GLOBAL MILITARISATION INDEX 2023

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SUMMARY

BICC's Global Militarisation Index (GMI) provides an annual ranking of the degree of a country's militarisation by measuring the resources it allocates to its military apparatus in relation to other areas of society. The Index has been published since 2003 and has been supplemented with a publication since 2014. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and covers 149 countries.

The first part of the Index reflects current developments and trends in militarisation based on the most recent data **(usually from 2022).** The **ten countries with the highest level of militarisation in 2022** are Ukraine, Israel, Armenia, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Singapore, Azerbaijan and Russia.

Even if militarisation has declined slightly or in some cases significantly in some countries due to rising financial and human resources, i.e. growing GDP or population, military build-up is increasing in absolute terms worldwide. This is particularly evident in the number of heavy weapons systems in relation to the total population. The **more than 410,000 heavy weapons** in 2022 **in the countries covered by the GMI represent an increase of almost 13,000 systems, or more than three per cent over the previous year.**

The **post-Soviet space** is the regional focus of the second part of the GMI 2023. The fifteen countries that became independent with the collapse of the Soviet Union are now highly militarised for a variety of reasons. Four of them, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, are currently in the GMI TOP 10. Seven are very highly militarised and two are highly militarised. There are also historical reasons for this, as many of these republics inherited not only large armies and arsenals from the former Soviet era, but also, in some cases, large and well-equipped paramilitary security apparatuses designed to secure domestic rule.

Since independence, the former Soviet republics have responded very differently to how to manage their relations with Russia or integrate themselves into regional alliances. **Russia** began to build up its military in 2008 and has since then increased not only its military efforts to secure its influence over the former Soviet republics. To prevent renewed Russian occupation or influence, Baltic states such as **Lithuania** are militarising within NATO. In **Moldova**, **Georgia** and **Ukraine**, militarisation goes hand in hand with escalating conflicts with the large Russian-speaking minorities there over the political system and future direction of the country. Only the government of **Belarus** under Lukashenko is seeking a military alliance with Russia. It has thus militarised itself alongside Russia and also retained its historically large security apparatus, primarily to secure domestic rule. The long-standing historical conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in turn shows that militarisation within the former Soviet empire is not only linked to a new "Cold War".

Finally, it can be observed that various actors are trying to gain influence over the former Soviet republics. Increasing arms imports from China, Turkey, Iran and Israel are also contributing to their militarisation.

As we have done in many previous years, we have taken the GMI a step further this year. We now calculate the trend in militarisation (ΔGMI) using a *moving average* over two years. This involves averaging the GMI scores from the past two years (2021 and 2022) and comparing them with the same score from the two previous years (2020 and 2021). In this way, we minimise short-term changes, which are mainly due to fluctuations in the reference values (such as the GDP).

Since 2014, BICC has produced this publication every year to present the GMI and providing insights into the dynamics and effects of militarisation. Throughout these years, the publication has been edited by Susanne Heinke. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her ten years of dedicated work.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE GLOBAL MILITARISATION INDEX (GMI)

The Global Militarisation Index (GMI) depicts the relative weight and importance of the military apparatus of one state in relation to its society as a whole. For this, the GMI records a number of indicators to represent the level of militarisation of a country:

\ the comparison of military expenditures with its gross domestic product (GDP) and its health expenditure (as share of its GDP);

\ the contrast between the total number of (para)military forces and the number of physicians and the overall population;

\ the ratio of the number of heavy weapons systems available and the number of the overall population.

GMI indicators and weighing factors

Sub-index / Indicator	**Factor**
Expenditures	
Military expenditures as percentage of GDP	5
Military expenditures in relation to health spending	3
Personnel	
Military and paramilitary personnel in relation to population. *	4
Military reserves in relation to population	2
Military and paramilitary personnel in relation to physicians	2
Weapons	
Heavy weapons in relation to population	4

The GMI 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 levels of militarisation of more than 150 states since 1990. BICC provides yearly updates. As soon as new data is available, BICC corrects the GMI values retroactively for previous years (corrected data on gmi.bicc.de). This may have the effect that current ranks may differ in comparison to previous GMI publications.

In order to increase the compatibility between different indicators and to prevent extreme values from creating distortions when normalising data, in a first step every indicator has been represented in a logarithm with the factor 10. Second, all data have been normalised using the formula x=(y-min)/(max-min), with min and max representing, respectively, the lowest and the highest value of the logarithm. In a third step, every indicator has been weighted in accordance to a subjective factor, reflecting the relative importance attributed to it by BICC researchers. To calculate the final score, the weighted indicators have been added up and then normalised one last time on a scale ranging from 0 to 1,000.

The GMI conducts a detailed analysis of specific regional or national developments. By doing so, BICC wants to contribute to the debate on militarisation and point to the often contradictory distribution of resources.

The ΔGMI indicator reflects the trend in militarisation. It is the difference between the average GMI-values of the past two years (2021 and 2022) and the average of the two previous years (2020 and 2021).

* \ The main criterion for coding an organisational entity as either military or paramilitary is that the forces in question are under the direct control of the government in addition to being armed, uniformed and garrisoned.

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BICC GMI in 2023

The war in Ukraine has had varying effects on global militarisation. For example, military spending in western and central Europe rose by 13 per cent in 2022, the largest increase since the end of the Cold War.[1] The number of heavy weapons in western Europe also increased for the second year in a row, reaching a level last seen in 2009 with more than 49,000 in 2022. This trend, which began in 2014, the year of the occupation of Crimea, shows that this long-standing rise in military spending is now increasingly being used for procurement. Following Russia's withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which had been showing signs of erosion for some time, there has been de facto no conventional arms control in Europe since 2023. This means that a new, dangerous and resource-consuming arms race is in full swing.

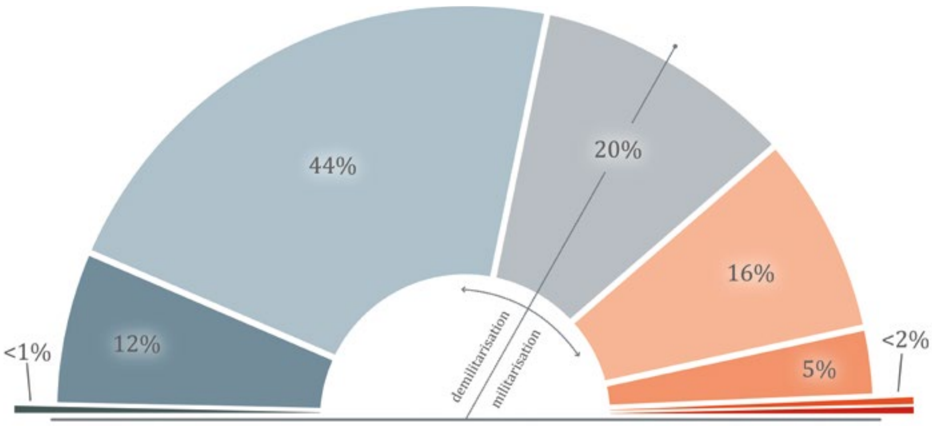
The dramatic militarisation of Ukraine in the wake of the Russian attack has prompted us to introduce the new category of "very high militarisation trend" (ΔGMI[2]) in the 2023 GMI to reflect this development. In contrast to the state of militarisation, which is recorded annually via the GMI value and for which we previously used the category of strong militarisation, this dynamic now captures the change in militarisation compared to previous years. This is why, in the current GMI 2023 Report, there is one country with very strong militarisation, one with strong, eight with moderate and 23 with little militarisation. The fact that the new record level[3] of global military expenditure of US $2,240 billion is not (yet) reflected in general militarisation in many countries is due to their growing resources. Global GDP increased by 3.1 per cent in 2022, and the population continued to grow in many countries. Overall, therefore, 65 countries show little demilitarisation, 18 show moderate demilitarisation and one country shows strong demilitarisation.

1 SIPRI: *Trends in World Military Expenditure,* 2022, SIPRI factsheet April 2023, accessible at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304_fs_milex_2022.pdf

2 The ΔGMI indicator reflects the trend in militarisation. It is the difference between the average GMI-values of the past two years (2021 and 2022) and the average of the two previous years (2020 and 2021). We describe increases in the GMI-value of more than 45 points as a very high militarisation trend, increases of between 15 and 45 points as a high militarisation trend, increases of between 5 and 15 points as a significant militarisation trend, and increases of between one and five points as a low militarisation trend. Likewise, we describe a decrease by the same number of points as a very high, high, significant or low demilitarisation trend. We consider changes in the range between 1 and -1 as slight changes of little importance.

