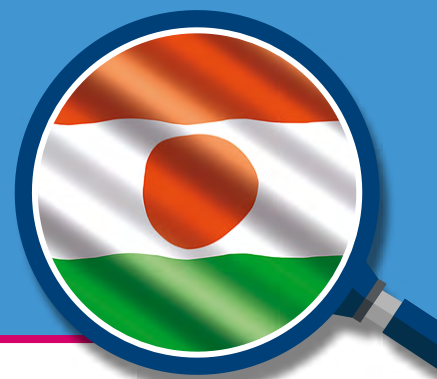


NIGER'S DEFENCE SECTOR

INSTITUTIONAL RESILIENCE TO CORRUPTION AMIDST A CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE



This policy brief aims to highlight findings from the 2020 Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) that are most pertinent for a path to enhanced institutional resilience to corruption in Nigerien defence governance. It is based on a close reading of the GDI results for Niger, policy literature, recent news reports, as well as a context and problem analysis conducted by Association Nigérienne de Lutte Contre La Corruption (ANLC) - the Transparency International (TI) national chapter in Niger.

Key findings:

- There is a severe lack of transparency and oversight around military activities in general but particularly regarding defence expenditure, procurement activities, and assets disposal. Institutional resilience to corruption risk among personnel is also weak.
- Improving transparency, information access, and external accountability are essential for advancing defence governance reform in Niger.
- Despite the changing political landscape, Niger's leadership should still strive to prioritise building institutional resilience in the defence sector through open dialogue with civil society actors and incorporating corruption risk mitigation mechanisms into military operations.

Country context: Political instability and sub-national conflict

As one of the poorest countries in the world, Niger has been grappling with scarce resources, high levels of violence, political instability, and shrinking civic space for decades. The military coup of July 2023 has intensified these challenges. International sanctions on trade and international funding, mounting jihadist violence in and around its borders, have proved to be massive challenges to its internal and geopolitical stability. Despite historical support from Western governments in the fight against global terrorist movements, Niger's control over its own territory continues to be threatened – not only by socioeconomic and geopolitical factors, but also by historically weak governance of the defence sector.

Sanctions. Following the coup, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed severe sanctions on Niger, such as the closing of

land and air borders as well as the freezing of service transactions and Nigerien assets in the regional central bank. These sanctions strongly deteriorated the country's already weak economic situation, particularly impacting the poorest part of the population, and were lifted in February 2024 for humanitarian purposes.

Poverty. Extreme poverty is thought to have affected an additional 700,000 people in Niger in 2023, reaching 52% of the population. Severe power cuts and rising food prices have further impacted the population and increased humanitarian needs.¹ Niger, already suspended from ECOWAS since the coup, decided to leave the bloc in January 2024 alongside Mali and Burkina Faso, which could impact the economy even more. In fact, growing economic and human security concerns have pushed thousands to flee.

1 The World Bank in Niger: Overview, Last Updated: March 19, 2024.

Internally displaced populations. The recent military coup only aggravated the dire situation, leaving more than 370,000 internally displaced people, with 84% of those being women and children.² As of July 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported over half a million (507,000) internally displaced people, where 80% of those are women and children.³

Security. The security situation of the country has worsened since the military coup and successive withdrawal of foreign troops from Nigerien soil, ordered by the military junta and supported by the population. According to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) data, deaths linked to extremist groups doubled across the period between July 2022 and July 2024.⁴ Moreover, since the coup, at least eight attacks by militant Islamist groups have resulted in the death of a dozen soldiers each. This reflects the highest level of violence against the Nigerien armed forces since 2021.⁵

International powers. Over 60% of Nigeriens had been against the previous government's use of foreign military forces to secure the country.⁶ It was not surprising then that French troops were pulled out in December 2023, while growing pressure from Niger's military junta on the US forced around 1,000 troops to leave by 15 September 2024. The country is moving away from traditional Western security providers, while focusing on defence cooperation with new allies, namely Russia and Turkey.⁷ At the same time Niger is reinforcing regional ties with Mali and Burkina Faso under a new mutual defence pact called the Alliance of Sahel States. In early July 2024, the three states decided to further their alliance and entered a new confederation, "the Confederation of Sahel States", emphasising both economic and military cooperation. A treaty was signed to restart their independence from France's influence in the region and ECOWAS, reinstating their intention of establishing a new common currency.⁸ The new Confederation will likely further complicate relations with neighbouring states and reshape international influence in the Sahel region.

