

State-Supported Religions and the State's Propensity for Violence

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

A trend in recent literature is the argument that the government can influence religious organizations through state-sponsorship, elite control, distribution of economic goods, toleration, and suppression. The opposite is also true; religious organizations can influence control over government through social mobilization, collective action, belief structures, alternative powers structure, and dictating public morals. Moreover, some authors have posited there is a strong link between the stability of one and the stability of other (Kay et. Al, 2010), (Barro and McCleary, 2005). But, does the instability between competing organizations lead to violence as reality? And can state structures be strongly correlated with such measures? Using a Hierarchical Logistic Regression model on 183 countries from 1990-2014, I argue that states with state-supported religions are more likely to have occurrences of battle-related violence than states without state-supported religions.

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## **1. Introduction**

According to sociologists, under certain conditions, the state suppresses religion (Gryzmala-Busse, 2012). The suppression can take many forms, and a religion or religious organization is targeted because it threatens some aspect of the state or elite's authority. The question I ask is what are the outcomes of a state that provides preferential treatment for a specific religion over others? And what are the mechanism that lead to the outcome? I argue that state with state-supported religions often, whether purposeful or not, engage in the suppression of non-state supported religions, which leads to increases in violent occurrences within the country. To start, I begin by showing the implications of religious identity.

The religious identity often also acts as a social mechanism that gathers disaffected individuals into a collective unit. When it grows large enough, it becomes a voice whose pleas are not only more easily heard but can also become a voice to be reckoned with. The religious group can either be supported or not supported by the state. State-supported religious constituents are often identified with the state and given preferential treatment in terms of law and policy. In many states, the government is not the only power structure that the people look to for social support. Many states have a state-supported religion that is often a benefactor of social welfare for the local populations that is regularly endorsed by the government (Cosgel and Miceli, 2009).

Non state-supported religions (from here on called independent religions) frequently do not share in the same level of preferential treatment and, in lieu of state support, form from several different mechanisms. One that Trejo argues is that the groups often form from disenfranchised portions of the population. These groups can develop from any number of social or government ills. Economic inequality, poor democratic representation, political suppression, disenfranchisement, and over-dependence on the elite franchise can lead to a class that feels its needs are ignored by the government, and thus feel compelled to collectivize. The independent religions usually have grassroots organizations, and focus on support the poorer parishioners rather than (at least initially) attempting to garner elite endorsement, government support, or economic and political power. The independent religion then gathers the collective support of the disenfranchised poor adherents through its attempts to fill the gaps left in the state and state-supported religions social welfare goods. The independent religion acts as a means of mobilizing the needs of the neglected and can bring about social change by offering a new avenue for voicing grievances.

While state-supported religions often distribute these goods as well, Trejo argues that State-supported religions often fall for the same distributional and social pitfalls as the state. Trejo calls this a “reputation deficit” when the government supported state religion is underperforming in its care for the needs of the poor (Trejo, 2009). When this happens, an intra-state competition between state-supported religions and non-state supported religions begins.

However, this is where the push comes to shove. If there is a competition between the state-supported religion and the independent religions, the government has a stake in the conflict. For the state, the independent religions can represent a threat to the legitimacy of the state-supported religion, which can also pose a threat to state authority, and it will likely impose a preference for the state-supported option and begin to intrude on specific practices that undermine the power and stability of the state-supported religion. The independent religions depend on a lack of government intrusion. When the state begins to attempt to change the practices of a religion, it represents a threat to that specific religion.

State-supported religions often lead to uneven religious freedoms for independent religious organizations (Finke and Martin, 2014). The new independent religion, or at least religions that do not support the actions of the state, can suffer consequences such as religious suppression or unequal representation under the law, especially when there is already a state-supported religion. Additionally, the independent religions have a higher chance of suffering state suppression because they are a resident threat to state power by way of providing an alternative power structure to the state. Prior literature on the relationship between the church and state has focused on the institutional effects between the church and state, along with the reasons for state suppression. What I focus on is measuring the after-effects of state suppression, specifically through the levels of state conflict violence.

I posit that if a state suppresses a rising competing religious organization, then it is not just suppressing the religious organization itself, but is also indirectly

suppressing the cries of the non-elites who are looking for a means of having their voices heard by participating in the independent religious organization and that the disenfranchised religious minority may resort to violence. My argument is that states with state-supported religions are more likely to experience occurrences of intrastate violence than countries without state-supported religions.

One reason the disenfranchised adherents are often adherents to an independent religion is precisely because they feel disenfranchised from the governments provided social goods and judicial activity. However, individuals joining independent religions do not necessarily upend their prior religious<sup>1</sup> and moral beliefs. Specific ethical components of the religious institution are often still crucial to the independent adherents. In joining the independent religion, they are looking for a religion that supports their grievances and adheres to its own religious beliefs. The prior institution probably preached a similar ethical system of beliefs, and quite likely had dogma of similar theistic views (at least to the outsider), but the adherents are also interested in the free application of the beliefs, not only the morals propagated from the pulpit. Hence, the newfound independent organization is attempting to fill the gaps of the state-supported religion or the state itself. By suppressing the independent religious organization, the state is also suppressing the means of collective efforts of the disenfranchised poor as well, who are left with no other options once the independent religion is

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<sup>1</sup> In this case, by religious I am referring to the specific, dogmatic theological beliefs that the adherent finds non-negotiable in their change to another religion. The change may often be more denominational in nature, versus a radical change from being monotheistic to atheistic or polytheistic in their conception of the world.

progressively curtailed by the state, and may often result in violence against the state.

If the state begins suppressing a collective group's protest, then the group is left without a means of airing their grievance and bringing about change. We should then observe an uptick in violent activities associated with states with supported religions. The uptick could be in the form of peaceful protests that are violently suppressed by the state, or grassroots level violence against the state. In either case, in this strain of argument, the criteria are that a state with a state-supported religion will see a measured increase in violence versus a state without a state-supported religion.

Conversely, I posit that states without a state-supported religion will not have this same level of violence for two reasons. First, as many soviet-state countries quickly found, a state cannot altogether remove religion from the population, even with the use of brutal force (Frank, 2001). And rather than have an uncontrolled independent religion which could undermine their efforts, the communist states instead opted for state-controlled religions that would at least act as a partial salve for those in the state that still felt a strong religious inclination. Thereby (in the 20<sup>th</sup> century), there is a strong correlation between authoritarian regimes and state-supported (albeit controlled, mutated, and/or altered) religions. Secondly, this does not necessarily mean there is endogeneity in the model between authoritarianism and state-supported religions as there are numerous examples of democratic regimes state-supported religions.

For the state and supported religion, suppression represents an attempt to maintain control by political and economic elites in order to stabilize their power. According to Casanova, the stability of the state-supported church is tied to the stability of the state (Casanova, 2011). If the state becomes unstable, then the supported church will as well. It will no longer attempt to provide for the needs of the poor, but will begin basing its efforts on supporting the re-stabilization of government, thereby indirectly supporting the elite's agenda to maintain their power. An uprising independent religion represents a threat to the power's status quo, even if the rising religion is merely looking to fill the gaps amidst the instability. The lower classes may very well see the hypocrisy of a state-supported church that is less interested in its applying its values than in forwarding government talking points. When the congregants realize the government is not addressing their interests, then they will find a new religion that is not as corrupt. The government will then engage in one of two things. Either they will try to suppress the introduction of a competing means of control, or the government will reform. The second is much harder to do without losing control because it admits wrong-doing, so some level of suppression is a much more likely option. If this is the case, than in the presence of a state-supported religion, we should begin to see a rise in possible occurrences of violence.

