

Religious Persecution in Cross-National Context: Clashing Civilizations or Regulated Religious Economies?

Running Head: Religious Persecution in Cross-National Context

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ABSTRACT

Despite the high visibility of religiously charged international social conflicts, the unique role of religion often is overlooked in social science research and theory. Some studies ignore religion, others conflate religion with other identities. Virtually all lack adequate data. We respond to these deficiencies by testing a theory-driven model of a particular form of social conflict, *religious persecution*. We investigate the proposition that religious regulation leads to religious persecution. Using measures coded from the *2003 International Religious Freedom Reports*, we consider how both social regulation and government regulation of religion in 143 countries affect the level of religious persecution in a country. We also consider and test competing hypotheses, particularly Samuel P. Huntington's clash-of-civilizations thesis. We find strong support for the religious economies arguments and only limited support for the clash-of-civilizations' thesis and other competing arguments.

BODY TEXT

At a time when religiously charged social conflicts are prevalent around the globe, social science research and theory have remarkably little to say about religion's unique role in these events. Many theories of social conflict view economic and political interests as the powerful forces that fuel the flames of dissent, with religion merely marking the boundaries for political alliances and economic concerns. To the extent that religion is included, it often is subsumed under ethnicity or other regional cultures. One of the few exceptions is found in Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1993, 1996). Huntington places religion at the core of cultural divides and considers religion a source of social conflict. His work, however, holds assumptions that many find untenable and faces research challenges on multiple fronts (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Henderson 2004; Jenkins 2002; Midlarsky 1998; Russett, Oneal, and Cox 2000; Tipson 1997; Weede 1998). Thus, most theories ignore the role of religion in social conflicts, even when the social conflict seems centered on religion.

Another reason for excluding religion from the study of social conflict is the lack of data that go beyond descriptive demographics *and* that cover most countries of the world (Grim and Finke 2005, 2006; Hsu et al. 2005). The religious forces related to social conflict are poorly identified and seldom measured. Most quantitative research is limited to a few measures on religious affiliation and survey data from selected countries. Measures on how the state treats religion, how religions are viewed by the larger culture, and the level of religious persecution are weak or absent. While a few studies go beyond the most basic measures of religion (e.g., Fox and Sandler 2003), even these efforts lack adequate measures of religious persecution or conflict.

Christian Davenport (2005) has pointed out the shortage of detailed data on conflict, Errol A. Henderson (1997:650) has stressed the need to “employ large-*N* research designs” in the empirical study of conflict, and Mark Lichbach (1989, 2006) has called for a closer link between the theoretical and statistical examinations of *specific forms* of conflict. We respond to these calls by using data collected to test a theory-driven model of a specific form of social conflict that has been common throughout recorded history: religious persecution (i.e., *physical abuse or displacement* due to one’s religion). Some religious demographers estimate that more than 200 million persons across all major religious traditions have been killed because of their religious affiliation during the past two millennia (Barrett and Johnson 2001:227). Even today, no religion is exempt from persecution. Jews remain targets of aggression in many regions of the world. Adherents of minority Muslim faiths have been jailed, deported, and/or killed in Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Dali Lama lives in exile as a symbol of the persecution of Buddhists. Hindus are fatally persecuted in Bangladesh and elsewhere. Practitioners of Falun Gong, Catholic bishops, Protestant house church leaders, and other religious figures are routinely jailed in China. Christian peace activists have been kidnapped, tortured and executed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq. In countries such as Singapore, religions which operate freely in many countries, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, are officially condemned as a dangerous cults or sects and many of their members are jailed for their religious conscientious objection to armed military service.

Our research addresses this topic with new data and new explanations. First, drawing on the religious economies theory, we view religion and religious persecution as more than a byproduct of economic and political forces. Contrary to the implications of the clash-of-

civilizations thesis, however, we argue that the attempt to regulate cultural and religious consensus within countries results in greater religious persecution. Second, drawing on data coded from the 2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, we develop measures for religious persecution and religious regulation. Combining these data with other cross-national sources allows us to empirically test multiple hypotheses explaining religious persecution.

EXPLAINING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Over the past few decades, much of the research on social conflict has focused on the relationships between pairs of countries (dyads, cf. Garnham 1976). Such research has evaluated the impact of proximity, power, status, alliances, development, and militarization, the causes of peace rather than conflict (e.g., Silverson and Ward 2002), and the pacific benefits of democracy, economic interdependence, and involvement in international organizations (e.g., Oneal and Russett 1999). Religion is noticeably absent. Even when moral dilemmas were part of the analysis, individual and psychological empirical approaches have not addressed religion (e.g., Quattrone and Tversky 1988). Game theory and deterrence theory also are used to study international conflicts (e.g., Putnam 1988), but they seldom are amenable to the inclusion of culture or religion variables. A study of state-sponsored mass murder paid attention to psychological, economic, internal and external upheaval explanations, and even ethnic fractionalization (Krain 1997). It did not, however, measure the possibility of religious-oriented causes or outcomes. Likewise, cross-national research addressing topics touching on religion, such as ethnicity, have focused on issues other than religion (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2000). Thus, most empirical research on conflict tends to look for political and economic causes and not consider religion. Some have gone so far as to

rule out religious causes altogether (e.g., Kunovich and Hodson 1999; McGarry and O’Leary 1995;).

Although several qualitative and historical studies have highlighted the importance of religion (e.g., Paden 2005), only a handful of quantitative studies have included religion (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003). Even these studies are often lacking adequate data and a clear theoretical framework that addresses religion to guide the research. Social-psychological monographs, such as Mark Juergensmeyer’s *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (2003), explain religious violence as emanating from social conditions that foster a corrupted version of religion.¹ Picturing such violence merely as a corruption of religion fails to account for the displacement and death of people because of their religious orientation, such as the sectarian massacres endemic in Iraq today or the so-called ethnic [religious] cleansing in Bosnia which fell along religious lines or the Holocaust of millions of Jews during World War II or the forced movement and massacre of hundreds of thousands of Armenians prior to World War I.

Of the explanations that do take religion seriously, Huntington’s arguments are one of the boldest attempts to return culture and religion to the fore in explaining social conflict. The trend he identifies seems obvious and holds an intuitive appeal: Civilizations of the world are organized around the major world religions and are often in conflict. We applaud Huntington’s efforts to acknowledge the powerful forces of religion and culture, but we part company in several areas.

Whereas Huntington calls upon countries to avoid conflicts by reaffirming their commitment to a single civilization, we argue that attempts to force religious homogeneity within a country can result in conflict. We acknowledge the potential tension of multiple

religions residing in the same country, but we draw attention to the consequences (often unintended) of religious regulation. Below we review Huntington's work and contrast it with our own arguments using a religious economies theory.

THE CLASH-OF-CIVILIZATIONS

The clash-of-civilizations perspective is wide ranging and, at times, general to the point of being un-testable. Huntington specifically states that his work is "not intended to be a work of social science" but rather a new "paradigm" (1996:12) for the *understanding* of the post-Cold War evolution of global politics. He explains that the world was kept in equilibrium by the alliances that squared off during the Cold War, but the collapse of the Soviet Bloc threw this balance out of kilter. Now, instead of geo-political alliances, "culture and cultural identities ... are shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world" (ibid:20). Huntington claims that these cultural identities are at their broadest level best conceived of as "civilizations," which have been primarily "identified with the world's great religions" (ibid:42). The way to avoid conflict (and we would add persecution) from this perspective is to keep the civilizations from clashing.

Though Huntington devotes the bulk of his arguments and examples to conflicts between countries, he explains that the "clash of civilizations . . . occurs at two levels". One points to the civilization divides across countries and regions, the other refers to the "fault lines between civilizations" within countries or territories (Huntington 1993:29). Reflecting on these two levels for the West he concludes that "[m]ulticulturalism at home threatens the United States and the West; universalism abroad threatens the West and the world" (Huntington 1996:318). For Huntington, civilization fault lines are a source of conflict; civilization homogeneity is a source of unity and peace.

Huntington acknowledges that it is a “highly simplified” picture (ibid:29). The centerpiece of this perspective is the thesis that “countries with similar cultures are coming together” while “countries with different cultures are coming apart” (ibid:125). Although the clash-of-civilizations model does not address if or when religion should be regulated or how a consensus should be attained, the implications are clear: religious homogeneity and consensus, like other forms of culture, should be promoted to avoid conflicts.

When the clash-of-civilizations perspective is applied to religion, however, it faces a number of challenges. We highlight only two. First, the clash-of-civilizations perspective must theoretically account for the great diversity *within* civilizations. It presumes that religions are intrinsically tied to specific societies and cultures, leading an analyst to proceed as if Arabs are Muslims, Chinese are Buddhists, Indians are Hindu, Europeans are Christians, and so on. In his seminal work, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins notes that Huntington “refers to ‘Western Christendom’ as if there could be no other species” (2002:6). However, the center of Christianity, as demonstrated by Jenkins, has shifted south and east. The largest single Christian congregation today is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, with over 800,000 members; and there are more Christians today in Eastern Africa than in Western Europe (World Christian Database 2005). Moreover, religious hegemonies can and do change: Spain was once a Muslim land and Algeria a Christian land; India was once a Buddhist land; the United States was once a land of native beliefs; Latin America was once indigenous, later Catholic, but may soon be evangelical and Pentecostal (Pew Forum 2006). We acknowledge that religion has served as an integrative force and is interwoven into regional cultures, but history fails to reflect Huntington’s simplified image of religious uniformity or stability.

Second, the clash-of-civilizations perspective must overcome the “religious explanation” problem, i.e., the difficulty of explaining social behavior based on *general* religious tradition. The classic example of such a general religious explanation is Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). The Protestant Ethic is intellectually captivating but empirically elusive (Stark 2004). Huntington’s work is similarly captivating and has triggered a variety of responses, some of which seek to operationalize his perspective (e.g., Beckfield 2003), and others which critique his perspective (Russett, Oneal, and Cox 2000; Tipson 1997; Weede 1998). When social conflict is attributed to cultural differences, however, explanations for social behavior quickly become obscure, vague and unsatisfying.

We acknowledge that general religious traditions help to mold and distinguish one culture from another, but viewing social conflict from a religious economies perspective allows us to identify and test whether a common mechanism operates across religious traditions. Rather than pointing to the general differences between Muslims, Christians, and other religions, we draw attention to the consequences of religious regulation, regardless of the religious traditions involved. We believe this provides a more coherent and useful explanation for social conflict than attributing conflict to clashes between general and irreconcilable religious traditions or civilizations.

