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Astuteness in Commitment: Rwanda and UN Peacekeeping 1994–2014

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ABSTRACT

This article traces Rwanda's history under German and Belgian colonialism, through independence and genocide to international respectability and membership of the Commonwealth. It examines Rwanda's impressive contributions to United Nations and African Union peacekeeping forces. There is no single explanation for the magnitude of Rwanda's contribution. It owes something to Rwanda's commitment to 'African solutions for African problems'. Deployment is relatively cheap and allows Rwanda to use its participation for political leverage in international affairs, to attract donors and to benefit financially. Peacekeeping is a factor in the astute foreign policy of Paul Kagame's government that enhances its authority and stability at home and its prestige abroad.

KEYWORDS

Rwanda; Commonwealth; peacekeeping; armed forces; United Nations; African Union; Paul Kagame; Democratic Republic of Congo

Introduction

The Republic of Rwanda offers a fascinating case study on participating in the United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) as a tool of foreign policy. For more than a decade, Rwanda has been ranked in the top 10 troop providers for UNPKO¹ while coming under harsh criticism from various United Nations (UN) bodies for exporting insecurity in its vicinity. Although the country was abandoned by the major powers at the very moment that massive slaughters were turning into genocide, Kigali soon became a vibrant advocate of a multilateral approach to international security. In November 2009, Rwanda became a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, despite having experienced colonial domination by Germany and Belgium as well as strong postcolonial ties with France and maintaining its membership in the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF). At first glance, these weird, unexpected and contradictory moves may appear as obvious symptoms of a poor, inconsistent or randomly conducted foreign policy. This article, however, argues the exact opposite: during the past two decades, Kigali has consistently conducted an efficient foreign policy in which significant contributions to UNPKO were astutely articulated with the goals of internal, regional and international recognition pursued by Rwandese diplomacy.

This article starts by recalling Rwandese history and its international relations. It then describes the magnitude of Kigali's current involvement in peacekeeping and assesses the main theories explaining the puzzle of Rwanda's commitment to peacekeeping operations.

From piece on the colonial chessboard to regional power

After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles stripped Germany of its colonial possessions in Africa. However, these territories did not gain independence, as some wished. Instead, in 1923, they were entrusted as League of Nations mandates (later on, UN trustees) to the victorious powers which already had colonies in Africa. As a result, the then named Ruanda-Urundi fell under Belgian authority.² The Republic of Rwanda only gained independence on 1 August 1962 in a context of growing ethnic-based violence. In the previous years, the raising turmoil had forced the Belgian authority to reverse its long-standing pro-Tutsi alliance in favor of the Hutu majority in a desperate move to appease the claims for independence.

Similar to its neighboring state Burundi, Rwanda's population is 80% Hutu, 15% Tutsi and 5% Twa.³ Most of the recent specialized academic literature⁴ tends to consider the latter ethnic divide 'to be at the core of the conflict and as a classic example of how socially constructed identities can become salient and problematic'.⁵ In Rwanda, the Hutu dominated the domestic political scene from 1959 to 1994. Such an ethnic-based dominance would not have been possible without the prior construction of political identities through the racial ideology initially promoted by the German colonial state and reproduced without major change under the Belgian mandate. These beliefs were gradually internalized by the Rwandese people and later became instrumental for social control and the exercise of state power.⁶

Rwanda's postcolonial history perpetuated the exclusion of the Tutsi group from power while the military were gradually gaining influence. As a result, the army [Armed Forces of Rwanda (FAR)] became a pivotal component of the Rwandese institutional setting. In 1973, these trends found their political and institutional translation through the coup of General Habyarimana. The following decades of Hutu power resulted in the exile of thousands of Tutsi people and caused the political and military build-up of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF found a convenient sanctuary beyond the Ugandan border, where it prepared for a fully fledged war against Habyarimana's regime. Launched in October 1990, the RPF attack was stopped only because of the military intervention of Habyarimana's allies, namely Zaïre, France and Belgium.⁷

Rushing back from the USA, where he was attending a military training course, the RPF military commander Paul Kagame quickly turned away from an inefficient frontal strategy to adopt a guerrilla-style tactic that soon demonstrated its efficiency. In response to an increasingly powerful insurgency, the Rwandese government began an in-depth restructuring of its military organization: they drastically increased enrollment, created local militias and engaged in 'psy ops'. So started a 3-year-long war of attrition that contributed dramatically to the radicalization of the stakeholders, the sharpening of ethnic antagonism and, as a consequence, a growing tendency for both sides to deliberately target civilians as part of their respective military strategy, thus paving the way for the subsequent 1994 catastrophe. French—and, to a far smaller extent, Belgian—military cooperation supported the aforementioned mutation of the Rwandese armed forces.⁸ The new—though artificial—military

balance somehow came to a tactical stalemate that was politically translated in the Arusha Accords (August 1993) after months of tedious negotiation.