## **1.1 Definitions**

If one is going to write about a term as relative as religion, it must first be somewhat defined, or at least partially explained what is meant by it in my article. For the dataset, religion is defined as one of the religious categorical designations

by the researchers, and whether the state's support is supporting one of the religions listed earlier. Busse's definition of religion seems to most closely define both its broader political importance, as well as its deeper personal meaning. For one, Busse argues that not all religious identities are "fungible". Some beliefs are very deeply held, for better or worse. Their beliefs are not easily discarded, and quite usually regarded as sacred, even if the adherents are unsure as to why. Additionally, Busse argues that, "Religion can thus function not only as a source of communal loyalty and shared identity and understandings but also as a powerful ideology, a set of normative principles and claims about how the world ought to function." (Gryzmala-Busse, 2012). Religion is not merely a tradition but a set of beliefs, that gives the individual and participating community a common identity. It has a set of views of how the world is, and how it should be, which inevitably informs how the adherents see the world, their neighbor, the government, and even the church itself. As such, if the world is not as it should be, then they are faced with the question on how to make it so, which often makes the church a political mechanism by way of its missional goal. What's important is to recognize the reason behind many/some church's desire to act strategically in order to influence policy. Religion can act as a collective organism that can mobilize adherents to action in pursuit of its mission.

By identity, in this case, I mean something somewhat different than identity defined as relating to racial or sexual identity. Busse argues that religion is different from other markers of identity in three ways. First, it has transnational claims that span substantial populations. It makes claims about authority that may

challenge the state, and can even be a sort of alternative to the state moral or law claims. Second, religion is “an unusually demanding identity.” Failing to fulfill religious duties can result in determination, and therefore exert more substantial pressure on adherents than the government. Third, because the risks and rewards of religion are so high, it can withstand robust public and secular onslaughts intent on eradication. Busse focuses on political conflict, not necessarily the tendency toward violent conflict. The question is whether or not states with supported religions are correlated with a tendency towards violence over states without supported religions.

I use the term state-supported religion rather than Finke and Martin’s “state-sponsored” religion for a couple of reasons. First, “state-sponsored” is a more narrow definition that implies a level of explicit, overt means of state support, or that there is an apparent religious institution that gains its power or sponsorship from the state. While this is indeed applicable in some cases such as the Iranian Shiitism or the Russian Orthodox Church, it does not cover examples where there is not an explicit institution tied the state or when the state is implicitly supporting a religion such in areas such as education or marriage. Additionally, the variables I am analyzing measure state financial support of religions, as well as specific laws or mandates that give preference to a specific religion over others.

For occurrences of violence, I am most interested in instances where the state is identifiably involved in dyadic battlefield related deaths. I speak more about the specific variable and dataset later. However, I focus on battlefield

related deaths as it indicates a level of violence that has escalated beyond non-violent actions by the state and independent actors, and reached a tipping point where battle-related deaths become a possibility. This represents a tipping point for the government and/or the independent actor in that one or the other has decided that this is the best option for addressing their grievances or concerns at this time. I do not differentiate between battlefield deaths for the government or for the independent actor, but argue that in either case, it is a sign that violence has occurred, which is the dependent variable in my analysis.

## **1.2 Literature review**

Much of the world has been *de*-secularizing for some time now. Religious adherence is up on many surveys and measures such as the pew poll (Hackett and Cooperman, 2017). Part of this is due to the rising differences in birth rates between predominantly developing and more religious countries versus the more secular western European countries. However, part of it is still attributable to the west. Some studies have found that religion has increasingly played a more significant role in European elections parties (Smith, 2009), (Knutsen, 2004). Brug et. al surveyed the connection between religiosity and party choice for European parliamentary elections. They found that while it has secularized, the effect of religion has increased (Brug et. Al, 2009). Indeed, religion as a whole has a growing importance in many countries across the world (Iannacone, 1998).

Additionally, religion still matters for certain parties and the effect of religion has increased for younger generations. Moreover, they've found that religion plays a more significant role in fractionalized societies, which further suggests

that religion has, for one, continued to play a crucial role in democratic societies. And second, that religious organizations can act as a means of collectivizing for political action. Religious cleavages are nothing new. They were quite evident in the time of the protestant reformation when Catholics and protestants competed for secular and religious power within the state. Thus, nation-building becomes mixed with religious adherence. Even after many European nations democratized in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the religious cleavages persisted through party alignment (Knutsen, 2004).

Many countries recognize the pluralistic nature of their society and make promises by way of constitutional laws that protected religious liberty within the state. Even the country's with state-supported religions pass religious protections. However, enforcement of said protections is often denied in many of those same countries. When countries begin to hamper legal protections for religious groups, higher levels of physical persecution and discrimination become more likely (Grim and Finke, 2007). Religious minorities depend on the government for their protection of fundamental civil liberties. Yet, the government can just as well be the cause of restrictions if the legislative and executive branches vote otherwise. The judicial branch then becomes their last safe haven, but, as Finke argues, in countries with long-standing divisions, the state may select to restrict specific religious groups (Finke et. Al. 2017). Finke further explains why the state would choose to limit specific religious groups. He states that "minority religions face discrimination from the state because they represent unwanted competition for the state-supported religion, are viewed as a threat to the state and larger culture and

lack support from an independent judiciary.” (Finke and Martin, 2011). When the state faces competition from a growing religious group, the state may very well crack down on it through various forms of suppression.

Which begs the question, what does the state have to fear as competition from a religious group? Trejo argues that there is a strong relationship between religious competition and political action. He focuses on the inter-religious competition as a function for political action. He argues that intra-state religious competition can lead to reform with an underperforming religion, and cause them to begin lobbying for social goods and services to retain/gain more religious adherents. Trejo examines the experience of the catholic church in Mexico. There, the catholic clergy were routinely ignoring the basic needs of their poor, rural parishioners. However, when the US mainline Protestantism, specifically Pentecostals, entered into the same locales, the situation changed. The Pentecostals lobbied for the rural indigenous causes, and grew in size, winning over a sizable group of catholic parishioners<sup>2</sup>. After suffering a reputation deficit from appeasing the rich and powerful elites, the catholic church switched tactics. They began to lobby for benefits for their congregants and played vital roles in mobilizing social movements. Trejo’s argument has two key takeaways.

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<sup>2</sup> Pentecostalism as a whole exhibits a strong leaning to individual responsibility, personal work ethic, and empowerment, versus belief in deterministic circumstances, which in turn often motivates their political involvement and voting patterns. McClendon states that, for Pentecostals, “individuals exposed to messages that emphasized their individual potential were more likely to participate politically. Furthermore, this political empowering effect was most evident among participants expose to self-affirming messages in the form of prosperity gospel- a religious message often associated with contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic churches” (McClendon and Riedl, 2015)

First, as he states, “We now know that religion facilitates collective action because it can create the ideological frames, collective identities, and mobilizing structures which social movements thrive.” (Trejo, 2009). Religion offers a means of collectivizing under a shared set of beliefs and act as a powerful mobilizing force of political change. Second, religions not only compete with each other but also compete with the government to provide goods and services. The government and elites may try to avoid distributing power to the poor, but the church acts as a unifying mechanism that gives the poor an ability to demand change and social goods—thereby making the church a competitor with those in power. And as Trejo pointed out, the catholic church, a state-supported church insofar as popular support, was more interested in maintaining its relationship with the elites rather than the poor parishioners. Only after the introduction of a competing religious organization did it reform its priorities. Finke and Martin further strengthen his argument, stating that, “even a small minority can be perceived by the state as a political, social, and ideological threat”(Finke and Martin, 2017). The church acted as an “ideological” infrastructure for the mobilization of the poor for them to lobby and bargain for the social goods they felt they deserved from the government.

Contrary to Marx, the church was not thrown off by the poor as if it was a shackle of the bourgeois but utilized as a tool for their own improvement. However, as Trejo showed, the church still bears the ability to be taken over by elitist sentiment, yet can also be a just collective action mechanism, circumstances depending.

