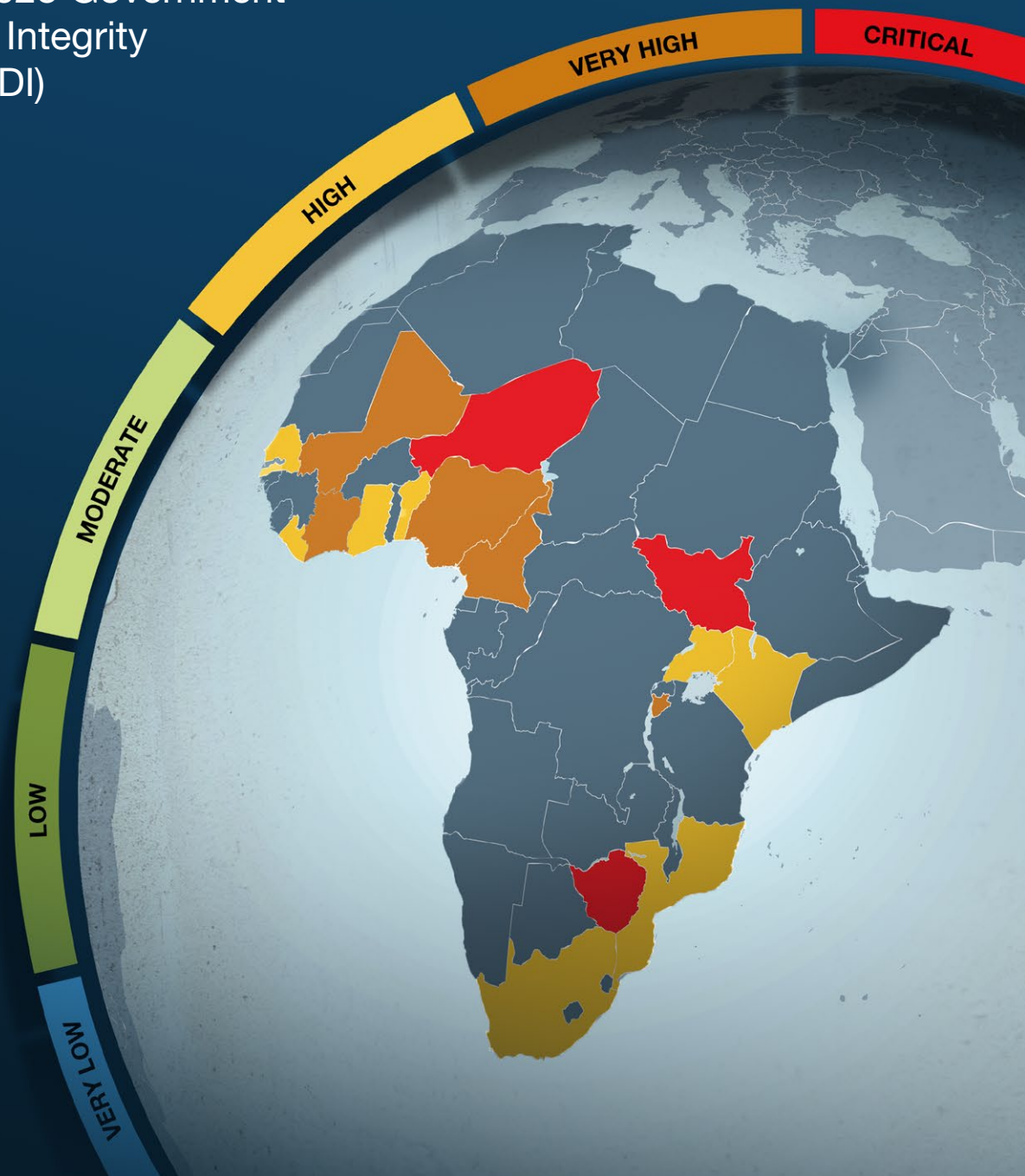


RESILIENCE AT RISK: DEFENCE GOVERNANCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Regional analysis drawing
on the 2025 Government
Defence Integrity
Index (GDI)



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

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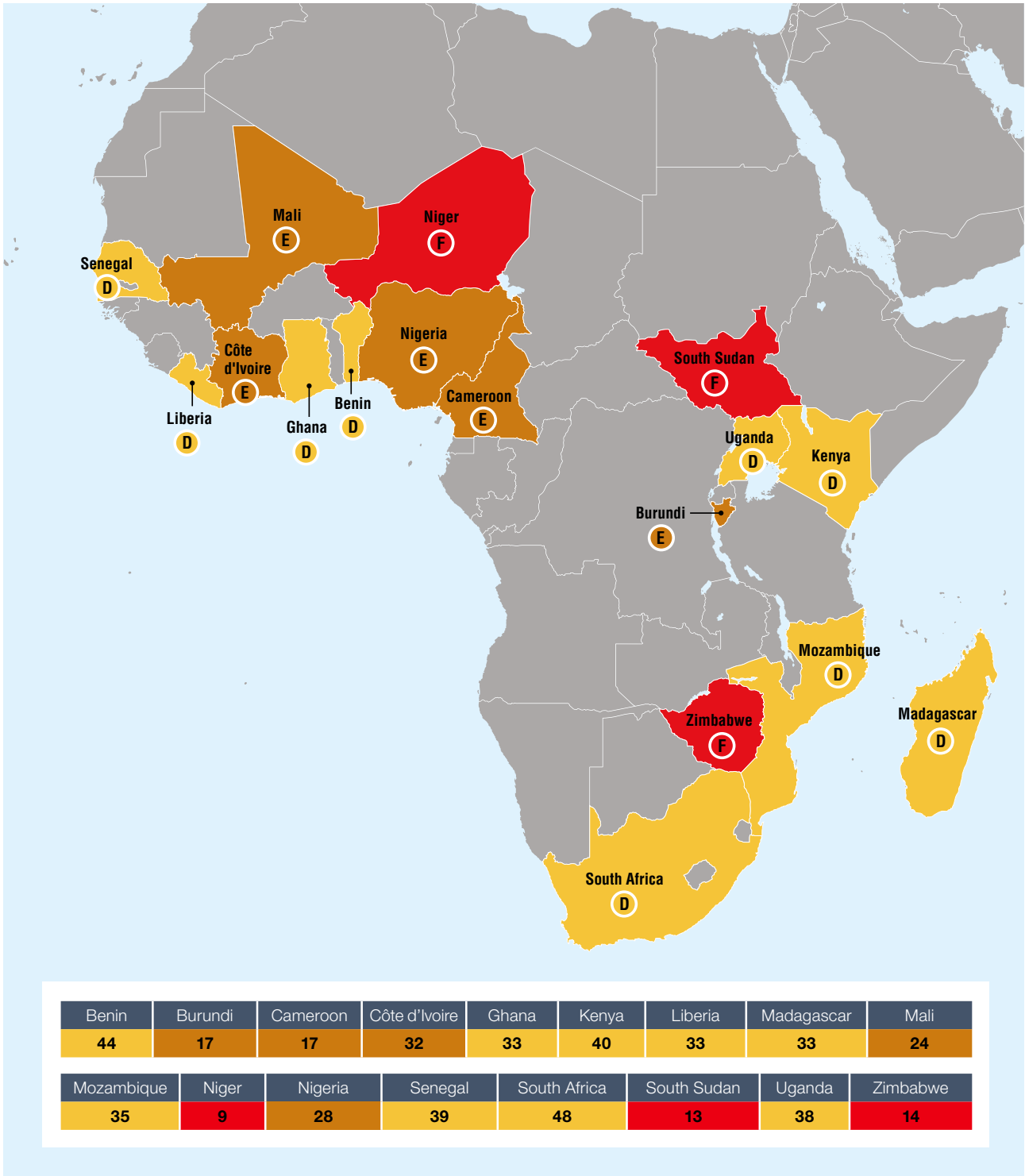
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2025 GDI SCORES: CORRUPTION RISKS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



Scoring rubric with levels of institutional resilience and corruption risk

- **A** Very low corruption risk **83 – 100**
 - **B** Low corruption risk **67 – 82**
 - **C** Moderate corruption **50 – 66**
- **D** High corruption risk **33 – 49**
 - **E** Very high corruption risk **17 – 32**
 - **F** Critical corruption risk **0 – 16**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Situated within a global landscape defined by a new era of militarisation, where rising defence expenditures frequently outpace the development of institutional safeguards, this report explores how opaque defence governance, weak oversight and embedded corruption risks undermine security sector governance and democratisation. Drawing on regional findings from the 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI), this report assesses defence corruption risks across 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While military secrecy is often invoked as a prerequisite for national security, the evidence reveals that transparency is, in fact, a strategic enabler of peace and stability.

Violent extremism and unconstitutional regime changes in Sub-Saharan Africa have exacerbated state fragility and human insecurity across the region. Combined with this intense instability, the secrecy surrounding national defence establishments enables corruption to operate unchecked within the sector. In Sub-Saharan Africa, corruption has hollowed out military effectiveness, enabled the diversion of arms to non-state actors, fuelled grievances that drive violent extremism, and undercut public confidence in state institutions. In fragile environments, the leakage of dangerous weapons can strengthen armed groups and criminal networks, reinforcing cycles of conflict, insecurity, and political instability, including recurring coups.

Continuing with Transparency International Defence and Security's (TI-DS) effort to address corruption in the defence sector, this report provides the first comprehensive update on the state of institutional resilience to corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2020. It leverages the 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) Sub-Saharan Africa dataset, the only research tool that thoroughly examines the quality of defence sector institutional controls.

Democratic backsliding and resilience across Sub-Saharan Africa

Since 2020, the security environment in Sub-Saharan Africa has been shaped by the convergence of violent extremism, armed conflict, organised crime, political instability, weak rule of law, and repeated unconstitutional changes of government. The region faces multiple, overlapping security threats that are placing increasing pressure on defence and security institutions. In response, governments have increasingly relied on military solutions to address internal security challenges, expanding the role and resources of defence establishments.

At the same time, the region's democratic trajectory reflects a complex interplay between institutional resilience and sustained backsliding. While public commitment to democratic governance remains, confidence in democratic performance has declined. In some contexts, this erosion of trust has translated into growing tolerance for military intervention when civilian authorities are viewed as corrupt or incapable of delivering security and public services.

These trends directly shape defence governance. As democratic checks weaken and executive authority expands, defence and security establishments become more insulated from scrutiny, creating conditions in which corruption risks can proliferate and persist.

Table 1. State of democracy in the Sub-Saharan African countries assessed in the 2025 GDI

Closed autocracies	Electoral autocracies	Electoral democracies	Liberal democracies
Mali, Niger, South Sudan	Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Uganda	Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal	South Africa

Source: *Our World in Data, Data Source V-Dem, 2024.*

2025 GDI findings: High-priority risk areas in defence sectors across the region

The 2025 GDI findings reveal systemic challenges in three major governance areas:



Financial transparency is similarly weak, particularly in relation to secret spending and off-budget expenditure. Defence budgets are frequently aggregated, audit access is restricted, and oversight of actual expenditures remains limited, reducing the traceability of defence spending. This is reflected in performance concentrated in the lower score ranges, with only two countries exceeding 50/100.



Procurement remains a systemic high-risk area, with around 71% of assessed countries falling within very high or critical risk scoring band. This reflects restricted competition, extensive use of exemptions, and weak oversight. Processes are frequently weakly formalised, enabling discretionary decision-making and limiting transparency across planning, contract awards, and delivery.



Military operations present critical corruption risks. With a regional average score of 12/100, institutional safeguards are weakest in operational contexts, where limited transparency and urgent decision-making create vulnerabilities in logistics, contracting, and resource allocation. The absence of anti-corruption measures in military doctrine, planning, and training further exacerbates these risks.

Across all areas of governance, four consistent risk patterns were observed in the 2025 GDI findings for the region:

- 1 Secrecy and opacity play a central role.** Defence institutions routinely invoke national security to restrict access to budgets, expenditures, and procurement data, often beyond legitimate needs.

 - **In practice, 16 out of 17 countries score 0 on secret spending, indicating near-total opacity in classified defence expenditure.**
- 2 A persistent gap exists between legal frameworks and implementation.** While most countries have established anti-corruption laws and oversight mechanisms, enforcement remains weak, with formal provisions rarely translating into consistent accountability.

 - **This gap is stark in access to information: while the average legal framework scores 44/100, effectiveness drops to just 7/100.**
- 3 Oversight institutions are systematically constrained.** Parliamentary and audit bodies often lack access to information, technical expertise, and independence, while executive dominance further limits their effectiveness.

 - **In practice, parliamentary oversight is limited or ineffective in 65% of countries, despite 88% having formal mandates on paper.**
- 4 Corruption risks are reinforced by governance conditions in high-discretion environments.** Areas involving rapid decision-making, limited transparency, and exceptional procedures—such as operational deployments, emergency spending, and procurement—are particularly exposed, with standard controls frequently bypassed.

 - **No country assessed explicitly addresses corruption risks in its military doctrine, underscoring the absence of systematic safeguards in operational planning and execution.**

Key drivers weakening oversight



Executive dominance

Centralised executive control weakens parliamentary and audit independence, and limits scrutiny of defence decision-making.



Disrupted democratic processes

Coups, transitions, and military-led governments suspend or weaken formal oversight institutions.



Defence exceptionalism and secrecy

Security exemptions and over-classification restrict access to defence information and reduce accountability.



Capacity and resource constraints

Limited expertise, staffing, and financial autonomy weaken oversight effectiveness.

Key drivers enabling secrecy and procurement opacity



Ambiguous national security justifications

broad security exemptions allow authorities to withhold information beyond legitimate needs.



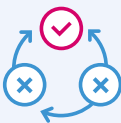
Concentration of decision-making authority

Executive control over classification and procurement limits independent scrutiny.



Fragmented disclosure

Defence budgets and procurement data are disclosed inconsistently and incompletely.



Normalisation of exceptional procedures

Emergency procurement and exceptional measures increasingly operate as standard practice.

Key drivers undermining integrity in military operations



Weak institutionalisation of corruption risk management

Corruption is rarely recognised as an operational threat within military doctrine, planning frameworks, or deployment procedures, resulting in limited prevention and mitigation measures.



Reactive rather than anticipatory risk management

Corruption risks are rarely integrated into operational planning processes, resulting in responses that occur after vulnerabilities have materialised rather than being identified and mitigated in advance.



Insufficient operational integrity capacity

Anti-corruption and integrity considerations are rarely integrated into routine military education and pre-deployment preparation, leaving personnel ill-equipped to respond to corruption risks in the field.



Reliance on high-risk contracting

Operations depend heavily on local contractors, emergency procurement, and complex supply chains, creating opportunities for rent-seeking, favouritism, and diversion of resources.



Risks of inaction

In a context of evolving security threats, shifting regional power dynamics, and rising defence expenditure across Sub-Saharan Africa, strengthening transparency and accountability in the defence sector is a strategic necessity. Without meaningful reforms, governments risk being ill-equipped to respond effectively to increasingly complex security challenges.

Failure to address defence governance weaknesses carries significant consequences.

- At the political level, fragile defence integrity undermines democratic gains by concentrating power within the executive, weakening civilian oversight, and enabling the consolidation of authoritarian practices.
- At the financial level, opaque systems and limited oversight enable the misallocation and diversion of substantial public resources, reducing the funds available for operational readiness and capability development.

- At the operational level, corruption directly affects the effectiveness of security forces.
- Mismanaged procurement, inadequate resource allocation, and compromised command structures can reduce the ability of armed forces to respond to threats, increasing the likelihood of mission failure. This is particularly critical in regions facing acute insecurity.

More broadly, the absence of robust oversight and accountability mechanisms erodes public trust in defence and security institutions. This loss of legitimacy can fuel grievances, reduce cooperation between populations and security forces, and create conditions that armed groups can exploit. These dynamics risk creating a destabilising feedback loop. Weak defence governance contributes to insecurity; insecurity, in turn, justifies further opacity and exceptional measures, further weakening oversight. Left unaddressed, this cycle can accelerate political instability, increase the likelihood of unconstitutional changes of government, and undermine regional and international security efforts.

Policy implications and reform priorities

The findings highlight that strengthening defence governance in Sub-Saharan Africa requires moving beyond formal frameworks towards effective implementation.



Defence oversight

- **Enhance parliamentary scrutiny:** Parliamentary defence committees should be empowered to summon expert witnesses, access relevant documentation, and hold defence officials accountable for their decisions. Parliamentary recommendations should be systematically reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into policy and practice by Ministries of Defence.
- **Empower audit institutions:** Governments should ensure that audit bodies have access to the necessary information to conduct comprehensive scrutiny of the defence sector. Internal and external audit bodies should have the expertise, independence, and mandate to conduct regular financial and performance audits, while audit recommendations should be systematically considered and acted upon by Ministries of Defence.
- **Improve procurement integrity:** Governments and Ministries of Defence should establish comprehensive procurement assessment of needs based on a national security strategy that guides future acquisitions planning and avoids opportunistic purchases. These assessments of needs and their implementation should be reviewed by external auditors and parliaments.



Access to information and secrecy

- **Reinforce access to information legal frameworks:** Governments should adopt or strengthen comprehensive access-to-information legislation that explicitly applies to the defence sector. These frameworks should define the scope of permissible secrecy, establish disclosure obligations, and include independent appeal mechanisms to ensure accountability.
- **Improve implementation through clear guidance and legal standards:** Governments should adopt practical guidance based on established standards such as the 2014 Tshwane Principles. This includes applying harm and public interest tests to determine whether information should be withheld, and providing training to legal officers and public officials responsible for classification and disclosure decisions.
- **Limit excessive secrecy in defence procurement:** Governments should review and narrow the use of classification in procurement processes, ensuring that secrecy is applied only where strictly necessary and proportionate. Legal provisions allowing national security exemptions should be clearly defined and subject to oversight, with minimum transparency requirements maintained throughout the procurement cycle.



