

Contributor Profile: Rwanda

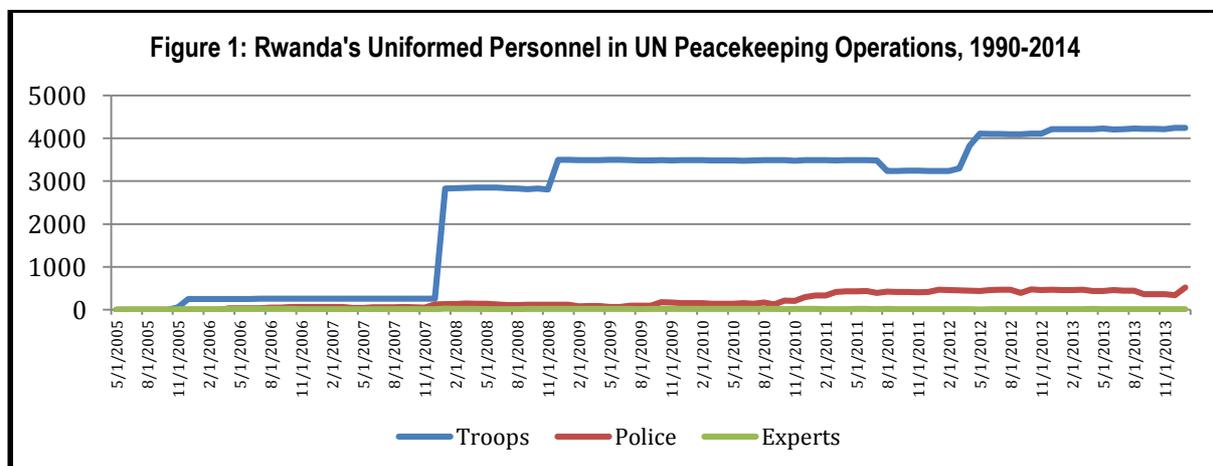
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Active Armed Force ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Official Deployments
33,000 World Ranking (size): 75th Army: 32,000 Air force: 1,000 Paramilitary/ Local Defense Forces: 2,000	16 Attack: 5 Multirole: 10 Multirole / Transport: 1	2013: US\$82m (1.06% of GDP) 2012: US\$76m (1.09% of GDP) 2011: US\$74m (1.16% of GDP) 2010: US\$75m (1.34% of GDP)	4,802 (256 women) (Feb 2014) Ranking: 7 th (3 rd largest African contributor)	MINUSMA 147 (1 police, 140 Formed Police Unit (FPU), 6 troops) MINUSTAH 153 police (13 IPOs, 140 FPU) UNAMID 3,410 (166 police, 10 experts, 3,234 troops) UNFISA 6 (2 police, 2 experts, 2 troops) UNMIL 10 police UNMISS 1,047 (43 police, 3 experts, 1001 troops) UNOCI 29 police	MISCA: 850 troops in Central African Republic (January 2014)
Defense Spending/ Active troop: ² US\$2,485 (compared to global average of approx. US\$70,300)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

In the last ten years, Rwanda has become an important contributor to UN peacekeeping and African Union (AU) peace operations. Rwandan contributions to peacekeeping were initially precluded by the 1990-94 civil war, 1994 genocide, and challenges of post-war security, including fighting an insurgency in the northwest of the country until 1998 and recurring interventions in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since 2004, Rwanda has risen to become one of the top providers of peacekeepers for both UN and AU missions. The Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) are particularly valued due to their training, discipline, the development ethos they bring to deployments, and the growing number of women among those trained and deployed.



Rwanda deployed its first 150 peacekeepers to protect ceasefire monitors under the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in 2004. This decision was influenced by the way the mission was framed as an effort to prevent genocide. This linked peacekeeping directly to the stated aims and basis of legitimacy of Rwanda's ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Since then, a desire to maintain positive relationships with key donors, support for the "responsibility to protect" principle, commitment to African solutions, and incentives related to prestige and finance, have underpinned Rwanda's provision of peacekeepers. In December 2013, Rwanda signed an MoU with the African Union to send troops to the Central African Republic. It has since deployed 850 soldiers under the International Support Mission in Central African Republic (MISCA).

The contribution of Rwandan police to Haiti signals willingness to deploy beyond Africa, but most of its peacekeepers remain in Africa, particularly in Sudan and South Sudan. Darfur accounts for the majority of Rwanda's overall deployment of troops, with Darfur, Haiti and Mali making up most of Rwanda's police contributions. Significant political capital is invested in the Darfur mission, which had a Rwandan Force Commander from 2009-13.

