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GLOBAL PEACE INDEX 2020

MEASURING PEACE IN A COMPLEX WORLD



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Global Peace Index 2020

Measuring Peace in a Complex World

The Global Peace Index (GPI) is considered a leading measure of global peace levels. Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) in Australia, the index uses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators to rank 163 countries according to their level of peacefulness, thus covering 99.7% of the world's population. The GPI measures peacefulness across three main domains, which are Safety and Security, Ongoing Conflict, and Militarization. This 2020 report was published in June 2020 and is made up of three parts. The first part summarizes the results of the GPI 2020 and the main changes that have occurred since last year; the second analyses the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on 'Positive Peace', highlighting which countries are best placed to recover from the economic blow caused by this pandemic; and the third introduces the IEP's newest research report – the Ecological Threat Register (ETR), which highlights a number of ecological threats and related them to Positive Peace and the economic coping capacity to help understand what future potential risks countries will face over the next thirty years. The report also includes appendices where the research methodology and GPI's indicators are explained in more detail.

GPI 2020 RESULTS

- **Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, whereas Afghanistan is the least peaceful.**

Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it held since 2008. It is followed by New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, and Denmark. At the other end of the index, Afghanistan is the least peaceful country for the second consecutive year, followed by Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen. All of these countries, except Yemen, have been ranked amongst the five least peaceful countries since 2015 at least.

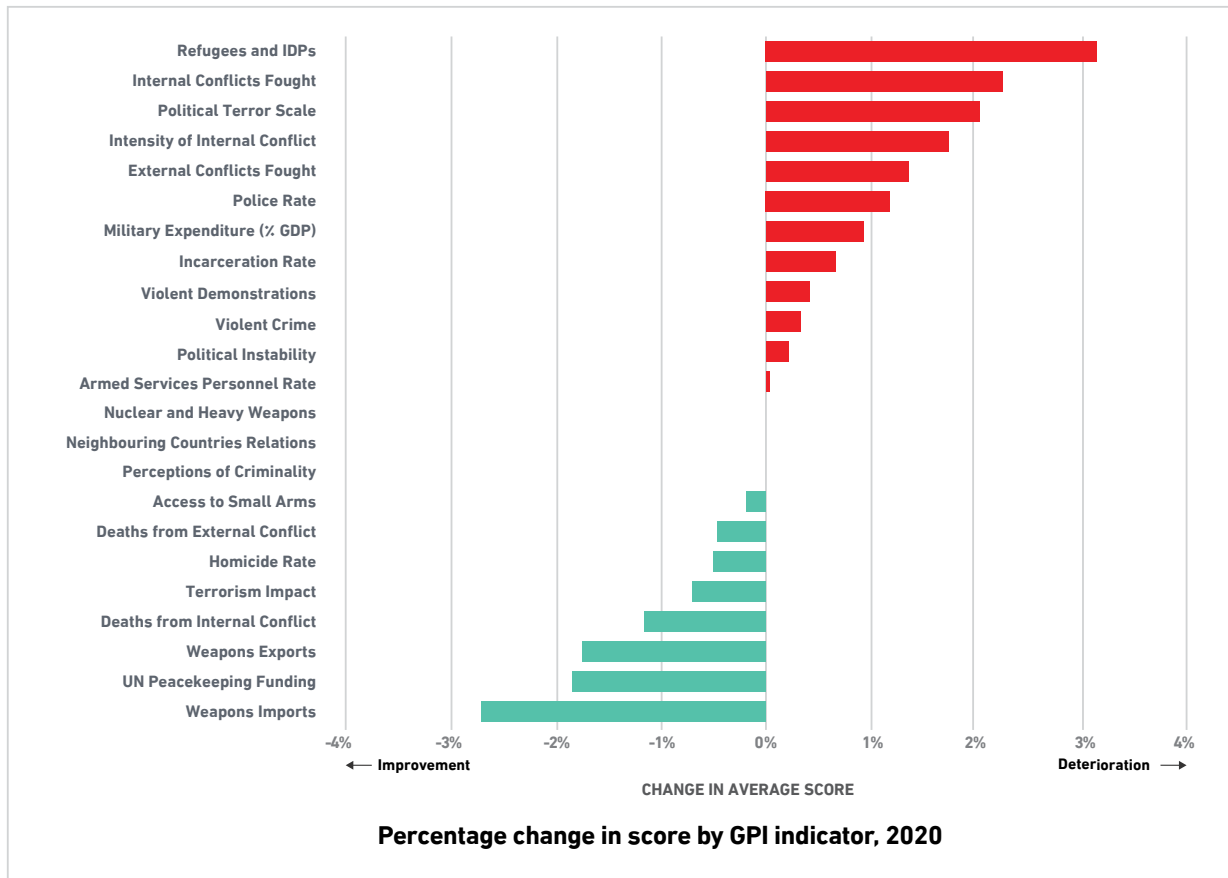
- **This year, the world became less peaceful for the ninth time since 2008. Overall, peacefulness improved in 81 countries, deteriorated in 80 and remained the same in the rest.**