So then why are religions in competition with the government? The government is not (usually, as of now, in the contemporary) competing with the church for the salvation of souls. Or trying to impose a cosmic vision on the people. What Trejo argues the Pentecostal churches in Mexico offered was the distribution of welfare services. Notice this was not the distribution of welfare by the government but from the churches themselves. The independent religion's adherents are not necessarily entering into this new community solely to lobby for redistribution. Much literature has been written on the almost counter-intuitive finding that the poor often vote against redistributive efforts that would most help themselves. Huber and Stanig argue that in many countries, the poor most often vote for right-wing parties that are against redistributive efforts. Religion and economic inequality are indeed related to voting choice, but they are not sole determinants (Huber and Stanig, 2007). The poor may have other goals in mind, such as the preservation of tradition, or attempts to restore prior times, in any case, "one should not assume the poor favor redistribution" (Ansell and Samuels, 2014). Morals and religious beliefs should not be entirely discounted when involved in the inter-religious competition (Brathwaite, 2015). Religion electorates are not as likely to be supporters of state-provided welfare goods and services. They often believe that the church can provide them in the event of an economic downturn or societal instability (Scheve and Stasavage, 2006). The growing influence of Pentecostalism in developing countries

Additionally, the church and state have experienced political conflict as to how poverty relief should be conceived. Welfare state provision has tended to

decrease religious participation as the state gradually takes over the church's prior role. Gill and Lundsgaarde state that there is a competition between the church and government for who offers social welfare (Gill and Lundsgaarde, 2004). Historically the church provided many welfare goods to the local population, but recently the government has started to offer more significant welfare benefits to its citizens. As government goods increase, fewer zealous congregants will be more likely to turn to easier to receive government handouts. The authors have found a strong negative correlation between welfare spending and religious participation.<sup>3</sup>

The provision of social welfare implies a level of inequality that is trying to be alleviated. According to Karakoc, economic inequality leads to a greater role of religion in politics. Countries with higher levels of inequality will also have higher levels of religious participation. Karakoc argues that

“economic inequality increases the positive evaluation of the role of religion in politics through its effect on religiosity and participation in religious organizations... this study demonstrates that inequality decreases attitudes toward support for two dimensions of public secularization: the secularization of public office holders, and the influence of religious leaders in politics” (Karakoc, 2012).

And that it also has a more significant effect on the poor. The premise that higher inequality is correlated with religious, political participation connects the

dots between Ansell, Trejo, and Huber. In a country with higher inequality, the government has limited goods and services that it is willing to (or even has) to offer to the greater public.

This has two implications for the poor. First, the poor's legal protections are a lower priority than that of the elites (Mayrl, 2018). The state has a vested interest in protecting its power, and thus the demands of the poor, as well as their protection, is second to the demands of the elites. Second, the poor have a minimal safety net on which to fall back on. As the prior authors quoted above stated, the church has traditionally been the provider of social welfare goods and services. Thereby the poorer classes have a religiously influenced interest in their political participation by way of having less economic equality. While the motivations vary by religion and denomination, religious voters are less likely to vote for redistribution, whether this is because they believe in prosperity oriented gospels, or believe the church should be the provider, and it has an effect on their voting patterns.

Furthermore, my argument further builds on Karakoc's argument on the relationship between the economy and religion. In countries with lower levels of economic development, we tend to see a higher reliance on religion in the realm of politics. As such, countries with lower levels of GDP should also demonstrate a heightened relationship between religion and violence. I argue that this relationship is positive and that in these economically lower states with greater political-religious associations, we should be able to observe what effect this has on occurrences of violence.

Some of the cited sources focus on what happens when the church bargains for more social welfare or is given it: it often turns into less religiosity among the receiving populations. What I want to answer is what happens when the state refuses to give in to the demands for social welfare to the extent of their demands. I argue that when all avenues have been exhausted, violence an answer, even on the smallest of scales. As such, I posit by way of appeasing the elites rather than the congregants that countries with states with supported religions, will experience a higher propensity towards violence. If elites feel the need to protect their power by way of restricting independent religions, and reinforcing the protection of the state-supported religion which aligns with the elites, then the disenfranchised will likely rebel, possibly through the use of violence.

### **1.2.1 Government-supported religion**

In a state without a supported religion, we would expect to find a country that gives voice to different groups irrespective of religion or systems of beliefs. These pluralistic societies would be less correlated with violent tendencies because the weight of judicial protection and social welfare is more evenly distributed. The poor congregants can gather freely, even through religious organizations, and are not barred from collectivizing or mobilizing to voice their concerns. Which dampens the possibility of the necessity of a violent, as what I posit is more likely in the case of government suppression. This is not to mean that elitist competition has been completely done away with; only that the system is at least perceived as more equitable by the religious parishioners, thereby assuaging feelings of disenfranchisement.

### **1.3 Data info**

I will combine three specific datasets for my analysis. Since my thesis covers a wide span of religion, government, and violence on a global scale, there is not a particular source that has them all. To get a survey of religiosity on a global scale, I use the Association of Religious Data Archives. For measurements of violence, I use the Upsala Conflict Data program, specifically state conflict data. And for Government measures, I use the Quality of Government, which has aggregated data from a variety of datasets on government measures into a single set. I also utilize World Development Indicators for some additional economic variables. I will briefly describe the data sets below. The data is a cross-national dataset that measures 187 countries from 1990-2014.

#### **1.3.1 ARDA**

In order to identify the religious inclinations of individual countries, as well as the relationship of governmental preferential treatment for various religions located within the country, I utilize the “Religion and State: Round 3” (Fox, 2019) dataset from the Association of Religious Data Archives. The dataset covers all countries with populations over 250,000, as well as a collection of countries with even lower populations. The goal of the dataset is to provide researchers with codings that measure the nature of a relationship between church and state on an individual country level. The state code sources are gleaned from various human rights reports, academic and media sources, as well as extensive use of Lexis Nexis. While the codebook for the dataset does not explicitly define religion, other overlapping ARDA codebooks provide context as to what religious they are

recording. The ARDA Religious Minority Codebook lists 20 different religious categories. They have four Christian denominations, three Islamic denominations, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Animist, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, Confucian, Chinese religions, Sikh, Mormon, and other. Other makes up 2.1% of the dataset.

The dataset covers countries from the year 1990 to 2014, except for a select number of countries that became independent, as happened to many countries after the fall of the Soviet Union. The variables are coded according to either a law and or consistent, systematic practice by the government behavior in reference to one of the religious variables measured. Each variable used in the final merged dataset is coded by year, and ARDA recorded all countries and years used. Indeed, the ARDA dataset was one the most complete datasets used in my analysis.

The dataset used a single row for each country, and then spread the variables across columns by year and question, in the form of *questionx1990*, *questionx1991*, etc.... For my analysis, I gathered the items into a separate single column and sorted by years and country. The specific variables I pulled from the dataset were M22, M25, M29, and VFUNDING. M22 is a variable measuring "Forced renunciation of faith by recent converts to minority religions." The ARDA dataset breaks it down into four ordinal variables measuring no government restrictions up to significant restrictions on religious minorities. For this analysis, the variable is changed to a binary variable  $IV = (0,1)$ , with 0 = to no government restrictions on government religions, and 1 = any government restrictions on religion. This is to help address the original question of if there is

any level of non-government supported religions facing restrictions by the government.

The next variables, M25 and M29, are similarly coded for this dataset. M25 in the ARDA dataset measures “restrictions on proselytizing by permanent residents of the state to members of minority religion.” The measure breaks it down by four ordinal levels, starting from no government restrictions on the proselytization by minority religions, up to sharply restricted and prohibited by the government. I code the first measure, no restrictions as equal to 0, and the other three levels which measure any level of government restriction, as equal to 1.

