

Wars and Rumors of Wars: Explaining Religiously Motivated Violence

Roger Finke and Jaime D. Harris
Pennsylvania State University

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Penn State University

Abstract

Observers have long recognized that religion has the capacity to fuel social action, serving as both the opiate and amphetamine of social change. This paper strives to understand the sources of religiously motivated violence. Using cross-national measures from the Association of Religion Data Archive's coding of the U.S. State Department's *International Religious Freedom Reports*, we will identify the political and social forces that serve to motivate religious violence. In particular, we will look at how government and social restrictions on religion have both direct and indirect effects on religiously motivated violence. Not only do these restrictions heighten tensions and increase grievances that potentially feed violence, they stimulate the growth of religious social movements and increase the social and physical isolation of religious groups.

Wars and Rumors of Wars: Explaining Religiously Motivated Violence

Religion has the capacity to fuel social action, serving as both the opiate and amphetamine of social change. Marx is best known for the opiate argument: “religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world...It is the *opium* of the people” (Marx, 1983, p. 115). But religion has not only curbed social change by supporting traditional institutions and morals, it has fostered some of the most dramatic changes in human history. From political revolutions to the transforming of education, religion has been a driving force in social change (McAdam, 1982; Gill, 1998; Stark, 2003). The evidence for religion as a stimulant and suppressant of social change continues unabated.¹

Yet, despite religion’s long historical record of fueling social action, it is often ignored when it comes to the area of contemporary social conflict. Indeed, many social scientists have argued that religion is merely a social marker for economic, demographic, and political forces and any relationship between religion and social conflict is spurious (cf. Kunovich and Hodson 1999). These forces fuel the change, they argue, and religion provides the marker for identifying the social group. We will argue that religion is far more than a social marker. Using a new source of data, we will first document that religious violence is more ubiquitous than most would expect. Most of our efforts, however, will be devoted to understanding how religious groups are propelled into action and how they fall victim to others. In particular, we will try to explain variation in

¹ Religion often fuels social change in one institution at the very time it is supporting the traditions of another. The Roman Catholic Church Poland during the 1980s serves as a prominent example. At the very time it was leading major political reforms, it was holding to a more traditional view of what it meant to be Catholic and Polish (Zubrzycki, 2006). Likewise this is evident in many of the conservative Islamic movements in the Middle East.

religiously motivated violence within countries.

We will introduce and test a theoretical model that attempts to explain this form of violence. First, we argue that the probability of religious violence increases when religious groups face strong state or societal restrictions. Second, we propose that the physical and social segregation of religious groups serves to increase religious violence. Third, we propose that when religious groups have overlapping social boundaries with social movements or political groups, this increases the capacity of religion to mobilize social action and increases the motives for others to mobilize against them.

Social Conflicts and Religion

Despite many qualitative and historical studies highlighting the relationship between religion and social conflicts (e.g., Paden, 2005), quantitative studies have been few in number and, until very recently, limited in scope (see Fox, 2008; Grim and Finke, 2007). Likewise religion, and other cultural influences, are largely absent from most theoretical explanations of social conflicts. Although a few social-psychological monographs, such as Juergensmeyer's *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (2003), attempt to identify the social psychological conditions spawning religious violence, there have been few attempts to include religion and culture into the larger body of research and theory on social conflict. The most notable exception, of course, is Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations." Huntington attempted to fill this void by drawing attention to the cultural and religious clashes that seemed so obvious to so many.

When Huntington (1993, p. 22) boldly proclaimed that world politics was

entering a new phase, one where the “great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict” are now cultural rather than economic or political, the argument had an intuitive appeal for many but the controversial implications resulted in an immediate firestorm. At the core of Huntington’s clashing civilizations lay religion. He argued that the civilization of Western Christianity is different from that of Eastern Orthodox Christianity; Eastern Christianity is distinct from Islam; Islam represents a fundamentally distinct civilization from Hindu; and so forth. The clash of civilizations (CoC) thesis posits that the post-Cold War world order is characterized by: (1) a resurgence in ethnic and religious identity; (2) increased intercivilizational interaction; and (3) economic and political indigenization and regionalization. These factors, in turn, lead to the increased salience of civilizational consciousness and identity. Consequently, disputes between nations of differing religious civilizations “supplant ideological and other forms of conflict as the dominant global form of conflict” (Huntington, 1993:48). Although Huntington’s conceptual definitions are vague and his controversial thesis faced fiery reviews and formidable research challenges,² he points to an important research question: What are the effects of religion and culture in explaining social conflict?

This prompted several scholars to explore the relationship social conflict holds with religion, ethnicity and language (Maoz and Russett, 1993; Henderson, 1998). Henderson and Lai found that religious similarity was associated with decreased interstate conflict (Henderson, 1997, 1998; Lai, 2006), lending limited support to

² Subsequent research has offered mixed assessments of the specifics of Huntington’s argument, some of which seek to operationalize his perspective (e.g., Beckfield, 2003), and others which critique some or most of Huntington’s assumptions (Chiozza, 2002; Fearon and Laitin, 2002; Fox, 2001; Gurr, 1994; Henderson, 2005; Jenkins, 2002; Midlarsky, 1998; Price, 1999; Russett, Oneal, and Cox, 2000; Tipson, 1997; Weede, 1998).

Huntington's claim. Additional research, however, finds that other elements of culture have distinct and sometimes opposing influences on conflict. For example, ethnic similarity has been shown to increase conflict (Henderson, 1997). Further, Henderson suggests that of three cultural components—religion, ethnicity, and language—religion possesses the most powerful influence. Douglas Johnson (2003) goes so far as to suggest that the religious roots of many current international conflicts renders cultural and religious factors more influential than those of conventional *realpolitik*.

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 level 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). Thus, the civilization fault line(s) within countries leads to conflicts just as they do across countries. Huntington recognizes that the argument is over simplified, yet he concludes that “countries with similar cultures are coming together” while “countries with different cultures are coming apart” (1996, p. 125). For Huntington, civilization fault lines are a source of conflict; civilization homogeneity is a source of unity and peace.

