariate regression analysis demonstrates that there are many factors, other than religious belief, which are more important for peace. These include corruption, political instability, political terror, gender and economic inequality and governance.
- There are more significant statistical drivers of peace than religion. Regardless of the presence of religion or atheism, full democracies are more peaceful.
- There are aspects of religion and religiously motivated activity which can have a positive impact on peace.

# QUESTION 4 IS RELIGION KEY TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT DRIVES PEACE?

Using a multivariate regression analysis, other characteristics were discovered which have more of an influence on the levels of peace in a country than religious traits. Explanatory variables such as corruption, GDP per capita, inequality, gender, political terror and intergroup cohesion all have more significant relationships with the level of a country’s peace than religion. The only significant connection between peace and religion found in the models is that high levels of peace are related to either low levels of religious diversity or high levels of religious diversity as measured through IEP’s Religious Diversity Index. Moderate levels of diversity see lower levels of peace highlighting the bell curve nature of the link between peace and religious diversity.

As previously mentioned some of the main determinants of peace are corruption, political instability, political terror, gender and economic inequality and governance. Appendix D contains a table of the results of the multivariate regression analysis.

## CORRELATIONS WITH PEACE AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RELIGIOUS HOSTILITIES

Countries with greater religious freedoms are generally more peaceful, whereas countries with less religious freedom are generally less peaceful. Religious freedom is defined as the absence of government restrictions towards religious practice and expression, whereas religious hostility is defined as the absence of aggression or violence towards particular religious beliefs and practices in a society. The Government Restrictions Index has been used to measure religious freedom and the Social Hostilities Index has been used to measure religious hostilities.

Religious freedom and the absence of social hostilities towards religion are related to the Pillar of Peace *Acceptance of the Rights of Others*. This Pillar measures both the formal laws that guarantee basic rights and freedoms as well as the informal social and cultural norms that relate to behaviours of citizens. These factors can be seen as proxies for tolerance between different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic groups within a country. A commitment to basic human rights and freedom are key characteristics of peaceful countries, and supported by very strong statistically significant correlations with several indices measuring human rights. Also important are societal attitudes towards fellow citizens, minorities, ethnic groups, genders and foreigners.

The Social Hostilities Index is significantly correlated to levels of peace, whereas the Government Restrictions Index has a moderately significant correlation to peace. The two regions with the most government restrictions towards religion, the Middle East and North Africa and South Asia, are both significantly correlated to the Pillar of *Good Relations With Neighbours* at 0.51 and 0.63 respectively.

This means that countries in this region that have a worse performance in this Pillar have higher levels of government restrictions towards religion.

**TABLE 4 CORRELATION BETWEEN GPI AND THE GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (GRI) AND SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX**

Religious restrictions are closely correlated to the religious hostilities, Appendix C contains scatterplots of these correlations.

Correlation between indicators		
	GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX	SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX
GPI	0.36	0.49
EXTERNAL GPI	0.48	0.53
INTERNAL GPI	0.25	0.38
GRI	—	0.58

Source: IEP, PEW

# THE PRESENCE OF MULTIPLE RELIGIONS IN A COUNTRY APPEARS TO HAVE A PACIFYING EFFECT IF THEY ARE FREE OF RESTRICTIONS.

## DOMINANT RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Countries without dominant religious groups have, on average, higher levels of peace and less government restrictions towards religion. They also have lower levels of religious hostilities. A dominant religious group means there is more than 60 per cent of the population identifying as followers of a particular belief system or denomination.

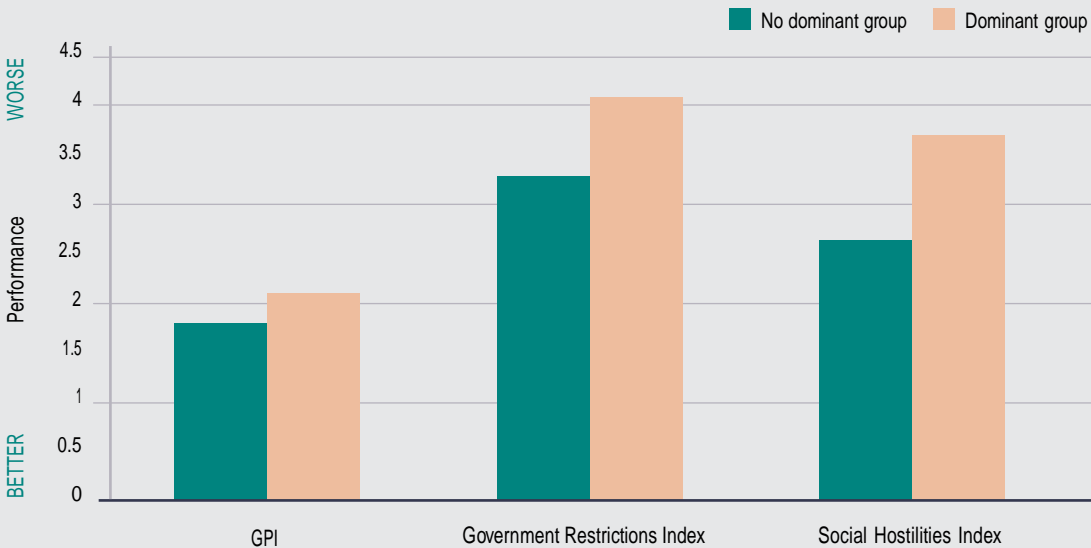
Countries without a dominant religious group are on average 17 per cent more peaceful than countries with a dominant religious group. Similarly, countries without a dominant religious group have on average 25 per cent less religious restrictions and 40 per cent lower religious hostilities.

The presence of multiple religions in a country appears to have a pacifying effect if they are free of restrictions.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, if the members of a religious group dominates and “achieves a monopoly”, they are likely to be able to access and use the power of the state. What has been seen in the past is that dominant religious groups with state power are open to persecute other religious groups and competitors.<sup>16</sup>

Sub-Saharan Africa was removed from the analysis in Figure 5 as this region has a unique history of tension within religious sub-groups.<sup>17</sup> This means that the presence or absence of a dominant religious group has less significance for this region. Religious and sub-religious groupings are often used as levers by politicians to mobilise supporters to pursue political, resource and social ends.<sup>18</sup>

**FIGURE 5** DOMINANT VERSUS NO DOMINANT RELIGIOUS GROUP COMPARED TO PEACE, RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS AND RELIGIOUS HOSTILITIES

Countries with no dominant religious group perform better in all indices.



