



WHY BUDGET REFORMS FAIL IN FRAGILE STATES: A political economy of discretion and non-reform in the Sahel

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Abstract

Budget reforms in fragile states repeatedly fail despite extensive diagnostics and widely available policy frameworks. This article explains this persistence by conceptualising budgetary non-reform as an endogenous institutional equilibrium that preserves discretionary power. It argues that effective budgetary authority is not located in formal budget laws but in public treasury management, which structures both ex ante design and ex post execution through liquidity control.

Drawing on a controlled comparison of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the analysis identifies stable blocking coalitions across central administrations, security actors, and political elites, whose converging interests make reform politically costly and collectively unattractive. It further shows that crises reinforce rather than disrupt this equilibrium by increasing the political value of discretion and executive control.

The article contributes to public administration and political economy debates by demonstrating that non-reform is not a failure of capacity or will, but a rational outcome of power-preserving institutional configurations.

Keywords: political economy; budgetary non-reform; discretionary power; public treasury; state fragility; authoritarian governance; Sahel

JEL Codes: H61 ; H68 ; P16 ; O23 ; D72

Digital Object Identifier (DOI): <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20031471>

1. Introduction

In fragile states, persistent budgetary dysfunctions—low credibility of fiscal forecasts, rigid programming, and systematic gaps between approved and executed budgets—are extensively documented in the public financial management literature (Allen et al., 2019; World Bank, 2017). According to standard reform approaches, the accumulation of diagnostics, tools, and best practices should progressively correct these failures. Yet, in practice, budgetary architectures remain strikingly stable.

This persistence constitutes a theoretical anomaly. If dysfunctions are well identified and reform instruments widely available, why do budget laws remain institutionally unchanged? Existing explanations—capacity deficits, information gaps, or weak political will—fail to account for the systematic reproduction of these arrangements across time and contexts.

This article argues that budgetary non-reform is not a failure of reform but an endogenous institutional equilibrium that preserves discretionary power. It shifts the analytical focus from the formal budget law to its execution, identifying public treasury management as the central locus of effective budgetary authority. Through the control of liquidity, payment sequencing, and infra-annual arbitrations, the treasury structures both ex ante budget design and ex post resource allocation.

Drawing on a controlled comparison of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the article shows that this equilibrium is sustained by stable blocking coalitions linking central budgetary administrations, security apparatuses, and political elites. These actors converge around the preservation of discretionary flexibility, rendering structural reform politically costly and strategically unattractive.

The central research question is therefore: why do budget laws remain institutionally stable in fragile states despite the availability of reform diagnostics and policy tools?

The article makes three contributions. First, it reconceptualises the budget law as a site of political power structured by execution mechanisms rather than formal rules. Second, it identifies treasury management as the core institutional mechanism through which discretionary power is preserved. Third, it demonstrates that crises reinforce rather than disrupt this equilibrium by increasing the political value of discretion, thereby reducing the political feasibility of structural reform.

2. The Budget Law as an Instrument of Power

2.1 Budgetary Neutrality and the Reform Illusion

Public financial management reforms are most often presented as technical processes aimed at improving procedures, transparency, and fiscal discipline. Widely disseminated through international normative frameworks, this perspective promotes the idea of the functional neutrality of budget laws, understood as mechanical devices translating public priorities into resource allocations (World Bank,

2017). Within this framework, reform failure is typically attributed to capacity deficits, imperfect information, or incomplete implementation (Hood, 1995; Grindle, 2017).

Such a technocratic reading, however, obscures the political dimension of budget reform. As shown by Andrews (2013), Andrews et al. (2017), and Allen et al. (2019), reforms may serve a function of institutional legitimation without substantially altering effective practices. The adoption of new frameworks, procedures, or instruments often operates as a signal of compliance, demonstrating alignment with recognised standards rather than transforming underlying relations of power.