Recent work has challenged Huntington's theory and the evidence on the healing effects of civilization homogeneity within countries when applied to religious persecution. Building on a theory of religious economies and using a new source of data, Brian Grim and the first author have found that the cultural and religious pluralism of a country are far less important than the state's response to this heterogeneity (Grim and Finke, 2007). Theoretically, we argued that the restrictions placed on religions, and not

religious or cultural pluralism, is far more important in understanding violence closely tied to religion. Not only does less regulation reduce the grievances of religions, it also decreases the ability of any single religion to wield undue political power. When 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. Empirically, we found that civilization divides had only an indirect relationship with religious persecution, whereas the coefficient from government regulation was direct, powerful and highly significant.³ We concluded that to the extent that governments ensure religious freedoms for all, religious persecution is reduced.

Explaining Religious Action

We will extend this previous research in two significant areas. First, we will move beyond religious persecution to include all forms of religiously motivated violence within countries. The destruction of property as well as physical displacement and abuse of individuals will be included and the victims of the violence will be secular as well as religious. Second, we want to more fully understand how and why lifting restrictions on all religions reduces conflict. We have argued that when privileges are granted to all religions and power to none, no single religion can claim the authority of the state. But we also recognize that these regulations set the parameters for social and political interactions. This research will look at how the interactions that can potentially increase social conflict. In particular, we will look at how social isolation and discrimination, as well as the social and political movements they spawn are related to religiously motivated

³ We defined persecution as “physical abuse or displacement due to one’s religion”. See Grim and Finke (2006) for more information on the indexes and the coding of the data.

violence.

When compared to Huntington, we will narrow the focus, but expand the explanation. Rather than look at all forms of social conflict, we narrow our attention to religiously motivated violence. But we greatly expand the explanation for understanding this form of conflict by moving beyond Huntington's seemingly inevitable and primordial cultural conflicts. We try to understand the context and process through which religiously motivated violence arises.

Regulating Religion

Despite 83 percent of all nations promising religious freedoms in their constitutions, 64 percent of the nations have two or more laws restricting the practice, profession, or selection of religion (Grim and Finke, forthcoming).⁴ Some of these regulations are seemingly benign. A requirement for all religions to register, for example, can be a formality that places little burden on the religious group, even the minority groups. In many countries, however, the regulations are far from benign and even the registration process becomes a major hurdle for most religions. In extreme cases, religion can determine residential location, employment opportunities, and social stigmatization; even in less restrictive environments regulations can serve to set religious groups apart. Whether it is through government identification cards or the tell tale signs of ethnicity or religious dress, religious identity can become a social barrier for select religious groups.

But the restrictions placed on religion go far beyond the actions of the state to include a wide array of societal and cultural restrictions. Often mobilized by a dominant

⁴ Another 8 percent, some without constitutions, hold laws providing such assurances.

religion that either lacks the authority of the state or wants to go beyond the state's actions, informal cultural restrictions often penetrate more deeply and monitor more closely than any formal policies enacted by the state, especially for minority religions. Not only can these restrictions go far beyond the formal restrictions imposed by the state, they are often enforced more effectively. The effectiveness of societal restrictions is illustrated by efforts to censor Internet content. Whereas, China's government employs the most recent technologies and thousands of employees to maintain its "Great Firewall," Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission has fewer than 25 supporting their efforts. Instead, they rely on approximately 1,200 messages each day from religious leaders and others requesting that sites deemed as threatening or morally offensive be blocked. Not surprisingly, the Saudi Internet is heavily censored (Burrows, 2008, p. 68). But societal restrictions on religion also include open prejudice and discrimination that either go beyond the formal laws or are not addressed by legal codes. Three independent cross-national data collections, relying on different collection procedures, have each confirmed the high level of societal restrictions placed on religion (Grim and Finke, 2006; Marshall, 2008; Fox, 2008).

Arguments on the consequences of restrictions have been laid out most completely by religious economy theorists (Finke, 1990; Stark and Finke, 2000), but the relationship between these restrictions and social conflict was fully anticipated by three of the most prominent scholars of the eighteenth century: Voltaire, Adam Smith, and David Hume. Over two and a half centuries ago François Marie Arouet a.k.a. Voltaire (1732) wrote: "If there were only one religion ... 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.” Adam Smith ([1776] 1976, p. 315) explained that “if the government was perfectly decided both to let them [religions] all alone, and to oblige them all to let alone one another, there is little danger.” Hume ([1780] 1854, p. 223) offered similar advice for magistrates, explaining that they “must preserve a very philosophical indifference to all of them [religions], and carefully restrain the pretensions of the prevailing sect.” This argument has been strongly supported by recent research on religious persecution, with both societal and state restrictions on religions serving as predictors of religious persecution (Grim and Finke, 2007; Forthcoming). Based on this theory and research, we propose the following hypothesis: *To the extent that a religious group faces societal or state restrictions, the probability of religiously motivated violence increases.*

Not only do these restrictions serve to increase grievances, they also strengthen the identity and social bonds within the group facing restrictions and widen the chasm between groups (Simmel, 1955; Coser, 1964). This leads to heightened tensions between groups and increases their ability to mobilize groups calling for social action. In short, these restrictions can have both direct and indirect effects on religiously motivated violence. Although our first hypothesis points only to the direct effects, restrictions on religions also change conditions that lead to religious violence. We address these conditions in our next two hypotheses.

Social Contact

One of the most enduring social scientific explanations for explaining inter-group conflict is some form of contact theory. Versions of the theory were circulating in the

1940s, but it was psychologist Gordon Allport's (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice* that provided the most detailed, convincing, and enduring introduction. Although many variants of the theory now exist, a core group of arguments are typically included. The most central thesis, included by all versions, is that increasing contact between groups or individuals tends to reduce inter-group conflict. Whether it is prejudice, discrimination, or open conflict, the theory suggests that increased contact will tend to improve relations.