The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) measures institutional resilience to corruption in the defence sector by focusing on both policymaking and public sector governance in national defence establishments. The index is organised into five main risk areas: (1) policymaking and political affairs; (2) finances; (3) personnel management; (4) military operations; (5) procurement. Each indicator is scored based on five levels from 0-100 (0, 25, 50, 75, 100), while indicator scores are aggregated (no weighting) to determine the question, risk area and overall scores. Scores are then assigned a band from A - F, which reflects the level of corruption risk.

Range of Scores

A	83 – 100	Very robust institutional resilience to corruption
B	67 – 82	Robust institutional resilience to corruption
C	50 – 66	Modest institutional resilience to corruption
D	33 – 49	Weak institutional resilience to corruption
E	17 – 32	Very weak institutional resilience to corruption
F	0 – 16	Limited to no institutional resilience to corruption

Corruption Risk

Very low
Low
Moderate
High
Very high
Critical

Within these risk areas, the GDI identifies 29 corruption risks specific to the defence and security sector. The GDI is further organised into 77 main questions, which are broken down into 212 indicators. In order to provide a broad and comprehensive reflection of these risk areas, the index assesses both legal frameworks (de jure) and implementation (de facto), as well as resources and outcomes.

² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Niger coup: Democracy and lives of most vulnerable at stake, says Human Rights Chief', 18 August 2023 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/niger-coup-democracy-and-lives-most-vulnerable-stake-says-human-rights-chief>

³ UNHCR, Niger: Forcibly displaced people (French), July 31, 2024. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/niger-map-forcibly-displaced-persons-french-9091>.

⁴ ACLED database on Niger. Accessed September 23, 2024

⁵ Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Niger Coup Reversing Hard-Earned Gains. May 13, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/niger-coup-reversing-hard-earned-gains/>

⁶ Afrobarometer. Key statistics Niger 2022. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/niger/>

⁷ "Russian troops arrive in Niger as military agreement begins", *BBC News*, April 12, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-68796359>; "Turkey, Niger agree to enhance energy, defence cooperation", Reuters, July 18, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/turkey-niger-agree-enhance-energy-defence-cooperation-2024-07-18/>

⁸ Le Monde. "Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali sign 'confederation' treaty marking divorce from West Africa bloc" July 6, 2024. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/07/06/niger-s-military-leader-states-niger-mali-burkina-irrevocably-turned-backs-on-ecowas_6676875_4.html

Niger scores poorly across all risk categories within the GDI, reflecting its difficulty with building robust institutions even in the midst of increased military spending and advanced operational training by Western allies in the past years.⁹ This lack of institutional resilience to corruption reflects a systemic weakness that not only provides opportunities for diversion of funds and influence-peddling, but also contributes to failures of equipment and tactics on the battlefield, and ongoing political and economic fragility.¹⁰ Given the limited oversight of the defence sector, and the ability of the military in maintaining secrecy around its operations, it is not surprising that corruption risk is high. However, there was a considerable support for democratic institutions

and processes in 2022, where 61% of Nigeriens thought of democracy as their preferred form of governance.¹³ Despite having a resilient civil society eager to make its voice heard, the political landscape has changed since then. The continuous failures of those in power to alleviate security concerns and put an end to growing socio-economic grievances has reflected heavily on the noticeable citizen support for the ruling military junta. When civilians lose trust in authorities, attitudes towards democratic rule usually change, while simultaneously support towards drastic political shifts, such as military rule, often increase; and this seems to be the case of Niger.¹⁴



A new UNDP report reveals that support for military coups in the Sahel is rooted in widespread impatience with existing politics.¹¹ Though many people believed the army should take over when a civilian government is incompetent, a large majority of those surveyed preferred a democratic form of government.

In short, coups are welcomed only because there is no other option. Offer a democratic alternative, the logic then runs, and a deep well of longing for “free and fair elections, gender equality and the protection of civil rights” will be mobilised.¹²

Six key findings from the research:

- 1 Ephemeral support for coups is a cry for democratic renewal.
- 2 Coup risk is higher where development is low.
- 3 Militaries should defend, not rule.
- 4 Business-as-usual will not work in the Sahel.
- 5 Post-coup transition processes must be inclusive to succeed.
- 6 At-risk countries need investment in democracy and human rights.

The continuous failures of those in power to alleviate security concerns and put an end to growing socio-economic grievances has reflected heavily on the noticeable citizen support for the ruling military junta.

