

BICC Index analyzes global militarization: Middle East on top position

PRESS RELEASE

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On Monday, 28 February 2011, BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is publishing the Global Militarization Index (GMI) 2011 (<http://www.bicc.de/our-work/gmi.html>). The Index depicts levels of global militarization and documents the development since 1990. The study evaluates the development orientation of states and analyzes regional militarization. The GMI shows that the Middle East is the highest militarized region in the world.

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BICC's research outcomes not only show the amount of funds being allocated to the military of one state. They also define the level of militarization of a country by the relation of military expenditure to its gross domestic product (GDP) or other areas in society, such as health care. "Our research can support politicians in assessing regional developments and contribute to making decisions, for instance in development cooperation or arms exports," Peter J. Croll, Director of BICC, states.

Middle East: Highest level of militarization

In 2009 (the year for which the latest data is available), Israel (865 points), Singapore (843 points), Syria (796 points), Jordan (779 points), Russia (777 points), South Korea (748 points), Cyprus (738 points), Greece (736 points), Kuwait (736 points) and Belarus (731 points) were on the top 10 of the GMI.

"The fact that four countries in the Middle East are amongst the top 10 shows that the high militarization of this conflict-riddled region further exacerbates instability," Jan Grebe, Project Leader at BICC, points out. Another seven countries in the region and in North Africa were amongst the top 20 countries with the highest levels of militarization in 2009: Libya (position 12), Oman (position 13), Bahrain (position 14), Saudi Arabia (position 15), United Arab Emirates (position 16), Iraq (position 17), and Algeria (position 18).

The prevailing high levels of militarization of Israel and other countries in the region can not only be attributed to mutual threat perceptions. It rather points to extremely important character of the military which will play a decisive role in the societal changes in the Middle East. "This is an aspect which policymakers should keep in mind when dealing with questions of international cooperation in general and arms exports or military aid in particular," Jan Grebe demands.

Occasional Paper VII „The Global Militarization Index (GMI) - A tool for evaluating development orientation of states as well as regional developments“ (pdf, English):
http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/papers/occ_paper_07/occasional_paper_VII_02_11_eng.pdf

Ranking table:
<http://www.bicc.de/our-work/gmi-table.html>

GMI Worldmap (pdf):
<http://www.bicc.de/uploads/gmi/pdf/gmi-map-2011.pdf>

Militarization in other regions of the world

In individual regions, various developments in militarization can be observed. In Europe, there are marked disparities. Belarus (position 10), Bulgaria (19) and Ukraine (25), for instance, show high levels of militarization in 2009.

Greece (1990: position 10; 2000: position 10; 2009: position 8) and Cyprus (1990: position 3; 2000: position 5; 2009: position 7) have even remained amongst the top 10 since 1990. For years, Athens has spent the most resources (in relation to its GDP) on its military in Europe and the European Union. Driving factors could be the Cyprus issue and generally the continuing conflict with its neighbor and NATO partner Turkey (GMI position 24 in 2009), which triggers off certain threat perceptions in Greece. High military expenditures, used for extensive arms deals in the past, could be one of the causes of the economic and financial crisis. "It remains to be seen whether the tough austerity measures of the Greek government, laid down by the European Union and the International Monetary Funds, will have an effect on the level of militarization in the coming years," Grebe states.

Since reunification in 1991, Germany's level of militarization has decreased more or less constantly from position 36 to position 86 in 2007. In 2009, with position 81 in the GMI, its militarization remained on an average level.

Even twenty years after the end of the confrontation between the Eastern and the Western blocs in Europe, Russia (2009: position 5) still uses more resources for the military sector—compared to society as a whole—than the United States whose absolute defense budget is markedly higher than that of Russia. With US \$663 billion and a share of 43 percent of global military expenditures, the United States are positioned at the very top of global military expenditures.

Against the background of a threatening arms race and many unresolved (border) conflicts, militarization levels in Latin America have consistently been high for years. Asia, on the contrary, shows a great heterogeneity in its levels of militarization. On the one hand, the rivalry between China and India as concerns regional influence increases the militarization levels in both countries. On the other hand, conflict countries, such as Sri Lanka, Thailand or Indonesia show very different levels of militarization.

Marked increases in military expenditure can be observed in threshold countries and countries with particularly high economic growth. High growth rates have created extensive financial resources, which were also invested in the military sector. Military expenditure in Brazil rose between 2000 and 2009 by 38 percent; those of India by 67, and China by 216 percent. Part of these expenditures was channeled into comprehensive modernization programs of the respective armed forces. Still, the share in military expenditure in relation to GDP and in health spending have only changed marginally in these countries. Brazil's militarization (1990: position 66; 2000: position 79; 2009: position 76) has constantly been average—with a light tendency towards a slight decrease. The same holds true for India's militarization (1990: position 79; 2000: position 87; 2009: position 79) despite a light tendency towards an increase. China's picture (1990: position 67; 2000: position 94; 2009: position 88) is similar to the one of Brazil. "These countries succeed in accelerating societal development as a whole," Croll summarizes.

Highest and lowest levels of militarization: a differentiated view is necessary

In Sub-Saharan Africa, most post-conflict countries show a slight decrease in militarization—due to the influence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DD&R) processes. In general, a rather low level of militarization can be observed. Exceptions are Angola (2009: position 31), Mauretania (2009: position 36), Djibouti (2009: position 40), Chad (2009: position 57), and Namibia (2009: position 59).

On first sight, it seems to be paradox that many African countries, such as Madagascar (armed conflict since 2002; 2009: position 133), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (war in eastern Congo since 2006; 2009: position 112), the Central African Republic (war since 2006; 2009: position 116), and Nigeria (armed conflict since 2004; 2009: position 135) were or are affected by armed conflict but still show low levels of militarization.

“A security sector that is weak or does not function at all cannot prevent violence and conflicts which negatively affect the population and seriously impair its development,” Jan Grebe explains. Consequences are fragile or weak states in which economic growth and development cannot occur. Amongst the 40 states with the lowest levels of militarization are 11 states, which, according to the Failed State Index belong to the category of ‘least stable states’. When looking at the category in which states are listed the stability of which is in danger, it becomes clear that 30 of the 40 countries with the lowest level of militarization show marked signs of weak and fragile statehood.

“The GMI—at best in combination with other indexes, such as the Human Development Index or the Global Peace Index—offers a strong data base for achieving a necessary differentiated estimate of militarization levels,” Peter J.Croll underlines.

The GMI uses mostly data of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute SIPRI, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and BICC. The ranking shows the militarization of 161 states since 1990. It is updated on an annual basis. The GMI is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).