On 4 October 1993, the UN Security Council voted on Resolution 872, which established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with a mandate to assist and monitor the implementation of the Arusha Accords. On 6 April 1994, the airplane carrying both Rwandese and Burundian presidents was shot down while landing at Kigali airport. The assassination acted as the spark that ignited the genocide. Planned and conducted by Hutu radicals who never accepted the sharing of power implied by the Arusha Accords, it consisted of the systematic slaughter of between 500,000 and one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu people. The genocide only stopped when the RPF completed its military victory over the governmental army.

Once in power, Paul Kagame accused France of being jointly responsible for the genocide. While Paris categorically denied the accusation, an investigation later conducted by the French Parliament concluded that France had not adequately assessed the political drift of the Rwandese regime and that officials in charge of French foreign policy in Africa had severely underestimated the extent of authoritarianism and racism in Rwanda.⁹ In 2006, when the French judge Jean-Louis Bruguière engaged in penal prosecution against Paul Kagame and several Rwandese officials for their alleged complicity in the assassination of Juvenal Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamira, Kigali broke off diplomatic relations with Paris. Before their resumption on 29 November 2009, Rwandese foreign policy experienced a dramatic shift away from its previous French- and Belgian-privileged ties, which were soon replaced by an Anglo-Saxon-oriented diplomacy. Kigali's diplomacy also inherited the personal address book of Paul Kagame and the RPF support network.

Cutting the colonial umbilical cord was inevitable, not only because of the dispute regarding responsibilities in the onset of the genocide, but also owing to the behavior of France and Belgium during the whole post-1994 period. In addition to their aforementioned military support to Habyarimana's regime, France and Belgium were severely criticized for their attitude during the genocide. Belgium decided to withdraw its contingent from UNAMIR after 10 of its paratroopers who surrendered to FAR soldiers were subsequently assassinated, the day after Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Because the Belgian units formed the military backbone of UNAMIR, their withdrawal meant that UNAMIR became powerless to oppose the genocide process in any way.¹⁰ The Belgian government further decided to advocate within the UN in favor of a complete withdrawal of UNAMIR. At the same time, an extraction force named 'Operation Silver Back' was sent to Kigali to ensure a safe withdrawal of the Belgian contingent together with Belgian nationals. The French government ordered almost concomitantly a similar operation with the codename 'Operation Amaryllis'. Although a combined effort of both Belgian and French operations with UNAMIR's Blue Helmets could at least have had a mitigating effect on the ongoing slaughter, the concept of both missions was explicitly limited to the exclusive purpose of a swift evacuation of nationals.¹¹ Amaryllis and Silver Back lasted from 8 to 14 April and eventually evacuated 2600 people, about 600 of whom were Rwandese.¹² Last but not least, Kagame's personal background is of key importance in understanding the reorientation of Rwandese foreign policy. Paul Kagame received an education in the English language in Ugandan primary and secondary schools. In 1990, he enrolled in a course at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, USA.

Strangely enough, the French 'Fashoda syndrome',¹³ which was then haunting inner circles around the French President François Mitterrand, eventually developed as a self-fulfilling prophecy. The RPF's ties with the US-supported Uganda instigated the theory of Anglo-Saxon conspiracy¹⁴ in the mind of many French diplomats and counselors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidency. Kagame's views on Rwanda were therefore regarded as a threat against the Francophonie, the cultural vehicle of French influence in Africa.¹⁵ This explains the subsequent French support for Habyarimana's regime, regardless of its poor record in terms of good governance, democracy and human rights observations. Ironically, supporting Habyarimana at all costs for the sake of French influence in Africa subsequently made the loss of Rwanda inevitable once Paul Kagame prevailed over his rival.

In the field of military cooperation, however, the shift did not materialize immediately. Rwanda was among the first beneficiaries of the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), launched in 1997 by the US State Department. This program aimed to train African military units for peace support operation (PSO) and was a direct consequence of both Somalian and Rwandese episodes. In Somalia, US troops experienced the risk of direct involvement on the ground, while in Rwanda, inaction and resistance to any international reaction resulted in political and moral responsibility for non-assistance to the victims of the genocide. Finding 'African solutions to African problems' soon became the mantra of the Western powers that launched similar PSO training programs in their respective areas of influence.¹⁶ In May 1997, the USA, France and Great Britain agreed upon a common capacity-building program designed to strengthen and coordinate their respective policies and provide a forum for other interested countries to participate. Thus, proper coordination between US, UK and French programs not only reduced their competing dimension, but also enabled some countries to join several of them. Senegal, for instance, took part in both ACRI and RECAMP¹⁷ at the same time. In the case of Rwanda, however, military cooperation with France was unthinkable only 3 years after the war. ACRI, on the other hand, was out of reach since a fundamental precondition for selection and participation in ACRI is the supremacy of democratic governance and the preparedness of the military to submit to civilian control and transparency.¹⁸ At the time, if Rwanda's military records disqualified it from meeting these preconditions, additional features of the country's external policy prevented any further US commitment with Kigali before the turn of the century.