RELIGIOUS ECONOMIES AND THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS REGULATION

The religious economies model was first developed to explain variations in religious activity. A central thesis is that when religious economies are unregulated and competitive, overall levels of religious commitment will be high (Finke and Stark 1988; Stark and Finke 2000). The theory goes on to explain that regulating religion restricts the supply of religion

by changing the incentives and opportunities for religious producers (religious leaders and organizations) (Finke 1990). That is, regulated religions will face increased entry and operating costs and will not compete on equal footing with religions condoned by the state. Initially used to explain the surge in religious activity in America following religious deregulation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Finke 1990; Finke and Stark 1992), it has since been used to explain religious change around the globe (Froese 2001; Gill 1994; Iannaccone, Finke, and Stark 1997; Stark and Finke 2000).

We extend this argument in two significant ways. First, we increase the scope of the argument. Whereas past work has sought to explain levels of religious activity, we seek to explain the level of religious persecution. How does the regulation of religion contribute to religious persecution? We argue that less regulation prevents persecution by ensuring fair competition for all religions within a society. Deregulating religious markets results in a rich pluralism where no single religion can monopolize religious activity and all religions can compete on a level playing field. Religious grievances against the state and other religions are reduced because all religions can compete for the allegiance of the people without the interference of the state.²

But not only does less regulation of religion reduce the grievances of religions, it also decreases the ability of any single religion to wield undue political power. To the extent that a religious group achieves a monopoly and holds access to the temporal power and privileges of the state, the ever-present temptation is to openly persecute religious competitors. When the state offers privileges to all religions and power to none, no single religion can claim the authority of the state. Thus, we argue that to the degree that governments ensure religious freedoms for all, there will be less conflict between religions and less religious persecution.

The pacifying effect of allowing multiple religions to freely compete has been noticed by many. Over two and a half centuries ago Voltaire wrote: “If there were only one religion in England there would be danger of despotism, if there were two they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness” (1980 [1733]:41). A few decades later, Adam Smith (1976 [1776]:314) explained that the “zeal of religious teachers can be dangerous and troublesome only where there is, either but one sect tolerated in the society, or where the whole of a large society is divided into two or three great sects.” And, though not speaking from a religious economics perspective, N.J. Demerath III offers a similar assessment for contemporary global religion, arguing “that the state must set the rules for cultural conflict and assure an equitable framework for religious diversity” (2002:124).

Our second extension is more subtle but equally important. Rather than limit our attention to the state’s formal regulation of religion, we give attention to regulatory forms that are embedded in the larger culture or in institutions and movements beyond the state. This regulation is often mobilized by a dominant religion that either lacks the authority of the state or wants to go beyond the state’s actions. Previous work has shown that even when religious economies are unregulated by the state, religious cartels form in an attempt to restrict the activities of other religions (Finke and Stark 2005). Yet this form of regulation has been largely ignored by previous tests of this theory. Religions, social movements, cultural context, and institutions beyond the state can all foster regulatory actions that lead to persecution. Accordingly, we define *religious regulation* as *the legal and social restrictions that inhibit the practice, profession, or selection of religion*.

Including both government and social regulatory forces are important for three reasons. First, past research has shown that legal restrictions on religion arise from social

origins. Popular religious movements, immigration patterns, political structure, and economic interests have all driven changes in the legal regulations placed on religion (Finke 1990; Gill 2005).³ Second, the enforcement of legal restrictions relies on social forces. When the local social groups and beliefs support legal codes, this eases regulatory actions, reduces monitoring costs and increases effective enforcement. For example, William Brustein (2003) has documented the pre-existence of widespread anti-Semitism throughout Europe prior to the Holocaust. This anti-Semitism eased the enactment of regulations against Jews and enhanced the enforcement of such regulations. And third, when certain religions are targets of persecution, this may increase regulation either by mobilizing religious groups that cooperate with the regime or by mobilizing religious groups that counter the regime. As evidenced by the legitimate political participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan today (Wiktorowicz 2001), government persecution of select religions can embolden the actions of social, political, and religious groups that learn how to work within the system. But repressed groups also have the potential to increase social and government regulation. When considering the 1990s atrocities in Algeria, Mohammed M. Hafez (2004) notes that religiously-motivated groups operating under repressive regimes became cohesive social forces that regulated and persecuted those not supporting their agendas. As a result, they drew the regulatory attention of the government and opened the door for even more persecution. The end result is an ongoing cycle: regulation → persecution → regulation → persecution. Understanding both social and government regulatory forces is essential for explaining religious persecution.

These extensions to the religious economies theory allow us to address the two challenges to the civilizations perspective described above. First, we argue that the religious economies perspective better accounts for the great “*diversity*” within civilizations and

religious traditions than does the civilization approach. The religious economies perspective presupposes a wide variety of religious preferences within any given society (Stark and Finke 2000:193-217). This presupposition also acknowledges that the various residents of the Arab world may be Muslim as well as Assyrian, Coptic, and Maronite Christians, not to mention Druze who draw on elements of Greek philosophy and Christian Gnosticism as part of their Islamic identity. It recognizes that Chinese may be Buddhist as well as Protestant, Muslim, Catholic, Confucian, etc. Indians may be Hindu as well as Sikh, Muslim, Catholic, Baptist, etc. Europeans and Westerners may be Christian as well as many other religions, or just believe without belonging (Davie 1990) or even lack belief (Voas and Crockett 2005). Indeed, none of the three most populous countries in Asia — China, India and Indonesia, representing well over a third of the world's population — falls neatly into religiously oriented civilizations. They are crossroads where all the major faiths are significantly represented (cf. Hefner 2000). Thus, diversity within civilizations, what Huntington refers to as the “divisive siren calls of multiculturalism” (1996:307), is a social fact in much of the world today.

Second, a religious economies perspective addresses the “*religious explanation problem*” of the civilization perspective by analyzing specific actions and behaviors rather than general religious traditions. Whereas a civilization approach tends to reify religion and culture as constants from a bygone era, the religious economies explanation emphasizes the dynamic nature of religion within culture and turns to the specific actions of the state and the nation's population. It also recognizes that religious loyalties can change on a large scale, as when the Christian Byzantine Empire became the Muslim Ottoman Empire, or on a small scale, as when the American boxer Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali. This does not

dismiss the importance of religious beliefs or the religious groups within which they are practiced, but it draws attention to the actions of the people involved in these traditions.

We acknowledge that conflict does occur across civilization divides and even helps to explain calls for greater regulation, but we argue that the *mechanism* explaining religious persecution within countries is the social and governmental regulation of religion. We also acknowledge that regulations are not always targeted at denying religious freedoms or controlling religious minorities. Yet, even when the intent of regulation is increasing a nation's security, we suggest that it can have the "unintended consequence" of persecution. Our model also suggests that religious persecution can in turn generate greater social regulation either by enhancing pre-existing prejudices or by serving as a focus for mobilizing religious groups in favor of or opposed to the religious regulations of the government. Many examples could be given, but conscious of space constraints, we offer four. (Later in this paper, the example of Iraq will also be discussed.)

First, social regulation of religion in India is a significant pressure and can result in government policies that promote persecution. This includes the powerful Hindutva movement (Rao 2004), which espouses Hindu hegemony at least at local levels. Such pressures have resulted in local anti-conversion laws which have legitimated accosting those who voluntarily convert from Hinduism (U.S. State Department 2006). Such regulations are not only in response to Hindu pressures: Indian Muslims have also been successful in lobbying the Indian government to support establishing Shari'a village councils. Such councils can make rulings that allegedly result in persecution (Legal Correspondent 2006). The situation in India has parallels with the situation in Nigeria, where some states respond positively to either Islam or Christianity (Paden 2005). Likewise, in Mexico, inadequate

enforcement of national policies has allowed local authorities in Chiapas and some other states to persecute people based on their religious affiliation (Navarro 2004).

Second, while religious freedom seemed to initially flourish as the Soviet Union collapsed, religion is becoming more heavily regulated by governments in response to the activities of religions (Richardson, Krylova and Shterin 2004). In Kazakhstan, which has had fairly pacific religious diversity, there are social pressures upon the government to prevent alternative faiths to Islam becoming established among ethnic Kazakhs, resulting in some persecution of minority faiths (Rotor 2007). Majority religions, however, are not always favored by those in power. In Uzbekistan, for example, the government cracks down on aggressive movements from within the majority Muslim religion (Hanks 2004; Rotor 2007).

Third, government regulation of religion in China empowers security forces to persecute religions they view as threats (Human Rights Watch 2006; Kindopp and Hamrin 2004). Fenggang Yang (2006) explains that this has resulted in three religious markets: officially permitted religions (red market), officially banned religions (black market), and religions with an ambiguous status (gray market). But the boundaries between these markets are fuzzy and fluid. When the state is challenged by religions (e.g., Tibetan Buddhist attempts to establish independence or Falun Gong protests against Beijing leadership) and regulation increases for all, many of the gray market religions now fall within the black market and are vulnerable to the state's persecution.

Fourth, in March 2004 it became illegal in France to wear conspicuous religious symbols in public schools (U.S. State Department 2005). Wearing a Muslim *hijab*, or head covering, can lead to official and societal discrimination (Windle 2004) and even physical

abuse, e.g., nine months after the legislation, there were cases of aggression because women were wearing headscarves (EUMC 2006:73-75).

OTHER EXPLANATIONS

As mentioned above, traditional explanations for social conflict have centered on concepts *other than* religion or other forms of culture. We will test many of these arguments as we develop a model for explaining religious persecution. Below we briefly review alternative arguments for explaining social conflict, including armed conflict, demographics, the economy, ethnicity, gender, the longevity of democracy, and dominant religion.

The importance of war as an independent variable has been suggested by Gregory Hooks (1994). It may be that religious persecution is an unintentional byproduct of armed conflict, or *collateral damage*, and thus has little to do with religious regulation or even religious fault lines (for a discussion, see Stark 2001). We agree that religious persecution can be a byproduct of more general armed conflict, but we do not expect it to explain fully or primarily the prevalence of religious persecution.

Many others researchers (including Huntington) link demographic and economic trends to social conflict, arguments that can be generalized to religious persecution. The demographic arguments frequently point to the effects of population growth. Huntington (1996), for example, observes that the high growth rates in Muslim countries and the accompanying glut of unemployed males between the ages of fifteen and thirty may be a source of instability and violence (also see Juergensmeyer 2003). But the arguments on the effects of economic development are far less consistent. Kenneth N. Waltz (1979) suggests that as a country's power increases, it can better afford to risk mistakes. Based on this principle we would expect that the more powerful economies have "wider margins of safety

in dealing with the less powerful” (Waltz 1979:194) and will less frequently resort to religious persecution. Past research has also suggested that sudden changes in the economy (Hefner 2000) or high levels of income inequality (Diamond 2005) can lead to social conflict. But there is a substantial literature that suggests just the contrary, i.e., income inequality concomitant to economic growth does not drive social conflict (e.g., Weede 1986).