3 SIPRI: *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2022,* SIPRI factsheet April 2023, accessible at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/2304_fs_milex_2022.pdf

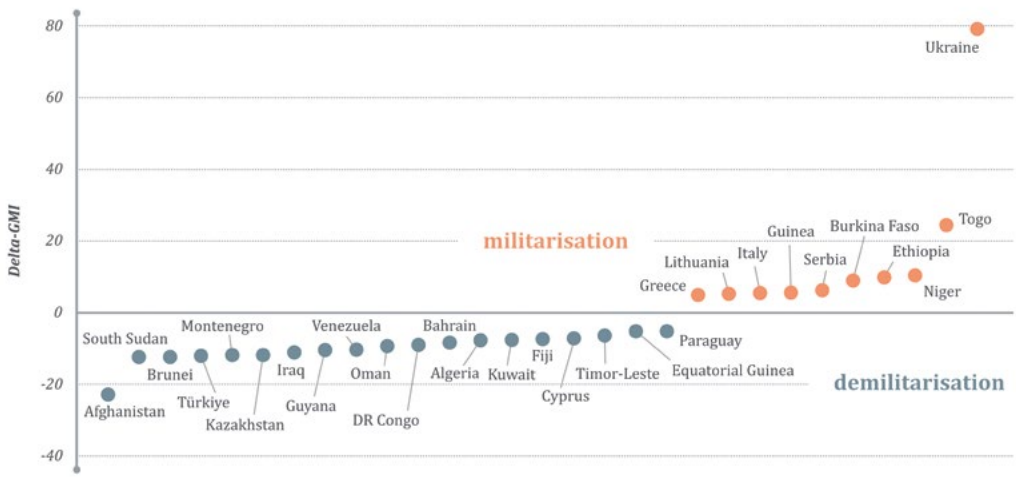
Figure I: *Global trends in (de)militarisation*



Trend in (de-)militarisation	2-year delta GMI	Countries
very high demilitarisation	> 45	0
high demilitarisation	> 15	1
significant demilitarisation	> 5	18
low demilitarisation	> 1	65
neutral	> -1 < 1	30
low militarisation	< -1	23
significant militarisation	< -5	8
high militarisation	< -15	1
very high militarisation	< -45	1

The **most significant trends in militarisation and demilitarisation** are shown in Figure II. As already mentioned, Ukraine shows the highest militarisation trends with very strong militarisation. Togo follows at a considerable distance with a high militarisation trend (ΔGMI 24.5). At the other end of the spectrum, Afghanistan shows a high demilitarisation trend (ΔGMI -21.7), and 18 countries show a significant demilitarisation trend.

Figure II: *Countries with significant to very high trends in (de)militarisation*



The war between Russia and Ukraine was also one of the key reasons why we chose the regional focus of the GMI, which this year is the post-Soviet space.

The Top 10

The GMI 2023 covers 149 of the 195 countries recognised by the United Nations.[4] The ten countries with the strongest militarisation in the GMI 2023 are Ukraine, Israel, Armenia, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Singapore, Azerbaijan and Russia (see Table I). These countries allocate particularly large amounts of resources to their military in comparison to other areas of society.

Table I: *Top 10*

Country				GMI	ΔGMI	Position
Ukraine	5.1	1.3	1.8	**335**	**79.2**	1 (+18)
Israel	2.1	1.8	3.1	**257**	**-4.9**	2 (-1)
Armenia	2.0	1.8	2.3	**223**	**-4.5**	3 (+0)
Qatar	3.0	0.8	2.2	**220**	—	4 (+2)
Bahrain	1.9	0.7	2.7	**215**	**-8.3**	5 (-3)
Saudi Arabia	2.9	0.7	2.1	**213**	**-4.5**	6 (-1)
Greece	1.9	1.1	2.7	**211**	**5.0**	7 (-2)
Singapore	1.7	1.3	2.7	**210**	**-0.3**	8 (-1)
Azerbaijan	2.4	0.9	2.3	**204**	**-1.3**	9 (+4)
Russia	2.1	1.1	2.4	**204**	**-2.4**	10 (+1)

Ukraine, which has been under attack from Russia since 2022, jumped 18 places to first place in the ranking and has very high dynamics of militarisation (ΔGMI 79.2). Due to war-related mobilisation, the number of Ukrainian military personnel increased significantly from 196,600 in 2021 to 688,000 in 2022. Ukraine's military expenditure jumped from 3.2 to 33.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), or from US $5.9 billion to around US $44 billion in absolute terms. In terms of heavy weapons, Ukraine saw a decline from 6,251 to 4,659 (about 25 per cent) as a result of the war and despite assistance deliveries. Consequently, Ukraine overtook **Israel**, which had been in first place for the past few years, and is now taking second place. Israel spent around US $23.3 billion on its armed forces, which comprised 169,500 soldiers and a reserve of 465,000 in 2022, slightly less than in the previous year (4.5 per cent of GDP). This results in a low demilitarisation trend (ΔGMI -4.9). Future editions of the Index will be an indicator of the extent to which the current war in Gaza is a driver of Israeli militarisation.

Armenia also recorded a low demilitarisation trend (ΔGMI -4.5), ranking third this year. Although the Caucasus state spent more on its military in absolute terms than in the previous year, military expenditure fell from 4.5 to 4.3 per cent of GDP growth. The republic has a military of 42,900 active soldiers and 210,000 reservists. This means that there are 15.4 soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants. This particular militarisation dynamic is linked to the frozen conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan (ranked ninth), a conflict which has repeatedly escalated into violence, most recently in September 2023.

4 It does not include territories that are not generally recognised, such as Taiwan or the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, no reliable data is available for some countries to analyse the distribution of resources between the military and overall society. We assume that some among them would have a very high level of militarisation (see GMI 2022).

Qatar is ranked fourth. Compared with the previous year (there are no two-year figures in this case), the country has shown a significant militarisation trend, moving up two places. This is mainly due to increasing military expenditures, which amount to US $14.7 billion (seven per cent of GDP) in 2022. The armed forces include 16,500 soldiers.

Bahrain, a second Persian Gulf state, is ranked fifth among the ten most militarised countries. The kingdom spent US $1.3 billion (3.2 per cent of its GDP) on the military, with 8,200 soldiers and 11,260 paramilitaries. This is slightly less than the previous year and represents a significant demilitarisation trend (ΔGMI -8.3).

Saudi Arabia, ranked sixth in the GMI (ΔGMI -4.5), is another state on the Arabian Peninsula that is among the ten most militarised countries in the world. In 2022, the kingdom spent US $73 billion or 7.4 per cent of its GDP on its military, significantly more than the previous year's US $63 billion. This expenditure also places it among the world's top five military spenders in absolute terms.

In seventh place is NATO member **Greece**, which—at 3.7 per cent of its GDP—spends the most on its military in relative terms within the alliance. The transfer of 1,200 used armoured personnel carriers from the United States over the past two years has led to a significant militarisation trend (ΔGMI 5.0).

Singapore dropped one place from the previous year and now occupies eighth place in the GMI ranking. The city-state spent around US $11.4 billion on its military, or 2.8 per cent of its GDP, as in the previous year. With 51,000 active soldiers and a reserve of another 252,500, the military is very large in relation to its population of 5.6 million and is heavily armed with over 3,000 heavy weapons systems. In comparison to the previous year, no trend towards militarisation can be observed (ΔGMI -0.2).

Azerbaijan is new to the TOP 10 in ninth place. The country, which is in permanent conflict with its neighbour Armenia, spent around US $2.6 billion or 4.5 percent of its GDP on its military in 2022. It currently has 64,050 active soldiers and a reserve of 300,000 additional soldiers.

Russia is also among the TOP 10. The country, which has been waging an all-out war against Ukraine since the beginning of 2022, increased its military spending from just under US $66 billion to almost US $72 billion (4.1 per cent of GDP). The simultaneous low demilitarisation trend (ΔGMI -2.4) is due to massive losses in military personnel and material. Russia is estimated to have had 70,000 heavy weapon systems in 2021 and only about 52,000 in 2022[5]. Similarly, the military reserve available to the country fell from two to 1.5 million soldiers as a result of the "partial mobilisation" in September 2022. At the same time, the number of active soldiers has risen from 900,000 in 2021 to 1,190,000 in 2022.