In the meantime, another important component of Rwanda's post-genocide foreign policy had developed. In 1996, Kigali joined Kampala in its effort to overthrow Mobutu Sese Seko, the president of Zaïre, and to replace him with his long-standing opponent, Laurent-Désiré Kabila.¹⁹ By supporting Kabila, Rwanda reconfigured the regional system of alliances, breaking with Habyarimana's close relationship with Zaïre and France. The Rwandese involvement in the African 'First World War'²⁰ after Kabila turned his back on its former patrons established the country as a key security actor in central Africa. Kigali appeared as a player and lost its image of a martyr state. It also triggered growing international criticisms regarding Kagame's personal authority on the one hand and the exactions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the other.

By 2000, the length of the conflict and its particularly dire human toll incited the UN to take active measures. The Security Council voted on several resolutions calling upon the belligerents to respect Congolese sovereignty.²¹ Rwanda was identified as a factor in the violence in the region and condemned for its actions in DRC. These events put Rwanda in

relative isolation on the international scene and delayed the deepening of its cooperation with the USA.

It was only in 2006, 2 years after the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program was launched to replace ACRI, that Rwanda had the opportunity to join the US-led PSO training program.²² This happened in a context of rapid reconciliation between Kigali and Washington, as evidenced by the 14 July 2014 signing of an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) with the US army.²³

Within a few years, Rwanda became one of the most quoted examples of ACOTA accomplishment. The training provided in Gako military camps, which used advanced techniques such as computer simulation, was celebrated as unprecedented in PSO training. A few months after its creation, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM)²⁴ was proudly advertising ACOTA's best success:

Rwanda is a prime illustration of ACOTA's success. Its forces in Darfur are recognized as a capable and highly affective [*sic*] military unit, due in large part to ACOTA training. Additionally, nearly all new Rwandan peacekeeping forces are indigenously trained by ACOTA-trained instructors.²⁵

After one year of tough negotiations,²⁶ Rwanda became a member of the Commonwealth in November 2009, thus becoming the second among the 54 members without prior colonial links with Great Britain. This was the final step in a long process engaged as early as February 1996, when Rwanda first applied to the Commonwealth after the organization was opened to countries such as Cameroon and Mozambique. The Commonwealth put the request 'under review' until 2007, when Kagame reaffirmed its interest through back channels.²⁷ Ever since 1996, many had seen that move as 'part of a policy of moving towards the Anglophone world and away from the influence of France'.²⁸ For its part, Rwanda rather viewed 'this accession as recognition of the tremendous progress [...] made in the last 15 years'.²⁹ The Rwandese were also eager 'to seize economic, political, cultural and other opportunities offered by the Commonwealth network'.³⁰ Kigali's desire for membership was thus motivated by various factors. Economic benefits were among them, but other ideational motives also played a role, such as the will to keep a distance from a 'French Africa' following the 'perception among Rwandans that the Anglophone way of doing things was "more progressive"'.³¹

Remarkably enough, Rwanda still remained a member of the OIF, successor of the Agency of Cultural and Technical Cooperation created in 1970. Rwanda was a founding member of this organization, even though French is not an official language and only around 600,000 out of 10 million inhabitants speak French in Rwanda.³² In an amazing synchronicity that cannot be entirely coincidental, France and Rwanda agreed to reopen diplomatic relations immediately after the announcement of Rwanda's membership in the Commonwealth. Despite this commitment, Rwanda–France relations are still not normalized. In an interview for *Jeune Afrique*, Kagame accused the 'Turquoise' operation's French soldiers of 'complicity' with Hutu genocidaires and sometime 'authors of slaughters'.³³ He reiterated these accusations during the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the Rwandese genocide, leading to the cancelation of the French official participation at these events. Furthermore, Kigali has not appreciated the treatment of the Rwandese priest Wenceslas Munyeshyaka in 2015. Exiled in France since 1994, the former priest of the 'Sainte Famille' parish was accused of having organized the slaughters of Tutsi who sought refuge in his parish. The lack of evidence to corroborate his 'active involvement' led the French investigating judges not to prosecute, while Munyeshyaka was sentenced to life imprisonment *in absentia* by Kigali's

military court³⁴. In 2015, the unusual delay by the Rwandese authorities in endorsing the nomination of Fred Constant as French ambassador in Kigali was another obvious sign of the strained and complicated relationship between Rwanda and France.

Peacekeeping: from victim to stakeholder

Nowadays, Rwanda is one of the UN's top troop contributors in peacekeeping operations. Since its first deployment of 31 Blue Helmets in 2005, its involvement has grown dramatically to reach 6141 personnel in 2016.³⁵ The country ranks fifth in the UN's top contributing countries, right behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Ethiopia. Its contingent represents 5.8% of the 104,279 men and women deployed under the UN's flag. Although Kigali displays impressive figures regarding its contribution to UN peacekeeping, it was when UN took over the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS) in December 2007 that Rwanda moved from the 41st top-ranked troop contributor to take over the eighth place in 2008.