One of the many justifications used for excluding religion from previous work on social conflict is that ethnicity taps into the most significant differences. Even scholars proposing cultural explanations of social conflict typically conflate ethnicity and religion, with some referring to “ethno-religious” activity (e.g., Norris and Inglehart 2004). While religion and ethnicity do overlap, they are not identical, and the degree of overlap will vary greatly by country.⁴

Yet another important consideration is gender. Norris and Inglehart suggest that the central fault line between the West and Islam involves issues of gender equality and sexual liberalization (2004:155). Fadwa El Guindi (1999) warns, however, that what a Westerner considers a sign of gender inequality may not be seen as such in the local community, such as wearing the *hijab*. So as not to superimpose a Western perspective, we will focus on the opportunities women have for health, income and education. Like others arguing that freedoms are a bundled commodity (Sen 1999), we expect that the betterment of women’s lives is closely related to religious freedoms and other civil liberties.

Democracy has also proven an important predictor of social conflict. Put simply, democracy, *given enough time*, will bring about social and legal transformations that ensure the peaceful commonweal of a country. Given that democracy, at least in the western

understanding of the term, implies deregulation, we expect that this will have a significant effect on religious regulation and religious persecution.

Finally, we would be remiss not to consider differences due to the two largest and proselytizing religions today: Islam and Christianity. To what extent does the domination of a country by one of these religions explain religious conflict? And, when the state relies on religious courts and laws (e.g., Shari'a law), does this increase persecution? We want to see whether our model explains persecution *across these religious traditions*. Despite discussions in the popular press, research has seldom included these obvious controls.

MODELING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

The core of our argument is that religious regulation — composed of *social* and *government* regulation — helps explain *religious persecution*, a specific form of *social conflict*. We expect that when governments ensure religious freedom and equitable treatment for all religions, less persecution will result. We will also investigate whether religious persecution legitimized by government regulations has a feedback effect that increases social regulation. Figure 1 summarizes the arguments that will be tested.

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

This model requires far more cultural and religion measures than have been tested in previous conflict models. Below we describe a series of new measures used in testing the model, beginning with a description of the source of our coded measures.

MAIN SOURCE: THE 2003 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORTS

The main measures we use to test our model are coded variables from the 2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, which are a product of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. Elsewhere, the strict procedures used for coding the reports have been

described in detail (see Grim 2005; Grim et al. Forthcoming; Grim and Finke 2006).

Recognizing, however, that this is a new data source, we will describe the strengths and limitations of this source in some detail. The reports are a structured, retrospective, qualitative survey of most countries of the world. The U.S. State Department started compiling reports in 1997. Although the initial reports were loosely structured, in 2001 they took on the reporting format shown in Figure 2 and are now widely regarded by international legal scholars and humanitarians as the most extensive and reliable source of information available on religious freedom.⁵

[Insert Figure 2 about here.]

The 2003 reports are bounded (July 1, 2002, to June 30, 2003), but they also include retrospective information on events that have been systematically monitored at least since the State Department's Interim Report (1998). Therefore, the data in these reports approximate a trend study, which captures both recurring problems and specific problems that occurred during the reporting period. The lengths of the reports vary according to the number of documented violations of religious freedom identified in the country. For example, the 2003 report for Indonesia contains 12,632 words while the report for Brazil has only 1,193 words.⁶

These reports offer several advantages when compared to other sources of cross-national data that both establish their credibility and minimize their bias. First, the reports carefully document the times, places, perpetrators, and numbers of victims of violations of religious freedom that affect persons of any faith, from Ahmadis to Zoroastrians. Second, the data are initially assembled by embassy officials living in the country, not representatives of the local government, the media, or residents with their own vested perspectives; this gives a positive balance between *nearness* and *remoteness* (Simmel ([1908] 1971)). Third, these

embassy officials receive training on gathering the information and follow a standardized reporting format (with similar information included for each nation). Fourth, the reports are then vetted by the U.S. special ambassador for religious freedom, who oversees this systematic collection of information for 195 countries. In addition to the primary report from local embassy staff, the ambassador's office consults with many informed sources, including State Department specialists and other government employees, the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, journalists, human rights organizations, religious groups, local governments, and academics. Fifth, unlike the reports used for some coded conflict data sets, the reports are placed and kept on line for critics and supporters alike to read and evaluate. Foreign governments, researchers, and the general public inspect, criticize, and call for corrections when errors are found.⁷ Sixth, and perhaps the most significant advantage, the International Religious Freedom Act commissioned an independent, bipartisan commission to “monitor facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom” (IRF Act 1998:202(e); also see Hertzke 2004:229, 305). Indeed, because the reports are expected to document violations of religious freedom and because the content is held accountable by so many, the number of violations is no doubt underreported.

Despite the many strengths of the reports, an obvious concern is that the information is biased by the political interests and assumptions of the U.S. Government. Georgetown University Islamic scholar John Voll has pointed out that viewing the separation of religion and state as an ideal and “working for an ‘unregulated religious context’ is itself a form of religious advocacy” (personal communication, August 10, 2006). After conducting multiple evaluations of the data, our evaluation is that the reports themselves have little systematic bias, though there seems to be bias in how the data are used by government officials.

The case of Saudi Arabia serves as an example. Even before the events of September 11, 2001, when it became more diplomatically acceptable to criticize the Saudi government, the 1998 Interim Report stated that in “Saudi Arabia, where the State religion is Islam and the government is Sunni Muslim, freedom of religion is denied all other religions, including other forms of Islam, such as Shi’a Islam. Persecution also occurs within the same religion, pitting one group or faction against another of the same religion” (Interim Report 1998). From 2001 to 2005, the opening sentence on the “Status of Religious Freedom” section of the reports states that “Freedom of religion does not exist.” The reports go on to explain “[n]on-Muslim worshippers risk arrest, imprisonment, lashing, deportation, and sometimes torture for engaging in religious activity that attracts official attention.” The annual reports directly point out the government’s responsibility: “Government continued to commit abuses of religious freedom.” Yet, despite all of these flagrant violations of religious freedom, it was *not until 2004* that Saudi Arabia was listed as a *Country of Concern* (the State Department’s designation for countries with serious religious freedom violations). We see this as evidence that what the State Department does *with* the reports is biased by diplomatic considerations more than what is *in* the reports.

We found statistical support for our evaluation by comparing our regulation indexes with the State Department’s list of 31 countries singled out for varying levels of barriers to religious freedom in 2003. Using Grim’s (2004:47) coding of the list (see Table 2 and Appendix A), we found that the government regulation and social regulation indexes were much less strongly correlated with the State Department’s list (.554 and .337) than they were with other independent efforts to measure religious freedom by Marshall (2000) at Freedom

House (.880 and .551) and by Jonathon Fox and Shmuel Sandler (2003) (.709 and .654) (all correlations significant at $p < .001$, two-tailed).

Before describing our core measures, two general comments about the coded data are useful. First, the inter-rater reliability of the coding was high. After excluding large number items such as population, which inflate reliability, the Cronbach's alpha for the double coded countries remained at a very high .9047 (cf. Grim 2005; Grim and Finke 2006; Grim et al Forthcoming). Reliability measures for the specific measures used in the analysis are reported below. And second, although data were coded for 195 countries, we will limit our analysis to countries with populations of two million or more (N=143). Also, because the data were assembled by U.S. embassies, data were not included for United States. The exclusion of this one case from the 143 included in this analysis will not impact the overall findings of the study (see discussion of Model C, Figure 6, on the impact of removing 24 cases).

CORE MEASURES

Persecution. Operational definitions for *religious persecution* vary widely (Hertzke 2004). Some include nearly any hardship endured because of one's religion (Marshall 1997), others discuss it in terms of martyrdom (Barrett and Johnson 2001). The first definition is so vague that it becomes impossible to measure and is so broad that it includes very disparate actions. The latter definition, which includes only martyrs, is more precise to measure but fails to include many related actions. We define religious persecution as: ***physical abuse or physical displacement due to one's religious practices, profession, or affiliation.*** Thus, religious persecution is more than religious opposition or a denial of personal rights; it occurs when individuals are either physically harmed or forced to relocate due to their religious affiliation,

beliefs or practices. In other words, religious persecution is a form of social conflict where the targeted group is identified by religion.

The *International Religious Freedom Reports* specifically enumerated the people abused and displaced because of violations of religious freedom, almost always citing names, places, and specific situations. The reports focused on violations that happened during the report period, but included violations considered recent enough to adversely impact the situation of religious freedom in the country. When specific numbers were not available, however, the reports often listed estimates within ranges. In reading the reports, the numbers abused and displaced fell into six ranges (i.e., none; ten or less; dozens to a couple of hundred; hundreds; thousands; and more than ten thousand). These six ranges provided enough collapsed categories to be treated as interval-level data (Bollen and Barb 1981).⁸ After reading a country's entire report, coders were asked to estimate the number of people who were physically abused or displaced due to their religion: (0) none; (1) 1 - 10; (2) 11 – 200; (3) 201-1000; (4) 1001 - 10,000; (5) > 10,000. This item was coded reliably ($\alpha=0.8583$) and provides an ideal measure for our dependent variable, religious persecution. Before describing the other measures to be used in the analysis, it is helpful to better understand the global distribution of religious persecution.

A GLOBAL PROFILE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Of the 143 countries included in our study, 54% (77 countries) have documented cases of people being physically abused or displaced from their homes because of a lack of religious freedom, i.e., *religious persecution*. Several of the cases, such as China, Sudan, and North Korea, are well known, but the persecution goes far beyond these few countries.

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

Religious persecution is evident in every region of the globe (Table 1). Religious persecution is, however, far higher in the Middle East and South Asian regions than any other region of the world. Only three of the 24 countries in these regions are coded as having no victims of religious persecution. For the six countries of South Asia, religious persecution has become the norm. Along with the high-profile countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, the reports documented high levels of persecution in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and a moderate level in Nepal. More than one-half of the countries in Africa and East Asia reported at least some form of persecution, with the total abused or displaced numbering more than 1,000 in all six East Asian countries. Finally, while religious persecution is noticeably lower for Europe and the Western Hemisphere, the rates still exceed 40 percent for each region.

But religious persecution is not only pervasive, it also is pernicious. Of the 77 countries with persecution reported, 25 countries had over 1,000 people abused or displaced (Figure 3). In 2003, the level of persecution in 14 countries exceeded 10,000 persons.⁹

[Insert Figure 3 about here.]

Religious persecution is present regardless of the predominant world religion. We specifically compare countries with majority populations from the two largest and most widespread world religions, Christianity and Islam (Figure 4). Low- to mid-level persecution (affecting 1000 persons or less) is present in both sets of countries: 35.1 percent of Christian-majority countries and 37.1 percent of Muslim-majority countries have between one and 1000 cases of persecution reported. A stark difference is seen, however, when looking at high-level persecution. Persecution of over 1,000 persons is present in 40 percent of Muslim-majority countries compared to 3.9 percent of Christian-majority countries.