Military operations and integrity framework

- **Integrate corruption risks into military doctrine and planning:** Governments should develop or update military doctrines to explicitly recognise corruption as an operational risk. This includes embedding anti-corruption considerations into operational planning, logistics, and contracting processes to ensure that integrity is treated as a core component of mission effectiveness.
- **Institutionalise comprehensive anti-corruption training for military and civilian personnel:** Implement annual anti-corruption general training for all ranks encompassing different themes identifying corruption, bribery, conflicts of interests and reporting corruption. Implement specific pre-deployment training to military operations and tackling corruption risks associated contracting during in operations
- **Strengthen and operationalise ethical frameworks:** Governments should develop, update, and widely disseminate clear and comprehensive codes of conduct for both military and civilian defence personnel. These frameworks should provide practical guidance on managing corruption risks and be supported by regular training and enforcement mechanisms.
- **Enhance reporting mechanisms and whistleblower protections:** Ministries of Defence should establish secure, confidential, and accessible reporting channels for corruption-related concerns. Robust legal and institutional protections for whistleblowers must be implemented and enforced to prevent retaliation and encourage reporting.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and scope of the report

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face a range of interconnected security and governance challenges, including violent extremism, armed conflict, political instability, and repeated unconstitutional changes of government.¹ These dynamics place increasing demands on defence institutions while reinforcing pressures for secrecy and exceptional decision-making. In such environments, corruption can become a significant security risk, diverting resources, weakening oversight, undermining operational effectiveness, and reducing public confidence in state institutions.^{2 3}

Against this backdrop, this report provides the first comprehensive update on institutional resilience to corruption in the defence sector across Sub-Saharan Africa since 2020. Drawing on the 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI), it assesses the management of corruption risks across 17 countries in five key risk areas: political, financial, personnel, operational, and procurement.

Situated within a global landscape defined by a new era of militarisation, where rising defence expenditures frequently outpace the development of institutional safeguards,⁴ this report explores how opaque defence governance, weak oversight and embedded corruption risks undermine security sector governance and democratisation. While military secrecy is often invoked as a prerequisite for national security, the evidence

reveals that transparency is, in fact, a strategic enabler of peace and stability.^{5 6}

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, corruption risks in defence governance are shaped by a complex combination of political, institutional, and contextual dynamics. Many countries face persistent security challenges, including internal conflict, insurgency, and regional instability. At the same time, some countries are experiencing periods of political disruption, including coups and transitional governments. These dynamics often expand the role of defence institutions in domestic security while placing additional pressure on defence budgets. In such contexts, secrecy, exceptional procedures, and limited scrutiny can become embedded in decision-making, increasing corruption risks across the sector. Although countries across West, East, and Southern Africa face similar governance pressures, their responses vary depending on critical factors of political stability, institutional capacity, and the extent to which governance frameworks are implemented in practice.

Within this context, this report focuses on three core themes that represent significant governance challenges across the region:

First, it examines how **formal oversight institutions are under strain**, analysing the functioning of parliamentary scrutiny and administrative oversight mechanisms, including internal and external audit systems.

Second, it explores how **secrecy and classification practices shape defence finances and procurement**, often creating opaque environments where financial decisions and acquisition processes bypass effective scrutiny.

Corruption is an enabler of weak security outcomes

Corruption in the defence sector poses significant risks to the effective use of public resources, and national security outcomes. When oversight mechanisms are weak and decision-making processes lack transparency, defence institutions risk misallocating resources, weakening operational effectiveness, and creating opportunities for the diversion of funds, equipment, and weapons. These dynamics can lead to instability and may fuel conflict. Defence governance risks can also erode public trust in security institutions and weaken the relationship between defence forces and the societies they are meant to protect. In this regard, stronger management of corruption risks in defence establishments ensures that armed forces operate responsibly, resources are used efficiently, and that defence institutions remain accountable.

1 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Sabotaging Peace: Corruption as a Threat to International Peace and Security", London, April 2025.

2 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Betrayed by the guardians: The human toll of corruption in defence and security", London, May 2024.

3 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Securing integrity, fostering peace: Strategy 2024-2026", London, 2023.

4 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Trojan horse tactics: Unmasking the imperative for transparency in military spending", London, April 2024.

5 Transparency International Defence and Security, "GDI 2020 Global Report: Disruption, democratic governance, and corruption risk in defence institutions", London, 2021.

6 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Sabotaging Peace: Corruption as a Threat to International Peace and Security", London, April 2025.

Third, it analyses **corruption risks in military operations**, where weak national security strategies, limited operational guidelines, and operational pressures can undermine monitoring and accountability during deployments.

While not all the Sub-Saharan African countries in the 2025 GDI featured in the 2020 GDI, 11 countries are present in both sets of assessments. In addition, the report also offers a comparative perspective by examining developments between 2020 and 2025.

This report also provides lessons essential to democratisation and security sector governance policy and practice. Specifically, the report moves the debate from *whether to reform* to the critical pathways of *how to build integrity*.

For practitioners, the research serves as an evidence-based diagnostic tool to identify weak links in defence activities such as procurement and personnel management, areas where analysts have identified corruption susceptibilities.⁷

For policymakers, it provides a framework to integrate anti-corruption measures directly into national and multilateral security frameworks in a manner that resolves the longstanding tension between ‘security-first’ and ‘governance-first’ approaches.⁸

In doing so, the report accentuates the call for defence institutions to not only be accountable to the executive but also to the citizens they are expected to protect.

1.2 Regional context: Defence governance in SSA

Sub-Saharan Africa’s democratic trajectory over the past five years reflects a complex interplay between institutional resilience and sustained backsliding. While public commitment to democratic governance remains, confidence in democratic performance has declined, particularly where governments are perceived as ineffective or unaccountable. In some contexts, this erosion of trust has translated into growing tolerance for military intervention when civilian authorities are viewed as corrupt or incapable of delivering security and public services.⁹

These broader regional trajectories have not manifested uniformly across countries. First, some states—such as Ghana, Kenya, Senegal— demonstrate democratic resilience, suggesting that strong institutions and active civil society can sustain accountability.¹⁰

Second, other countries exhibit more subtle forms of democratic erosion. Political competition has been constrained through restrictions on opposition actors, limitations on media freedom, and the narrowing of civic space. Constitutional changes modifying term limits, age requirements, or eligibility criteria—observed in countries such as Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, and Benin—have reinforced executive dominance.¹¹

Third, more acute democratic ruptures have occurred through unconstitutional changes of government. For the past 5 years, there have been 11 successful military takeovers, illustrating a resurgence of military intervention in politics and a breakdown of civilian control.¹² These trends directly shape defence governance. As democratic checks weaken and executive authority expands, defence and security establishments become more insulated from scrutiny, creating conditions in which corruption risks can flourish and persist.

Corruption within defence and security institutions carries distinct risks. Corruption in defence directly affects the state’s use of force and its ability to provide security. The diversion of resources through opaque procurement, off-budget expenditure, patronage-based promotions, or payroll fraud weakens operational readiness and distorts strategic planning. In fragile or conflict-affected contexts, such practices directly undermine peace, stability, and security.¹³

Defence governance concerns how authority is exercised over defence institutions, resources, and decision-making. In a region confronting rising conflict levels, unconstitutional power seizures, and growing institutional stress, strengthening defence integrity is not a secondary reform agenda but a core component of democratic resilience. In this light, the GDI provides a structured framework to assess corruption risks within defence sectors and identify pathways for reform at a critical time for the region.

7 N’dri, L. M., & Kakinaka, M., “Corruption, ICT and military spending in Sub-Saharan Africa,” Defence and Peace Economics, 2023.

8 These approaches represent the inherent tension between exempting security institutions from transparency because of security reasons and demanding their transparency and accountability. Good Security Sector Governance does not require the elimination of secrecy. Rather, it requires that secrecy be proportionate, independently verified, and subject to oversight by bodies with appropriate clearances.

9 AfroBarometer, “Africans’ commitment to democracy undermined by poor political performance, but not economic failures”, Afrobarometer inaugural flagship report reveals,” July 2024.

10 Brookings, “Prospects for Democratic Resilience in Africa during uncertain times,” September 2025.

11 Ibid.

12 Institute for Security Studies, “Tackling democratic subversions is the pathway to preventing coups in Africa,” January 21, 2026.

13 Transparency International Defence and Security, “Sabotaging Peace: Corruption as a Threat to International Peace and Security”, London, April 2025.

What is the Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI)?

The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) is designed to measure institutional resilience to corruption in the defence sector, by focusing on both policymaking and public sector governance in defence establishments. It provides a framework of good practice that promotes accountable, transparent, and responsible governance in the defence establishment. The index recognises that:

- Corruption within the defence and security sector limits a country’s ability to defend itself and provide meaningful security to its population.

- The secrecy that often envelops the defence sector wastes resources and weakens public institutions, enabling diversion of state resources for private gain through defence institutions.
- Effective state institutions play a pivotal role in preventing the waste of public funds, the abuse of power, and fraud within the defence and security sector.

The index consists of five main risk areas: *policymaking and political affairs; finances; personnel management; military operations; and procurement.*

Q	No. of Questions	Total 77
i	No. of Indicators	Total 212

POLICYMAKING AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS	Defence Policymaking	Q 7 i 24	Anti-corruption Policy & Institutions	Q 4 i 9	Organised Crime	Q 2 i 5	Export Controls	Q 1 i 3
	Defence Budgets & Revenue	Q 7 i 21	Intelligence Services	Q 2 i 5	Natural Resources	Q 1 i 5		
FINANCES	Special Budget Items	Q 4 i 7	Asset Disposals	Q 2 i 6				
	Private Sector Activity	Q 3 i 6	Defence Expenditures	Q 1 i 4				
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT	Payroll, Promotions, Appointments, Rewards	Q 6 i 16	Conscription & Recruitment	Q 2 i 6	Leadership	Q 2 i 5		
	Values & Standards	Q 5 i 17	Whistleblowing & High-risk Positions	Q 2 i 6				
MILITARY OPERATIONS	Anti-corruption Training & Monitoring	Q 3 i 6	Forward Planning	Q 1 i 2				
	Private Military Contractors	Q 1 i 3	Military Doctrine	Q 1 i 2				
PROCUREMENT	Technical Requirements / Specifications	Q 7 i 18	Contract Award & Delivery	Q 3 i 10	Arms Deals	Q 2 i 4		
	Competition in Procurement	Q 3 i 10	Offsets	Q 3 i 7	Agents / Brokers	Q 1 i 2		

Continued on next page

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

The indicators allow the GDI to drill down in fine detail on a variety of issues across the broad field of defence sector governance. In order to provide a broad and comprehensive reflection of these risk areas, the index assesses both legal frameworks and implementation, as well as resources and outcomes. This is intended to capture the implementation gap between law and practice,

and target areas for reform to narrow this gap. The scoring rubric has five levels of scores from 0-100, with the highest score indicating the most robust institutional resilience to corruption for the area.

For more information about the methodology, please see the methods section of this report or the *GDI Methods Paper*, available on the GDI website.

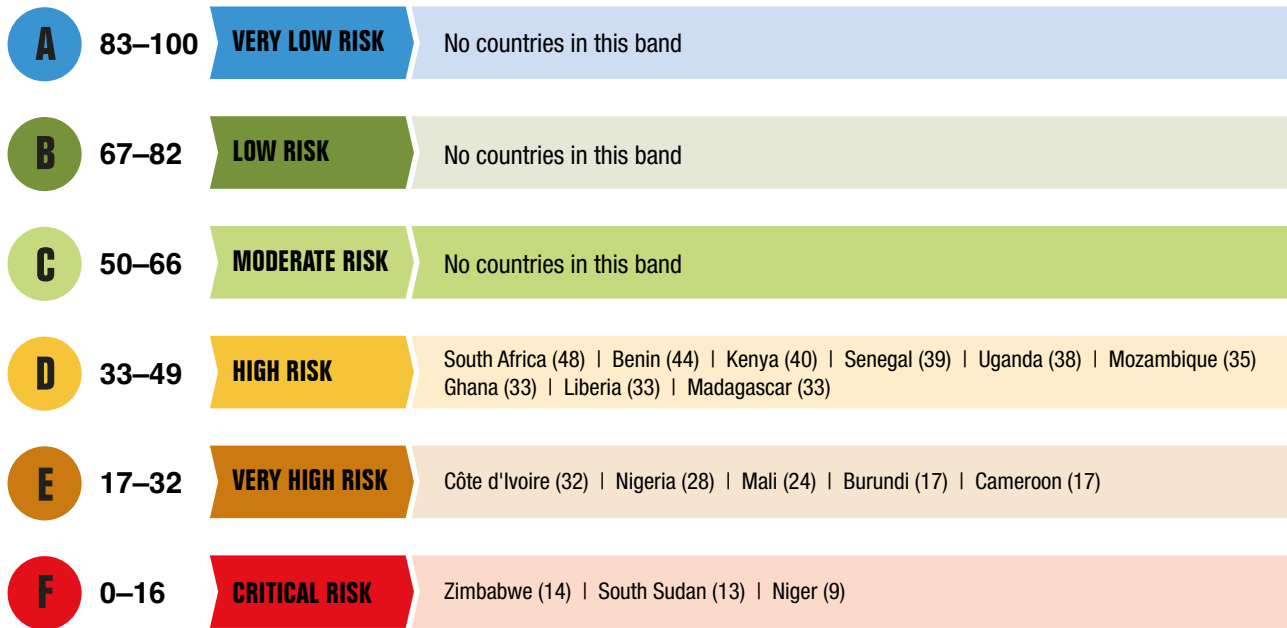


2. REGIONAL OVERVIEW: COMPARATIVE DEFENCE GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE

The 2025 GDI findings reveal that corruption risk remains a systemic feature of defence governance across Sub-Saharan Africa, with no country achieving a low or moderate corruption risk score overall.

Figure 1. Distribution of countries by scoring band

Overall 2025 GDI scores – Sub Saharan Africa



The 2025 GDI findings show that all Sub-Saharan countries in the index face critical to high corruption risk in their defence sectors. Figure 1 displays the overall score distribution for the region. Scores across thematic risk areas demonstrate that military operations face the most critical corruption risk (12/100), followed by procurement (24/100), and financial (29/100) (Figure 2).

Only one country falls within the lowest scoring band (Band F – critical corruption risk), making personnel management the strongest-performing governance area in the region (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Regional average scores by GDI risk area

17 Countries	Political Risk	D	37
	Financial Risk	E	29
	Personnel Risk	D	45
	Operational Risk	F	12
	Procurement Risk	E	24

Figure 3. Country performance across GDI risk areas

Overall 2025 GDI scores by risk area

Defence Policymaking and Political Affairs		Defence Finances		Defence Personnel Management		Military Operations		Defence Procurement	
South Africa	62	South Africa	79	Mozambique	60	Benin	33	Senegal	45
Ghana	60	Kenya	51	Uganda	60	Côte d'Ivoire	27	South Africa	41
Benin	52	Uganda	48	Kenya	58	Senegal	27	Madagascar	38
Kenya	50	Benin	41	Benin	56	Liberia	18	Benin	35
Uganda	44	Liberia	41	South Africa	55	Mozambique	17	Mozambique	33
Senegal	42	Senegal	33	Côte d'Ivoire	53	Madagascar	15	Kenya	32
Mozambique	38	Madagascar	30	Nigeria	50	Nigeria	12	Liberia	31
Côte d'Ivoire	37	Côte d'Ivoire	28	Senegal	50	Uganda	12	Ghana	30
Nigeria	37	Ghana	27	Ghana	47	Kenya	10	Uganda	26
Madagascar	36	Mozambique	27	Madagascar	44	Burundi	8	Nigeria	23
Liberia	35	Mali	25	Liberia	41	Cameroon	7	Mali	20
Mali	28	Nigeria	16	Mali	39	Mali	7	Côte d'Ivoire	18
Zimbabwe	27	Burundi	14	Cameroon	35	Ghana	4	Zimbabwe	12
South Sudan	26	Cameroon	13	Burundi	29	South Africa	2	Burundi	11
Cameroon	23	South Sudan	13	Zimbabwe	24	Niger	0	Cameroon	10
Burundi	21	Niger	10	Niger	21	South Sudan	0	South Sudan	9
Niger	12	Zimbabwe	7	South Sudan	16	Zimbabwe	0	Niger	4



The consistency of the GDI methodology (see Annex A) in 2020 and 2025 allows for an analysis on the transformations in the region's defence sector corruption risk, focusing on the 11 countries that appear in both iterations of the index (Figure 4).¹⁴

Sub-Saharan Africa's average defence sector management of corruption risk improved by 1.3 points between 2020 and 2025, with the region remaining in the Band E ('very high' corruption risk). Its institutional resilience to corruption continues to be very low, with a median regional score of 26.9/100.

Figure 4. Comparison of overall GDI scores across the 2020 and 2025 iterations

Countries	Overall Score GDI 2020	Overall Score GDI 2025
Cameroon	13	17
Côte d'Ivoire	22	32
Ghana	23	33
Kenya	35	40
Mali	20	24
Niger	22	9
Nigeria	22	28
South Africa	57	48
South Sudan	11	13
Uganda	38	38
Zimbabwe	20	14

¹⁴ Methodological note: While the GDI methodology remained consistent between 2020 and 2025, the country samples are not fully identical. The 2025 Sub-Saharan Africa assessment covers 17 countries selected based on factors including defence relevance, political and security developments. As a result, some countries assessed in 2020 were not included in the 2025 iteration.