Source: IEP, PEW, World Religion Project

Note: Dominant religious group means more than 60 per cent of the population identifies with the same religious sub-group or denomination.

Sub-Saharan Africa removed from the analysis.

### RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Regionally, religious homogeneity or heterogeneity is associated with more religious freedom. Regions with mid-range religious diversity have the most government restrictions and social hostilities towards religion.

The two most religiously homogeneous regions, Central America and Caribbean and South America, have the lowest levels of government restrictions and religious hostility. The three most religiously diverse regions, North America, Asia-Pacific and Sub Saharan Africa, have similarly low levels of government restrictions and religious hostilities.

In contrast, the regions with mid-range levels of religious diversity have the highest levels of government restrictions and religious hostility and the lowest levels of peace. Europe runs against this regional trend. However, this may be because Europe contains the majority of the world's full democracies, and full democracies have more explanatory power for peace than religious diversity does. Russia and Eurasia, South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa all have mid-range levels

of religious diversity. Notably, these regions are more likely to be non-secular and authoritarian. One explanation of the phenomenon is that religiously homogeneous societies have less reason for restrictions or hostility and a more heterogeneous society is less likely to be controlled by one religious group.

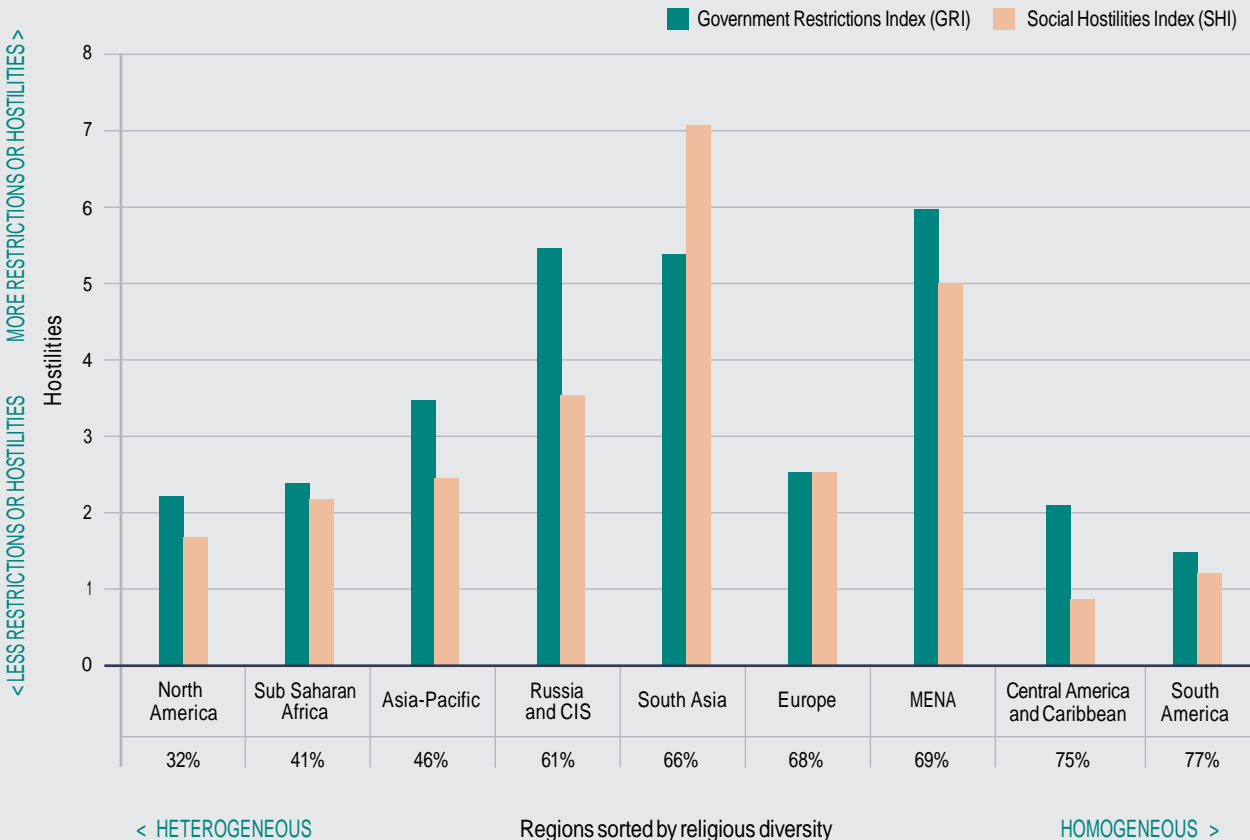
### GOVERNMENT TYPE

Full democracies have the best average performance in peace, and the lowest levels of religious restrictions and religious hostilities. Less regulation of religion reduces the grievances of religions, and also decreases the ability of any single religion to wield undue political power.<sup>19</sup>

Full democracies outperform every other government type. Full democracies are on average 58 per cent more peaceful, have 131 per cent less religious restrictions and 49 per cent less religious hostility than authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes have the worst performance in peace and unsurprisingly in religious restrictions. However, authoritarian regimes are the

**FIGURE 6 REGIONAL MEASURES OF GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX AND SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX BROKEN DOWN BY RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY**

Religious restrictions and religious hostilities fall on a bell-curve with the mid-levels of religious diversity having the worst performance. Europe is the only region against trend.

