Kosovo is becoming an increasingly prominent security player in the Western Balkans. The approval in 2018 of legislation that paved the way for the transformation of Kosovo’s Security Forces into a national army sent shock waves through the region, with Serbia accusing Pristina of “beating war drums”. Whilst Serbian threats of occupation have failed to materialise, the move was momentous in a region that is witnessing spiralling militarisation and renewed great power competition. With Kosovo stating its ambition to become a NATO member once its national army is operational and with the Ministry of Defence’s (MoD) budget increasing by six million euros in 2019, this is a critical juncture for Kosovo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member of Open Government Partnership</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN Convention Against Corruption</td>
<td>Has not signed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms Trade Treaty</td>
<td>Has not signed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Central and Eastern European states become increasingly integrated with the EU and NATO through membership and partnerships, they are poised to play a key role in the continent’s future, and in particular its security and defence decisions. Nevertheless, a combination of acute threat perceptions, rising defence budgets, and challenges to democratic institutions make states in Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus particularly vulnerable to setbacks in defence governance, which could threaten the progress made over the past decades. Already, authoritarian governments, particularly in the Western Balkans and Central Europe, have overseen significant democratic backsliding that has undermined the quality of defence governance and heightened corruption risk in the sector. Continuing and frozen conflicts in Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan, combined with Russian attempts to exert influence over the region through electoral interference, disinformation and corruption, contribute to a delicate security situation in a strategically critical region. This will test the quality of defence governance across the region, which though fairly robust, has persistent gaps and deficiencies that need addressing. Weak parliamentary oversight and increasing alignment between the executive and legislature is undermining the quality of external scrutiny, while procurement continues to be shrouded in secrecy and exempted from standard contracting and reporting procedures. Equally, access to information and whistleblower protection systems are increasingly coming under threat and anti-corruption remains poorly integrated into military operations.

2 Andrew Rettman, ‘Serbia Threatens to Invade Kosovo, Stirring Bad Memories’, EU Observer, 6 December 2018.
3 Sasa Kulenovic, ‘Western Balkans and the Return to Arms: Can the EU Stabilize the Region?’, Vocal Europe, Policy Paper, 3 October 2019.
4 Vukasin Zivkovic, ‘NATO Perspective of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina’, European Western Balkans, 8 February 2019.
Overall scores
The size of the colour band corresponds to number of countries that fall into that category.

KOSOVO SCORE
HIGH RISK
D
42

Risk Comparison

KOSOVO
REGION AGGREGATE
INDEX AGGREGATE

POLITICAL

FINANCIAL

PERSONNEL

OPERATIONAL

PROCUREMENT
Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2019)  
Military expenditure as share of government spending (SIPRI, 2020)  
Committee members with defence expertise %  
# of meetings/year  
Last review/update of defence policy

Kosovo has an uneven record regarding government transparency and access to information. Although it ranks second highest in the Western Balkans for requests for information that are submitted and answered positively, with 56%, the figure remains low internationally. Kosovo's Law on Public Access to Information dates back to 2010 and its implementation in the defence sector remains incomplete. Generally speaking, delays in providing information are frequent and the information released can be superficial or redacted arbitrarily. There is a process of appeals and an Ombudsman who can commend institutions to grant access after a rejection, although a BIRN investigation has revealed that only 45% of such requests resulted in access to the requested documents. However, it should be noted that, with regards to defence, all requests to access information were responded and no cases have been sent to the ombudsman. Nevertheless, some progress has been made in relation to budget transparency. The defence budget includes a breakdown of different lines of expenditure, including related to capital expenditures, such as construction, procurement and acquisitions. This is complemented by an online procurement-planning portal (e-prokurimi) where contracting authorities are obliged to publish details for non-classified contracts related to goods, services and utilities. However, significant portions of budget expenditure, especially related to capital expenditures, are considered classified, exempting these contracts from publication on the portal and restricting oversight.

Parliamentary Oversight

Lengthy political deadlock after elections in both 2017 and 2019 have severely affected the National Assembly’s legislative and oversight activities. Kosovo’s highly polarised political context in which Assembly members are frequently absent, sometimes due to boycotts, has resulted in regular failure to achieve a quorum, leading to delays in legislating and exercising oversight. As the European Commission has regularly highlighted, oversight of Kosovo’s Security Force (KSF) continues to be insufficient. Though new legislation enhancing the procedures for democratic control of the KSF came into force in 2019, as things stand, Kosovo’s existing parliamentary oversight mechanisms are weak. The recently renamed Committee on Security and Defence Issues, replacing the Committee on Internal Affairs, Security and Oversight, is responsible for scrutinising defence policy.

However, it is expected to oversee the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the KSF, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Police Inspectorate, an unreasonably broad scope, especially given the committee’s lack of resources and expertise. Moreover, revelations of close political ties between committee members and the leadership of the KSF raises questions over the committee’s impartiality. In the past three years, the committee has failed to launch a single investigation in the sector and has merely reviewed draft laws. There is also no evidence of the committee reviewing internal audit reports, despite the MoD’s internal audit unit conducting roughly eight audits per year. Nevertheless, in 2021, the committee did review the MoD’s annual performance report, which was presented to it by the Ministry.