Figure 5. Changes in regional average scores across GDI risk areas, 2020–2025

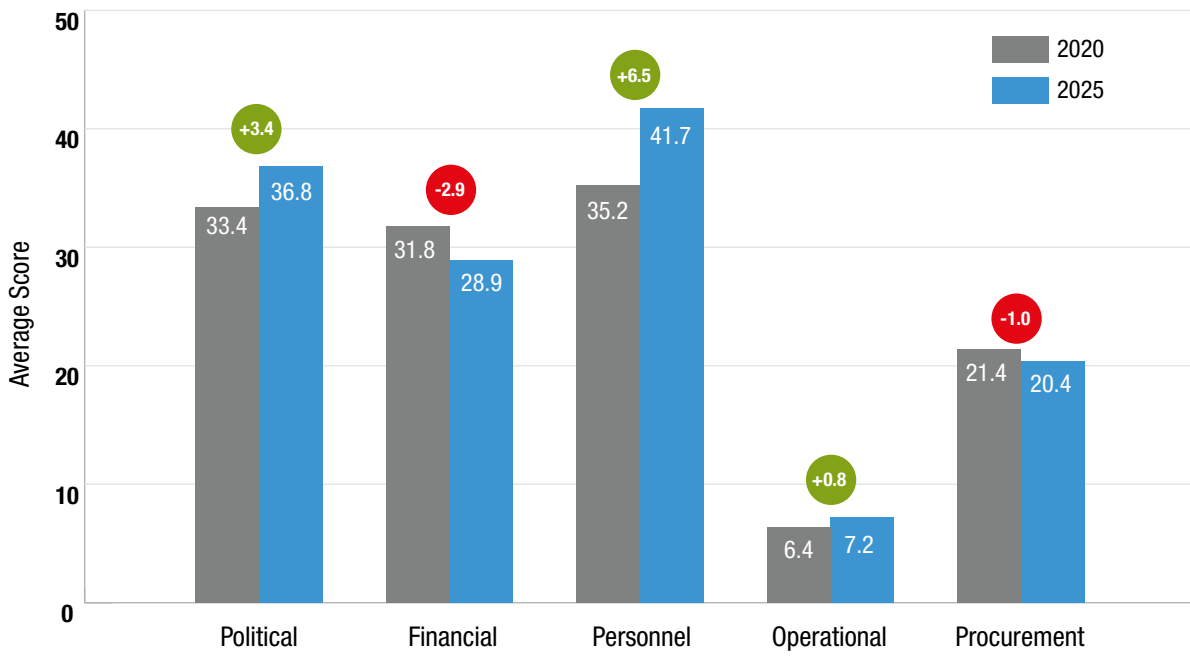
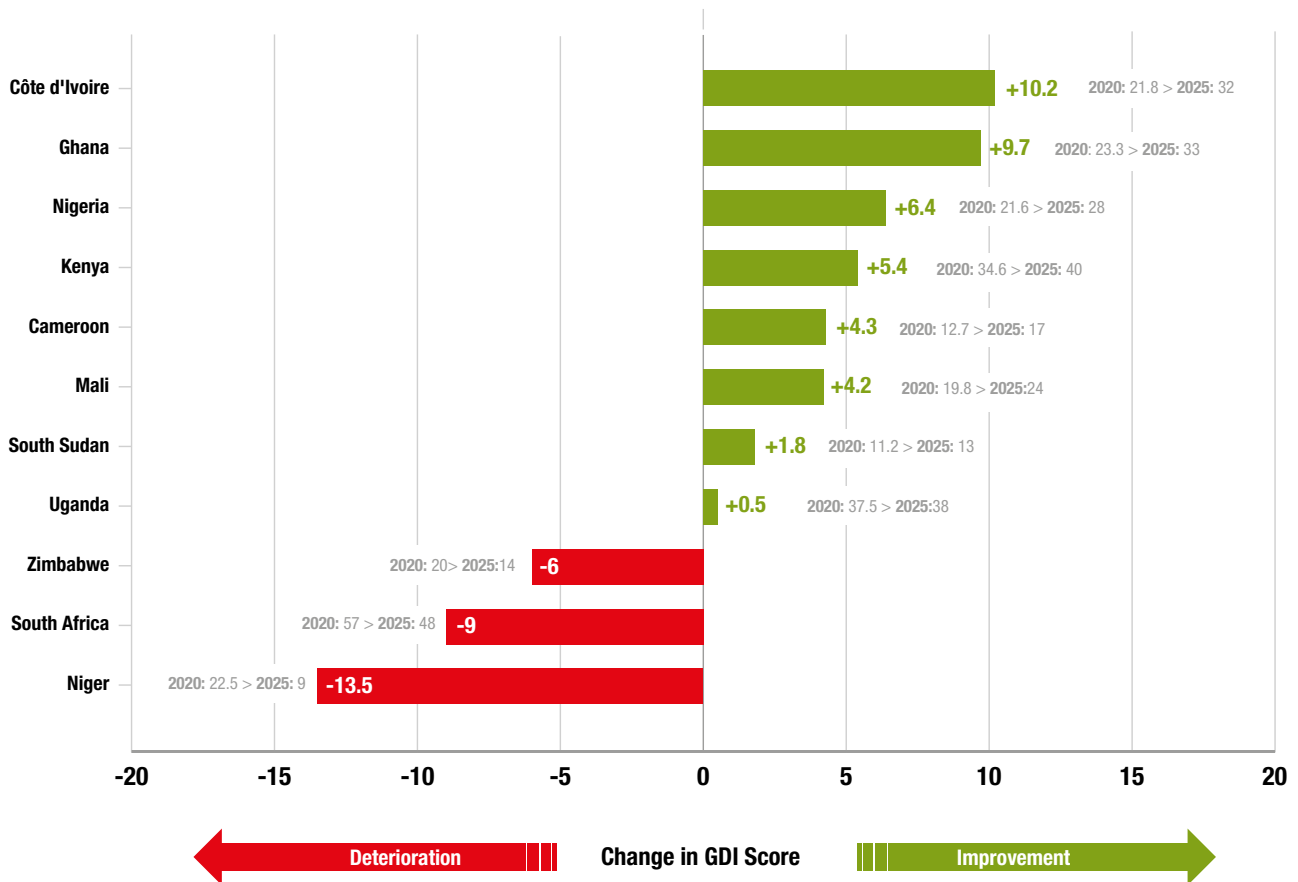


Figure 6. Country-level score changes over time



From 2020 to 2025, personnel risk shows the most significant improvement, increasing by 6.5 on average (Figure 5). Political risk also slightly improves (+3.4), while operational risk remains critically low despite slight gains (+0.8). By contrast, the financial risk area declines (-2.9), and procurement risk remains stagnant (-1.0) indicating limited progress (Figure 5).

Personnel management recorded the strongest improvements between 2020 and 2025, but progress remains uneven across assessed countries.

These aggregate trends, however, involve significant variation at the country level (Figure 6). While regional averages show modest improvement overall, performance across countries is uneven. Approximately two-thirds of the 11 countries assessed in both iterations recorded improvements in their overall GDI scores between 2020 and 2025, while the remainder experienced declines.

Côte d'Ivoire (+10.2), Ghana (+9.7), Nigeria (+6.4), Kenya (+5.4), Cameroon (+4.3), Mali (+4.2), South Sudan (+1.8), and Uganda (+0.5) recorded improvements in their overall scores. By contrast, Niger (-13.5), South Africa (-9.0), and Zimbabwe (-6.0) have experienced the most significant reversals. The GDI country briefs provide further insights into these dynamics.¹⁵

15 Transparency International Defence & Security, "2025 GDI Country Brief Analysis", March 2026.

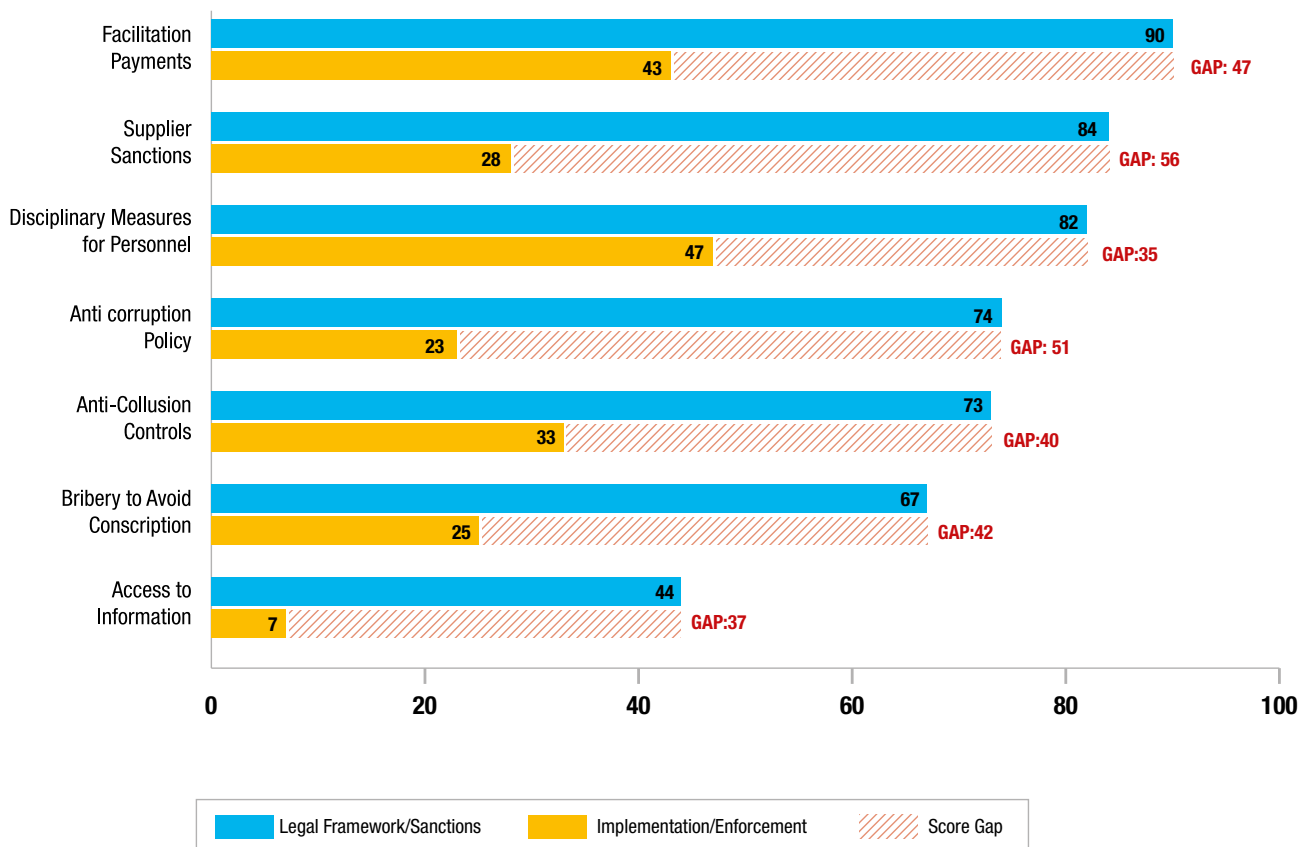
These country-level shifts help explain broader regional trends. Improvements among several West and East African countries contributed to the modest increase in the regional average, while significant deteriorations in a smaller number of countries limited overall progress.

The 2025 GDI also reveals a persistent gap between formal frameworks and their implementation (Figure 7). Many states have adopted anti-corruption policies and strategies; however, enforcement remains significantly weaker in practice. This gap is evident across multiple areas. Legal provisions addressing bribery and misconduct fall within the very low

corruption risk scoring range (Band A - Very Low Risk), yet enforcement and follow-up investigations remain inconsistent. Similarly, anti-corruption policy frameworks indicate low corruption risk (Band B - Low Risk), yet their effective implementation averages only 23/100 (Band E – Very High Risk). This pattern suggests that relevant legal frameworks for defence governance are adopted, while mechanisms to ensure compliance and monitoring are inconsistently applied. Overall, these findings indicate that the challenge in defence governance is less the absence of rules than the limited capacity or political will to enforce them consistently.

Figure 7. The implementation gap: law vs practice

Regional average scores for legal frameworks VS their enforcement across 17 SSA countries



3. DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING, GOVERNANCE AND ELEVATED CORRUPTION RISKS

3.1 Regional threats, conflict, instability, coups, counterterrorism

Since 2020, the security environment in Sub-Saharan Africa has been shaped by the convergence of violent extremism, armed conflict, organised crime, political instability, and repeated unconstitutional changes of government.¹⁶⁻¹⁷ The region now confronts overlapping security threats that have intensified demands on defence and security institutions. In response, governments have increasingly relied on military solutions to address internal security challenges, expanding the role and resources of defence establishments.

Violent extremism has expanded in geographic reach and intensity, most visibly in the Sahel, where conflict dynamics have shifted from localised insurgencies to broader conflict zones. Groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) have established bases in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Skyrocketing violence from jihadist terrorism has plunged Mali into a near-civil war over the past years. Much of the north of the country has come under the de facto rule of militant Islamist group since the

coups of 2020 and 2021.¹⁸ This expansion has placed increasing pressure on neighbouring and coastal states, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, stretching defence forces that were not historically configured for sustained internal counterinsurgency operations.

Organised crime has been reinforced by the expansion of violent extremism across Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly through the proliferation of illicit arms. Arms trafficking has also facilitated the spread of insecurity, enabling armed groups to operate beyond traditional conflict zones and intensifying attacks in neighbouring states.¹⁹ In response to these dynamics, efforts to secure borders and counter armed groups have expanded the operational remit of military forces often under exceptional measures. These conditions heighten corruption risks by increasing discretion in procurement and deployment decisions, while oversight mechanisms struggle to keep pace.²⁰

Unconstitutional changes of government have further entrenched governance fragility across the region. In Madagascar, the October 2025 military coup followed widespread protests and allegations of corruption. Although an interim assumed power and committed to a return to constitutional order within two years, the episode underscored the central role of the armed forces in political crisis management and the fragility of civilian oversight during periods of unrest. In Niger, the July 2023 coup entrenched military rule, followed by a new transitional framework extending military leadership. Mali presents a longer trajectory of military intervention in politics. Following coups in 2020 and 2021, a 2023 constitutional referendum strengthened presidential and military authority, while elections were postponed indefinitely and political parties were dissolved in 2025 on public order grounds. Subsequently, in January 2025, the military regimes in Niger and Mali, along with Burkina Faso withdrew from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and reinforced their role in the Alliance of Sahel States created in September 2023. This shift reshapes regional dynamics in security cooperation and weakens existing multilateral oversight and accountability frameworks.



Organised crime has been reinforced by the expansion of violent extremism across Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly through the proliferation of illicit arms.

¹⁶ Brookings, "Prospects for Democratic Resilience in Africa during uncertain times," September 2025.

¹⁷ Institute for Security Studies, "Tackling democratic subversions is the pathway to preventing coups in Africa," January 21, 2026.

¹⁸ Dion Ena and Joseph Sany, "After Two Coups, Mali Needs Regional Support to Bolster Democracy," United States Institute of Peace, December 9, 2021.

¹⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Firearms Trafficking in the Sahel," New York, 2022.

²⁰ Amadou Boly & Eric Nazindigouba Kere, "Tackling terrorism in Africa needs urgent collective efforts", CEPR, July 18, 2023.

Political instability and conflict continue to undermine defence governance. In South Sudan, recurrent violence, and repeated delays in implementing the 2018 peace agreement have entrenched a fragile political settlement.²¹ Ongoing concerns over arms diversion are reflected in the continued United Nations arms embargo. In Mozambique, persistent insecurity linked to the Cabo Delgado insurgency has unfolded alongside highly centralised governance. These prolonged transitions have expanded executive control over defence policy, often at the expense of parliamentary and civic oversight, creating conditions in which secrecy is normalised, accountability weakens, and corruption risks intensify.

3.2 CSOs engagement on defence

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a critical role in resisting democratic backsliding and strengthening accountability, particularly in contexts where formal oversight institutions are weakened. However, across

Sub-Saharan Africa, their capacity to fulfil this role is increasingly constrained. The regional and global context is marked by shrinking civic space, with conditions across much of Sub-Saharan Africa classified as repressive.²² A worrying trend is unfolding with an increase of laws and regulations curtailing civil liberties; cybersecurity legislation that violates privacy; antiterrorism laws used to limit free association; and laws limiting CSO participation in Niger or Zimbabwe.²³

Attacks on journalists and independent media further undermine accountability. In Cameroon, criminal provisions such as “spreading false news,” “insults,” and “incitement to revolt” are routinely used to detain and prosecute journalists, who are at times tried before military courts.²⁴ Similar patterns of harassment, arrest, and intimidation of journalists and media outlets have been documented in Niger, Burundi, and Nigeria. Protesters and civil society activists have also faced arbitrary detention and excessive use of force in countries including Madagascar, Uganda, Mozambique and Kenya, reinforcing a climate of fear and self-censorship.²⁵

Figure 8. Civic space and CSO engagement in defence



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

21 United Nations, Meetings coverage and press releases, “‘No Appetite for Another Extension’ of South Sudan Peace Agreement, Mission Head Tells Security Council, Urging Leaders Focus on Benchmarks without Delay,” February 5, 2025.

22 CIVICUS Monitor, “People Under Attack 2024,” December 2024

23 World Bank Group, “Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 21st Century: Four Trends and an Uncertain Outlook,” March 2024.

24 CIVICUS Monitor, “People Under Attack 2024”, December 2024.

25 Ibid.

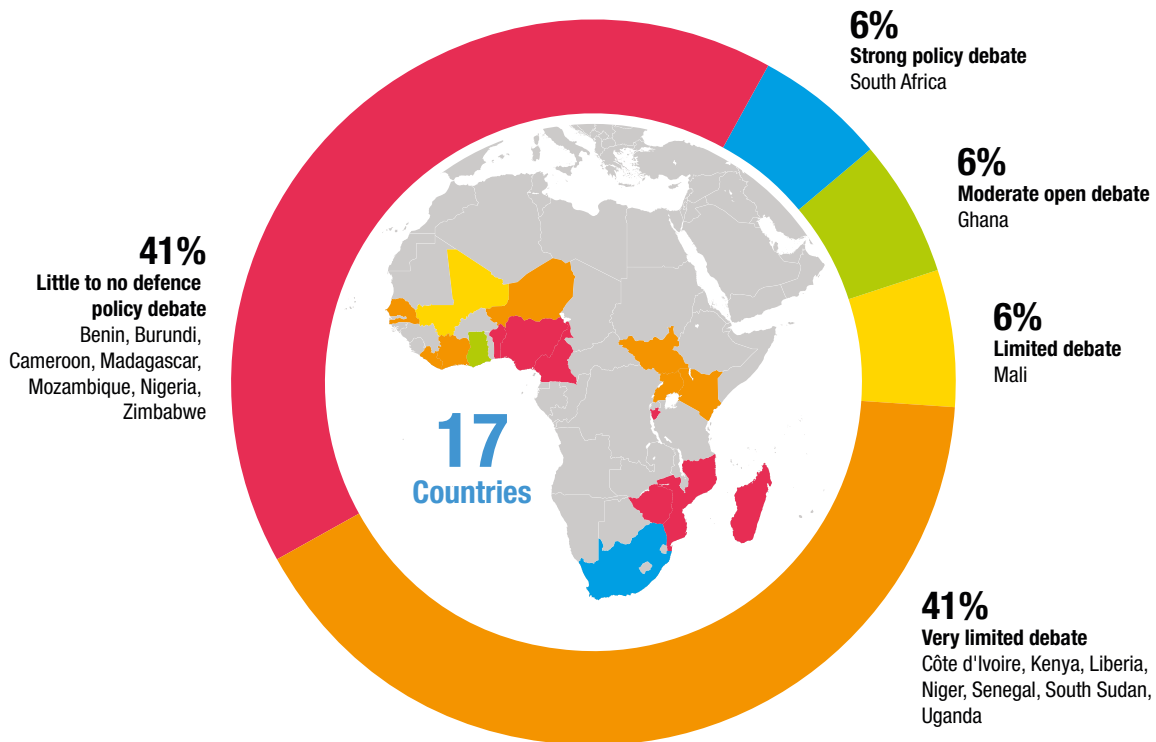
Engagement between civil society and defence institutions remains particularly limited. Long-standing traditions of secrecy, the prioritisation of national security narratives over civil liberties, the technical complexity of defence issues, and deep mistrust between CSOs and security institutions all constrain meaningful dialogue.