Yet, most versions of contact theory argue that it is not just the quantity of contact that matters, it is the type of contact and the social conditions under which the interactions occur that make the difference. In particular, scholars often point to four sets of conditions for these interactions: equal status; support from authorities; shared goals; and interdependence between groups. The first highlights that even intimate and frequent contact does little to change inter-group conflict if the interactions assume unequal status. The second condition points to the importance of sanctions stemming from formal and informal authority figures that can either facilitate or impede positive interaction; the third and fourth establish the influence of cooperative rather than competitive actions for the attainment of mutually beneficial outcomes. The social restrictions and formal regulations placed on religions can influence each of these conditions. Restrictions placed on religion can influence both the frequency of contact and the conditions under which the contact occurs.

Because this model was developed by psychologists and has been revised and tested most extensively in psychology and social psychology, most tests of the theory have been limited to individuals in lab settings or taking surveys (Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995; Emerson, Kimbro and Yancey, 2002; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Moreover, due

to the limitations of surveys and the ethical considerations of experimental design, most of the research has focused on prejudice and discrimination rather than open conflict and aggression. But the theory was developed to explain inter-group conflict and is applicable at multiple levels, going well beyond the interactions of individuals or small groups. When applied to large social and religious groups, the argument remains the same. The level of contact and the conditions under which this contact occur (i.e., competitive and unequal status) help to explain the resulting violence.

The essence of the argument is that increasing contacts reduces prejudice, discrimination, and violence when the groups share equal status, cooperative goals, and have support from authorities. When applied to religious groups, we can see how formal and informal restrictions on religious freedoms serve to curb all of these interactions. To the extent that formal and informal regulations restrict religious groups, their interactions with the other groups are often reduced and when they do occur they are neither cooperative nor equal.⁵ When one group holds an advantage or receives privileges above and beyond another group, the chances of social conflict increase. Reducing the larger argument to a single testable hypothesis, the predicted outcome reads as follows: *To the extent that a religious group's interaction with other members of the society is restricted, the probability of religiously motivated prejudice, discrimination, and violence increases.*⁶

This restricted interaction contributes to increased tensions between groups for multiple reasons. We list a couple. First, it results in a social isolation that sharply

⁵ We emphasize the role of government regulations in restricting interaction, but the limited interaction can also result from natural physical barriers or from social barriers placed on one or more the groups.

⁶ We recognize, of course, that some religious groups might desire reduced contact with other groups for religious motives. But virtually none will seek to face open discrimination or a second-class citizenship.

increases the social density within the religious group and reduces social ties outside the group. Denied many forms of personal, educational, and professional interactions outside the group, group members rely ever-more heavily on the networks, institutional support, and teachings of their own religious group. Second, research on ethnoreligious conflict suggests that discrimination increases the salience of group identity (Gurr, 1993, 1994). Supportive of this idea social psychologists have developed and tested what they refer to as “belief congruence.” Proponents of this argument have shown that negative attitudes and behaviors are more likely when groups believe that their core values are threatened or opposed by another group (Struch and Schwartz, 1990; Esses, Haddock, and Zanna, 1993; Biernat, Vescio and Theno, 1996). Wellman and Tokuno (2004) argue that “the symbolic boundaries of religion (no matter how fluid or porous) mobilize individual and group identity in conflict, and sometimes violence, within and between groups” (p. 291). Religion and discrimination can work together to increase the salience of the group’s identity which, in turn, can facilitate widespread and intense collective action.

For our research, however, we will give little attention to the micro-level mechanisms detailed and debated by social psychologists. Instead, we will remain attentive to the macro-level relationships. We are testing if societal and state restrictions on religious groups increase their physical and social isolation and if this isolation is linked to higher levels of religiously motivated violence.

Mobilization and Opportunity

Finally, an extensive literature on social movements has demonstrated that grievances alone do not result in social action: groups must have both the resources and

the opportunities for action. Resource mobilization scholars emphasize the importance of organization in the emergence and success of social movements. Movements with formally organized infrastructures and greater available resources are more likely to survive and succeed (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Jenkins, 1983; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996). However, political opportunities greatly influence the form and outcomes of collective action and conflict as well. A weak ruling polity, the acquisition of elite allies, and other factors within the political environment can encourage mobilization (Tilly, 1978; Kitschelt, 1986; Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996, Meyer 2004).

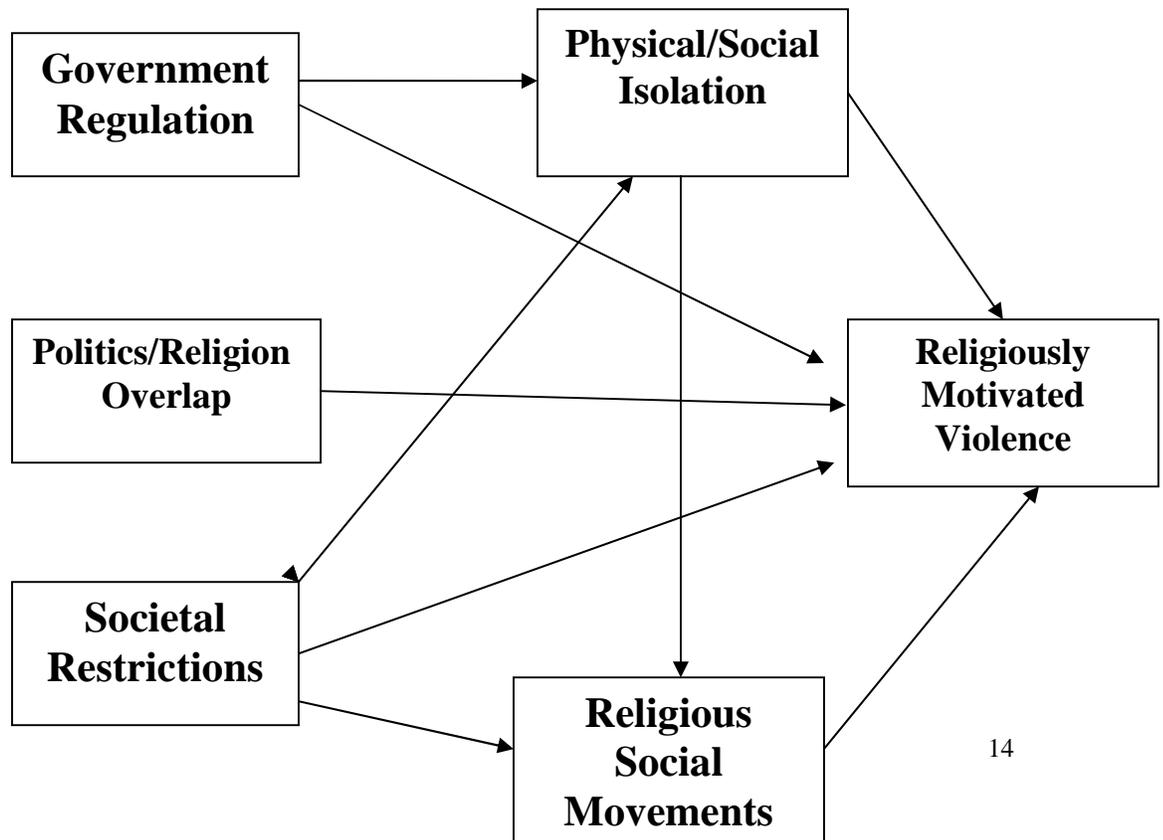
The overlapping boundaries religion holds with political and social movements can facilitate this social action. When the resources of religious groups (i.e., dense networks, religious beliefs, and money) are combined with organizational vehicles designed for social action, the result is increased levels of collective action. Fox (2002) combines elements of grievance, mobilization and opportunity in his theory of protest and rebellion. Drawing from the Minorities at Risk Model of conflict posited by Gurr (1993), Fox demonstrates how discrimination against ethnoreligious minorities leads these groups to develop grievances. Grievances increase the importance of group identity which, in turn, facilitate group mobilization and, ultimately, protest or rebellion.