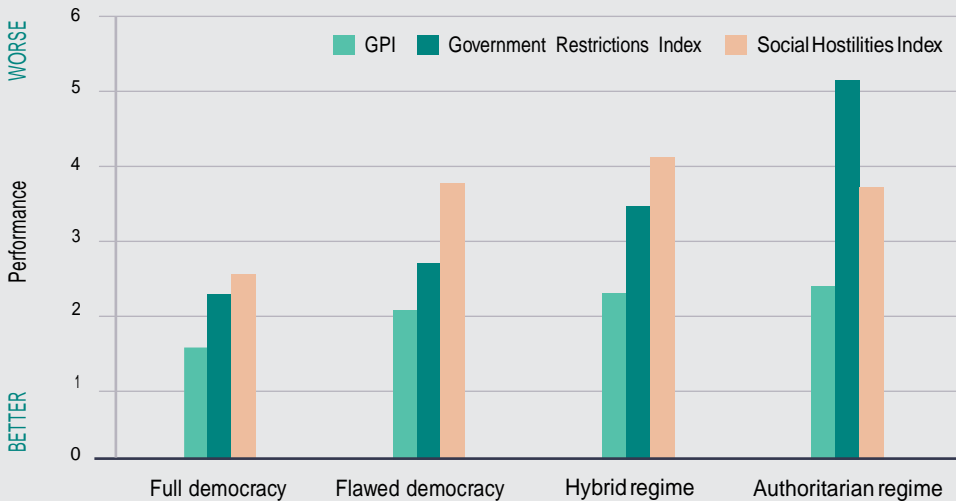


Source: IEP, PEW, World Religion Project

second best performing government type on the Social Hostilities Index, reflecting the ‘enforced peace’ that can occur in some authoritarian contexts.

Every full democracy, except the US, is amongst the 50 most peaceful countries in the world. Full democracies have disproportionately higher levels of non-believers than other forms of government. However, the overall proportions of atheists are generally very low and are therefore incapable of creating a strong influence on the factors that affect peace. Full democracies are peaceful regardless of the levels of religious belief.

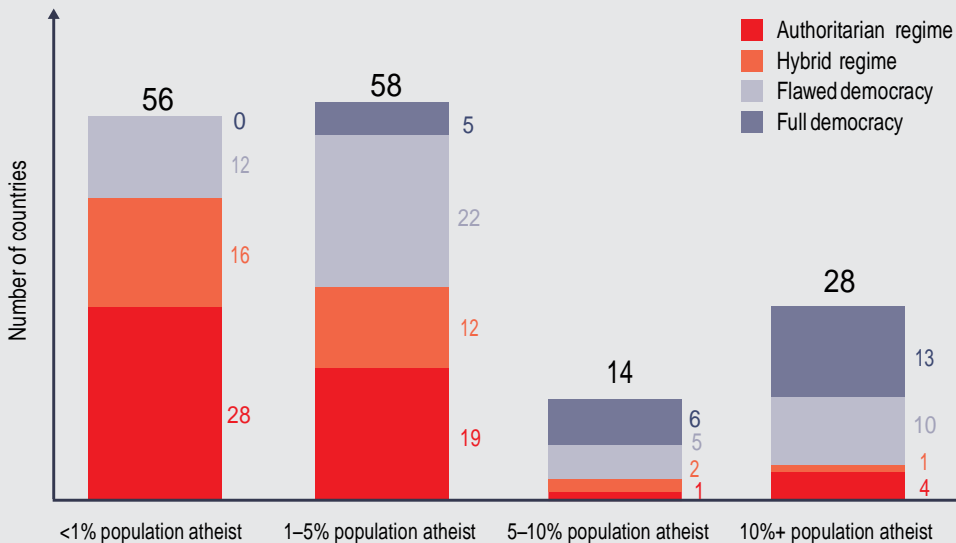
**FIGURE 7 PERFORMANCE BY GOVERNMENT TYPE FOR THE GPI, GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX AND SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX**  
Full democracies have the best performance in all indicators.



Source: IEP, PEW, EIU

**FIGURE 8 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION THAT BELIEVES IN RELIGION BY GOVERNMENT TYPE**

The countries with higher proportions of atheism are more likely to be full democracies. Those with lower proportions of atheism are more likely to be authoritarian or hybrid regimes.



Source: World Religion Project, EIU

# QUESTION 5 CAN RELIGION PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING?

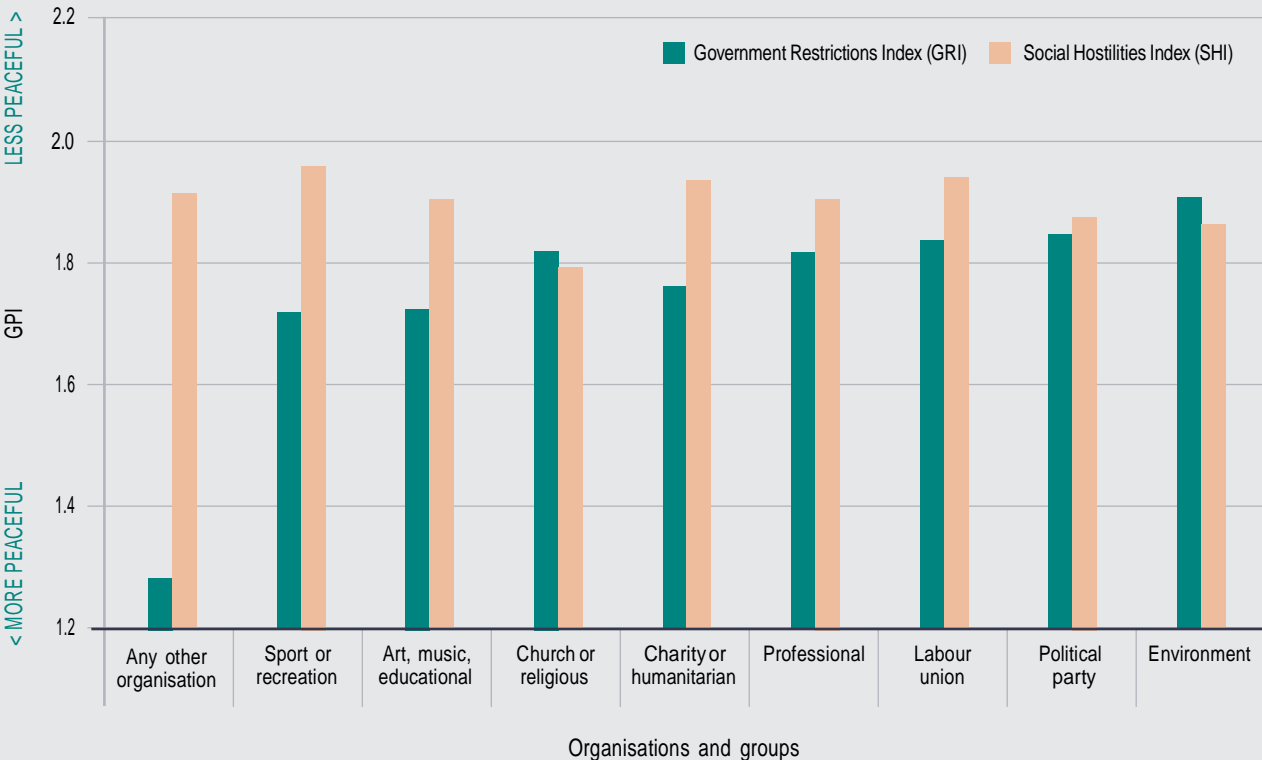
Although there is a tendency to focus on conflicts which can be defined by religious competition there are many examples where religious leaders have played significant roles in peace. Oft cited examples are Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King and the role they played in successful non-violent movements.