M29 measures the role of government enforcement of religious education, measured as “Mandatory education in the majority religion.” The ARDA dataset codes it on four levels. The first coded as 1 if the government does not engage in any level of mandatory religious education. It is coded as 2 if some but not all students are able to opt-out of courses, or this only applies to some students. It is coded as 3 if in public schools only and coded as 4 if in all schools, including private schools. In my dataset, I change the one as equal to 0, and the other three as equal to one. My reason for doing this is that while levels 2 and 3 there appears to be some level of government accommodation in the case of only enforcing in public education, private schools are generally expensive, and only the upper classes, meaning the elites, would be the ones who could afford a different school besides the one provided by the government.

The final variable coded from the ARDA dataset and included in this model is VFUNDING. The ARDA dataset measures state funding of religion on six ordinal levels, starting at, 0 = the government does not fund religion, all the way up to 5 = government funding of religion goes to only one religion, no other religions receive funds. The middle variables capture some nuance in funding by measuring whether or not the government funds religions in the country, and to what extent it measures one or more religions in the country. It takes into account what proportion of the country is represented by the religions being funded, and whether it is equally represented by the proportion of funding it receives. Meaning that if the government funding is distributed equally, it is only equal in so far as the population is represented. This being the case, I want to control whether a state is funding any religions at all, since even if the state is proportionally distributing funds to multiple religions, a single religion may be the dominant one, and thus be the primary recipient of government religious funding. In my dataset for this model, I code no government funding as equal to 0, and the rest as equal to 1.

### **1.3.2 Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)**

For the dependent variable, I utilize the UCDP dyadic dataset to measure a state's participation in violence. The dataset measures conflict data by level of conflict and focuses on the dyads within each conflict. The dataset analyzes state-based armed conflict as "a contested incompatibility that concerns the government and or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in

a calendar year.” The dataset measures the primary country and government involved in the conflict, and then adds measures for additional actors. With indicators for country-year, I create a binary variable that measures government participation in violent conflicts greater than 25 battle-related deaths. Countries with no participation in conflict in each year or less than 25 battlefield related deaths are set equal to 0, and countries participating in conflicts greater than 25 battlefield related deaths are set equal to 1. The goal is to measure whether a state is engaging in violence, and model this against its support of majority religions within its country. The theory being that if a state is supporting and educating on a specific religion, the model should confirm that the state has a higher propensity toward violence, even on a small scale.

### **1.3.3 Economic Indicators**

In order to add some additional independent country-specific variables, I add a selection of economic and population indicators to help control for country size and economy. I utilize the GDP and trade dataset by Gleditsch, which provides a complete set of measures of GDP, and GDP per capita. Gleditsch also includes population estimates for the countries. Notice that some data is not available past 2011, and I use some inference methods to gather relatively accurate data until 2014 using Amelia data imputations, which I explain more about later. I also use a variable from the World Development Indicators dataset on enrollment in primary school education to run some robustness tests. I argue this is important due to the ARDA variable measuring state support of religious education and will help control for if the state has high rates of support for

religious education, but then does not also have high levels of participation of primary school students. As was said earlier, states have historically engaged in mandatory religious education as a means of converting portions of the population and or instilling specific values held as necessary to the state.

In the case of states with high levels of state-supported religions, inducing religious facets into the state educational system does one of two things: possibly indoctrinate non-religious majority adherents, or decrease educational opportunities by minority religious adherents by way of not wanting to allow their children to become possibly indoctrinated by dominant religious views. In order to create a hierarchical model, I am using categorical variables for regions as defined by the Correlates of War dataset, which divides countries across the world into seven geographic regions.

#### **1.3.4 Amelia**

To fill some gaps in the missing data, I utilize a well-regard imputation package in R called Amelia. Amelia is a tool that utilizes multiple imputes in missing data in time-series cross-sectional datasets. It uses a bootstrapping based algorithm, which is considerably faster than other imputation methods. I only use Amelia for imputing a select number of variables, primarily the Gleditsch economic and population indicators, which are missing post-2011 information.

#### **1.4 Methods**

My method will be a hierarchical logistic regression that measures whether a country has a state-supported religion or not (0,1), on both regional and global

levels. I will use a series of variables that measure violence within the region using the Correlates of War dataset to uncover violent trends related to state-supported religions. Additionally, I will add control variables related to economic trends such as per capita GDP, economy type, and levels of economic freedom. Some controls for government type and civil liberties will be added as well to measure the correlation between state-supported religions and specific types of governing states.

For my argument, I am using a hierarchical logistic regression model to understand the mechanisms at play between state-supported religions and violence. The dependent variable in my model is a binary outcome of  $DV = (0,1)$  with 0 = countries with less than 25 battlefield related deaths by year, and 1 = countries with more than 25 battlefield related deaths in a year. For independent variables in my model I use measures that capture the affects of economic indicators and government sponsorship of religious institutions on the outcome of whether or not the country is a participant in battlefield violence.

I run the model in R and get the following results. Four of seven variables return as statistically significant,  $p < .05$ . Gross domestic product has an inverse relationship with occurrences of violence, meaning that as a countries GDP decreases, the chance of government violence should decrease as well. The population has a significant positive relationship so that larger countries should see a higher probability of occurrences of state-based violence. The first three religious variables are not listed as significant. The variable that measures whether states force individuals to renounce faith has low significance at  $p = .49$

and has a negative relationship with occurrences of violence. Similarly, countries that restrict proselytization by a minority has a negative relationship with the dependent variable and is extremely insignificant at  $p = .92$ .

**Table 1: Results of Hierarchical Logistic Regression**

Table 1:

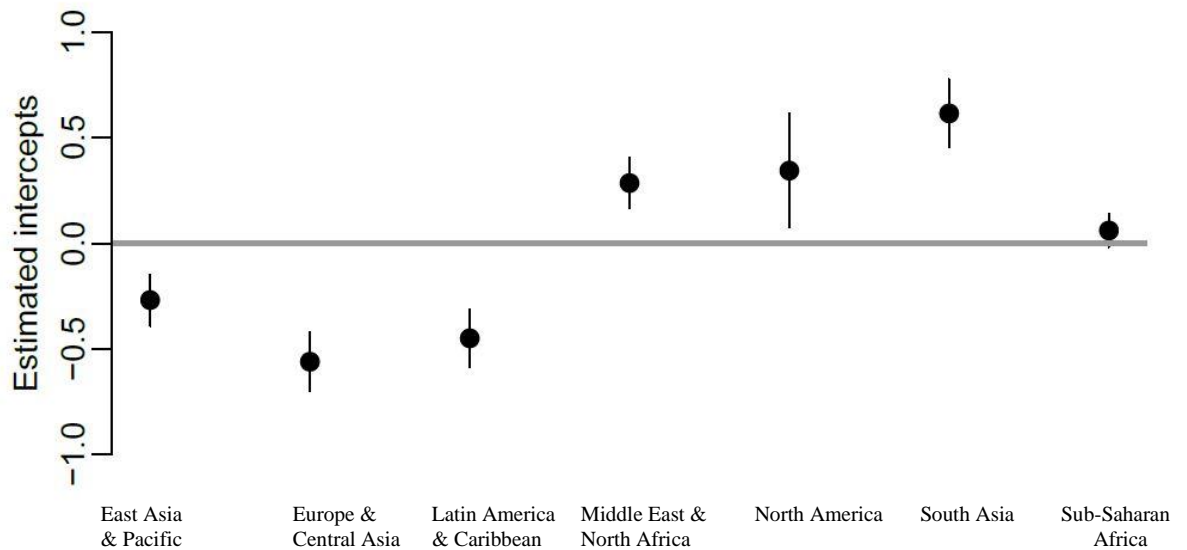
|                           | <i>Dependent variable:</i>                   |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           | combin                                       |
| Gross Domestic Product    | -0.387***<br>(0.056)                         |
| Population                | 0.951***<br>(0.066)                          |
| Renunciation of Faith     | -0.118<br>(0.174)                            |
| Proselytization Restrict. | -0.012<br>(0.140)                            |
| Gov Rel Ed Fund           | 0.151<br>(0.129)                             |
| Gov Rel Fund              | 0.396***<br>(0.124)                          |
| Constant                  | -6.704***<br>(0.427)                         |
| Observations              | 3,840  |
| Log Likelihood            | -1,416.332                                   |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.         | 2,848.665                                    |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit.       | 2,898.691                                    |
| <i>Note:</i>              | * $p < 0.1$ ; ** $p < 0.05$ ; *** $p < 0.01$ |

“Gov Rel Ed Fund” represents M29, the variable measuring whether or not a government enforces mandatory religious courses in education. The variable

is closer than the prior two religious variables, at  $p = .23$ , but it is still not significant. The positive coefficient suggests though that when a government is enforcing religious aspects into education, the state is more likely to experience occurrences of violence.

