Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences
ISSN: 2284-5747 | e-ISSN: 2458-1054
Covered in: ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, J- GATE, CrossRef, CrossCheck, Google Scholar, Ideas RePeC, Econpapers, Socionet, KVK, WorldCat, ICI Journals Master List - Index Copernicus.

2023, Volume 12, Issue 2 pages: 1-12 | doi: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss/12.2/87

Religion, Violence, Terrorism and War

Carmen Gabriela LĂZĂREANU [1]

[1] Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Department of Social Work, 9 Cloşca Street, Iaşi RO-700066, Romania, gabrielalazareanu@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The study presented highlights the causes and effects of the war in individual life in the conditions where the war in Ukraine takes place on the border of Romania. The effects of this war also affect us through the thousands of refugees who crossed our country or stayed here. Accidents of war are also present in new drones or remnants of drones reaching us, in Tulcea, Galati, Sulina. In the second part of the research, the population's perceptions related to this war and terrorist actions that are currently loved in the world were highlighted. The role of religion in creating peace is not an explicit one, but there are situations in which religion intervened favorably, religion can be a promoter of peace but it can also be the cause of armed conflicts.*

Keywords: *war, terrorism, conflict, religion, accident war, death, violence.*

How to cite: Lăzăreanu, C. G. (2023). Religion, violence, terrorism and war. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences, 12*(2), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss/12.2/87

©2023 Published by LUMEN Publishing. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

I. Introduction

The question that arises is: How can you live in situations of war, violence, and terrorism? The following lines contain the impressions of a child who understood the word "death":

"Grandma was in the kitchen making tea when suddenly, a huge drone. All its lights were blinking, and it was flying so low above the house that Grandma threw herself to the floor. Ina and I were in her little room when we heard it. At first, the drone made a strange sound, not like an airplane. We crouched down on the floor, this time, we didn't hurry to go down to the cellar because if it had exploded in the air, no one would have known we were down there. We would have been buried alive.

The drone circled the area, dropping bombs as it went. Tears streamed down my face. I lay on the bed for the first time in my life, thinking that I really wanted to live. My heart was in my throat every time another bomb dropped. I clung to every minute, to every second. I had never been so close to death... I prayed for the drone to fly farther and not hit the house. I prayed to God to help me. I couldn't breathe. After a while, it became quiet. Finally, I managed to calm down."(Skalietska, 2022)

The issue at hand regarding terrorism, violence, and war is whether aggression as a form of human behavior has always been a fundamental element, a common trait across all societies and primitive groups. Lorenz (1966) mentioned the existence of a negative energy that fuels aggression and accumulates within us, much like steam in a closed container. This "heightened arousal" creates pressure that needs to be released. Consequently, both the individual and the group seek ways to release this energy. Lorenz (1966) emphasized that this instinct was initially helpful to humanity by selecting the fittest individuals for survival and compelling them to spread across the Earth to protect themselves from the innate aggression of others. Today, this instinct is more of a threat than an adaptation; it is "a hereditary evil of modern society" (Lorenz, 1966).

Conflicts that arise between different groups and communities, which can have various targets, can manifest differently in the form of revolts resulting in violence, crises, acts of terrorism, wars, and so on.

Terrorism does not have a universally accepted definition; the simplest one is that it is a "goal and method", a tactic of unconventional warfare used to achieve political objectives. It relies on acts of spectacular violence directed at populations not directly involved in the conflict but with the potential to exert pressure on leadership.

II.1 Terrorism, Manifestation Forms

Terrorism can be characterized as "an asymmetric conflict phenomenon from positions of inferior strength (military, political, or economic) waged by groups, states, state organizations, non-state entities, or interstate entities as forms of undeclared, unconventional warfare that disregard the rules imposed by the Geneva Convention.

Mistakenly, terrorism is sometimes assimilated with insurgency, fanaticism, psychological warfare, war crimes committed by regular armed forces, or clandestine operations, a confusion often intentionally maintained for propaganda reasons.

