Political Stability and the Global Militarization Index: A Comparative Analysis of Armenia and Israel, 2008–2023

Mirzoyan Armen A.
Ph.D. Student, Department of Political Science, Faculty of International Relations, Yerevan State University (Yerevan, RA)
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2396-4933
armenmirzoiian@gmail.com

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Քաղաքական կայունություն և համաշխարհային ռազմականացման ինդեքս. Հայաստանի և Իսրայելի՝ 2008-2023 թվականների համեմատական վերլուծություն

Միրզոյան Արմեն Ա.
հայցորդ, Քաղաքագիտության ամբիոն, Միջազգային հարաբերությունների ֆակուլտետ, Երևանի պետական համալսարան (Երևան, ՀՀ)

Ամփոփագիր. Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրության է ենթարկվում Հայաստանի և Իսրայելի քաղաքական կայունության և ռազմականացման փոխկապակցվածությունը՝ հիմնվելով Համաշխարհային ռազմականացման ինդեքսի 2008-2023 թվականների տվյալների վրա: Վերլուծությունը համադրում է երկու երկրների ռազմական ներուժի դինամիկան, պաշտպանական բյուջեների փոփոխությունները և դրանց ազդեցությունը երկրների ռազմականացման տեմպերի վրա: Հետազոտության ընթացքում մանրամասնորեն դիտարկվում են Հայաստանի և Իսրայելի ռազմականացման ինդեքսի տարեկան տատանումներ, ինչպես նաև այն, թե ինչպես է պաշտպանական ծախսերի աճը կամ նվազումը արտահայտվում ինդեքսի ենթակատեգորիաներում՝ զինված ուժերի անձնակազմի հարաբերակցությունից մինչև ՀՆԱ-ում ռազմական ծախսերի տեսակարար կշիռ: Անհրաժեշտ է ընդգծել նաև այն հանգամանքը, որ դիտարկվող ժամանակահատվածում Իսրայելի պաշտպանական ծախսերն ունեն առավել կայուն և կանխատեսելի կառուցվածք, մինչդեռ Հայաստանի ռազմական բյուջեն զգայուն է արտաքին ճգնաժամերի, տնտեսական հնարավորությունների և պատերազմի հետևանքների նկատմամբ:
Հանգուցաբառեր եւ բառակապակցություններ՝ քաղաքական կայունություն, ինդեքս, համաշխարհային ռազմականացման ինդեքս, SIPRI, ռազմական ծախսեր, ռազմական բյուջե

Политическая стабильность и Глобальный индекс милитаризации: сравнительный анализ Армении и Израиля за 2008–2023 годы

Мирзоян Армен А.
Соискатель, Кафедра политологии, Факультет международных отношений, Ереванский государственный университет (Ереван, РА)

Аннотация. В статье исследуется взаимосвязь между политической стабильностью и уровнем милитаризации Армении и Израиля на основе данных Глобального индекса милитаризации за 2008-2023 годы. Анализ сопоставляет динамику военного потенциала двух стран, изменения оборонных бюджетов и их влияние на темпы милитаризации. В ходе исследования детально рассматриваются ежегодные колебания индекса милитаризации Армении и Израиля, а также то, как рост или сокращение оборонных расходов отражается в его подкатегориях- от соотношения численности личного состава вооружённых сил до удельного веса военных расходов в ВВП. Следует также подчеркнуть, что в рассматриваемый период оборонные расходы Израиля характеризуются более устойчивой и предсказуемой структурой, тогда как военный бюджет Армении остаётся чувствительным к внешним кризисам, экономическим возможностям и последствиям войны.
Ключевые слова и словосочетания: политическая стабильность, индекс, глобальный индекс милитаризации, SIPRI, военные расходы, оборонный бюджет

From the perspective of examining, measuring, and assessing political stability, the study of the Global Militarization Index is of particular value. This index has been developed by the Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC). Overall, it measures the relative position of 149 countries worldwide from the standpoint of militarization. The index research is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany. It is widely used to study and compare the

military economies of different countries [**7**]. The index conducts its measurements through three main indicators [**1**, p. 4]:

- The comparison of military expenditures with its gross domestic product (GDP) and its health expenditure (as a 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.

