

PRESS RELEASE

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Global militarization: Countries of the Middle East continue to be amongst the top ten

For the third time, BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is publishing its Global Militarization Index (GMI) (<http://www.bicc.de/our-work/gmi.html>). The current Index looks at the level of militarization of 149 countries and documents the developments since 1990. The GMI 2012 confirms that the Middle East is the region with the highest level of militarization in the world.

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The GMI 2012 is based on data from the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and BICC. It shows the degrees of militarization of 161 states since 1990. BICC provides yearly updates. It defines the level of militarization of a country by the relation of military expenditure to gross domestic product (GDP) and social factors, such as health care. In 2010 (the year for which the latest data is available), Israel, Singapore, Syria, Russia, Jordan, Cyprus, South Korea, Kuwait, Greece and Saudi Arabia are the top ten scorers on the GMI. Despite the fact that the United States is 30th of 149 states in the GMI 2012, its defense budget amounting to US \$687 billion continues to be, in absolute numbers, the highest in the world. "The GMI shows, however, that the degree of militarization in the United States has increased in the past ten years. The Index permits us to keep an eye on this trend," Jan Grebe, Project Leader at BICC, explains.

Fact sheet 2012:

http://www.bicc.de/uploads/gmi/pdf/Global_Militarization_Index_2012_Fact_Sheet_e.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>

Middle East: way ahead

Five of the top ten countries in the GMI are situated in the Middle East: Israel (ranked 1), Syria (ranked 3), Jordan (ranked 5), Kuwait (ranked 8), and Saudi Arabia (ranked 10). Nearly all countries in the Middle East can be found amongst the first 40 ranks of the GMI. This is proof of the overall high level of militarization in this conflict-prone region—Iran, for instance, is at position 32. Against the background of the Arab Spring, the continuing unrest and the political conflicts in some states, the inherent danger of high degrees of militarization is a continued destabilization of the region. "High levels of militarization can contribute to turning already existing internal and external conflicts into violence," Marc von Boemcken, BICC expert, comments.

Occasional Paper VII /
Research Paper "The
Global Militarization
Index (GMI)" (2011)

http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/papers/occ_paper_VII_02_11_eng.pdf

"In the Middle East, the huge amounts of weapons, which for example Saudi Arabia has purchased in the past years and continues to do so, may be an indication of a regional arms race," warns Jan Grebe. The GMI shows similar trends of regional arms escalation for Asia and Latin America.

Tendencies towards regional arms races

Two of the countries with the highest levels of militarization in 2010 can be found in Southeast Asia and East Asia: Singapore (ranked 2) and South Korea (ranked 7). "There is no reliable data for North Korea on military expenditures, number of armed forces, and number of heavy weapons systems. Therefore it is impossible to calculate its degree of militarization but one can assume that it is the country with the highest level of militarization in the world", Marc von Boemcken remarks. While China (position 83) and India (position 75) show moderate degrees of militarization, China's military expenditures in absolute terms amount to US \$114 billion—and have been increasing for years. At present, the Chinese military budget is the second highest in the world after the United States. The reaction of many countries in the region to Beijing's armament efforts may have an effect on the degree of militarization in some countries.

In South America, degrees of militarization are rather constant, some of which are quite high. Chile (ranked 34), Ecuador (ranked 36), Peru (ranked 48) and Colombia (ranked 49) are those with the highest levels of militarization in the region. Possible causes for this could be unsolved territorial conflicts or the internal conflict in Colombia. While Brazil shows quite moderate levels of militarization (ranked 76), its absolute military expenditures in 2010 of around US \$28 billion were much higher than those of all other Latin American states, and have been growing in recent years. "Here again, the question poses itself whether there are tendencies towards a regional arms race which Brazil is leading," Jan Grebe wonders.

BICC's GMI is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).