Rwanda appears to be a highly specialized peacekeeping actor. Kigali mainly contributes military personnel to the missions (84.1%) and police forces to a lesser extent (15.8%). Rwanda is committed to taking part in UN operations on the African continent. Apart from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), to which it contributes 183 policemen, Rwandese personnel are deployed in seven countries: Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. UNAMID³⁶ and UNMISS,³⁷ the UN's operations in Darfur and South Sudan, respectively, regroup 75.5% of the Rwandese contributions to UN peacekeeping, demonstrating its strong involvement in the Sudanese security complex. Within these two missions, Rwanda has become the backbone of the peacekeeping efforts, since it is the second biggest provider of personnel in each mission. Such leverage gives Rwanda a legitimate claim to occupying key positions at the head of peace operations.³⁸

Kigali's commitment to peacekeeping is well demonstrated by the magnitude of its efforts. In 2016, the 6141 soldiers who were deployed abroad under the UN flag accounted for 17.5% of the country's military personnel.³⁹ Among the top 10 troop contributors, only Burkina Faso (25.3%) and Senegal (20%) had comparable figures. The seven other countries dedicated only an average of 2.1% of their armed forces to UN peacekeeping. The diversion of so many troops from protecting the national territory seems to demonstrate the Rwandese project of managing African conflicts by increasing regional cooperation.⁴⁰

The Rwandese authorities usually explain their strong involvement in peace operations by calling upon the value of multilateralism. In 2009, Kagame declared to the UN General Assembly that 'Multilateralism has always been the key tenet in forging a fairer international community—based on equitable global governance; the United Nations itself is based on this very sound and tested principle and practice'.⁴¹ He reiterated this statement in 2012, when Rwanda was competing for a seat at the UN Security Council: 'Since security and development cannot be achieved without each other, we all have to play our roles—from the average citizen, to government leaders, to global institutions like the UN—to find inclusive solutions for lasting peace and prosperity'.⁴² Rwanda acknowledges the limits of the individual actions of states in the international scene and argues in favor of joint actions for coping with mutual problems such as conflicts in Africa.

This point of view is in line with the principles of the African Union (AU), where Rwanda deployed intense multilateral efforts even before deepening its involvement within the UN. From April 2006 to March 2012, the country was a member of the AU's Peace and Security

Council for three consecutive 2-year mandates.⁴³ The participation of Rwanda in several AU peace operations gives weight to Kagame when he declared that:

it is increasingly obvious that local or regional initiatives aimed at resolving conflicts yield more positive results because those involved have a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. Their proximity to the conflict makes them more invested in a comprehensive resolution, and enables the necessary support for whatever process is agreed upon.⁴⁴

The Rwandese involvement in UN peacekeeping should therefore be understood as the extension of its endeavor towards conflict resolution in Africa. This also explains Rwanda's African focus within UN peace operations.

AMIS is a prominent example of Rwandese peacekeeping.⁴⁵ The AU created this mission in July 2004 to cope with the conflict in Darfur and to test its conflict-management capacities since its transformation from the Organization of African Unity, which was dissolved in 2002. The mission's first contingent was composed of 150 Rwandese military observers, who were gradually reinforced by more troops as the scope of the mission widened. Throughout AMIS's evolution, Rwanda remained a key player. When the UN became involved in AMIS by creating UNAMID,⁴⁶ Kigali went on as the backbone of the mission. The enlargement of the framework from the AU to the UN did not put the Rwandese participation into question, suggesting that the reasons for its commitment go farther than a mere African solidarity. The 1994 genocide gives Rwanda a 'moral mandate' to prevent genocide in Africa,⁴⁷ especially in Darfur, where the situation was qualified as genocide by the US Secretary of State.⁴⁸

The Rwandese effort was rewarded in October 2012, when it was elected after almost 20 years of absence as a member of the UN Security Council. Ironically, Kigali had only been granted this privilege once before: in 1994–95, during the genocide and its direct aftermath. In this regard, Rwanda made an impressive recovery, moving in less than two decades from a virtually destroyed country to a respectable state that matters in international affairs. This successful transition is closely related to the Rwandese ambitions in international arenas. Involvement in multilateral endeavors gives Rwanda credibility and respectability *vis-à-vis* its partners. The strength of its military deployment in peace operations and its commitment to the success of the mission also show the modernity, discipline and credibility of the country's security sector.⁴⁹ The Rwandese determination to fulfill the mission is well measured by the number of its fallen peacekeepers since it lost 30 soldiers under UNAMID alone. Despite these heavy losses (14% of this mission's casualties), Kigali did not question its involvement in Darfur. The reason is not a disdain for its soldiers' lives—the fallen peacekeepers receive public and popular honors—but rather relates to the country's own history, as 'Rwanda cannot "do a Belgium"—abandon the defenceless [*sic*] people of Darfur to the mercy of marauders called Janjaweds, who are backed by the full force of government.'⁵⁰