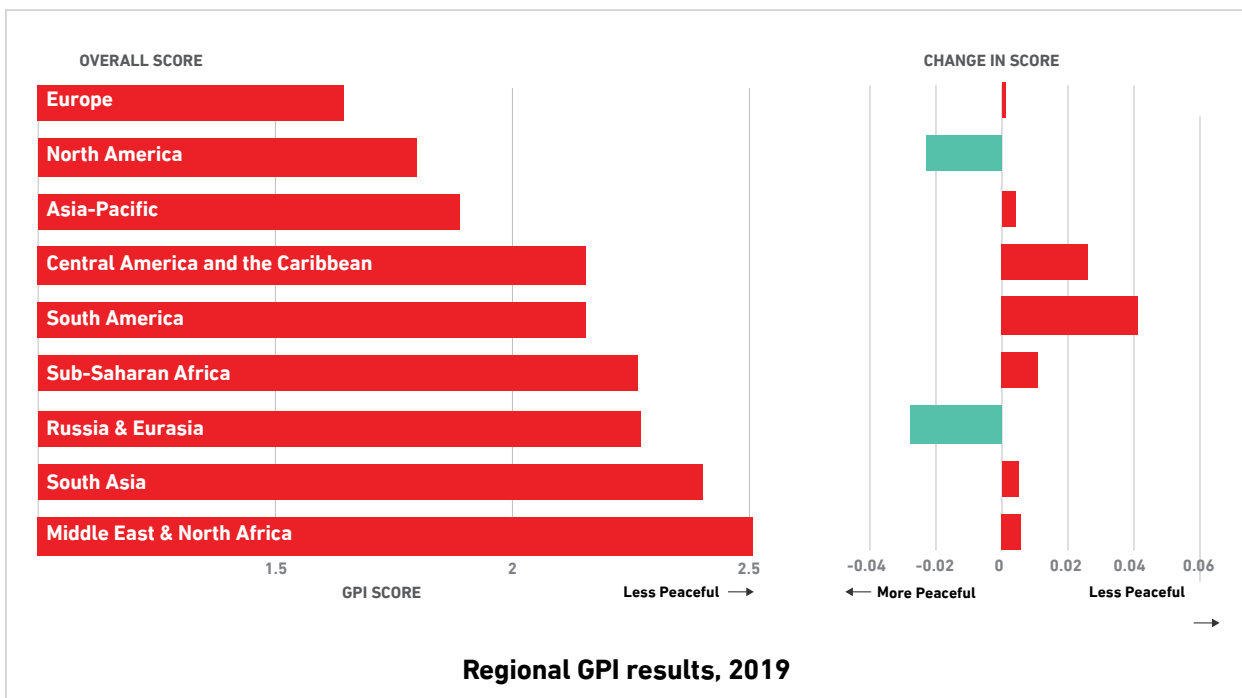
According to the 2020 GPI, the world is now considerably less peaceful than it was in 2008, when the first version of the index was produced. Since then, the average level of country peacefulness has deteriorated by 3.76%. This is mainly caused by increased terrorist activity, the intensification of conflicts in the Middle East, rising regional tensions in Eastern Europe and Northeast Asia, and increasing numbers of refugees and heightened political tensions in Europe and the US.