The critical variable, “Gov Rel Fund,” which measures whether or not a state is funding a majority religion (i.e., has a state-supported religion), shows a positive correlation with the dependent variable. The significance is calculated at  $p = .00143$ , further suggesting the importance of the variable for predicting occurrences of violence and confirms that at some level, there is a relationship between state-supported religions and violence, but this does not necessarily mean that it is state-supported religions per se, but could be the presence of religion itself. Further analysis of the relationship between the state, religion, and the populace will be addressed later.

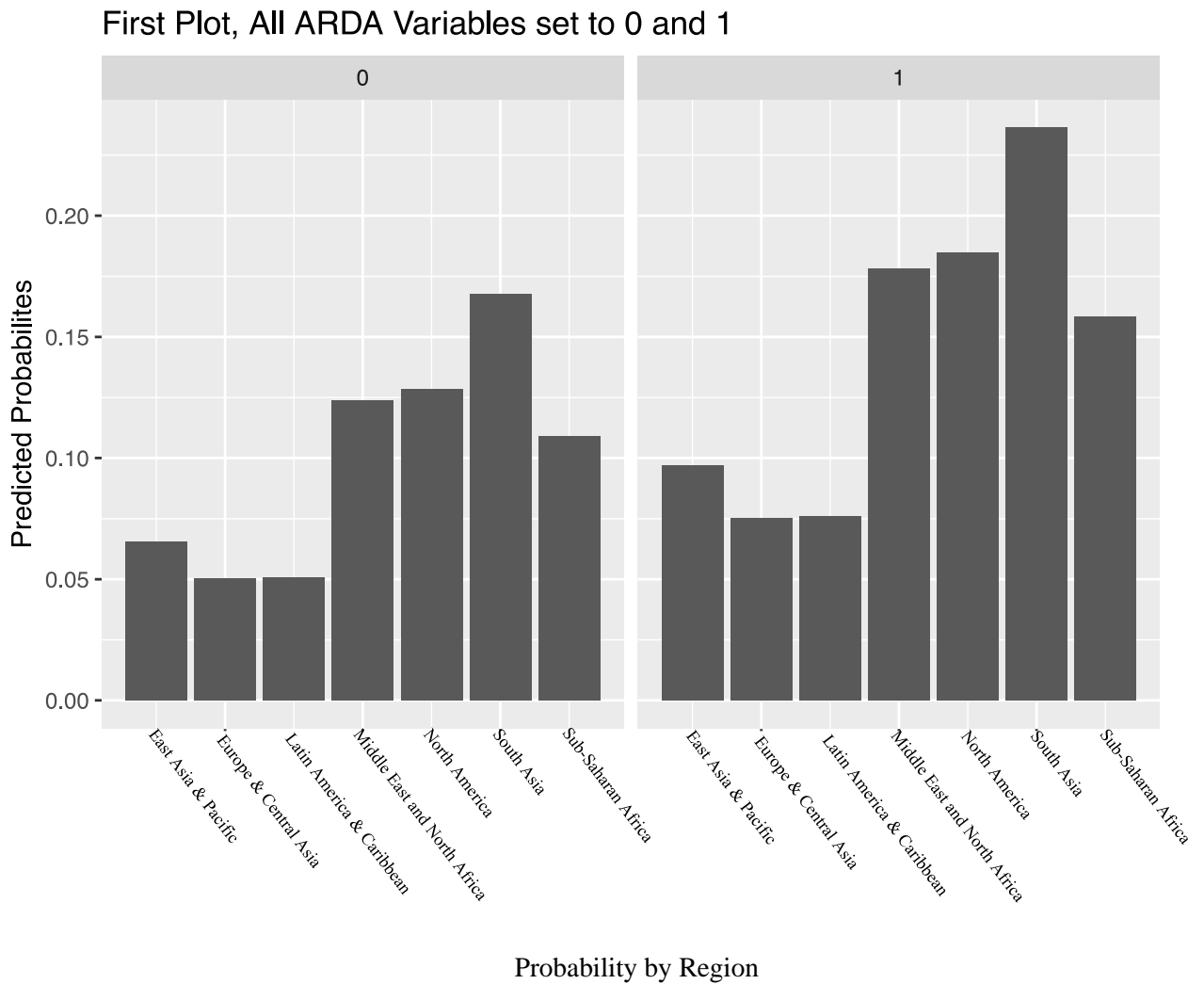
The hierarchical part of the model added random effects based on a categorical variable addressing regions. The Correlates of War dataset divides the world into seven regions: East Asia & Pacific, Europe & Central Asia, Latin America & Caribbean, Middle East & North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. I included the regional level differences to model whether or not regions have different relationships with state-supported religion and occurrences of violence. The intercepts of the model are listed below.



**Figure 1: Random Effects Intercept Graph**

Intercepts are the dots, and their standard errors are the small bands stretching above and below. East Asia, Europe, and Latin America each have lower negative intercepts, meaning they have a lower predicted probability of experiencing occurrences of violence as a whole. Conversely, the Middle East, North America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa all have positive intercept, suggesting they have a higher predicted probability of experiencing occurrences of violence. North America has a very large standard error band due to the low number of countries listed as North America,  $n = 2$ : the United States, and Canada. The intercepts as a whole suggested there are some regional differences in the relationship between state-supported religions and occurrences of violence. Europe, especially Eastern Europe, has several countries that grant a level of government support to religions within the state but also have little to no occurrences of battlefield related violence. In the Middle East, there are many

countries with state-supported religion and higher occurrences of violence. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia appear to follow this trend, as well.



**Figure 2: Plot of Predict Probabilities**

To further illustrate the model, I plot the predicted probabilities of the model given whether a state has all religious variables = 1 on a regional level. Each column represents the probability of a specific region experiencing violence. As can be seen below, states with state-supported religions, forced renunciation of faith, restrictions on proselytization, and mandatory religious teaching in

education, have a higher predicted probability towards violence, even with the two variables that have a negative correlation with the dependent variable. The lower end of GDP, we see differences between Religion = (1,0) with roughly an 10 point increase in predicted probability towards violence.

## **2. Robustness tests**

One of the key variables I included in the first model is the government support of religion in the education system. The ARDA dataset provides a measure for the level of enforcement the state has for religion in its public schools. To check the robustness of the model, I add a variable into the equation to measure the effect of total primary school enrollment in the country. I argue that states with state-supported religions will also attempt to express these religious beliefs in their state education system. I further hypothesize that a state with high levels of religiously enforced education (both private and public) should then see a rise in predicted violence due to the state's attempt to impose specific systems of beliefs on parts of the population.