This leads to the following hypothesis: *To the extent that a religious group forms the basis for political parties and social movements, the group's ability to motivate social action (including religious violence) is increased.* In other words, when groups are backed by the institutional and ideological support of a larger religious group, the capacity for social action, whether it is for peace or violence, are greatly enhanced.

Figure 1 illustrates the core argument we are proposing. As reviewed in the

propositions, we expect restrictions on religion (formal and informal), isolation (physical and social), and movements organized around religion (social and political) to be strongly associated with religious violence. But we also expect multiple indirect relationships. As noted earlier, government regulations and social restrictions often define the parameters for acceptable social interaction. Thus, we expect government regulations and societal restrictions to help explain the level of social and physical isolation religious groups face. In turn, we argue that societal restrictions and isolation help explain when religious social movements arise. When social restrictions on religion heighten grievances and isolation, and this religious discrimination increases the density and strength of in-group relationships by isolating the group, the time is ripe for social movements to be mobilized by religion.

Figure 1: Model Predicting Religiously-Motivated Violence



To sum up, religion holds the capacity to unite a group within clear boundaries and to stimulate collective action. When religious groups are targets of restrictions, discrimination and isolation, their capacity for social action is enhanced by providing both shared grievances and an increased unity. This capacity is enhanced even more when religion serves to mobilize social and political movements. Together, the clear group boundaries, shared grievances, common religious beliefs, dense social networks, and organizational vehicles for social action result in a high capacity for collective social action.

Data

Reliable and refined cross-national measures of religious restrictions, religious violence, and religion related movements are derived from the 2001, 2003, and 2005 U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom (IRF) Reports. The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act requires that an annual report on the state of religious freedom be generated for the host country of every U.S. Embassy. These reports are based on a wide variety of sources including, but not limited to: national and local government records, local NGO's, newspaper accounts, and reliable anecdotal evidence provided by clergy, religious leaders, and other key individuals. Embassy officials are given training to follow standardized reporting procedures and are required to 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. The final annual reports are publicly available and are scrutinized by many, including an independent, bipartisan commission to "monitor facts and circumstances of violations of

religious freedom” (IRF Act 1998:13; also see Hertzke 2004:229, 305). The end result is a detailed and standardized report for 196 countries. Our assessments, and the assessments of others, have found these reports to be remarkably free of bias and reliable (Hertzke, 2004; Grim and Finke, 2006; 2007).⁷ Perhaps the most serious shortcoming is the underreporting of events (e.g., religious violence or restrictions on religions) when access to full information is limited.

Relying on these reports, the staff of the Association of Religion Data Archives used a detailed coding instrument to develop scores of quantifiable measures. Two trained staff members independently read and coded each country’s report. The level of reliability between the coders was extremely high, with most measures exceeding an alpha of 0.9.⁸

Although we coded data for all 196 countries, we will limit our analysis to the 138 countries with populations of at least two million.⁹ We will also use an aggregate dataset, rather than any single year. To avoid fluctuations that might occur in a single year or time point, the data from the three collection points (i.e., 2001, 2003, and 2005) are aggregated into a single dataset with each measure representing the mean response across the three collections. The complete aggregated file can be downloaded free of

⁷ We acknowledge, however, that what the State Department does *with* the reports is clearly biased by diplomatic considerations. For example, since 2001 Saudi Arabia’s report has stated in the opening sentence on the “Status of Religious Freedom” section 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 reports directly point out government’s responsibility: “Government continued to commit abuses of religious freedom.” It was *not until 2004*, however, that Saudi Arabia was listed as a *Country of Concern* (the State Department’s designation for countries with serious religious freedom violations).

⁸ For a complete discussion on the International Religion Freedom Reports and measures of religious freedom, see Grim and Finke, 2006.

⁹ Grim and Finke (2007) utilized 143 nations with populations over 2 million, while our analysis uses only 138 derived from the same source. This difference is due to the omission of five territories not considered independently in this analysis: Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Serbia and Montenegro, and Palestine.

charge from the Association of Religion Data Archives (<http://www.thearda.com/>).¹⁰

Below we offer a brief overview of the measures used. For a more detailed review, see Appendix A.