It has been considered that the difficulty of defining terrorism stems from the complexity of the phenomenon, which is related to the cultural and social perception of acts of violence and the political objectives pursued through terror. Some targets may be directed toward media manipulation, "punishment and revenge" for real or imagined injustices, or achieving political goals (changing leadership, governance systems, imposing lines of religious, political, moral, economic conduct, territorial conquests, etc.). As a method, spectacular violence is often used against a civilian population not directly involved in the conflict but with the potential to influence the target leadership. The existence of several forms of terrorism has been mentioned, based on the number of individuals involved:

- Individual terrorism - the most challenging to combat, usually committed by mentally disturbed individuals, exemplified by the infamous terrorist Theodor Kaczynski, known as the Unabomber, who carried out 23 attacks over 18 years, killing 3 people and injuring 18.
- Group terrorism - isolated, difficult-to-detect cases, such as Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, responsible for the Oklahoma City FBI building bombing, which had connections to an Islamic terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf.
- Franchise terrorist groups - affiliated with anarchist cells from the early 20th century, an example being the terrorist group Al Qaeda.
- State-supported terrorist groups, exemplified by Black September, a Palestinian terrorist group originally created against Jordan, with support bases in Syria and Lebanon.
- Affiliated terrorist groups linked to a political, religious, or ideological movement, whether nationalist, social, ecological, etc. Examples include ETA, a Basque nationalist group, and various

groups tied to political or religious ideologies, such as Abu Sayyaf, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc.

- Insurgency and terrorism organizations, representing a disputed category, exemplified by insurgency groups that employ terrorism as a supplementary tactic and operation, with the IRA being a typical example or the Colombian guerrilla group FARC.

II.2 Theories of War

Acts of terrorism are associated with or promote armed conflicts such as wars, which have multiple facilitating factors and motivational causes.

Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, a facilitating factor can be seen in the cause of nuclear armament. Functionalism highlights conflicting interests and desires for territorial expansion and control that lead to war.

The functions of war can be discussed from a functionalist perspective:

- Territorial expansion and the expansion of political power by a group, for example, Hitler, who invaded nation after nation between 1939 and 1940, while Japan threatened the South Pacific (Park, 1941).
- The function of social integration – creating an understanding within borders, for example, Afghanistan, where Afghan groups cooperated to resist the Soviets (Coser, 1956; Timasheff, 1965).
- The function of social change – stimulating the development of science and technology, for example, Japan during World War II, which experienced rapid industrialization after defeat, highlighting deficiencies (Pruitt and Snyder, 1969).
- Economic gain function - access to commercial markets, markets for speculation in favor of certain social groups.
- Ideological function – dominance of a political or religious system or the suppression of an opposing system, for example, the Crusades undertaken by Christians between the 11th and 14th centuries to reclaim the Holy Land from Islam.
- Revenge or punishment function for a nation, for example, the war between Arab states against Iraq (Pruitt and Snyder, 1965).
- Military security function – when a nation attacks because that territory is strategically exploited by an enemy, for example, Israel in 1981 (Henslin, 1996).

- Credibility function – the need for a nation to be taken seriously, i.e., to provide support for what it says (Henslin, 1996).
- Image protection function, for example: the Pakistani army attacking India (Sagan, 1994).
- Preventive protection of resources function, for example, the Gulf War – which can be considered a case of preventive protection of resources.

It can be noted that no war serves a single function, and if a war prolongs, the function can change (e.g., the Pakistani attack involved territorial expansion but also the ideology of the occupiers and military security). The Crusades, which began in 1095, had ideological purposes as well as territorial expansion and economic benefits (Bridgwater, 1953).

