



**Government Defence  
Integrity Index**



**2020**



Country Brief:

**CAMEROON**



# CAMEROON

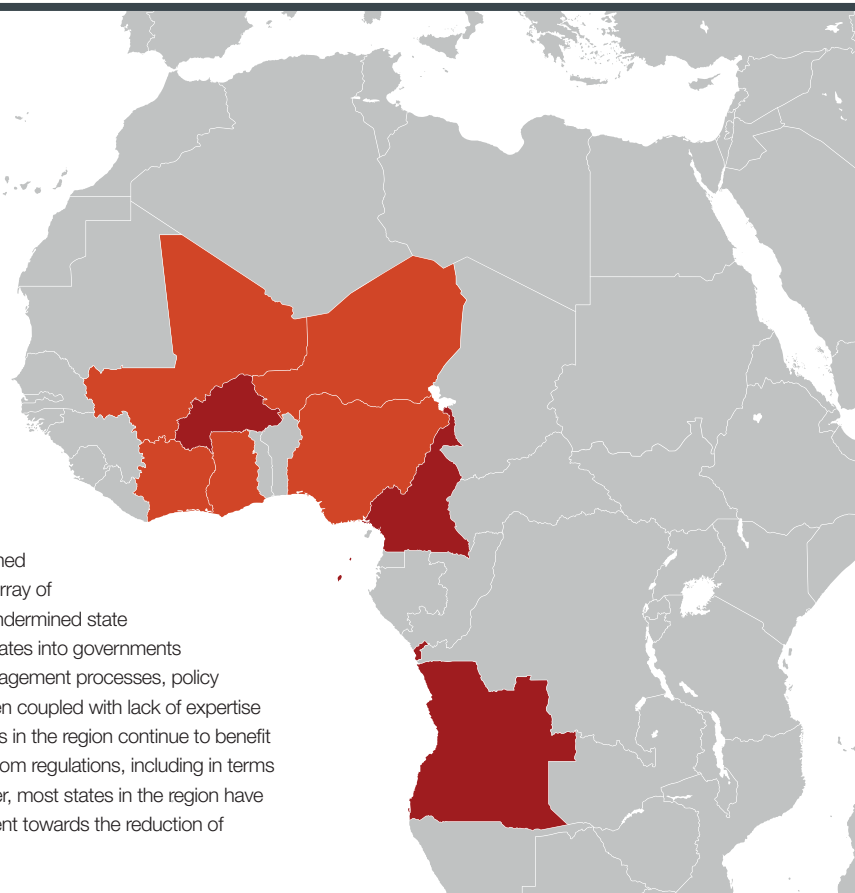
Since 1982, Cameroon's political landscape has been dominated by President Paul Biya who has overseen a decline in stateness and political participation, and a crackdown on opposition in an increasingly repressive and authoritarian state.<sup>1</sup> Security challenges have multiplied too, with Boko Haram and Islamic State gaining footholds in Cameroon's neglected North, while in the mainly English-speaking and marginalised Northwest and Southwest regions, clashes between separatists and government forces have intensified since 2016.<sup>2</sup> Biya's government has played on Western concerns over Boko Haram and Islamic State expansion, and conflated this with the legitimate grievances at the heart of the Anglophone crisis.

This has been used to leverage significant counterterrorism assistance that is financing an increasingly brutal repression of citizens.<sup>3</sup> Cameroon's militarization strategy is evident elsewhere too. The armed forces grew by 10,000 troops between 2017 and 2018,<sup>4</sup> whilst military expenditure has doubled in the last twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Procurement too has intensified leading Cameroon to sign deals with a wide array of foreign partners for hardware and investing in building up the country's military infrastructure. However, this military drive is occurring in a sector where institutional safeguards to corruption are weak or non-existent and where governance mechanisms are ineffective. Parliamentary oversight exists in name only and procurement is highly secretive, raising concerns that public funds are being diverted. Personnel management issues and deficiencies in terms of anti-corruption and military operations also underline the serious risk of abuse of power and corruption by Cameroonian forces.