Two ways in which religions can facilitate greater peace is through the common benefits of group membership, and the power of inter-faith dialogue for conflict resolution. This is highlighted by the number of groups dedicated to inter-faith dialogue such as Religions for Peace which is a global organisation with hundreds of affiliates.

Additionally, research highlights that the membership of groups is a form of social capital and in general social capital is associated with better performance in peace. Greater religious membership can have a positive impact to a country's peace providing that it is tolerant and also depending on a complementary mix of attitudes, institutions and structures within a nation. The Pillars of Peace has found that civic engagement and participation is associated with gains in peace. A study of the responses from 46 countries in the World Values Survey finds that higher group membership corresponds with greater levels of peace.

**FIGURE 9 PEACE COMPARED TO ABOVE AND BELOW AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP RATES OF GROUPS**

Countries with above average membership rates for organisations are on average more peaceful. This includes membership of church or religious groups.



Source: World Values Survey



The category with the biggest difference between above and below average membership rates is for the 'Any Other Organisation' which includes any group not listed in Figure 9. This includes general social groups as well as general interest groups. Some examples would be gaming groups, appreciation societies, heritage groups, language groups and common interest groups. Given the large diversity of these groups and that it is user defined it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this, except that it confirms the trend whereby above average group membership rates corresponds with greater peace.

The difference between the two groups above average or below average membership rates consistently shows higher membership rates are associated with more peaceful countries, other than for environmental groups. The difference ranges from three per cent to 15 per cent.

Figure 9 demonstrates that there is a connection between religious membership and peace, although not large. This study included 47 countries and therefore the sample is not comprehensive. Nevertheless, the study does help to inform our understanding of the relationship between peace and religion. Membership could encourage improvements in several of the Pillars of Peace. For example, greater group membership could lead to improvements in the *Good Relations with Neighbours* Pillar. This Pillar refers to the relations between individuals and communities as well as to crossborder relations. Countries with positive external relations are more peaceful and tend to be more politically stable, have better functioning governments, are regionally integrated and have low levels of organised internal conflict.<sup>21</sup>

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Assessing whether religion is a vice or virtue for conflict does not allow for a nuanced understanding of its relationship with peace. Instead, a more holistic view of peace is needed. Whilst the relationship between religion and peace has some significance, there are many other factors which have greater explanatory power. Government type appears to have a much more significant connection with peace, and religious freedom, than religious characteristics. That is not to say that religious characteristics, like the absence of a dominant group and religious diversity, do not correspond with higher peace. Rather, there are other features which are more significant that are not related to religion.

## BOX 4 PEACEBUILDING AND INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

Another aspect of religion which can have a positive impact on peace is inter-faith dialogue and peacebuilding dialogues. Organisations such as Religions for Peace are global in reach and consist of hundreds of affiliated organisations.

Inter-faith dialogue is a growing area of conflict resolution and peacebuilding which has become more significant, especially in the twenty-first century. Inter-faith dialogue has been a successfully employed strategy in ending conflicts. This includes civil and political movements such as the interfaith movement surrounding the U.S. Civil Rights movement and the reconciliation efforts at the end of Apartheid in South Africa, as well as armed conflict including less well known events such as intervention of an imam and pastor in Yelwa Shendam Nigeria and the mediation of the Sant' Egidio Community which helped resolve the civil war in Mozambique in 1992. Religions for Peace for instance played a key role in ending the conflict in Sierra Leone via the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone.

Douglas Johnston, president of the International Centre on Religion and Diplomacy, has identified that there are certain conditions for faith-based intervention to have an increased likelihood of success. These include that there is a religious element to the conflict, the presence of religious leaders on both sides of a dispute, religious struggles that transcend national borders and if there has been delays in bringing about a resolution to the conflict.<sup>22</sup> There is a large body of literature which demonstrates the success of inter-faith dialogue as a catalyst for the cessation of armed conflict. This report does not seek to add to that body, but rather to note some of the positive elements of religion.

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## ENDNOTES

1. The Foundation is a non-partisan charitable organisation working with business people, academics, government officials and community leaders from multiple faiths (or of none) to educate the global business community about how religious freedom is good for business, and it engages the business community in joining forces with government and non-government organisations in promoting respect for freedom of religion or belief. More information can be found at: <http://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/>.
2. For example Hitchens C. (2007). *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York, USA: Twelve Books chapter 2.
3. Gort J., Jansen H., & Vroom H. (ed.s) (2002). *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities*. New York, USA: Rodopi B.V.
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11. See graphs in Appendix D.
12. Appendix E contains analysis done with the World Values Survey and the levels of self-reporting of atheism levels as well as the levels of those who answer that they never or practically never attend religious services. There is no notable trend of higher rates of atheism being associated with a better performance in the GPI. However, as 27 out of the 43 countries perform in the top 50 for the GPI it is not a representative sample.
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# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Five main sources of data have been used to measure and assess the relationship between religion and peace.