[Insert Figure 4 about here.]

Regulation. We also rely on the *International Religious Freedom Reports* for the two indexes of religious regulation. The first index measures the government's regulation of religion and is defined as *the restrictions placed on the practice, profession, or selection of religion by the official laws, policies, or administrative actions of the state*. This form of regulation is not limited to the formal laws of the state. Religious groups can face battles for zoning approvals, tax-exemption, and public incorporation. Thus, restrictions against religions can be blatant laws against their existence or more subtle administrative restrictions that limit their operations. The *government regulation of religion index (GRI)* includes six items about the government's efforts to regulate religion, including interfering with the right to worship, legal codes and policy actions on religion, and the regulation of mission work, proselytizing, preaching and conversion. The variables are reliably coded (alpha = .9468) and have a high level of internal reliability (alpha = .9161). The GRI has been assessed using factor analysis and reviewed in far greater detail than space here allows (see Grim and Finke (2006) for full details on the index and its components). The description of this variable and all the variables used in this study are summarized in Table 2 and Appendix A.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

The second index measures the social regulation of religion and is defined as *the restrictions placed on the practice, profession, or selection of religion by other religious groups, associations, or the culture at large*. This form of regulation might be tolerated or even encouraged by the state, but is not formally sanctioned or implemented by government action. Social regulation can be extremely subtle, arising through the pervasive norms and culture of the larger society, or it can include blatant acts of controlling religion. Often, though not always, this form of regulation is a product of religion: religions regulating other

religions. Like other groups, religions seek to gain advantage by forming cartels and alliances that can regulate culture and give the group a competitive advantage. Unlike the measures used for government regulation, the five items on the *social regulation of religion index (SRI)* focus on societal attitudes toward nontraditional religions, conversion, and proselytism, as well as on negative attitudes of social movements and religious institutions toward other religious groups, especially new, foreign, or minority religions. The measures included in the index are reliably coded (alpha = .8321) and hold a high level of internal reliability (alpha = .8047).¹⁰

To test Huntington's clash-of-civilization thesis, we rely on two measurements. The first measures the extent to which a country lies on the boundary of a civilization divide or is composed of multiple civilizations. The "civilizations" are based on the definitions and maps used by Huntington (see Grim 2005). Our second uses the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) to compute religious monopoly, or homogeneity. We calculate our HHI by summing the squared market share of each of the top five religious traditions in the country. For example, using data coded from the IRF reports, Austria's score (5664.57) is the sum of the squares of 74.0 (Catholic), 12.0 (Atheist), 4.7 (Lutheran), 4.2 (Muslim) and 2.2 (Orthodox Christian). The index reflects the extent to which a country is dominated by one religious tradition.¹¹ Because Huntington's civilizations are closely tied to major religious traditions, this offers another measure of clashing civilizations.

OTHER MEASURES

For the remaining concepts, we rely on measures from a variety of sources. For a measure of armed conflict, we use a re-coding of the Project Ploughshares data assembled by the Ecumenical Peace Center of the Canadian Council of Churches (Project

Ploughshares2003a, 2003b; Regehr 2001). Project Ploughshares defines armed conflict as “a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict” (Regehr 2001).

We returned to the *International Religious Freedom Reports* for measuring the overlap of religion and ethnicity. Coders were asked: “*Does the Report mention whether ethnic identity is related to religious affiliation?*” The responses were: 0=No or not related; 1=For one or a few ethnicities it is related; 2=Many ethnicities are related to specific religious affiliation; and 3=Ethnicity seems to determine religious affiliation. The reports went to some length to report abuses and restrictions that were clearly religious and not ethnic in nature and many reports mentioned the general degree to which religion and ethnicity overlapped. It is important to note that this measure does not require that the ethnicity-religion overlap be a source of conflict. This is a measure of the extent of the overlap, not the consequences.

Finally, the remaining measures of demographics, economics, gender, and politics rely on familiar cross-national data sources: the United Nations for economic and demographic data, the World Christian Database for religious percentages by country, and Freedom House for data on political democracy. Details are reviewed in Table 2 and Appendix A.

TESTING THE MODEL

We test our theoretical model using structural equation modeling. As summarized in Figure 1, our basic proposition is that religious regulation leads to religious persecution. We propose that religious persecution is most directly associated with government regulation of religion, and that social regulation of religion is associated with religious persecution

indirectly through its effect on government regulation. We will test this model against alternative explanations, the first being the clash-of-civilizations model.

RELIGIOUS ECONOMY MODEL VS. CIVILIZATION THESIS

We begin with a model that includes the key measures for the religious economies argument (social and government regulation of religion), the clash-of-civilizations thesis (civilization divide and the HHI religious homogeneity Herfindahl index), and other religion-related issues (religious law, religion-ethnicity tie, and the percentage Muslim and Christian).¹² We allowed each of the control variables to correlate with each other and to predict each of the three key variables in the theoretical model. We then trimmed all paths and correlations from the model that were found to be non-significant (i.e., $p > .05$, two-tailed). The significant regression relationships are reported in Model A (Figure 5), which has an excellent fit with the data (chi-sq 11.106, df 12, $p = .520$, RMSEA = .000), i.e., any departure of the data from this model is statistically insignificant at $p = .520$. Also, the nonrecursive path is very stable (stability index = .118).

[Insert Figure 5 about here.]

The relationships predicted by the religious economies model are all statistically significant, with government regulation of religion having a strong and highly significant effect on religious persecution (standardized regression coefficient of .52).¹³ Social regulation of religion also has an indirect effect on religious persecution through its effect on government regulation (.45), making its total standardized effect on religious persecution roughly $.45 * .52 = .23$. Civilization Divides also has a direct significant effect on religious persecution (.18) and, through its relation to social regulation, it has an indirect effect on religious persecution, yielding a total effect of approximately $.18 + (.30 * .45 * .52) = .25$.

The Herfindahl index, our second measure for civilization divides, had no significant effects on any element of the religious economies model, so was removed from the model. The other controls had effects only on social and government regulation, with no significant direct effects on religious persecution. We also found support for religious persecution having a feedback effect on the social regulation of religion (.17).¹⁴

RELIGIOUS ECONOMY VS. OTHER ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

In addition to the controls from the previous explanations, controls for gender, armed conflict, demographics, economics, and democracy are added next. As we did in testing Model A, we began with an untrimmed model (see Appendix C) and then trimmed the non-significant paths and correlations from the model. Economic crisis, income inequality, life expectancy, and population density as well as the Herfindahl measure did not significantly predict religious persecution or either of the regulation measures, and were thus dropped from the model. Model B (Figure 6) summarizes the results. Model B is excellent fit with the data (chi-sq 38.805, df 41, $p = .569$, RMSEA = .000), and the nonrecursive path is very stable (.126).

[Insert Figure 6 about here.]

The religious economies model continues to offer the most complete explanation for religious persecution. The paths from social regulation to government regulation, from government regulation to persecution, and from persecution to social regulation show little change. Government regulation continues to have the strongest effect on persecution. Civilization divide no longer directly predicts persecution once armed conflict is added into the model, which does directly predicts persecution (.26). Overall, the amount of variance in religious persecution increases from R-sq = .42 in Model A to .49 in Model B.

Model B also shows how the religious economies model explains a particular civilization divide that receives much attention, i.e., the divide between the world's two largest religions — Islam and Christianity. The adoption of religious law (mostly Shari'a Law) and the percent Muslim in a country are *positively* associated with social regulation of religion (.27 for each).¹⁵ Percent Christian, however, is *negatively* associated with government regulation of religion (-.26). As expected, the longevity of democracy (-.31) and economic strength (-.16) are negatively associated with government regulation; their addition to the model decreases the relative strength of percent Christian from -.35 in Model A to -.26 in this model. This is logical given that percent Christian is positively correlated with both variables (.478 and .220, respectively). One surprising result is that population growth is negatively associated with government regulation (-.20). Rather than offer a post hoc explanation, we will simply note that the effect of population growth may be different depending on the type of growth involved (Crenshaw, Ameen, and Christenson 1997).

Population size does, however, directly predict the level of religious persecution (.19). The addition of population size does not substantially change the strength or significance of the other variables in the model, as did armed conflict. This gives some indication that the best way to interpret the influence of population size in the model is in its unavoidable scale relationship to the dependent variable. That is, the likelihood of having a large number of cases of persecution is higher in a larger country. Thus, controlling for population size, the model functions the same.

[Insert Table 3 about here.]

Table 3 presents the standardized total effects¹⁶ of each variable with a significant regression path in Model B upon social regulation, government regulation, and religious

persecution. The main finding is that religious persecution is most powerfully explained by government regulation of religion (.537), supporting the predictions made by the religious economies model. The level of democracy's longevity had the strongest effect in terms of lowering the level of government regulation of religion and social regulation had the strongest effect on increasing government regulation. Religious persecution is affected directly by armed conflict (.275) and only indirectly by civilization divides (.066), which works through social regulation of religion. Though percent Christian (-.137) and percent Muslim (.061) have effects working in opposite directions, the effects are fully explained by the model.

To verify that our findings are not being driven by regions of the world where persecution is highest, we excluded the 24 countries from South Asia, the Near East and North Africa (see Appendix B and Table 1) and ran the same model. The result of this analysis is that there is *no change* in the substantive findings. The paths from social regulation to government regulation, from government regulation to religious persecution, and from religious persecution to social regulation show little change. Government regulation increases in strength (from .51 to .56) and continues to have the strongest total effect on religious persecution. The nonrecursive stability index remains strong (.127). Overall, the amount of variance in religious persecution decreases only slightly from R-sq = .49 in Model B to .46 in Model C, and the model fit statistics all remain extremely strong. The support for our theoretical model is robust.

[Insert Figure 7 about here.]

Finally, we conducted multiple other tests of our key hypotheses using alternate samples and recursive models. Most significantly, we found that the regulation → persecution model reviewed in Figures 6 and 7 fits the data when grouping the sample by

countries whose majority religion is Christianity versus Islam. We also found that a recursive model (one where social regulation directly leads to religious persecution) provided a comparable R-square (.51), but the fit of the model (chi-sq 38.979, df 35, $p = .295$, RMSEA = .028) was lower than the nonrecursive Models (Figures 6 and 7). Although the path from social regulation to persecution in the recursive model was significant (.16, $p < .05$, two-tailed), the coefficient was weaker and less significant than the persecution \rightarrow social regulation path in the nonrecursive model (.21, $p < .01$, two-tailed). Because the nonrecursive model more effectively tests the theoretical model proposed and is a better statistical fit, we show only the nonrecursive model. All of the many models we tested, however, support the argument that the regulation of religion results in higher levels of religious persecution, regardless of the country's majority religion or whether the model is recursive or nonrecursive.