Conflict theory presents three causes of war:

- Struggle for resources (Angell, 1965) is an example of groups with limited resources, constituting a natural conflict.
- Imperialism, geographical expansion; Hobson (1939) emphasized that wars among capitalist nations result from surplus capital. To gain land, markets, and invest capital, leaders convince decision-makers to conquer other countries and territories.
- Pressures from the government's army, from the "military machine" whose position and prestige depend on the continuation of war (Schumpeter, 1949).

Wright's (1942) conclusions, a professor of international law, following his analysis of war, are that:

1. People do not become more peaceful over time; recently, wars have become more frequent, intense, and extensive.
2. Wars are less controlled than before; international alliances have expanded, drawing more countries into the possible conflict, making it possible for a country to remain neutral.
3. Religion does not affect the possibility of wars; a country where Christianity dominates is not more pacifist than a nation where Islam dominates.
4. The organizational forms of states, democracies, republics, monarchies, do not influence the conflictual aspect.
5. Prosperity does not influence belligerence; prosperous nations are neither more nor less belligerent than poor ones.
6. Shared religion does not reduce war (e.g., Ukraine).
7. A common language does not reduce the possibility of war (e.g., Ukraine).

8. Being neighbors is not a factor contributing to peace; the likelihood of conflict increases with the number of borders.
9. Education does not favor peace; developed countries are just as prone to war as developing ones.

II.3. Wars Triggered by Accidents

In the category of the destructive capabilities of superpowers, it is worth mentioning the destructive possibilities of accidental wars caused by human or computer weaknesses, including computer malfunctions. For example, in 1980, on three occasions in the first 6 months, Americans reported that Russian missiles had been launched at the United States, and the countdown began. This was caused by a computer error detected by the Americans who did not intervene immediately.

The idea that the "end of the world" could be triggered when a computer malfunctions is a frightening thought. Another potential mistake could be operator error, which is equally alarming.

For instance, on October 28, 1962, the Commander of North American Defense was informed that a nuclear-armed missile had been launched from Cuba and was about to strike Tampa, Florida. While the U.S. prepared its response, it was discovered that an operator had accidentally inserted a test tape, which simulated an attack from Cuba (Sagan, 1994).

There have also been nuclear accidents, including a series of nuclear weapon detonations. For example, the submarine George Washington accidentally collided with a Japanese vessel and sank it. Two of the Scorpion submarines sank. In one incident, a mechanic accidentally threw a wrench into a stack of nuclear missiles in Arkansas, causing one of the missiles to launch. On multiple occasions, nuclear weapons have fallen from airplanes through open bomb bays.

In addition to accidents, there have been instances of internal nuclear sabotage, such as the unauthorized firing of a missile by a bomber pilot or a missile commander.

II.4. Biological Wars and Chemical Weapons

Biological and chemical wars are destructive due to the effects they produce. For example, the use of poisonous gas by the French and Germans during World War I shocked the world and led to the signing of a treaty in Geneva in 1925 that prohibited the use of chemical weapons (Revzin, 1989). However, this treaty did not succeed because these types of weapons are inexpensive, lethal to humans but do not destroy property, and can be

delivered through a variety of means. For instance, in 1960, Iran and Iraq used mustard gas in attacks, and in the 1960s and 1970s, the United States sprayed chemicals in Vietnam. These chemicals were not aimed at people but were intended to clear jungle areas, waterways, and communication lines. The spraying stopped when Vietnamese women began giving birth to deformed children. After the war, thousands of Vietnam veterans claimed that Agent Orange had affected their health. In 1989, the case was supported with compensation of approximately $12,000 for each soldier who sued the government.

Another example would be the Russians' use of chemical substances in Afghanistan, which had dermatological effects and killed 473 inhabitants, according to the district chief's report, although Russia denied the accusations.

II.5. The Importance of Peace and the Role of Religion

From the examples mentioned among the forms of violence practiced between states, the importance of peace and conflict resolution can be emphasized to prevent situations of destruction caused by wars with long-lasting effects.