The first is the Global Peace Index (GPI) comprised of 22 indicators. The GPI uses the absence of violence or fear of violence as the definition of peace. The index consists of measures of external peace and internal peace. The indicators can also be divided into three groups, militarization, ongoing conflicts and societal safety and security.

### The measures of Militarization are:

- Military expenditure as a percentage of GDP;
- Number of armed-services personnel per 100,000 people;
- Volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as recipient (imports) per 100,000 people;
- Volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as supplier (exports) per 100,000 people;
- Financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions;
- Nuclear and heavy weapons capability;
- Ease of access to small arms and light weapons.

### The measures of Ongoing Conflict are:

- Number of external and internal conflicts fought;
- Number of deaths from organised conflict (external);
- Number of deaths from organised conflict (internal);
- Level of organised conflict (internal);
- Relations with neighbouring countries.

### The measures of Societal Safety and Security are:

- Level of perceived criminality in society;
- Number of refugees and displaced people as a percentage of the population;
- Political instability;
- Political terror;
- Terrorist activity;
- Number of homicides per 100,000 people;
- Level of violent crime;
- Likelihood of violent demonstrations;
- Number of jailed population per 100,000 people;
- Number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people.

The second source is comprised of two indices created by Pew Research which measure the levels of religious freedom within in a country. These indices have been generated by Pew and rely on published reports from 18 publicly available cross-national sources, including the U.S. State Department and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Religious freedom is made up of two components: low restrictions by the government and low hostility towards other religious groups. Hence, low levels of government restriction towards religion and social hostilities towards religion means a country will have strong religious freedom. Of note is that both indices are made up of negatively framed questions.

The first of these indices, the Government Restrictions Index (GRI), is comprised of 20 measures of government laws, policies and actions that restrict religious beliefs and practices, with a higher index score demonstrating more restrictions.

**Questions include:**

- Does any level of government interfere with worship or other religious practices?
- Is religious literature or broadcasting limited by any level of government?
- Was there harassment or intimidation of religious groups by any level of government?

The second index, the Social Hostilities Index (SHI), is comprised of 13 measures of acts of religious hostility by private individuals, organisations or groups in society. This includes religion-related armed conflict or terrorism, mob or sectarian violence, harassment over attire for religious reasons or other religion related intimidation or abuse. A higher index score for the SHI shows greater social hostilities.

**Questions include:**

- Were there crimes, malicious acts or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias?
- Did violence result from tensions between religious groups?
- Did organized groups use force or coercion in an attempt to dominate public life with their perspective on religion, including preventing some religious groups from operating in the country?

As the indices use the calendar year, comparisons to the Global Peace Index (GPI) are to the subsequent year. Of the 162 countries in the GPI, every country except North Korea are in the Government Restrictions Index and Social Hostilities Index. Unless stated otherwise, analysis using the Government Restrictions Index and Social Hostilities Index use the year 2012 and the 2013 GPI.

The third main source of data is the religious breakdown of different countries. This is relied upon to determine the correlation between the levels of people identifying as belonging to a particular religious group or not. There is a category for atheists. This data is sourced from the World Religion Project, which records percentages of state's population that practice a given religion.<sup>23</sup> This is done in three stages: creating a systematic classification of religious families; using major data sources and categorising religious breakdowns under the relevant classifications; and reconciling discrepancies of information from different sources. The 2010 data is the most up to date and therefore has been used. Religious changes within societies occur slowly, therefore the figures are considered accurate enough for this study.

The World Religion Project contains 2010 data for every country in the GPI except Syria and South Sudan.

The World Religion Project has been taken as authoritative on all recordings of atheism and religion in general. Atheism means non-belief, nonreligious, atheists or non-believers.<sup>24</sup> It is not used simply to mean no belief in a deity.<sup>25</sup> Whilst the World Values Survey relies on self-reported accounts of atheism and provides more detail on the attendance of church and religious ceremonies, it has details for only 43 countries for 2010. According to the World Values Survey only three countries, Sweden, Taiwan and South Korea, have significantly higher numbers of atheism than those recorded in the World Religion Project. However, in each case the World Values Survey was viewed as less reliable.

The fourth major source of data is the World Values Survey. This has been used as an alternate source for determining the levels of nonreligious people in a country, as well as in gauging attitudes to religion more generally. The World Values Survey relies on interviews and other survey techniques. Although different questions have not been asked in every country, the World Values Survey provides insights into the different membership rates for groups and organisations, including churches and religious organisations, within a country.

The fifth main data source is the Religious Diversity Index. Data from the World Religion Project is also used to measure religious diversity. Using the Herfindahl index methodology,<sup>26</sup> a tool to measure the market concentration of different industries, each country can be given a number which demonstrates the level of religious concentration: from heterogeneous to homogeneous. This number is called the Religious Diversity Index (RDI). A lower percentage means a country is more religiously diverse, whereas a higher percentage shows a more homogeneous religious breakdown.

There are two ways to classify religions: 'general' measures all forms of Christianity as the one measure, whereas 'all' measures all types of religious groups e.g. Catholicism as distinct from Protestantism etc. Unless stated otherwise, the Religious Diversity Index used relies on the 'all' measure for finer detail.

Although Pew have already generated a Religious Diversity Index, IEP created its own in order to be consistent in the data source for religion.<sup>27</sup> Pew employs estimates of the proportional breakdown of religious groups in countries from their Global Religious Landscape study. This study uses a Religious Diversity Index which relies on religious demographics supplied by the World Religion Project which allows for an understanding of the different breakdowns of religious sub-groups within a country.