In 65% of Sub-Saharan African countries assessed, defence institutions have neither formal nor informal policies to engage with CSOs. However, in 53% of countries, CSOs enjoy a range of protections from government interference and can operate, although fear of reprisal is present in most of these countries. Where engagement exists, it rarely addresses corruption risks or defence governance issues directly. Mechanisms that could enhance public accountability—such as regular consultations with civil society or public access to defence policy and security strategies—remain largely absent. Only four countries have conducted any form of public consultation on defence issues, contributing to a low regional score of 15/100 for public consultation and 24/100 for defence policy debate (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Civic space of defence scorecard, 2025 GDI averages

Civic space of defence	Regional average
CSO protections	44
Practice of openness of defence institutions	43
Government engagement in public discourse	43
Regularity and strength of the public debate	40
Scope of involvement of the public in defence policy debate	32
Policy of openness to CSOs	29
Scope of defence policy debate	29
Transparency of defence policy documents	24
Response to information requests	22
Public consultations	15
Public scrutiny of non-central government incomes	12

Figure 10: Openness of the defence policy debate in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

Indeed, 82% of countries do not have an in-depth debate of defence policy and issues. If conducted, the debate rarely involves the media or CSOs, and information and documents on the defence policy or security strategy are rarely made available to the public.

3.3 Rising defence spending

As in the rest of the globe, defence spending in Sub-Saharan Africa has considerably increased in the past 5 years, growing by 17.8% between 2020 and 2025. Across the countries assessed in the 2025 GDI, defence spending represented, on average, 7.6% of total government spending and 1.5% of GDI in 2025.²⁶ Rising defence spending across many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa reflects growing insecurity, including violent extremism, insurgencies, organised crime, and regional instability. **States facing these security issues often expand military spending to respond to urgent threats but rising military expenditure does not automatically produce greater security.** Instead, it may intensify mistrust, deepen instability, and divert resources from long-term development

and peacebuilding.²⁷ Rising defence expenditure, when not accompanied by robust governance, can create significant corruption and accountability risks. Steep increases in defence spending reshape institutional influence, raising the relative power of military establishments over civilian.²⁸ In contexts, where civilian oversight mechanisms are weak, the armed forces may accumulate political leverage, eventually positioning themselves as alternative centres of authority.

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 have generated unprecedented violence, with the Sahel now accounting for nearly half of global terrorism-related deaths.²⁹ These violent extremist groups have expanded southward, placing increasing pressure on coastal states including Benin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. In response, countries in the region have considerably increased their defence budgets which have grown by 60.5% on average between 2020 and 2025 (Table 2).

Table 2: SIPRI Military Expenditure Data, GDI countries in West Africa

Country	2025 defence expenditure (in millions USD constant 2024)	% change 2020-2025	% change 2024-2025	Share of GDP (2025)	Share of government spending (2025)
Nigeria	1756.2	15.4%	54.8%	0.91%	5.90%
Mali	882.9	30.5%	-5.4%	3.87%	14.80%
Côte d'Ivoire	721.1	5.7%	9.5%	0.77%	3.76%
Cameroon	580.4	27.5%	8.5%	1.06%	6.53%
Senegal	532.8	35.7%	-16.6%	1.56%	5.18%
Niger	449.9	62.5%	3.2%	2.14%	15.16%
Ghana	385.2	62.2%	40.4%	0.48%	2.40%
Benin	203.7	178.9%	21.8%	0.89%	4.82%
Liberia	40.3	126.4%	19.2%	0.85%	3.89%

26 SIPRI, "Military expenditure database", 2025.

27 United Nations Development Programme, "Journey to extremism in Africa: Pathways to recruitment and disengagement", 2023.

28 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Governance First: Tackling governance risks amid increasing defence spending", April 21, 2026.

29 BBC, "The region with more 'terror deaths' than rest of world combined", March 2025.

East Africa

East Africa is shaped by overlapping conflicts, violent extremism, organised crime, and cross-border structural fragilities. Weak state presence in peripheral regions, porous borders, and the circulation of small arms continue to enable armed groups and criminal networks to operate across the region.³⁰ In this context, all countries from East Africa included in the 2025 GDI have also increased defence spending between 2020 and 2025, but decreased from 2024 to 2025 in Burundi, Madagascar and South Sudan as shown in Table 3. Defence expenditure also represents a considerable share of the defence budget in Uganda and Burundi.

Southern Africa

Southern Africa presents a more mixed picture. Countries have shown more stability than in West and East Africa with less changes in democratic governance. The security landscape is shaped by a mix of transnational threats, institutional weaknesses, and evolving defence governance challenges. Similarly to what was observed in the two other sub-regions, defence spending increased in the past 5 years in Mozambique and Zimbabwe but decreased in South Africa, the

largest spender in Sub-Saharan Africa, as seen in Table 4. Defence also represents the lowest share of government spending.

Overall, the data demonstrates that defence expenditure has increased significantly across Sub-Saharan Africa over the past five years, particularly in regions facing acute insecurity such as West Africa and the Sahel. While these increases are often presented as necessary responses to violent extremism, insurgencies, and regional instability, they also carry important governance implications. Rising military expenditure may strengthen state security capacities, but it can also reshape institutional balances of power by increasing the influence of military establishments relative to civilian institutions.

These trends suggest that the impact of defence spending depends not only on the scale of expenditure, but also on the quality of governance surrounding it. This echoes recent United Nations Development Programme research on military expenditure in Africa which showed transparent, accountable, and strategically planned defence spending can contribute to stability and development, whereas poorly governed military expenditure can increase corruption, fiscal stress, and institutional fragility.³¹

Table 3: SIPRI Military Expenditure Data, GDI countries in East Africa

Country	2025 expenditure (in millions USD constant 2024)	% change 2020-2025	% change 2024-2025	Share of GDP (2025)	Share of government spending (2025)
Kenya	1355.2	19.7%	7.9%	1.07%	4.63%
Uganda	1198	3.1%	7.3%	1.96%	9.02%
Burundi	169.3	92.3%	-1.5%	3.24%	14.85%
Madagascar	110.6	11.1%	-9.3%	0.62%	3.80%
South Sudan	102.6	1093%	-39.2%	3.42%	18.38%

Table 4: SIPRI Military Expenditure Data, GDI countries in Southern Africa

Country	2025 expenditure (in millions USD constant 2024)	% change 2020-2025	% change 2024-2025	Share of GDP (2025)	Share of government spending (2025)
South Africa	2996.4	-16.7%	-1.2%	0.74%	2.19%
Mozambique	445.7	8.70%	-7.90%	1.87%	6%
Zimbabwe	133.5	26.50%	35.70%	0.56%	NA

30 BTI Project, "Regional dashboard: East and Southern Africa", 2024.

31 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Beyond the numbers: Rethinking Military Expenditure and Development Trade-Offs in Africa", March 17, 2026.

4. GOVERNANCE UNDER PRESSURE: WEAK OVERSIGHT

4.1 Parliamentary oversight

Parliament requires enshrined powers to effectively exercise its oversight role in defence, including shaping decisions, approving, and vetoing laws, allocating funds, approving arms procurement, and rejecting and amending policies. Additionally, parliaments need to undertake their responsibilities independently, without coercion or undue influence from the executive or the military. In democracies, parliaments play a critical role in ensuring that defence and security forces carry out their duties in accordance with national and international laws. Parliamentary oversight is therefore a core pillar for transparency, accountability, and responsible use of public resources in the defence sector.

In practice, however, oversight of defence frequently proves challenging. The 2025 GDI findings reveal a persistent gap between formal parliamentary mandates and their effective exercise, particularly in budget approval, defence policy scrutiny, and follow-up on irregularities. Most parliaments in the region have formal rights to scrutinise defence policies and budget with 88% enjoying at least some formal rights. However, the effectiveness of this control is limited in practice. In 29% of countries, parliaments do not debate defence policy at all or do so informally. Moreover in 65% of countries, the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight is limited. Ghana stands as the exception in the region, recording very robust oversight in practice. Findings also show that parliaments are constrained by executive or military influence. All countries, except Ghana, report occasional to regular undue influence particularly coming from the executive. In most countries, defence matters fall under the direct authority of the President, and this executive dominance often removes these issues from legislative scrutiny.

Similarly, most countries in the region have defence committees within parliament with some formal mechanisms to conduct scrutiny over defence policy. The regional average demonstrates strong formal rights with an overall score of 81/100. Yet these powers do not consistently translate into meaningful oversight. Committee members' expertise is often lacking with only 41% of countries where there are at least some committee members with expertise in the defence sector. This lack of expertise combined with often limited access to information on the sector by Parliamentarians

effectively constrain legislative scrutiny, explaining why parliaments may approve defence budgets or policies without meaningful debate or scrutiny. Indeed, parliamentary oversight mechanisms tend to be reactive or selective, focusing on isolated reviews rather than continuous scrutiny. Long term oversight is occasional, except in Ghana, South Africa and Uganda. More importantly, recommendations are rarely implemented by Ministries of Defence. In only 25% of countries studied, defence committee recommendations are sometimes implemented by the government and only regularly in Ghana.

Finally, procurement has been escaping parliamentary oversight in most countries. Parliaments are rarely involved in procurement oversight as acquisitions are often formally excluded from the scope of oversight. In practice, 2025 GDI findings are showing very limited involvement in scrutiny of procurement requirements and supplier's service and or delivery obligations.

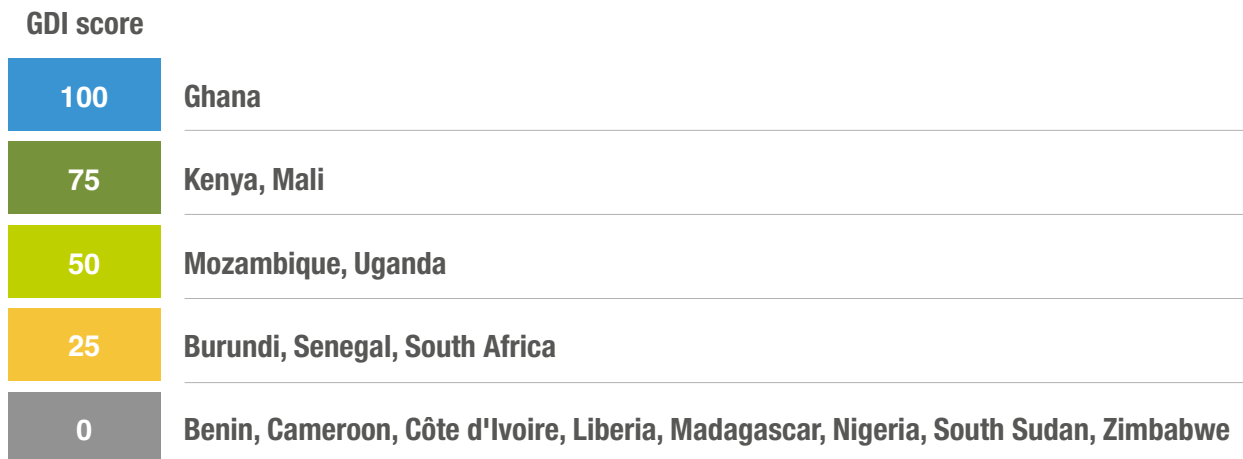
4.2 Audit systems

Parliament's oversight function is supported by internal and external audit institutions which play a key role in strengthening accountability in the defence sector.

Internal audit

Ministries of Defence in most countries have internal audit units, responsible for reviewing expenditure and compliance within the chain of command. The 2025 GDI findings indicate that internal audit mechanisms in Sub-Saharan Africa are, on paper, relatively well established within ministries. Most countries assessed have dedicated internal audit or inspectorate functions with formal mandates to review expenditure, compliance, and internal controls.

In practice, however, the effectiveness of internal audit remains very weak. Internal audit reports are rarely shared with external oversight bodies, such as supreme audit institutions or parliamentary committees, and when they are, disclosure is typically restricted to high-level summaries. This limits follow-up, independent verification, and broader accountability. Moreover, there is little evidence that ministries of defence systematically act on internal audit findings. Recommendations are

Figure 11. Parliamentary defence committees conducting reviews of major defence policies

* **Niger:** Given that national institutions, including the National Assembly, were dissolved on July 26, 2023, the GDI score is Not Applicable.

Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

often not implemented, tracked, or publicly reported on, resulting in weak institutional learning and limited corrective impact. In only 24% of countries internal audit recommendations are integrated or considered by the Ministries of Defence.

Notable exceptions exist. According to 2025 GDI results, in Benin (75/100), Kenya (58/100), Ghana (88/100) and Mozambique (50/100), internal audit functions appear comparatively more robust, with clearer mandates, better resourcing, more consistent engagement with management processes and more regular internal audit activity.

External audit

External audit institutions, or Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), play a central role in democratic accountability. Established as independent bodies from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, SAIs are mandated to audit public institutions and the use of public resources. In the defence sector, their work provides oversight actors with credible financial and performance information to scrutinise spending, assess value for money, and identify corruption and mismanagement risks.

The 2025 GDI findings indicate that external audit of the defence sector remains weak across much of Sub-Saharan Africa. While most countries formally recognise the independence of their SAIs; in practice, robust and systematic auditing of defence institutions is the exception rather than the norm. Regionally, 18% of countries show little to no external audit of the defence sector.

A further 41% grant SAIs a formal mandate to audit defence, yet these audits are conducted irregularly, with limited depth or scope, and often exclude high-risk areas such as procurement, secret expenditure, or extra-budgetary funds.

In terms of institutional design, SAIs generally enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy in law and, in many cases, in practice. However, budgetary constraints, capacity limitations, and political sensitivities surrounding defence spending continue to restrict their effectiveness. Where audits are conducted, reports are often published online, contributing to transparency in principle. Yet publication is frequently delayed, and reports are commonly issued in summarised form, reducing their usefulness for detailed scrutiny and follow-up.

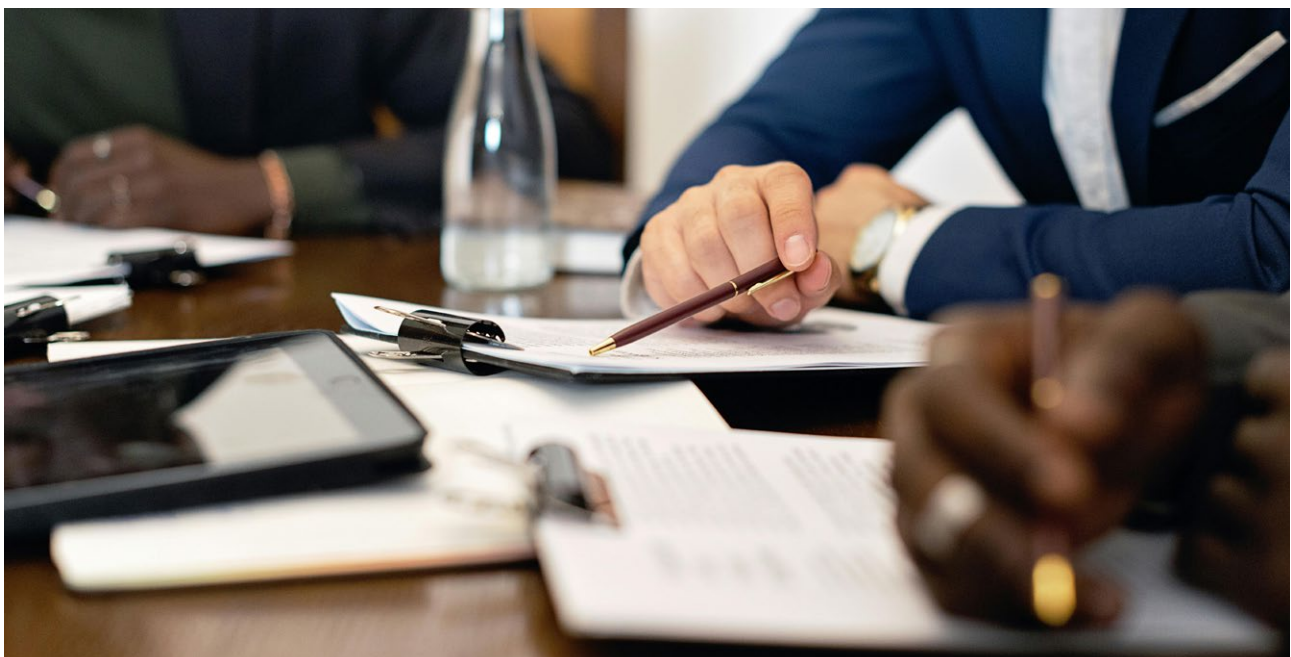
External audit recommendations are rarely acted upon by Ministries of Defence or central governments. Only 18% of countries assessed show evidence that defence institutions at least occasionally address audit findings in their policies or practices.

Positive examples exist. Benin and South Africa stand out for stronger external audit engagement in the defence sector, with South Africa scoring 81/100 and Benin 69/100. In these cases, audit findings are more detailed, more regularly produced, and more likely to feed into parliamentary oversight.

Moreover, 2025 findings also highlight overall very weak scrutiny of non-central government sources incomes, secret spending or procurement requirement/processes.

Figure 12. Audit systems scorecard, 2025 GDI averages

Audit systems	Regional average
External audit independence	61
Mandate and resources of audit bodies	59
Independence of the scrutiny	58
Asset disposal controls	51
Effectiveness	47
Internal audit activity	47
External audit transparency	43
External audit activity	35
Independence	30
Internal audit external scrutiny	28
Asset disposal scrutiny	28
Institutional scrutiny of sources of incomes	25
Internal audit-enabling oversight	22
Responsiveness of Ministry to internal audit findings	23
Enforcement sanctions on issues with supplier's service and /or delivery obligation	23
Responsiveness of Ministry to external audit findings	19
Scrutiny of single/restricted competition procedures	19
Procurement requirement scrutiny	18
Comprehensiveness of secret spending auditing	15



4.3 Key risk drivers and illustrative country examples

Oversight institutions are weakened not by the absence of formal mandates, but by political interference and executive dominance, weak or disrupted democratic processes, defence exceptionalism and secrecy norms as well as capacity and resource constraints.



Executive dominance

GDI results show that the centralisation of authority in the executive reduces the autonomy of parliaments, supreme audit institutions, and oversight bodies. In many systems, defence, security, and intelligence remain firmly under presidential control. In Cameroon, for example, 18 of the 20 members of the Defence Committee belong to the ruling party CPDM, limiting its ability to challenge the Executive. Similar patterns are observed in Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Zimbabwe.



Disrupted democratic processes

Coups, transitions, and military-led governments suspend or dissolve parliaments and courts, removing oversight entirely or rendering it symbolic.

In Mali and Niger, post-coup transitions have dissolved elected parliaments, removing legislative oversight of defence policy, budgets, and procurement. In Mali, transitional bodies retain formal oversight roles but operate under executive control. In Niger, the dissolution of the National Assembly has removed legislative oversight entirely.



Defence exceptionalism and secrecy norms

Legal exemptions and over-classification of information create structural blind spots that limit the ability of parliaments and auditors to assess policy choices, spending, and performances. Security narratives are frequently used to justify opacity and to frame oversight as a threat to national stability. Thus, oversight bodies lack access to information even when mandates exist. This pattern has been observed in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda.