However, this literature remains centred on reform failure as the outcome of implementation gaps or capability constraints. It does not fully account for the persistence of institutional arrangements even when their limitations are widely recognised. This article departs from this perspective by arguing that the stability of budgetary systems cannot be reduced to incomplete reform. Rather, it reflects a stabilised institutional equilibrium in which non-reform itself performs a political function: the preservation of discretionary power.

The apparent depoliticisation of budgetary choices thus rests on an analytical fiction. By reducing the budget law to a set of formal rules, reform discourse renders invisible the underlying arbitrations it organises. Budget design structures access to information, implicitly hierarchises priorities, and preserves margins of discretion at the execution stage. Reform therefore becomes an exercise in procedural conformity, compatible with the reproduction of existing institutional equilibria rather than a lever of political transformation.

This perspective requires a shift from analysing reform design to identifying the locus of effective budgetary power. While existing approaches focus on formal rules and procedural improvements, they overlook the mechanisms through which discretion is operationalised in practice. As the following sections demonstrate, this locus is not the budget law itself, but its execution through treasury management.

2.2 Path Dependence and Institutional Lock-In

The stability of budgetary architectures in fragile states can be analysed through the lens of institutional path dependence (North, 1990; Pierson, 2004). Formal budget rules coexist with stabilised informal practices that shape actors' behaviour and constrain the space of credible alternatives. Under such conditions, any substantive transformation of budget design entails significant political costs, as it challenges entrenched positions, administrative routines, and discretionary margins of manoeuvre.

These lock-in mechanisms are neither accidental nor irrational. Central finance ministries have strong incentives to preserve procedural frameworks they already master—even if imperfect—in order to minimise organisational uncertainty. Development partners prioritise stability, comparability, and formal traceability, thereby reinforcing the reproduction of standardised models (Booth & Therkildsen, 2012).

Executives, for their part, retain spaces of informal arbitration that allow them to adjust budget execution to political, security, and social constraints.

Taken together, these mechanisms generate a self-reinforcing institutional equilibrium. Each actor anticipates the immediate and concentrated costs of reform—loss of informational control, reduced flexibility, increased exposure—relative to uncertain and deferred gains in efficiency or credibility. Under these conditions, reform is perceived as a negative-sum institutional transformation, while non-reform constitutes a stable and individually rational outcome.

These dynamics can be summarised in the following typology, which provides an analytical mapping of the principal sources of institutional stability:

Table 1. Typology of Budgetary Lock-In Mechanisms

Mechanism	Main actors	Institutional effect
Procedural dependence	Central finance ministries	Inertia
External norms	Development partners	Formal compliance
Informal arbitration	Executive authorities	Opacity

Source: Authors, 2026.

This typology should not be read as a descriptive classification, but as an analytical mapping of complementary sources of institutional stability. Each mechanism contributes to preserving discretionary flexibility, thereby reinforcing the equilibrium conditions under which budgetary non-reform persists.

The budget law thus appears less as an instrument of transformation than as a stabilised institutional compromise, whose disruption would directly threaten prevailing political equilibria. Understanding the persistence of non-reform therefore requires moving beyond formal rules to examine how discretionary power is effectively exercised in practice. This shift leads to the central argument of the article: that the core of budgetary power lies not in the approved budget, but in its execution through treasury management.

3. Blocking Coalitions and Structured Interests

The recurrent failure of budget reform in fragile states cannot be explained by isolated design flaws or implementation gaps. It reflects a stabilised institutional equilibrium produced by blocking coalitions whose interests converge around the preservation of discretionary power embedded in existing budgetary arrangements. These coalitions do not rely on explicit coordination, but on a strategic alignment of incentives that renders non-reform individually rational and collectively robust (Besley & Persson, 2011; Fukuyama, 2014; Khan, 2010; North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009).

While existing political economy frameworks emphasise limited access orders (North et al., 2009) or the political settlements, state formation, or the fiscal foundations of state capacity (Besley & Persson, 2011; Fukuyama, 2014; Khan, 2010), they tend to treat budgetary institutions as outcomes of broader political equilibria. This article shifts the perspective by identifying the budget system itself—and more specifically its execution—as a central arena in which these equilibria are actively reproduced. Blocking coalitions do not merely reflect institutional constraints; they operate through concrete budgetary mechanisms that preserve discretion.

