



**Government Defence  
Integrity Index**



**COUNTRY  
BRIEF**

**MALI**

**2025**





# MALI

As one of the largest countries on the African continent, Mali faces many challenges related to its size, location, and geopolitics. Economically, the country remains heavily dependent on agriculture and commodity exports—particularly gold and cotton—with limited diversification and high vulnerability to climate shocks and global market fluctuations.<sup>1</sup> Despite its abundant natural resources, Mali remains one of the world’s poorest countries in the world. Since its independence, the country has oscillated between periods of fragile democracy and military rule, with the most recent coups in 2020 and 2021 ushering in a prolonged military-led transition. A constitutional referendum was held in June 2023 further enhancing the powers of the president and the armed forces.<sup>2</sup> Presidential elections were supposed to take place in February 2024 but have been postponed indefinitely, and in May 2025 the government dissolved all political parties banning their activities over public order concerns.<sup>3</sup> In this context, power is concentrated among political and military elites, undermining transparency, accountability and inclusive economic development. Moreover, in January 2024 Mali announced its withdrawal from ECOWAS, alongside Niger and Burkina Faso and its joining of the military pact the Alliance of Sahel States. The country is also facing a deteriorating security situation, as important

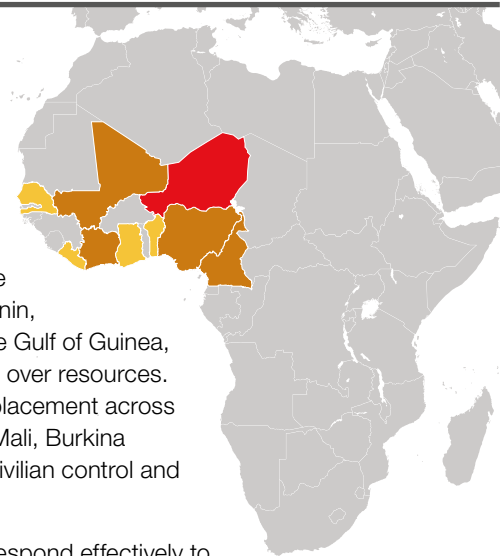
parts of the north and east of the country is now controlled by the jihadist insurgency and remain outside government control. This has been exacerbated by a fuel blockade imposed by armed groups, which is paralysing the economy and daily life.<sup>4</sup>

Corruption risks remain pervasive, and the weakened armed forces struggle to effectively respond to persistent threats from jihadist affiliated to Al-Qaida. Reflecting these dynamics, the 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) found that Mali’s defence sector shows limited strengths—such as partial budget disclosure, formal codes of conduct, and legal bans on commercial activity—and that corruption and governance risks remain very high. Democratic oversight collapsed after the 2020 coup, audit bodies are inactive, and most spending is opaque. Personnel management is vulnerable to political influence, ghost soldiers, and weak integrity enforcement. Operations lack anti-corruption doctrine, and procurement is almost entirely exempt from transparency and scrutiny under expanded “defence secrecy.”

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

## WEST AFRICA

The security environment in West Africa has deteriorated markedly over the past decade, driven by the expansion of jihadist insurgencies, political instability, and transnational organised crime. Armed groups such as Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) have generated unprecedented violence, with the Sahel now accounting for nearly half of global terrorism-related deaths. These violent extremist groups have expanded southward, placing increasing pressure on coastal states including Benin, Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, and Ghana. Insecurity is further compounded by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, trafficking in arms, drugs, and natural resources, and climate-related competition over resources. The cumulative effect has worsened the humanitarian crisis and widespread displacement across the region. These security challenges have unfolded alongside military coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea between 2020 and 2023, which have further weakened civilian control and democratic oversight.



Weak defence sector governance has significantly undermined states’ ability to respond effectively to these threats. Defence institutions across West Africa remain characterised by limited transparency, weak accountability, and entrenched defence exceptionalism. Parliamentary oversight is constrained by executive dominance, and limited technical capacity, reducing civilian control over defence policy, budgets, and procurement. Limited budget transparency has weakened accountability and fuelled public mistrust. Simultaneously, non-transparent and discretionary procurement systems have increased corruption risks, distorted capability development, and diverted resources away from operational needs. While most states in the sub-region have ratified United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), uneven implementation has arguably continued to expose defence sectors to corruption (risks), undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of security responses.