9 Transparency International Defence & Security, Government Defence Integrity Index 2020, Niger Country Brief. <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/niger/>; Anna, Cara. “How the Coup in Niger Could Expand the Reach of Islamic Extremism, and Wagner, in West Africa.” *PBS NewsHour*, July 27, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/how-the-coup-in-niger-could-expand-the-reach-of-islamic-extremism-and-wagner-in-west-africa>

10 Transparency International Defence & Security. “GDI 2020 Global Report: Disruption, Democracy, and Corruption Risk in Defence Sectors.” London: Transparency International UK, November 2021. https://ti-defence.org/gdi/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/02/GDI-Global-Report-v7_17Feb22.pdf

11 UNDP. “Soldiers and Citizens: Military Coups and the Need for Democratic Renewal in Africa.” United Nations Development Program, 2023. <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/soldiers-and-citizens#>

12 Burke, Jason. “Niger’s Coup Adds to Chaos in the Sahel, but It May Also Offer Some Hope.” *The Guardian*, August 6, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/06/nigers-coup-adds-to-chaos-in-the-sahel-but-it-may-also-offer-some-hope>

13 Afrobarometer. Key statistics Niger 2022. <https://www.afrobarometer.org/countries/niger/>

14 “Thousands in Niger Rally in Support of Coup Leaders”, *Al Jazeera*, August 6, 2023. [https://www.cetri.be/Niger-is-civil-society-against?lang=fr](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/6/thousands-in-niger-rally-in-support-of-coup-leaders;Azizou, Garba Adboul.” Niger: Civil society against democracy?”, <i>CETRI</i>, March 28, 2024. <a href=)

Global trends, domestic challenges

In addition to increasing geopolitical instability and economic fragility, Niger is vulnerable to several global forces that contribute to the weakening of its defence governance. Because of its position in the Sahel as a critical military outpost in the battle against terrorist groups from a Western viewpoint, Niger has been a major recipient of bilateral foreign assistance, specifically from France and the United States, although that changed with the 2023 coup. It is important to recognise the involvement of external actors prioritising securitisation of the region, which has been observed to hamper progress on security sector reforms. Thus, good governance, inclusivity, human rights, and anticorruption continue to be treated as secondary targets by several foreign states and international organisations working on peace and security in the region.¹⁵ As a consequence, international aid has done little to provide security for the more rural areas of the country, and some communities have created their own self-defence militias in response to state failure.¹⁶ The twin pressures of violent extremism in neighbouring countries and terrorist violence on and in its own borders stoke the illegal arms trade in Niger, making it a rising centre for small arms proliferation.¹⁷

The proliferation of small arms can exacerbate security threats. Security provision is hampered by an increase in severe human rights violations against the population including gender-based violence.¹⁸ Furthermore, the complex security situation in some regions of Niger generate additional corruption risks and security challenges with non-state armed actors engaging in income-generating activities.¹⁹ Niger is a

transit migration state, and the EU has been involved in migration management policy, especially in Agadez.²⁰ The city has seen an increase in sex trafficking and other forms of human trafficking, small arms trafficking, and drug trafficking continue to endure.²¹ With few livelihood opportunities, many may turn to illicit activities to survive, and others may view it as an opportunity to pursue illicit activities.²² Law 36-2015, aimed primarily at restraining migration to Europe, criminalised transportation of migrants north from Agadez to Libya and Algeria for onward transition to Europe.²³ The controversial law failed in limiting migration, pushing it underground. By doing so, the law generated a new set of issues, including illegal migration, human rights abuses, and economic frustrations - which is why many are celebrating the junta's decision to abrogate it.²⁴

While Niger is the latest country to join the Sahel's 'coup belt', many of its neighbours continue to reject support from Western governments that are calling for a return to democratic rule.²⁵ This has spurred increasing amounts of aid to Mali and Burkina Faso from Russia, as well as the presence of private military and security companies such as the Wagner Group/Africa Corps that are tasked with providing security for ruling military juntas and their interests. However, the Russia-backed Wagner group is implicated in a number of humanitarian massacres and civilian deaths since their alliance with the Malian military junta.²⁶ There is little to suggest that their presence has led to a decrease in violence, terrorist or otherwise; rather, stability in the country has further worsened.²⁷

The democratic backsliding of the region, coupled with generally weak governance and poor public service provision, serves to further threaten stability. Niger will need robust institutions to maintain stability in the country.

15 Venturi, Bernardo, and Nana Toure. "The Great Illusion: Security Sector Reform in the Sahel." *The International Spectator* 55, no. 4 (2020): 54-68.

16 Kone, Hassane. "Arms Trafficking from Libya to Niger Is Back in Business." *ISS Africa*, July 28, 2022. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/arms-trafficking-from-libya-to-niger-is-back-in-business>

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18 Gender-Based Violence Areas of Responsibilities, Global Protection Cluster, 'Gender-Based Violence. Secondary Data Review', 3 January 2023. <https://globalprotectioncluster.org/AoR/GBV>

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20 Frowd, P.M. 2020. "Producing the 'transit' migration state: international security intervention in Niger." *Third World Quarterly*. 41(2), pp.340–358.