5 The number of heavy weapons held by warring parties is subject to great uncertainty. Our data on the armament of armed forces comes from the *Military Balance* of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Given the verified losses of 5,444 heavy weapons reported by the Oryx blog, this reduction does not seem entirely unrealistic. The losses listed by the blog include only those that can be verified by photo or video. Oryx, Attack on Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine, 5 February 2022, available at https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html.

Focus on Regional Militarisation

With the official end of the Soviet Union in 1991, fifteen new states appeared on the world map. But even more than thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet space has by no means simply dissolved into its individual states. The Belovezh Accords signed by Russia, Belarus and Ukraine on 8 December 1991 formally marked the end of the Soviet Union, but also the beginning of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), through which most of the closely intertwined successor states continued to form a common economic and security space. Today, historical references to the (pre-)Soviet past still play a central role in justifying either the (re-)integration of the region into a Russian world or the preservation of the national independence or identity of the former union states. During his first presidency (2000–2004), Vladimir Putin had already repeatedly pushed for the (re-)integration of the post-Soviet space under Russian leadership. In 2002, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was established as an alliance of six states to guarantee its members' security and territorial integrity (see map on pages 12 and 13). The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) furthered this integration and was intended to lead to a union of states, as is being considered between Russia and Belarus in the form of the Russian–Belarusian Union. At the time of writing, however, only Belarus appears to be open to such further integration, while other post-Soviet countries have increasingly resisted these attempts at (re)integration. In particular, Russia's increasingly aggressive integration efforts over time and their ideological connection to the idea of a "Russian world", which also includes Russian-speaking populations and territories of neighbouring countries, have provoked defensive reactions. The Baltic ex-Soviet republics, which had not joined the CIS, later turned to the European Union and NATO. After Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 to secure the independence of the de facto regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia, which claims both regions as its own, withdrew from the CIS. In 2018, four years after the annexation of Crimea in violation of international law, Ukraine followed suit. Moldova is also considering leaving in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova—countries that have all experienced Russian-backed secessions and have long-term aspirations for EU membership—formally joined together in 2006 to form the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM).

This conflict between integration and independence, currently reflected in Russia's war against Ukraine but also in Transnistria and Georgia, is a key driver of militarisation in the region, but not the only one.

In countries such as Belarus, the military plays a central role in maintaining domestic power, which also contributes to militarisation. In addition, the states of the former Soviet Union have conflictual relations not only with the former centre of the empire, Russia, but also to some extent with each other. For example, there are tensions between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan over the conflict in the Batken region. More recently, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region have again escalated militarily. This conflict also shows that the region has long since become a sphere of interest for various actors. The top arms exporters to the region, shown in the map on pages 12 and 13, illustrate that Russia has often been supplanted as the largest supplier, and that countries such as Israel, Turkey and Iran have gained influence. In this regional section, we look at the different drivers of militarisation, using selected countries with very strong militarisation as examples.

Russia

We will start by analysing the Russian Federation, the former centre of the Soviet empire. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the country experienced not only an immense wave of liberalisation and privatisation, which led to the impoverishment of large sections of the population and the rise of the oligarchs[6], but also to the violent secessionist wars in Chechnya (1994–1996; 1999–2009). Under President Putin in particular, the military has taken on a greater role in securing Russia's regional and global influence. Russia fought a brief war against Georgia in 2008, occupied Crimea in 2014, intervened on the side of Assad in Syria from 2015 onwards and in Kazakhstan in 2022, and attacked Ukraine in the same year. Russia has been one of the most militarised countries in the world for years and currently ranks tenth in the Global Militarisation Index.

Security Policy and Militarisation

In the 1990s, Russia's militarisation initially declined due to financial constraints, disarmament commitments and heavy losses in the first Chechen war. In 1998, the country reached an all-time low of 19th place. The war against Georgia (2008) revealed numerous weaknesses in the armed forces: For example, around one-third of all units were made up of poorly trained conscripts, and there was a lack of unified command structures and professional leadership. Defence Minister Serdyukov and his successor Shoigu introduced far-reaching reforms, reducing the size of the armed forces significantly, cutting over 100,000 officer posts, disbanding various units and shifting the ratio of conscripts to professional soldiers in favour of the latter. At the same time, they modernised their equipment. Between 2008 and 2016, military spending as a percentage of GDP increased significantly, from 3.1 to 5.4 per cent, to prepare the armed forces for the new geopolitical situation. Since the military doctrine adopted in 2015, this has consisted of increased global competition and a gradual redistribution of influence.[7] The document identifies NATO enlargement, plans for a missile shield and externally induced upheavals in neighbouring countries as key threats to Russia.

Russia has consistently ranked among the 15 most militarised countries since 2001. The GMI 2023 ranks Russia the fourth most militarised country among the 15 post-Soviet states. Although Russia's militarisation declined briefly in 2013 due to the downsizing of its armed forces, it rose again between 2015 and 2016 due to increased spending. In the following years, however, it fell slightly again.

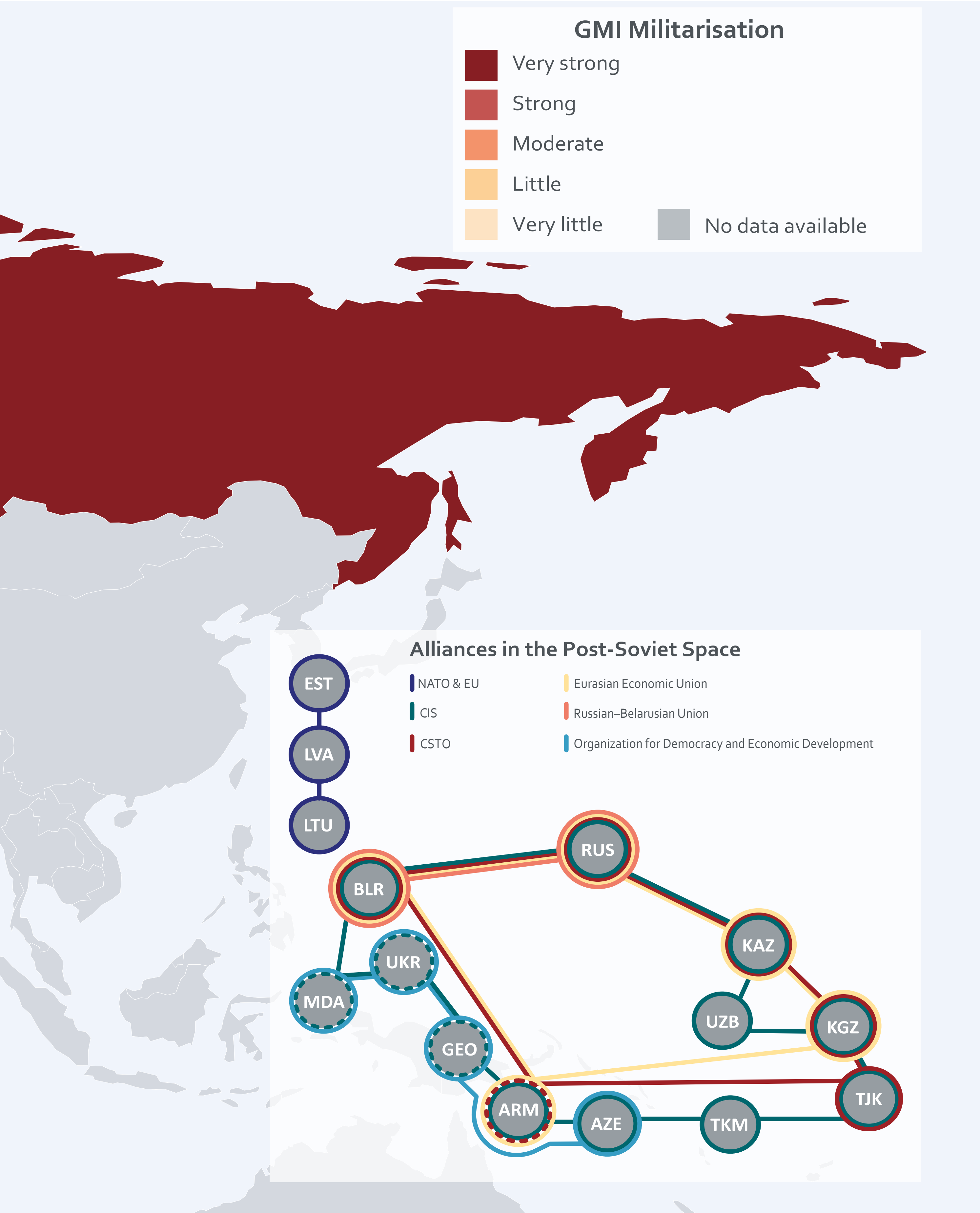
Russia is highly militarised in terms of military expenditure and heavy weapons. In 2022, military expenditure amounted to around US $72 billion, or 4.1 per cent of GDP, representing the climax of the past five years. The main arms imports over the past five years came from Iran (60.9 per cent), mainly *Shahed-136* loitering munitions. Imports from China (just under 10 per cent) ranked third, behind Ukraine in second place (25 per cent).

