



**Government Defence
Integrity Index**



2020

Country Brief:

MALI

MALI

Once a democratic standard bearer in West Africa, Mali has suffered a dramatic decline in peace and stability in recent years. Political instability as a result of two military coups since August 2020, the first overthrowing the government of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) and the second in May 2021 side-lining the President and Prime Minister of the Transitional Government, have compounded intractable security and development issues that have plagued Mali for over a decade.¹ Since 2012, an initial armed rebellion in the north has mutated into violent inter-communal clashes in the centre, which has become a hotbed for extremist groups.

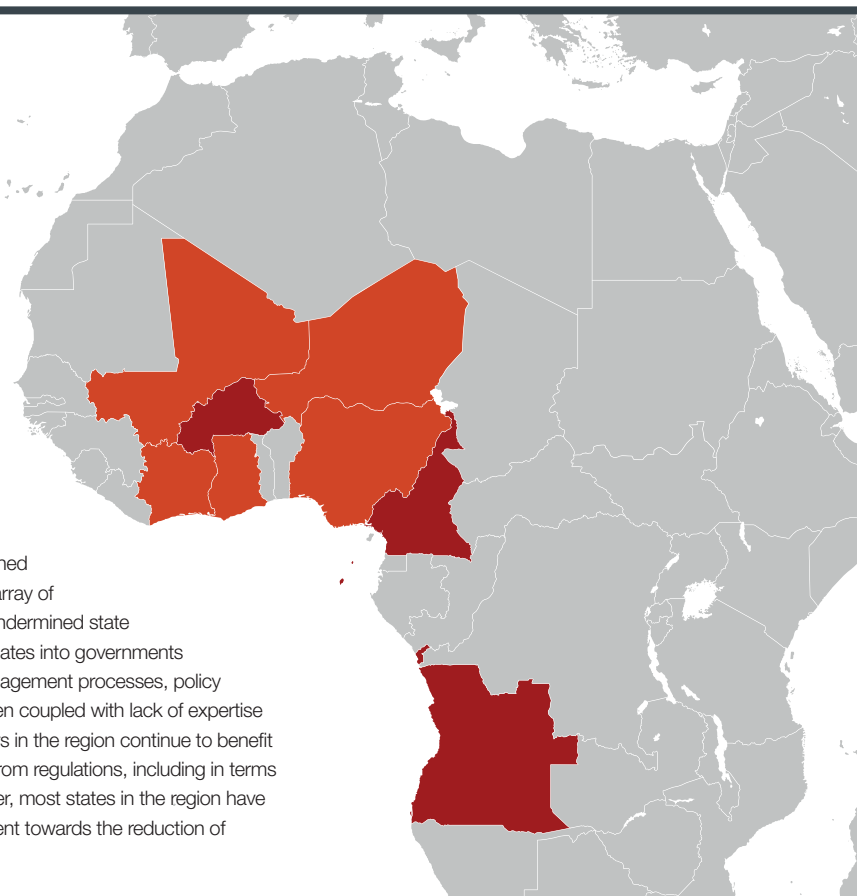
Mali has become a priority for international actors and hosts a United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, alongside European Union (EU) training missions and various international security initiatives.² Extremist armed groups have capitalised on the chaos to embed themselves, turning Mali into a key battleground in the fight against terrorism and triggering the deployment of foreign military operations, most notably from France.³ In response to this myriad of security challenges and with the impetus of donor support, military spending has trebled since 2010, reaching \$474 million in 2019,⁴ amounting to 22% of the national budget.⁵ However, corresponding efforts to improve defence governance have fallen short. Corruption risk remains rife and the hollowed out armed forces are unable to effectively respond to threats. Without urgent efforts to strengthen structural and institutional safeguards to corruption and improve accountability and transparency, Mali will be unable to address its complex security needs.

Member of Open Government Partnership	No
UN Convention Against Corruption	Ratified in 2008
Arms Trade Treaty	Ratified in 2013

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.



