Does Religion Cause War?

Author Name

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

Does Religion Cause War?

**Introduction**

 Religion has played a vital role in the lives of individuals since the beginning. Since records began, there have been multiple wars and conflicts among different tribes, countries, or nations. Whether it is the belief in contemporary Christianity or whether it goes back to the times of Judaism and Hinduism, there has been religion as an influencing factor, on some level. A number of wars between countries and civilizations took place in the past. However, it is important to understand the real motives behind these wars. Technological advances, economic crises, and political upheavals change the face of society. In the last few decades, there has been much finger-pointing at Christians and Islamic extremists. It is obvious that history is a mixed bag, as conflicts and wars are related to both religious and personal motives. The majority of people argue that religion is the main reason behind most of the wars, while others claim that it is power, politics, and material goods that are problematic factors behind a war. However, it is inconclusive whether religion is the major reason behind war or not. It is crucial to determine whether religion contributes to wars or that there are other motives behind it.

**Discussion**

 First of all, there is a need to determine the major reasons behind the war to get a better understanding of its origin. A number of motives behind wars including economic gain, civil war, revenge, nationalism, religion, territorial gain, defense war, and revolution. However, people argue that The Crusades is a perfect example to explain that wars can be religious. Undoubtedly, The Crusades were a series of religious wars that were fought to take control of the Holy Land (Pearse, 2007). These wars were held in Western Asia and Europe by the Roman Catholic Church. The major purpose of that war was to provide assistance to the Christian Byzantine Empire that was attacked by Muslims. The conflict between Muslims and Catholics started a series of these wars. Therefore, it is evident that wars can be religious and of great intensity. However, people also argue that differing religious beliefs did not start these wars. It was the massacre of three thousand Christians that compelled Christians to start The Crusades. One must need to understand that The Crusades would not have taken place if Muslims did not massacre 3000 Christians (Pearse, 2007). The different religious backgrounds of both nations became the primary reason behind that war.

In addition, it is unfair to draw a conclusion on the basis of just one example. It is necessary to keenly observe another side of this issue. God has been used in order to justify many cruel moments from crucifying Jesus to stoning adulterers. Political and cultural motivates have been fulfilled by many nations while keeping religion on the front. It is necessary to indicate how cultural and political motives are satisfied by various leaders. The conflict in Northern Ireland is a significant example to justify that religion has been used by leaders to satisfy their needs. Division and unison are incited within people of Northern Ireland with the help of religion (Pearse, 2007). The issue of identity is the primary reason behind this conflict. The Nationalists in Northern Ireland have Catholic faith, while the unionists are predominately protestors who wanted to remain as a part of Great Britain (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). Commonly, it is believed that religion and sectarianism are prevailing in the conflict. With the help of this example, it is safe to say that religion is not the sole reason for wars. However, in reality, religion has been used as an incentive to continue as the conflict in order to cover the real motives of leaders such as cultural or political purposes. A number of leaders and scholars also believe that religion stimulates peace among nations (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). Thomas Jefferson in one letter stated that “we took the liberty to make some enquiries concerning the ground of their pretensions to make war upon nations who had done them no injury, and observed that we considered all mankind as our friends who had done us no wrong, nor had given us any provocation” (Letters of Thomas Jefferson).

Identification of actual causes of war is one major aspect of concern for the stakeholders. Undoubtedly, it is vital to explore all the potential factors that stimulate the calamity of war in different forms. It is noteworthy to mention that various researchers in this discipline discovered diverse ideological arguments to evaluate the main causes of the chronic concern of war. The phenomenon of religion is recognized as the one critical factor associated with the issue of war. It is argued that religion can increases the risk of war (Pearse, 2007). It is vital to critically examine the argument whether religion causes a problem of war or if this is just a myth. This form of consideration is crucial to successfully explore the existing association between the facets of religion and war. It is argued that religion is one major cause of war and this association can be observed in the case of many different forms (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). There are various practical examples in history where the practical implication of religion causes immense division between people. It is one common prospect about the facet of religion, that it divides people based on the difference of their beliefs. Religion is characterized as the practical medium that makes it difficult for people to think beyond their religion and give necessary respect to all humanity (Pearse, 2007). In other words, the spectrum of religion is defined as the medium of increasing the feeling of hatred between people who are different from each other due to the difference in their religious faiths. The consideration of religion as the cause of war can never be ignored as it is the main source of increasing gaps between different groups of human beings. It is argued that religion is a critical cause that reflects the debate that people differ from each other that ultimately enhanced the issue of incompetence between different individuals (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011).

It is evident that religion causes certainty, which is a potential reason to engage individuals in war. Meic Pearse in his book *The Gods of War* demonstrated that a range of secular ideologies has left a trail of devastation and death in their wake (Pearse, 2007). The majority of people argue that most wars are religious wars by providing examples of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Lebanese civil war, Buddhist uprising, Nigerian conflict, Yugoslav Wars, and Abyssinia-Somalia conflict. It is also apparent that religion divides humans between believers and non-believers (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). These beliefs can compel individuals to fight for the sanity of their religions. People often argue that it is a false assumption to believe that the majority of wars are religious. According to the Institute of Economics and Peace, 123 out of 1763 wars have been caused by religion (Morgan, 2016). The overall weight of this statistic is approximately 7 percent. By keeping in view this figure, it is clear that most wars are not religious wars. Most violent groups in history tend to be anti-religious, which can be seen in the case of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. World War II was the most deadly regime of human history (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). The traditional religious expressions were forbidden by both groups. Religious traditions were willingly replaced with politics and nationalism in order to satisfy and fulfill personal reasons (Morgan, 2016). It is a common perception that religion promotes hate by dividing individuals into believers and non-believers. This division persuades individuals to hate each other.