Since the industrial revolution, states have often become involved in the state education system to inculcate certain values into the population (Robinson, 1994). Indeed, the modern educational system arose with the modern nation-state (Mitter, 1993). Sometimes these values are nationalist oriented towards developing specific skill sets, or ideological values (Tamir, 1993). For instance, in the case of the Soviet Union, education was regularly filled with lessons on one's

civic duty to the country and comrade, as well as propagating other doctrines that the state felt was necessary to instill in the next generation. I argue that in the case of states that support mandatory religious education, there will be a higher probability of violence in these states than states that either provide equal support of religion in educational institutions or do not support religion in education.

One way this could lead to violence is that by legislating and enforcing the teaching of certain religious beliefs, this a sign of willful government favor for one religion over another and is co-symptomatic of broader societal issues felt on the deepest level: the nuclear family. Families will have to decide between choosing to send their children to school where they will be exposed and possibly influenced by religious beliefs contrary to their own. While this may be a sign of closemindedness in the west, in many developing countries where religion is a dominant form of identity, this represents a familial crisis. The family is left between leaving their children uneducated, thus setting them up for failure in the future, or placing them under a system of education that could undermine their religious preferences.

There is the option of starting their private religious schools where they are free to teach as they see fit according to their religious beliefs. However, in many countries, government regulations are forbidding this or placing additional restrictions on the education autonomy of these private schools, and sometimes force the schools to adopt teaching in line with public institutions. The ARDA code captures these nuances in terms of measuring government-enforced support of religion in education both in the public and private spheres, but it does not

provide measures of total enrollment. I suspect that by adding World Development Indicator for total enrollment by country by year, we should see rises in predicted violence in states with religious enforced education versus countries without applied religious education. This rise in predicted violence is co-symptomatic with low levels of education, but should also contribute to higher levels of violence in that it represents an additional level of government intrusion.

I run the models the same as before but add instrumental variables taken from the World Development indicators for educational enrollment. It is an instrumental variable that measures the percentage of total primary school enrollment in the country from 1990-2014. The model is still a hierarchical binary logistic regression.

The results of the equation are listed in Table 2 below. All statistically significant variables from the original equation remain the same. Gross domestic product, population, and government funding of religion all remain significant at  $p < .01$ . They also maintain their positive and negative coefficient as before. Educational Enrollment is recorded as negative and significant at  $p < .01$ . Meaning that as the percentage of total population enrolled at some point in primary education for a given country increases, the predicted probability of the occurrence of violence decreases. Additionally, the ARDA variable that indicates government religious education mandates becomes significant in the new model at  $p = .045$ . It has a positive correlation, suggesting that if a government mandates the teaching of education in either the public or private schools, then the predicted probability of violence for the given country will increase.

A negative coefficient for educational enrollment and a positive one for mandated religious education leads to an interesting finding. The question is, how or why? Increases in educational enrollment are something generally correlated with a developing or progressing state. Rising rates of education mean a more educated population that can participate in and advance a developing economy. So, how does mandated religious education affect rates of violence? One possible outcome is that in a country with low economic and educational development, the children who are more likely to enroll are the children of elites. In lieu of equitable government support, children of elites are the ones most able to attend primary school. They are being raised to both succeed their parents and excel in the developing government and economy.

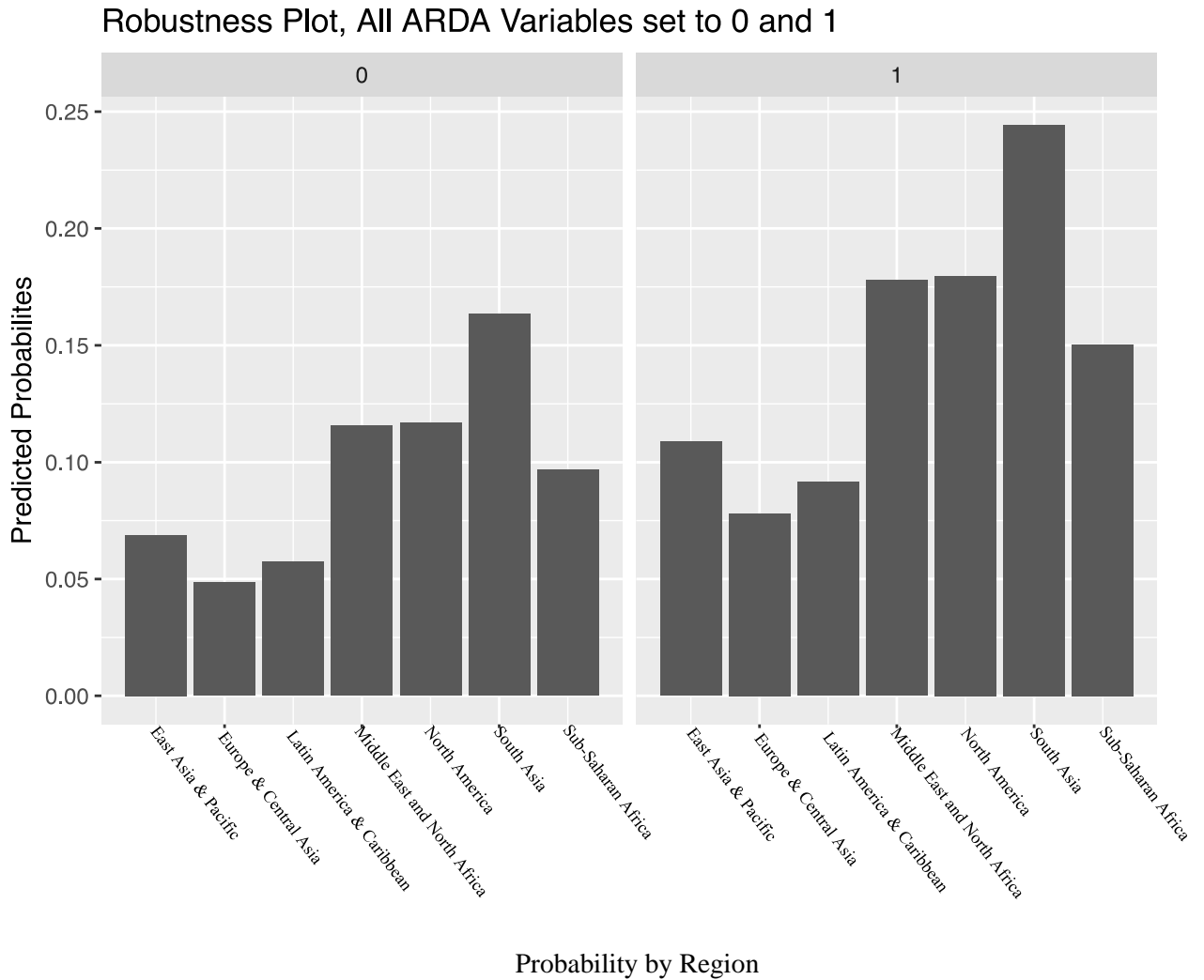
If a government favors a specific majority religion and mandates it in education across the country, then the minority elites and their children are both placed at a disadvantage and are left with two dismal moral choices. This represents a sign of increasing moral intrusion by the government and will likely lead to increases in societal estrangement by a member of the minority religion. The state may be expanding the reach of the mandated religion to increase the strength of the state, proselytize in minority religions, attempt to integrate a nationalist identity with the religious identity, or merely appease the majority religion adherents. However, to the minority religion stakeholders, this could be interpreted as an additional threat to the independent minority religion, thus leading to a possible rise in a violent occurrence.