For Beswick, peace operations are a way for Rwanda to gain the support of international partners, support that can eventually translate into development aid and foreign investments.⁵¹ In this regard, the Rwandese efforts are necessary since Kigali's image suffered badly from its involvement in DRC and the accusation of human rights violations committed there by its forces and allied armed groups. This situation poses a dilemma for potential foreign partners, as the British Peace Support Team explained in 2004:

On the one hand, providing facilities and training in PSO [Peace Support Operations] skills might help to guide the RDF [Rwandan Defense Forces] along a productive route towards making a positive contribution in the Region. On the other, such facilities could easily be misused for training in conventional skills, and the British could easily be accused of assisting the RDF in their activities in the eastern DRC.⁵²

The military forces involved in PSO training programs are usually the same as those mobilized for other military purposes. Training providers thus face a dilemma since they have no guarantee that their know-how will not benefit aggressive operations opposed to the UN Charter. This possibility was very serious regarding Rwanda. In December 2004, Kigali was suspected of massive illegal military incursions across the Congolese border to hunt down Hutu armed groups opposed to Rwanda.⁵³ Although the authorities denied Kinshasa's claims,⁵⁴ the affair was brought to the UN Security Council, which 'strongly condemned' the alleged incursions and demanded 'that the government of Rwanda withdraw without delay any forces it may have in the territory of the [DRC]'.⁵⁵

Explaining paradoxes

Rwanda's involvement in peace operations—and the magnitude of its participation—remains a puzzle. The Rwandese leaders who advocate in favor of this engagement have had a very personal relationship with peacekeeping during the civil war, as they witnessed the tragic failure of UNAMIR in limiting—not to say preventing—the 1994 genocide. If modern Rwanda is built on one of peacekeeping's biggest fiascos, why does Kigali display such efforts to become a key player in peace operations?

The first answer to this question may rest in the Rwandese commitment to the AU's ideals of finding 'African solutions to African problems'.⁵⁶ The country's experience is a clear example of the danger of relying on external partners to cope with conflicts in Africa. After all, the murder of 'only' 10 Belgian Blue Helmets was sufficient to provoke the dislocation of UNAMIR. As Kagame argues, African states are more likely to have higher stakes in the resolution of a conflict in their neighborhood, as well as a better understanding of its roots.⁵⁷ This view is clearly at odds with the 'payback theory',⁵⁸ according to which Rwanda would be committed to peace operations as a way of showing gratitude for its benefits from past operations. Although the UN Observer Mission Rwanda–Uganda and UNAMIR may have had some positive effects, it is very unlikely that the current Rwandese authorities feel any thankfulness towards these operations.

A realist approach to peacekeeping would argue that participation in peace operations allows Rwanda to fulfill its national interests. In Sudan, the Rwandese contingents are essential for the conduct of UNAMID and UNMISS as few countries are willing to send peacekeepers to these areas, where the conflicts are still hot. By becoming indispensable to the organization, Rwanda acquired leverage at the international level that may come in handy in meeting some of its foreign policy objectives. In July 2008, under pressure from the DRC and Spain,⁵⁹ the UN tried to persuade Rwanda to replace the then UNAMID commander, Major General Karake, accused of war crimes committed in the 1990s. Kigali reacted by threatening to withdraw its troops if Karake was discharged. The UN had to surrender, and Karake remained mission commander until May 2009.⁶⁰ On 26 August 2010, the French newspaper *Le Monde* published a draft version of a report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. This report pointed to the direct responsibility of Rwanda in the conflicts in eastern DRC between 1993 and 2003, and accused Kigali of supporting acts of genocide against Hutu refugees. On 3 August 2010, the Rwandese Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon saying that 'attempts to take actions on this report—either through its release or leaks in the media—will force us to withdraw from Rwanda's various commitments to the United Nations, especially in the

area of peacekeeping.⁶¹ The leak forced Ban Ki-moon to go to Kigali on 7–9 September. The publication date of the report was postponed to 1 October and released simultaneously with the comments of the states involved.⁶² Although the report was published anyway, Kigali's pressures seem to have worked since there was no follow-up regarding the accusations of genocide and war crimes.

The way in which Rwanda uses its participation in peace operations as political leverage in unrelated international affairs demonstrates that Kigali understands multilateral involvement as a tool to ascertain its particular foreign policy goals. This stands at odds with a 'redeem theory', which explains the Rwandese commitment as a means of making amends for its behavior in DRC.⁶³ The threats towards the UN demonstrate that this is not the case. They are a clear example of the astuteness of Rwanda, which uses its position as a key player in peacekeeping to defend particular aspects of its foreign policy. Although Kigali rarely plays the 'peacekeeping trump' in such an explicit way, it constitutes a clear precedent for the UN that Rwanda is aware of its bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the organization, and this behavior has inspired other providers of peacekeeping contingents.