Even though world peacefulness has overall deteriorated, some indicators have shown significant improvements, mainly in the Militarization domain. This was driven by an improvement in the UN peacekeeping funding and a fall in the level of both weapons imports and weapons exports. Of the 163 countries included in the index, 113 reduced their armed forces rate, 100 decreased their military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, and 67 lowered their levels of nuclear and heavy weapons. Even though military expenditure as a percentage of GDP has been declining globally, falling from 2.32 to 2.2% of GDP since 2008, it recorded increases in 79 countries last year.

- **Over the past year, the largest improvement was in the Weapons Imports indicator, while the Refugees and IDPs indicator recorded the worst average deterioration.**

Both the weapons imports and weapons exports indicators notably improved over the past year; they are now at their most peaceful level since 2009, with 63% of countries having no weapons exports since 2015. However, weapon exports are highly concentrated in the West. Out of the 10 countries with the highest levels of per capita weapons exports, seven are in Europe, including highly





peaceful countries such as Norway, Switzerland and Sweden. In fact, France has now the largest weapon exports in the world on a per capita basis, followed by the US, Russia, and Israel. However, when measured by total export value, over 75% of total weapons exports come from five countries only: the US, Russia, Germany, France, and China, with the US alone accounting for over 32%.

On the other hand, the total number of refugees and IDP grew globally by almost three folds, rising from under 25 million in 2008 to over 65 million in 2019. There are now 15 countries where at least 5% of the population are either refugees or internally displaced. Syria has the largest number of refugees and displaced people as a percentage of its total population, with around 75% of the entire Syrian population being either internally displaced or refugees. South Sudan has also over 37% of its population displaced. In Somalia and the Central African Republic, more than 20% of the population are displaced as well.

• Europe remains the most peaceful region in the world, while the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are the world's least peaceful region.

Over the past year, peacefulness has improved in two of the world's nine regions only: North America and Russia and Eurasia. North America was the only region that recorded improvements across all three GPI domains, whereas the performance of Russia and Eurasia improved in two domains (the Ongoing Conflict and Safety and Security domains) but deteriorated on

the Militarization domain. In contrast, South America and Central America and the Caribbean recorded the largest and second largest deterioration on the 2020 GPI. The situation in South America has deteriorated across all three domains, although this was mainly driven by deteriorations on Militarization and Safety and Security. Ranked amongst the 15 least peaceful countries in the world, Venezuela is the least peaceful country in this region.

Although Europe has reported a slight deterioration this year, it is still the most peaceful region in the world. Only two European countries (Kosovo and Turkey) are not ranked in the top half of the index. Turkey is the least peaceful country in Europe. The increasing tensions with Greece over refugees in 2019 among others have led to a decline on the political instability and political terror scale indicators. It should be noted, though, that overall Europe had the largest number of protests, riots and strikes, totally around 1,600 events between 2011 to 2018. As more European countries plunge deeper into the recession triggered by COVID-19, it will not be surprising to see more civil unrest events taking place in Europe in the near future.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA), on the other hand, continues to be the world's least peaceful region since 2015. Three of the five least peaceful countries in the world are in this region: Syria, Iraq and Yemen. If the MENA was excluded from this index, the average level of peace would only have deteriorated by 1%, rather than 2.5%, over the last ten years; and if the

impact of the conflict in the Middle East, particularly the increase in terrorism and forced migration, had not changed, the world would have become even more peaceful.

Although the armed conflict in Syria has subsided following the ceasefire deal in March this year, millions of Syrians are still either displaced internally or are refugees. In Iraq, violent protests continue across the country, killing more than 700 because of the clashes between anti-government protesters and security forces since October 2019. Still, Iran has the largest fall in peacefulness in the region; its performance has deteriorated across all three GPI domains, particularly in terms of Safety and Security. This can be explained by increasing political instability and the possibility of more violent protests over rising inflation, poverty and corruption. Despite the ongoing instability in the MENA, it did record improvements on several indicators. For example, the number of deaths from internal conflict has gone down, and the intensity of internal conflict has also improved. Furthermore, weapons imports and weapons exports improved over the past year.

- **While terrorism is more spread globally, the Terrorism Impact indicator continued to improve**

Terrorism and internal conflict are the largest contributors to the global deterioration in peacefulness. Over the past decade, terrorist activity decreased in 43 countries only, while it increased in 97 others. In addition, it seems that more countries now are affected by terrorism. In the 2008 GPI, 48 countries had not experienced any terrorist activity in the preceding five years; this number dropped to 30 in the 2020 GPI. However, it is estimated that deaths from terrorism has fallen from over 33,500 in 2014 to less than 8,000 in 2019. This is primarily due to the defeat of ISIL in Iraq and Syria as well as the military operations against Boko Haram in Nigeria.