DISCUSSION

We have proposed and empirically tested a theoretical model of religious persecution, a specific form of social conflict. Our statistical model indicates that the regulation of religion has clear consequences: It results in the abuse and displacement of people based upon their religious affiliation. The model also illustrates the ongoing cycle of social regulation \rightarrow government regulation \rightarrow persecution \rightarrow social regulation, etc. Social pressures from competing religions, social movements, and institutions can prompt increased regulation; increased regulation holds the potential for unleashing persecution from or condoned by the state, and this persecution can stimulate greater social regulation in response. Whether arising from a call for greater security or the desire to preserve religious or cultural purity, the consequence of religious regulation is often persecution.

This cycle is evident in the high-profile case of Iraq. The 2005 *International Religious Freedom Report* documents the strong current of social regulation: “conservative and extremist Islamic elements continued to exert tremendous pressure on society to conform to their interpretations of Islam’s precepts” (U.S. State Department 2005). This push for dominance is related to the government’s support of a particular religion and regulation of others. The result has been extensive persecution. While the government makes pronouncements against acts of persecution, the Iraq report states that there

were also numerous allegations that the ISF – specifically the Ministry of Interior’s (MOI) Quick Reaction Forces (Wolf Brigade) – abducted, detained, tortured, and carried out extrajudicial killings against members of the Sunni Arab minority (op cit).

This sets up a vicious cycle where the increased conflict results in increased social pressures for controls.

Our new coded data confirms several striking differences between majority Muslim and majority Christian countries. While religious persecution happens regardless of the dominant religion, as shown in Figure 4, predominantly Muslim countries have far higher levels of religious persecution. To understand the differences in persecution, we take a step back and look at the role of religious regulation and why it differs so sharply across countries. Within our models we found that social regulation increases as the percent of Muslims in a country rises and government regulation declines as the percent Christian increases, but neither percent Muslim nor percent Christian has a direct effect on religious persecution. Instead, their effects work through the social and government regulation of religion.

We argue that understanding religious persecution and the sharp differences between majority Muslim and majority Christian populated countries requires that we understand

differing views on how religion should be regulated — or not regulated. As shown in the models presented, *Percent Muslim* and *Shari'a Law* work side by side to predict higher social regulation of religion, while *percent Christian* and *longevity of democracy* predict lower government regulation of religion. We propose that one of the key differences is that *Christian tradition looks to the state as the legitimate authority, while Islamic tradition looks to the community of Muslims and its religious leaders.*¹⁷ Supporting this thesis, analysis of the recent World Value Surveys has shown that respondents in Muslim countries “display greater support for a strong societal role by religious authorities” than do those from Western countries, even when controlling for strength of religiosity and other social factors (Norris and Inglehart 2004:147).¹⁸ Once religious leaders have the authority to regulate other religions, however, we argue that the chance of religious persecution greatly increases.

But the question not addressed by our research is why majority Muslim countries are more likely to turn to religious leaders and other sources outside of the state to regulate religion. Is it a product of the historical times or inherent to the religion? Had this study been done a few hundred years ago while the Inquisition or the Crusades were at full throttle, the findings may have been very different. In an age of globalization, are Muslim populations embracing Islamic values in an effort to counter the Western hegemony that has existed since the decline of the Ottoman Empire? Several propositions should be explored in future work. First, previous work has shown that religious intolerance tends to increase during times of religious conflict (Stark 2001). Is the increased regulation a response to perceived cultural and religious threats? Mansoor Moaddel argues that the rise of militant religious fundamentalism in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, and Syria was the result of a state (often associated with foreign influence) that was “zealously undermining the social functions and influence of

religion” (2005:342). He notes that it was not simply an attempt to separate church and state; the goal was to rid the state of all religious entrapments. A useful extension of this research would be to study whether levels of regulation are associated with higher levels of perceived religious threats or secularism. Another useful extension would be to study the effects of the revival of public religion in Europe (cf. Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006). This new presence may increase social and legal regulation of religion just as cult controversies have increased regulation in Europe (Beckford 1985, 2004).

Second, do the teachings, unique history, and organizational structure of the Muslim faith provide a foundation for greater regulation outside of the state? Christian scriptures and theological tradition recognize the role of government authorities in regulating civil society. Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and numerous passages from the Christian New Testament all point to the authority of the state in the use of physical force.¹⁹ In contrast, Muslims look to Shari’a law as a way to safeguard society from corruption, social ills, and from colonial and foreign encroachments. Islam began as a movement opposing a corruptly regulated society in Mecca, and the community of faith sought to supplant that corrupt civil authority. Rather than look to the state to correct the injustice of persecution, the legitimate response was to fight “until there is no persecution” (Koran 2.193a, M.H. Shakir’s English interpretation). Weber similarly observed that Islam used *jihad* (often translated as “struggle”) as a way to “rise to the top of the world’s social scale” ([1922] 1993:262) rather than be trampled by the unjust. Conversely, Christians, who have a long history of sovereign states that were involved in internecine religious conflict and crusades, look to democracy as the safeguard for the commonweal. Closely related to the teachings and unique history of Islam is the structure of the Islamic judicial system. Whereas the courts in predominantly Christian countries are

typically subsumed within the larger state structure, the courts in predominantly Muslim countries frequently hold substantial independence from the state and are heavily swayed by religious leaders (Hallaq 2005).

This research, however, calls for more than just efforts to explain Muslim-Christian differences. The research calls for a continued sorting out of the cultural and religious influences on social conflict. For example, we need to recognize that religion and ethnicity are separate concepts, with distinct effects, that require separate measures. Ethnicity and religion frequently do overlap, just as land interests and religion overlap or as ethnicity and economic interests overlap; but they should not be conflated. Likewise, we need to continue improving cross-national measures of religion that allow us to sort out the distinctive effects of religious beliefs, practices, and regulation.

Perhaps the most significant finding from this research is that more detailed measures of religion should be included in studies of social conflict. Previous work has been quick to point out that many religious disputes are centered on land or economic interests. Because such disputes involve economic interests, however, does not make the effects of religion any less real. Does anyone really think that disputes over minuscule portions of Jerusalem are merely based on the economic value of the land?

CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that explanations of social conflict cannot ignore the unique role of religion, especially when investigating conflicts such as religious persecution. Specifically, this research has found that *religious regulation* — composed of *social* and *government* regulation — offers a strong explanation for variation in the level of *religious persecution*. Government regulation was found to be the strongest predictor of religious

persecution even when controlling for other possible explanations. The results showed that a state's regulation of religion is a reaction to pressures created by the social forces seeking to regulate religion; these regulatory actions contribute to religious persecution and can set up a vicious cycle of persecution once unleashed.

The primary alternative model considered was Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1993, 1996), which does treat culture as a driving force and gives religion important consideration. Although Huntington's model does not directly address religious regulation, the model clearly identifies civilization fault lines (including religious fault lines) as a source of conflict within countries. We found that Huntington's *civilization divides* have only indirect effects on religious persecution. The specific mechanism that leads most directly and powerfully to religious persecution is not clashes *between* civilizations but the concrete regulatory actions of societies and governments. This regulation mechanism also helps to explain the higher levels of religious persecution in countries populated more heavily by Muslims. Specifically, as the percentage of Muslims increases, so does social regulation of religion, which increases the level of government regulation and therefore persecution. The important point to note is that the regulation mechanism we have described *accounts for* differences between religious traditions and offers empirically-supported conceptual clarity to one of the fundamental challenges of the twenty-first century.

Of the remaining measures considered, only one, armed conflict, had a direct and significant effect on the level of religious persecution.²⁰ This result is in line with Gregory Hooks' argument that war should be treated as an explanatory variable, not just an outcome variable (1994). In addition to religious regulation, war leads to persecution.

This research has relied on a new source of coded data based on the *2003 International Religious Freedom Reports*. These data are available for download at www.TheARDA.com, as will be further releases of these and other related data. Just as television journalists have no story without a picture, social scientists have no story without data. The lack of cross-national data on religion and religious persecution has severely handicapped the social sciences' ability to study the topic. Our new source of data provides a global profile and offers multiple measures of religion in cross-national studies. Finally, while governments typically view religious regulation as a necessity to maintain order and reduce potential violence, the irony is that more regulation leads to increased persecution, which means less order and more violence, as shown by the data.

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Table 1. Percentage of Countries with Religious Persecution (Population > 2 Million)

Africa (35 countries)	East Asia (20)	Europe & Eurasia (42)	Near East & North Africa and South Asia (24)	Western Hemisphere (22)	World (143)
51%	55%	43%	88%	41%	54%

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in the Analyses

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Barriers List	143	0	5	0.664	1.424
Persecution	143	0	5	1.524	1.739
SRI	143	0	10	4.456	3.409
GRI	143	0	10	3.533	3.036
Civilization Divide	143	0	3	0.769	0.909
Relig. Homogeneity	143	81	10000	5592.621	2524.46
Armed Conflict	143	0	7	1.371	2.216
Population Growth	141	-0.7	4.3	1.5	1.2
Population Density	142	3.817	16113.744	484.433	1884.829
Population Size	143	2,032,315	1,306,691,689	42826391.76	144040586.2
Economic Strength	131	548	37738	8884.183	9725.716
Income Inequality	115	24.7	70.7	39.603	10.06
Economic Crisis	117	0	7	1.718	1.586
Religion-Ethnicity Tie	143	0	3	0.993	1.01
Women Better Off	120	0	0.052	0.004	0.008
Percent Christian	141	0.024	97.388	49.983	38.001
Percent Muslim	141	0	99.129	27.073	35.922
Democracy Level	137	0	5	1.876	1.536
Life Expectancy	135	36.9	82	65.75	12.329
Religious Law	143	0	6	0.944	1.849
Valid N (listwise)	97				

Table 3. Standardized Total Effects for Model B

Standardized Total Effects	Regulation of Religion		Religious Persecution
	Social	Government	
Women Better Off	-0.145	-0.062	-0.032
Religious Law	0.279	0.119	0.061
Percent Muslim	0.279	0.119	0.061
Civilization Divide	0.302	0.129	0.066
Armed Conflict	0.056	0.024	0.275
Population Size	0.042	0.018	0.204
Religion-Ethnic Tie	0.013	0.123	0.063
Percent Christian	-0.028	-0.267	-0.137
Democracy Level	-0.034	-0.320	-0.164
Population Growth	-0.022	-0.207	-0.106
Economic Strength	-0.018	-0.167	-0.086
SRI: Social Regulation	0.047	0.447	0.229
GRI: Government Regulation	0.110	0.047	0.537
Religious Persecution	0.215	0.092	0.047