1 World Bank, “Country Overview: Mali”, 2024.  
 2 Booty, Natasha and Marc Pivac, “Assimi Goïta: President gets sweeping powers in new Mali constitution”, BBC News, July 23, 2023.  
 3 RFI, “Mali dissolves all political parties as opposition figures disappear”, May 14, 2025.  
 4 BBC, “Mali shuts schools and universities as jihadist blockade worsens fuel crisis”, October 27, 2025.

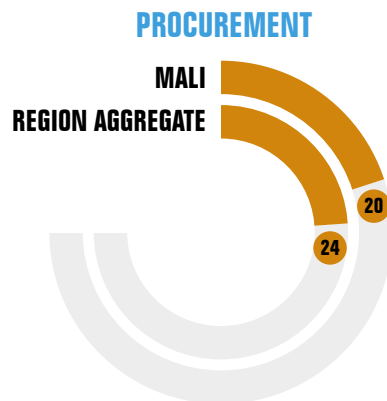
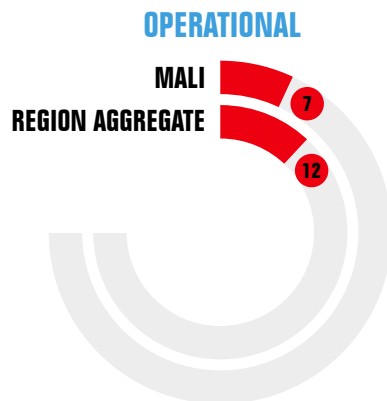
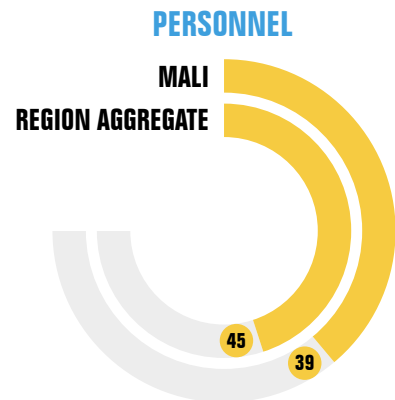
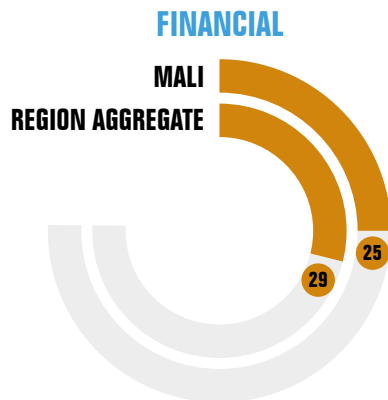
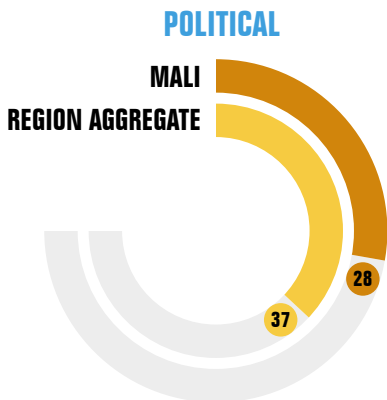
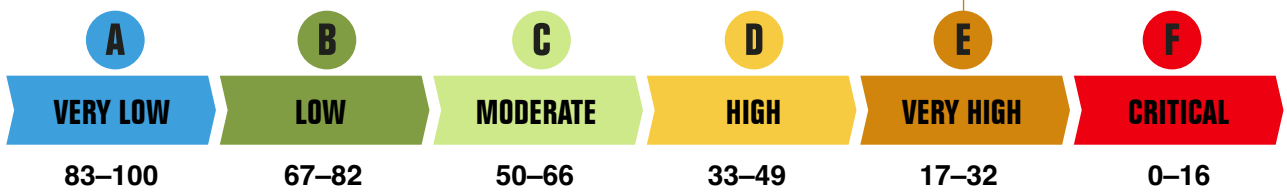


# MALI

## RISK COMPARISON

The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) assesses five key risk areas: political, financial, personnel, operational, and procurement. This section compares Mali's performance in each area with the regional average (Sub-Saharan Africa).