Dependent Variables

We define religious violence as *any act of violence to persons or property motivated by the religious belief or profession of the perpetrator or victim*. When compared to past research on religious persecution or violence, this expands the concept in two key areas. First, our definition incorporates violence towards property as well as individuals by including vandalism and destruction of property. Because the destruction and desecration of sacred places is a common manifestation of religious tension, we argue that it should be included in any examination of religious conflict. Second, violence can be motivated by the religion of the perpetrator or the victim.

To account for the multi-dimensional nature of religious violence we utilize two measures. An item on the *Breadth of Religious Violence* measures the ubiquity of religious violence in a nation. The coding instrument poses the question: “to what extent is there religiously related violence in the nation (victim and/or perpetrator)?” Based on the State Department IRF report, coders select one of the following responses: “None/Isolated acts of religiously motivated violence;” “widespread acts or covering several regions with religiously related violence;” or “on-going war with religiously related violence.” The second item, *Religious Violence Intensity*, measures the intensity of religious violence. The coding instrument asked for “the highest level of religious

¹⁰ The direct link for the aggregated file is:
<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/IRFAGG.asp>

violence” and offered the following responses categories: “none;” “anti-religious brand graffiti;” “vandalism to religious brand property;” “bombing or burning of religious brand property;” “beating, rape, or physical assault of person(s) due to religious brand;” “torture or killing of person(s) due to religious brand;” and “massacre of and/or war between religious brands.”

For our analysis we will combine these two items into a single measure of religious violence. After converting the values of the previous two measures of religious violence into z-scores, we combined them into a single *Religious Violence Index*. The final index scores range from zero to ten with higher scores representing higher levels of overall religious violence. The Cronbach’s alpha is 0.89.

Predictors

To measure the level of restrictions placed on religions, we rely on two indicators: a *Government Regulation Index* and a *Societal Restriction* measure. We define government regulation as “the restrictions placed on the practice, profession, or selection of religion by the official laws, policies, or administrative actions of the state” and measure these restrictions with six items on the government’s efforts to regulate religion, including regulation of mission work, proselytizing, preaching, conversion and worship, as well as more general legal and policy actions.¹¹ The variables are reliably coded (alpha = .9468) and have a high level of internal reliability (alpha = .9161). This measure is an eleven-point index with low government regulation coded as zero and high government regulation coded ten. *Societal Restriction* measures the restrictions placed on

¹¹ See Appendix A for the items included in the GRI and Grim and Finke (2006) for more discussion and details on constructing the index.

the practice, profession, or selection of religion by non-state actors such as religious groups, or the culture at large. This summary measure takes into account the information from the entire report and assigns each nation a score ranging from zero to ten based on the intensity of religious restriction.

We are also interested in testing the relationship religious violence holds with the isolation (or segregation) of religious groups and the social and political movements organized around religion. When measuring isolation we are especially interested in settlement policies and forced displacement that physically separate individuals based on religion as well as discriminatory practices that lead to socio-economic isolation. The *Social Isolation Index* we use is based on a three-item index that includes measures of discrimination, displacement and government settlement policies and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.72. Higher scores are associated with higher degrees of isolation. We measure the infusion of religion into political and social movements with two indicators. The indicator we call *Religious Social Movements* measures both the extent to which religious social movements are organizing for increased power and the extent to which they are actively campaigning against other religions. Higher values indicate greater mobilization as well as more intense campaigning against other religious brands. The indicator of *Politics/Religious Overlap* measures the extent to which religion and political parties are interconnected. Higher scores indicate extensive overlap between religious and political organizations.

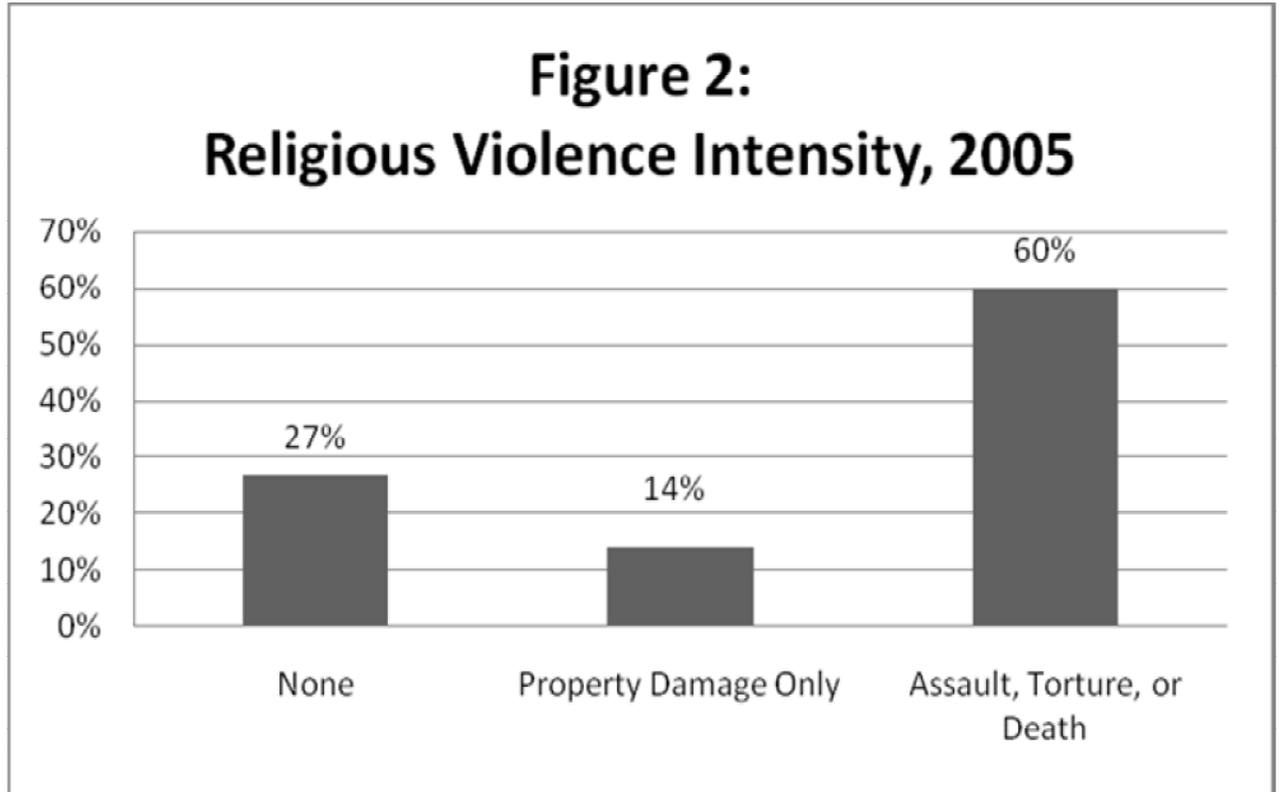
Finally, we will enter additional control variables into our final model, including a *Civilization Divide* measure to test Huntington's Clash of Civilizations' thesis. Derived from the map of civilizations drawn by Huntington, this measure is coded "1" if the