Member of Open Government Partnership	No
UN Convention Against Corruption	Ratified in 2006.
Arms Trade Treaty	Ratified in 2018.

## West Africa

In recent years, corruption and weak governance have fuelled popular grievances and diminished the legitimacy of national institutions across West Africa. For some states, including Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, corruption has underpinned armed conflict and the proliferation of violent extremist groups that have gained a foothold in the region. These groups are now beginning to threaten West Africa's coastal states, who themselves are confronted with rising piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In turn, these conflicts are fuelling a rise in intercommunal violence and exacerbating tensions linked to climate change and resource scarcity. Meanwhile, trafficking and smuggling in small arms, drugs, natural resources, and human beings continue to pose a significant threats to regional stability. Poorly governed national defence forces have struggled to contend with this array of security challenges and their vulnerability to corruption has undermined state responses to insecurity. Extremely limited transparency translates into governments releasing incomplete information on budgets, personnel management processes, policy planning, and acquisitions of military assets. This, in turn, often coupled with lack of expertise and resources, undermines civilian oversight. Defence sectors in the region continue to benefit from a defence exceptionalism in which they are exempted from regulations, including in terms of procurement or freedom of information legislation. However, most states in the region have signed and/or ratified the UNCAC, showing some commitment towards the reduction of corruption risk within their borders.



<sup>1</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI Country Report – Cameroon, Gutersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Deutsche Welle, 'Cameroon's Escalating Anglophone Crisis Shows Little Sign of Abating', 24 June 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Chris W.J. Roberts & Billy Burton, 'Cameroon's Government Is Deceiving the West While Diverting Foreign Aid', *Foreign Policy*, 22 November 2020.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Group, 'Total Armed Forces Personnel – Cameroon', 2018.

<sup>5</sup> SIPRI, 'Military Expenditure by Country in constant 2018 (US\$ m), 1988-2019', SIPRI 2020.

# CAMEROON

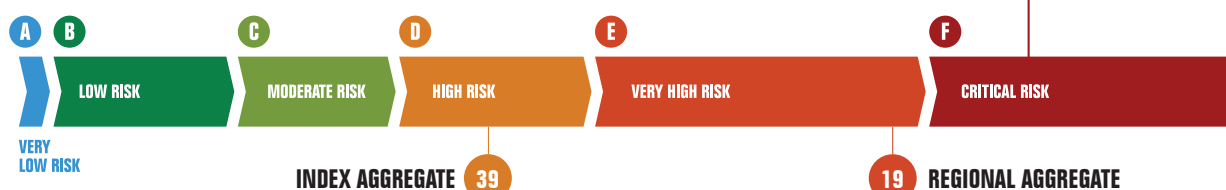
## Overall scores

The size of the colour band corresponds to number of countries that fall into that category.