Part 2: Decision-making Process

RDF deployments and activities, including peacekeeping, are not enshrined in any legal document. Decision-making is therefore opaque, resting with a select politico-military elite within the RPF and defense establishment. President Kagame as Commander in Chief has the ultimate say over who goes where. The Minister of Defense, General James Kabarebe, and the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), General Patrick Nyamvumba, are involved at the strategic decision-making level. Other senior military officers and security advisers to the President and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) are also involved in the decision to deploy. After the initial decision to deploy has been made, the CDS takes over day-to-day strategic oversight of RDF forces. Troops earmarked for peacekeeping missions are then sent to the Rwanda Military Academy, Gako, for collective pre-deployment training. Troops returning from mission are sent back to [Gako](#) for a further 6-9 months for re-insertion, political education and lessons learned.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: Rwanda's contributions to peace operations, both UN and AU, should be seen in the wider context of the political aims of the RPF. The failings of UN peacekeeping in Rwanda 1993-94 are a recurring feature in the [rhetoric of Rwanda's political leaders](#). This underpins both criticism of the UN for inadequate responses to African crises and an argument that Rwanda's unique experience bestows a responsibility to ensure robust future responses. This translates into support for "African solutions" and AU missions, as well as UN missions. This is reflected in the [stated aims](#) of Rwandan representatives following Rwanda's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2013. Though African peace and stability are stated as high priorities during this tenure, Rwandan representatives have also used the Security Council platform to highlight non-African crises, such as in Syria.

Domestically, the provision of peacekeepers has become a source of national pride and can be considered part of Rwanda's post-genocide national identity. This is clear in the efforts to highlight a distinctive "Rwandan approach" to peacekeeping. Elements of post-war reconstruction derived by Rwanda's leaders from historical national practice, including the concept of *Umuganda* ("community work") have been transplanted from Rwanda to Darfur

via peacekeepers. Accounts of Rwandan peacekeepers constructing schools and clinics while on mission, introducing energy-saving stoves and *Umuganda* are publicized widely in national media. This contribution to peacekeeping is part of the post-genocide story of Rwanda's place in the world and part of the RPF approach to nation-building. The deaths of Rwandan peacekeepers on mission are reported, marked and commented on by political and military leaders. [37](#) Rwandan peacekeepers have been killed during UN and UN-AU peacekeeping missions, 29 of these in Darfur/UNAMID. A further 7 were killed during the AU Mission in Sudan before the creation of UNAMID. There is no attempt to hide casualties, as has occurred in some other TCCs. Instead, deaths are acknowledged as sacrifices in service to the people of the country in which they were sustained, and there is public recognition of those injured during peacekeeping duties.

Prestige is also a motivating factor for Rwandan contributions. Peacekeeping offers an opportunity for Rwanda to showcase a transition from a state synonymous with genocide to one making a significant and positive contribution to African peace and security. It also allows the RDF to access funds and support for training and infrastructure to facilitate this. Rwanda now routinely trains all members of the RDF for peacekeeping duties. This expands the pool for potential deployment as well as suggests that peacekeeping is considered a core duty of the RDF.

Finally, despite these significant contributions Rwanda remains a small state in a crowded region. Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya are increasingly involved in peacekeeping. Maintaining and increasing contributions, and/or developing specialist capacities such as the deployment of female police and troops, are likely to be important in sustaining both Rwanda's prestige in this field and its position as a strategic partner for states, including the US.

Economic Rationales: Rwanda's defense spending remained relatively constant in recent years, at around US\$73 million per year between 2010 and 2013. Due largely to economic growth in Rwanda, defense expenditure has declined as a proportion of GDP from 1.34% in 2010 to 1.06% in 2013. Nevertheless, the RDF continues to require a significant financial commitment and peacekeeping contributions help to offset some of these costs. Rwanda is clearly a preferred partner of the US in building African peacekeeping capacity, with the ACOTA Director [commenting](#) in 2013 that "ACOTA trains over 17 countries engaged in peacekeeping but Rwanda remains the best..." International partners, especially the US, UK, EU and Japan, have underpinned the development of the RDF into a valued peacekeeping contributor, through military and others forms of assistance. This has largely taken the form of constructing training facilities and paying for various courses, but also in procuring non-lethal equipment and providing strategic lift. The [US, for instance, transported the Rwandan battalion into CAR in support of the AU in January 2014.](#)

Reimbursements from the UN for peacekeeping contributions provide significant proportions of Rwanda's defense budget. However, delays have caused frustration and impacted Rwanda's performance against wider fiscal targets. During its role in AMIS (2004-07), Rwanda also experienced delays in receiving compensation from the AU for peacekeepers killed during deployment. Rwandan representatives at the UN have [cited](#) slow rates of reimbursement as a factor hindering sustained commitment. Nevertheless, Nina Wilen suggested that in 2010 around 70% of defense expenditure could be covered from reimbursements.³ If Rwanda is to maintain large armed forces it will be difficult to make up such a shortfall other than through peacekeeping. In this vein, Rwanda contributed to a

Senior Advisory Group survey of TCCs in 2013, seeking to use this process to secure increased rates.