nation is divided between civilizations and “0” if it is not. We worked with many demographic, political and social measures, but our final analysis will highlight population (logged), gross national product per capita (logged), and regime type. The regime type will be taken from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Jaggers, 2008). Researchers for the Polity project annually develop two separate measures of government autocracy and democracy for each country in the international system, each coded zero to ten. The autocracy score is then subtracted from the democracy score and the difference is a measure of the level of democracy, with negative ten indicating complete autocracy and ten complete democracy.

Testing the Model

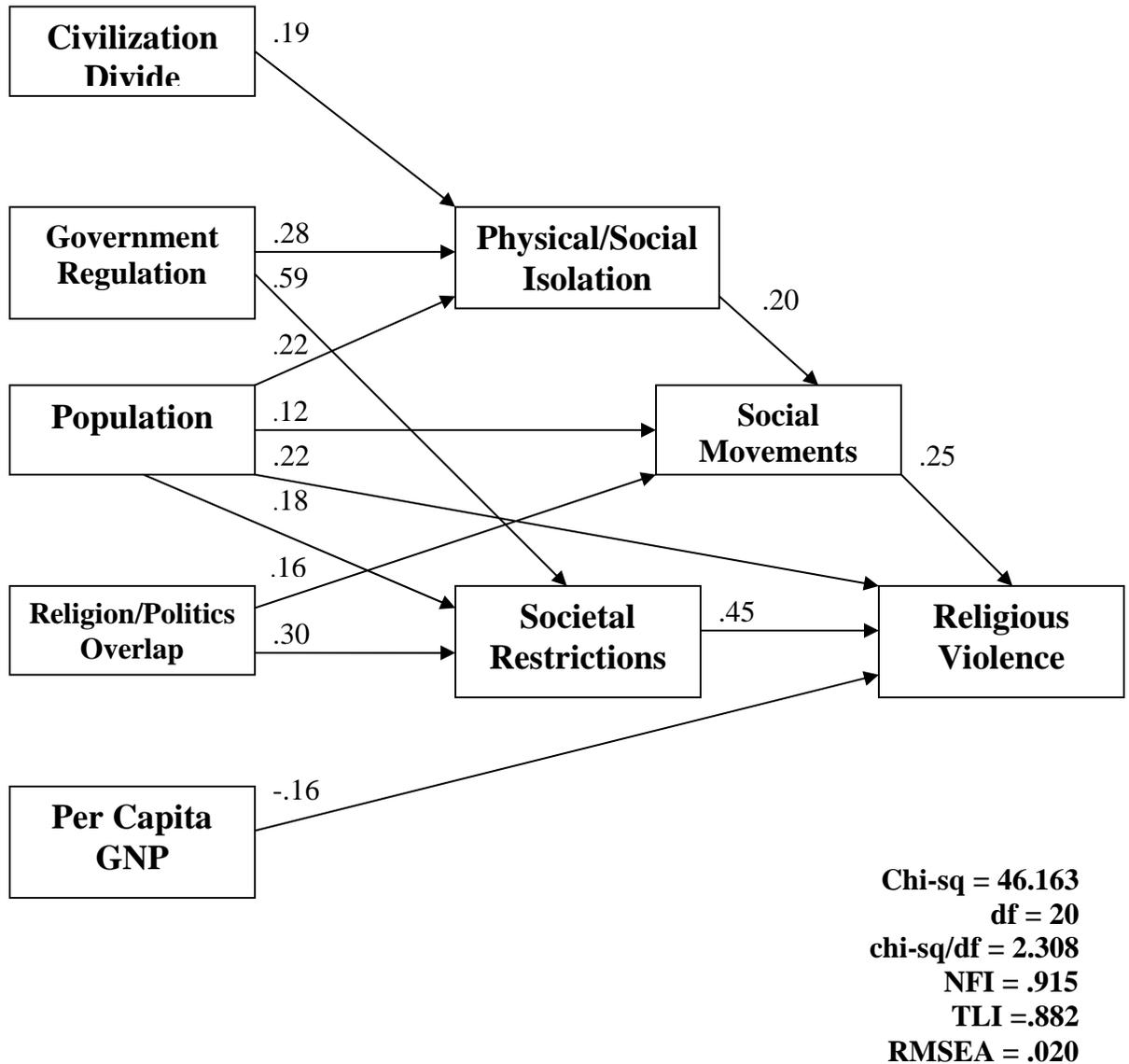
As shown in Appendix B, each of the measures in our model has substantial variation. Most importantly, our *Religious Violence Index* ranges from 0 to 10 with a mean of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 3.26. When looking at each of the measures composing this index we found that both the breadth and the intensity of the religious violence showed wide variation. In 2005, for example, religious violence was coded as “widespread” in 27 percent of all countries and some form of religious violence was found in 73 percent of all countries. For some countries the religious violence was mild, including only graffiti and vandalism. For most, however, the violence included major property damage and physical harm to individuals. Figure 2 summarizes the intensity of religious violence for a single year, 2005. Collapsing the seven categories into three, we can see that some form of religiously motivated physical assault, torture or death was found in 60% of the countries coded. From these two measures we can see that religious

violence is present in most countries and widespread in many.