¹ Jean-Hervé Jezequel, 'Mali: A Coup Within a Coup', *International Crisis Group*, 27 May 2021.

² Nina Wilen, 'A Logic of its Own: The External Presence in the Sahel', *Real Institute Elcano*, 24 November 2020.

³ Council on Foreign Relations, 'Destabilisation of Mali – Conflict Tracker', January 2021.

⁴ SIPRI, 'Military Expenditure by Country in constant 2018 (US\$ m), 1988-2019', SIPRI 2020.

⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, 'BTI 2020 Country Report – Mali', Gutersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020, p. 6.

MALI

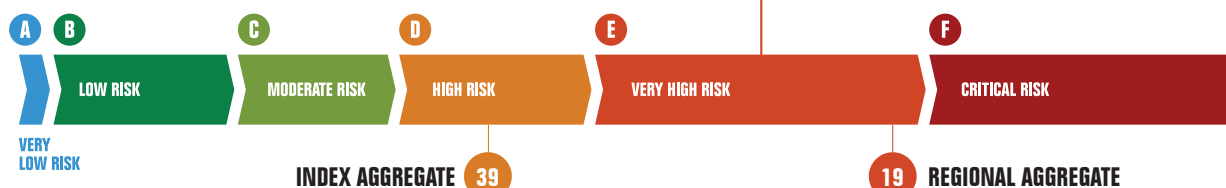
Overall scores

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

MALI SCORE
VERY HIGH RISK

E

20



A > 83-100 VERY LOW

B > 67-82 LOW

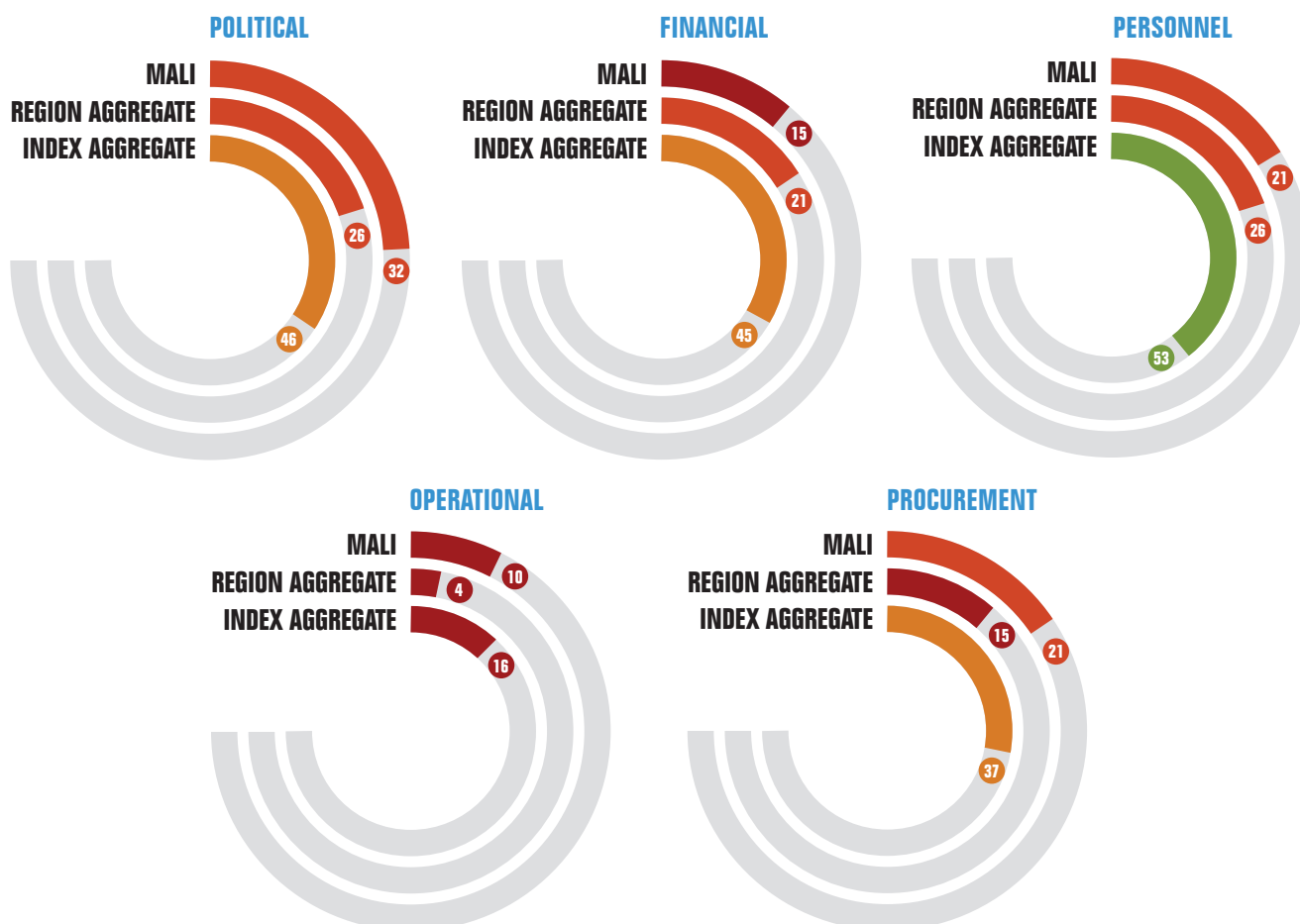
C > 50-66 MODERATE

D > 33-49 HIGH

E > 17-32 VERY HIGH

F > 0-16 CRITICAL

Risk Comparison



MALI

Parliamentary Oversight

Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2019)	43/100
Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2020)	12.7%
Committee members with defence expertise (%)	7% (1 out of 14)
# of meetings/year	Data is not publicly available.
Last review of defence policy/strategy	Strategy is still under development.

Prior to the August 2020 coup, the quasi-consensus politics in play in Mali left little space for meaningful debate and parliamentary oversight.⁶ This was largely due to the presidency's majority in the National Assembly and the repeated postponing of legislative elections.⁷ Weak parliamentary oversight is particularly evident in the defence sector, where significant investments in training and equipment have not been matched by governance reforms.