Within this configuration, any substantive reform of the budget law is perceived as a negative-sum transformation. Expected gains in efficiency or fiscal credibility are uncertain and deferred, whereas political, organisational, and informational costs are immediate and concentrated. This asymmetry generates a predictable outcome: actors systematically favour the preservation of discretionary margins over institutional transformation. Non-reform thus emerges as a stable equilibrium sustained by convergent but uncoordinated strategies.

3.1 Central Budgetary Administrations

Central budgetary administrations occupy a structurally dominant position within public finance systems due to their asymmetric control over information. They command macro-budgetary frameworks, preparation calendars, execution data, and the interpretative authority over discrepancies between forecasts and outcomes. This informational centrality constitutes a core source of institutional power, as it conditions the capacity of other actors to contest budgetary arbitrations.

From the perspective of these administrations, reforms targeting budget design—particularly those that enhance execution transparency or reduce procedural flexibility—directly threaten their control over infra-annual arbitrations. Such reforms increase exposure, reduce informational asymmetries, and weaken their role as central brokers of budgetary decision-making. In politically unstable environments, non-reform therefore operates as a rational risk-minimisation strategy, privileging controllable procedures over uncertain institutional change (Andrews, 2013; Allen et al., 2019).

3.2 Security Apparatuses and Sovereign Expenditure

Security institutions constitute a second pillar of the blocking coalition due to their structurally privileged relationship with budgetary discretion. In fragile contexts, defence and security expenditures are routinely extracted from ordinary budgetary debate, justified by urgency, sovereignty, and the sensitivity of information. This sanctuarisation extends beyond allocation levels to encompass execution modalities and oversight mechanisms.

The resulting informational asymmetry limits the capacity of civilian institutions to integrate security spending into a unified and rule-based budgetary framework. Reforms aimed at increasing predictability or traceability are perceived as constraints that may reduce operational responsiveness and strategic

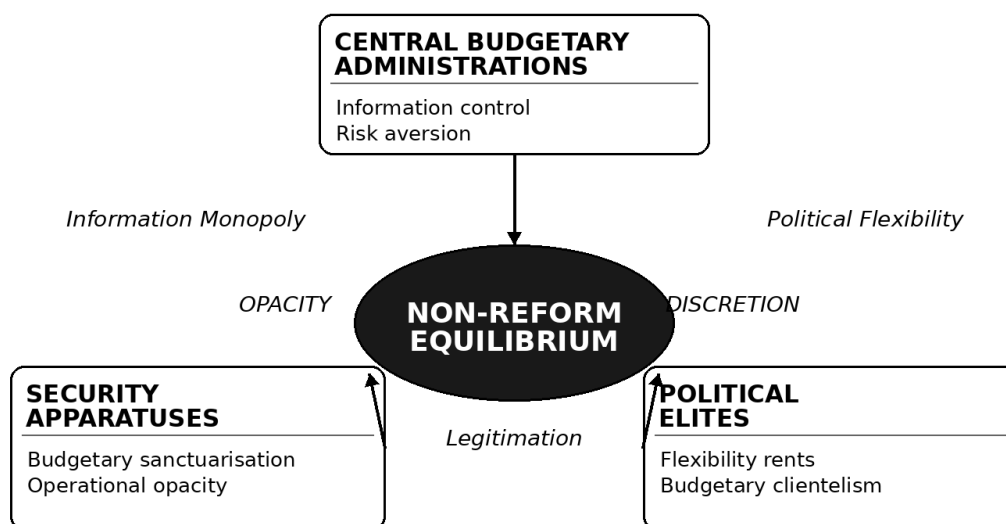
flexibility. Conversely, the persistence of existing arrangements preserves a degree of ex post discretion that is considered indispensable in volatile security environments (Collier, 2009; World Bank, 2017, 2020). Non-reform thus reflects not inertia, but an active preference for institutional configurations that maximise adaptive capacity.