The measurements of the Global Militarization Index are based on data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the International Monetary Fund, the World Health Organization, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and BICC. Undoubtedly, the level of militarization can influence a country's political stability in various ways. However, it is not, in itself, a direct indicator of political stability or instability. What matters most are the underlying factors driving the rise in militarization, the nature of the relationship between state institutions and the armed forces, and the broader foreign policy environment in the region. High scores in the Global Militarization Index generally indicate that a state prioritizes military-related expenditures, often due to the presence of external threats. In certain cases, the development of military potential may indeed serve as a deterrent or as a mechanism for ensuring stability by preventing external aggression. Nevertheless, in the absence of serious external threats, substantial military spending may negatively affect the state budget, as those resources could otherwise be allocated to the development of other sectors of the economy. This, in turn, may generate social tensions that fuel instability, since the essential needs of the population remain unmet, thereby eroding public trust in the incumbent authorities. Moreover, the militarization of one state within a specific region can impact the political stability of the entire region: neighbouring states may also increase their military expenditures, triggering an arms race and transforming the region into a potential zone of conflict. Finally, in some cases, high scores in the Global Militarization Index may also indicate that the armed forces exert considerable influence over governance, which can, to some extent, affect political stability. Although such contexts may exhibit a form of relative political stability, democratic institutions may become vulnerable.

The Global Militarization Index demonstrates that from 2019 onward, Armenia and Israel have consistently ranked among the most militarized countries in the world. The line graph below presents the Global Militarization Index scores of Armenia and Israel for the years 2008–2023

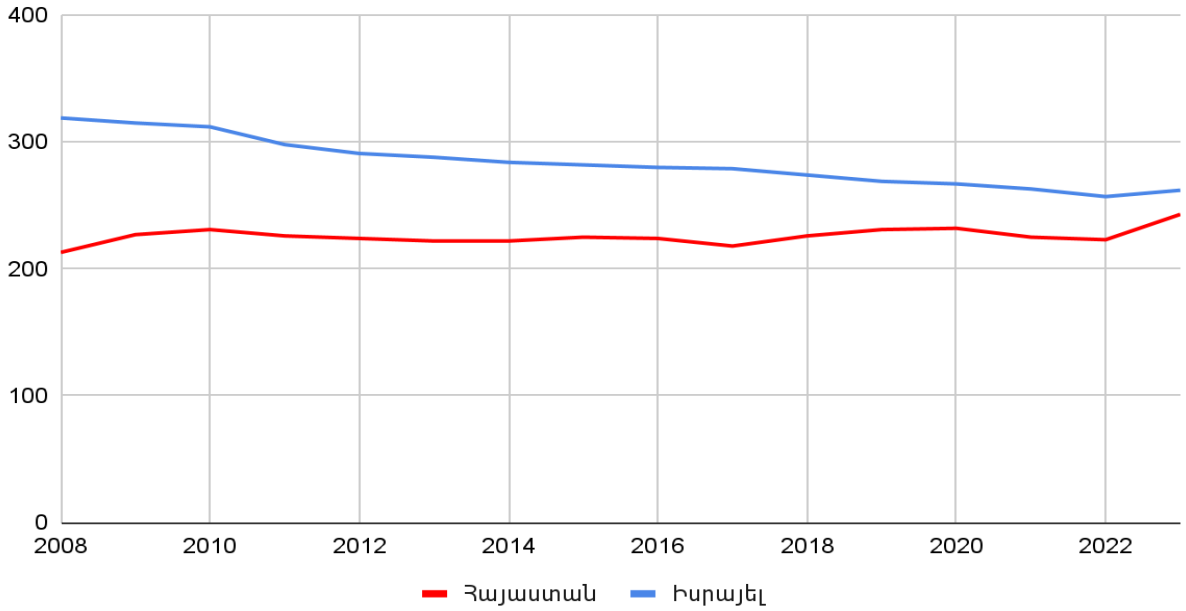

Figure 1. *Global Militarization Index Scores of Armenia and Israel (2008–2023)*

Based on the database of the Global Militarization Index, the x-axis of this line graph represents the observed years, while the y-axis shows the aggregate index score, which is derived from the evaluation of the three core indicators. From 2008 to 2021, Israel consistently ranked first among the most militarized countries, relinquishing this position only in 2022 to Ukraine. This shift was due to the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine war, which triggered a significant inflow of Western

weaponry into Ukraine, a sharp increase in military expenditures, and the mobilization of reserves. Israel's position as one of the most militarized countries in the world can be explained by the fact that this Middle Eastern state is surrounded by the Arab world and Iran, many of whose governments do not recognize Israel as a sovereign state and claim that the Jews have occupied Palestinian lands. Over the years, this indicator has shown that a high level of militarization has become a structural characteristic of Israeli society, rather than merely a temporary response to specific threats.