To test the model presented in Figure 1, we will use structural equation modeling (SEM). As mentioned earlier, our final dataset will include the 138 nations with populations over two million and the measures are the mean responses for each item over the three collections (2001, 2003, and 2005). Missing data were imputed using full information maximum likelihood estimates for the SEM models and all models were analyzed using AMOS 16™. 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 model presented in Figure 3 includes the theoretical model proposed earlier as well as a measure to test the Clash of Civilization thesis and multiple controls to provide a more fully specified model.

Figure 3: Proposed Model with Controls



Notes: Exogenous variables were allowed to correlate if significant a $p < .05$, two tailed.
 Error terms are not shown in diagram. N = 138 countries > 2 million population
 All paths shown are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

The results in Figure 3 provide substantial support for the proposed arguments. Lending strong support for hypothesis 1, societal restrictions on religious groups is the strongest and most consistent predictor of religiously motivated violence. When societal restrictions on religious groups increase, religiously motivated violence rises.

Government restrictions were also highly correlated with religious violence (.547), but the direct path from government regulation to religiously motivated violence was not significant.¹² The indirect influence of government restrictions, however, was substantial: explaining the physical and social isolation of religious groups and serving as the strongest predictor of societal restrictions imposed on religion. After running multiple models, using both SEM and OLS, we found the societal restrictions measure to be the strongest and most consistent predictor of religious violence.¹³

We find partial support for hypothesis 2. As expected the physical and social isolation of religious groups is tightly interwoven with the other variables in the model. Government regulation and civilization divides each help to explain when this isolation will occur and the isolation helps to explain when social religious movements will arise. But the path between isolation and religious violence is not significant. Rather than having a direct effect, the path is indirect traveling through religious social movements.

Providing support for hypothesis 3, the measure for religious social movements

¹² Our conclusion that the societal restrictions measure is an intervening variable between government regulation and religious violence is also supported by our Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) equations. The coefficient for the government regulation measure was highly significant before including societal restrictions in the model. Once the societal restrictions measure is included, however, the coefficient for government regulation drops to near zero and is insignificant.

¹³ We also ran similar models using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). Similar to the SEM models we found that Societal Restrictions, Social Movements, and Population were the only measures to have significant coefficients when predicting Religiously Motivated Violence. Unlike the SEM model the coefficient for per capita GNP was not significant. For all of the models, Societal Restrictions held the most highly significant coefficient.

holds a direct and highly significant path to religiously motivated violence. We also find that the isolation of religious groups and societal restrictions each serve to fuel the activities of these movements, especially the societal restrictions. But our measure for the overlap between political parties and religion does not hold a significant coefficient with religious violence. Instead it has an indirect effect on religious violence by serving to increase the activity of religious social movements and societal restrictions that may arise in support of or opposing such movements.

Finally, only two controls have a direct effect on religiously motivated violence. As expected, the amount of violence increases as the size of the country increases. A less obvious finding is that population size increases the activity of religious social movements as well as the isolation of religious groups. The second control with a direct effect is per capita GNP. As per capita GNP increases, religiously motivated violence decreases. This finding, however, is relatively weak and is not significant in all models. The control we entered for civilization divide had no direct effect and was not significant in any of our models. However, the divide measure does help to explain when religious groups face physical and social isolation.

Discussion/Conclusion

Recent studies have shown how societal and government restrictions on religion can help to explain religious and social action (Finke, 1990; Stark and Finke, 2000; Finke and Stark, 2005; Grim and Finke, 2007; Fox and Tabory, 2008), but this research extends past work in two significant ways. First, we expanded the substantive reach of the argument by applying it to religiously motivated violence. More significantly, however,

we propose and test an extended theoretical model. This model takes initial steps in explaining why and how restrictions on religion can fuel social action.

The model we proposed for explaining religious violence (see Figure 1), argues that restrictions on religion have both direct and indirect effects on religiously motivated violence. Not only do these restrictions heighten tensions and increase grievances that potentially feed violence, they stimulate the growth of religious social movements and increase the social and physical isolation of religious groups. We argued that both the social movements and the increased isolation can lead to an increased group solidarity that reinforces the religion's potential and propensity for collective action and violence. Social movements, in particular, join with religion to provide the organizational vehicles needed for social action. Thus, our model argues that government and societal restrictions on religion define the parameters for a religious group's interaction with the larger culture. When restrictions increase, the chances of a violent response also increase.

When tested, the core mechanisms of this model were strongly supported with cross-national data from 138 countries. Societal restrictions on religion and religious social movements have strong, positive and direct effects on religiously motivated violence. Government restrictions on religion had no direct paths to religious violence, but it was a strong predictor of the societal restrictions and the isolation of religious groups. The physical and social isolation of religious groups and the overlap between political parties and religion both helped to explain the increased activity of religious social movements. In summary, restrictions on religion (formal and informal), isolation (physical and social), and movements organized around religion (social and political) all

contributed to our final explanation of religious violence.

Our inclusion of the civilization divide measure had little impact on the model. The path from civilization divide to the isolation of religion groups was significant, lending at least some support to the importance of Huntington's civilization divides in explaining the physical and social isolation of religious groups; but the divide measure had no direct effect on religious violence and any indirect effect was weak given that it had no effect on societal restrictions or religious social movements. This lends support for our earlier argument that the cultural and religious divides of a country are far less important than the country's response to this heterogeneity.

This research has shown that religion has the capacity to stimulate and mobilize collective action and that restrictions placed on religion can make significant contributions in explaining religiously motivated violence. Once largely omitted from major cross-national studies due to a lack of data and theoretical justification, both the theory and the data sources have shown remarkable advances in recent years.¹⁴ When combined with other recent work on democracy (Woodberry 2008; Fox 2007) and religious persecution (Grim and Finke, 2007), this work calls for a major reevaluation of the role of religion in cross-national studies.

¹⁴ The Association of Religion Data Archives (www.theARDA.com) provides a rich source of cross-national measures as well as survey data.