3.3 Political Elites and Rents of Discretion

Political elites complete the blocking coalition through their direct interest in discretionary budgetary flexibility. In fragile states, the budget functions not only as a policy instrument but as a central resource of political management, mobilised to respond to crises, sustain support coalitions, and arbitrate intra-elite competition.

Mechanisms enabling infra-annual reallocations, unanticipated expenditures, and the use of parallel instruments provide decision-makers with immediate leverage. By contrast, reforms that rigidify execution or constrain discretionary adjustments increase the political costs of governance by limiting the ability to respond to uncertainty in real time. Under such conditions, non-reform constitutes a politically efficient equilibrium, even as it undermines fiscal credibility over the medium term (Alesina & Perotti, 1996).

Figure 1. Analytical Mapping of Blocking Coalitions



Source: Authors, 2026.

This figure represents a generalisable analytical model of the convergence of interests among central budgetary administrations, security apparatuses, and political elites. It maps the complementary

resources—information, discretion, and legitimacy—through which these actors sustain a shared institutional equilibrium. Its analytical function is to formalise the mechanism through which individually rational strategies produce collective stability, thereby explaining the systematic neutralisation or dilution of reform initiatives.

While this blocking coalition accounts for the formal stability of budgetary arrangements, it does not fully explain how discretionary power is operationalised in practice. Its effectiveness depends on a central instrument that remains under-theorised in existing approaches: public treasury management. It is through the treasury that liquidity is controlled, arbitrations are enacted, and the gap between formal rules and effective allocation is organised. The following section therefore shifts the analysis from the approved budget to the executed budget, identifying treasury management as the core mechanism through which institutional equilibrium is reproduced.

4. Public Treasury as the Political Core of Non-Reform

Analyses of budget reform remain structurally incomplete as long as they treat the budget law primarily as a voted legal text rather than as an execution process governed by treasury management. In fragile contexts, effective budgetary power is not exercised at the moment of legislative approval, but through the control of liquidity, payment sequencing, and infra-annual arbitrations. Budgetary authority is therefore not an attribute of formal rules, but an effect of treasury control.

This shift in perspective—from the formal budget to the executed budget—provides a unified explanation for a central empirical puzzle: the durable coexistence of formally disciplined budget laws with highly discretionary execution practices. Treasury management does not merely adjust execution ex post; it structures budget design ex ante, through the anticipation of the margins of manoeuvre it preserves once the fiscal year unfolds. Budget design and execution are thus not sequential stages, but components of a single political mechanism organised around discretionary control.

4.1 The Strategic Under-Theorisation of Treasury Power

Within dominant public financial management frameworks, treasury issues occupy a marginal analytical position. Emphasis is placed on programming, classification, and ex ante fiscal discipline, while liquidity management, payment sequencing, and infra-annual instruments are treated as technical matters of routine administration (Schick, 1998; Allen et al., 2019).

This analytical separation is misleading. By isolating budget design from execution, standard PFM approaches depoliticise a central locus of power. Yet the capacity to decide when and who is paid determines the effective hierarchy of public priorities, irrespective of formally approved allocations. Treasury management thus operates as a technology of governance that reconciles formal fiscal discipline with sustained discretionary power.

This article departs from existing approaches by identifying treasury management not as a residual function of execution, but as the core institutional mechanism through which budgetary power is exercised and preserved.

4.2 Opacity, Arbitration and Strategic Feedback

The political centrality of the treasury lies in its capacity to organise a structural and anticipatory decoupling between budget law and budget execution. Visible appropriations are designed with full awareness of the instruments that will later enable their reconfiguration. Special treasury accounts, advances, payment regulations, and deferrals do not correct the budget law; they constitute its anticipated operational extension.

This generates a feedback mechanism in which execution constraints shape design choices, and design choices anticipate execution flexibility. Politically sensitive arbitrations are systematically displaced towards instruments characterised by low transparency, where they become technically framed and politically less contestable. Treasury management therefore functions as a buffer zone that absorbs political tensions while preserving the appearance of procedural compliance.