## APPENDIX B

# EXPLANATION OF CONFLICT CATEGORIES

The seven categories that underpin conflict are not mutually exclusive, but rather there are conflicts which could fit into all categories. The definitions of the seven categories are:

- **'Identity-based'** refers to identity aspirations, which means conflicts which are caused by different groups demanding greater respect, recognition or resources as a result of membership of a particular group or identity. Identity refers to "collectivities based on ethnicity, religion or other ascriptive traits" meaning it is very broad and can include several types of grouping.
- **'Self-government (separatist)'** means the demand for self-determination and self-government, which is associated with separatist movements.
- **'Opposition to the ideological system'** means an opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a state. There were only two different types of conflict with system as a major factor in 2013. These two examples are groups that are driven to change the country into a communist state, such as FARC in Colombia, or the desire to introduce a different system of government shaped by particular understandings of Islam such as sharia law. Hence system based conflicts can involve religious elements and these have been dual coded in this methodology.
- **'Opposition to government'** means conflicts driven by opposition of the internal or international policies of a government. Many coups, for example, would be driven by opposition to government policies.
- **'Resource-based'** refers to fights to control the resources of a nation, which could include natural resources, territory or man-made resources such as mines or oil refineries.
- **'Territory-based'** refers simply to conflicts about the control of territory.
- **'Religious elements'** refers to conflicts where a major actor in the conflict claims affiliation with a particular religious group or tension between religions is a major cause of conflict. In 2013 the majority of conflicts with religious elements were based on establishing "an Islamic political structure or introduce or reinforce elements of Islamic law in the country's institutions or in the form of a state."

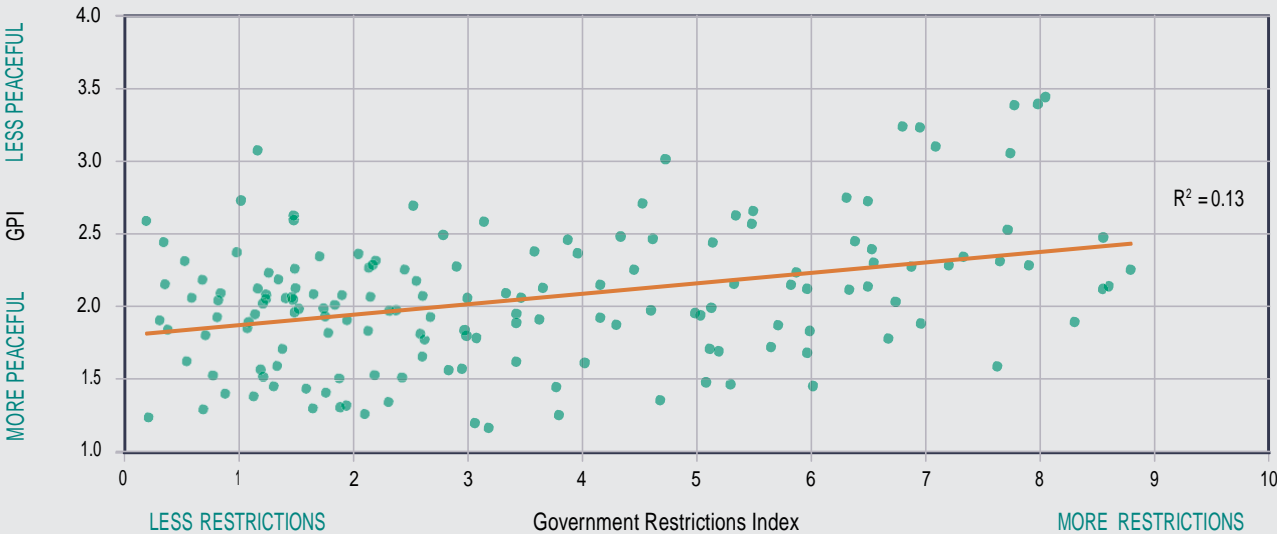
Source: Escola de Cultura de Pau. Alert 2014!

# APPENDIX C CORRELATION SCATTERPLOTS

**FIGURE 10** GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (2012) VS SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX (2012)



**FIGURE 11** GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (2012) VS GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



Sources: IEP, PEW

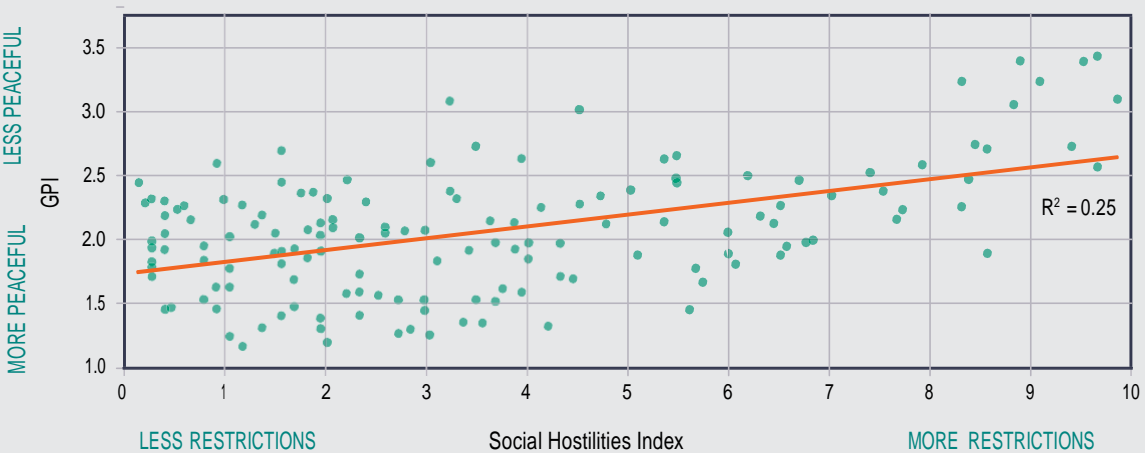
**FIGURE 12** GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (2012) VS EXTERNAL GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



**FIGURE 13** GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS INDEX (2012) VS INTERNAL GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