- **Azerbaijan and Armenia recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2020 GPI, and Bahrain had the third highest increase**

Azerbaijan's score on the 2020 GPI improved by 7.6%, the largest improvement in peacefulness globally; it was even ranked above the US. Armenia had the second largest increase in peacefulness on the index; it was ranked among the 100 most peaceful countries. This was largely due to the considerable improvement in relations between the two neighbouring countries since 2016, which has reduced the number of deaths from internal conflict and the number of refugees and IDPs as a percentage of the population. However,

this political stability did not last for a long time. The Nagorno-Karabakh area has remained a conflict zone and has become less stable again since the conflict reignited in July 2020. Consequently, the two countries' rankings in the GPI are likely to fall next year.

Bahrain's peacefulness has risen for the third consecutive year. With a rise of nine places in the rankings to 110, it is now the 8th most peaceful country in the MENA. The improvement was mostly driven by changes in the access to light arms and the intensity of internal conflict. Even though private gun ownership is still high in the country, it has dropped by 50% on a per capita basis over the last few years. Bahrain has strict laws on firearms possession; only those over the age of 21 can get a license for firearms and ammunition.

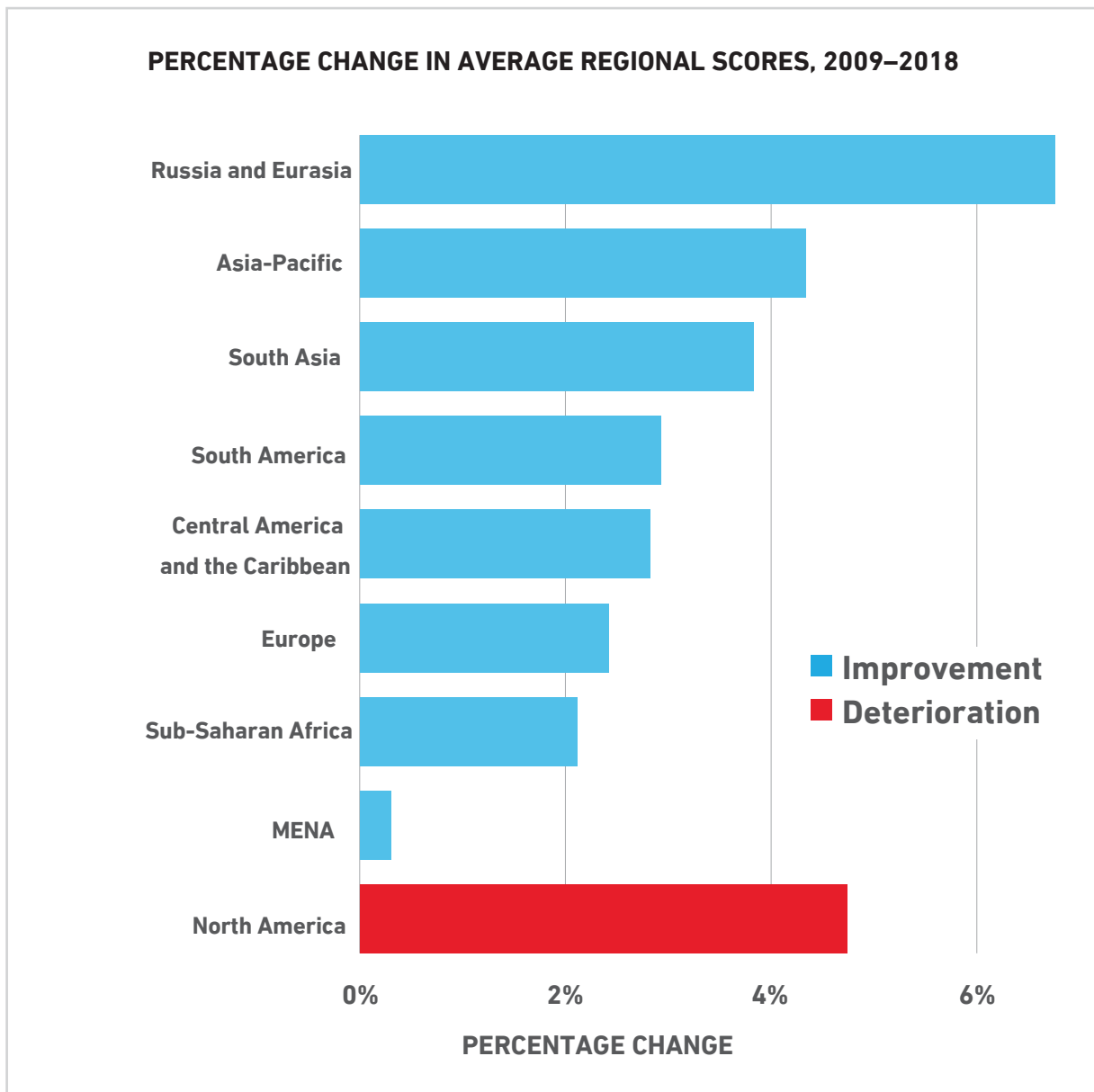
Furthermore, although tensions continue between the Sunni and Shia, the Bahraini authorities have managed to control violent protests; data from the Ministry of Interior shows a 86% decline in the number of terrorism-related criminal investigations in the country since 2014.