Capacity and resource constraint

Limited technical expertise within parliamentary committees or audit institutions weakens their ability to scrutinise complex defence budgets, procurement contracts, or operations. Dependence on the executive for funding or staffing undermines institutional autonomy. In Zimbabwe, internal audits are generally conducted by junior officers and subject to hierarchical approval. In Kenya, fiscal constraints and non-ringfenced budgets have reduced the capacity of the Office of the Auditor General.

4.4 Regional snapshots: Governance trends in parliamentary and administrative oversight and Implications

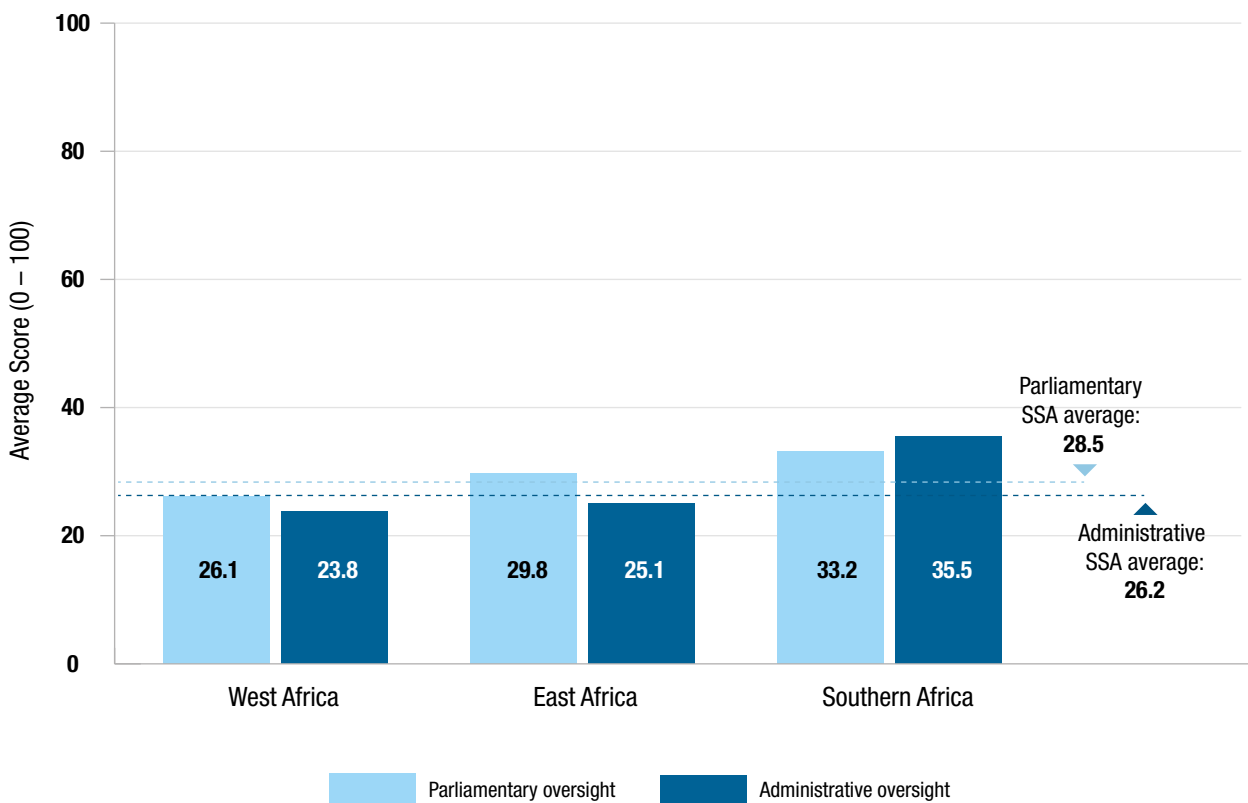
The 2025 GDI findings reveal limited variation in oversight performance across Sub-Saharan Africa’s sub-regions (Figure 13). Overall, the strength of parliamentary and administrative oversight mechanisms remains broadly comparable. In West and East Africa, parliamentary oversight appears marginally stronger than administrative oversight, although overall scores remain weak. In Southern Africa, oversight frameworks are comparatively more robust, with administrative controls—such as audit and inspectorate functions—performing somewhat better than parliamentary scrutiny. These differences should, however, be interpreted with caution, as they may partly reflect variations in the number and composition of countries assessed within each sub-region.

A closer examination of the qualitative data reveals more nuanced trends. In West Africa, most countries reviewed maintain formal parliamentary committees and audit bodies with established mandates. However, their practical effectiveness is frequently constrained by delayed or restricted access to defence information. Secrecy provisions, the use of emergency powers, and entrenched executive dominance over defence policymaking significantly limit meaningful oversight. Executive control over defence decision-making emerges as a consistent sub-regional pattern.

In Southern Africa oversight remains limited, particularly in parliament scrutiny, and is constrained by the lack of expertise of its members and the influence of the government. Zimbabwe and Mozambique should particularly emphasise strengthening external audit processes while South Africa should focus on enhancing the effectiveness of the internal audit and the consideration of its recommendations.

In conflict-affected and coup-prone contexts—including Mali, Niger, and South Sudan—oversight mechanisms are either marginalised or effectively absent. Exceptional

Figure 13: Governance trends in parliamentary and administrative oversight



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

spending practices, emergency procurement, and transitional political arrangements often bypass routine budgetary and audit procedures, further weakening accountability.

In comparatively more stable political environments, oversight institutions tend to be present and functional but frequently operate in a reactive or selective manner. Scrutiny often focuses on isolated reviews or high-profile incidents rather than continuous, systematic examination of defence policy, expenditure, and procurement. This distinction underscores an important gap between the existence of monitoring mechanisms, present in most countries in the SSA region, and the exercise of sustained and proactive oversight, only visible in few countries such as Ghana, Kenya or South Africa.

Together, these findings suggest that while formal oversight frameworks are widely established across the region, their effectiveness is shaped less by institutional design and more by political context, access to information, and the degree of executive restraint.

In conflict-affected and coup-prone contexts (including Mali, Niger, and South Sudan)

OVERSIGHT MECHANISMS



are either marginalised or effectively absent.



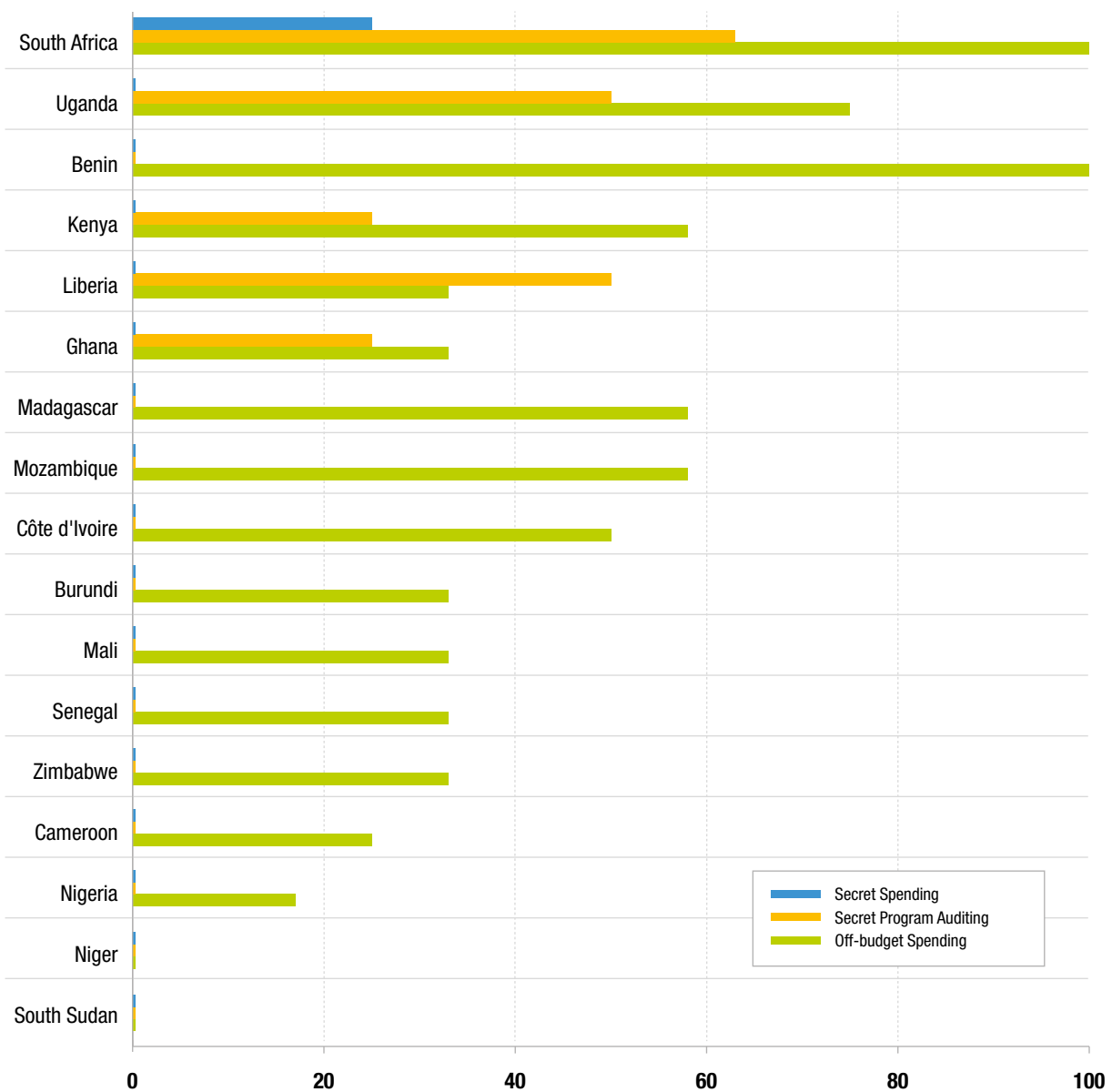
5. AN ARCHITECTURE OF SECRECY: TRANSPARENCY GAPS AND CORRUPTION RISKS

Secrecy and classification practices sit at the core of corruption risk in defence governance across Sub-Saharan Africa. While a degree of confidentiality is inherent to defence and security, 2025 GDI findings show that secrecy is routinely extended beyond legitimate security needs. Exceptional procedures, restricted competition, and discretionary decision-making are often justified on security grounds, yet rarely subject to effective oversight.

5.1 Defence finances context

Across the region, secrecy and classification operate as a de facto financial architecture governing defence spending. Secret spending is consistently opaque with 16 out of 17 countries scoring 0 and only South Africa scoring 25/100 (Figure 14), indicating that information on classified expenditure is either undisclosed or unreliable. Defence and intelligence budgets are routinely presented

Figure 14. Secrecy in defence spending. Per-country scores on secret spending, auditing and off-budget transparency



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

Even where formal provisions are relatively strong, disclosure is constrained by broad security justifications, administrative delays, and selective release of information—particularly in relation to budgets and procurement. Where frameworks are absent or exclude defence institutions, classification operates as a de facto restriction, with no enforceable standards governing disclosure.

as single-line or highly aggregated allocations, as seen in Kenya and Senegal, preventing identification of spending on secret items even where overall figures are published. In several cases, intelligence agencies are funded through special accounts or executive-controlled allocations outside standard public financial management systems, as observed in Madagascar and Mali. As a result, secrecy functions as the default condition governing defence finances.

Low scores in the 2025 GDI for secret programme auditing further reflect this architecture, with around 70% countries scoring 0 (Figure 14). Audit institutions often lack mandates to review classified expenditure or are granted only restricted access. Where audits occur, they are frequently internal and reported to the executive or military leadership, with little or no transmission to legislatures, as seen in Burundi and Madagascar. Parliamentary scrutiny is commonly limited to aggregated information or excluded entirely on national security grounds, including in Cameroon and Mozambique, while oversight committees are often redirected to executive bodies such as national security councils, as observed in Nigeria.

While off-budget expenditure scores vary more widely (Figure 14), the regional average (43/100) falls within the Band D (high corruption risk), indicating persistent reliance on special funds or exceptional financing mechanisms. Only a small number of countries, Benin and South Africa (both scoring 100), anchor defence expenditure in formal budgetary processes and subject to parliamentary scrutiny.³² By contrast, in Mozambique (58/100) and Zimbabwe (33/100), formal legal prohibitions coexist with parallel financing practices that operate outside the budget framework, particularly in relation to intelligence and internal security operations.^{33 34 35} At the other end of the spectrum, the highest risks arise where off-budget spending is unregulated altogether. In Niger and South Sudan (both scoring 0), legal controls have

been suspended, overridden, or never fully established, allowing off-budget spending to become a structural feature of defence governance.³⁶

Access to information and disclosure

Opacity in defence finances is also shaped by how classification and access-to-information frameworks are designed and applied. While legitimate national security considerations justify restricting certain information, these safeguards are frequently undermined by ambiguous legal definitions of national security. The 2025 GDI reveals a systematic gap between formal legal frameworks and their practical application (Figure 15), with a regional average of 44/100 for legal provisions, compared to just 7/100 in practice.

While several countries have established formal access-to-information frameworks, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa (all scoring 100 in legal provisions), their implementation remains limited (scoring between 0 and 50, indicating weak implementation). More broadly, 82% of countries score 0 in effectiveness, indicating that access rights rarely translate into actual disclosure in practice.

Across the region, three patterns are observed. A small number of countries have relatively comprehensive legal frameworks governing access to information. However, these still exhibit large gaps between law and practice. A larger group operates with partial frameworks, lacking key safeguards such as clear classification rules, limited exemptions, or independent appeal mechanisms. In these cases, the gap remains consistently high, around 50 points, reflecting systematic implementation failures. At the highest-risk end, legal frameworks are absent or exclude defence institutions altogether (Burundi, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, Zimbabwe). Here, both legal provisions and implementation score at or near zero, resulting in no effective access to defence information.

32 Report of the Court of Account on the Covid-19 expenditures Benin, 2022.

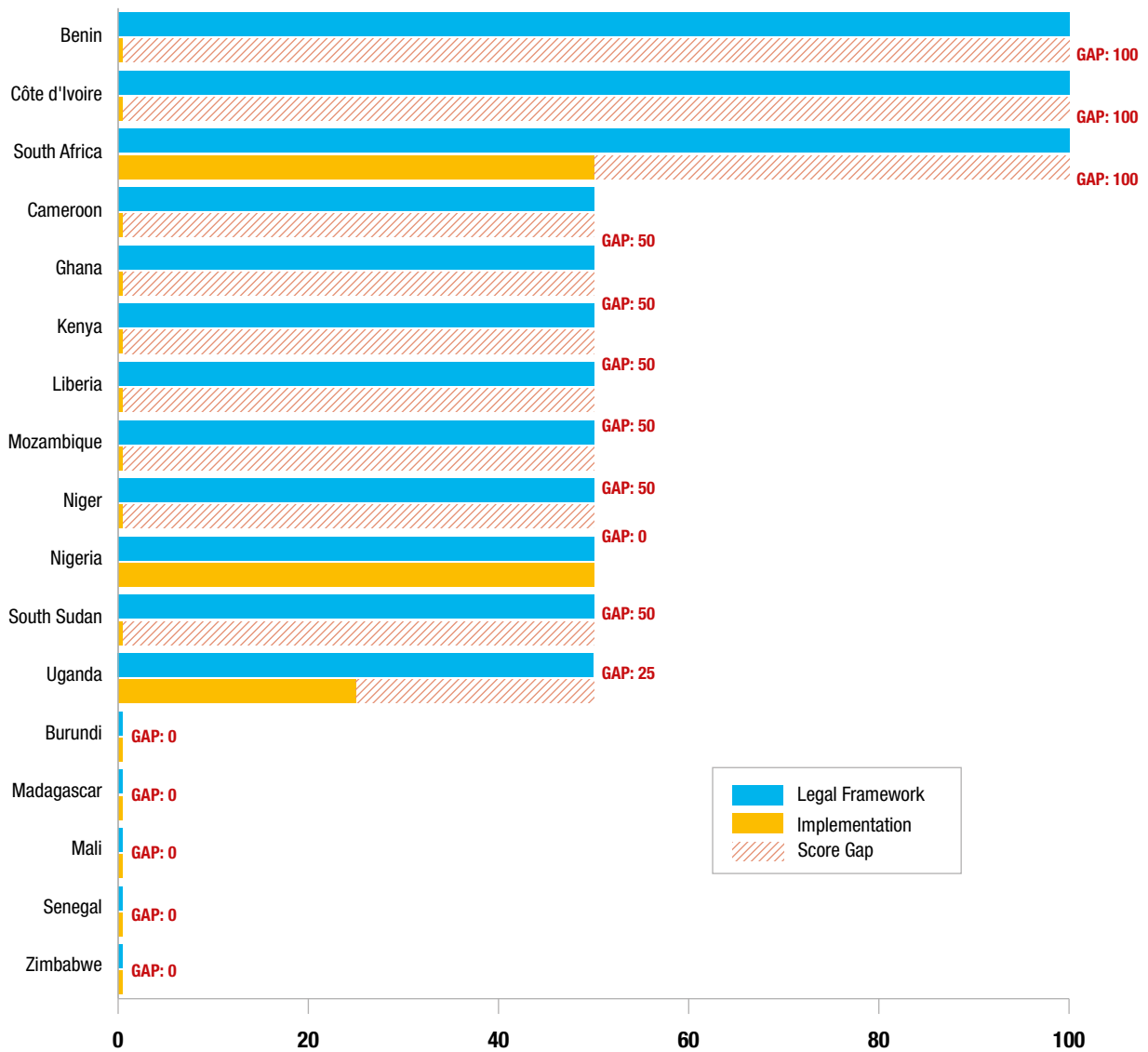
33 Aldemiro Bande and Leila Constantino, "How much does the State spend on the war in Cabo Delgado and how does it spend it?," Centro de Integridade Publica, Maputo, August 2021.

34 Interview with a Procurement Officer, Army, Harare, August 2, 2024. Government Defence Integrity Index. Zimbabwe Assessment.

35 Tinashé Kairiza, "Military in US\$90m murky weapons deals," Zimbabwe Independent, November 2, 2022.

36 L'Événement Niger, Niger: Ordonnance 2024-05 du 23 février 2024, un boulevard à la grande corruption. [Niger: Ordinance 2024-05 of 23], February 2024.