**Table 2: Robustness Model Results**

Table 2:

|                           | <i>Dependent variable:</i> |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
|                           | combin                     |                      |
|                           | (1)                        | (2)                  |
| Education Enrollment      | -1.298***<br>(0.195)       |                      |
| Gross Domestic Product    | -0.323***<br>(0.058)       | -0.387***<br>(0.056) |
| Population                | 0.911***<br>(0.067)        | 0.951***<br>(0.066)  |
| Forced Faith Renunciation | -0.088<br>(0.175)          | -0.118<br>(0.174)    |
| Proselytization Restrict. | -0.086<br>(0.141)          | -0.012<br>(0.140)    |
| Gov Rel Ed Fund           | 0.277**<br>(0.130)         | 0.151<br>(0.129)     |
| Gov Rel Fund              | 0.368***<br>(0.126)        | 0.396***<br>(0.124)  |
| Constant                  | -1.104<br>(0.921)          | -6.704***<br>(0.427) |
| Observations              | 3,840                      | 3,840                |
| Log Likelihood            | -1,393.693                 | -1,416.332           |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.         | 2,805.385                  | 2,848.665            |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit.       | 2,861.664                  | 2,898.691            |

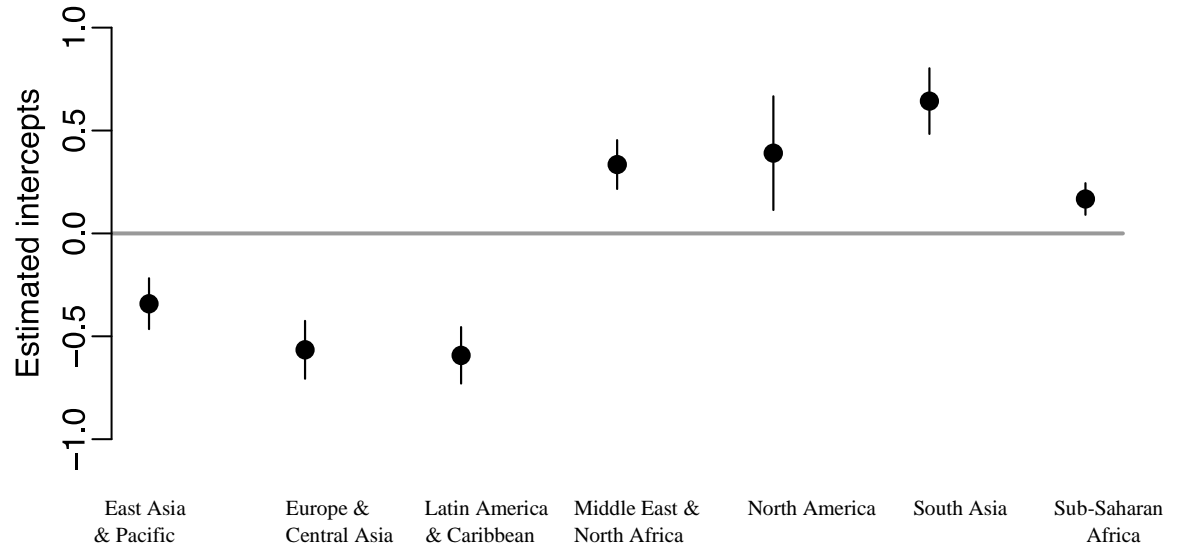
*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01



**Figure 3: Predict Probability of Robustness Model**

Similarly to the earlier plot, I chart the predicted probabilities by region. According to the coefficients, there is negative relationship between the primary education enrollment variable and the predicted probability of violence. In this model, religion has an even more significant effect on the predicted likelihood of violence, with a nearly 10 point increase. South Asia, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa regions also record a similar rises in predicted probability, albeit at a lower level. This further suggests that states with state-supported religions, both from a funding level and from an education level, have a higher predicted

probability towards violence. Though this has different levels of effects across regions, states without state-supported religions appears to have lower tendencies to occurrences of battlefield violence. And, as I will show in the next section, there are specific historical examples of this in action.



**Figure 4: Random Effects Intercepts of Robustness Model**

## 2.1 Second Robustness Test

I create a second model to check for the robustness of the results. In this model, I include a factor in income levels of the country to give an additional layer of analysis. I suspect that countries at different levels of GDP per capita will have very different participation rates in violence, and countries with lower levels of GDP will likely have lower rates of government-funded educational opportunities. I use a categorical variable from WDI indicators to factor in income

levels by region in the model. I also remove the variable measuring gross domestic product to reduce the possibility of collinearity between variables.

The model is the same as prior models, a hierarchical logistic regression; the only change, in this case, is a change random-effects factor from measuring regional differences to measuring differences by income level. The results of the model as listed below. They are similar to earlier: educational enrollment, population, mandated religious education, and government religious funding all remain significant. Proselytization and forced faith renunciation remain insignificant. The model further builds on my hypothesis even in the absence of regional differences and explicit GDP measures, religious funding and mandated religious education by the state are associated with higher levels of violence.

**Table 3: Second Robustness Model**

Table 3:

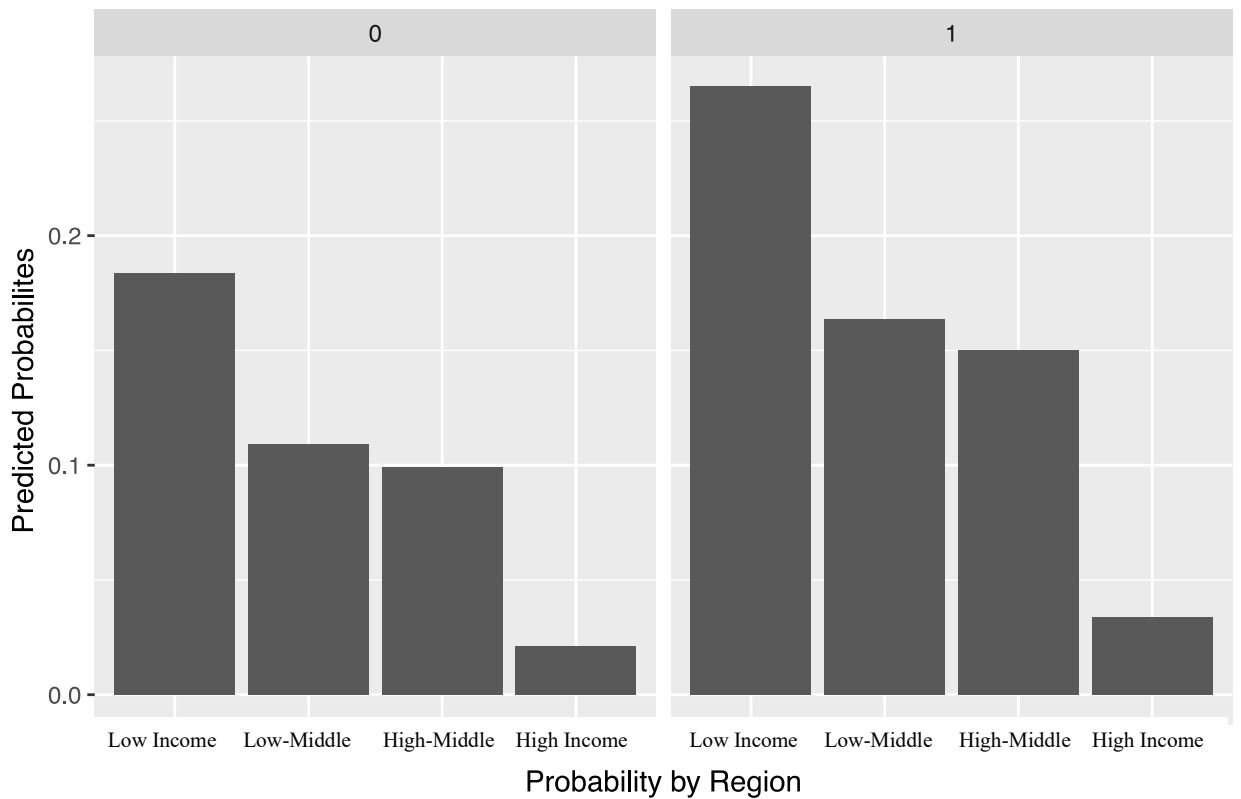
|                           | <i>Dependent variable:</i> |                      |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                           | combin                     |                      |                      |
|                           | (1)                        | (2)                  | (3)                  |
| Education Enrollment      | -1.345***<br>(0.189)       | -1.298***<br>(0.195) |                      |
| Gross Domestic Product    |                            | -0.323***<br>(0.058) | -0.387***<br>(0.056) |
| Population                | 0.604***<br>(0.035)        | 0.911***<br>(0.067)  | 0.951***<br>(0.066)  |
| Forced Faith Renunciation | -0.137<br>(0.169)          | -0.088<br>(0.175)    | -0.118<br>(0.174)    |
| Proselytization Restrict. | -0.095<br>(0.131)          | -0.086<br>(0.141)    | -0.012<br>(0.140)    |
| Gov Rel Ed Fund           | 0.292**<br>(0.122)         | 0.277**<br>(0.130)   | 0.151<br>(0.129)     |
| Gov Rel Fund              | 0.360***<br>(0.118)        | 0.368***<br>(0.126)  | 0.396***<br>(0.124)  |
| Constant                  | -1.662*<br>(0.987)         | -1.104<br>(0.921)    | -6.704***<br>(0.427) |
| Observations              | 3,840                      | 3,840                | 3,840                |
| Log Likelihood            | -1,373.635                 | -1,393.693           | -1,416.332           |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.         | 2,763.270                  | 2,805.385            | 2,848.665            |
| Bayesian Inf. Crit.       | 2,813.296                  | 2,861.664            | 2,898.691            |