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Appendix A: Measures

Population	Logged population of the country as listed by the 2003 World Factbook
Per capita GNP	Logged per capita gross national product as listed by the 2003 World Bank Reports on Human Development
Democracy	Polity Score of country on the autocracy/democracy spectrum in 2003. Range -10 – 10.
Civilization Divide	Dummy for whether the nation is divided between two or more civilizations as designated by Samuel Huntington in <i>The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order</i> . 0=No divide; 1=Divided nation
Government Regulation	Does the Report mention whether foreign missionaries are allowed to operate? 0=Allowed and/or no limits reported; 1=Allowed but with restrictive limits reported; 2=Prohibited
	2003 Gini index coefficient measuring income inequality within each nation. Taken from the 2003 United Nations Development Report. Range: 0-1
	Literacy rate of the population over 15 years old from the 2003 United Nations Development Report.
	Does the Report mention whether foreign missionaries are allowed to operate? 0=Allowed and/or no limits reported; 1=Allowed but with restrictive limits reported; 2=Prohibited Does the Report mention that proselytizing, public preaching, or conversion is limited or restricted? 0=No; 1=yes, but (equally) for all religions; 2=yes, but only for some religions Does the Report indicate that the government interferes with an individual's right to worship? 0=No or no interference; 1=Some interference; 2=severe interference How is freedom of religion described in the Report? 0 = law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; 1=law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice, but some problems exist, e.g. in certain localities; 2=limited rights and or rights are not protected or are restricted; 3=does not exist
	Does the Report mention whether foreign missionaries are allowed to operate?
	0=Allowed and/or no limits reported; 1=Allowed but with restrictive limits reported; 2=Prohibited
	Does the Report mention that proselytizing, public preaching, or

	<p>conversion is limited or restricted? 0=No; 1=yes, but (equally) for all religions; 2=yes, but only for some religions</p> <p>Does the Report indicate that the government interferes with an individual's right to worship? 0=No or no interference; 1=Some interference; 2=severe interference</p> <p>How is freedom of religion described in the Report? 0 = law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice; 1=law/Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice, but some problems exist, e.g. in certain localities; 2=limited rights and or rights are not protected or are restricted; 3=does not exist</p> <p>Does this Section of the Report specifically mention that the government policy contributes to the generally free practice of religion? 0=yes; 1=yes, but exceptions are mentioned; 2=no.</p>
Societal Restrictions	<p>According to the Report, to what extent do the society's religious groups, associations, or the culture at large restrict the practice, profession, or selection of religion? 0=None; 10=Extensive restrictions.</p>
Politics/Religion Overlap	<p>According to the Report, what is the nature of political parties (in practice)? 0=All political parties are secular; 1=Correlation between political party and religion; 2=Political parties can be religious or secular; 3=Political parties must be religious</p>
Social Isolation Index	<p>Index indicating both social and physical isolation due to religious brand. Range 0-10</p>
	<p>According to the Report, do settlement and expansion policies (e.g., internal migration policies) have anything to do with religion? 0=Nothing to do with religion beyond holy sites; 1=Some general relation to religion; 2=Highly related to religion or belief</p>
	<p>According to the Report, are allegations reported of discrimination in education, housing and/or employment based on religion? 0=No discrimination; 1=Some discrimination; 2=Widespread discrimination; 3=Caste-like system</p>
	<p>Considering the entire Report, estimate the number of people who were displaced from home due to religion in this country. 0=None; 1=Less than 10; 2=10 to 200; 3=201 to 1,000; 4=1,001 to 10,000; 5=10,000 to 99,999; 6=100,000 to 999,999; 7=More than 1 million</p>
Social Movements	<p>According to the Report, what is the situation regarding social movements in relation to religious brands in the country?</p> <p>0 = [Either A or B]: a) All social movement(s) exist that are reported either promote religious freedom or are amicable and do not intimidate people from (other) religious brands, or b) All social movement(s) that are reported either promote religious freedom or are amicable and do not intimidate people from</p>

	<p>(other) religious brands. 1 = [Either A or B]: a) Social movement(s) exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand, but they are uncoordinated at either national or regional levels. (flashes of activity), or b) Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands, but they are uncoordinated at either national or regional levels. (flashes of activity). 2 = [Either A or B]: a) Social movement(s) exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand through unconnected, but regionally coordinated means. (regional & organized activity), or b) Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands through unconnected, but regionally coordinated means. (regional & organized activity). 3 = [Either A or B]: a) Social movement(s) exist that seek national or regional hegemony for a religious brand through nationally coordinated means. (national & organized activity), or b) Social movement(s) exist that campaign against certain religious brands through nationally coordinated means. (national & organized activity)]</p>
Religious Violence Breadth	<p>According to the Report, to what extent is there religiously related violence in the nation (victim and/or perpetrator)? 0=Isolated acts of religious-related violence; 1=Widespread acts or covering several regions with religiously-related violence; 2=On-going war with religiously-related violence</p>
Religious Violence Intensity	<p>According to the Report, what is the highest level of religious violence reported? 0=None; 1=Anti-religious brand graffiti; 2=Vandalism to religious brand property; 3=Bombing or burning of religious brand property; 4=Beating, rape, or physical assault of person(s) due to religious brand; 5 Torture or killing of person(s) due to religious brand; 6=Massacre of and/or war between religious brands</p>
Religious Violence Scale	<p>Scale measuring overall religious violence. Generated from the standardized values of <i>Religious Violence Intensity</i> and <i>Religious Violence Breadth</i>. Range 0-10.</p>

Appendix B: Descriptive Statistics for Measures

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Religious Violence Breadth	138	0	2	0.75	0.71
Religious Violence Intensity	138	0	6	2.84	1.99
Religious Violence Index	138	0	10	4.27	3.26
Population	138	14.51	20.99	16.44	1.24
Per Capita GNP	137	1.95	4.58	3.17	0.70
Democracy	133	-10	10	3.19	6.68
Civilization Divide	136	0	1	0.07	0.25
Government Regulation	138	0	9.44	3.85	3.04
Politics/Religion Overlap	138	0	2	0.41	0.51
Isolation	137	0	10	1.73	2.22
Societal restrictions	138	0	10	3.01	1.70
Social Movements	138	0	3	1.19	1.02
Structural Equation Model N ^a	138				