Security Rationales: Rwanda is an important military power in east and central Africa, but it is not a regional hegemon. Rwanda's leaders must continually re-assert their claims to be a key security partner in the region, compared to Uganda and increasingly Kenya and Ethiopia. RDF peacekeeping supports this case and has proved central to Rwandan diplomacy. Rwanda has faced much criticism and censure, [including aid cuts](#), for its military involvement in the DRC. Peacekeeping elsewhere allows Rwanda's military prowess to be cast instead as a positive attribute. It also provides leverage in discussions with UN representatives. In 2010, President Kagame [threatened](#) to withdraw troops from UNAMID if a leaked UN report that was critical of Rwandan involvement in DRC was not amended. Assuming such threats are genuine, Rwanda's commitment to existing and future missions may therefore be conditional on wider political factors.

Institutional Rationales: Peacekeeping is identified by the RPF as helping to professionalize the military and promote integration of former combatants, as well as providing activities to occupy troops. The RDF is comprised of former warring factions as well as new recruits. Peacekeeping provides these integrated forces with situations where they have to depend on each other and learn to work together, without the danger of conducting military operations in the DRC. Rwanda's increased commitment to peacekeeping followed the withdrawal from combat operations in DRC. This would suggest that peacekeeping also provides an avenue for occupying armed forces, especially those that could be a potential threat.

Normative Rationales: Rwanda's contributions to peacekeeping draw directly on the moral authority gained by the RPF in ending the 1994 genocide. The decision to make a first foray into peacekeeping in Darfur reflects this. Rwanda's representatives have also [made clear](#) that they believe Rwanda speaks on issues such as peace and conflict, genocide prevention, and the responsibility to protect with a moral authority which others cannot possess. Peacekeeping allows Rwandan leaders to illustrate their commitment to genocide prevention. Embedding a culture of peacekeeping within the RDF and highlighting peacekeeping as a source of pride, domestically and internationally, suggests this will remain central to Rwanda's engagement with Africa and the UN. Such contributions may also provide a springboard for Rwanda and Rwandans to play greater roles in regional and continental security fora such as the East African Standby Force (EASF) and the AU.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Rwanda's initial preference was to contribute to AU missions. This reflected deep mistrust of UN peacekeeping following the 1994 genocide. Nonetheless, Rwanda maintained contributions to the hybrid mission in Darfur, UNAMID, despite criticizing the mandate and equipment shortages. It has since contributed to other UN missions and has deployed troops as part of an AU mission in CAR (MISCA). This pattern of deployment suggests that Rwanda may prefer to work through the African security architecture where possible but that it is willing to support UN missions where necessary. This pragmatism is reflected in the contribution to MINUSTAH outside Africa.

Rwanda has also recently shown increased commitment to East African security partnerships. These are aligned with broader policy priorities of improving trade, development and other links with countries including Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Kenya. Rwanda has also

supported the EASF, supplying its commander 2007-10 and participating in joint exercises. It hosts the East African Community (EAC) Non Commissioned Officers' Centre of Excellence at RDF Combat Training Centre in Gabiro and, in January 2014, announced plans to develop Mutual Defense and Peace and Security Pacts between Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. There are political and strategic reasons for Rwanda to invest in these relationships; this is reflected in the fact that a former Rwandan Ambassador and Minister, Richard Sezibera, is currently Secretary-General of the EAC (2011-16). Nevertheless, despite this growth in security-related activity at the regional level the capacities of EAC and the EASF remain limited. In the medium term these regional activities will therefore likely supplement rather than replace Rwanda's peace support activities under the auspices of the AU and UN.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Rwanda has a difficult relationship with the government of the DRC, and with the UN and other international actors over its policies towards the DRC. Since 1996 Rwanda has intervened directly there twice and been regularly accused of supporting rebel groups in the east of the country, most recently in [2013](#). Rwanda denies this while heavily criticizing the failures of the UN, via MONUC and MONUSCO, to stabilize the region. Nevertheless, following the alleged defeat of the M23 rebel group in November 2013 Rwanda has [called for](#) the UN Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) to turn its focus on Rwandan rebels, the FDLR. This suggests that although Rwanda has historically questioned the ability of the UN to tackle Rwanda's security challenges, it is currently at least willing to concede that the new force should be given the opportunity to try. Whether this will prove sufficient to deter future Rwandan military involvement in DRC, overt or covert, remains uncertain.