- **Violence continues to have a significant impact on economic performance of countries around the world, even though it has improved since last year.**

In 2019, the economic impact of violence to the global economy totalled \$14.5 trillion PPP, decreasing by 0.2% (or \$29 billion) from 2018. This improvement was essentially due to the decreasing impact of Armed Conflict, particularly in the MENA region. As both deaths from terrorism and GDP losses from conflict went down by 48% and 21% respectively in 2019, the economic impact of Armed Conflict decreased by 11% (or \$66 billion) to \$521 billion at the global level. These costs are largely related to refugees and displaced persons; and when measured as a percentage of their GDP, they were the highest in Syria, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

It should be noted, though, that the economic impact of suicide was higher than the economic cost of Armed Conflict. In 2019, the cost of Armed Conflict was \$521 billion, while suicide cost stood at \$757 billion.

When it comes to military spending, the US still spends more than any other country annually, even though it has recently reduced its armed service personnel rate as well as its military expenditure as a percentage of GDP. The other four countries with the highest total military expenditure are China, Saudi Arabia, India, and Russia; all of which have also reduced their armed service personnel rates last year.



Positive Peace & the COVID-19 Pandemic

The report's Positive Peace Index focuses on the interaction between the COVID-19 pandemic and Positive Peace. Positive Peace is a measure of a country's ability to maintain peace; high levels of Positive Peace are associated with low levels of violence and resilient institutions that can respond to the evolving needs of society and are well-prepared to recover from any economic shock such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the report does not include details of Positive Peace changes across countries, it highlights changes across regions. As shown below, the only region whose Positive Peace deteriorated in the ten years between 2008 and 2018 was North America (the US and Canada). This deterioration was primarily driven by the US,

although the situation in Canada also deteriorated. All the other eight regions improved, with the largest improvements reported in Russia and Eurasia.

The Positive Peace Index is built on eight pillars, all of which are key for any country's recovery from COVID-19 and its impact. For example, countries with Well-Functioning Government and High Levels of Human Capital had more robust responses to the outbreak. These two pillars allowed governments to swiftly close borders, enforce quarantine and isolation measures, ban social gatherings and increase testing capacity, all of which helped to reduce infection rate, reduce pressure on the health system, and improve death rate.

Although the report was published in June, before the long-term impact of COVID-19 had started to unfold,

it explores the immediate impact of the pandemic on Positive Peace and attempts at making general economic predictions. The lockdowns and movement restrictions adopted by many countries around the world will have huge economic costs that will negatively affect Positive Peace, even though this is likely to have uneven impact on different countries and sectors. For example, Spain and Italy were among the first European countries mostly affected by the interruption to tourism, while oil producing countries were affected by the reduced oil prices as a result of lower consumption. Generally, expected global GDP growth for 2020 has been revised down from 2.9% to -3%, and the IMF forecasted that only two countries will have positive GDP growth for 2020: China and India.