In November 2012, a UN report accused Uganda of supporting the M23 rebels in DRC. Kampala reacted by threatening to withdraw its peacekeepers from the UN-mandated AU mission in Somalia, where they accounted for one-third of the contingent, and even evoked a complete disengagement from UN peace operations.⁶⁴ This example highlights the fact that even modest contributors can enjoy political leverage from peacekeeping participations. Such leverage can also be achieved through deploying key materiel rather than massive contingents. In South Sudan, Rwanda sent eight transport and tactical helicopters.⁶⁵ Together with Ethiopia, it is the mission's main contributor of rotary-wing aircrafts, which are crucial in such a vast and poorly accessible theater. This technical contribution is relatively small in terms of personnel, but is indispensable for the functioning of the operation.

Critical theories of security argue that Rwanda's involvement in peacekeeping is related to the broader debate about the 'mercenaries–peacekeepers'. As mentioned above, states can engage in peacekeeping in order to attract foreign donors. This can be viewed as a form of transaction, where poor states accept to jumping on the bandwagon behind a stronger state or an international organization in exchange for financial support, institutionalizing an asymmetric North–South relationship.⁶⁶ Regarding Rwanda, this is related to the apparent switch from one vassal position to another. Before 1994, Kigali was a close ally of France. After the RPF took over, relations with Paris quickly deteriorated and Rwanda gradually turned to the USA. This relationship proved profitable for the Rwandese government, which benefitted from a strong ally and an important provider of development aid.⁶⁷ In addition to the 2004 ACSA treaty granting them the use of Rwandese military facilities,⁶⁸ the USA can count on the Rwandese presence in Sudan to react *vis-à-vis* Omar al-Bashir, who refused the deployment of non-African peacekeepers. Ironically, the French unconditional support of Habyarimana's regime at all costs, fearing that Rwanda might slip away from its sphere of influence, may have provoked the large divide between Paris and Kagame, inciting the latter to turn to Washington instead.

Another critical argument holds that states participate in UN peace operations in order to benefit from the monthly allowances the organization pays for each soldier deployed. The amount paid, set at USD 1332, can be attractive in less developed countries, where the troops' salary is inferior.⁶⁹ In 2013–14, when the allowance was still set at USD 1028, the UN disbursed on average USD 1210 per peacekeeper, including the supplements for specialists

and weapons maintenance.⁷⁰ There is no doubt that peacekeeping is financially interesting. For the Rwandese 2013–2014 fiscal year, the UN reimbursements amounted to 5.2% of the state budget.⁷¹ However, this standard allowance remained steady since 2002, while the sophistication of military equipment and operations increased greatly; it took 12 years to raise the allowance to its current amount.⁷² In addition, this theory fails to explain why Rwanda would have been so committed to peacekeeping even under AU mandates.

One last explanation for the Rwandese peace operations is related to internal politics. Sending troops to prevent genocides abroad reinforces RPF's domestic moral authority, recalling that the RPF rebuilt Rwanda from the ashes of the 1994 genocide.⁷³ By taking part in multinational endeavors, the authorities demonstrate to the Rwandese that they have been able to place their country among the ones that count on the international scene. The US Permanent Representative to the UN indeed lauded Kigali's efforts, stating that:

[t]he Secretary-General [...] should draw lessons from the leadership of Rwanda [...] And it's not just because the Rwandans volunteer for complex and dangerous missions. It's because of their commitment to protect civilians, the population in countries where the Rwandans serve trust them; troops from others countries who serve alongside them draw strength from their fortitude; and aggressors who would attack civilians fear them.⁷⁴

Rwanda is also proud to figure as an example of female inclusion in peace operations, especially through its police contingents. With 16.3% of female presence among the 974 deployed agents, the country ranks fourth in terms of women's participation on the list of the UN Police providers.⁷⁵ In September 2014, the UN chose Rwanda to organize its first 12-day, all-female training for police peacekeepers. According to the instructor:

[m]any police contributing countries have valuable lessons to learn from Rwanda's policing traditions in terms of discipline, organization and the continuous search for excellence.⁷⁶

In addition, owing to the military prestige of the RPF and the authoritarian nature of the regime, the army plays a pivotal role in the stability of the latter. Indeed, a 2014 survey ordered by the Rwandese Senate stated that the army is the second most trusted institution in the country, after the presidency.⁷⁷ Ensuring that the troops' salaries are attractive is thus a guarantee of discipline and cohesion. For some analysts, the end of the DRC conflict in 2003 placed Kigali in a difficult position.⁷⁸ The withdrawal of its forces meant that the soldiers would no longer be able to loot mineral resources abroad. The redeployment of Rwandese soldiers under Blue Helmets would be a strategy to compensate for this loss of revenue while preventing unrest within the army. According to Jordaan, although the Rwandese army demilitarized eastern DRC, it still benefits from illegal mining activities, creating an ironic situation where peacekeeping in Darfur and South Sudan would be financed by exactions in DRC.⁷⁹