Figure 15. Access to information: law vs implementation



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

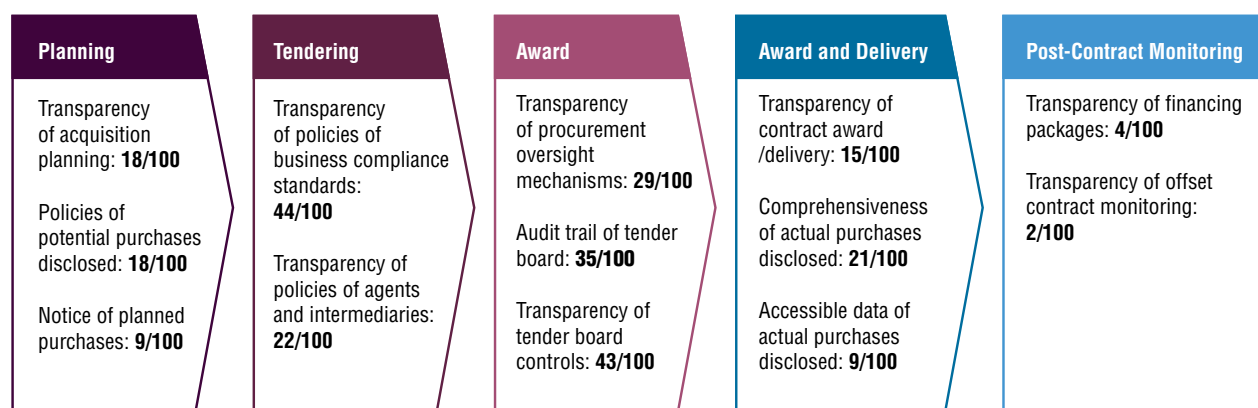
In practice, these legal frameworks translate into weak effectiveness. Even where formal provisions are relatively strong, disclosure is constrained by broad security justifications, administrative delays, and selective release of information—particularly in relation to budgets and procurement. Where frameworks are absent or exclude defence institutions, classification operates as a de facto restriction, with no enforceable standards governing disclosure.

Secrecy and classification practices across defence finance systems shape how resources are planned, allocated, and spent. This is reflected in consistently low transparency scores across multiple stages of defence financial governance (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Defence finance transparency scorecard, 2025 GDI averages

Defence finance transparency	Regional average
Budget transparency	
Timeliness	66
Comprehensiveness	57
Proactive publication of budget	51
Comprehensiveness of budget disclosure	37
Response to information requests on budget	22
Defence spending transparency	
Timeliness of defence spending	38
Comprehensiveness of defence spending	29
Proactive publication of defence spending	24
Explanation of defence spending variances against budget	21
Audit and oversight access	
Access to external audit reports	43
Legislative/Executive access to internal audit reports	28
Legislative access to information	6
Access to information and disclosure	
Legal framework on access to information	44
Effectiveness of access to information	7
Defence income and ownership transparency	
Transparency of beneficial ownership	34
Transparency of defence income	28
Transparency of military-owned business scrutiny	20
Transparency of military involvement in natural resources	5
Asset disposals	
Transparency of disposal process	16
Transparency of asset disposals	15
Transparency of financial results of disposals	10

Figure 17. Transparency across the defence procurement cycle, 2025 GDI averages



The weakest scores are concentrated in areas critical for external scrutiny, including access to information (7/100), legislative access (6/100), acquisition planning (18/100), and contract transparency (15/100). By contrast, elements of budget formulation—such as timeliness (66/100) and overall comprehensiveness (57/100)—perform comparatively better, indicating that transparency declines as spending moves from planning to execution and oversight. **This suggests that while some information is disclosed at the aggregate level, the stages where resources are prioritised, allocated, and monitored remain opaque, limiting the ability to trace defence spending in practice.**

These broader transparency weaknesses are also reflected across the defence procurement cycle (Figure 17). Some oversight and tender controls score comparatively higher, but transparency remains overall weak from acquisition planning to post-contract monitoring.

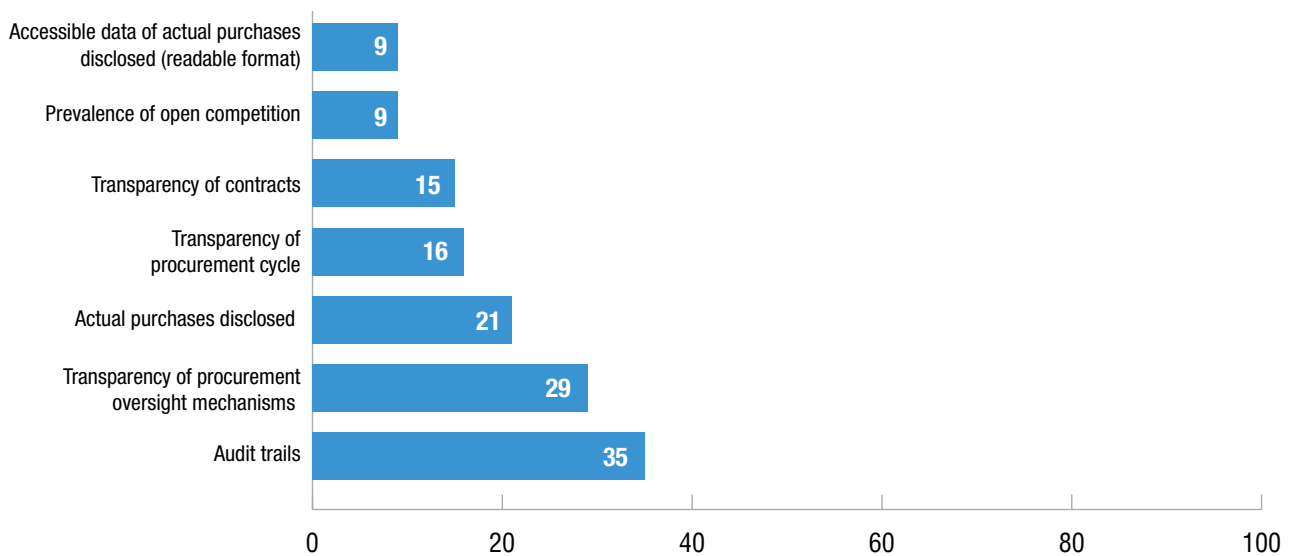
Defence procurement exemptions and access to procurement data

Against this backdrop, defence procurement emerges as a particularly vulnerable area of public spending. Across the region, procurement legislation is characterised by extensive security-related exemptions, which allow key stages of the procurement cycle to be excluded from standard rules on competition, disclosure, and oversight. In practice, this creates parallel systems in which classification decisions—often controlled by the executive or defence authorities—determine what information can be accessed.

These legal exemptions are reflected in limited systematically *de facto* access to defence procurement data across the region. (Figure 18). Across key procurement transparency indicators, most countries score in the lowest bands. For example, over 70% of countries score 0 on open competition and over 75% score 0 on access to actual purchase data. Similarly, transparency of contracts and procurement cycle disclosure remain at the critical risk (Band F), with regional averages of 15/100 and 16/100, respectively. Even where partial information exists, it is often incomplete or not accessible in usable formats. Audit trails show slightly more variation (35/100) but remain inconsistent and rarely enable full traceability. As a result, procurement decisions remain difficult to trace in practice, limiting scrutiny before contracts are awarded, during implementation, and after completion.







Figure 18. Access to defence procurement data



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

5.2 Key risk drivers and illustrative country examples

Driver	Governance Impact	Examples
 <p>Ambiguous national security justifications</p>	Broad security exemptions enable excessive secrecy and bypass transparency requirements.	In Ghana and Liberia, confidentiality clauses permit defence institutions to deny or delay disclosure on the grounds of security, even where the information does not appear sensitive.
 <p>Concentration of decision-making authority</p>	Executive control over classification and procurement limits oversight access.	In Mozambique, defence and security forces have denied auditors access to information, while in Zimbabwe defence information may be withheld under classified-operation exemptions approved by the President.
 <p>Fragmented and uneven disclosure</p>	Procurement and spending data remain partial, aggregated, or inaccessible.	In Kenya and Nigeria, financial and procurement information remains fragmented or partially inaccessible.
 <p>Normalisation of exceptional procedures</p>	Emergency procurement measures become embedded in routine defence governance.	In conflict-affected and politically unstable contexts such as Mali and Niger, exceptional procedures have become embedded in defence governance, displacing routine controls.

5.3 Procurement vulnerabilities within opaque financial systems

West Africa shows the widest dispersion across financial transparency and procurement risk (Figure 19). While countries such as Benin, Ghana, and Liberia have formal frameworks in place, reliance on security exemptions and restricted access to procurement data limits traceability. By contrast, higher-risk contexts such as Nigeria, Niger, and Mali illustrate how structural opacity, political instability, and emergency governance arrangements weaken both transparency and accountability.

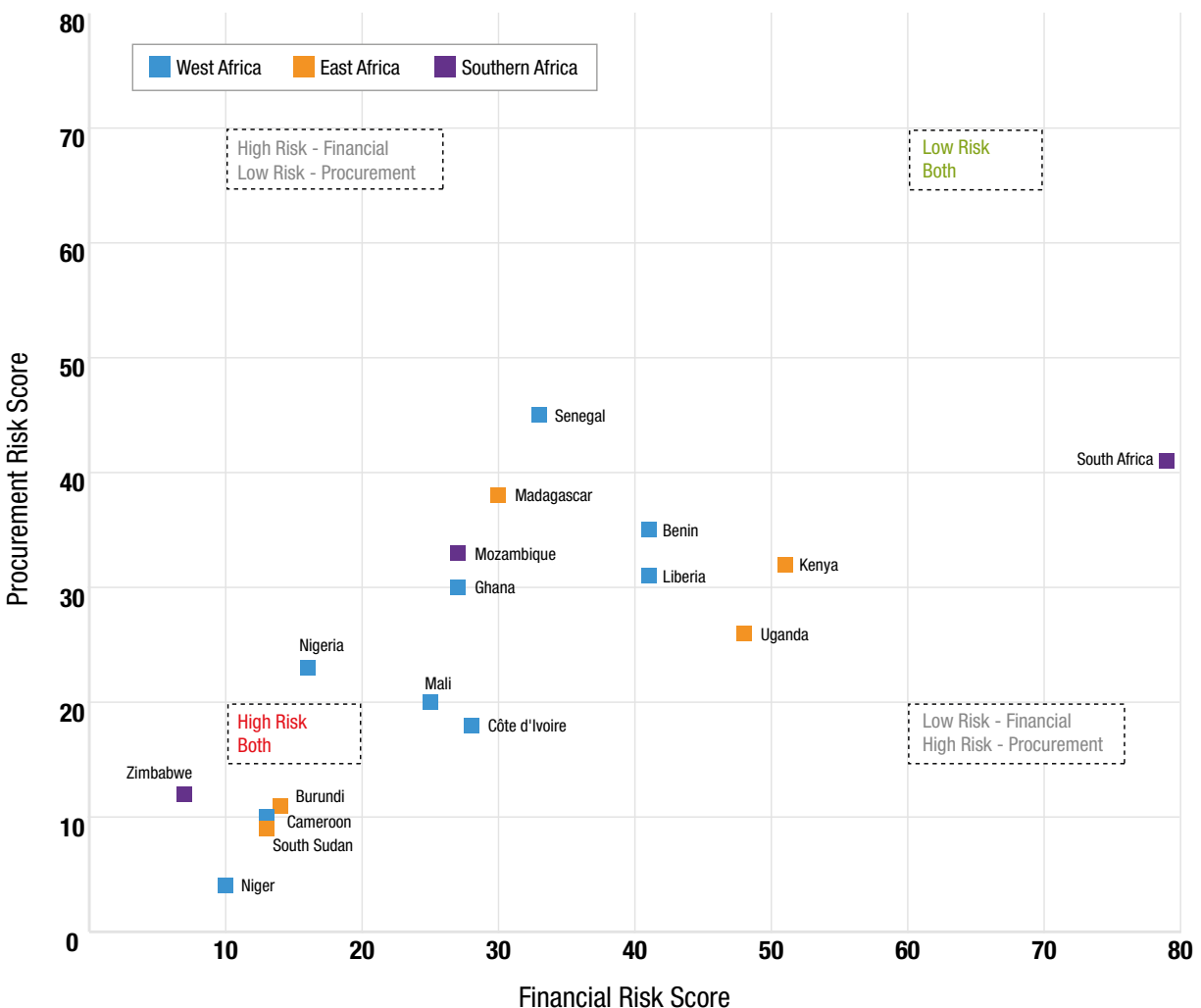
Countries assessed in East Africa tends to group around moderate financial transparency but elevated procurement risk. In countries such as Kenya and Uganda, stronger budget frameworks coexist with constrained access to procurement data and widespread use of classification. At the lower end,

Burundi and South Sudan combine weak financial transparency with limited oversight, reinforcing higher corruption risks.

Southern Africa reveals a deeper contrast. South Africa demonstrates comparatively stronger financial transparency and lower procurement risk, while Zimbabwe remains highly opaque across both dimensions, limiting effective scrutiny.

Across sub-regions, procurement risks tend to intensify where defence financial governance is weakest. However, the pattern goes beyond the presence of formal financial controls. What appears decisive is how classification powers, security exemptions, and executive discretion are applied in practice. Where these are concentrated and routinely invoked, procurement processes become difficult to trace, embedding vulnerability within the broader architecture of secrecy rather than in budget transparency alone.

Figure 19. Comparative patterns of financial transparency and procurement risk areas



Source: 2025 Government Defence Integrity Index.

6. MILITARY OPERATIONS: MISSION CRITICAL

Many Sub-Saharan African countries are involved in domestic, regional, and/or international military operations that increasingly define the relationships among armed forces, political actors, and civilian populations. These operations span protracted counter-insurgency campaigns such as Nigeria's *Operation Hadin Kai* in the Northeastern region and the Lake Chad Basin, renewed internal and regionally supported deployments in South Sudan, including Ugandan troop involvement to bolster the unity government, and multinational stabilisation

efforts such as the Southern African Development Community Mission to address insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC).^{37 38 39}

Yet military operations often unfold in environments where corruption risks are acute and institutional safeguards weakest.

The 2025 GDI data reveals that military operations have the highest susceptibility to corruption in sub-Saharan Africa, with this risk area scoring 12/100 (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Performance of operational risk area performance relative to other GDI risk areas

	Political	Financial	Personnel	Operational	Procurement	Overall
Benin	52	41	56	33	35	44
Senegal	42	33	50	27	45	39
Ghana	60	27	47	4	30	33
Liberia	35	41	41	18	31	33
Côte d'Ivoire	37	28	53	27	18	32
Nigeria	37	16	50	12	23	28
Mali	28	25	39	7	20	24
Cameroon	23	13	35	7	10	17
Niger	12	10	21	0	4	9
Kenya	50	51	58	10	32	40
Uganda	44	48	60	12	26	38
Madagascar	36	30	44	15	38	33
Burundi	21	14	29	8	11	17
South Sudan	26	13	16	0	9	13
South Africa	62	79	55	2	41	48
Mozambique	38	27	60	17	33	35
Zimbabwe	27	7	24	0	12	14

VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	VERY HIGH	CRITICAL
83–100	67–82	50–66	33–49	17–32	0–16

37 Kingimi, A. and Atabong, A.B., "Militants kill 16 on Nigerian army base, military outpost, security sources say," Reuters, May 26, 2025.

38 Rodney Muhumuza, "Uganda Deploys Special Forces to South Sudan to Protect the Government as Fears of Civil War Grow," AP News, March 11, 2025.

39 The Southern African Development Community (SADC), "Deployment of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo," SADC, January 4, 2024.

Figure 21. Operational risks in the 2025 GDI

Operational Risk	F	12
Military doctrine	F	2
Operational training	E	18
Forward planning	E	17
Corruption monitoring in operations	F	9
Controls in contracting	F	12

The next sub-sections unravel operational corruption risks in the region. Together, they demonstrate significant integrity and anti-corruption deficits in military doctrine, forward planning, training, and contracting. These lapses do not merely represent governance shortcomings, but they also pose direct strategic risks to mission success and to long-term stability across the region.

Military Doctrine

Military doctrine provides the authoritative framework through which armed forces define threats, allocate responsibilities, and translate political objectives into operational practice. Where corruption is not recognised doctrinally as a strategic risk, it is rarely treated as an operational variable requiring mitigation. This can drive deployments to entrench predatory networks capable of disrupting peace and stability.

Evidence from the GDI indicates that military doctrine is the lowest-scoring operational indicator, meaning nearly all the Sub-Saharan African countries assessed fail to reference corruption in the overall military doctrine for their military forces. Where references exist, they are typically aspirational rather than operationalised, lacking guidance on implementation, reporting chains, or accountability mechanisms.⁴⁰

About 94 per cent of countries do not have a military doctrine integrating corruption risks (Figure 21). This indicates that most of these countries do not formally treat corruption as a strategic operational issue, and, as such, do not provide a guideline on how to prevent and address it in theatre. Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa – all major troop contributors to UN peacekeeping operations – scored 0 on this indicator, with only Nigeria marginally exceeding that score.^{41 42 43 44}

The absence of doctrinal clarity risks normalising ad hoc responses and leaves anti-corruption safeguards dependent on personalities rather than systems, an approach ill-matched to complex, high-tempo deployments. This gap is particularly problematic in fragile and conflict-affected settings, such as in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, where security sector corruption has been shown to undermine social cohesion and government legitimacy.^{45 46}

Forward Planning

Effective forward planning is indispensable to operational success, as it determines how missions anticipate threats, allocate resources, and manage risks. Yet corruption risk is rarely institutionalised within operational planning frameworks in Sub-Saharan African contexts. Where corruption is absent from planning matrices, vulnerabilities in logistics, personnel payments, and contracting are more likely to proliferate once forces deploy.

With a GDI average score of 17/100, countries assessed in the Sub-Saharan Africa has very weak institutional resilience to corruption when it comes to forward planning. 70 per cent of countries assessed scored between 0 and 16, suggesting that the majority of them face critical corruption risk on this indicator. This includes contexts such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, South Sudan, Mozambique, and Madagascar. Even though some provisions may be made for corruption risk, they tend to be considered in only very few operations, especially in external deployments. With a score of 75, only Côte d'Ivoire exhibits robust institutional resilience to corruption.

40 Transparency International Defence and Security, "GDI 2020 Global Report: Disruption, democratic governance, and corruption risk in defence institutions," London, 2021.

41 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Contribution of Uniformed Personnel to UN by Country and Personnel Type," UN, 2024.

42 Voice of America, "AU, Somalia agree on troop numbers for new mission," The East African, February 26, 2025.

43 The Southern African Development Community (SADC), "Deployment of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo," SADC, January 4, 2024.

44 Felix Onuah, "Niger Coup: West African block activates standby force for possible intervention," Reuters, August 10, 2023.