The sharp rises in government debt, unemployment rate, and the numbers of young people not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) are likely to push more households into poverty and increase the risk of outbreaks of violence and conflict. While some countries might manage to mitigate the adverse economic effects, the more fragile nations that already had, for example, high unemployment rates and ongoing conflict, will be hit more severely by adverse economic shocks. Europe will probably see more civil unrest as a result of the economic recession, while many countries in Africa will face famine, putting more pressure on the African states.

ECOLOGICAL THREAT REGISTER

The Ecological Threat Register (ETR) is the IEP's newest research report. It relates a set of ecological risks to Positive Peace and economic coping capacity in order to help understand the potential risks, such as food insecurity and water scarcity, countries are likely to face in the next three decades; it also measures the ability of countries to cope with these risks. The ETR is based on the premise that emerging ecological threats, stimulated by climate change, will increase risks for political and socioeconomic tensions; a country's resilience will be crucial to mitigate and adapt to new ecological threats and, thus, to survive. According to the ETR, countries with high peace levels will have greater capacity to adapt to climate change and cope with its adverse impacts. Thus, Positive Peace can be used as a measure of a country's resilience to economic shocks as well as its ability to adapt to climate change.

It should be noted that the effects of ecological threats will not be restricted to the countries where they occur. Extreme weather conditions, such as floods

and droughts, often result in famines that regularly lead to mass migration, which in turn increases instability and violence in neighbouring countries. Data shows that in 2017, 19 million people were displaced by natural disasters, which is substantially larger than the number of people displaced due to conflict. Estimates suggest that by 2050, drought and climate change will create up to 86 million additional migrants in sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in South Asia and 17 million in Latin America.

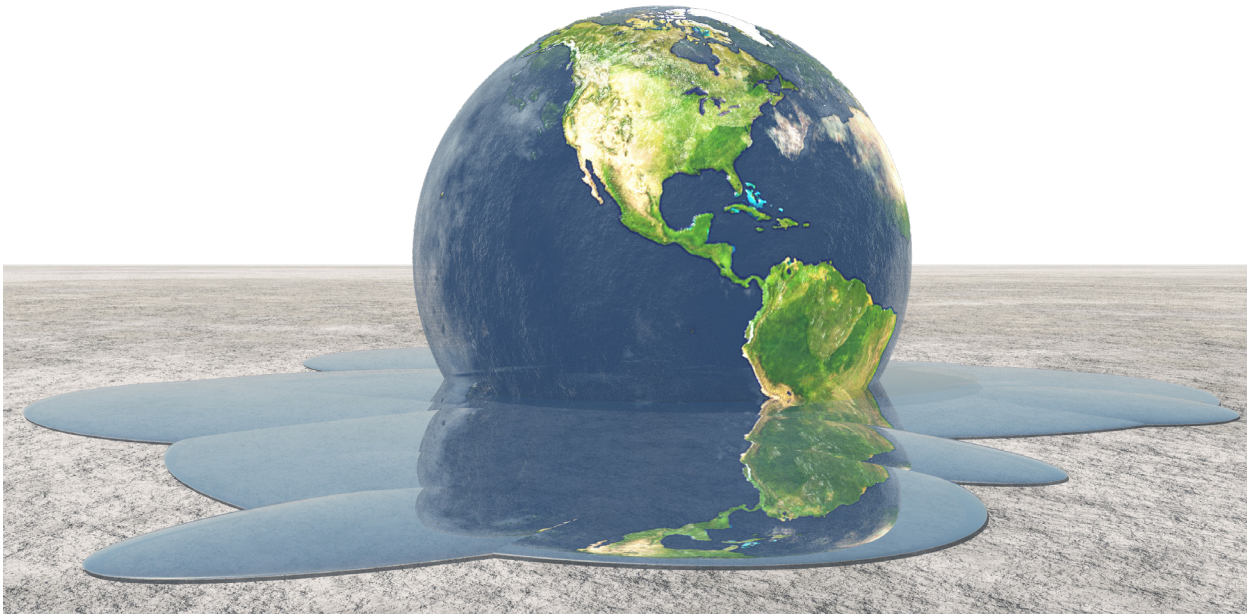
According to the ETR, countries can be divided into three distinct groups, based on the relationship between ecological risks and Positive Peace: countries with low peace and high exposure to risks (countries that suffer from ongoing armed conflicts, like Afghanistan and Syria); those with medium peace and high exposure to risks (such as India and Tanzania); and those with high peace and low exposure to risks (countries such as Iceland and New Zealand). Saudi Arabia falls within the third category i.e. high peace and low exposure to risks.