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25 Lawal, Shola. "West Africa's 'coup belt': Did Mali's 2020 army takeover change the region?", *Al Jazeera*, August 27, 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/27/west-africas-coup-belt-did-malis-2020-army-takeover-change-the-region>

26 Doxsee, Catrina, and Jared Thompson. "Massacres, Executions, and Falsified Graves: The Wagner Group's Mounting Humanitarian Cost in Mali." Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 11, 2022. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/massacres-executions-and-falsified-graves-wagner-groups-mounting-humanitarian-cost-mali>

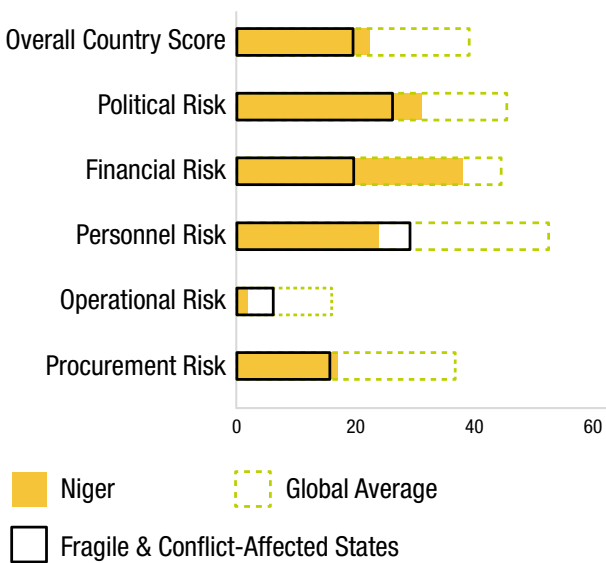
27 Stronski, Paul. "Russia's Growing Footprint in Africa's Sahel Region." Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 28, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/02/russias-growing-footprint-in-africas-sahel-region?lang=en>

Institutional resilience in defence governance

Niger was assessed at a very high level of corruption risk in the 2020 GDI, with weak performance across all risk categories. This is mirrored in the historical trend of other fragile and conflict-affected states, with weak institutions not just in the defence sector, but across government.

Figure 1: 2020 GDI scores across the five risk areas, index averages

GDI average scores across risk areas



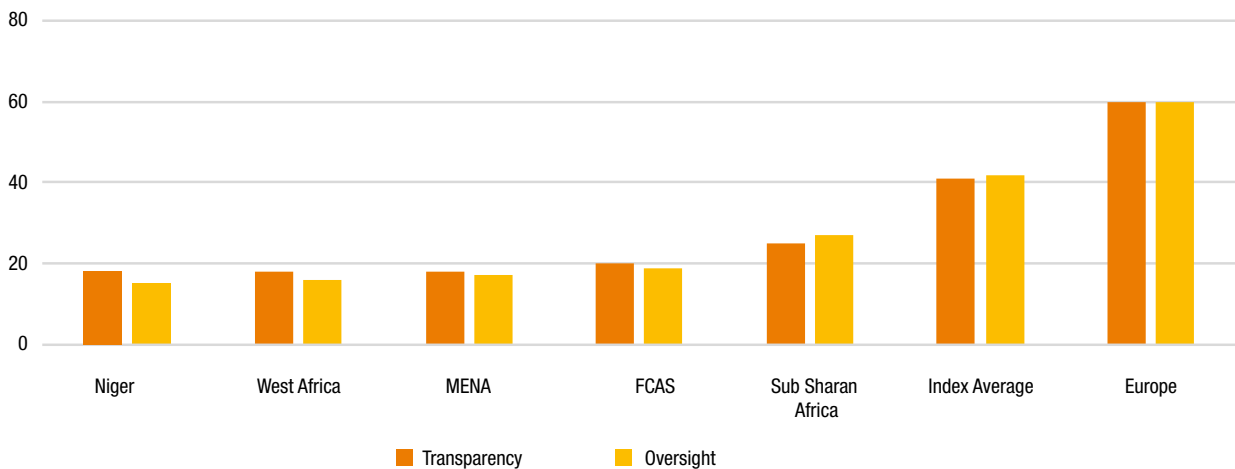
Niger faces a severe lack of transparency and oversight in its defence governance. It falls in the bottom quarter of the GDI 2020, alongside most countries from West Africa, but achieving the lowest score in that region. Scores from the GDI reflect the parallel nature of transparency and oversight, highlighting that they exist in a mutually reinforcing cycle and suggesting that without strong transparency, strong oversight is nearly impossible, and vice versa.