In recent years, foreign policy attention has focused on the role of religion in contributing to conflicts around the world (Mills, 1958). In many more fragile states such as Myanmar, Congo, and Sri Lanka, religious divisions exacerbate conflicts, even where religion may not be the primary cause of the conflicts. However, religion can still play a significant role in establishing peace and preventing and resolving conflicts. Religion connects with peace in four major ways:

- Ideas of human dignity and humanitarianism are common to all, derived from the notion that all are created in the image of the Divine, serving as the foundations for peace. Religious concepts of salvation and forgiveness are at the core of key post-conflict reconciliation efforts, providing resources to help societies heal from the devastating consequences of war.
- Interfaith protests often focus attention on peaceful forms of resistance to oppression and injustice. Think of religious denunciations of apartheid and segregation practices as sins or religious efforts to stop ethnic cleansing in certain areas.

III. Methodology

The research was conducted to highlight the perception of the role of religion in peace treaties worldwide. It was carried out in 2023 in Iasi, Romania. There have been controversies regarding the role of religion in achieving peace and as a facilitating cause of conflicts. The sample presented in this research consisted of 97 subjects, 3 females and 94 males, with a predominance of males. Of these, 31.95% were from urban areas, and 68.04% were from rural areas, with ages ranging from 18 to 47 years.

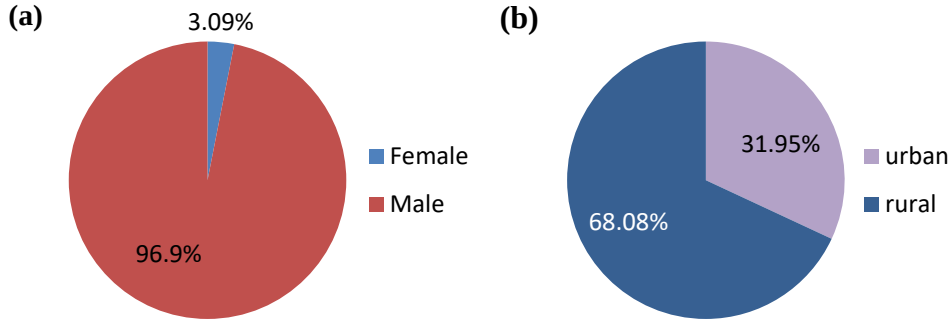


Fig. 1 Subjects ratio a) by gender and b) by area of habitation
Source: author's own conception

The questionnaire used in this study was structured around discussion topics. It started with the working hypothesis that religion plays a role in shaping peace, a hypothesis confirmed by the investigation, with 89.69% of positive responses. The involvement of religion was mentioned by 58 subjects (59.7% - more than half) as interfaith dialogue. Regarding peace in Ukraine, 59.77% of respondents mentioned the United States as having an important role, and the cessation of war was considered necessary to be achieved through peace treaties by 79.38% of respondents.