Finally, with regards to external auditing functions, it should be noted that external audit reports are not submitted to the defence committee and are instead reviewed by the Committee for the Supervision of Public Finance. The National Audit Office, which conducts external scrutiny of defence spending, is relatively active in auditing the sector. Nevertheless, its ability to have its recommendations implemented is limited.

Financial Transparency

Kosovo has an uneven record regarding government transparency and access to information. Although it ranks second highest in the Western Balkans for requests for information that are submitted and answered positively, with 56%, the figure remains low internationally. Kosovo’s Law on Public Access to Information dates back to 2010 and was complemented by a new Law on Access to Public Documents in 2019. It is widely held to be one of the best legislative frameworks in the region, however, information classification criteria are fairly broad and its implementation in the defence sector remains incomplete. Generally speaking, delays in providing information are frequent and the information released can be superficial or redacted arbitrarily. There is a process of appeals and an Ombudsman who can commend institutions to grant access after a rejection, although a BIRN investigation has revealed that only 45% of such requests resulted in access to the requested documents. However, it should be noted that, with regards to defence, all requests to access information were responded and no cases have been sent to the ombudsman. Nevertheless, some progress has been made in relation to budget transparency. The defence budget includes a breakdown of different lines of expenditure, including related to capital expenditures, such as construction, procurement and acquisitions. This is complemented by an online procurement-planning portal (e-prokurimi) where contracting authorities are obliged to publish details for non-classified contracts related to goods, services and utilities. However, significant portions of budget expenditure, especially related to capital expenditures, are considered classified, exempting these contracts from publication on the portal and restricting oversight.

12 National Assembly, ‘Committee on Security and Defence Affairs’.
16 The Committee for the Supervision of Public Finance’s last defence review was on 12 June 2020.
24 In 2020 there were 11 RAI on non-classified information, 0 delays, 0 rejections, according to the response received by MoD to the K20TN request for access to public documents dated 26th of September 2021.
In late 2018, the newly formed Kosovan Army adopted the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers that also covers public bodies, including defence and military institutions. Kosovo’s legislation is widely considered one of the most complete and best in Europe, however, in practice its prioritisation and implementation remain an issue. There is a lack of awareness in the sector as to the mechanisms through which claims can be made. There also significant concerns as to how effectively the law will be enforced and the degree to which protection is guaranteed for those reporting wrongdoing, particularly in a field as sensitive as defence. Elsewhere, anti-corruption provisions are only loosely referenced in codes of conduct. The Code of Ethics for the Kosovo Security Force makes reference to integrity-building measures and conflicts of interest. However, it does not provide clear guidance on how personnel should address these issues, and there is no publicly available evidence that such a code exists for civilian personnel. Similarly, aside from a commitment in the 2019-2022 Integrity Plan for the Ministry of Defence, there is no evidence that regular anti-corruption training occurs for personnel in the sector. While the commitment in the Integrity Plan is positive, evidence of implementation is needed for it to be considered effective.

Kosovo currently does not participate in any international military operations, as the Kosovo Security Force is primarily a civil defence group. However, with its gradual transformation into fully-fledged armed forces and the country’s aim to become a NATO member state once this process is finished, the prospect of Kosovar troops deploying abroad in the near future is increasing. Without a sustained emphasis on improving awareness of corruption risk in operations, Kosovar troops will be poorly prepared to counter corrupt practices that may jeopardise their mission. Kosovo currently does not have a defence strategy, and none of its existing strategic documents, including the Ministry of Defence’s Integrity Plan 2019-2022, recognise corruption as a strategic issue for the success of operations. This is partly because the KSF do not participate in operations. However, an international operational force without anti-corruption guidelines for operations or institutionalised training on corruption risks, jeopardises the success of its missions. It should be noted though that KSF personnel do receive some training on corruption issues, although this is delivered by bilateral partners such as the UK, Norway and NATO and have yet to be fully integrated into the Kosovan armed forces own training package.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel Ethics Framework</th>
<th>Operations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whistleblowing legislation</td>
<td>Law on Protection of Whistleblowers (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># defence-sector whistleblower cases</td>
<td>Data is not publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Code of conduct violations</td>
<td>Military: Data is not publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilian: Data is not publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial disclosure system</td>
<td># submitted: Data is not publicly available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of violations: Data is not publicly available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2018) | N/A |
| Troops deployed on operations # | N/A |

In late 2018, the newly formed Kosovan Army adopted the Law on Protection of Whistleblowers that also covers public bodies, including defence and military institutions. Kosovo’s legislation is widely considered one of the most complete and best in Europe, however, in practice its prioritisation and implementation remain an issue. There is a lack of awareness in the sector as to the mechanisms through which claims can be made. There also significant concerns as to how effectively the law will be enforced and the degree to which protection is guaranteed for those reporting wrongdoing, particularly in a field as sensitive as defence. Elsewhere, anti-corruption provisions are only loosely referenced in codes of conduct. The Code of Ethics for the Kosovo Security Force makes reference to integrity-building measures and conflicts of interest. However, it does not provide clear guidance on how personnel should address these issues, and there is no publicly available evidence that such a code exists for civilian personnel. Similarly, aside from a commitment in the 2019-2022 Integrity Plan for the Ministry of Defence, there is no evidence that regular anti-corruption training occurs for personnel in the sector. While the commitment in the Integrity Plan is positive, evidence of implementation is needed for it to be considered effective.