According to the 2013 Decree on defence and security procurement, Niger's defence acquisition plan is not subject to public disclosure and is classified as "top secret," nor is the plan subject to legislative scrutiny by the Security and Defence Committee.

Consistent with the findings of a 2022 audit on state spending that estimated budget discrepancies of approximately \$99 million, budgeting and spending practices in Niger's defence sector also seemed to lack democratic scrutiny.²⁸ Under Issoufou's and Bazoum's governments, the legislature was not presented with a fully detailed budget proposal, and the Defence Committee was given only partial information related to spending on secret items and military intelligence, significantly limiting its ability to contribute to both budget elaboration and oversight.²⁹ Specifically, for defence budgets, there was severely limited oversight because the committee lacked the technical expertise required to do so. Instead, budget elaboration was done entirely by the executive. Following the coup in July 2023, an increase

Figure 2: Results of the 2020 GDI on defence transparency and oversight

GDI 2020: Defence Transparency and Oversight



28 "Niger: NGOs complain over alleged loss of \$99m in state funds", *Al Jazeera*, 13 May, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/13/niger-ngos-file-complaint-over-alleged-loss-of-99-m-in-state-funds>

29 Republic of Niger Ministry of Finance, 'Budget Proposal 2021', 17 September 2020. Republic of Niger Transparency International Defence & Security, Government Defence Integrity Index 2020, Niger Country Assessment and Country Brief. Available here: <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/niger/>



in the level of secrecy around defence expenditure and planning is expected³⁰ with little to no oversight as most institutions, including the National Assembly, were dissolved. The GDI 2020 showed that the defence budget was disclosed to the public, but information was highly aggregated, and a lack of justifications and explanations hindered its legibility. The vast majority of defence spending was not disclosed either. Information was released under three vague expenditure categories of management and administration, security, and peacekeeping. There were also a number of expenditures that pertain to defence and security that fell under the office of the presidency and are thus excluded from Ministry of Defence (MOD) figures.

Ordinance 2024-05, was adopted recently on the 23rd of February, 2024, exempting public procurement and public accounting spending linked to the acquisition of equipment, materials, supplies, as well as the performance of works or services intended for the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) from regular oversight regulations.³¹ The adoption of this Ordinance has been considered as a step backwards in terms of good governance in the defence and security sector.

Before the coup, the legislature received no information on asset disposals, and there was no oversight of the asset disposal process. A 2017 Small Arms Survey gathering data on illicit arms flows, revealed that Niger was lacking comprehensive mechanisms to capture data on arms seizures: "[...] weapons are often stored without any details regarding the seizure and are frequently misidentified. And while these various bodies record

seizures and voluntary submissions, there is no national register of seized weapons and no centralisation of either the weapons or the data about such weapons."³² Moreover, there was also no public disclosure of any kind pertaining to asset disposals and no evidence that the legislature was provided with internal or external audits of military spending. Only one instance of auditing of the ministry of defence has been documented since 2016, and the report was deemed confidential and not released to the public.³³ It is unclear whether it was officially shared with the legislature or the defence and security committee. It is also imperative to note that all these establishments are under threat after the 2023 coup due to the state of suspended constitution.³⁴

There is no evidence of functioning oversight mechanisms for procurement and contracting, nor are audits regularly conducted on military spending. The lack of public disclosure on contracts and military acquisitions, as well as the limited information on procurement processes in the defence sector, makes it impossible for civil society actors to determine whether actual military acquisitions correlate to planning, or funds are being used effectively. A confidential government audit in 2019 found that Niger **lost at least \$137 million** due to procurement malpractice over the last eight years.³⁵ Moreover, the Inspection Générale des Armées estimated that **more than \$320 million worth of deals out of a total of \$875 million were problematic**. The report concluded that deals were significantly overpriced, while the bidding process was often not conducted according to good governance practices. Thus, without a competitive

30 Transparency International Defence and Security. A year after Niger's coup: corruption, violence and human insecurity. What now? 8th August 2024. <https://ti-defence.org/niger-coup-2024-corruption-military-defence-security-insecurity/>

31 Bache, David. "Niger: un décret de la présidence abroge les contrôles sur les dépenses liées à la défense", [Niger: Presidential decree abolishes controls on defence spending] *RFI*. March 10, 2024. <https://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20240310-niger-un-d%C3%A9cret-de-la-pr%C3%A9sidence-abroge-les-contr%C3%B4les-sur-les-d%C3%A9penses-li%C3%A9es-%C3%A0-la-d%C3%A9fense>

32 Savannah de Tessières, "Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger", Small Arms Survey, March 2017. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/measuring-illicit-arms-flows-niger>