⁸ The flagship Military Programming Law (LOPM),⁹ required the government to present an annual list of purchases to parliament for verification and sign off. However, in practice, several large acquisition projects were excluded from review and approval by the defence committee.¹⁰ This underlines the limitations inherent in the committee's functioning. Under the IBK government, the defence committee was chaired by the President's son, Karim Keita, until public pressure forced him to resign in July 2020.¹¹ Additionally, only two of the 14 committee members belonged to parties that were not part of IBK's coalition, further calling into question the committee's incentive to effectively scrutinise defence policy.¹² The committee's weak capacity is another barrier. Before its dissolution, only one member had any relevant experience in the sector and a lack of funding means it conducts no investigations.¹³ Gaps in parliamentary oversight are compounded by deficiencies in the external auditing system. Since its creation in 2004, the Auditor General (BVG), which is responsible for external auditing, has never conducted a compliance verification of the Ministry of Defence. When it has attempted to scrutinise defence expenditure, such as during an IMF-mandated audit into the off-budget acquisition of a presidential plane in 2014, the BVG never even received the plane's operating contract.¹⁴ Similarly, Mali's public contract regulator, the Public Procurement Regulator (ARMDS), is frequently unable to audit the Ministry of Defence's finances due to officials' refusal to share relevant documents.¹⁵

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?	Partially (national security exemptions).
Audit reports on defence (2015-2020) #	None.
Open Budget Index (IBP, 2019)	38/100
World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2021)	99th out of 180