Figure 1: Alternative Explanations vs. the Religious Economies Model

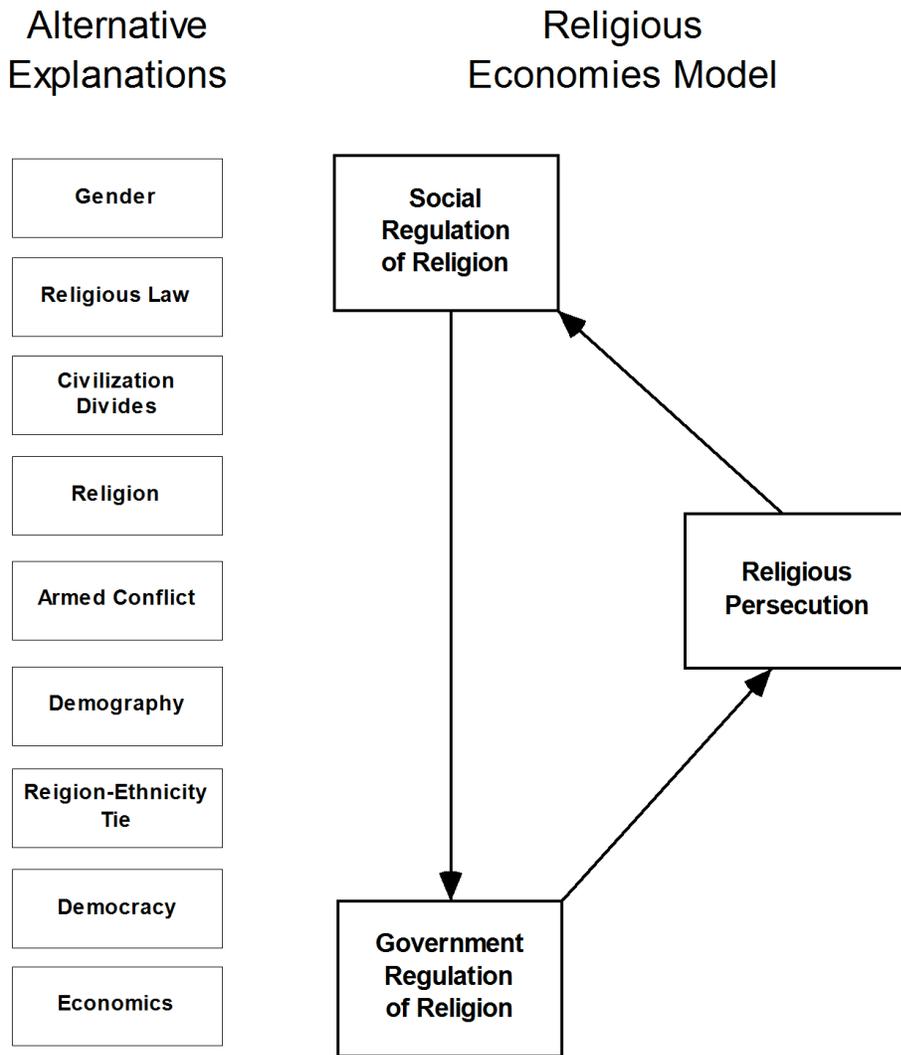


Figure 2: International Religious Freedom Report (for each country)

- Introductory Overview* (untitled section)
1. Religious Demography
 2. Status of Religious Freedom†
 - a. Legal/Policy Framework
 - b. Restrictions on Religious Freedom
 - c. Abuses of Religious Freedom††
 - d. Forced Religious Conversion
 - e. Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom‡
 3. Societal Abuses and Discrimination
 4. U.S. Government Policy

† Beginning in 2004, the Reports contain a section on terrorism.

†† This section is absent for countries with no reported abuses.

‡ This section is present only when improvements have been made since the last Report.

Figure 3. Level of Persecution in 77 Countries Where Religious Persecution is Reported

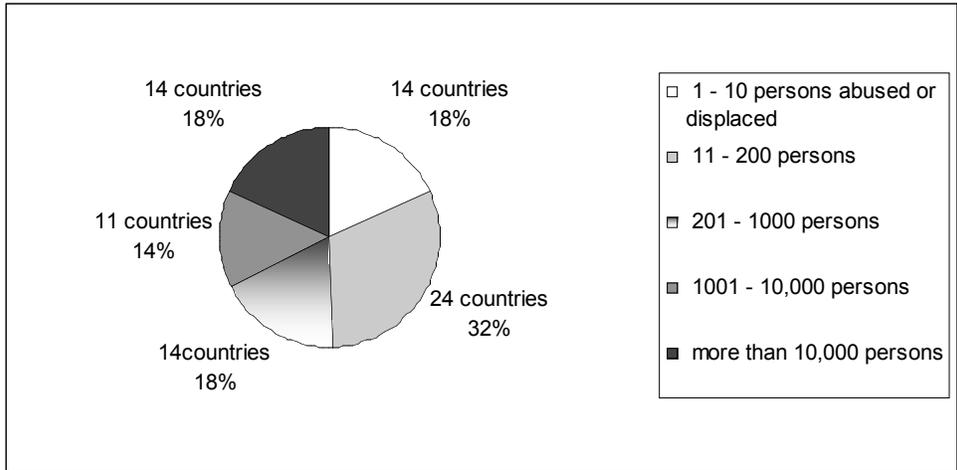


Figure 4. Level of Persecution in Majority Christian and Majority Muslim Countries

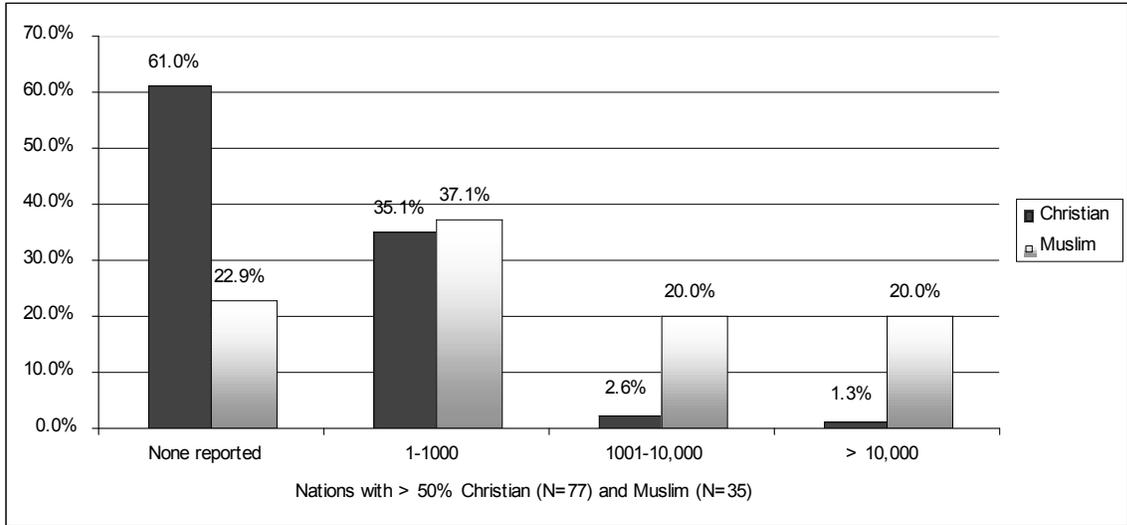
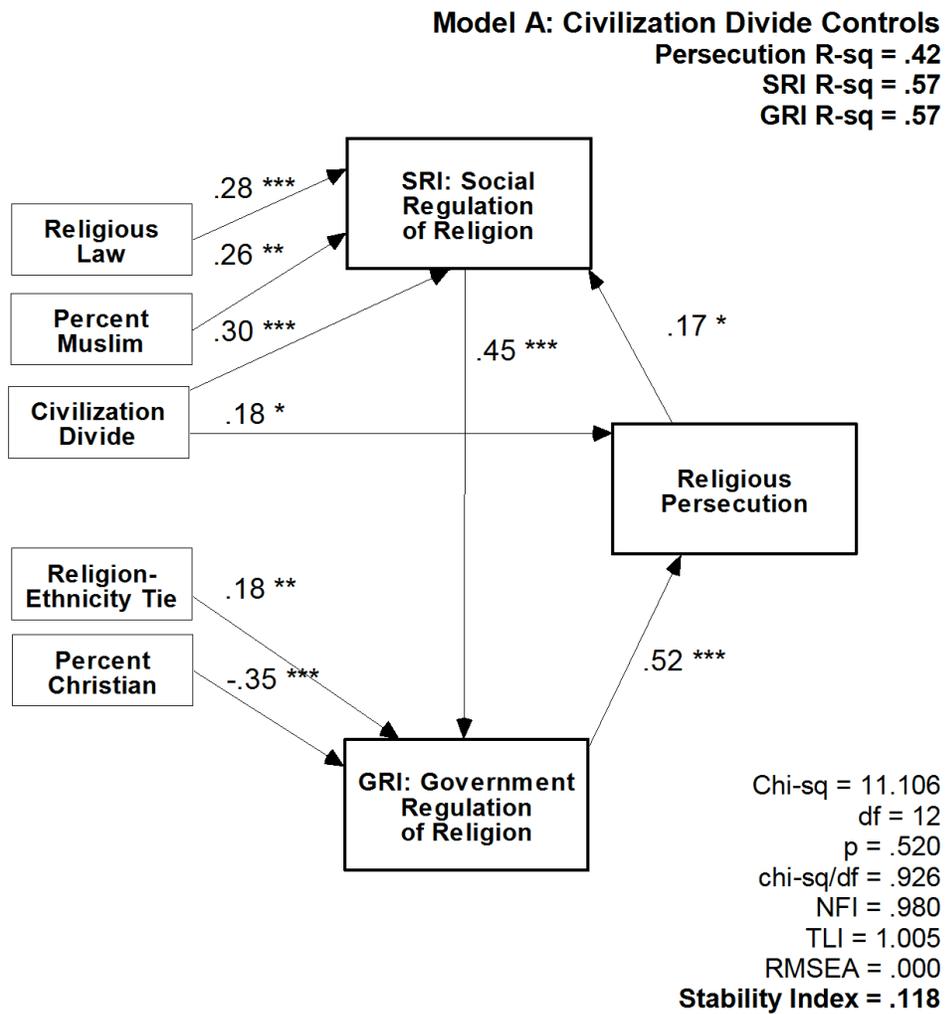
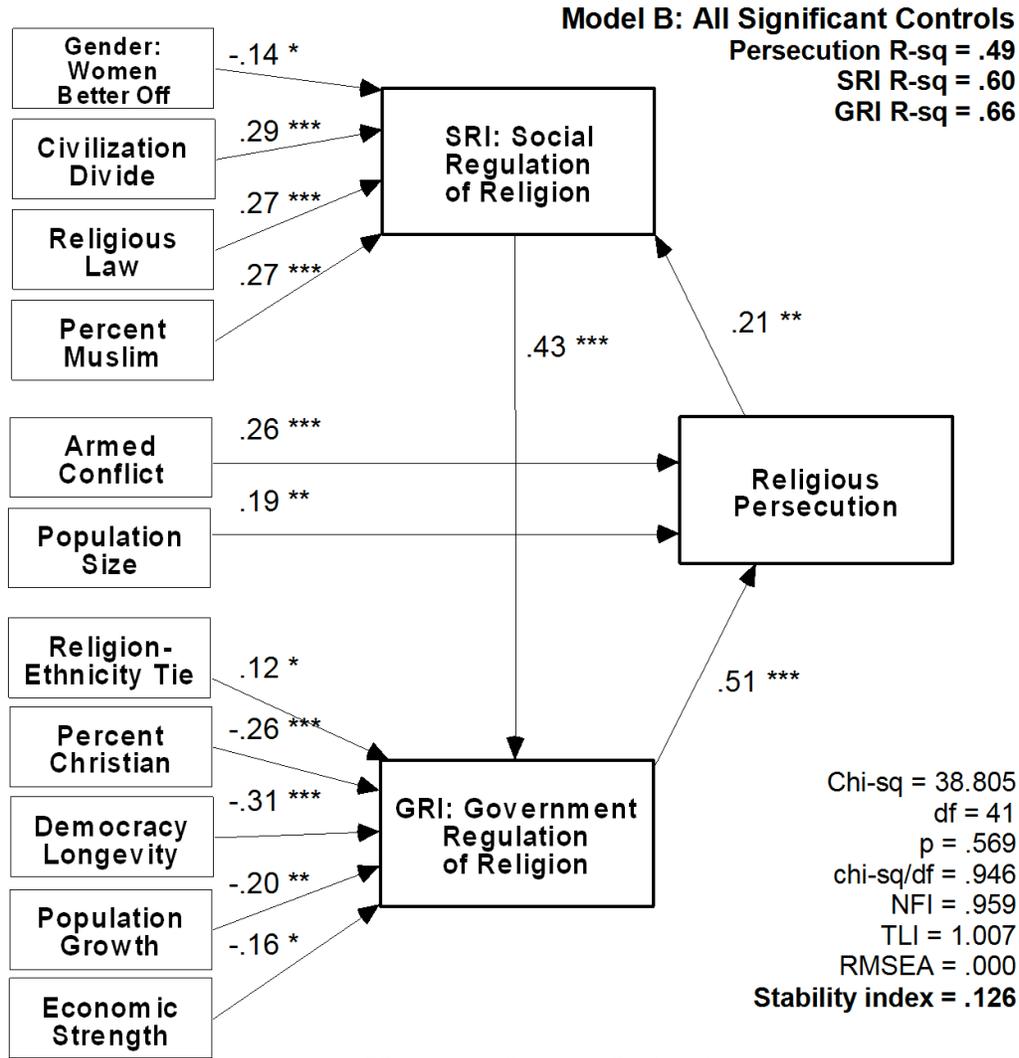