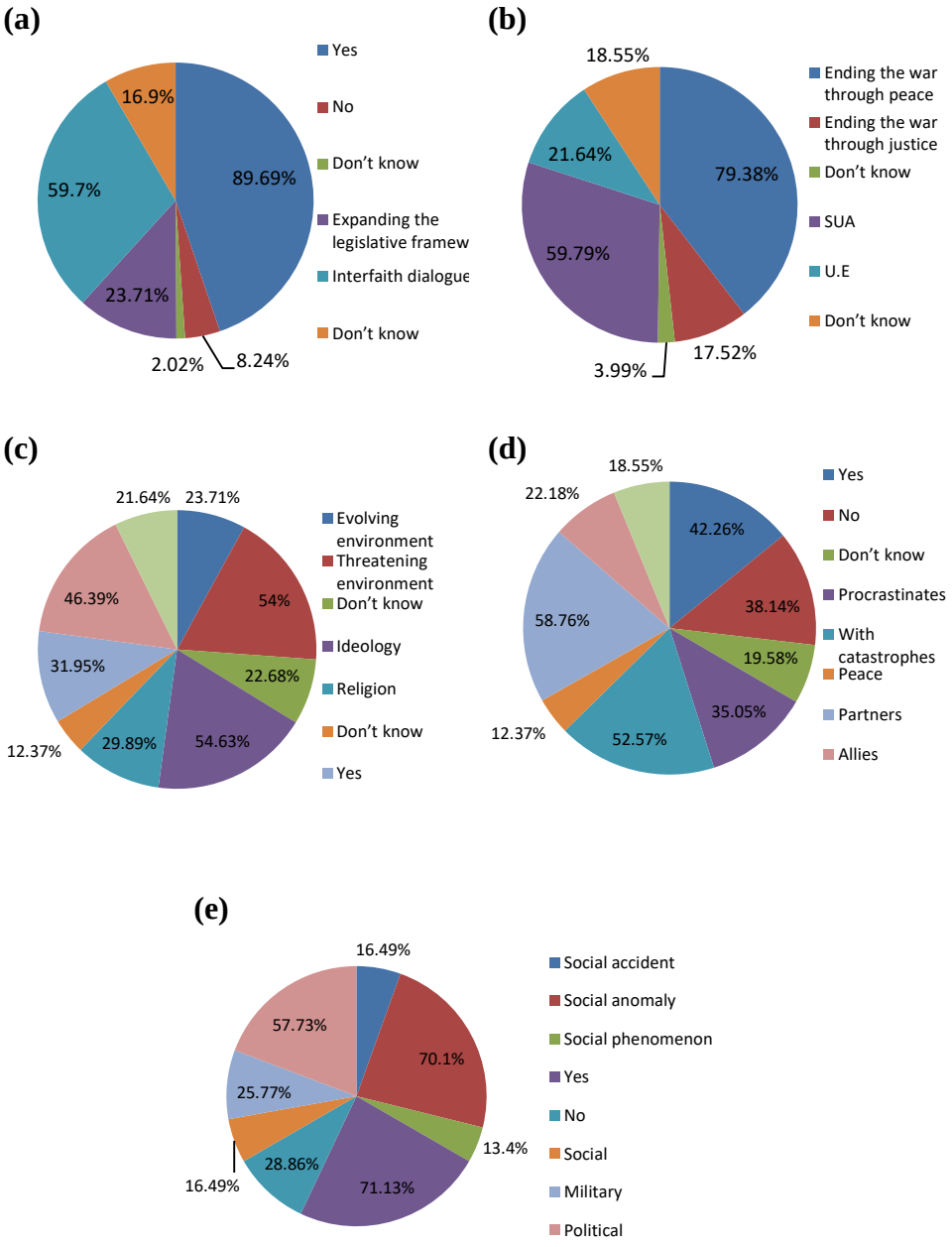


Fig. 2. Graphical representation of data from a) table 2 b) table 3 c) table 4 d) table 5 and e) table 6.
Source: author's own conception

Islamic extremism was considered threatening by 52 subjects due to acts of terrorism, and terrorism was mostly seen as a social anomaly by the majority of subjects (70.10%).

Tab.1. The sample presented in the 2023 research in Iasi County

Female		**Male**		**The origin environment**				**Age**
				urban		**rural**		
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	18–47
3	3.09	94	96.90	31	31.95	66	68.08	

Source: author's own conception

Tab. 2. The role of the church in achieving peace. How can the church resolve conflicts?