6 Kotz, D., & Weir, F. (2007). *Russia's Path: From Gorbachev to Putin. The Demise of the Soviet System and the New Russia.* Routledge.

7 Dresdener Studiengemeinschaft Sicherheitspolitik e. V. (2015, 5 February), *Militärdoktrin der Russischen Föderation* (DSS-Arbeitspapiere), accessible at https://slub.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A20928/attachment/ATT-0/.

Militarisation in the Post-Soviet Space

Source: Natural Earth


GMI Militarisation
Very strong
Strong
Moderate
Little
Very little
No data available
Alliances in the Post-Soviet Space
NATO & EU
CIS
CSTO
Eurasian Economic Union
Russian–Belarusian Union
Organization for Democracy and Economic Development
EST
LVA
LTU
RUS
BLR
UKR
MDA
GEO
ARM
AZE
TKM
TJK
KAZ
UZB
KGZ

In terms of personnel, Russia only displays a strong militarisation, with a ratio of 8.3 active soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants. In addition to the still large armed forces (1,190,000 active soldiers and 1,500,000 reservists), the large number of paramilitary forces, currently numbering 559,000, such as the Russian National Guard Rosgvardiya, also plays an important role. Created by Putin's decree in 2016, they are officially tasked with fighting terrorism and organised crime, as well as maintaining public order but are also often seen as a response to the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine and as a tool to intimidate internal opposition. If these paramilitary forces are taken into account, there are more than 12 (para)military personnel per 1,000 inhabitants in Russia.

Recent Developments

Since 24 February 2022, Russia has been waging a war of aggression against Ukraine in violation of international law. In his speech on the occasion of the Russian invasion, President Putin justified it with the need to protect the Russian population in Donbas and to prevent the country's integration into NATO. According to Putin, the aims of the 'special military operation' were the demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine significantly worsened relations between Russia and the West, but also led to an intensification of relations between Russia and countries such as Iran and North Korea. At the time of writing, Russia is buying arms and ammunition from both countries for the war in Ukraine. Compared to the previous year, Russia has significantly increased its military spending (from US $66 billion to almost US $72 billion). The country is preparing for a long war and is ramping up its arms production accordingly.

Lithuania

As an example of those Baltic states that turned westwards after the collapse of the Soviet Union and are now part of NATO, we turn to Lithuania. The country has a long history of foreign rule, including by Poland, Russia and Germany. Traumatic events such as the partisan war against reintegration into the Soviet Union after the end of German occupation and World War II are still deeply rooted in the country's collective memory and are central to the perception of Russia as a threat.[8] After independence, Lithuania sought to integrate into Western alliances very early. Article 150 of the new constitution of 1992 stipulated that membership in a post-Soviet alliance such as the CIS was inadmissible. Instead, Lithuania signed the NATO Partnership for Peace in 1994 and an Association Agreement with the European Union a year later. Culturally, as in other former Soviet republics, a process of 'de-Russification' began after independence, reflected in the fact that Lithuanian was made the only official language despite the large Russian minority. Although Lithuania shares only a short border with Russia, it is considered particularly vulnerable due to the so-called Suwalki Gap—the shortest land link between Belarus and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. Like the other Baltic states, Lithuania has undergone significant militarisation over the past decade.

The country has been classified as highly militarised since 2015 and as very highly militarised since 2019.

8 Davoliūtė, V. (2014). *The making and breaking of Soviet Lithuania: memory and modernity in the wake of war.* Routledge.

Security Policy and Militarisation

Based on the experience of various occupations, the independent state attached great importance to military defence. Even the reorientation of the armed forces after independence was based on the realisation that Lithuania, as a small country, would need the most comprehensive or even 'total defence'[9] possible to prevent another occupation. This meant, on the one hand, the involvement of large sections of the population and, on the other, integration into the NATO collective defence system.[10] The constitution introduced the right and duty of all citizens to defend the country against an attack (Article 139), compulsory military service and a military reserve. While the threat perception in Lithuania initially decreased after joining NATO, it has increased again in recent years, especially after 2014. According to the Ministry of Defence's current threat analysis, the greatest danger comes from Russia and its ally Belarus.[11]

Lithuania is the most militarised country of the Baltic states. It ranks 21st in this year's GMI, while Estonia ranks 29th and Latvia 63rd. The strong militarisation of the last decade encompasses all three dimensions of the GMI.

In terms of personnel, Lithuania is one of the most militarised countries in the world. The Lithuanian armed forces have grown significantly over the last 20 years, from 13,510 active soldiers in 2003 to 23,000 active soldiers and 7,100 reservists in 2022. This means that there are about eight active soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants in Lithuania. This increase in personnel is partly due to the reintroduction of conscription, which had initially been abolished in 2008, in response to the annexation of Crimea one year earlier. The reserve of 309,200 soldiers initially shrank dramatically after the abolition of conscription but doubled again between 2018 and 2022, from 6,700 to 14,500 soldiers. Paramilitary units have also grown exponentially since 2014. One of the oldest, the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union (LRU), now officially exists as an NGO, although it is state-funded and led by a serving officer. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, its membership doubled from 7,000 to the current (2022) 14,000. If one includes these paramilitary personnel, there are more than 13 paramilitaries per 1,000 inhabitants in Lithuania, which is not an insignificant number.

In terms of military spending, Lithuania has been committed to NATO's two per cent target for quite some time. Over the past decade, the country has gradually increased its spending from US $366 million in 2013 (0.76 percent of GDP) to US $1.66 billion (2.5 percent of GDP) in 2022. This puts Lithuania in the group of highly militarised countries in terms of expenditure.

Lithuania is also highly militarised in terms of heavy weaponry, the stock of which has risen steadily since 2014. As a country without a significant defence industry of its own, it has mainly purchased weapons from Germany and the United States. For several years, the country has been trying to modernise its mechanised units.
To this end, it imported 90 light wheeled tanks, 18 self-propelled artillery systems and 190 decommissioned armoured personnel carriers from Germany between 2015 and 2022.

9 "Total defence shall mean that (…) the resources of the State shall be employed in the defence effort and that each citizen and the Nation shall offer resistance by every means allowed under international law," Chapter 7, Section 1, accessible at https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.353942?jfwid=pd6eq4zc3

10 Statkeviciute, G. (1999). The Development of Lithuanian Armed Forces: View Ahead. *Baltic Defence Review, 1*(57).

11 Ministry of National Defense (2022). National Threat Assessment, Vilnius, accessible at https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ANGL-el-_.pdf

Recent Developments

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has significantly worsened relations between Russia and Lithuania. The country firmly implemented EU-wide sanctions against Russia and temporarily restricted rail transit to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. Lithuania also responded by supplying arms to Ukraine and further upgrading and modernising its own armed forces. In this context, the Lithuanian government announced in March 2023 its plan to transform a mechanised infantry battalion into an armoured battalion, procure 40 to 50 main battle tanks and increase the number of conscripts further. The war is also having an impact on domestic politics. According to recent polls, resentment towards Russians and Russians living in the country has increased.[12]

Belarus

As Russia's closest ally after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we take a look at Belarus. The country has a long history of foreign rule. At the end of the 18th century, Belarus came under the control of the Russian Empire and first declared its independence on 25 March 1918. Following armed conflicts between Soviet Russia and Poland, part of the country was annexed by Poland, while the other part became the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. After the occupation by Nazi Germany in 1941, which installed a puppet Belarusian government[13], German units had killed 1.6 to 1.7 million (about 25 per cent) Belarusians by 1944, including almost the entire Jewish population. The country's reconstruction took place within the framework of the Soviet Union. Like other former Soviet republics, Belarus declared its sovereignty in July 1990. However, many institutions and structures remained de facto unchanged. In the parliament elected in 1990, the democratic opposition was clearly outnumbered by the reformed communists. The 1991 referendum revealed strong pro-Soviet sentiments in Belarusian society. Under Alexander Lukashenko, a former military man who has ruled the country since 1994, the country has followed a predominantly pro-Russian course, including the preservation of the Soviet legacy. In 1999, Belarus and Russia signed the "Treaty on the Russian–Belarusian Union", according to which the sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutions and other elements of statehood of both states are maintained, but at the same time, most policy areas (foreign, security and economic policy) are coordinated jointly.