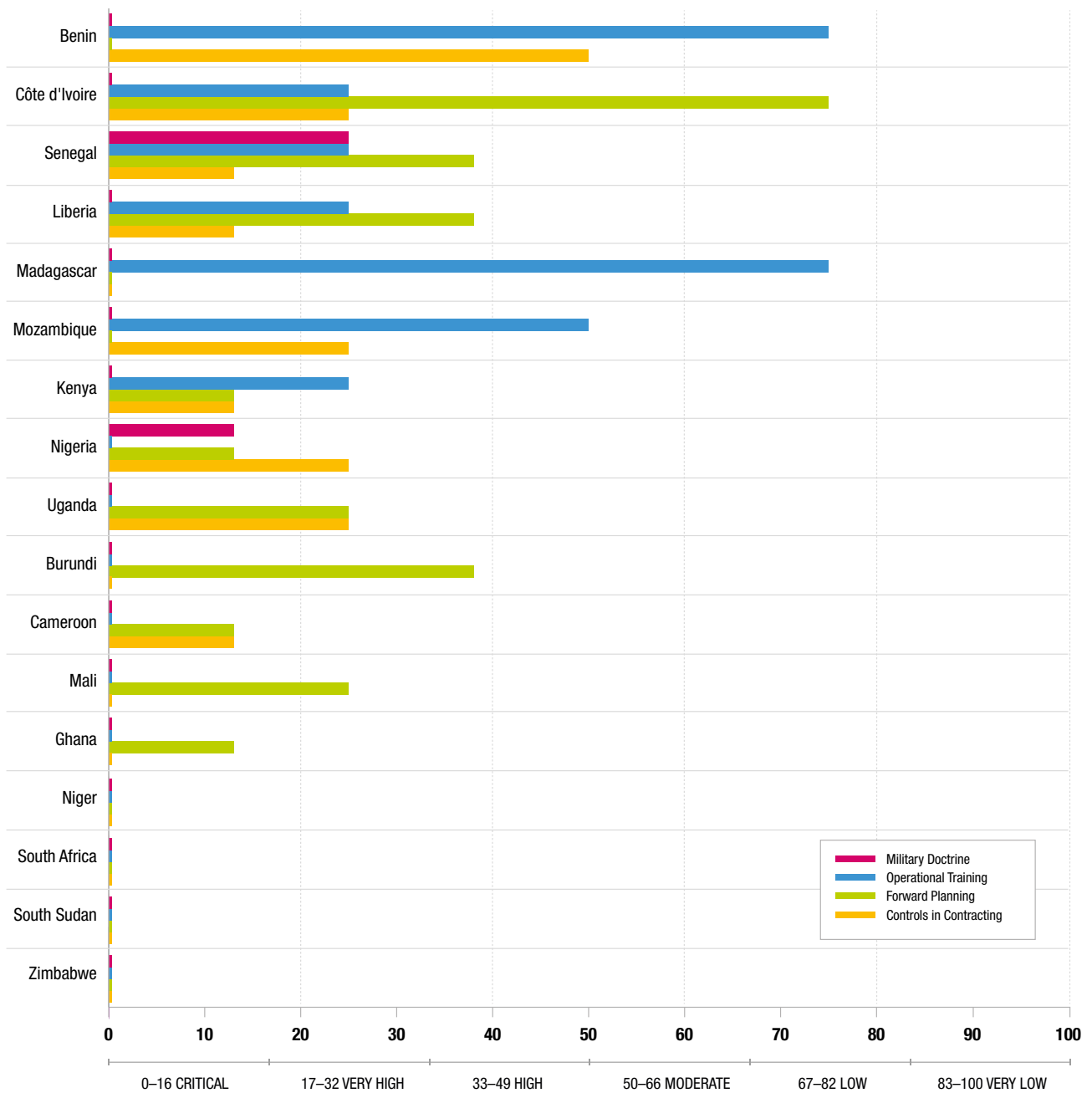
45 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "United Nations Peacekeeping, DPPA. Achieving peace through integrity - addressing corruption in conflict-affected settings," UNODC and Partners, 2025.

46 World Bank, "Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Transparency: The Fight Against Corruption", World Bank, 2020.

This discussion underscores the rarity of consideration for corruption during the planning and execution of operations in the region. In the absence of anticipatory planning, anti-corruption measures may emerge reactively, after ramifications have already materialised,

increasing strategic and reputational risks. Evidence from African operations, including Somalia, shows how weak planning oversight creates opportunities for diversion and inefficiency, a concern also reflected in United Nations assessments of mission effectiveness.^{47 48 49}

Figure 22. Country performance across operational risk indicators in the 2025 GDI



47 Williams, P.D, "Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM)", 2007-2017. Oxford University, Press, 2018.

48 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "United Nations Peacekeeping, DPPA. Achieving peace through integrity - addressing corruption in conflict-affected settings," UNODC and Partners, 2025.

49 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Fighting Corruption in Post-Conflict and Recovery Situations: Learning from the Past," UNDP, 2010.

Table 5: African countries from the top 20 United Nations troop and police contributors as of 31 January 2026⁵⁰

Global Rank	Country	Total UN Peacekeeping Personnel
3	Rwanda	4,201
7	Ghana	1,938
9	Morocco	1,334
11	United Republic of Tanzania	964
12	Cameroon	934
13	Ethiopia	926
14	Senegal	887
15	Zambia	886
18	Burundi	761
19	Malawi	15

Anti-corruption training for commanders

Pre-deployment anti-corruption training is essential to enable commanders to detect, examine, and manage integrity risks in the field. Diversity in mission-specific corruption risk pathways, including in emergency procurement, complex financial flows, and relationships with diverse stakeholders, requires unique, comprehensive training programmes targeted at each pathway.⁵¹

2025 GDI findings showcase noteworthy deficits in pre-deployment corruption training for commanders. Such activities are absent in more than half of the countries, with nearly 60 per cent of them scoring 0 — including major UN troop contributors such as Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, and Cameroon, as well as conflict-affected contexts like South Sudan (see Table 5). Exceptions are notable in Benin and Madagascar, where all commanders are required to and do undergo comprehensive training on corruption as part of their ordinary and pre-deployment education.

Evidence from United Nations peace operations highlights how systemic leadership, transparency, and accountability failures are partly rooted in weaknesses in training and oversight prior to deployment.⁵²

Without mandatory, operationally grounded anti-corruption preparation and corresponding monitoring mechanisms, commanders may be tactically proficient yet insufficiently equipped to safeguard mission resources and legitimacy. Thus, it is important to strengthen pre-deployment training standards and conduct frameworks for countries engaged in peace and military operations at home and abroad.

Controls on Contracting

In conflict and fragile operational settings across Sub-Saharan Africa, contracting for essential services and supplies, such as fuel, transport, infrastructure, security and logistics, channels significant financial flows into local economies. While this can generate short-term economic activity, it also creates potent incentives for rent-seeking and capture by elites, particularly where oversight mechanisms are underdeveloped.

⁵⁰ United Nations Peacekeeping, "African countries from the top 20 Troop and police contributors as of 31 January 2026".

⁵¹ Transparency International Defence & Security, "Interventions Anti-Corruption Guidance", London, 2019.

⁵² United Nations General Assembly, "Report of an independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic", United Nations, 2016.

Key drivers undermining integrity in military operations



Weak institutionalisation of corruption risk management

Corruption is rarely recognised as an operational threat within military doctrine, planning frameworks, or deployment procedures, resulting in limited prevention and mitigation measures.



Reactive rather than anticipatory risk management

Corruption risks are rarely integrated into operational planning processes, resulting in responses that occur after vulnerabilities have materialised rather than being identified and mitigated in advance.



Insufficient operational integrity capacity

Anti-corruption and integrity considerations are rarely integrated into routine military education and pre-deployment preparation, leaving personnel ill-equipped to respond to corruption risks in the field.



Reliance on high-risk contracting

Operations depend heavily on local contractors, emergency procurement, and complex supply chains, creating opportunities for rent-seeking, favouritism, and diversion of resources.

Evidence from operations in Somalia highlights how opaque contracting practices and limited audit capacity can complicate accountability, strain logistics chains and expose forces to exploitation by local brokers.^{53 54} Others have also underscored the vulnerability of emergency procurement systems in fragile environments, noting that compressed timelines and relaxed competition amplify corruption risks across the supply chain.^{55 56}

Despite these recognised vulnerabilities, only 1 of the 17 GDI countries (Benin) demonstrates a moderate insulation from corruption or better on controls in contracting for goods and services in theatre, scoring

50/100. The remaining countries score between 0/100 and 32/100, revealing weak or absent safeguards (Figure 22).

More than two-thirds of the 17 countries have limited to no institutional resilience to corruption, including South Sudan, Niger, Mali, Cameroon, and South Africa. Competitive bidding procedures are often waived under operational pressure and specialised training for contracting officers on corruption risk is uncommon. **Without enforceable transparency standards, robust audit trails, and independent oversight, contracting processes risk becoming vectors for local political capture, a phenomenon capable of undermining mission legitimacy and long-term stability outcomes.**

53 Williams, P.D., "Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM)", 2007-2017. Oxford University Press, 2018.

54 Hansen, S.J., "Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group". Hurst Publishers, 2013.

55 UNODC, United Nations Peacekeeping, and DPPA, "Achieving peace through integrity - addressing corruption in conflict-affected settings", UNODC and Partners, 2025.

56 World Bank, "Enhancing Government Effectiveness and Transparency: The Fight Against Corruption. Global Report", World Bank, 2020.

7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Reform priorities to strengthen defence governance in Sub-Saharan Africa

West Africa

Reform efforts in West Africa should prioritise strengthening civilian oversight, particularly parliamentary scrutiny, audit functions, and procurement monitoring.

In higher-risk contexts—particularly Nigeria, Mali, and Niger—rebuilding accountability mechanisms following political instability and limiting the use of exceptional procurement procedures remain urgent priorities. Given the scale of security operations, it appears crucial that these countries develop comprehensive military doctrine and start considering corruption risks in deployment training, planning of military operations, and monitoring processes on the ground.

East Africa

With most countries reviewed suffering from the lack of scrutiny in practice, reforms should prioritise improving the effectiveness of oversight institutions through greater access to information, stronger audit capacity, and enhanced procurement transparency. Reducing reliance on classified procurement and strengthening integrity safeguards in operational environments remain key priorities, particularly in countries affected by conflict and concentrated executive authority.

Southern Africa

Reforms should focus on strengthening the effectiveness and independence of oversight institutions, particularly around classified spending and external audit processes. Reinforcing financial scrutiny, and embedding integrity safeguards within military operations remain essential, especially in higher-risk contexts such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

7.2 Good practices and reform pathways

Transparency International Defence and Security research has consistently emphasised reform priorities for the region focusing on elements of governance frameworks such as access to information,⁵⁷ civilian oversight mechanisms,⁵⁸ capacity building,⁵⁹ financial governance controls,⁶⁰ and accountability in military operations. The 2025 GDI findings show that while elements of these frameworks exist in some countries, they are unevenly defined and inconsistently implemented. This reinforces that corruption in defence is not only a governance challenge but a structural risk to effective, accountable, and legitimate security provisions. The following reform pathways outline practical steps to strengthen defence governance.

Reform Pathway 1

Enabling effective civilian oversight

Reform efforts must reflect diverse political and institutional contexts. Strengthening civilian oversight of the defence sector, across both legislature and administrative systems, should be prioritised. This includes enhancing skills with parliamentary committees, particularly in scrutinising defence policy and budgets; reinforcing external audit functions and improving the tracking of military expenditure; and strengthening oversight of procurement through more robust tender board controls.

Where oversight mechanisms exist, priority should be given to improving access to defence information and ensuring that audit findings and parliamentary recommendations are systematically acted upon. Strengthening follow-up and enforcement is essential to ensure that oversight translates into corrective action rather than remaining procedural. In contexts where oversight is constrained or absent, strengthening internal and external audit functions with clear mandates, regular reporting, and some degree of external visibility can provide a minimum level of accountability. Across

57 Transparency International Defence & Security, "Unlocking Access: Balancing National Security and Transparency in Defence," London, 2024.

58 Transparency International Defence & Security, "The Missing Element: Addressing Corruption through Security Sector Reform in West Africa," London, 2021.

59 Transparency International Defence & Security, "Securing Progress: Mapping Opportunities for Anti-Corruption in Security Sector Reform Frameworks," London, 2023.

60 Transparency International Defence & Security, "Niger's Defence Sector: Institutional Resilience to Corruption Amidst a Changing Political Landscape," London, 2025.

61 Transparency International Defence & Security, "Mali's Defence Sector: Systemic Corruption Risk Amidst Escalating Violence," London, 2025.

all contexts, closing the gap between formal oversight provisions and their implementations remains the central reform priority. This includes safeguarding the independence and protection of oversight actors from political interference.^{62 63}

Reform Pathway 2

Strengthening transparency through clearer classification and disclosure frameworks.

Frameworks governing access to defence information across countries assessed in the region range from relatively comprehensive systems to a complete absence of regulation, but their effectiveness is often undermined in practice. Strengthening institutional resilience therefore requires improved information sharing across and within government, ensuring that budgets, audits, expenditures, and acquisition plans are accessible to oversight bodies; more open and accessible budget processes, including greater public transparency; and stronger procurement transparency and oversight, particularly through reviewing and limiting the use of legal exemptions.

In many contexts, defence institutions are partially or fully excluded from access to information and procurement frameworks, while classification decisions are left to executive discretion. This concentration of control reinforces opacity and limits meaningful scrutiny. Addressing these challenges requires not only formal disclosure frameworks, but clearer safeguards governing their use and consistent application. This includes narrowing national security exemptions, establishing independent and enforceable review mechanisms, and ensuring that defence procurement is subject to minimum standards of transparency and oversight. Reforms should also prioritise improving the traceability of defence spending across the full cycle—from budget allocation to procurement and operational use.

Shifting from secrecy as the default towards transparency as the norm is critical to reducing corruption risks and strengthening accountability across defence governance.^{64 65 66}

TI-DS research highlights the importance of integrating anti-corruption safeguards into operational planning and oversight to mitigate corruption risks in security operations

Reform Pathway 3

Embedding integrity safeguards in military operations

The report highlights that oversight of operational activities, including deployments, logistics, and the use of operational resources, remains limited in many contexts. Strengthening integrity safeguards within operational environments therefore represents an important reform pathway. This includes incorporating corruption risk mitigation into military operations in collaboration with Ministries of Defence and armed forces, particularly by integrating corruption risks into military doctrine and forward planning, and embedding anti-corruption measures into operational training.

Additional measures include establishing clearer legal frameworks governing military deployments, strengthening internal accountability mechanisms within defence institutions, and improving monitoring of operational expenditures and supply chains. Integrating anti-corruption as a cross-cutting component of military operations is essential to ensure that operational effectiveness is not undermined by corruption risks. TI-DS research highlights the importance of integrating anti-corruption safeguards into operational planning and oversight to mitigate corruption risks in security operations.⁶⁷

Across all pathways, the findings reinforce that anti-corruption in defence must be treated not as a technical reform area, but as a core security and political priority embedded across governance, operations, and decision-making.

62 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Securing progress: mapping opportunities for anti-corruption in security sector reform frameworks", London, 2023.

63 Transparency International Defence and Security, "The Missing Element: Addressing Corruption through Security Sector Reform in West Africa", London, 2021.

64 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Unlocking Access: Balancing National Security and Transparency in Defence", London, 2024.

65 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Nigeria's defence sector: Persistent corruption risk amidst escalating security threats", London, 2025.

66 Transparency International Defence and Security, "Mali's defence sector: Systemic corruption risk amidst escalating violence", London, 2025.

67 Ibid.

8. CONCLUSION: STRENGTHENING DEFENCE GOVERNANCE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The findings of this report highlight both persistent weaknesses and areas of gradual progress in defence governance across countries in the assessment in Sub-Saharan Africa. These trends are closely linked to broader socio-political dynamics affecting the region, including executive dominance, conflict pressures, and shrinking civic space. Overall, corruption risks in the defence sector remain high.

Across most countries, defence sector decisions, including policies, budgets, and procurement, continue to receive limited scrutiny. Oversight institutions formally exist in many contexts, but their practical effectiveness remains constrained. Parliamentary committees, audit bodies, and other oversight mechanisms frequently lack timely access to information, technical expertise, and the institutional independence required to conduct meaningful scrutiny. As a result, oversight often takes the form of monitoring rather than sustained and proactive accountability. While financial oversight mechanisms are comparatively stronger across the region, they rarely translate into tangible institutional outcomes. Defence procurement remains particularly vulnerable, with oversight of acquisition processes consistently weaker than that applied to broader financial management.

Secrecy and classification practices are a central driver of corruption risk in defence governance of countries assessed in Sub-Saharan Africa. While a degree of confidentiality is justified on national security grounds, the 2025 GDI findings show that secrecy is routinely extended beyond what is necessary, effectively becoming the default framework governing defence finances. Weak disclosure affects not only budget transparency but also procurement planning, contract allocation, and the tracking of actual expenditure. Defence procurement is particularly vulnerable, as exemptions from standard rules restrict competition, limit access to information, and prevent effective oversight. As a result, procurement decisions remain difficult to trace throughout the process. Restricted civic space exacerbates these risks. In contexts where civil society and media lack access to defence information, corruption risks are highest



Finally, corruption risks in military operations remain critical across the region. Institutional safeguards to prevent corruption during operations are often weakest precisely where resources, discretion, and urgency are greatest. This is particularly concerning given the number of countries engaged in counterterrorism, peacekeeping, and internal security operations. Failure to address corruption risks in operational contexts can undermine mission effectiveness, erode public trust, and ultimately increase the likelihood of operational failure.

ANNEX A

GDI METHODOLOGY

Government Defence Integrity Index framework and pillars

The GDI is the first global analysis of institutional and informal controls to manage the risk of corruption in defence and security institutions. The GDI provides a framework of good practice that promotes accountable, transparent, and responsible governance based on the premise that better institutional controls reduce the risk of corruption. The index is thus a comprehensive assessment of the quality of institutional controls in the defence sector.

The 2025 Sub-Saharan African Report assesses 17 countries: Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Suda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. These countries were selected based on several factors that include their role in the global arms trade, levels of political or defence-related instability, recent reform efforts affecting defence integrity, and their relevance to TI-DS and partners' ongoing work and advocacy.

The GDI assesses the existence, effectiveness, and enforcement of institutional safeguards to corruption across five key risk areas: policymaking and political affairs; finances; personnel management; military

operations; and procurement. Under these areas, the GDI identifies 29 sector-specific corruption risks, assessed through 77 main questions and broken down into 212 indicators. The GDI assesses both legal frameworks and implementation, as well as resources and outcomes, and target areas for reform to narrow this gap.