This mechanism can be formalised as follows: formal allocation → anticipated flexibility → discretionary execution → ex post reallocation

This logic is summarised in Table 2, which maps the distribution of effective budgetary power.

Table 2. Approved Budget vs Executed Budget: Mapping Zones of Power

Instrument	Visible ex ante	Flexible ex post
Budget appropriations	Yes	No
Treasury management	No	Yes
Special Treasury Accounts	No	Yes

Source: Authors, 2026.

This table should be read as an analytical representation of the displacement of budgetary power. Instruments that structure effective allocation are precisely those that escape ex ante visibility. This inversion explains why formal improvements in budget design fail to alter substantive outcomes.

4.3 Reform as a Rupture of Power

Within this configuration, budget reform cannot be understood as a technical adjustment. Any attempt to realign design and execution—by increasing treasury transparency, limiting discretionary instruments,

or enforcing consistency between approved and executed budgets—directly threatens the institutional rents associated with liquidity control.

Reform therefore entails a redistribution of arbitration capacities among central administrations, security apparatuses, and political elites. This redistribution transforms a stable equilibrium into a perceived negative-sum game, in which immediate and certain losses—reduced flexibility, increased exposure, diminished opacity—outweigh uncertain and deferred gains in efficiency or credibility.

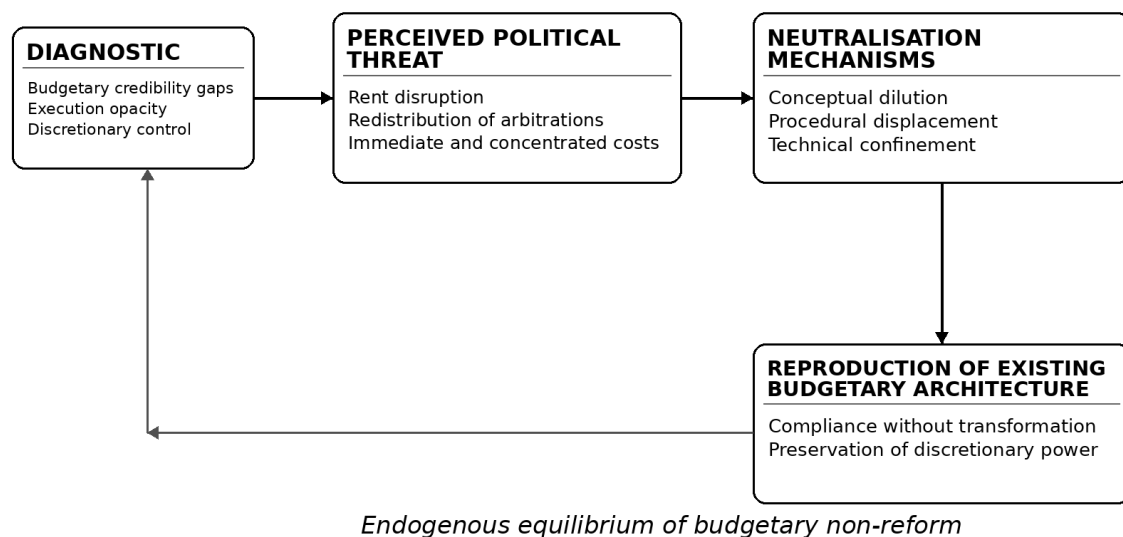
This dynamic activates predictable neutralisation mechanisms: conceptual dilution, technical requalification, and procedural displacement. Reform initiatives are not rejected outright; they are absorbed, reframed, and redirected in ways that preserve underlying discretionary structures.

The causal mechanism of non-reform can therefore be formalised as follows:

diagnosis → perceived political threat → activation of neutralisation mechanisms → reproduction of institutional equilibrium

This sequence demonstrates that non-reform is not an accidental outcome, but a rational institutional choice embedded in the structure of budgetary power.