Unlike Israel, the Republic of Armenia gradually, but rapidly, entered the ranks of the world's most militarized countries by steadily increasing its military expenditures year by year. In 2008, Armenia ranked 12th among the most militarized countries, but from 2020 to 2022, it has consistently been among the top three. In 2023, Armenia is the fourth most militarised country in the world. The growth in Armenia's militarization between 2008 and 2023 can be objectively explained. During this period, border clashes with Azerbaijan became more frequent, often limited to localized skirmishes but occasionally escalating into large-scale combat and warfare. The most intense military engagements between Armenia and Azerbaijan during this timeframe occurred in August 2014, July 2020, November 2021, and September 2023, when the Azerbaijani offensive led to the complete depopulation of Artsakh. Additionally, significant hostilities took place in April 2016 and during September-November 2020. Nevertheless, the 44-Day war of 2020 demonstrated that a high level of militarization and increased military spending alone were still insufficient to secure a decisive advantage over the adversary on the battlefield.

According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Israel's military expenditures have generally exhibited an upward trend from 2008 to 2023. Compared to the 2008 level (USD 13.8 billion), military spending nearly doubled by 2023, reaching USD 27.5 billion. As of 2023, Israel ranks 15th in the world in terms of absolute military expenditures [**13**, p. 2]. Notably, military spending constitutes the second-largest component of Israel's state budget. In 2023, with a total budget of 484.7 billion shekels (approximately 132 billion dollars), the military share accounted for about 20.83% of the total budget. In the case of Armenia, SIPRI data indicate that the national military budget also showed a general upward trend from 2008 to 2023. Expressed in U.S. dollars, Armenia's military budget increased almost every year, except for 2011, 2016, 2020, and 2021. The line graph below presents the military expenditures of Armenia and Israel in absolute terms.

The analysis of the data reveals a significant disparity in military expenditures between the two countries, with Israel clearly holding the advantage. In Israel's case, the increase in military spending from 2008 to 2023 is largely attributable to various factors, including military operations against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, border tensions with Lebanon and Syria, efforts to contain Iran, and counterterrorism measures.

In Israel's case, military expenditures include not only the spending of defence ministries but also the defence industry complex. Israel is both a producer and exporter of armaments to many countries worldwide, and the revenues generated from this sector contribute to the development of the Israeli economy [**12**, p. 684]. Despite these resources, Israel does not bear the full financial burden of maintaining its armed forces alone. It receives substantial support from its main ally, the United States. Before October 2023, when Hamas launched an attack on Israel, the U.S. covered approximately 15% of Israel's defence budget [**10**]. From October 2023 to the end of September 2024, the U.S. allocated 22.76 billion dollars for ongoing military operations in the region, of which 17.9 billion dollars was provided as military aid to Israel, and 4.86 billion dollars was spent on U.S. military operations in the Middle East, including strikes against the Houthis [**2**, p. 1]. Beyond financial resources, the U.S. also supplies Israel with tanks and artillery equipment, mines, missiles, small arms, and non-lethal weaponry. In the case of Armenia, as of 2023, military expenditures rank third in the state budget, after social protection and general public services. According to SIPRI data, based on open sources, Armenia's military budget ranged between 350-450 million dollars from 2008 to 2017. Starting in 2018, Armenia experienced a sharp increase in its military budget compared to previous years. By 2023, the Armenian military budget grew by a record 40% compared to the previous year, exceeding 1 billion dollars and reaching 1.329 billion dollars. For comparison, in the same year, Azerbaijan's military budget amounted to 3.561 billion dollars, which is approximately 2.6 times higher than Armenia's. It is important to note that in the case of Armenia, only the expenditures of the Ministry of Defense are reported within the defense sector. In contrast, Azerbaijan presents its total defense and security expenditures, which encompass not only the budget of the Ministry of Defense, but also those of the State Border Service, the State Security Service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, and the Ministry of Defense Industry. In fact, the last time the difference was this small was in 2005.

In 2011–2012, Azerbaijan's military spending exceeded Armenia's by 8–9 times.

Nevertheless, within Israel's state apparatus, there are several ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, that consider the current pace of military spending to be detrimental to the country's economy [**5**, p. 37]. Proponents of increased defence expenditures, on the other hand, argue the opposite, citing, among other points, the declining share of military spending in GDP. The higher the proportion of military expenditures in GDP, the more a state, due to specific factors, including security considerations, prioritizes the defence sector over the socio-economic system. In Israel's case, despite the growth in absolute military spending, the share of defence expenditures in GDP has declined. In 2022, it amounted to approximately 4.5%, which is significantly higher than the 2% benchmark set by NATO for its member states. This reflects the fact that, while security remains a top priority for Israel, socio-economic sectors are also given substantial attention. In Armenia, as of 2023, military expenditures accounted for 5.5% of GDP, with the country's GDP totalling 24.09 billion dollars [**16**].