33 Transparency International Defence & Security, Government Defence Integrity Index 2020, Niger Country Assessment. <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/niger/>

34 International Institute for Strategic Studies, 'The coup in Niger', August 2023. <https://www.iiss.org/sv/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-coup-in-niger/>

35 Burke, Jason. "Niger lost tens of millions to arms deals malpractice, leaked report alleges", *The Guardian*, 6 August 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/06/niger-lots-tens-of-millions-to-arms-deals-malpractice-leaked-report-alleges>



TI-Niger held a three-day advocacy workshop with parliamentarians, defence officials, and CSOs to support the draft bill proposal on the prevention and prosecution of corruption and related offences in Niger.

bidding process, some deals were never finalised as the purchased equipment was never actually delivered.³⁶ The introduction of a 2016 procurement law requiring state-to-state acquisition of arms was meant to curb corruption associated with direct negotiations with private weapons manufacturers, but because of limited information, it is not clear whether the law has had any effect.

GDI findings also show that institutional resilience to corruption risk among personnel is also quite weak. For instance, Niger's armed forces are not bound by a code of conduct. Aside from an instruction manual on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross, that makes no reference to corruption, there is no overarching framework document regulating conduct.³⁷ Even though the Military Code provides some loose guidance, it lacks the universal and obligatory character of a code of conduct and makes little reference to corruption.³⁸ Furthermore, awareness of this code and education around it are significantly lacking. For this reason, breaches of the Military Code are only occasionally investigated, and prosecutions for cases involving corruption are almost unheard of. In addition to this,

the lack of a legal framework around whistleblowing undermines any reports of abuses, thus further enabling a culture of impunity throughout the sector.

However, Niger's scores on civic engagement indicators match or exceed the index average, reflecting a civically minded public that participates in well-structured consultative practices, and engages in civil demonstrations at times. Even following the coup, women's rights organisations have also been active in civic engagement.³⁹ Outside of government, there is also significant public debate on security and defence issues by civil society, journalists, and academics. The work of ANLC (TI-Niger) represents the resilience of the Nigerien civil society. The chapter undertook a series of initiatives aimed at fostering transparency, cooperation, and anticorruption measures. This included consolidation of the new Citizen Vigilance and Community Watch Committees (C2VCs) and continued advocacy efforts with promising results for the adoption of a new anticorruption law, which received strong support from a parliamentary network and former president Mohamed Bazoum. In the immediate aftermath of the coup in 2023, ANLC continued to adapt its activities to the new political reality, maintaining communication with the

³⁶ Mark Anderson, Khadija Sharife, and Nathalie Prevost, "How a Notorious Arms Dealer Hijacked Niger's Budget and Bought Weapons from Russia", Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), 6 August 2020. <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigation/how-a-notorious-arms-dealer-hijacked-nigers-budget-and-bought-weapons-from-russia>

³⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross, 'Niger: Humanitarian Law Manual for Armed Forces', 25 March 2015. <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/niger-humanitarian-law-manual-armed-forces#:~:text=This%20branch%20of%20law%20protects,fundamental%20rules%20of%20this%20law.>

³⁸ Republic of Niger, 'Act No. 2003-10 of 11 March 2003 setting out the Military Code of Justice', Official Gazette, No. 6, 5 May 2003.

³⁹ UN Women, 'Women's groups in Niger push for justice amid coup and economic crisis', October 25, 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/10/womens-groups-in-niger-push-for-justice-amid-coup-and-economic-crisis>



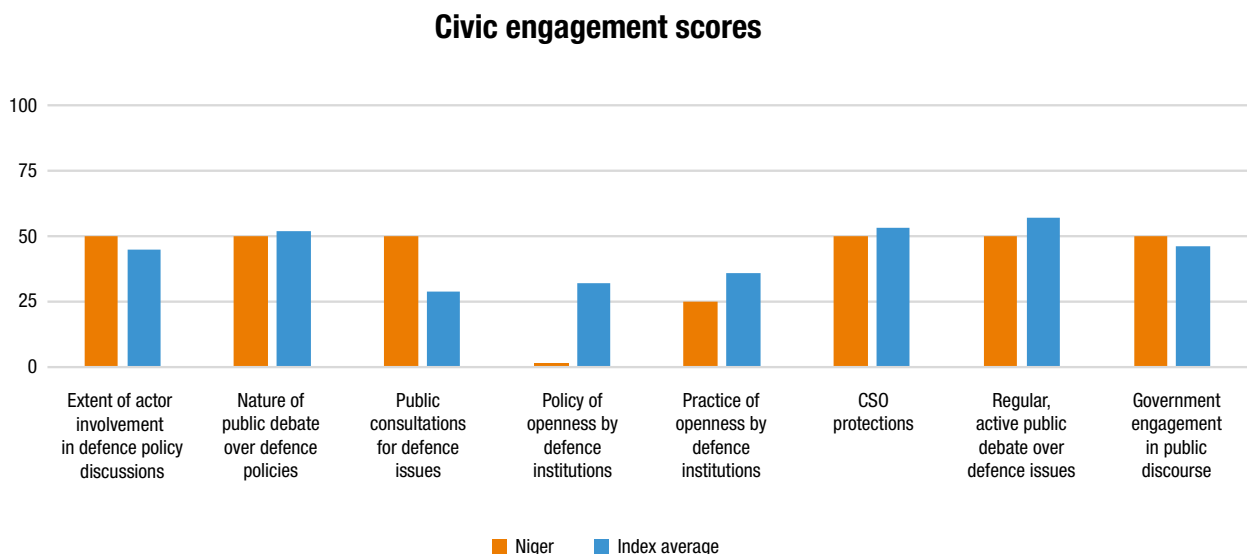
Meeting convened by TI-Niger between parliamentarians, military personnel, and researchers.