Figure 2. Causal Chain of Budgetary Non-Reform



Source: Authors, 2026.

This figure formalises the causal sequence through which reform attempts are systematically neutralised. Its analytical function is to demonstrate how the identification of dysfunctions triggers defensive adaptations that preserve discretionary power, thereby stabilising an endogenous equilibrium of non-reform.

By identifying treasury management as the political core of budgetary governance, this section shows that the persistence of non-reform cannot be explained by technical limitations or contextual contingencies. It reflects a generalisable mechanism linking execution, discretion, and institutional stability. The following section extends this argument through a controlled comparison across Sahelian states, demonstrating that these dynamics are transposable across distinct political trajectories.

5. A Controlled Sahelian Comparison

An analysis of budgetary non-reform mechanisms cannot be considered robust if it relies exclusively on a single national case. In the Sahelian context, budgetary dysfunctions are frequently explained through country-specific political trajectories, singular security configurations, or contingent leadership choices. Such readings, however, tend to overestimate contextual variation while underestimating the structuring force of shared institutional arrangements.

The purpose of this section is precisely to de-singularise the Malian case by demonstrating that the mechanisms identified in the previous sections recur across states with distinct political trajectories. The controlled comparison between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso does not seek to assess relative performance, but to test a simple hypothesis: if contexts vary while budgetary architectures and outcomes remain similar, the explanation is structural rather than contextual (North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009; Besley & Persson, 2011). The comparative extension also builds on recent work on fiscal stress, insecurity, and structural vulnerability in Mali and the Sahel (Sissoko, 2025a, 2025b; Sissoko et al., 2024, 2025).

5.1 Institutional Similarities under Political Diversity

Despite significant differences in regime type, civil–military relations, and transition trajectories, the budget laws of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso display robust institutional similarities. In all three cases, the budget law remains formally rigid, highly centralised, and weakly adaptable during execution. This rigidity does not stem from conjunctural choices, but from a stabilised procedural configuration that is inherited and continuously reproduced.

More importantly, the centrality of the treasury in budget execution emerges as a clear institutional invariant. Effective arbitrations are systematically displaced towards infra-annual instruments that circumvent formal rigidities without formally challenging the legal framework of the budget law. This convergence is particularly significant insofar as it persists independently of differences in electoral calendars, levels of political instability, or executive configurations.

5.2 Converging Mechanisms of Reform Failure

The comparison also reveals a striking homogeneity in the mechanisms through which budget reforms are neutralised. Across the three countries, attempts at substantive transformation of budget design follow

similar trajectories: conceptual reframing of reform proposals, displacement towards secondary procedural adjustments, and technical confinement of debates within specialised administrative arenas.

These convergences indicate that non-reform does not result from a lack of political will specific to any single country, but from a shared institutional equilibrium sustained by comparable blocking coalitions. Central budgetary administrations, security apparatuses, and political elites occupy analogous positions within the budgetary architecture in each case, accounting for the reproduction of similar outcomes despite divergent political contexts (Allen et al., 2019; World Bank, 2017).

5.3 Structure over Context

The analytical value of this comparison lies precisely in what it allows to be neutralised. Contextual variables—political alternation, intensity of security crises, or relationships with development partners—vary substantially across the three cases. Yet these variations do not affect the rigidity of the budget law, the centrality of treasury management, or the weakness of effective reform.

This finding reinforces the article's core argument: the budget law operates as a structuring institutional object whose properties are reproduced independently of national contexts. Budgetary non-reform should therefore not be interpreted as a local anomaly or a contingent failure, but as the expression of a systemic logic characteristic of fragile Sahelian states.

Table 3. Synthetic Institutional Comparison

Country	Budget law rigidity	Treasury centrality	Effective reforms
Mali	High	Very strong	Weak
Niger	High	Strong	Weak
Burkina Faso	High	Strong	Weak

Source: Authors, 2026.

Analytical note: This table does not compare national performance. Its purpose is to falsify a contextual explanation. The similarity of institutional configurations, despite differentiated political contexts, confirms that mechanisms of budgetary non-reform reflect shared structures rather than country-specific trajectories.

