

CORRUPTION RISK AND MILITARY OPERATIONS: A STRATEGIC PRIORITY TO BE ADDRESSED

TI-DS FACTSHEET

Military Operations

Corruption can be a determining factor in the success or failure of a military operation, and can exacerbate insecurity in the operating environment by inadvertently strengthening corrupt networks. Rather than being treated as a secondary issue by militaries, identifying and countering corruption risks should be treated as a strategic priority.

Military operations frequently take place in environments affected by corruption, meaning that an operation that is not prepared to address corruption risks on deployment can: (1) suffer from corruption within their own forces, and (2) exacerbate existing corruption in the operating environment. This can result in military operations not only failing in their stated objectives, but also exacerbating insecurity by inadvertently strengthening corrupt networks.

Diagnosing and countering corruption in military operations and security assistance requires awareness, preparation and skills. Corruption is often overlooked, or its impacts and risks are underestimated. Militaries should include corruption in forward planning of operational activity, identify corruption risks in the operating environment and implement preventative mitigation measures.

The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) 2020 found that countries around the world have extremely limited institutional resilience to corruption when it comes to military operations.

Two-thirds of countries assessed in the GDI were found to be at critical risk of corruption in their military operations. This means that there is significant potential for corruption to undermine military operations on the frontline, be they aimed at securing peace internally or abroad. This could have devastating consequences, both for missions' ability to achieve their objectives and for security and stability more widely, as the influx of resources that accompany missions increases corruption risk in the operational theatre.

Only a handful of countries address corruption in their military doctrine: Reference to corruption is completely absent from military doctrines in 70 per cent of countries in the index. For these countries, corruption is not officially considered a strategic issue for operations, and there are no guidelines on how to mitigate associated risks. This includes 14 of 22 NATO members, including Canada, Germany, Denmark and France, and 13 of 16 EU member states assessed.

Military forward planning rarely addresses corruption risks in operations: Over 80 per cent of countries are at high to critical risk of corruption in this regard, 70 per cent of which score 0. Assessed NATO countries and EU member states average under 25 points for this area.

Monitoring practices in relation to corruption risk are poor across the board: 66 per cent of countries do not deploy any trained personnel for corruption monitoring in operations.

Significant gaps in pre-deployment corruption training for commanders: 72 per cent of countries are at high to critical risk of corruption in relation to pre-deployment anti-corruption training for commanders, 41 per cent of which score 0. For this latter group, this means that there is no known corruption training whatsoever for commanders.

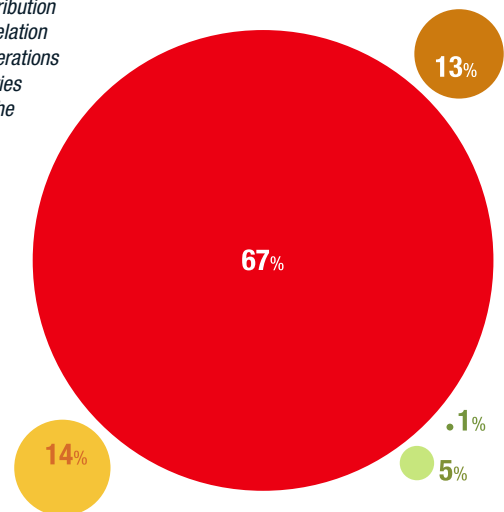
Countries are not doing enough to strengthen anti-corruption controls in contracting for operations: 95 per cent of states are at high to critical risk of corruption in relation to contracting on missions.

What does 'good' look like?

Risks of corruption should be identified as a priority consideration and measures put in place to mitigate them.

- Anti-corruption should be embedded as a priority in the overarching military doctrine;
- Military planners and personnel deployed on mission should undergo anti-corruption training
- Corruption risk assessment of host country should be conducted prior to mission.
- Contracting on mission should take into account corruption risks; Private military contractors should be subject to oversight and accountability.

Figure 1: *Distribution of scores in relation to military operations across countries assessed in the GDI 2020*



- F CRITICAL CORRUPTION RISK**
- E VERY HIGH CORRUPTION RISK**
- D HIGH CORRUPTION RISK**
- C MODERATE CORRUPTION RISK**
- B LOW CORRUPTION RISK**
- A VERY LOW CORRUPTION RISK**



WHAT CAN BE DONE? CORRUPTION RISK PATHWAYS AND EXAMPLE MITIGATION MEASURES

1. Corruption within mission forces

eg. ghost soldiers, diversion of resources

Codification of ethical standards accompanied by internal investigative structures and sanctions

Deployment of expert personnel capable of monitoring corruption within missions

2. Relations with host nation stakeholders

eg. corrupt local networks, militias

Investing financial support carefully and applying conditionality

Cooperating with civil society (for increased oversight and likelihood of whistleblowing reports of wrong-doing)

3. Supporting host nation defence forces with high levels of corruption risk

eg. misuse of defence funds, patronage in recruitment

Choosing partners carefully: marginalising spoilers, supporting change agents

Strong integrity standards among mission troops and their ability to notice and report corruption among partner forces

4. Corruption in sustainment and contracting

eg. outsourcing of services, contracting in field

Transparency in contracting to enable external scrutiny

Limiting reliance on agents and intermediaries

5. Armed forces undertaking civilian functions

eg. delivery of humanitarian resources

Strong integrity standards among mission personnel to prevent creation of new opportunities for corrupt networks

Supporting development of civil society oversight mechanisms to help create longer-term accountability



Find out more

For more on current trends in defence sector governance and anti-corruption controls, including military interventions, see the [Government Defence Integrity Index \(GDI\) 2020](#)

Read more analysis of the GDI 2020 findings on operations in the [global findings report](#).

TI-DS's [Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance](#) provides resources and practical guidance on identifying and mitigating corruption risks in military operations.

See TI-DS's [research and policy recommendations on the corruption risks for UN peacekeeping operations](#)

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