In sum, there is no such thing as a single explanation for Rwanda's commitment to peacekeeping. The participation in peace operations arises from different reasons at both domestic and international levels. However, it demonstrates an astute foreign policy that creatively uses a great variety of tools to compensate for the waves of criticism against the Rwandese activities in DRC and Kagame's authoritarianism. Acting at different levels, Kagame has been able to give Rwanda a pivotal role in the current African security architecture, completing the country's quest for respectability. At the top of a country equipped with a professional and disciplined army, Kagame appears as a respectable leader of a stable and strong country, in stark contrast to many of its neighbors in the Great Lakes area.⁸⁰ Finally, Rwanda seems committed to the idea that a peaceful environment is better for everyone. Kigali did not

hesitate to criticize AMIS's mandate because it was seen as inadequate to fulfill the mission's goal, namely protecting civilians.⁸¹ Even the loss of several peacekeepers did not lead to questioning of the Rwandese commitment to AMIS.

Conclusion

Rwanda's adhesion to the Commonwealth should be understood in the same way as its involvement in peace operations: an investment in a foreign policy instrument that may prove useful in the future. As with peacekeeping, there is no single reason for this decision, and this is exactly the point. For Rwanda, the deployment of peacekeepers is relatively cheap and provides many advantages. Its troops benefit from state-of-the-art training programs and improve their combat experience, while the government gains prestige at the international level. Peace operations are thus cheap investments with high returns, especially regarding their political multiplying effect.

Nowadays, the Western powers face a dilemma: they are pressured by their more and more informed populations to 'do something' to solve unacceptable situations regarding human rights, yet their public opinion has grown more and more intolerant of the loss of soldiers in operations. The sheer volume of forces required for larger and more complex peace operations could never be supplied without the contributions from less developed countries. For states like Rwanda, the demand for peacekeepers constitutes a great opportunity to become indispensable in key theaters of operation. The peacekeepers are political investments that contribute towards restoring Kigali's international respectability, attract the attention of foreign partners and provide a potential leverage that could be useful should Rwanda need to put some pressure on another state or the UN itself.

The multiple reasons for its implication reflect various political benefits that even a small power like Rwanda can achieve at low cost. Rwanda's ability to leverage its peacekeeping activities to meet its own political goals introduces nuance into discussions of less developed countries' contributions to peacekeeping being viewed as a cheap power multiplier. Kigali's astute use of peacekeeping indeed seems to inspire other African countries,⁸² suggesting that in the near future, peacekeeping may become a tool of foreign policy used by a growing number of countries.

Notes

1. Bakary Traore (2013) *La contribution africaine au maintien de la paix onusien: enjeux et dessous d'un engagement croissant*. Brussels: Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (Note d'analyse du GRIP).
2. Lewin André (2006) Les Africains à l'ONU, *Relations internationales*, 4(128), pp. 55–78.
3. Jean-Pierre Chrétien (1997) *Le défi de l'ethnisme: Rwanda et Burundi, 1990–1996*. Paris: Karthala.
4. Mahmood Mamdani (2001) *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Oxford: James Currey; Gérard Prunier (1995) *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press; Linda Melvern (2000) *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. London: Zed Books.
5. Patricia Daley (2006) Challenges to peace: conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region of Africa, *Third World Quarterly*, 27(2), p. 305.
6. Mamdani (see note 4).
7. Gérard Prunier (1993) Eléments pour une histoire du Front patriote rwandais, *Politique Africaine*, 51, pp. 121–138.