**VERY HIGH RISK**





## PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Legislative oversight of budget (Open Budget Survey, 2023)	30/100
Military expenditure as a share of government spending (SIPRI, 2024)	4.2%
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.

Following successive coups and the dissolution of elected institutions, Mali remains under a military-dominated transitional regime marked by weakened democratic checks and limited separation of powers. In fact, since the 2020 coup d'État, there has been no democratically elected body providing oversight of defence policymaking, budgeting, procurement, or arms acquisitions. Political risks in the defence sector are therefore very high.

The National Transitional Council (CNT), whose members are appointed by the transitional president, formally assumes the role of the former National Assembly and includes a Defence, Security and Civil Protection Commission mandated to review defence policy and budget.<sup>5 6</sup> In practice, however, its oversight powers are largely symbolic. Executive dominance and the blanket use of defence secrecy and defence exceptionalism effectively place most defence activities beyond legislative scrutiny.<sup>7</sup>

Internal and external audit mechanisms are also effectively non-functional. The Inspectorate General of the Armed Forces and Services holds a mandate for internal control over management and operations yet does not conduct audits in practice. Externally, neither the Supreme Court nor the Office of the Auditor General fulfils its statutory responsibilities regarding defence oversight.<sup>8 9 10</sup> As a result, there is no meaningful independent scrutiny of the defence and security sector, reinforcing opacity and heightening corruption and political interference risks.<sup>11</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 (2020-2025) #	None
Open Budget Index (IBP,2023)	10/100
World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2025)	119th out of 180.

The concentration of executive authority and rising security expenditure have severely weakened financial transparency and accountability in Mali's defence sector, where corruption risks remain very high. According to the Open Budget Index, Mali has one of the lowest budget transparency score in the region. Some defence spending appears in the annual finance law, but data lack detail and exclude secret items.<sup>12</sup> Actual spending is undisclosed, and although off-budget expenditure is formally prohibited, it occurs informally and remains unrecorded.<sup>13 14</sup>

Defence and security institutions, as well as their personnel, are legally barred from owning or participating in commercial enterprises.<sup>15 16</sup> No evidence indicates institutional involvement in business activities, but the absence of detailed disclosures prevents assessing whether individual defence personnel engage in unauthorised private enterprise.

Access to information is extremely restricted. Mali has no access-to-information law, and defence communications are sporadic, with most information classified on national security grounds, leaving the sector largely closed to public scrutiny.<sup>17</sup>

5 Journal Officiel de la Republique du Mali, "Transition Charter, October 1st 2020".

6 Republic of Mali, "International Regulations of the National Transition Council", March 2023.

7 Interview with a Member of the Defence, Security and Civil Protection Committee of the National Transitional Council, July 11, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

8 Republic of Mali, "Law No. 2012-009 of February 8, 2012 amending Law No. 03-030 of August 25, 2003, establishing the office of the Auditor General".

9 BVG, "Reports of the Office of the Auditor General".

10 Supreme Court, "Annual reports accounts section supreme court".

11 Transparency International Defence and Security, "External Auditing of the Defence Sector in Mali: Challenges and Possibilities", December 2024.

12 Ministry of Economy and Finance, "Finance Act 2024".

13 Ministry of Economy and Finance, "Report on the quarterly implementation of general budget revenue and expenditure", December 31, 2024.

14 Republic of Mali, "Act no. 2016-047 of 30 September 2016 amending Act no. 2013-028 of 11 July 2013 on the Finance Acts".

15 Republic of Mali, "Constitution of Mali", July 2023.

16 Republic of Mali, "Order No. 2023-015/PT-RM of March 21, 2023 on the General Status of Military Personnel".

17 Website of the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, DIRPA press releases section.



## PERSONNEL ETHICS FRAMEWORK

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

Personnel risks in Mali’s defence sector remain high. Although anti-bribery provisions formally apply, they are rarely enforced, and the absence of whistleblower protections—alongside a discouraging reporting environment—reinforces impunity.<sup>18 19 20</sup> Transparency over personnel numbers is limited and payroll fraud persists; in April 2024, authorities identified around 3,000 “ghost soldiers,” highlighting serious weaknesses in human resource management.<sup>21</sup>

