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## **Economic Crisis Drives Up Conflict**

une 3, 2009

Martha Dodge, OneWorld US

WASHINGTON, Jun 3 (OneWorld.net) - The world has become slightly less peaceful over the last year due in large part to the global economic crisis, says an annual report released vesterday that measures countries' peacefulness.

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"There is a clear correlation between the economic crisis and the decline in peace," said Clyde McConaghy, president of the Global Peace Index (GPI), at Average: 5 (2 votes)

Uprooted people line up for food in Mogadishu, a region of Somalia that has seen particularly intense fighting. The Global Peace Index ranks Somalia as one of the least peaceful nations in the world. © Jamal Osman / IRIN

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the Washington, DC release of the report. "This confirms that there is a real-world economic value for peace."

The GPI ranks 144 countries worldwide using 23 indicators, including military expenditures, prison population, number of displaced persons, potential for terrorist acts, and human rights adherence. It's produced annually by the Australian think tank Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and the Economist Intelligence Unit.

As food and fuel prices spiked in 2008 and the global economy subsequently spiralled, "many of the indicators used by the GPI to measure peace, such as the likelihood of violent demonstrations and political instability, increased while others -- such as respect for human rights -- decreased," specifies the IEP in a statement about the report.

The index clearly reflects the relationship between financial hardship and violence.

Iceland -- ranked "most peaceful" last year -- fell to fourth place after the country's economy collapsed late last year, inciting the characteristically reserved population to take to the streets.

Moreover, noted McConaghy, the correlation between economic well-being and peace runs both ways.

New findings this year indicate that intensified conflict worldwide cut economic output by roughly nine percent, or \$4.8 trillion.

"The reality is that the net economic benefit of peace to humanity is substantial, and governments and businesses should seriously consider how adopting practices and policies that promote peace helps their bottom line," said McConaghy.

The index "provides us with a much more fluid understanding of the conditions of peace and the intrinsic role that peacefulness has," added Linda Jamison of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at the release Tuesday.

In particular, a well-functioning government, freedom of the press, and respect for human rights are central to peaceful societies.

Citizens of peaceful nations also tend to believe their culture is not superior to others, support tolerance, free speech, and human rights, and believe military action should be limited.

Accordingly, New Zealand tops off this year's GPI thanks in part to increased political stability following the November election of a new coalition government. The country also scores low in terms of homicide rates, militarization, and the likelihood of violent demonstrations.

War-ravaged Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia, on the other hand, once again round out the bottom of the list. Somalia has lacked a functioning central government for over a decade and 1.1 million of its people are living as refugees within the country's borders.

Meanwhile, Scandinavian and western European nations such as Denmark, Norway, and Austria continue to place in the top five, consistent with previous years.

Most improved is Bosnia and Herzegovina, which jumped up 23 spots to 50, due to improvements in safety and security that have allowed large numbers of refugees to return home since the end of the country's brutal civil war in 1995.

The United States also rose by six spots to take 83rd place in the GPI.

A decrease in the threat of terrorism, heightened political stability, and the fall of other countries in the rankings contributed to this move. However, significant militarization, ease of access to weapons, ongoing combat deaths, and large prison populations keep the country from scoring in league with most other industrialized democracies.

Concluded McConaghy: "Global challenges call for global solutions and these solutions will require cooperation on a global scale unparalleled in human history.

"Peace is the essential prerequisite because without peace we will be unable to achieve the levels of cooperation, inclusiveness, and social equity necessary to solve these problems, let alone empower the international institutions needed to regulate the challenges."

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Great post, I wish I knew

Great post, I wish I knew it was getting better, however I know deep inside that it's not.

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That's not all that

June 4, 2009 - 10:56am — buddy007

June 5, 2009 - 2:22am — gsl63

That's not all that surprising as I've always thought that the global economy had a far reaching impact. During the Gulf War in the early 1990's, Iraq destroyed a large amount of it's oil supply so that the US wouldn't be able to obtain it. As a result, gas prices went up for a short period of time. Nearly every conflict that the U.S. has been involved in has underlying economic implications.

BJ

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**Great Post** 

June 3, 2009 - 10:58pm — justinglover

Thanks for this post. I found it to be very informative and insightful. I also love the quote at the end. thanks again.

Justin Glover

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I hate to admit it but I am

June 4, 2009 - 8:53pm — kbeucke

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