Mali's defence sector is shrouded in secrecy and financial information in particular is under tight executive control. Mali's published defence budget is highly aggregated and contains only a superficial spending breakdown. Any explanations that are included provide little clarity to the content of individual lines.¹⁶ Furthermore, the use of off-budget income to supplement budgets is routine. The army has a statutory duty to participate in public works and runs revenue-generating activities like engineering projects, running charter flights, and manufacturing spare parts, none of which are included in the budget or published elsewhere.¹⁷ As such, the official budget contains only a fraction of the resources available for military activities. The complete lack of transparency and scrutiny around how this income is spent raises concerns as to whether such funds are subject to misuse. Alongside off-budget income sources, off-budget expenditures are also frequent. Numerous purchases go completely unrecorded. The infamous acquisition of a presidential jet and military equipment in 2014, were not recorded or submitted as part of the budget and the contracts turned out to have been grossly inflated.¹⁸ This lack of transparency in spending is exacerbated by the complexities in accessing financial information. Mali does not have a Freedom of Information law, meaning that defence institutions can invoke national security to such an extent that obtaining sensitive information from the Ministry of Defence is virtually impossible.¹⁹

⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, 'BTI 2020 – Mali', p. 9.

⁷ Deutsche Welle, 'Mali: Legislative Elections Hampered by Low Voter Turnout', DW, 30 March 2020.

⁸ Ena Dion & Emily Cole, 'How International Security Support Contributed to Mali's Coup', USIP, 21 September 2020.

⁹ DCAF, 'Mali SSR Background Note', 11 February 2019.

¹⁰ TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 13.

¹¹ France 24, 'Embattled Mali President's Son Quits Role in Parliament Amid Protests', France24, 13 July 2020.

¹² Transparency International Defence and Security, *Building Integrity*, p. 13.

¹³ Transparency International Defence and Security, *Building Integrity*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Transparency International Defence and Security, *Building Integrity*, p. 14.

¹⁵ A.B. Niang, 'Mali : Audit des marchés publics de l'année 2014 : – 41% seulement de conformité aux procédures – Opacité totale pour le Ministère de la Défense et des anciens combattants', MaliActu, July 1, 2017.

¹⁶ Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances, *Projet de Loi de Finances Rectificative 2020*, Bamako, 2020, pp. 58-59.

¹⁷ Anatole Ayissi and Nouhoum Sangaré, "Mali," in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanisms of Control*, Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful (eds.) Oxford, OUP, 2006, 122-137.

¹⁸ Ibrahima Dia, 'Achat d'avion présidentiel-contrat d'armement : Comment fut opéré le casse du siècle : 38 milliards dans la cagnotte' [Purchase of the Presidential plane-arms contract: How the robbery of the century was accomplished: 38 billion in the kitty], *Malinet*, 2016.

¹⁹ TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 16.

MALI

Personnel Ethics Framework

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

Mali's armed forces are subject to a publicly available code of conduct.²⁰ However, it does not refer directly to bribery, corruption or conflicts of interest and serious questions have been raised around its effectiveness. Widespread violations of its core tenets and increasing human rights abuses in the context of the fight against extremism have been widely reported.²¹ Some soldiers have been prosecuted for breaching the code of conduct, but impunity remains a serious issue and only the most publicised cases are investigated. As a result, investigations and convictions for corruption-related crimes are particularly rare. The absence of any legislation regulating whistleblowing is a key obstacle to this and the penal code makes it very difficult for personnel to come forward without fearing reprisals. Within the military itself, a failure to comply with illicit practices can result in dismissal and there are few incentives to report wrongdoing.²² There are also issues with payment procedures, where a lack of oversight and the absence of mechanisms for detecting potential anomalies mean bonuses and salaries have been embezzled by commanders with few prospects of them being caught.²³ On the recruitment side, whilst formal hiring process do exist, political considerations heavily influence the process. Candidates frequently secure positions due to personal connections in government or to serve wider political interests, as was the case in the nomination of the former Chief of Staff as Inspector-General of the Army in 2018. It is reasonable to assess that this appointment helped secure the president votes in Sikasso, Mali's most populous region, where the leader of the 2012 coup retains strong support.²⁴ The move also helped IBK shore up his support within the armed forces at a time when another member of the opposing junta was preparing to challenge him for the Presidency.²⁵

Operations

Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2018)	21,000
Troops deployed on operations #	Unknown number deployed in counter-terror, counter-insurgency, border control and public order operations.