Appointments remain vulnerable to political influence. Although formal criteria exist, they are not applied objectively.<sup>22</sup> The President, the Ministers of Defence and Security, and senior military leadership continue to exert decisive influence over promotions and strategic postings, with no external oversight of appointments at middle or senior levels.<sup>23</sup>

Codes of conduct exist but insufficiently address corruption risks. Both civilian and military personnel have access to them, and military staff receive some training, though no evidence was found of training for civilian staff.<sup>24 25</sup>

## OPERATIONS

Total armed forces personnel (World Bank, 2020)	41,000
Troops deployed on operations #	38 (as of 31 May 2025)

Mali has conducted extensive military operations in recent years to counter terrorism, rebellion, armed banditry, and cross-border crime, yet operational corruption risks remain critical. The country lacks a military doctrine that addresses corruption in defence operations, provides no dedicated pre-deployment integrity training, and offers no guidance on corruption risks linked to operational procurement. Although some operations were previously carried out alongside international partners—including the EU, the UN, and France—whose missions required anti-corruption considerations in strategic planning, these external safeguards have diminished following their withdrawal. Mali remains a troop contributor to UN missions, where corruption is integrated into operational planning, but such standards are not systematically applied to national operations.

18 Interview, Retired Military Officer, June 12, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

19 Republic of Mali, “Law n°01-80 of 20 August 2001 on the Code of Criminal Procedure. Amended by Law n°2013-016/ of 21 May 2013.

20 PPLAAF, “Lanceurs d’alerte au Mali: état des lieux du cadre légal et des pratiques”, [Whistleblowers in Mali: an overview of the legal framework and practices], December 2023.

21 Bamada.net, “Mali : 3 000 sous-officiers fictifs recevaient des salaires depuis des années”, [3,000 fictitious non-commissioned officers had been receiving salaries for years], April 8, 2024.

22 Republic of Mali, “Order No. 2023-015/PT-RM of March 21, 2023 on the General Status of Military Personnel.

23 Interview, Retired Military Officer, June 12, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.

24 Republic of Mali, “Code of Conduct of the Armed and Security Forces of Mali”, 1997.

25 Interview with an Active Duty Military Officer, Infantry, July 3, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index.



## DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

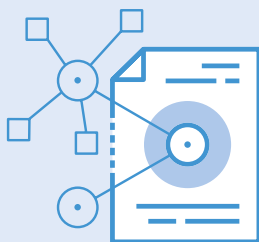
Military expenditure (US\$ mil) (SIPRI, 2024)	\$929.28
Open competition in defence procurement (%)	Data is not publicly available.
Main defence exports – to (SIPRI, 2020-24)	N/A
Main defence imports – from (SIPRI, 2020-24)	Russia (43%) Unknown (17%) UAE (10%) Turkey (9.1%) China (8.3%)

Mali is among the region’s highest defence spenders, with military expenditure increasing by an estimated 56% since 2020.<sup>26</sup> However, the extreme opacity of the defence sector prevents any reliable assessment of how these funds are distributed or utilised. Procurement risks in Mali’s defence sector are critical, driven by sweeping exemptions from standard rules and pervasive opacity. Defence procurement was formally removed from the public procurement framework by the May 2023 decree. The revised Public Procurement Code has since broadened the “defence secret” designation to cover most of defence and security expenditures.<sup>27 28</sup>

As a result, the defence procurement cycle is largely opaque, with no comprehensive or publicly accessible acquisitions framework. No information is published on

defence purchases, procurement plans, or the justification of operational needs, making it impossible to assess alignment with a national defence strategy. Competition is highly restricted, with most contracts awarded through mutual agreement or limited tenders.<sup>29</sup> Procurement decisions have increasingly reflected political alignment—particularly with Russia, China, and Turkey— raising further concerns about patronage, influence, and the bypassing of competitive processes.<sup>30 31</sup>

Oversight mechanisms exist on paper but are not exercised in practice.<sup>32 33</sup> No effective oversight has been conducted since 2020. Consequently, defence purchases and contracts operate entirely outside transparency and control mechanisms.



GDI data collection for **Mali** was conducted from May 2024 to August 2025.

26 SIPRI, “Military Expenditure Database: Mali”, 2024

27 Republic of Mali, “Decree No. 2015-0604 P-R M of September 25, 2015 on the Code of Public Procurement and Public Service Delegations”.