Yes		**No**		**Don't know**		**Expanding the legislative framework**		**Interfaith dialogue**		**Don't know**	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
87	89.69	8	8.24	2	2.02	23	23.71	58	59.7	16	16.9

Source: author's own conception

Tab. 3. Peace in Ukraine

Ending the war through peace		**Ending the war through justice**		**Don't know**		**SUA**		**U.E**		**Don't know**	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
77	79.38	17	17.52	3	3.99	58	59.79	21	21.64	18	18.55

Source: author's own conception

Tab. 4. Islam: Politics and Religion

Evolving environment		**Threatening environment**		**Don't know**		**Ideology**		**Religion**		**Don't know**		**Yes**		**No**		**Don't know**	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
23	23.71	52	54	22	22.68	53	54.63	29	29.89	12	12.37	31	31.95	45	46.39	97	21.64

Source: author's own conception

Tab. 5. The European Community in the future

Yes		**No**		**Don't know**		**Procrastinates**		**With catastrophes**		**Peace**		**Partners**		**Allies**		**Don't know**	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
41	42.26	37	38.14	19	19.58	34	35.05	51	52.57	12	12.37	57	58.76	22	22.18	18	18.55

Source: author's own conception

Tab. 6. Terrorism: Presentation Methods and Formation of Organizations

Social accident		**Social anomaly**		**Social phenomenon**		**Yes**		**No**		**Social**		**Military**		**Political**	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
16	16.49	68	70.10	13	13.40	69	71.13	28	28.86	16	16.49	25	25.77	56	57.73

Source: author's own conception

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, religion is represented by influential communities and institutions in civil society, often seen as representing unifying values that transcend contentious issues. These institutions are often among the most stable, trustworthy entities in crisis areas capable of contributing to dispute mediation. An example would be the achievements of groups like the Sant'Egidio Community, whose successful accomplishment includes the peace agreement in Mozambique in 1992 after 30 years of civil wars. Other examples include interfaith reconciliation efforts in South Africa, Muslim-Christian coalitions in the aftermath of Balkan conflicts, and ecumenical Christian efforts in Colombia.

All these interfaith efforts, from Africa to the Middle East and East Asia, do well at the micro-level but are rarely able to change the long-term destiny of countries caught in civil wars or regional conflicts. Despite these limitations, the mere existence of interfaith groups often inspires or encourages others to move in the direction of peace, mutual cooperation, and reconciliation. September 21st was International Peace Day, a day to remind political leaders, business people, cultural figures, and religious individuals that the greatest gift religion has given to humanity is the infinite potential of people to thrive and procreate in conditions of PEACE.

References

Angell, R. C. (1965). The sociology of human conflict. *Sociology of Religion 28*(1), 48–51. https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/28.1.48-a

Bridgwater, W. (1953). *The Columbia-Viking desk Encyclopedia(1st ed.).* Viking Press.

Coser, L.A. (1965). *The functions of social conflict*. New York: Free Press.

Henslin, M. J. (1996). *Essentials of sociology: A down to Earth approach.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hobson, J. (Ed.). (1939). *Imperialism: A study*. London: G. Allen.

Lorentz, K. (1966). *On aggression*. New York: Free Press.

Mills, C. W. (1958). *The causes of World War Three*. New-York: Simmon & Schuster.

Revzin, Ph. (1989). U.S. claims progress at global meeting discussing ban on chemical weapons. *Wall Street Journal*, A3.

Park, R. E. (1941). The social function of war observation and notes. *American Journal of Sociology 46*, 551–570. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/218698

Pruit, D. G. & Snyder, R. C. (1969). *In theory and research on the causes of war.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall.

Sagan, S. D. (1994). The perils of proliferation: Organization theory deterrence theory, and the spread of nuclear weapons. *International Security 18* (4), 66–107. https://doi.org/10.2307/2539178

Schumpter, J. A. (1955). *The sociology of imperialism*. New York: Meridian.

Skalietska, Y. (2022). *Războiul prin ochii unui copil. Mărturii din Ucraina*. Bookzone, Bucureşti

Simmel, G. (1904). The Sociology of Conflict. *American Journal of Sociology 9* (4), 490–525.

Timasheff, N. (1965). *War and revolution*. New York: Seed&Ward.

Wright, Q. (1942). *A study of war. 2 vols.* University of Chicago Press