Resistance in the military: There is minimal resistance in the military for peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping is seen as part of the role of the modern military and is greatly aspired to. Furthermore the benefits in terms of political bargaining chips, forging cohesion, economic dividends, and collective and individual benefits have not gone unnoticed by the RDF leadership. As such defense policymakers are keen to continue to deploy the RDF to peacekeeping missions.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Rwanda contributes extensively to UN and AU missions and, in the case of the CAR crisis, has done so at relatively short notice. Domestic and international benefits flow from involvement in peacekeeping. These go beyond financial inducements, tapping into an RPF vision of a new Rwanda and a new national identity. The development and promotion of a "Rwandan approach" to peacekeeping, characterized by the transfer of the models of *Umuganda*, involvement in development work and [quick impact projects](#), shows this is viewed in Rwandan policy circles as a sustained effort. There are however challenges to maintaining Rwanda's contributions at current levels, in terms of both quantity and quality.

The financing of peacekeeping remains problematic, with Rwanda pressing for higher reimbursement rates and for increased speed and predictability of such transfers. It has used its seat on the Security Council to pursue this.

Relations with the DRC are a continuing concern. Rwanda has leveraged its peacekeeping contribution to make demands of the UN regarding the publication of [expert reports](#) on Rwanda's role there. These reports allege the involvement of Rwandan military forces and Rwandan-backed rebels in atrocities. Such allegations tarnish the RDF but may also incentivize peacekeeping as a way to rehabilitate the RDF's reputation. However, there are

also negative implications which may affect Rwanda's peacekeeping training. Accusations of continued support for M23 during 2012 led to the withdrawal of aid by many of Rwanda's donors, including suspension of military aid from the US and the cancellation by Denmark of a new \$25 million peacekeeping training facility. Nevertheless, Rwanda has recently been involved in training Burundian peacekeepers for deployment to CAR and in January 2014 the US provided all strategic lift for RDF troops deploying to CAR in support of the AU.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Defense policymakers from the President down are all champions of peacekeeping. Some senior military officers have participated in peacekeeping operations and have seen the benefits. The CDS himself was Force Commander in Darfur from 2009-2013. There is a great deal of pride on behalf of the defense establishment regarding RDF peacekeepers and justifiably so, given the significant numbers deployed and their performance in the mission environments they enter.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Although smaller than some of its neighbors, the RDF retains significant capabilities in terms of infantry, counter insurgency operations, intelligence and Special Forces, but also military administration. Several officers have been Senior Mission Leaders in peacekeeping operations and many more have been trained for senior positions. Other areas of capability are logistics, procurement and supply. Rwanda has highly capable women in the security forces and does not discriminate when deploying forces. The RDF provided the first contingent of female police officers to UNOCI in 2012 and currently has the highest number of female police on UN missions, with 228 women deployed.

Shortcomings are the lack of strategic lift and serious air capability more generally (no fixed wing aircraft). An opaque and closed decision-making structure among a few select individuals is a further shortcoming.

Part 8: Further Reading

- Beswick, D., "The risks of African military capacity-building: Lessons from Rwanda," *African Affairs*, 113(451), forthcoming April 2014.
- Beswick, D., "The role of the Military in Contemporary Rwanda" in M. Campioni & Noack, P. (eds.) *Rwanda Fast Forward: Social, Economic, Military and Reconciliation Prospects* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012).
- Beswick, D., "Peacekeeping, regime security and 'African Solutions to African Problems': Exploring Rwanda's involvement in Darfur," *Third World Quarterly* 31:5 (2010): 739-754.
- Jowell, M., "Cohesion through socialisation: Tradition, liberation and modernisation in the forging of the Rwanda Defence Forces," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, forthcoming April 2014.
- Wilén, N., "A Hybrid Peace through Locally Owned and Externally Financed SSR-DDR in Rwanda?" *Third World Quarterly*, 33:7 (2012): 1,323-36.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2014* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2014).

² Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2014*.

³ Wilén, N., "A Hybrid Peace through Locally Owned and Externally Financed SSR-DDR in Rwanda?" *Third World Quarterly*, 33:7 (2012).