As of 2020, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) accounted for 4.24% of the country's workforce [**9**], making Israel the leader among OECD member states by this measure. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), active personnel in Israel's ground, naval, and air forces number up to 169,500, of which 126,000 serve in the ground forces, 9,500 in the navy, and 34,000 in the air force [**4**, p. 331]. Military service in Israel is mandatory for all citizens aged 18 and above. Men serve for three years, while women serve for two years [**3**]. The inclusion of both sexes in military service allows Israel to maintain a substantial reserve force of approximately 465,000 personnel [**1**, p. 7]. In contrast, exact figures for the personnel of the Armed Forces of Armenia are not readily available. However, according to IISS data, the size of Armenia's armed forces has shown a declining trend since 2008. As of 2023, the number of active service members stands at approximately 42,900 [**4**, p. 171], compared to 47,000 in 2020 (3.39% of Armenia's workforce [**8**]), and around 55,700 in 2009. The Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC) further notes that the Territorial Defence Forces (listed in the report as semi-militarized units) comprise about 4,300 personnel, with an additional reserve of approximately 210,000 [**1**, p. 13]. According to BICC, Armenia has roughly 15 military personnel per 1,000 inhabitants, which is considered a high ratio. Although both countries have a very high number of military personnel per 1,000 inhabitants, the trend in both cases is declining. It is important to note, however, that in Armenia, the reduction in armed forces personnel has coincided with a decrease in the country's overall population. In Israel, by contrast, the number of active personnel and the number of servicemen per 1,000 inhabitants have declined, while the country's population has steadily increased over the years. Nevertheless, despite Israel's population being approximately 3.5 times larger than Armenia's in 2023, the difference in the number of military personnel per 1,000 inhabitants between the two countries is not substantial.

Israel is also among the leading exporters of the global military-industrial complex. According to data for 2023, Israel ranked ninth among the world's arms-exporting states, with India, the Philippines, and the United States constituting its top three buyers. Nevertheless, in recent years the volume of Israel's major arms exports has somewhat declined. While in 2014-2018 Israel accounted for 3.1% of global arms exports, in 2019–2023 this share decreased by approximately 25%, falling to 2.4% [**14**, p. 2]. Major actors within Israel's military-industrial complex include Elbit Systems, Israel Aerospace Industries, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, and IMI Systems. These companies produce unmanned aerial vehicles (including the Harop type), the tactical missile-defense system known as the Iron Dome, Spike anti-tank missile systems, among other technologies. In contrast, Israel's arms imports have followed the opposite trend. Ranked fifteenth globally in terms of arms import volume, Israel accounted for 2% of world arms imports in 2014-2018, and 2.1% in 2019-2023, marking an increase of around 5.1%. Israel primarily imports weaponry from the United States (approximately 69% of all imports), Germany (30%), and Italy (0.9%). It should be emphasized that SIPRI derives its data from open sources, while a significant share of arms-related transactions are conducted confidentially. Therefore, these figures do not represent the full picture.

By contrast, the Republic of Armenia is predominantly an arms-importing country, with a very weakly developed domestic military-industrial sector. In March 2021, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute published the study "Arms Transfers to Conflict Zones: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh," which examined Armenia's military expenditures and its military and non-military acquisitions [**15**]. According to the study, Russia was Armenia's largest supplier between 2011 and 2020, accounting for 93.7% of the country's military procurement. Russia supplied Armenia with air defense systems (including the Smerch system), multiple-launch rocket systems, fighter aircraft, tanks, armored personnel carriers, as well as

Iskander operational-tactical missile systems [**17**, p. 9]. Jordan ranked second (5.3%) [**18**], followed by Ukraine (1%). However, in recent years, particularly after the 44-day war, this picture has changed significantly. Russia has lost its leading position, while France and India have emerged among Armenia's primary suppliers [**8**]. According to some data, India has become Armenia's main arms supplier [**6**]: 43% of weaponry imported into Armenia in 2022–2024 originated from India [**11**].

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Armenia and Israel through the Global Militarization Index demonstrates that in small and mid-sized states, political stability is profoundly shaped by the interaction of external security pressures and domestic governance dynamics. Despite their differing geopolitical environments, both countries exhibit patterns in which heightened militarization correlates with periods of political strain, revealing the extent to which security imperatives penetrate internal political processes. The findings suggest that neither Armenia nor Israel can achieve sustainable political stability without addressing the structural vulnerabilities embedded in their security environments. Consequently, future stability in both states will depend not only on internal institutional resilience but also on the capacity to recalibrate their security strategies within an increasingly volatile regional order.

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