The two states have also cooperated closely in military terms in various institutions, such as the CSTO military alliance, since the 1990s. Belarus is also very important for Russia's Eurasian integration projects. The large security apparatus, which wields great political power in the country and has been criticised for human rights violations, has played a central role in the country's very strong militarisation over the past twenty years.

12 Lithuanian National Television and Radio: Survey shows that Lithuanians have abysmal opinion of Russia, favour Poland and Germany, 01 February 2023, accessible at https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1856830/survey-shows-lithuanians-have-abysmal-opinion-of-russia-favour-poland-and-germany

13 Marples, D. R. (2012). *Belarus. A denationalized nation,* 2nd ed., Oxon.

Security Policy and Militarisation

The Belarusian regime and its security apparatus are closely intertwined. The national military doctrine, adopted in 2016, defines the primary task of the armed forces as defence against external attacks and threats from upheavals such as "colour revolutions".[14] The security forces are authorised to use armed force to maintain 'public order'. Lukashenko last used army units to quell mass protests in 2021. As part of the ongoing Belarusian–Russian integration process, this national military doctrine was replaced in 2021 by a joint doctrine[15] that gives high priority to the defence of the alliance's territory, making Belarus the de facto Belarusian–Russian western flank vis-à-vis NATO. These internal and external threat scenarios also influence Belarus' militarisation.

Although militarisation has declined somewhat since 2014, Belarus has been one of the countries with a very strong militarisation for two decades. This year, it ranks 19th in the GMI.

It scores highest in the Heavy Weapons Index, where it has been one of the most heavily militarised countries for 20 years. Already a region with a very high concentration of troops in Soviet times, it has "inherited" corresponding quantities of military equipment. Although Belarus has its own defence industry, producing vehicles and guided weapons, it does not have the capacity to produce complex systems such as combat aircraft locally. Over the past decade, it has mainly purchased weapons systems from Russia.

In terms of personnel, Belarus has generally been one of the most heavily militarised countries over the past 20 years. In addition to the rather small number of currently (2022) 48,000 active soldiers, there is the impressive number of 110,000 paramilitary forces that have been serving in the "internal troops" of the Ministry of the Interior since 1995 to secure internal power. There is also a substantial reserve of around 290,000 soldiers. This means that Belarus has only five active soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants. However, if paramilitary forces are included, the ratio of (para)military personnel to civilians changes to 17 per 1,000, a figure comparable to Armenia.

Belarus scores lowest in the area of military expenditure, where it ranks 95th in the GMI 2023. Here, militarisation has ranged between little and moderate for the last twenty years. It peaked in 2006 at 1.7 per cent of GDP, but in 2022, it was only 1.2 per cent at US $792 million, although Belarus would need to increase military spending to 1.5 per cent of GDP to meet the goals of its Armed Forces Development Concept.

Recent Developments

Belarus has long tried to maintain a supposedly neutral position in the Ukraine conflict. In November 2021, however, Lukashenko made it known that Crimea "legally belongs to Russia."[16] Since then, the country has increasingly sided with Russia. In the run-up to the Russian invasion on 14 February 2022, the two countries held a joint manoeuvre called 'Allied Resolve', which became a pretext for the deployment of Russian troops. Since then, these have been crossing into Ukraine from Belarusian territory and firing into Ukrainian territory from there. Officially, Belarusian troops are not involved in the conflict. However, President Lukashenko announced his intention to create new territorial defence units with 45,000 reservists to ensure the security of his own territory in the event of an attack. The two countries also pressed ahead with the military integration of the two armed forces. In December 2022, for instance, Lukashenko confirmed the operational capability of Russian-supplied *Iskander-M* short-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. In mid-2023, Russia began to position tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus.

14 International Institute for Strategic Studies. (2019). *The Military Balance 2019* [the annual assessment of global military capabilities and defence economics] Routledge, p. 179.

15 European Parliament. (2023). *Russia-Belarus military cooperation.* EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, accessible at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/739348/EPRS_ATA(2023)739348_EN.pdf.

16 Belarus leader, in U-turn, says annexed Crimea is legally Russian. *Reuters*, 30 November 2021, accessible at https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/belarus-leader-u-turn-says-annexed-crimea-is-legally-russian-ria-2021-11-30/.

Ukraine

Ukraine can look back on a turbulent history marked by its integration into the great empires and its struggle for independence. In the 17th century, the eastern part of Ukraine was annexed by the Russian Empire, followed by the western part in 1793 and the subsequent 'Russification' of the entire country. This included banning the use of the Ukrainian language and forcing conversion to the Russian Orthodox faith. In March 1917, the short-lived Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed, which was eventually incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922.[17] In the 1930s, Ukraine suffered a devastating famine that killed an estimated 3.5 million people. It was caused by Stalin's ruthless industrialisation policy of forced collectivisation of agriculture. The *Holodomor*, as the famine is known in Ukraine, remains a collective trauma and has played an important role in the development of an independent national identity.[18] After gaining independence in 1991, Ukraine initially maintained close ties to Russia. In 1994, the countries agreed in the Budapest Memorandum that Ukraine would hand over the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, much of which it had inherited, to Russia in return for security guarantees.[19] From the outset, Ukraine sought to find a role for itself between the West and Russia. The founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) also signed a partnership agreement with the European Union in 1994. There have been several mass mobilisations centred on the state of democratic transition and the question of relations with the European Union and Russia.

Ukraine is therefore an example of the group of post-Soviet states characterised by an internal conflict over whether to align with the West or with Russia. During the Orange Revolution in 2004, thousands took to the streets to protest against electoral fraud and in favour of greater European integration.[20] The Euromaidan, which began in 2013, also highlighted the internal divide between East and West. At the time, there were mass protests in Kyiv against then-President Viktor Yanukovych, who refused to sign the planned Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) and instead sought close cooperation with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). As a result of these pro-Western protests, pro-Russian separatists took over parts of the Donbas with Russian support. Russian troops also occupied Crimea. Putin refers to both regions as "Novorossiya" (New Russia) and thus as part of Russia's sphere of influence. This has increasingly made Ukraine the new centre of the geopolitical conflict between Russia and the United States.

17 Kubicek, P. (2008). *The history of Ukraine.* Westport.

18 Stark, R. (2010). Holodomor, Famine in Ukraine 1932-1933: A Crime against Humanity or Genocide? *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies, 10*(1), 2.

19 Besides the United States and the United Kingdom, Russia also assured such guarantees.

20 Masters, J. (2023). *Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia.* Council on Foreign Relations, 14 February 2023, accessible at https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia

Security Policy and Militarisation

Ukraine's recent official security and defence strategies have emphasised that Russia is an existential military threat. A key aspect of the new National Security Strategy 2020[21] and associated military reforms is therefore the development of strategic relations with key players such as the European Union and NATO, with a focus on the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and France. Ukraine aims to fully implement the Association Agreement with the European Union and to become a member of NATO.[22] In addition, the country has made a concerted effort in recent years to increase interoperability between the Ukrainian and Western NATO armies through joint training and procurement. Ukraine's overall GMI score has been rising since 2014, reaching an interim high in 2015, when Ukraine moved from 41st to 23rd place in the ranking. This score remained relatively stable until last year. However, the overall GMI score has skyrocketed since the Russian invasion, with Ukraine taking first place in the ranking this year. This is mainly due to a sharp increase in military spending and personnel.