## CAMEROON SCORE CRITICAL RISK

F

13



A > 83-100 VERY LOW

B > 67-82 LOW

C > 50-66 MODERATE

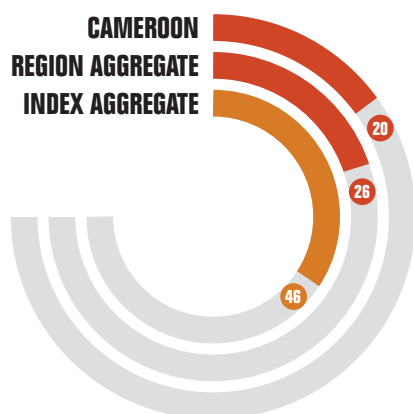
D > 33-49 HIGH

E > 17-32 VERY HIGH

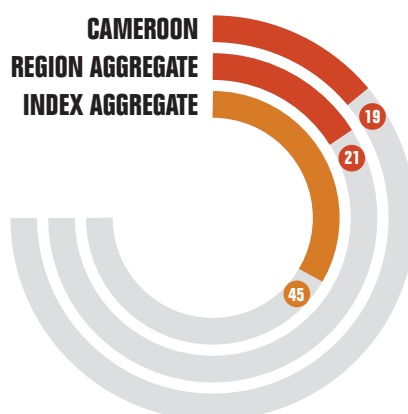
F > 0-16 CRITICAL

## Risk Comparison

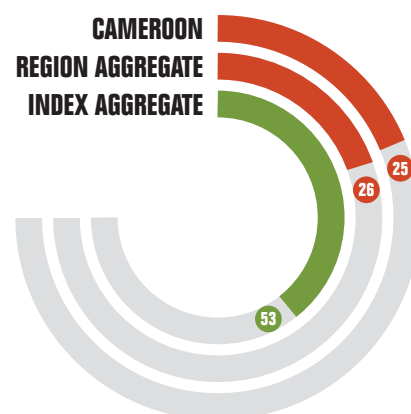
### POLITICAL



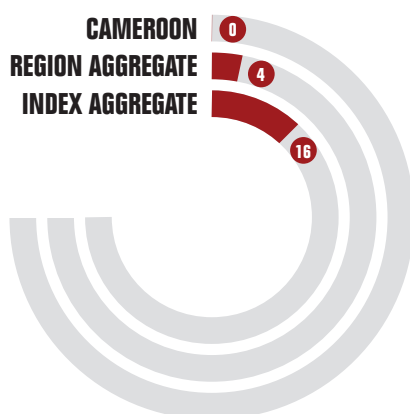
### FINANCIAL



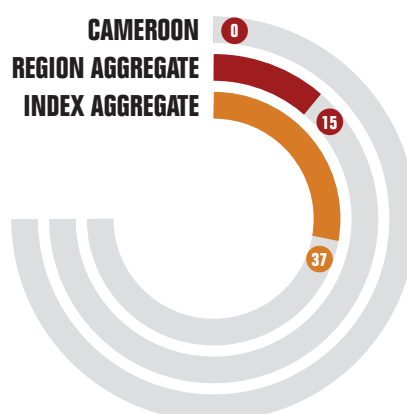
### PERSONNEL



### OPERATIONAL



### PROCUREMENT





# CAMEROON

## Parliamentary Oversight

Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2019)	33/100
Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2020)	5.8%
Committee members with defence expertise (%)	Data is not publicly available.
# of meetings/year	Data is not publicly available.
Last review of defence policy/strategy	Strategy is not publicly available.

Cameroon's system of government is highly centralised. President Biya holds a monopoly on power and has cultivated extensive patronage networks in politics and the military, enabling him to exert power informally as much as through formal structures.<sup>6</sup> Biya's party, the CPDM, has a stranglehold over the National Assembly and Senate, where it controls 82% and 88% of the seats respectively, reducing them to arenas where government decisions are approved with little debate.<sup>7</sup> As such, parliamentary oversight of the executive and defence is virtually non-existent. Aside from the lack of incentives to scrutinise the executive, Article 35 of the Constitution exempts loosely defined defence and national security matters from parliamentary scrutiny,<sup>8</sup> allowing the President to govern through decrees. Nevertheless, there are two designated bodies, a defence and security committee in the senate and a parliamentary defence committee, that are charged with overseeing defence activities. However, the senate committee has not held a meeting since 2018, while the parliamentary committee rarely ever meets. Neither committee has any power over policy, procurement or administration, and their role is largely advisory. Reflecting the CPDM's dominance of the legislature, both committees are composed exclusively of party members rendering any enquiries they do conduct extremely partisan. The committees do not publish any reports, nor do they submit budget amendments, and they only meet when summoned by the President. There is no evidence of either committee conducting hearings, investigations or summoning any witnesses to testify, nor is there any evidence of them formulating recommendations. The complete absence of any internal or external audit functions for defence are further impediments to oversight. For instance, there is no evidence of any functioning internal audit within the Ministry of Defence. The State Supreme Audit body is mandated to carry out audits of ministries, with the exception of the Ministry of Defence, which is not compelled to share information with any actor other than the executive. Notwithstanding, the State audit body's head is appointed by the President, severely undermining the body's independence and the quality of its scrutiny.<sup>9</sup>

## Financial Transparency

Defence-related access to information response rates	(1) % granted full or partial access: Data is not publicly available. (2) # subject to backlog: Data is not publicly available.
Defence-related complaints to ombudsman/commissioner #	Data is not publicly available.
Does the commissioner have authority over the MoD?	Data is not publicly available.
Audit reports on defence (2015-2020) #	None.
Open Budget Index (IBP, 2019)	28/100
World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2021)	135th out of 180.