Religions established a position as a stimulating factor to encourage people to adopt the domain of violence and brutality against others. The domain of religious wars is one prominent concept that requires the necessary attention to examine the associated relationship between the elements of religion and war (Morgan, 2016). The existing connection between religion and war can be observed in the case of different examples such as the facets of Crusades, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). All these aspects of growing tensions between different individuals are the example of the stimulating role of religion as the cause of conflict. It is argued that the philosophy behind the spectrum of religion increases the potential chances of growing tensions between individuals or groups who are different from each other. Undoubtedly, it is one horrific condition to use religion as the domain of argument to create terror and violence against any specific group (Morgan, 2016). Conflict is identified as the major element appeared due to the division of people based on the broad idea of religion.

However, people argue that religion itself does not promote hate among each other. According to the Bible, “they will hammer their swords into sickles, reshape their spears into pruning hooks. One nation will not attack another. They will not practice [or learn] war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). Regardless of the Bible, other religions also encourage the concept of peace and love among each other. According to the Quran, “Satan wishes to sow enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling” (Quran 5:91). Religions teach us about peace and love, but many individuals in the past used religion to justify war. However, people have divided a single religion into a number of sects. Christianity itself is divided into thousands of sects, which is highly problematic. Each sect is trying to fulfil its desires and motives by using religion. It is unlikely for individuals to arrive at sublime truth without having faith. Religion is all about faith that makes individuals equal in front of God. However, nature has always favored the strong ones over the susceptible ones (Pearse, 2007). It is important to consider that people are the ones who cause conflict and confrontation rather than religion itself. Therefore, it is not wise to conclude that there is no war without religion. Cruel motives of individuals are the prevailing causes of wars in the world.

A religious war or holy war is one prominent argument that helps to figure out that religion is the primary cause of war. A critical examination of the role of religion is a necessary condition to make better inferences about the existing connection between religion and war. Various secular ideologies under the spectrum of religion influence the concern of conflict that appears in many different forms. The primary reason for all the historic wars is identified as the imbalance approach of religion that turned as the extreme degree of conflict between different nations. This argument can be better apprehended by considering the example of the European wars. These wars are identified as the chronic series of wars that appeared due to improper interpretation of religious ideologies.

Proper examination of the current situation of war and peace of the world is also a necessary condition to successfully address the phenomenon of conflict based on the idea of religion. It is significant to mention that the regional domains of conflicts in the form of growing terrorism in the regions of Iraq, Syria, etc. originated due to the difference of religious opinion between different groups (Pearse, 2007). This form of consideration clearly revealed that the risk of religion as the stimulating factor of war can never be ignored, as it creates visible differences between people and groups based on their different religious thoughts and ideologies. According to Alexandra Mirai, an Arab-German film director, “religion is all good, but we are almost back to medieval times now, where we are obsessed with going into religious wars and electing our politicians based on their religious statements.” The current spectrum of wars in the context of religion is successfully defined by the author who indicates the utilization of religion as philosophy playing a critical role when it comes to considering the existing association between war and religion. The interpretation of religion is questioned by the author with these words that there is nothing wrong with the religion but there is a need to critically examine the implication of the main idea of religious philosophy adopted by believers. The current scenario in the context of conflict is a major facet of consideration that requires the necessary attention. It is argued that in the current scenario of conflict enhancement, the followers of the religion are obsessed to involve in different forms of religious conflicts (Purzycki & Gibson, 2011). This form of consideration ultimately turned as the calamity of war due to the conflicting representation of religion. In other words, the phenomenon of religion is used as the medium by the followers to create and enhance the issue of conflict between diverse individuals.

**Conclusion**

By overviewing these arguments, it is evident that religions have the tendency to cause war. It is obvious that religions cause inevitability among humans by providing different views, which leads to confrontation. It would be unfair to conclude that religion is not the primary cause of war. This notion is significantly denied with the example of World War II, The Crusades, and the current war in Afghanistan. A critical examination of various pieces of evidence and historical figures illustrate that religion can cause intensive wars as it has in the past. The consideration of different historical events clearly indicates that the risk of war due to the phenomenon of war can never be ignored. There is an example of a number of wars in world history that appeared due to religious differences existing between different religious groups. It is obvious that the identity of the religion is used by different stakeholders as the stimulating factor to initiate the approach of war against their counterparts. The extreme obsession of the specific faith eventually limits people’s tolerance level to accept different realities and embrace it in its true perspective. In simple words, religious intolerance can be characterized as the major instigating factor that motivates people to involve in the facet of conflict and war against each other. It is highly considerate to understand the consequences of these wars. Religious wars are cruel, intense, and have the tendency to last for years as seen in World War II and The Crusades. People have made their own perceptions by forbidding traditional religious expressions. Secular ideologists and leaders should not use religion on the front to fulfill their motives.

**References**

Morgan, R. (2016). Does religion cause war?. Issue, 24, 3-5.

Pearse, M. (2007). *The gods of war: is religion the primary cause of violent conflict?*. InterVarsity Press.

Purzycki, B. G., & Gibson, K. (2011). Religion and violence. *Skeptic*, *16*, 22-27.