Figure 5: Test of Model A, Controlling for Civilization Divides



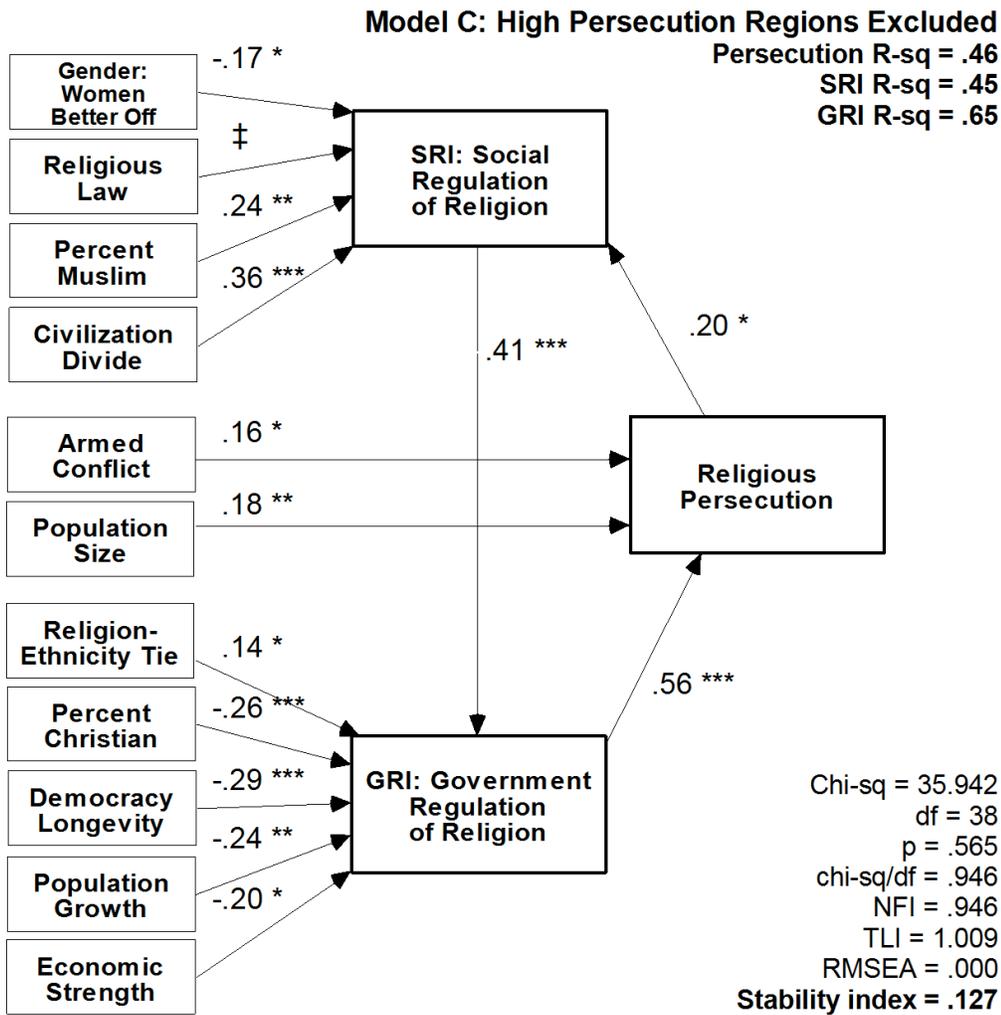
*** p < .001; ** p < .01, two-tailed
 Exogenous variables were allowed to correlate if sig. at p < .05, two-tailed.
 Error terms are not shown in diagram.
 N = 143 countries > 2 million population

Figure 6: Test of Model B With All Controls



*** p < .001; ** p < .01 * p < .05, two-tailed
 Exogenous variables were allowed to correlate if sig. at p < .05, two-tailed.
 Error terms are not shown in diagram.
 N = 143 countries > 2 million population

Figure 7: Test of Model C with High Persecution Regions Excluded



*** p < .001; ** p < .01 * p < .05, two-tailed

‡ p = .051, two-tailed (therefore not included in model calculations)

Exogenous variables were allowed to correlate if sig. at p < .05, two-tailed.

Error terms are not shown in diagram.

N = 119 countries > 2 million pop. (excluding South Asia, Near East & North Africa)

Appendix A: Summary of Measures

State Department Barriers List (2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, coded by Grim 2004)

0=no concerns mentioned; 1=Stigmatization of Certain Religions by Wrongfully Associating Them with Dangerous "Cults" or "Sects"; 2=Discriminatory Legislation or Policies Disadvantaging Certain Religions; 3=State Neglect of the Problem of Discrimination Against, or Persecution of, Minority or Nonapproved Religions; 4=State Hostility toward Minority or Nonapproved Religions; 5=Totalitarian or Authoritarian Attempts to Control Religious Belief or Practice

Religious Persecution: Abuse or Displacement (2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, coded by Grim 2005)

Considering the entire Report, estimate the number of people who were physically abused or displaced due to their religion: 0 = none; 1 = > 0 < 10; 2 = 10 – 200; 3 = 201-1000; 4 = 1001 - 10,000; 5 = > 10,000

Social Regulation of Religion Index (SRI) (Grim and Finke 2006)

Five questions coded from the 2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports* measure social regulation. These focus on general social attitudes toward religion and the actions of social movements and religious institutions toward other religious groups, especially new, foreign, or minority religions. These variables have a high level of internal reliability ($\alpha = .8047$) and address the restrictions religious groups face from the larger culture and other institutions. Also see footnote 12.

Government Regulation of Religion Index (GRI) (Grim and Finke 2006)

Six questions coded from the 2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports* measure government regulation. These variables have a high level of internal reliability ($\alpha = .9161$), and cover a broad range of religious freedoms that are frequently denied by the state. The individual measures include the state's specific actions for regulating religious mission work, proselytizing, preaching, conversion and worship, as well as more general legal and policy actions.

Civilization Divide (Huntington 1996, coded by Grim 2005)

How many borders of this country touch the borders of a country that is predominantly from one of the other major "civilizations" (cf. Huntington 1996)? (0) All national borders are with countries of the same "civilization" or the country is an island; (1) One country from another civilization borders this country; (2) More than one country from another civilization borders this country; (3) This country is internally split between civilizations.

Religious Homogeneity: Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) (2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, coded by Grim 2005)

Degree of religious homogeneity in each country: $HerfdI2 = (\% \text{ Citizens belonging to 1st largest religious tradition})^2 + (\% \text{ Citizens belonging to 2nd largest religious tradition})^2 + (\% \text{ Citizens belonging to 3rd largest religious tradition})^2 + (\% \text{ Citizens belonging to 4th largest religious tradition})^2 + (\% \text{ Citizens belonging to 5th largest religious tradition})^2$ Note: In this calculation, the % is expressed as a whole number (99% = 99).

Armed Conflict (Project Ploughshares 2001 - 2003, coded by Grim 2005)

Level and recency of armed conflict in each country: (0) None reported; (1) Ended sometime from 1988-2002; (2) 2001 conflict involving 1,000-10,000 civilian and military deaths; (3) 2002 conflict involving 1,000-10,000 civilian and military deaths; (4) 2001 conflict involving 10,001-100,000 civilian and military deaths; (5) 2002 conflict involving 10,001-100,000 civilian and military deaths; (6) 2001 conflict involving > 100,000 civilian and military deaths; (7) 2002 conflict involving > 100,000 civilian and military deaths.

Population Growth (UN 2002)

Average exponential rate of growth of the population over a given period. It is calculated as $\ln(P_t/P_0)/t$ where t is the length of the period. It is expressed as a percentage.

Population Density (UN 2002)

Population Density = Population / land area in miles

Economic Strength (World Bank 2005)

Purchasing Power Parity: The number of currency units required to buy goods equivalent to what can be bought with one unit of the currency of the base country, usually the U.S. dollar, or with one unit of the common currency of a group of countries.