According to the GMI Expenditure Index, the country is in first position globally. Until 2015, Ukraine's militarisation over the last twenty years was only in the moderate-to-strong range in terms of expenditure, which shifted upwards after the annexation of Crimea and 2015 respectively. Since then, it has been one of the most militarised countries in terms of GDP expenditure. In 2022, military expenditure was over 33 per cent of GDP (US $44 billion), a huge increase of 30 per cent.

Ukraine has also been a highly militarised country for much of the past 20 years in terms of the Heavy Weapons Index. However, the score has fallen, meaning that Ukraine has only been among the highly militarised states since 2014. In 2022, Ukraine ranked 33rd in the world in terms of heavy weapons. The political shift towards the West is also reflected in the sources of supply for weapons systems. While Ukraine was initially dependent on Russia for a long time, despite having a relatively large defence industry of its own, the picture has changed significantly in the last five years. Between 2018 and 2022, 34.4 per cent of Ukrainian arms imports came from the United States, 16.7 per cent from Poland and 10.6 per cent from Germany.

Ukraine recorded its lowest militarisation in terms of personnel, although there has also been a dramatic increase since the outbreak of the war. In 2022, Ukraine ranked ninth in this respect. While the Ukrainian military had 121,500 active personnel in 2014, the number rose to 204,000 in 2015 following the outbreak of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. After the Russian attack in 2022, it increased to 688,000 in the course of the general mobilisation. This gives Ukraine a ratio of 18 active soldiers per 1,000 civilians. This is the highest among the countries analysed here. If paramilitary forces are included, the score rises to 24, well above that of Belarus and Armenia (score of 17 each).

Recent Developments

Since the Russian invasion, direct support to Ukraine from other, mainly Western, countries in the form of arms supplies and financial aid has increased significantly. In addition to developing its own military capabilities, the country is now determinedly pursuing NATO membership. At the Vilnius Summit in 2023, NATO acknowledged that Ukraine's future lies in the Alliance, but remained vague on the terms of membership. In this context, accession talks with the European Union are also a high priority for Ukraine. An EU decision on negotiations is expected in December 2023.

21 ПРЕЗИДЕНТ УКРАЇНИ, (2020). Presidential Decree No. 392/2020 on decision by the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) on the National Security Strategy of Ukraine of 14 September 2020, accessible at https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3922020-35037 (in Ukrainian).

22 Brusylovska, O. (2022). Security and Defense Policy of Ukraine in the Main Provisions and Objectives of its Strategic Documents. In P. Sinovets & W. Alberque (Eds.), *Arms Control and Europe. New Challenges and Prospects for Strategic Stability* (pp. 111–124). Cham.

Armenia

Like Azerbaijan (see below), we consider Armenia as a former Soviet republic whose militarisation is largely driven by the protracted regional conflict with its neighbour over the Caucasian region of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the Treaty of Moscow (1921), designed to govern relations between Soviet Russia and nascent Turkey, Moscow assured Turkey that the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, mainly populated by Armenian nationals, would become an *oblast* (territorial unit) of (predominantly Muslim) Azerbaijan. Like Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia was part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1922, and only became part of the Soviet Union in 1936 as the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. Shortly after Armenia's declaration of independence in August 1990, the conflict became more volatile when Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent republic on Azerbaijani territory in 1991. Armenia remained closely linked to Russia through the CIS and later the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the EEU. In the first war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh (1992–1994), Russia supported the Armenian armed forces, making the region de facto independent. With the 'Velvet Revolution' in 2018, which saw a change of power and the rise of a new generation in Armenia, the previously strong 'Moscow–Yerevan axis' appeared to be weakening. Statements by the new political elite in Yerevan indicated that the country might seek EU membership instead of joining the EEU. However, Armenia's dependence on Russian energy and the renewed escalation of the conflict with Azerbaijan in 2021 have thwarted efforts to distance itself from Russia as a military protector. Since Azerbaijan's seizure of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in September 2023, however, Russian–Armenian relations have been in a deep crisis.

Security Policy and Militarisation

Due to the ongoing conflict with its neighbour Azerbaijan, Armenia has been one of the most militarised countries over the past 20 years. In this year's GMI, the country ranks third in the GMI and second among the former Soviet republics. Currently—not least due to the renewed military escalation of the conflict with Azerbaijan—clear rifts in relations between Armenia and its protector Russia are noticeable for the first time.

In its security strategy adopted in 2020, Armenia explicitly names the recognition of the Republic of Artsakh's independence (until 2017 the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh) and the recognition of the genocide of Armenians in 1915/16 as national goals. In addition to Azerbaijan, Turkey is also described as a threat that would jeopardise the security of the country and the stability of the region by arming Azerbaijan. The paper describes relations with Russia, which has a continuous military presence in the country, as a historic friendship that should be further deepened and expanded, particularly in the area of security.[23] Membership of the CSTO is another building block of the country's security architecture. Nevertheless, Armenia also maintains relations with NATO and has established a permanent representation at its headquarters in Brussels in 2004.

23 Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Armenia. (2020). ***National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia***, accessible at https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/security%20and%20defense/Armenia%202020%20National%20Security%20Strategy.pdf

Armenia relies on a comparatively large and well-armed military. As a result, Armenia has consistently been one of the most militarised countries in the world over the past 20 years, and has been in the top 10 of the GMI ranking for the past 14 years.

This generally strong militarisation is also reflected in the individual Indexes of the GMI. Armenia has consistently ranked among the most militarised countries in terms of expenditure since 2006, spending an average of four percent of GDP on its military since 2007. In absolute terms, it peaked at US $674 million in 2019, although this has since fallen slightly to US $634 million.

Armenia's now very strong militarisation in terms of personnel has also increased steadily over the past two decades. The country's armed forces currently comprise 42,900 active soldiers, 4,300 paramilitaries and a reserve of 210,000. With a current population of 2.7 million, this ratio of almost 15 active soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants is high. If paramilitary forces are included, this figure rises slightly to almost 18.

The country also has a very strong militarisation in terms of heavy weaponry; this is a change from 2004 and earlier, when militarisation was strong here. With over 100 battle tanks, 427 other armoured vehicles and 160 artillery systems, it has a significant arsenal of heavy weapons in relation to its size.

As the map on pages 12 and 13 shows, Armenia is largely dependent on Russia for its arms imports. Over the past five years, it has purchased 83 per cent of all imports from its northern neighbour. These consisted of air defence systems, combat aircraft and attack and transport helicopters. To a lesser extent, Armenia also purchased arms from India (10.4 per cent) and Jordan (6.8 per cent).

Recent Developments

Azerbaijan's occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in September 20/23 plunged not only Armenian–Azerbaijani relations into a deep crisis but also relations between Russia and Armenia. As recently as 2020, Russian efforts to end the conflict and the fact that Nagorno-Karabakh did not come under Azerbaijani control played an important role. Russian peacekeepers secured the Lachin Corridor between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. However, in the face of the war against Ukraine and Azerbaijan's massive military superiority, Russia withdrew its support for Armenia, which resulted in the fact that Armenia refused to take part in the CSTO manoeuvres in early 2023. Following Azerbaijan's capture of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 after just two days of fighting, the country is not only openly considering leaving the alliance but also questioning Russia as a protective power. In a survey conducted in March this year, the majority of respondents ranked Russia only third behind France and Iran[24] as a security partner. Iran, Armenia's traditional ally in the region, is also currently playing a role in peace negotiations with Azerbaijan and in containing Turkish influence.