Government transparency is extremely poor in Cameroon, with many decisions made by presidential decree with little public consultation.<sup>10</sup> Initiatives to increase transparency, such as an e-government project in 2006, have not resulted in a noticeable improvement in the information being shared by the authorities.<sup>11</sup> The defence sector is particularly opaque, especially in terms of financial information. The published defence budget provides only highly aggregated figures and does not include a breakdown by functions, instead making reference to only top-line figures. Information on most areas of the budget is completely unavailable, with the budget split into four vague sections, including "Governance and Institutional Support" and "Participating in National Development Activities."<sup>12</sup> The impact of poor budget transparency on the availability of defence information is amplified by the absence of an access to information framework. Cameroon has no legislation providing for the public's right to access government information and journalists are regularly arrested and prosecuted for their work.<sup>13</sup> Without an access to information law, the public's ability to access defence information is seriously undermined, making it nearly impossible to obtain even the most basic information. A further obstacle to financial transparency is the prevalence of off-budget defence income. Cameroon receives significant security income from bilateral agreements with France, China, Turkey and the US amongst others, but publishes no reliable information related to this assistance. It is also not subject to any form of public or institutional scrutiny. On top of this, the government publishes no information on income derived from equipment sales and property disposal. As a result, official figures in the defence budget are likely just a fraction of the resources dedicated to defence, significantly increasing the risk of corruption.

<sup>6</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Cameroon*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Cameroon*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Republic of Cameroon, 'Law No 96-06', *Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon*, 18 January 1996, Article 35.

<sup>9</sup> International Budget Partnership, 'Cameroon', 29 January 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Cameroon*, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Freedom House, 'Cameroon', 2020, C3.

<sup>12</sup> Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, 'Law No.2017/021 of 20 December 2017 relating to the Finance Law of the Republic of Cameroon for the 2018 Financial Year' *2018 Budget Law*, Part II, 20 December 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Freedom House, 'Cameroon', D1.



# CAMEROON

## Personnel Ethics Framework

Whistleblowing legislation	None.
# defence-sector whistleblower cases	None.
# Code of conduct violations	<b>Military: Data is not publicly available.</b>
	<b>Civilian: Data is not publicly available.</b>
Financial disclosure system	# submitted: None.
	# of violations: None.

Heavy-handed military operations in the Anglophone regions have resulted in stark reports of crimes against humanity and human rights abuses committed by Cameroon's security forces.<sup>14</sup> Impunity is a serious issue within the Armed Forces and the military's ethics frameworks are inadequate tools to stop abuses and corruption-related offences. Though military and civilian personnel are subject to codes of conduct, neither makes any reference to bribery, gifts or conflicts of interest, rendering them extremely weak tools with which to counter corruption. The military code is also a state secret and its enforcement is hard to gauge. Some personnel have been sanctioned for breaches and committing abuses, but these issues are usually dealt with internally and prosecutions are exceedingly rare, partly due to a corrupt and ineffective judiciary.<sup>15</sup> Mechanisms for military personnel to report corruption and wrongdoing are also wholly ineffective. Cameroon, for instance, has no legal framework around whistleblowing. CONAC, the government's corruption reporting system, has a hotline to report abuses, however the government itself has never actively encouraged its use. Furthermore, CONAC is directly answerable to the President, significantly undermining its independence. As a result, there is very little trust in reporting channels, leaving potential abuses un-reported. Integrity is further undermined during recruitment processes. There is no well-established process for recruiting military personnel, with no clear and objective criteria provided for different posts. This is particularly striking at middle and top management levels where appointments are based solely on Presidential discretion, making political allegiance the main criteria for promotion. There is no external scrutiny or vetting of such appointments and no information is communicated about the process.