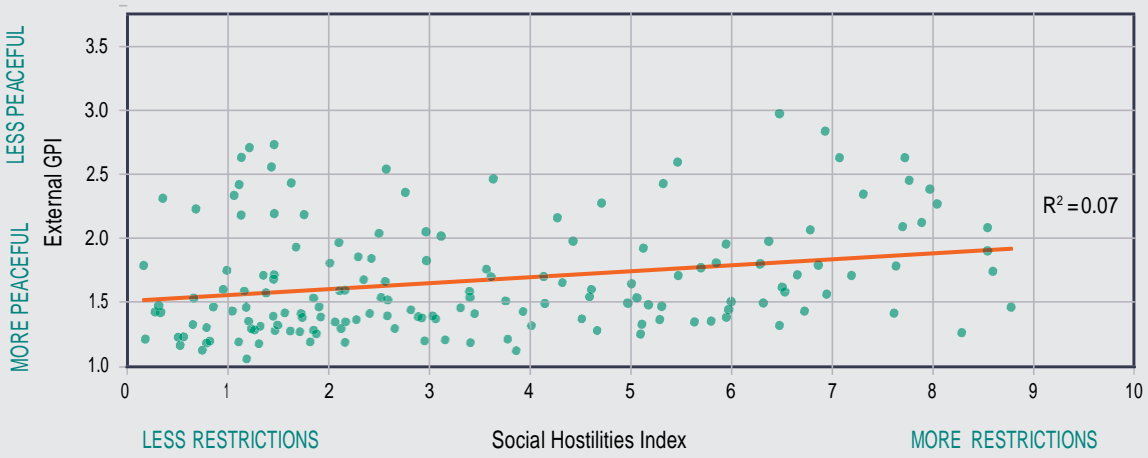
**FIGURE 14** SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX (2012) VS GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



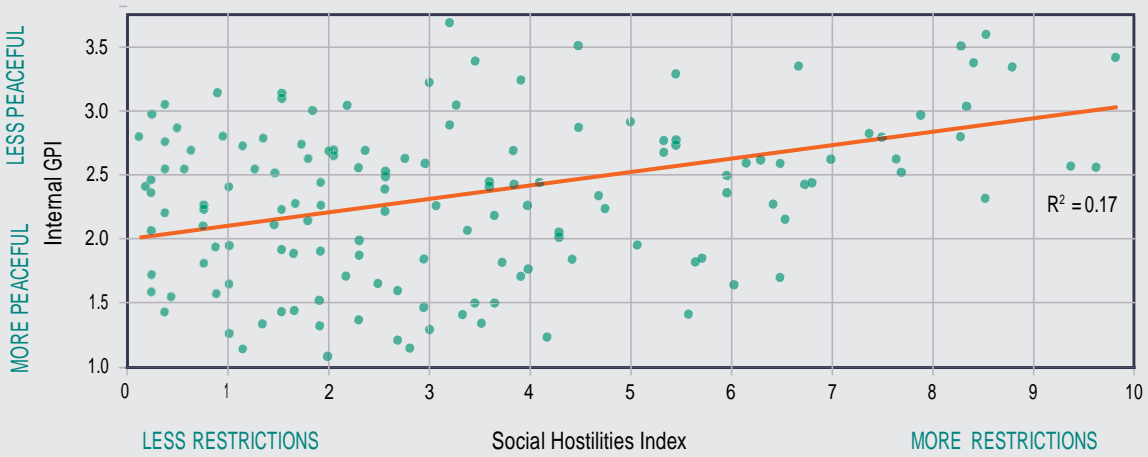
Sources: IEP, PEW



**FIGURE 15** SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX (2012) VS EXTERNAL GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



**FIGURE 16** SOCIAL HOSTILITIES INDEX (2012) VS INTERNAL GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (2013)



Sources: IEP, PEW

## APPENDIX D MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

**TABLE 5** RESULTS OF MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Internal	Estimate	Std. Error	T value	Pr (> t )
INTERCEPT	1.11E+00	3.57E-01	3.099	0.00260 **
POPULATION	-3.07E-10	1.26E-10	-2.431	0.01706 *
POLITICAL STABILITY	-3.23E-01	4.72E-02	-6.835	9.89E-10
POLITICAL TERROR SCALE	1.92E-01	4.19E-02	4.587	1.47e-
CORRUPT PERCEPTIONS INDEX	-1.13E-02	2.19E-03	-5.137	1.64E-06
FDI OF GDP	-5.95E-03	4.02E-03	-1.481	0.14223
GENDER INEQUALITY	7.78E-01	4.53E-01	1.718	0.08927
MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING	1.17E-02	1.23E-02	0.954	0.34283
GDP PER CAPITA	4.43E-06	1.56E-06	2.832	0.00572
GINI COEFFICIENT	1.41E-02	2.60E-03	5.416	5.13e-07 ***
RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY INDEX	-2.15E-01	9.89E-02	-2.175	0.03226 *
MULTIPLE R SQUARED	0.8992			
ADJUSTED R SQUARED	0.8879			
F-STATISTIC	79.42 on 10 and 89 DF			
P-VALUE	<2.2e-16			
RESIDUAL STANDARD ERROR	0.2092 on 89 degrees of freedom			

## INTERPRETATION

Shows the amount of change in the dependent variable due to a one unit increase in the independent variable. For this we can say that a one unit increase in the Gini coefficient is related to a "1.41E-02" increase in the internal GPI.

$n - p$ , where  $n$  is the number of observations, and  $p$  is the number of coefficients in the model, including the intercept. For example, the model has four predictors, so the Error degrees of freedom is  $100 - 11 = 89$ .

Test statistic for the F-test on the regression model. It tests for a significant linear regression relationship between the response variable and the predictor variables.  
p-value for the F-test on the model.  
For example, the model is significant with a p-value of  $< 2.2e-16$ .

t-statistic for each coefficient to test the null hypothesis that the corresponding coefficient is zero against the alternative that it is different from zero, given the other predictors in the model. Note that  $tStat = Estimate/SE$ . For example, the t-statistic for the intercept is  $47.977/3.8785 = 12.37$ .

Coefficient of determination and adjusted coefficient of determination, respectively. For example, the R-squared value suggests that the model explains approximately 89 per cent of the variability in the response variable GPI.

Adjusted r squared is simply the r squared which has been adjusted for the number of predictors in the model. This is beneficial when using a model such as the one above which holds numerous predictor variables.