27 Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, ‘Law No. 06/L-085 On Protection of Whistleblowers’.  
31 Živković, ‘NATO Perspective of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.’  
### Defence Procurement

| Military expenditure (US$ mil) (SIPRI, 2020) | 77 |
| Open competition in defence procurement (%) | 78.5% (non-classified open procedures); 9.2% (non-classified restricted); 12% (classified) |
| Main defence exports (to) | N/A |
| Main defence imports (from) | N/A |

Military expenditure represents a relatively small percentage of Kosovo’s GDP, but is increasing as plans for the new national army take shape. This will inevitably mean a sharp rise in defence procurement requirements and initiatives to equip and professionalise the new force. However, public procurement in Kosovo remains vulnerable to corruption, with poorly resourced oversight institutions and insufficient monitoring of contracts. These issues are also evident in the defence sector, which suffers from high levels of opacity and financial secrecy in procurement procedures. The Ministry of Defence and Kosovo Security Force (KSF) do not publish public procurement plans, making it difficult to determine how decisions and requirements are established. The KSF’s Comprehensive Transition Plan (2019-2027) outlines its acquisition plan, yet the document is published in a summarised form and excludes most details and justifications. Secrecy in the acquisition planning process and in the elaboration of procurement requirements is further compounded by weak oversight of the procedures themselves. Kosovo’s legal framework has yet to be aligned with the EU’s Defence Procurement Directive, although specific regulations were introduced in 2019 to properly manage defence and security procurement, including those subject to classification. Oversight institutions also suffer from poor capacity. The Procurement Review Body is responsible for implementing procurement review procedures and is authorised to review and disqualify operators from participation upon written request of a contracting authority. However, it is chronically understaffed and two of its five board members are currently suspended due to their indictment in a corruption case.

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KOSOVO 2020 GDI Scorecard

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE
HIGH RISK

Political Risk
- Legislative Scrutiny: D 49
- Defence Committee: E 17
- Defence Policy Debate: F 8
- CSO Engagement: D 42
- Conventions: UNCAC / OECD: F 0
- Public Debate: C 50
- Anticorruption Policy: A 88
- Compliance and Ethics Units: B 75
- Risk Assessments: A 83
- Acquisition Planning: D 33
- Budget Scrutiny: E 25
- Budget Availability: C 58
- Defence Income: B 67
- External Audit: B 69
- Natural Resources: B 67
- Organised Crime Links: B 75
- Organised Crime Policing: B 67
- Intelligence Services Oversight: A 88
- Intelligence Services Recruitment: C 50
- Export Controls (ATT): F 0
- Lobbying: F 0

Financial Risk
- Asset Disposal Controls: E 25
- Asset Disposal Scrutiny: B 67
- Secret Spending: F 0
- Legislative Access to Information: E 25
- Secret Program Auditing: F 0
- Off-budget Spending: B 75
- Access to Information: D 38
- Beneficial Ownership: A 100
- Military-Owned Business Scrutiny: A 100
- Unauthorised Private Enterprise: C 50
- Defence Spending: C 56

Personnel Risk
- Public Commitment to Integrity: E 25
- Disciplinary Measures for Personnel: C 50
- Whistleblowing: C 50
- High-risk Positions: B 67
- Pay Rates and Allowances: E 25
- Payment System: A 83
- Objective Appointments: C 50
- Objective Promotions: B 81
- Bribery to Avoid Conscription: NA
- Bribery for Preferred Postings: B 67
- Chains of Command and Payment: A 100
- Military Code of Conduct: C 58

Operational Risk
- Military Doctrine: F 0
- Operational Training: B 75
- Forward Planning: F 0
- Corruption Monitoring in Operations: NEI
- Controls in Contracting: F 0
- Private Military Contractors: NS

Procurement Risk
- Procurement Legislation: D 38
- Procurement Cycle: D 33
- Procurement Oversight Mechanisms: C 50
- Potential Purchases Disclosed: E 25
- Actual Purchases Disclosed: E 25
- Business Compliance Standards: D 38
- Procurement Requirements: D 33
- Competition in Procurement: C 50
- Tender Board Controls: B 75
- Anti-Collusion Controls: D 44
- Contract Award / Delivery: D 38
- Complaint Mechanisms: A 83
- Supplier Sanctions: B 67
- Offset Contracts: F 0
- Offset Contract Monitoring: F 0
- Offset Competition: F 0
- Agents and Intermediaries: C 50
- Financing Packages: E 25
- Political Pressure in Acquisitions: NS

Risk Grade
- Grade: D 42
- Score: 42

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

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE
HIGH RISK

Grade: D
Score: 42

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
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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