Income Inequality (UN 2002)

United Nations' Gini Coefficient as a percentage

Women Better Off (UN data, re-coded by Grim 2005)

Difference between the HDI and the GDI, with positive numbers set to zero, and negative numbers squared (to produce positive values)

Percent Christian (World Christian Database 2005)

Percentage of population that is Christian of any type

Percent Muslim (World Christian Database 2005)

Percentage of population that is Muslim of any type

Democracy Level (Freedom House 2005, recoded by authors as below)

Democracy = 2; Restricted Democracy = 1; all else = 0. Scores for each country from 1900, 1950, and 2000 added together to give an indication of the strength of democracy over time.

Life Expectancy (UN 2002)

Average number of years of life at birth (age 0) according to the expected mortality rates by age estimated for the reference year and population.

Religious Law (2003 *International Religious Freedom Reports*, coded by Grim 2005)

What best describes the position of Religious Law (e.g., Shari'a, Canon Law, The Decalogue) in the country? 0 = It does not rule the country in whole or part; 1 = Political or social movements advocate its adoption for some regions of the country; 2 = Political or social movements advocate its adoption for the entire country; 3 = It is the law in some regions in the country, but some groups in those regions are exempt from certain of its applications; 4 = It is the law in all regions in the country, but some groups are exempt from certain of its applications; 5 = It is the unqualified law in some regions in the country; 6 = It is the unqualified law in all regions in the country.

Appendix B. Countries by Region

Africa (sub Saharan)

Angola
Benin
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo, Democratic Republic of the
Congo, Republic of the
Cote d'Ivoire
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guinea
Kenya
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
Sudan
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Near East and North Africa

Algeria
Egypt
Iran
Iraq
Israel
Israeli Occupied Territories
(Palestine)
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Libya
Morocco
Oman
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Tunisia
United Arab Emirates
Yemen

Europe and Eurasia

Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Macedonia
Moldova
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovakia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tajikistan
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Uzbekistan

South Asia

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

East Asia and the Pacific

Australia
Burma (Myanmar)
Cambodia
China-Hong Kong
China-Taiwan
China-Tibet
China
Indonesia
Japan
Korea, (North) Democratic Republic of
Korea, (South) Republic of
Laos
Malaysia
Mongolia
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Vietnam

Western Hemisphere

Bolivia
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

Appendix C. Regression Coefficients for Untrimmed Model B

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Persecution	<---	Civ. Divide	-0.012	0.165	-0.07	0.944
Persecution	<---	HHI	0	0	-1.308	0.191
Persecution	<---	Armed Conflict	0.213	0.062	3.447	***
Persecution	<---	Rel-Ethnic Tie	0.066	0.116	0.567	0.571
Persecution	<---	Pop. Growth	-0.598	17.399	-0.034	0.973
Persecution	<---	Econ. Strength	0	0	-1.589	0.112
Persecution	<---	Income Ineq.	-0.003	0.019	-0.183	0.854
Persecution	<---	Pct. Muslim	-0.001	0.006	-0.262	0.794
Persecution	<---	Pct. Christian	-0.005	0.005	-1.043	0.297
Persecution	<---	Democ. Longevity	-0.081	0.106	-0.766	0.443
Persecution	<---	Gender	-14.563	19.305	-0.754	0.451
Persecution	<---	Rel. Law	-0.017	0.089	-0.195	0.845
Persecution	<---	Pop. Density	0	0	-0.243	0.808
Persecution	<---	Econ. Crisis	-0.025	0.094	-0.272	0.786
SRI	<---	Rel. Law	0.433	0.152	2.849	0.004
GRI	<---	Rel. Law	0.179	0.122	1.464	0.143
SRI	<---	Life Expec.	0.008	0.025	0.327	0.744
GRI	<---	Life Expec.	0.022	0.02	1.117	0.264
SRI	<---	Pct. Muslim	0.022	0.01	2.221	0.026
GRI	<---	Pct. Muslim	-0.003	0.008	-0.327	0.744
SRI	<---	Civ. Divide	0.852	0.286	2.984	0.003
GRI	<---	Civ. Divide	-0.008	0.231	-0.034	0.973
SRI	<---	HHI	0	0	0.449	0.654
GRI	<---	HHI	0	0	-0.565	0.572
SRI	<---	Armed Conflict	-0.031	0.112	-0.275	0.784
GRI	<---	Armed Conflict	-0.098	0.084	-1.159	0.246
SRI	<---	Rel-Ethnic Tie	0.342	0.198	1.725	0.084
GRI	<---	Rel-Ethnic Tie	0.362	0.156	2.318	0.02
SRI	<---	Gender	-56.118	30.178	-1.86	0.063
GRI	<---	Gender	33.068	24.618	1.343	0.179
SRI	<---	Pop. Growth	35.545	29.369	1.21	0.226
GRI	<---	Pop. Growth	-47.65	23.59	-2.02	0.043
SRI	<---	Pop. Density	0	0	-0.345	0.73
GRI	<---	Pop. Density	0	0	0.117	0.906
SRI	<---	Econ. Strength	0	0	0.277	0.782
GRI	<---	Econ. Strength	0	0	-1.956	0.05
SRI	<---	Income Ineq.	-0.052	0.03	-1.737	0.082
GRI	<---	Income Ineq.	0.016	0.025	0.644	0.52
SRI	<---	Econ. Crisis	0.237	0.146	1.625	0.104
GRI	<---	Econ. Crisis	0.128	0.116	1.108	0.268
SRI	<---	Pct. Christian	0.002	0.008	0.253	0.8
GRI	<---	Pct. Christian	-0.017	0.006	-2.592	0.01
SRI	<---	Democ. Longevity	-0.075	0.171	-0.44	0.66
GRI	<---	Democ. Longevity	-0.628	0.134	-4.682	***
Persecution	<---	Pop. Size	0	0	2.766	0.006
GRI	<---	Pop. Size	0	0	1.536	0.125
SRI	<---	Pop. Size	0	0	0.809	0.419
Persecution	<---	Life Expec.	0.015	0.015	1.053	0.292
GRI	<---	SRI	0.367	0.066	5.562	***
Persecution	<---	GRI	0.225	0.06	3.733	***
SRI	<---	Persecution	0.437	0.155	2.826	0.005

¹ Juergensmeyer (2003) provides a bibliography of other such works on religion and violence.

² We use the term “religious regulation” to mean *the restrictions placed on the practice, profession, or selection of religion*, while we use the term “religious deregulation” to mean *the removal of legal and social restrictions that inhibit the practice, profession, or selection of religion*. This implies that there will be laws necessary to prevent religious monopolies.

³ Anthony Marx (2003) has argued that religious conflict was the furnace within which modern democracies were forged in Europe. Although our work will not directly address his thesis, his work suggests multiple other hypotheses that should be tested between religious conflict, democracy and human rights.

⁴ The U.K. Census (2001), which includes measures of national origin, ethnicity and religion, clearly shows the religious diversity present among nationalities and ethnicities living in England and Wales.

⁵ For example, on October 30, 2006 at the State Department’s commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the “Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief,” the Cohen Professor of International Law and Human Rights at Emory School of Law, Johan D. van der Vyver, stated that the International Religious Freedom reports “have come to be the most extensive and reliable sources on the state of religious freedom in countries of the world.”

⁶ The reports do not have the same information level for North Korea, Libya, and Bhutan because the State Department did not have access to these countries during the reporting period.

⁷ The level of error seems to be decreasing over time. We have observed that information omitted from (or in error in) one year’s country Report is corrected in subsequent years. For

example, the omission of a long-standing missionary presence in the United Arab Emirates in the 2001 Report was corrected in the 2003 Report.

⁸ We also ran the analysis using the midpoint value of each category to test whether the unequal categories changed the substance of the analysis. The model remained an excellent fit. A few coefficients were attenuated, but they remained highly significant.

⁹ See Appendix B for table of countries by region. Note: Though the annual Reports focus on violations that happen *during* the report period, they also include violations that continued to adversely impact religious freedoms. As a result, the numbers used for religious persecution represent a one-year window of time but included numbers with ongoing significance, such as the ongoing displacement of up to 30,000 from their communities in Mexico, in part due to conflict between Catholics and Evangelicals in the Chiapas region. Also see Navarro (2004).

¹⁰ To avoid any measure of physical hostility in our independent variables, we made minor revisions to the SRI described in detail in an earlier publication (Grim and Finke, 2006).

Because two of the five index items on social attitudes towards nontraditional religions and conversion included response categories ranging from amicable/none to tense/negative to hostile, we collapsed the highest category (i.e., "hostile") into the category below (i.e., "negative"). Thus the two items measured if the social attitudes ranged from amicable to negative.

¹¹ We are not attempting to measure organizational diversity within a single world religion. Instead, we are trying to measure if one major religious group dominates a nation.

¹² Although not shown, we also tested the religious economies model alone and found all the relationships to be significant at $p < .001$ (two-tailed). However, model fit statistics could not be calculated because of insufficient degrees of freedom.

¹³ All standardized regression paths reported in this discussion are significant at $p < .05$, two-tailed, unless otherwise noted. Significance levels of the regression paths discussed are indicated in the figures.

¹⁴ We tested the model's specific nonrecursive direction. Modeling the nonrecursive loop in the opposite direction results in a model that significantly *departs from the data*: $p = .026$ (chi-sq 54.205, df 36, RMSEA = .059).

¹⁵ These two variables are allowed to correlate in the model (.67). The substantive findings and significant relationships are not changed by the exclusion of either from the model.

¹⁶ The results in Table 3 take into account the compounding effects present in the nonrecursive loop, so the total effects are slightly stronger than the direct effects shown in the Figure 5, e.g., government regulation's effect on religious persecution is .52 in Figure 5, but .537 in Table 3.

¹⁷ The Pew Global Attitudes Project offers a related finding. When Muslims in predominantly Muslim countries were asked "What do you consider yourself first?", 60 percent responded "a Muslim" and 22 percent responded a citizen of their country. When Christians in predominantly Christian countries were asked the same question, 24 percent said "A Christian" and 62 percent said a citizen of their country (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006).

¹⁸ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart go on to conclude that the most substantial cleavage between Islamic countries and others is gender equality and sexual liberalization (2004).

When explaining religious persecution, our gender measure has a weak though significant effect on social regulation but no direct effect on religious persecution.

¹⁹ The Bible acknowledges that *government authorities* are agents of "wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:4b, NIV). Saint Augustine argues that Christians

may kill without incurring the guilt of murder if they represent “public justice or the wisdom of government” (1952:142). Thomas Aquinas argues that support from authority of the sovereign of the State is one of the three conditions for a war to be just (1952:578).

²⁰ That is aside from the control for population size, which is related to persecution because of the scale of measurement. As mentioned earlier, increasing population size increases the likelihood of having a large number of cases of persecution, even though the risk of persecution per person might remain the same.