By showing that non-reform mechanisms recur across multiple Sahelian states with distinct political paths, this section consolidates the article's central hypothesis: the persistence of budgetary architectures results from a generalisable institutional equilibrium. The conclusion now turns to the theoretical implications of this finding and discusses the fundamentally political conditions under which a credible transformation of budget laws in fragile states might become possible.

6. Why Reform Windows Fail

Contrary to a widely held assumption in the literature on institutional reform, crises do not constitute favourable windows of opportunity for transforming budget laws in fragile contexts. Instead, they produce a reinforced lock-in effect by increasing the political value of discretion, rapid decision-making, and the centralisation of arbitrations. This section shows that crisis operates as an amplifier of non-reform mechanisms, rather than as a catalyst for institutional change.

6.1 Crises as Moments of Strategic Recentralisation

In situations of crisis—whether security-related, economic, or socio-political—radical uncertainty reshapes the criteria of institutional rationality. The priority shifts away from optimising *ex ante* rules towards ensuring immediate intervention capacity. This configuration mechanically favours the recentralisation of budgetary power around the executive, central administrations, and, above all, treasury instruments.

Crises thus intensify reliance on mechanisms that enable rapid arbitrations: infra-annual regulations, advances, special accounts, and derogatory procedures. Far from being temporary, these arrangements tend to become institutionalised because they respond effectively to the imperatives of emergency governance. The budget law, as a collective, procedural, and relatively rigid instrument, becomes secondary to the primacy of discretionary execution. Crisis therefore does not suspend existing budgetary logics; it radicalises them.

6.2 Endogenous Selection of Reforms: Symbolic versus Structural

Under conditions of recentralisation, not all reforms are treated equally. Crisis generates an endogenous selection between symbolic reforms and structural reforms. Symbolic reforms—such as the adoption of new texts, visible procedural adjustments, or the reaffirmation of good governance principles—are compatible with emergency management because they do not alter existing discretionary capacities. They perform a signalling function, both domestically and internationally, without challenging the prevailing institutional equilibrium.

Structural reforms, by contrast, are systematically postponed or neutralised. By seeking to rigidify execution, enhance treasury transparency, or realign budget design with execution practices, they increase institutional uncertainty and reduce political room for manoeuvre precisely when discretion is most highly valued. Crisis thus does not block reform by default; it actively filters which types of reform are deemed politically acceptable.

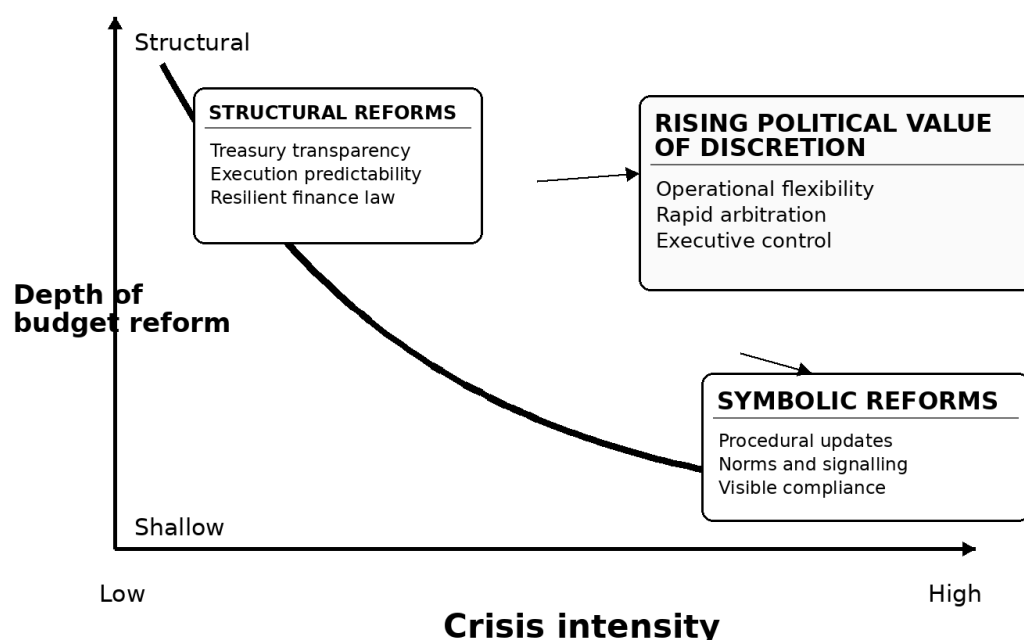
6.3 Resilient Finance Law (RFL): Institutionally Pro-Cyclical, Politically Counter-Cyclical