*Note:*

\*p&lt;0.1; \*\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*\*p&lt;0.01

I illustrate the results of the model by plotting the differences of religious indicator effects on predicted probabilities and rates of primary education enrollment. Similar to the last few models, there is a discernible increase in the predicted probability of violence in states without religious education mandates and funded religious versus states without. The effect is more pronounced in states with lower incomes than states with high incomes. This follows the same pattern as earlier when the predicted probability plotted to the original model.

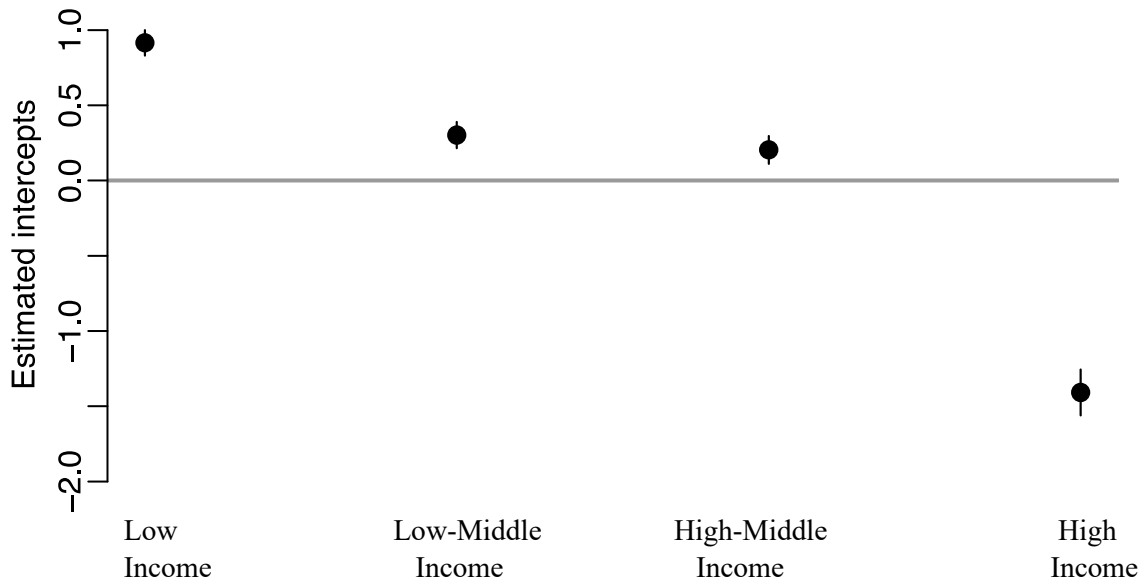
Second Robustness Plot, All ARDA Variables set to 0 and 1



**Figure 5: Predicted Probabilities for Second Robustness Model**

Low income has the highest predicted probability of occurrence of violence, both middle and upper middle-income countries have relatively similar levels, and high-income countries have the lowest predicted probability. The

regions each experience a predicted rise in probability of battle-field related violence. Many of the low income countries are located in South Asia, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Most of the high-income states are located within Western Europe; low-income countries are usually developing ones. In any case, the chart further supports my thesis that in states with favor specific religious organizations in their funding and educational systems see a higher probability of violent occurrences.



**Figure 6: Random Effects Intercept for Second Robustness Model**

### **3. The Syrian Example**

I use the example to Syrian Civil war following the Arab Spring as an example of how states with state-supported religions engaged in religious suppression in policies and education, which led to violence in the region.

Prior to the revolution, Syria was a relatively diverse population with a large mix of religious and linguistic groups. Despite its efforts, the Syrian government had largely failed to unite the country together under Syrian Nationalism. The Syrian government was largely made up of a Muslim minority called Alawites, and they espoused Ba'athism, which is a form of Arab-Nationalism. The Alawites were regarded as anti-Muslim by Sunni's in the region and the Sunni's generally did not trust them. The Alawites restricted religious education and Sunni' Ulema's, further oppressing the Sunnis (Fildis, 2012).

According to interviews conducted by Bali, Syrian students within the educational system prior to the Syrian Civil War state were oppressed, albeit in different ways. Government policies dictated that only the Baath party could operate within the school systems. The Ba'ath party espoused methods of indoctrinating students on Party ideologies such as Arab-nationalism and anti-Zionism. Bali argues that the students interviewed were forced to participate in classes that attempted to indoctrinate them on party policies. The goal of the Ba'ath party was to use to schools to help spread the ideologies of the state to every village and neighborhood (Bali, 2015).

In March 2011, in opposition of increasing government restrictions, the Syrian population began conducting mass protests across the country. They were a part of the Arab Spring at the time and were intended to bring about government reform and increased liberties for religious and ethnic minorities. The Assad regime began to implicitly target Sunni Muslim communities except for those that expressed support of the regime (Jasser, 2014). The peaceful protests quickly turned violent, as the state began to use armed conflict to stem the protests. The protestors soon responded in turn, and the peaceful moderates were subsumed by violent opposition members, leading to the Syrian Civil War.

In this example, there is a shared identity between the Assad Ba'athist Regime and the Alawites system of belief. The Ba'ath party espoused Arab-Nationalism and Anti-Zionism, and suppressed Sunni Muslim's ability to practice and pass down their faith. The Alawite's Ba'ath party attempted to indoctrinate students through schools and education in order to spread the values of the state. When the state refused, peaceful protests with a diverse set multi-ethnic and multi-faith background were formed. The protestors were against the encroachment of the state and demanded bureaucratic and economic reforms. The Assad regime, feeling its power and ideology threatened, began to engage in violent oppression, which the population, in turn, responded to with their own violent measures.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The adherents are expected to have certain beliefs and act a certain way, regardless of their social standing. However, when the interests of the state begin to infringe on the independent religions, the minority class begins to feel its institution is threatened. The models shown have illustrated the effect state-supported religions have on occurrences of violence. States at different stages of development all see a rise in the predicted probability of violence when the state is engaging in various forms of religious preferences. This shows that at some level, there exists an inherent tension between religions in states with state-supported religions. Funding of a specific religion and mandated the teaching of said religion the educational system both represent increased ties between the state and religion, leading to a predicted rise in violence.

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