C2VCs and the new military governors. Despite another year of political turmoil, the chapter's commitment to anticorruption efforts remains strong and the C2VCs continue operating. ANLC continues to use its strong networks and relationships built with and within the communities to navigate the dynamic and complex political landscape in Niger.

This insistence by civil society actors on engaging in public discourse and making demands of government places Niger in a much stronger position than its weak GDI scores would otherwise indicate. There has also

been considerable work done by both civil society actors and international organisations to establish relationships between the armed forces and civilian communities, as a means of providing better safety and security to local populations. Despite the fact that defence institutions have historically been closed off from civil society engagement, there is distinct pressure for that to change. Therefore, findings on transparency, information access, and external accountability are considered key to identifying a path forward for defence governance reform.

Figure 3: Results of the 2020 GDI on civic engagement





Meeting convened by TI-Niger in Tahoua with local officials, Citizen Vigilance and Community Watch Committees, and local Civil Society Organisations.

Priorities of the Nigerien Defence and Security Committee (DSC) in its October 2021 Action Plan (drafted with the support of DCAF):⁴⁰

- Assess the existing legislation to establish a diagnostic analysis on defence classified information (“secret defence”) with recommendations for follow up.
- Build an understanding in the DSC of gender issues in the security and defence sector.
- Strengthen regional cooperation between parliaments on security and defence, building on regional networks.
- Initiate a debate on the implementation of follow-up mechanisms on recommendations made by the National Assembly as part of parliamentary inquiries.
- Continue building the capacity of the parliament in terms of security and defence sector oversight.
- Strengthen the role of the National Assembly in security and defence procurement oversight.
- Sensitise the population on laws related to the rights of prisoners, including specific rights for women and the youth.
- Further integrate the DSC in the development, implementation and monitoring of Niger’s National Security Policy.

⁴⁰ Morand, Jolie-Ruth, and Keryan Wurlod. “Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Political Transition: Lessons from Niger.” Policy Paper. Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), September 2022. https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/imce/SSAD/Parliament_oversight_in_Niger_Policy_paper_EN.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

While the GDI offers a comprehensive assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses that are crucial for corruption risk mitigation, it is important to understand how its findings can be best applied. Rather than capturing information about one specific area of interest, the GDI captures information about the entire system encompassing defence governance. This means that findings apply to a range of actors (e.g., parliament, civil service, armed forces, media, civil society organisations, etc.), and a range of areas (e.g., policymaking, personnel management, financial management, procurement, operations). As a result, it extends well beyond the remit of what one organisation can address effectively. The expertise needed to address problems will be found across a range of international and national entities. Partnership is thus crucial for effective use of GDI findings.

Due to the unusual situation that Niger is facing with a ruling military junta of unclear duration, these recommendations may not apply all at once. Regardless, information is a foundational element of functioning governance systems, even in the absence of democratically elected leaders. Without information about government's actions and the outcomes of those, it is nearly impossible for reliable budgets to be drafted and executed, for public services to reach citizens, or for funding to arrive at its intended and legitimate destination. Likewise, civil society engagement is a critical element in the ability of the Nigerien government to address the security situation in rural and border areas. Establishing a role for civil society actors and citizens in the development of localised security solutions will foster civil-military relationship-building at the local and sub-national level. Combined with civil society inputs into national security dialogues, this kind of multi-level public engagement can endure even in times of political instability and may help with the return to democratic rule.

The recommendations below distinguish between actions that TI-DS is well-placed to lead in partnership with the TI chapter or other international actors, and actions that provide advisory or advocacy support.