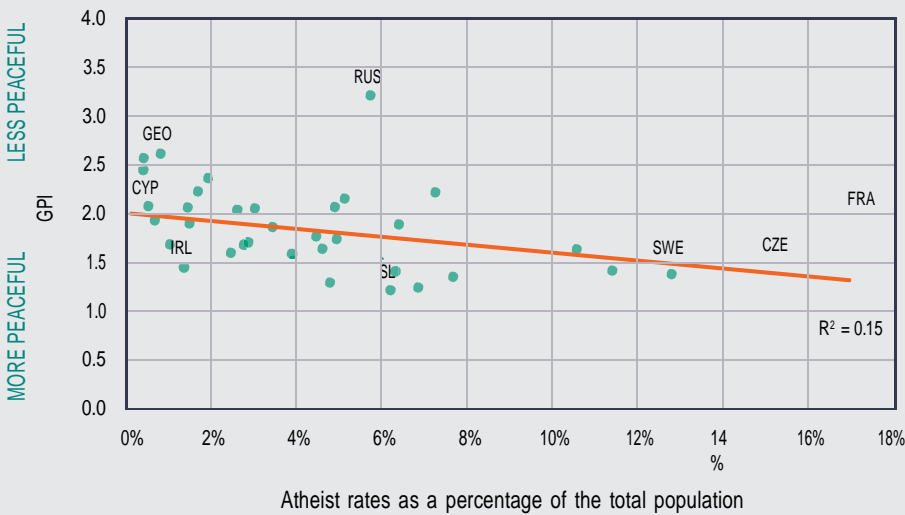
# APPENDIX E

## WORLD VALUES SURVEY VIEW

The World Values Survey has only limited data points for atheism and religious service attendance in 2010. There is a bias towards European countries.

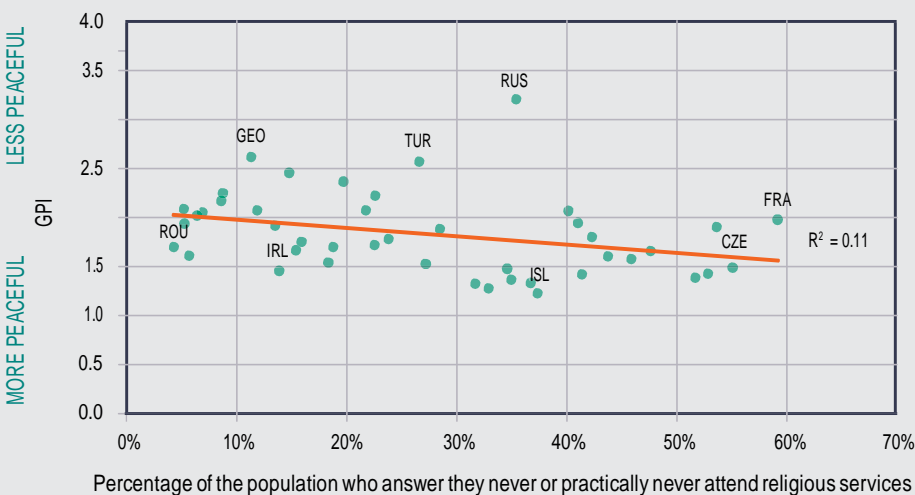
**FIGURE 17 GPI (2013) VS LEVELS OF ATHEISM (2010 WORLD VALUES SURVEY)**

There is a mild trend of higher rates of atheism being associated with a better performance in the GPI. However, as 27 out of the 43 countries perform in the top 50 for the GPI it is not a representative sample.



**FIGURE 18 GPI (2013) VS THOSE WHO ANSWER THEY NEVER OR PRACTICALLY NEVER ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES (2010 WORLD VALUES SURVEY)**

There is an extremely weak link between higher reportage of never attending religious services and a better performance in the GPI. Again, it is a small sample size which relies mainly on European countries.



Sources: IEP, World Values Survey

# OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS AND PEACE

## **2014 Global Peace Index Report** *Institute for Economics and Peace* – February 2014

The 2014 GPI Report analyses the state of peace around the world and identifies countries most at risk of becoming less peaceful.



## **Global Terrorism Index 2012** *Institute for Economic and Peace* – December 2012

The Global Terrorism Index is the first index to systematically rank and compare 158 countries according to the impact of terrorism.



## **The Economic Cost of Violence Containment**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– February 2014

A new methodology that calculates the cost of preventing and containing violence in over 150 countries.



## **Violence Containment Spending in the United States**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– September 2012

Violence Containment Spending provides a new methodology to categorise and account for the public and private expenditure on containing violence.



## **Mexico Peace Index**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– November 2013

The Mexico Peace Index measures the state of peace in all 32 Mexican states analysing trends and drivers of peace over the last ten years.



## **Global Peace Index 2012**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– June 2012

The Global Peace Index is the world's preeminent measure of peacefulness. This is the 6th edition of the Global Peace Index.



## **Pillars of Peace**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– September 2013

Pillars of Peace is a new conceptual framework for understanding and describing the factors that create a peaceful society.



## **United States Peace Index 2012**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– April 2012

The 2012 United States Peace Index has found that the U.S. is more peaceful now than at any other time over the last twenty years.



## **Global Peace Index 2013**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– June 2013

The 2013 GPI Report analyses the state of peace around the world, identifying trends in violence and conflict, as well as the key drivers of peace.



## **Economic Consequences of War on the U.S. Economy**

*Institute for Economics and Peace*  
– February 2012

The Economic Consequences of War on the U.S. Economy analyses the macroeconomic effects of U.S. government spending on wars since World War II.



## **United Kingdom Peace Index 2013**

*Institute for Economic and Peace*  
– April 2013

The UK Peace Index report analyses the fabric of peace in the UK over the last decade and has found that since 2003 the UK has become more peaceful.



## **Measuring Peace in the Media 2011**

*Institute for Economics and Peace and Media Tenor*  
– January 2012

For the second year, IEP and Media Tenor have jointly analysed global television networks' coverage of peace and violence issues; it covers over 160,000 news items from 31 news and current affairs programs that air on four continents.



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