24 Center for Insights in Security Research (2021). Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia, accessible at https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Armenia-Final-PPT_31.01.2022_Eng.pdf

Azerbaijan

Like its western neighbour Armenia, Azerbaijan was once part of the Russian Empire, which benefited as a colonial power from Azerbaijan's wealth of fossil fuels such as oil. The Caucasus republic was briefly independent between 1918 and 1922. In 1922, it became part of the Transcaucasian SFSR (see above) as the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, which was dissolved in 1936. It was subsequently incorporated into the Soviet Union, along with Armenia and Georgia. The former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan declared independence in 1991. As a result, Azerbaijan joined the CIS in 1991 and the Collective Security Treaty (CST)—the forerunner of the CSTO—in 1992. Azerbaijan hoped that this would provide military support in the border conflict with Armenia. When Armenia, supported by Russia, gained control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region in a war with Azerbaijan (1992–1994), Azerbaijan let the CST expire in 1999 and did not join its successor, the CSTO.[25] The Aliyev presidential dynasty (Heidar Aliyev, in power from 1993 to 2003 after a military coup, and his son Ilham Aliyev since 2003) has transformed the country into an autocracy, which, in foreign policy, has pursued a patient and broad policy, focusing on the territorial integrity and restoration of Nagorno-Karabakh and strategically seeking proximity to Russia, Turkey and the European Union.[26] At the time of writing, Turkey is the most important ally in the region.

Security Policy and Militarisation

Azerbaijan is also one of the most heavily militarised countries in the world. It currently ranks 9th on the GMI. In its national security concept, the resource-rich country on the Caspian Sea stresses the territorial integrity of the country and the conflict with Armenia. But it also stresses the importance of its vast natural resources for the country's development. Its connectivity to the international energy network is, therefore, the second major concern of national interest.[27] Since 2006, Azerbaijan has been connected to Turkey via the South Caucasus Pipeline, which passes through Georgia, and to Italy and the European Union via the Trans-Anatolian and Trans-Adriatic Gas Pipelines since 2020.

Azerbaijan is the most highly militarised country in terms of military expenditure. In this area, it has been one of the countries with very strong militarisation since 2004, and this year, it is even on sixth position worldwide in the Expenditure Index. An absolute peak in the last twenty years was reached in 2015 with military expenditures of US $3.67 billion (5.46 per cent of GDP). The country currently spends slightly less on its military, at US $2.66 billion (4.55 per cent of GDP).

25 Hasanov, S. (2019). *Imperiales Erbe? Machtpolitische Ambitionen Russlands im Südkaukasus zwischen 1992 und 2014.* Köln: Springer VS.

26 Valiyev, A., & Yagubova, I. (2022). Azerbaijan's Strategic Patience in a Changing World. *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst.* Central Asia Initiative and Silk Road Studies, accessible at https://www.cacianalyst.org/resources/pdf/220830-FT-Azerbaijan.pdf

27 National Security Concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan, unofficial translation by ETH Zurich, 23 May 2007, available at https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/154917/Azerbaijan2007.pdf

Azerbaijan currently ranks 13th in the world in the Heavy Weapons Index. Since 2009, Azerbaijan, which until then had largely relied on stocks from the former Soviet Union, has become increasingly interested in modern weapons for its armed forces. As a result, the country became the 23rd largest arms importer in the world between 2009 and 2019. In the last five years, there has been a shift in suppliers. While, between 2009 and 2018, the country still purchased most of its arms from Russia (with Israel and Belarus in second and third place), over the last five years, Israel has clearly overtaken Russia in terms of import volume (66 per cent vs. 12 per cent). Among other things, Azerbaijan has purchased 450 kamikaze drones and a number of reconnaissance drones from there since 2016, giving it a significant military advantage over Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Around five per cent of its arms imports between 2018 and 2022 come from Turkey.

In terms of personnel, the country is also very highly militarised (position 34 in the world). Azerbaijan relies on 18 months of military service, which is compulsory for all male citizens from the age of 18. With 64,000 soldiers, its military is not particularly large, but due to conscription and the decades-long smouldering and escalating conflict with Armenia, the country maintains a relatively large reserve of 300,000 soldiers. With 6.3 active soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants, Azerbaijan has the second lowest figure (after Belarus) among the countries analysed. Compared to other post-Soviet states, the size of Azerbaijan's paramilitary forces is relatively small at 15,000. There are only 7.8 (para)military personnel per 1,000 civilians in Azerbaijan. This is the lowest score of the six post-Soviet countries analysed here.

Recent Developments

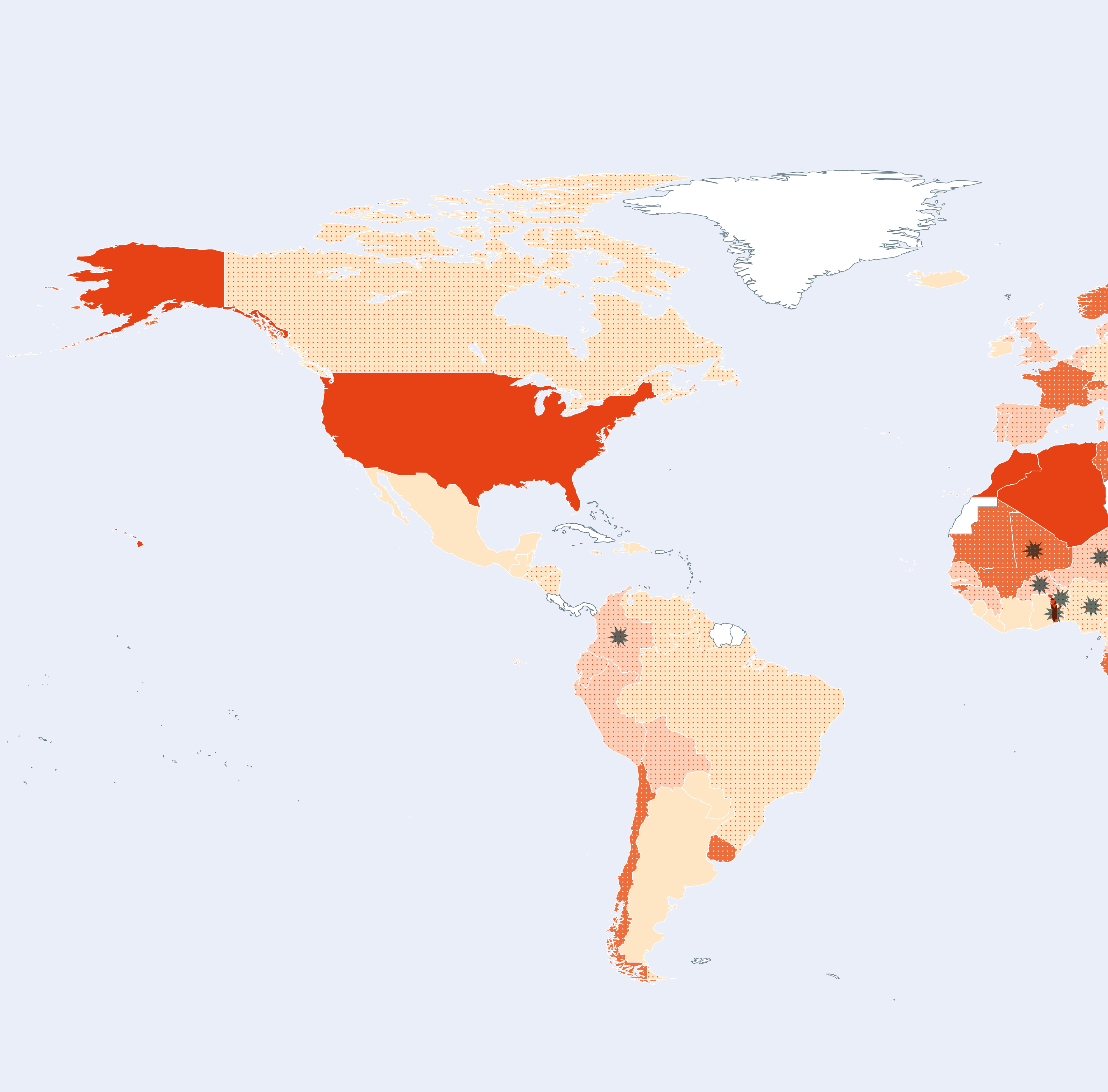
The Trans-Anatolian and Trans-Adriatic Gas Pipelines, two pipeline projects that bypass Russia and Armenia, have caused discontent in Moscow since 2020, as they compete with its own South Stream pipeline project, which was to connect Russia to Europe via the Black Sea and Bulgaria, bypassing Ukraine. Relations with Russia have also been strained by the war in Ukraine. Following the Russian invasion, President Aliyev took a surprisingly pro-Ukrainian stance, calling on the country not to accept the occupation of its territory. Azerbaijan sees the occupation of Crimea and Donbas as a parallel to the Armenian occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Soviet attempt to violently suppress the independence movement in Baku in 1990.[28]

With the two-day Azerbaijani attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, which ended with Azerbaijan's capture of the region, Azerbaijan now seems to have set the facts for the next few years. Although Armenia asked the CSTO for assistance and Russian peacekeepers were on the ground, Russia did not intervene in light of the war in Ukraine. As a result, more than 100,000 Armenians have fled the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Initially, there were fears that Azerbaijan, in view of its rapid successes, might expand its war aims and militarily seize the previously demanded Zangezur corridor, which provides a direct link to the Nakhchivan exclave. At the end of October 2023, however, first talks between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan took place in Iran, with the participation of Russia and Turkey, which are expected to result in a freeze or formalisation of the status quo.