TYPES OF ECOLOGICAL THREAT

1. FOOD SECURITY

In 2017, 873 million people around the globe experienced hunger and food insecurity i.e., the inability to access sufficient, healthy food to meet their dietary requirements. Food security is affected by several factors, such as climate change and economic development, but it is also strongly correlated with Positive Peace. For example, countries with a Sound Business Environment and Equitable Distribution of Resources have stronger economic stability; they can better maintain their food security and address inequality in access to food in times of crises.

It is expected that the COVID-19 outbreak and the economic losses related to it will accelerate adverse impacts on food security. The lockdowns will disrupt domestic agricultural production and restrict poorer households' ability to earn their daily income to purchase food; it may also increase demand as a result of panic buying. Several countries such as Kazakhstan and Vietnam have also adopted policies to secure their own food supply and suspended their food exports, which will affect countries that rely on imports to fulfil needs. Analysis shows that Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and Haiti have a very high risk of food shortages from the COVID-19 pandemic; these countries are among the least peaceful on the Global Peace Index and generally have low levels of Positive Peace.



2. WATER SECURITY

Water scarcity is expected to increase across different regions and countries in the next twenty years. This is mainly due to the increase in water demand as well as the change in precipitation patterns caused by climate change. Water use or demand has increased by 1% per year since 1980, owing to population growth, growing economic activity and changing consumption patterns. Underground water is also being depleted not only in arid regions in China, India and the USA, but also in humid environments like Brazil and Bangladesh. In addition, recently built dams are restricting the water flows in areas that have traditionally been major food producers. The UN estimates that over two billion people already live in areas experiencing high water stress i.e. their demand for water exceeds the supply.

According to the ETR, the least peaceful regions have more areas affected by high levels of water insecurity. Indeed, water has been the cause behind disputes within countries and between different nations. As the demand for water increases over years, competition for water resources will intensify. Overall, 44 of 164 countries are currently at high risk of water stress. All these countries are located in the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan and Central Asia regions. According to the report, the five countries with the highest water stress are Qatar, Israel, Lebanon, Iran and Jordan. However, all Gulf

countries are considered at catastrophic levels of water scarcity.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE

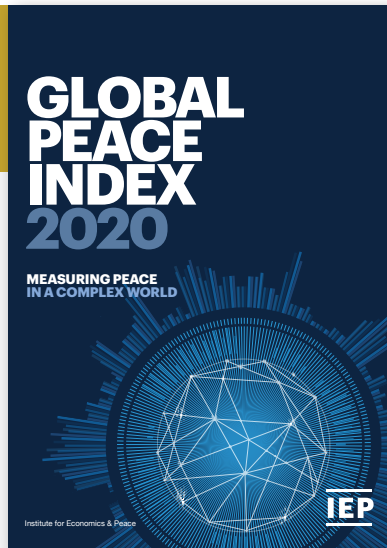
Climate change presents a threat to global peace in the next few decades because it will increase resource scarcity and especially affect food and water security. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the earth's surface temperature will rise by further 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052. Estimates suggest that sea levels will rise by up to 2.1 meters by 2100; this will potentially result in coastal floods that affect the lives of 300 million people in China, Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand over the next thirty years. While some places might have flash flooding as a result of changes in weather, other areas will be affected by severe droughts. The impact of climate change varies across regions, but countries that fail to adapt to climate change will be facing the biggest risks.

There is a strong correlation between climate change threat and Positive Peace, meaning that countries with higher levels of Positive Peace will have more resilience and more capacity of mitigating the impact of climate change. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most exposed region to the climate threat, followed by Central America and the Caribbean and South Asia, although there are variations between countries within the same region.



Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)

The IEP is an independent, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. The IEP's research focuses on developing new theoretical frameworks to define peacefulness; providing metrics for measuring peace; and revealing the relationships between business, peace and prosperity as well as promoting a better understanding of the cultural, economic and political factors that contribute to peace. IEP is headquartered in Sydney, with offices in New York, The Hague, Mexico City, Brussels and Harare.



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