Mali's armed forces are deployed throughout the country in order to fight extremist groups, quell the violence in the centre, and ensure the implementation of the 2015 peace accord. However, the military is ill-equipped to effectively manage and mitigate corruption risks during deployments, despite them being exposed to high levels of corruption risk during operations.²⁶ The military is yet to recognise corruption as a strategic issue for military operations and the military doctrine is still being developed. As such, there is no clear framework through which to address corruption in the field and there is no evidence that corruption risk is taken into account during the forward planning for operations. To compound this, the armed forces receive very little training on corruption issues. Courses provided by partners such as European Union Training Mission (EUTM) overwhelmingly focus on tactical and operational issues.²⁷ The lack of appreciation for the impact of corruption on military operations also means soldiers receive no specific guidelines on managing corruption risk and corruption is not monitored during deployments. As such, personnel are less able to identify corruption risk when they arise and are not equipped to implement relevant strategies to mitigate and reduce such risks in the field, increasing the likelihood of corruption becoming entrenched and undermining operational objectives.

²⁰ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Mali, *Code de Conduite des Forces Armées et de Sécurité du Mali*, Bamako, 1997.

²¹ See for instance, France24, 'UN Probe Accuses Mali Army of War Crimes, Armed Groups of Crimes against Humanity', France24, 22 December 2020; Amnesty International, 'They Executed Some and Brought the Rest With Them': Human Rights Violations by Security Forces in the Sahel', *Amnesty International*, London, 2020.

²² TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 19.

²³ Le Sphinx, 'Armée Malienne: Au moins 44 Milliards de FCFA de primes volatilisés [Malian Army : At least 44 billion FCFA worth of bonuses missing]', June 2020.

²⁴ The controversial nomination was done in order to secure votes for the President from the Sikasso area of Mali where the General in question retained strong support. See, TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 18.

²⁵ TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 18-19.

²⁶ TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 20.

²⁷ TI-DS, *Building Integrity*, p. 20.

MALI

Defence Procurement

Military expenditure (US\$ mil) (SIPRI, 2020)	580
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, Brazil, Spain, France, South Africa

Military procurement has become a matter of significant public debate in Mali as a result of highly publicised corruption scandals that have emerged in relation to military acquisitions.²⁸ Article 8 of the Procurement Code²⁹ exempts certain purchases related to national security from public procurement legislation and effectively shields them from any scrutiny, heightening corruption risk.³⁰ In the 2014 case of vastly overpriced defence contracts, the government used Article 8 in an attempt to conceal the real sums being spent, before being caught, leading to multiple resignations of senior officials.³¹ As a result of this practice, most major purchases are not subject to open tenders and requirements are fulfilled through single-sourcing, restricting the release of information related to these purchases

and hampering the work of oversight bodies. The Auditor General (BVG), for instance, is supposed to publish annual reports evaluating the government's spending programmes but often has no access to defence information, similar to the Public Procurement Regulator (ARMDS), which depends on Ministries' compliance to operate.³² Transparency in the procurement cycle is also undermined by the absence of a clear acquisition planning process that should dictate procurement requirements and ensure they reflect priorities set out in the defence strategy, aside from loosely defined priorities in the 2016-2020 Military Programming Law (LOPM). Equipment is often purchased on ad-hoc basis, resulting in inefficiencies across the board. For instance, equipment purchases are often made without acquiring related spare parts, leading to expensive hardware quickly becoming unusable.³³

²⁸ See for instance, Dorothée Thiénot, 'Mali: Les Contrats d'Armement Surfactures, une Bombe à Retardement pour IBK', 14 October 2014.

²⁹ Government of the Republic of Mali, 'Décret N°2015-0604/P-RM du 25 Septembre 2015 Portant Code des Marchés Publics et des Délégations de Service Public', Article no. 8, *Journal Officiel de la République du Mali*, p.1689, 2 October 2015.

³⁰ *Journal Officiel de la République Du Mali*, "Code des marchés publics et des délégations de service public", Numéro 43, p1689, 2 Octobre 2015.