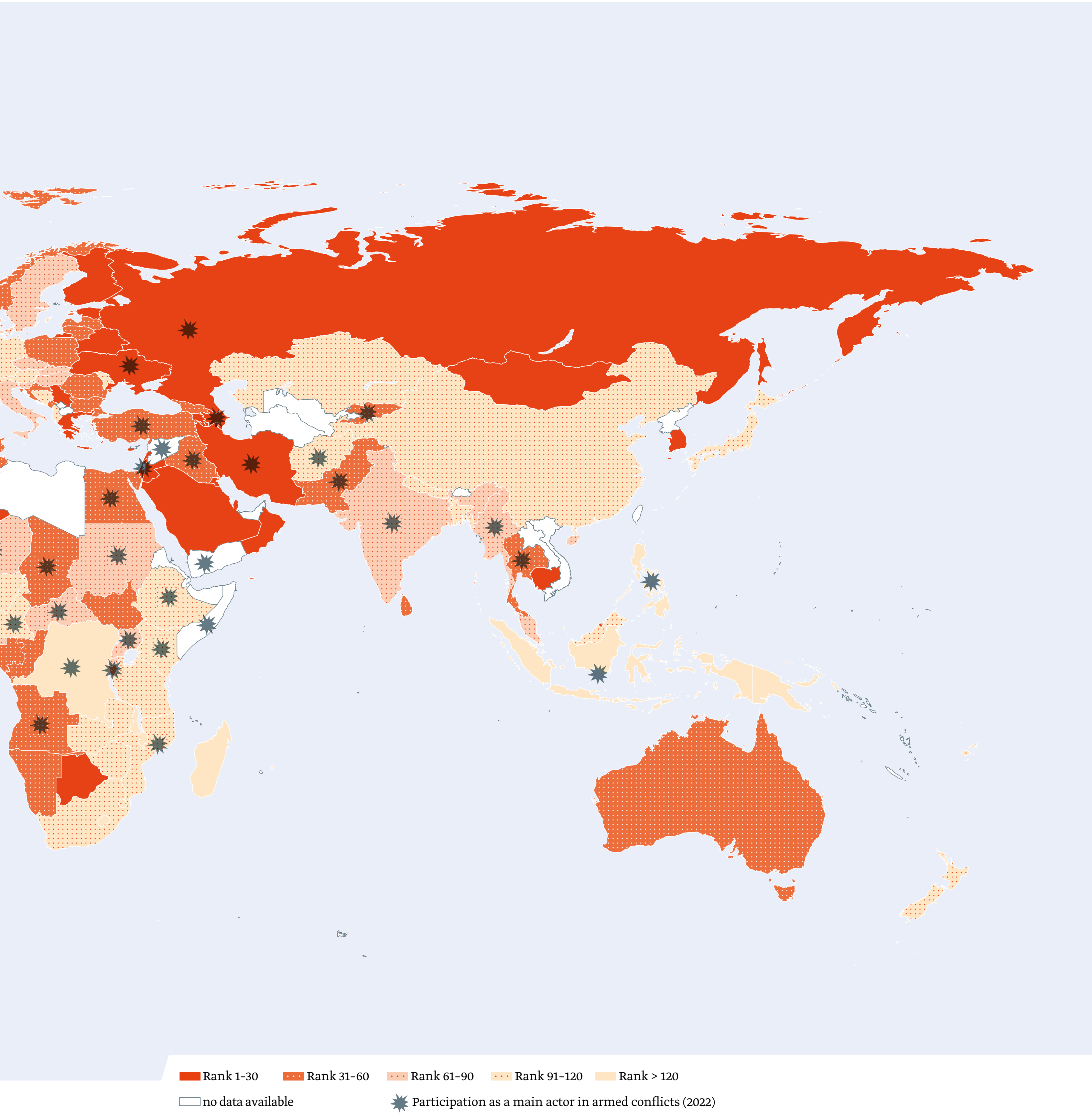
28 Atasuntsev, A. (2023). *Long-Standing Ties Between Armenia and Russia Are Fraying Fast.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessible at https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90768

The depiction and use of boundaries or frontiers and geographic names on this map do not necessarily imply official endorsement or acceptance by BICC.

Map 1
Overview GMI-ranking worldwide



Source conflict data: *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset* **Sources of administrative boundaries:** *Natural Earth Dataset*


Rank 1–30
Rank 31–60
Rank 61–90
Rank 91–120
Rank > 120
no data available
Participation as a main actor in armed conflicts (2022)

MILITARISATION INDEX RANKING 2023

	Rank	Country	Rank	Country	Rank	Country
Very strong	1	Ukraine	11	Lebanon	21	Lithuania
	2	Israel	12	Kuwait	22	Botswana
	3	Armenia	13	Oman	23	Cambodia
	4	Qatar	14	Jordan	24	Togo
	5	Bahrain	15	Korea, Republic of	25	United States of America
	6	Saudi Arabia	16	Brunei	26	Finland
	7	Greece	17	Cyprus	27	Serbia
	8	Singapore	18	Algeria	28	Iran
	9	Azerbaijan	19	Belarus	29	Estonia
	10	Russia	20	Morocco	30	Mongolia
Strong	31	Chad	41	Turkey	51	Burundi
	32	Namibia	42	Montenegro	52	France
	33	Mauritania	43	Georgia	53	Mali
	34	Myanmar	44	Pakistan	54	Kyrgyzstan
	35	Iraq	45	Tunisia	55	Chile
	36	Romania	46	Poland	56	Australia
	37	South Sudan	47	Norway	57	Switzerland
	38	Croatia	48	Sri Lanka	58	Bulgaria
	39	Egypt	49	Congo, Republic of	59	Gabon
	40	Uruguay	50	Angola	60	Guinea-Bissau
Moderate	61	Slovakia	71	Venezuela	81	Spain
	62	Sweden	72	Rwanda	82	Peru
	63	Thailand	73	Uganda	83	Senegal
	64	Latvia	74	Hungary	84	Equatorial Guinea
	65	Italy	75	Niger	85	Netherlands
	66	Colombia	76	Burkina Faso	86	El Salvador
	67	Denmark	77	Bolivia	87	Central African Republic
	68	Sudan	78	Portugal	88	Belgium
	69	Slovenia	79	India	89	Guinea
	70	United Kingdom	80	Czech Republic	90	Ecuador
Little	91	Kazakhstan	101	Mozambique	111	Afghanistan
	92	Nicaragua	102	Albania	112	Tanzania
	93	Bosnia and Herzegovina	103	China	113	Jamaica
	94	Canada	104	Fiji	114	Brazil
	95	Malaysia	105	Cameroon	115	New Zealand
	96	Moldova	106	Eswatini	116	South Africa
	97	Austria	107	Honduras	117	Japan
	98	Germany	108	Nepal	118	Bangladesh
	99	Ethiopia	109	Zimbabwe	119	Benin
	100	Luxembourg	110	Zambia	120	Tajikistan
Very little	121	Cote d'Ivoire	131	Malawi	141	Madagascar
	122	Dominican Republic	132	Argentina	142	Ireland
	123	Kenya	133	Guyana	143	Ghana
	124	Indonesia	134	Belize	144	Cape Verde
	125	Paraguay	135	Nigeria	145	Trinidad and Tobago
	126	Gambia	136	Mexico	146	Papua New Guinea
	127	Liberia	137	Sierra Leone	147	Mauritius
	128	Lesotho	138	Congo, Dem. Rep.	148	Malta
	129	Philippines	139	Timor-Leste	149	Haiti
	130	Seychelles	140	Guatemala		

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