The GDI is the result of a robust research process led by a Country Assessor who completes a standardised questionnaire, drawing on both desk research and confidential interviews. All evidence is cited, triangulated, and reviewed by TI-DS for consistency, validity and reliability ensuring high standards of research.⁶⁸ The assessment is then reviewed by two external experts who check and validate the assessor's research, while providing insights based on their expertise. Governments are invited to verify factual accuracy and submit further evidence, and their comments are incorporated where relevant.⁶⁹

The current iteration of the GDI uses the same methodology as the 2020 edition, allowing for comparison of findings and trends over the five-year period.



68 Transparency International, Defence & Security, "GDI Methods Paper," 2020, page 9.

69 For more information on the GDI research process, see: "The Government Defence Integrity Index. Methods Paper," available at: https://ti-defence.org/gdi/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/12/GDI-Methods-Paper_v3_09122020.pdf

Range of Scores			Corruption Risk
A	83 – 100	Very robust institutional resilience to corruption	Very low
B	67 – 82	Robust institutional resilience to corruption	Low
C	50 – 66	Modest institutional resilience to corruption	Moderate
D	33 – 49	Weak institutional resilience to corruption	High
E	17 – 32	Very weak institutional resilience to corruption	Very high
F	0 – 16	Limited to no institutional resilience to corruption	Critical

Scoring and aggregation

The scoring rubric provides 5 distinct levels of scoring for each of the 212 indicators, from 0-100 (0-25-50-75-100), with the highest score indicating best practice for the area. The rubric includes a breakdown for every indicator, which allows users to identify the specific areas of strength and weakness within each assessed indicator.

Indicator scores are aggregated using a simple aggregation method (no weighting) to determine the 77 question scores, the risk area scores, and the overall country score. Overall scores are then assigned to a band from A to F, which is intended to reflect the level of corruption risk in defence sector institutions and practices.

Limitations and scope

The GDI is not a measurement of corruption, nor does it quantify lost funds, identify corrupt actors, or estimate public perceptions of corruption. Instead, it assesses the quality of mechanisms used to manage corruption risk and evaluates the factors that are understood to facilitate corruption, together with the dynamics that provide an environment in which corruption can flourish unchecked. The index focuses primarily on internal defence governance, with limited consideration of external impacts such as arms exports and military operations.

Some qualitative factors relevant to corruption risk are included but not scored. These are elements for which there is no good practice standard yet established, or where context varies significantly across countries. This decision is based on the difficulties involved in scoring these questions consistently over time, and in this iteration of the index.

The GDI is the result of a robust research process lead by a Country Assessor who completes a standardised questionnaire, drawing on both desk research and confidential interviews. All evidence is cited, triangulated, and reviewed by TI-DS for consistency, validity and reliability ensuring high standards of research.

ANNEX B

GDI CONTENT: 77 QUESTIONS

- Q1. Is there formal provision for effective and independent legislative scrutiny of defence policy?
- Q2. Does the country have an identifiable and effective parliamentary defence and security committee (or similar such organisations) to exercise oversight?
- Q3. Is the country's national defence policy or national security strategy debated and publicly available?
- Q4. Do defence and security institutions have a policy, or evidence, of openness towards civil society organisations (CSOs) when dealing with issues of corruption?
- Q5. Has the country signed up to the following international anti-corruption instruments: UNCAC and the OECD Convention?
- Q6. Is there evidence of regular, active public debate on issues of defence? If yes, does the government participate in this debate?
- Q7. Does the country have an openly stated and effectively implemented anti-corruption policy for the defence sector?
- Q8. Are there independent, well-resourced, and effective institutions within defence and security tasked with building integrity and countering corruption?
- Q9. Does the public trust the institutions of defence and security to tackle the issue of bribery and corruption in their establishments?
- Q10. Are there regular assessments of the areas of greatest corruption risk for ministry and armed forces personnel, and are the findings used as inputs to the anti-corruption policy?
- Q11. Does the country have a process for acquisition planning that involves clear oversight, and is it publicly available?
- Q12. Is the defence budget transparent, showing key items of expenditure? And it is provided to the legislature in a timely fashion?
- Q13. Is there a legislative committee (or other appropriate body) responsible for defence budget scrutiny and analysis in an effective way?
- Q14. Is the approved defence budget made publicly available? In practice, can citizens, civil society, and the media obtain detailed information on the defence budget?
- Q15. Are sources of defence income other than from central government allocation (from equipment sales or property disposal, for example) published and scrutinised?
- Q16. Is there an effective internal audit process for defence ministry expenditure (that is, for example, transparent, conducted by appropriately skilled individuals, and subject to parliamentary oversight)?
- Q17. Is there effective and transparent external auditing of military defence expenditure?
- Q18. Is there evidence that the country's defence institutions have controlling or financial interests in businesses associated with the country's natural resource exploitation and, if so, are these interests publicly stated and subject to scrutiny?
- Q19. Is there evidence, for example through media investigations or prosecution reports, of a penetration of organised crime into the defence and security sector? If no, is there evidence that the government is alert and prepared for this risk?
- Q20. Is there policing to investigate corruption and organised crime within the defence services and is there evidence of the effectiveness of this policing?
- Q21. Are the policies, administration, and budgets of the intelligence services subject to effective and independent oversight?
- Q22. Are senior positions within the intelligence services filled on the basis of objective selection criteria, and are appointees subject to investigation of their suitability and prior conduct?
- Q23. Does the government have a well-scrutinised process for arms export decisions that aligns with Articles 7.1.iv, 11.5, and 15.6 of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)?
- Q24. How effective are controls over the disposal of assets, and is information on these disposals, and the proceeds of their sale, transparent?

- Q25. Is independent and transparent scrutiny of asset disposals conducted by defence establishments, and are the reports of such scrutiny publicly available?
- Q26. What percentage of defence and security expenditure in the budget year is dedicated to spending on secret items relating to national security and the intelligence services?
- Q27. Is the legislature (or the appropriate legislative committee or members of the legislature) given full information for the budget year on the spending of all secret items relating to national security and military intelligence?
- Q28. Are audit reports of the annual accounts of the security sector (the military and intelligence services) subject to parliamentary debate?
- Q29. In law, are off-budget military expenditures permitted, and if so, are they exceptional occurrences that are well-controlled? In practice, are there any off-budget military expenditures? If so, does evidence suggest this involves illicit economic activity?
- Q30. Are mechanisms for accessing information from the defence sector effective?
- Q31. Do national defence and security institutions have beneficial ownership of commercial businesses? If so, how transparent are details of the operations and finances of such businesses?
- Q32. Are military-owned businesses subject to transparent independent scrutiny at a recognised international standard?
- Q33. Is there evidence of unauthorised private enterprise by military or other defence ministry employees? If so, what is the government's reaction to such enterprise?
- Q34. Do the Defence Ministry, Defence Minister, Chiefs of Defence, and Single Service Chiefs publicly commit, through, for example, speeches, media interviews, or political mandates, to anti-corruption and integrity measures?
- Q35. Are there effective measures in place for personnel found to have taken part in forms of bribery and corruption, and is there evidence that these measures are being carried out?
- Q36. Is whistleblowing encouraged by the government, and are whistle-blowers in military and defence ministries afforded adequate protection from reprisal for reporting evidence of corruption, in both law and practice?
- Q37. Is special attention paid to the selection, time in post, and oversight of personnel in sensitive positions, including officials and personnel in defence procurement, contracting, financial management, and commercial management?
- Q38. Is the number of civilian and military personnel accurately known and publicly available?
- Q39. Are pay rates and allowances for civilian and military personnel openly published?
- Q40. Do personnel receive the correct pay on time, and is the system of payment well-established, routine, and published?
- Q41. Is there an established, independent, transparent, and objective appointment system for the selection of military personnel at middle and top management level?
- Q42. Are personnel promoted through an objective, meritocratic process? Such a process would include promotion boards outside of the command chain, strong formal appraisal processes, and independent oversight.
- Q43. Where compulsory conscription occurs, is there a policy of not accepting bribes for avoiding conscription? Are there appropriate procedures in place to deal with such bribery, and are they applied?
- Q44. Is there a policy of refusing bribes to gain preferred postings? Are there appropriate procedures in place to deal with such bribery, and are they applied?
- Q45. Are chains of command separate from chains of payment?
- Q46. Is there a Code of Conduct for all military personnel that includes, but is not limited to, guidance with respect to bribery, gifts and hospitality, conflicts of interest, and post-separation activities? Is there evidence that breaches of the Code of Conduct are effectively addressed?
- Q47. Is there a Code of Conduct for all civilian personnel that includes, but is not limited to, guidance with respect to bribery, gifts and hospitality, conflicts of interest, and post-separation activities? Is there evidence that breaches of the Code of Conduct are effectively addressed?
- Q48. Does regular anti-corruption training take place for military and civilian personnel?
- Q49. Is there a policy to make public outcomes of the prosecution of defence services personnel for corrupt activities, and is there evidence of effective prosecutions in recent years?

- Q50. Are there effective measures in place to discourage facilitation payments (which are illegal in almost all countries)?
- Q51. Do the armed forces have military doctrine addressing corruption as a strategic issue on operations?
- Q52. Is there training in corruption issues for commanders at all levels in order to ensure that these commanders are clear on the corruption issues they may face during deployment?
- Q53. Is corruption as a strategic issue considered in the forward planning of operations? If so, is there evidence that commanders at all levels apply this knowledge in the field?
- Q54. Are trained professionals regularly deployed to monitor corruption risk in the field (whether deployed on operations or peacekeeping missions)?
- Q55. Are there guidelines, and staff training, on addressing corruption risks in contracting whilst on deployed operations or peacekeeping missions?
- Q56. Are private military contractors employed and if so, are they subject to a similar level of scrutiny as for the armed forces?
- Q57. Does the country have legislation covering defence and security procurement with clauses specific to corruption risks, and are any items exempt from these laws?
- Q58. Is the defence procurement cycle process, from assessment of needs, through contract implementation and sign-off, all the way to asset disposal, disclosed to the public?
- Q59. Are defence procurement oversight mechanisms in place and are these oversight mechanisms active and transparent?
- Q60. Are potential defence purchases made public?
- Q61. Are actual defence purchases made public?
- Q62. What procedures and standards are companies required to have – such as compliance programmes and business conduct programmes – in order to be able to bid for work for the Ministry of Defence or armed forces?
- Q63. Are procurement requirements derived from a national defence and security strategy, and are procurement decisions well-audited? Are defence purchases based on clearly identified and quantified requirements?
- Q64. Is defence procurement generally conducted as open competition or is there a significant element of single-sourcing (that is, without competition)?
- Q65. Are tender boards subject to regulations and codes of conduct and are their decisions subject to independent audit to ensure due process and fairness?
- Q66. Does the country have legislation in place to discourage and punish collusion between bidders for defence and security contracts?
- Q67. Are there mechanisms and procedures that ensure that contractors meet their obligations on reporting and delivery?
- Q68. Are there mechanisms in place to allow companies to complain about perceived malpractice in procurement, and are companies protected from discrimination when they use these mechanisms?
- Q69. What sanctions are used to punish the corrupt activities of a supplier?
- Q70. When negotiating offset contracts, does the government specifically address corruption risk by imposing anti-corruption due diligence on contractors and third parties?
- Q71. How does the government monitor offset contracts?
- Q72. What level of competition are offset contracts subject to?
- Q73. How strongly does the government control the company's use of agents and intermediaries in the procurement cycle?
- Q74. Are the principal aspects of the financing package surrounding major arms deals, (such as payment timelines, interest rates, commercial loans or export credit agreements) made publicly available prior to the signing of contracts?
- Q75. How common is it for defence acquisition decisions to be based on political influence by selling nations?
- Q76. Does the country regulate lobbying of defence institutions?
- Q77. Is comprehensive data on actual spending on defence published during the budget year?

ANNEX C

COUNTRY SYNOPSES: STRENGTHS AND PRIORITY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN GDI DATA

Benin

Corruption risks in Benin's defence sector are high in military operations and procurement. There is little financial transparency and oversight is weak, with strong presidential control and limited parliamentary or public scrutiny. Key laws and whistleblower protections have been repealed, reducing accountability. Nonetheless, some safeguards are in place to prevent military commercial involvement and integrity initiatives show progress, including anti-corruption training of military personnel.

Burundi

Corruption risks in Burundi's defence sector are very high. Despite, formal rights given to the Parliament to control the defence policy and budget, regular corruption risk assessment and a transparent payment system, parliamentary oversight remains weak and dominated by executive and military influence, while financial and procurement transparency is minimal. Personnel management lacks safeguards and codes of conduct. Operational planning excludes anti-corruption measures, and public or civil oversight is nearly absent, enabling persistent opacity and misconduct. Defence procurement is highly opaque, lacking competition, oversight, and clear legal procedures despite a clear procurement legislation.

Cameroon

Cameroon's defence sector shows some good practices, including published defence budgets, internal audits, and the existence of codes of conduct for personnel. However, these measures are outweighed by systemic weaknesses: weak parliamentary oversight, opaque finances, politicised appointments, ineffective whistleblower protection, and fully non-transparent procurement processes dominated by "special contracts," leaving the sector highly vulnerable to corruption and mismanagement.

Côte d'Ivoire

Corruption risks are high in Côte d'Ivoire's defence institutions. Oversight and transparency in Côte d'Ivoire's defence sector remain limited. Parliamentary and audit scrutiny is weak, financial information is opaque, and access to information extremely limited. Defence procurement is exempt from standard rules and lacks external control. Personnel systems show some strengths such as comprehensive payment system, but whistleblowing, ethics enforcement, and operational anti-corruption measures are underdeveloped.

Ghana

Ghana's defence sector demonstrates generally moderate rule-of-law performance, supported by active parliamentary scrutiny, functioning defence committees, and formal procurement frameworks. There is space for public debate, and civil society organisations benefit from strong protections. However, gaps in law and practice persist, particularly in anti-corruption policy. Despite active budget publication, transparency is limited in key areas including, asset disposals, secret spending, personnel numbers and pay rates. Operational risk management and offset contracting record the lowest levels of performance.

Kenya

Kenya's defence sector shows strong disciplinary measures, with firm sanctions for personnel and robust policies on bribery and facilitation payments. Yet the military code of conduct remains underdeveloped, and corruption risks are not prioritised during deployments. Procurement risks also remain high, with weak implementation and limited transparency in purchases and contract awards. While beneficial ownership rules and scrutiny of military-owned businesses are relatively robust, the parliament's oversight role and engagement with civil society remain notably constrained.

Liberia

Corruption risks are high across Liberia's defence institutions, with the legislature playing a limited role in shaping defence policy and persistent weaknesses in procurement open competition, audit trails and offset contracting. Compliance and ethics units exist, but lack sufficient independence, and internal audit functions do not necessarily consider findings from an active external audit body. Objectivity is also limited in selection, appointment, and promotion processes, even as disciplinary measures and sanctions for military personnel demonstrate comparatively stronger performance.

Madagascar

Corruption risks in Madagascar's defence sector are high including weak parliamentary oversight, politicised appointments, and opaque procurement. Financial transparency is limited, audits are ineffective, and operational corruption safeguards are minimal. While formal frameworks—such as anti-corruption policies, ethics codes, and tender boards—exist, enforcement is inconsistent, and access to information remains highly restricted, undermining accountability across the sector.

Mali

Mali's defence sector shows some positive practices, including partial budget publication, accurate payment system, and rules on institutional beneficial ownership. However, pervasive governance gaps persist politicised appointments, weak personnel controls, opaque procurement exempt from oversight, and the absence of democratic scrutiny or effective audits leave the sector very highly vulnerable to corruption and executive interference.

Mozambique

Mozambique's defence sector faces significant gaps between law and implementation. While sanctions and whistleblowing protections are in place, effectiveness remains limited, and facilitation payments persist despite anti-bribery provisions. Procurement follows formal planning but allows little open competition and discloses few purchase details. Although the defence budget is broadly comprehensive, financial risks persist due to extensive secret items and limited legislative access to information. The absence of corruption as a strategic concern in military doctrine further shows weak operational risk management.



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Niger

Niger's defence sector faces critical risks in political, financial, operational, and procurement risks, driven by the absence of democratic oversight since the 2023 coup, non-functional audit mechanisms, and extreme financial opacity. Limited good practices—such as formal legal sanctions for corruption and existing codes for military and civilian staff—remain largely unenforced. Procurement and operations occur without transparency, competition, or integrity safeguards, while politicised appointments, weak protections, and declining training further heighten corruption and accountability risks.

Nigeria

Corruption risks remain deeply embedded across Nigeria's defence sector, underpinned by weak short- and long-term oversight from the Defence Committee and limited engagement by internal and external audit bodies. Financial scrutiny is particularly fragile, with significant gaps in defence spending transparency, secret expenditures, and military-owned enterprises. Although anti-bribery sanctions exist in law, enforcement is inconsistent, personnel processes lack objectivity, and operational risk management and procurement practices remain weak despite a legal framework that formally recognises corruption risks.

Senegal

Senegal's defence sector benefits from good governance practices such as active tender boards, reliable payment systems, and public debate around defence issues—but high corruption and governance risks persist. Parliamentary and committee oversight remains weak, audits are ineffective, and transparency over budgets, spending, and procurement is minimal. Most defence procurement bypasses standard rules through broad secrecy exemptions. Personnel integrity frameworks are incomplete and integrity measures during military operations remain limited.

South Africa

South Africa's defence sector benefits from relatively strong institutional controls, long-term oversight mechanisms, and a solid external audit presence. However, policy responsiveness remains limited, with weak executive engagement and accountability mechanisms that do not consistently translate oversight into corrective action. Defence-spending risks are moderate, but procurement continues to suffer from gaps between the legal framework and its practical implementation. These shortcomings are most visible in operations, where corruption risks are insufficiently anticipated and managed.

South Sudan

South Sudan's defence sector is featured by weaknesses in oversight and accountability, particularly in procurement and military operations. Although formal provisions for legislative scrutiny exist, effective oversight by parliament and internal-external bodies is extremely limited. Procurement and operations face the highest exposure to risk, intensified by opaque financial practices despite the presence of some formal controls. A lack of clear rules, and limited commitment to integrity further undermine accountability across the sector.

Uganda

Uganda shows moderate oversight of defence policy, but internal audit functions offer limited support for effective scrutiny. External oversight bodies offer stronger institutional evidence, repeatedly identifying failures to implement key procurement recommendations. While sanctions frameworks are robust in law, enforcement is inconsistent, particularly for senior or high-risk positions, and appointment processes lack sufficient oversight. As a result, procurement and operational activities remain highly exposed to corruption risks.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's defence sector faces critical levels of corruption risk, characterised by extreme opacity and an almost complete absence of external oversight or public policy debate. Budget information is unavailable, and access to defence-related data remains severely restricted. Procurement and operations are particularly exposed to high risks. While improvements in the payment system and some anti-bribery sanctions exist, these are outweighed by the broader lack of transparency and accountability.

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