³¹ Transparency International Defence & Security, Building Integrity, p. 21.

³² MaliWeb, 'Audit des Marchés Publics de l'année 2014: 41% seulement de conformité aux procédures, Opacité totale pour le Ministère de la Défense et des anciens combattants', MaliWeb, 1 Juillet 2017.

³³ MaliActu, 'Affaire dite "des avions cloués au sol": voici les faits, tous les faits, rien que les faits (deuxième partie)', 27 Septembre 2019.

Version 1.0, October 2021

GDI data collection for **Mali** 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.

MALI 2020 GDI Scorecard

		Grade	Score
Political Risk		E	32
Q1	Legislative Scrutiny	D	42
Q2	Defence Committee	D	46
Q3	Defence Policy Debate	C	50
Q4	CSO Engagement	D	42
Q5	Conventions: UNCAC / OECD	C	63
Q6	Public Debate	A	88
Q7	Anticorruption Policy	F	0
Q8	Compliance and Ethics Units	E	25
Q9	Public Trust in Institutions	NS	
Q10	Risk Assessments	F	0
Q11	Acquisition Planning	D	33
Q12	Budget Transparency & Detail	B	75
Q13	Budget Scrutiny	C	63
Q14	Budget Availability	D	42
Q15	Defence Income	F	0
Q16	Internal Audit	F	6
Q17	External Audit	F	0
Q18	Natural Resources	D	40
Q19	Organised Crime Links	E	25
Q20	Organised Crime Policing	F	0
Q21	Intelligence Services Oversight	F	0
Q22	Intelligence Services Recruitment	F	0
Q23	Export Controls (ATT)	A	100
Q76	Lobbying	F	0

Financial Risk		F	15
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	F	0
Q30	Access to Information	F	0
Q31	Beneficial Ownership	C	50
Q32	Military-Owned Business Scrutiny	F	0
Q33	Unauthorised Private Enterprise	B	75
Q77	Defence Spending	D	38

Personnel Risk		E	21
Q34	Public Commitment to Integrity	F	0
Q35	Disciplinary Measures for Personnel	C	50
Q36	Whistleblowing	F	0
Q37	High-risk Positions	F	0
Q38	Numbers of Personnel	F	0
Q39	Pay Rates and Allowances	E	25
Q40	Payment System	E	25
Q41	Objective Appointments	E	25
Q42	Objective Promotions	F	6
Q43	Bribery to Avoid Conscription	F	0
Q44	Bribery for Preferred Postings	B	67
Q45	Chains of Command and Payment	F	0
Q46	Military Code of Conduct	C	50

OVERALL COUNTRY SCORE

VERY HIGH RISK

E

20

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



Personnel Risk		E	21
Q47	Civilian Code of Conduct	C	50
Q48	Anticorruption Training	E	25
Q49	Corruption Prosecutions	E	25
Q50	Facilitation Payments	E	17

Operational Risk		F	10
Q51	Military Doctrine	F	0
Q52	Operational Training	E	25
Q53	Forward Planning	F	0
Q54	Corruption Monitoring in Operations	F	0
Q55	Controls in Contracting	E	25
Q56	Private Military Contractors	NS	

Procurement Risk		E	21
Q57	Procurement Legislation	F	0
Q58	Procurement Cycle	D	33
Q59	Procurement Oversight Mechanisms	E	25
Q60	Potential Purchases Disclosed	E	25
Q61	Actual Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q62	Business Compliance Standards	F	13
Q63	Procurement Requirements	E	17
Q64	Competition in Procurement	E	25
Q65	Tender Board Controls	E	25
Q66	Anti-Collusion Controls	C	50
Q67	Contract Award / Delivery	E	19
Q68	Complaint Mechanisms	A	83
Q69	Supplier Sanctions	D	33
Q70	Offset Contracts	F	0
Q71	Offset Contract Monitoring	F	0
Q72	Offset Competition	F	0
Q73	Agents and Intermediaries	E	25
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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