28 Republic of Mali, “Decree No. 2023-275 PT-RM of May 3, 2023 establishing the system of works, supply and service contracts excluded from the scope of the code of public procurement and public service delegations.”

29 Website of the Directorate General for Public Procurement, “Ministry of Defence tenders”.

30 Eugène Berg, “Russia’s push into Africa continues, Conflits:Revue de Géopolitique”, June 21, 2024.

31 Jeune Afrique, “Mali receives new military aircraft from Russia and Turkey”, March 17, 2023.

32 Republic of Mali, “Decree No. 2015-0604 P-R M of September 25, 2015 establishing the code of public procurement and public service delegations”.

33 Public Procurement and Public Service Delegation Regulatory Authority (ARMDS), “Annual Report 2023”.

# MALI 2025 GDI SCORECARD

	Grade	Score
<b>POLITICAL RISK</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>28</b>
Q1 Legislative Scrutiny	F	0
Q2 Defence Committee	D	45
Q3 Defence Policy Debate	D	38
Q4 CSO Engagement	C	58
Q5 Conventions: UNCAC / OECD	C	63
Q6 Public Debate	D	38
Q7 Anticorruption Policy	E	25
Q8 Compliance and Ethics Units	F	0
Q9 Public Trust in Institutions	NS	
Q10 Risk Assessments	F	0
Q11 Acquisition Planning	F	8
Q12 Budget Transparency & Detail	C	50
Q13 Budget Scrutiny	C	63
Q14 Budget Availability	E	17
Q15 Defence Income	D	42
Q16 Internal Audit	F	0
Q17 External Audit	F	6
Q18 Natural Resources	A	92
Q19 Organised Crime Links	F	0
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
<b>FINANCIAL RISK</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>25</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	D	33
Q30 Access to Information	F	0
Q31 Beneficial Ownership	A	100
Q32 Military-Owned Business Scrutiny	A	100
Q33 Unauthorised Private Enterprise	NEI	
Q77 Defence Spending	E	19
<b>PERSONNEL RISK</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>39</b>
Q34 Public Commitment to Integrity	F	0
Q35 Disciplinary Measures for Personnel	C	63
Q36 Whistleblowing	F	0
Q37 High-risk Positions	F	8
Q38 Numbers of Personnel	F	0
Q39 Pay Rates and Allowances	F	0
Q40 Payment System	C	50
Q41 Objective Appointments	E	25
Q42 Objective Promotions	B	75
Q43 Bribery to Avoid Conscription	NA	
Q44 Bribery for Preferred Postings	A	100
Q45 Chains of Command and Payment	A	100
Q46 Military Code of Conduct	B	67
Q47 Civilian Code of Conduct	C	50
Q48 Anticorruption Training	F	0
Q49 Corruption Prosecutions	D	42
Q50 Facilitation Payments	NEI	

**OVERALL  
COUNTRY  
SCORE**

**HIGH RISK**

**E**

**24**

## RISK GRADE

<b>A</b>	<b>83–100</b>	<b>VERY LOW RISK</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>67–82</b>	<b>LOW RISK</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>50–66</b>	<b>MODERATE RISK</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>33–49</b>	<b>HIGH RISK</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>17–32</b>	<b>VERY HIGH RISK</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>0–16</b>	<b>CRITICAL RISK</b>

	Grade	Score
<b>OPERATIONAL RISK</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>7</b>
Q51 Military Doctrine	F	0
Q52 Operational Training	F	0
Q53 Forward Planning	E	25
Q54 Corruption Monitoring in Operations	F	8
Q55 Controls in Contracting	F	0
Q56 Private Military Contractors	NS	

	Grade	Score
<b>PROCUREMENT RISK</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>20</b>
Q57 Procurement Legislation	F	0
Q58 Procurement Cycle	E	25
Q59 Procurement Oversight Mechanisms	F	8
Q60 Potential Purchases Disclosed	F	13
Q61 Actual Purchases Disclosed	F	0
Q62 Business Compliance Standards	D	38
Q63 Procurement Requirements	F	8
Q64 Competition in Procurement	F	13
Q65 Tender Board Controls	E	25
Q66 Anti-Collusion Controls	B	75
Q67 Contract Award / Delivery	C	50
Q68 Complaint Mechanisms	C	50
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	NEI	
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



# Government Defence Integrity Index



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