In partnership with ANLC (TI chapter):

1 Promote and continue national policy dialogue between civil society, military and political leaders, and government (including through quarterly-held meetings) where civil society actors are enabled to provide input into national security strategy discussions and implementing policies. Endorse inclusive and civil society-led dialogues to enable transparent progress reporting as well as impact measurement of these initiatives.

- 2** Support collaboration between women's rights organisations and civil society organisations focused on anticorruption. Promote a wider understanding and awareness of sexual forms of corruption, and the relevance of anticorruption for prevention and responses to gender-based violence.⁴¹
- 3** Scrutinise any newly developed anticorruption efforts from the military government and provide guidelines on these efforts together with improving civilian oversight mechanisms of the security forces.
- 4** Draft an internationally accepted range of exceptions for defence and security sectors that can be used in the development of legal frameworks, specifically in the right to information law. This is also important for regulations governing procurement transparency and budget transparency, as well as for understanding the impact of new and existing regulations relating to procurement practices.
- 5** Advocate for public disclosure of critical information about the defence sector, including single source and competitive contracting, military acquisitions, defence income and foreign assistance, external audits, disaggregated expenditures, and asset disposals. This is particularly important in the absence of a right to information law or in the case of a poorly functioning access to information decree.

⁴¹ White, Sabrina. Corruption, the defence and security sector, and sexual and gender-based violence." Transparency International Defence & Security, July 2024. Corruption, the defence and security sector, and sexual and gender-based violence - Transparency International Defence & Security <https://ti-defence.org/publications/>

In partnership with TI chapter and NATO Building Integrity Programme (NATO-BI), Norwegian Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector (CIDS), or Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF):

- 6** Incorporate corruption risk mitigation into military operations, in collaboration with MOD and Armed Forces. Priority areas are:
- Corruption risk in military doctrine and forward planning.⁴²
 - Integration of anticorruption into operational training.
 - Integrity standards in defence personnel management (code of conduct, anti-bribery, recruitment, promotions, anticorruption training, etc).

In partnership with TI chapters in the Sahel and relevant international actors:

- 7** Support the development of a regional civil society initiative on the regulation of private military and security companies, emphasising that this issue is too pervasive for one country to tackle alone and requires collective action.⁴³

In collaboration with, or providing advisory support to, other actors, including national civil society actors and international actors such as donor governments, multilateral institutions, or transnational NGOs:

- 8** Foster civil-military cooperation aiming to:
- Enable tailored and context-specific security solutions.
 - Bring awareness of corruption risks as threats to peace and stability.
 - Advocate for measures to counter small arms proliferation.

- 9** Strengthen legal frameworks, emphasising that well-designed laws provide effective counter-corruption foundations, and that defence and security must be included in any governing laws. If possible, regulations are preferable to executive decrees, as they are more difficult to overturn or rescind. Priority areas are:
- Right to information law, including proactive disclosure.
 - Anticorruption law.
 - Whistleblowing law.

- 10** Strengthen institutional resilience, emphasising that transparency and integrity are critical to building and sustaining effective organisational practices. Priority areas are:
- Parliamentary oversight of the defence sector.
 - Information sharing across and within government – information must be shared with oversight authorities and departments with shared responsibilities; this includes budgets, audits, expenditures, secret items, intelligence, and military acquisition plans.
 - Open budgets, with a focus on public participation, as well as budget transparency and accessibility.
 - Procurement transparency and oversight, such as revising Ordinance No. 2024-05 of 23 February 2024 to include public procurement and public accounting spending linked to the acquisition of equipment, materials, supplies, as well as the performance of works or services intended for the Defence and Security Forces (FDS).



THE EXPERTISE NEEDED
TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS WILL
BE FOUND ACROSS A RANGE OF
**INTERNATIONAL AND
NATIONAL ENTITIES**

⁴² This is an issue across the index, with low scores reported for almost every country assessed.

⁴³ These indicators were not scored, as it was impossible to determine effective policy or practice. Efforts to build coalitions around this issue would help to identify international standards for the GDI on PMSC indicators.



Transparency International (TI) is the world's leading non-governmental anti-corruption organisation, addressing corruption and corruption risk in its many forms through a network of more than 100 national chapters worldwide.

Transparency International Defence & Security (TI-DS) works to reduce corruption in defence and security sectors worldwide.



Association Nigérienne de Lutte Contre La Corruption (ANLC) was established in 2001, and became a national chapter of Transparency International in 2006. ANLC is the leading civil society organisation dedicated to fighting corruption, as well as promoting integrity and good governance in Niger. Its vision is an integrated, corruption-free Niger.

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