## Operations

Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2018)	34,400
Troops deployed on operations #	750 in Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

Cameroonian troops are deployed on multiple fronts at home, engaging in operations against separatist movements in the Anglophone regions and against extremists groups in the north, in addition to a 750-strong contingent of peacekeepers with MINUSCA in Central African Republic.<sup>16</sup> As such, their operational readiness and preparation are coming under increasing scrutiny. However, an assessment of corruption risk in the framework for military operations reveals some critical vulnerabilities. Cameroon's secretive military doctrine has not been reviewed fully since 1979 and makes no mention of corruption as a strategic issue on operations.<sup>17</sup> There is also no evidence of corruption being considered in the forward planning of operations, nor of any related risk assessments being carried out. This lack of emphasis also extends to training, where there are no known examples of corruption-related courses for commanders or personnel. The exception to this is the general ethics course at the International School for Security Forces, however the school is highly exclusive, and admissions are restricted to only the most well-connected and wealthy officers. There is also no evidence of guidelines or mitigation strategies being in place that detail how to identify and address corruption issues during deployments.

<sup>14</sup> Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa & Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, *Cameroon's Unfolding Catastrophe: Evidence of Human Rights Violations and Crimes Against Humanity in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon*, Montreal, 3 June 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Cameroon*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, 'Troop and Police Contributions – Cameroon', 31 December 2020.

<sup>17</sup> At the time of writing, revisions to the 1979 doctrine are underway but have not been approved.





# CAMEROON

## Defence Procurement

Military expenditure (US\$ mil) (SIPRI, 2020)	376
Open competition in defence procurement (%)	Data is not publicly available.
Main defence exports – to (SIPRI, 2016-20)	N/A
Main defence imports – from (SIPRI, 2016-20)	Russia, France, United States, Slovakia, Serbia

Despite the escalating threat posed by Boko Haram and Islamic State in the north, Cameroon's recent large-scale investment in military hardware has been focussed on operations in the Anglophone regions, sourcing equipment from suppliers as varied as the United States, the UAE, China and South Africa.<sup>18</sup> This investment has turned Cameroon into the sixth largest importer of heavy weapons in Africa.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, these acquisitions have largely been carried out on an ad-hoc basis, without any oversight or proper management due to the weakness of governance mechanisms in the defence procurement process. Cameroon does not have a clear and publicly available acquisition planning process for defence. There is no evidence that requirements and actual purchases are derived from an overarching defence strategy, as the strategy itself is so secretive it is only known by top military and government officials. The result is that defence procurement is conducted reactively and largely off-the-cuff at

the whim of emerging and evolving threats, raising significant corruption risks and undermining due process. Serious issues also exist in relation to procurement oversight which is virtually non-existent. The 2018 Public Procurement Code excludes all procurement relating to defence and security and there is no evidence of any separate legislation applying to acquisitions.<sup>20</sup> The complete absence of a legal framework means that there are no provisions for any oversight of these procedures. The entirety of defence procurement is classed as "special contracts" and not subjected to any of the scrutiny or regulations that standard government expenditure is subject to.<sup>21</sup> Neither parliament, nor the Supreme Audit institution have a mandate to review defence procurement. As a result, very little information is released about these procedures, as the Ministry of Defence rarely releases any information, and the only news comes from suppliers and snippets in the media.

<sup>18</sup> Roberts & Burton, 'Cameroon's Government is Deceiving the West'.

<sup>19</sup> APA News, 'Cameroon is Africa's 6th largest heavy weapons importer – report', 4 March 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Republic of Cameroon, 'Decree No. 2018/366 of 20 June 2018 on Public Procurement', Article 71, 20 June 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Republic of Cameroon, 'Decree No. 2018/366', Article 71.

Version 1.0, October 2021

GDI data collection for **Cameroon** was conducted February 2018 to March 2019. The narrative discussion in this GDI brief was produced at a later time with the most recent information available for the country, which may not be reflected in the GDI country assessments or scores.