The Resilient Finance Law (RFL) framework epitomises this incompatibility between structural reform and crisis logic (Sissoko & Dembélé, 2026a, 2026b). From an institutional perspective, the RFL

is pro-cyclical: it seeks to adapt budget design to conditions of fragility by enhancing predictability, coherence, and execution sustainability. Politically, however, it is counter-cyclical: the more intense the crisis, the more it constrains the discretionary margins that dominant actors seek precisely to preserve.

The RFL simultaneously challenges multiple institutional rents: informational control by central budgetary administrations, operational flexibility of security apparatuses, and discretionary arbitration capacities of political elites. In crisis contexts, this challenge is perceived as a systemic risk. Expected losses—immediate, certain, and concentrated—far outweigh potential gains that are deferred and diffuse. The non-adoption of the RFL therefore appears not as a reform failure, but as a rational strategy for stabilising budgetary power.

Figure 3. Crisis Intensity and Reform Depth: A Stylised Structural Relationship



Source: Authors, 2026.

Analytical note: This figure does not depict a measured empirical relationship. It represents a stylised structural relationship between crisis intensity (horizontal axis) and the depth of budgetary reform (vertical axis). It synthesises the argument that increasing crisis intensity raises the political value of discretion and reduces the acceptability of structural reforms. The negative slope illustrates a generalisable institutional mechanism, rather than a contingent correlation.

By demonstrating that crisis reinforces non-reform rather than correcting it, this section closes the article's core argument. The conclusion now turns to the theoretical implications of this analytical

inversion and to the fundamentally political conditions under which a credible transformation of budget laws in fragile states might become conceivable.

7. Conclusion

This article shows that the persistence of budget reform failure in fragile states is not an institutional anomaly, but the outcome of a stable political equilibrium structured by discretionary power. By shifting the analytical focus from formal budget laws to their execution, it demonstrates that effective budgetary authority lies in treasury management, where liquidity control and infra-annual arbitrations shape both resource allocation and the political feasibility of reform.

This perspective leads to a central proposition: budgetary non-reform persists not despite dysfunction, but because existing arrangements perform critical political functions. Budget laws stabilise governance precisely by allowing a decoupling between formal rules and discretionary execution, thereby preserving flexibility under conditions of uncertainty and crisis.

Theoretically, the article advances three interconnected claims. First, budget laws must be analysed as instruments of power rather than neutral fiscal frameworks, requiring a shift from rule-based evaluation to the study of institutional configurations. Second, treasury management constitutes the core mechanism through which this power is exercised, structuring both ex ante design and ex post adjustment. Third, it identifies the political costs of predictability as a key constraint on reform: in fragile contexts, uncertainty is not merely endured but actively maintained as a resource of governance.

These findings have broader implications for debates on state fragility, fiscal legitimacy, and public administration. As long as budget design remains decoupled from its modes of execution, formal improvements in fiscal frameworks are unlikely to produce substantive change. Budgetary transformation therefore cannot be approached as a technical sequence of reforms, but must be understood as a political process involving the redistribution of discretionary power. Without addressing these underlying equilibria, reform efforts will continue to generate compliance without transformation.

Funding

No funding was received for this research.

Declaration of competing interests

The authors declare that there are no known financial or non-financial competing interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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