# CAMEROON

## 2020 GDI Scorecard

		Grade	Score
<b>Political Risk</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>20</b>
Q1	Legislative Scrutiny	D	42
Q2	Defence Committee	F	13
Q3	Defence Policy Debate	F	0
Q4	CSO Engagement	E	17
Q5	Conventions: UNCAC / OECD	C	63
Q6	Public Debate	E	25
Q7	Anticorruption Policy	C	63
Q8	Compliance and Ethics Units	D	33
Q9	Public Trust in Institutions	NS	
Q10	Risk Assessments	F	0
Q11	Acquisition Planning	F	0
Q12	Budget Transparency & Detail	B	75
Q13	Budget Scrutiny	F	0
Q14	Budget Availability	F	8
Q15	Defence Income	F	0
Q16	Internal Audit	F	0
Q17	External Audit	F	0
Q18	Natural Resources	F	15
Q19	Organised Crime Links	E	25
Q20	Organised Crime Policing	D	33
Q21	Intelligence Services Oversight	F	0
Q22	Intelligence Services Recruitment	F	0
Q23	Export Controls (ATT)	C	50
Q76	Lobbying	F	0
<b>Financial Risk</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>19</b>
Q24	Asset Disposal Controls	F	0
Q25	Asset Disposal Scrutiny	F	0
Q26	Secret Spending	F	0
Q27	Legislative Access to Information	F	0
Q28	Secret Program Auditing	F	0
Q29	Off-budget Spending	E	17
Q30	Access to Information	F	0
Q31	Beneficial Ownership	F	0
Q32	Military-Owned Business Scrutiny	A	100
Q33	Unauthorised Private Enterprise	D	38
Q77	Defence Spending	C	50
<b>Personnel Risk</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>25</b>
Q34	Public Commitment to Integrity	F	8
Q35	Disciplinary Measures for Personnel	C	50
Q36	Whistleblowing	F	8
Q37	High-risk Positions	F	0
Q38	Numbers of Personnel	F	0
Q39	Pay Rates and Allowances	F	13
Q40	Payment System	E	25
Q41	Objective Appointments	F	0
Q42	Objective Promotions	E	31
Q43	Bribery to Avoid Conscription	NA	
Q44	Bribery for Preferred Postings	A	83
Q45	Chains of Command and Payment	C	50
Q46	Military Code of Conduct	E	19

## OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE

**CRITICAL RISK**



### RISK GRADE

**A • 83-100 VERY LOW**  
**B • 67-82 LOW**  
**C • 50-66 MODERATE**  
**D • 33-49 HIGH**  
**E • 17-32 VERY HIGH**  
**F • 0-16 CRITICAL**



		Grade	Score
<b>Personnel Risk</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>25</b>
Q47	Civilian Code of Conduct	D	38
Q48	Anticorruption Training	E	17
Q49	Corruption Prosecutions	E	25
Q50	Facilitation Payments	D	33
<b>Operational Risk</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>0</b>
Q51	Military Doctrine	F	0
Q52	Operational Training	F	0
Q53	Forward Planning	F	0
Q54	Corruption Monitoring in Operations	F	0
Q55	Controls in Contracting	F	0
Q56	Private Military Contractors	NS	
<b>Procurement Risk</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>0</b>
Q57	Procurement Legislation	F	0
Q58	Procurement Cycle	F	0
Q59	Procurement Oversight Mechanisms	F	0
Q60	Potential Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q61	Actual Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q62	Business Compliance Standards	F	0
Q63	Procurement Requirements	F	0
Q64	Competition in Procurement	F	0
Q65	Tender Board Controls	F	0
Q66	Anti-Collusion Controls	F	0
Q67	Contract Award / Delivery	F	0
Q68	Complaint Mechanisms	F	0
Q69	Supplier Sanctions	F	0
Q70	Offset Contracts	F	0
Q71	Offset Contract Monitoring	F	0
Q72	Offset Competition	F	0
Q73	Agents and Intermediaries	F	0
Q74	Financing Packages	F	0
Q75	Political Pressure in Acquisitions	NS	

### KEY

**NEI** Not enough information to score indicator  
**NS** Indicator is not scored for any country  
**NA** Not applicable



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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their generous financial support of the production of the Government Defence Integrity Index. Thanks are also extended to the many country assessors and peer reviewers who contributed the underlying data for this index.

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