8. Olivier Lanotte (2007) *La France au Rwanda (1990–1994)—entre abstention impossible et engagement ambivalent*. Ixelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, p. 81.
9. Assemblée nationale (1998) *Rapport de la mission d'information sur le Rwanda*. Paris: Assemblée nationale, pp. 355–358.
10. The Belgian contingent accounted for 17% of UNAMIR personnel in March 1994. One month later, the 2485-strong mission shrank to 640 Blue Helmets.
11. On 7 April 2000, during a remembrance ceremony in Kigali, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt expressed official apologies for having abandoned the Rwandan people.
12. Assemblée nationale (1998) *Mission d'information de la commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées et de la commission des affaires étrangères, sur les opérations militaires menées par la France, d'autres pays et l'ONU au Rwanda entre 1990 et 1994*. Paris: Assemblée nationale, no. 1721 (15 December 1998).
13. Historical reference to the 1898 Fashoda incident. In the context of the colonial struggle for Africa, France and the UK came close to a war in 1898 for the control of the upper Nile river basin. Although it was solved peacefully, it remains as an example of the Anglo-French competition for influence in Africa. See for example Lanotte (see note 8); Chafer Tony (2013) The UK and France in West Africa: toward convergence?, *African Security*, 6(3–4), pp. 234–256; Brown Roger Glenn (1969) *Fashoda Reconsidered: The Impact of Domestic Politics on French Policy in Africa 1893–1898*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
14. These fears took especially the form of an alleged project of 'Tutsiland' incorporating Uganda, Rwanda and territories of the then Zaire.
15. Lanotte (see note 8), p. 200.
16. As soon as 1994, France launched the RECAMP program, which became a European Union program—EURO RECAMP—from 2008 onwards.
17. French acronym for 'renforcement des capacités africaines de maintien de la paix'.
18. United States Congress (1997) *Transcript of the One Hundredth Fifth Congress—The African Crisis Response Initiative Hearing before the Sub-committee on Africa*. Washington: United States Congress, 8 October 1997.
19. Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau and David Brannan (2001) *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, p. 18.
20. Patricia Daley (2006) Challenges to peace: conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region of Africa, *Third World Quarterly*, 27(2), p. 303.
21. Especially resolutions 1304, 1332, 1468 and 1493, as well as the presidential statements of 22 June and 7 December 2004.
22. US Department of State (2009) *ACOTA Partner: Rwanda*, www.state.gov/p/af/rt/acota/partners/126185, accessed June 2015.
23. *Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (US-RW-01) between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda*. Kigali, 13 July 2004.
24. For more information on AFRICOM, see for example Nicolas van de Walle (2009) US policy towards Africa: the Bush legacy and the Obama administration, *African Affairs*, 109(434), p. 21; Carl A. Levan (2010) The political economy of African Responses to the U.S. Africa Command, *Africa Today*, 57(1), pp. 2–23.
25. US AFRICOM (2008) *Fact Sheet on Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA)*. Stuttgart: AFRICOM.
26. The Commonwealth secretariat faced criticism from human rights activists for its decision because of alleged strong-arm policies by the Rwandan government.
27. Amitav Banerji (2010) Rwanda and the Commonwealth, *Round Table*, 99(410), pp. 486–488; Georgina Holmes (2011) Rwanda and the Commonwealth: the evolution of the BBC's institutional narrative on the 1994 Rwandan genocide, *Round Table*, 100(416), p. 526.
28. Mike Pflanz (2009) Rwanda joins the Commonwealth, *The Telegraph*, 29 November.
29. Statement by Louise Mushikiwabo, Rwanda's information minister, in Pflanz (see note 28).
30. Pflanz (see note 28).
31. Holmes (see note 27), p. 527.
32. There are 576,000 French speakers in Rwanda, according to Encyclopedia Britannica's Book of the Year 2014.

33. François Soudan (2014) 'Je ne conseille à personne de se mêler des affaires intérieures du Rwanda', President Kagame's interview for *Jeune Afrique*, *Jeune Afrique* no. 2778.
34. Trial International (2016) 'Wenceslas Munyeshyaka case', <https://trialinternational.org/fr/latest-post/wenceslas-munyeshyaka/>
35. United Nations (April 2016) *UN Mission's Contributions by Country*. New York: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.
36. United Nations–African Union mission in Darfur.
37. United Nations mission in South Sudan.
38. Monique Mukaruliza was deputy chief of AMIS between 2004 and 2007, while Jean-Bosco Kazura was AMIS's deputy commander between 2005 and 2006 before becoming MINUSMA's commander in 2013–14. A Rwandese, Patrick Nyamvumba, was commander of MINUAD between 2009 and 2013 and had Emmanuel Karenzi Karake as deputy chief of the same mission.
39. The 2014 edition of *The Military Balance*, published annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.
40. The World Bank's records show that Rwanda had a 35,000-strong army in 2013.
41. Paul Kagame (2009) *Statement by H.E. Paul Kagame President of the Republic of Rwanda at the 64th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations*. New York: Permanent Representation of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations, p. 3.
42. Paul Kagame (2012) *Speech by H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, to the 67th General Assembly of the United Nations*. New York: Permanent Representation of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations, p. 4.
43. This corresponds to half of the life of this body, which started its activities in April 2004.
44. Kagame (see note 42), p. 4.
45. Danielle Beswick (2010) Peacekeeping, regime security and 'African solutions to African problems': exploring motivations for Rwanda's involvement in Darfur, *Third World Quarterly*, 31(5), p. 742.
46. UNAMID is the African Union/UN hybrid operation in Darfur and is co-headed by both organizations.
47. Nsongurua Udombana (2007) Still playing dice with lives: Darfur and Security Council Resolution 1706, *Third World Quarterly*, 28(1), p. 102; Beswick (see note 45), p. 740.
48. Colin Powell (2004) *The Crisis in Darfur*. Washington DC: United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 9 September 2004.
49. Although Rwanda lost 30 peacekeepers for UNAMID, it did not reconsider its participation to the mission.
50. Pan Butamire (2009) Rwanda cannot pull out of Sudan; she is embarked, *The New Times*, 11 December.
51. Beswick (see note 45).
52. Beswick (see note 45), pp. 746–747.
53. UN (2004) *Letter dated 30 November 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*. UN document S/2004/935, 1 December.
54. UN (2004) *Letter dated 30 November 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*. UN document S/2004/933, 30 November.
55. UN (2004) *Statement by the President of the Security Council*. UN document S/PRST/2004/45, 7 December, p. 1.
56. Beswick (see note 45).
57. Paul Kagame (see note 42), p. 4.
58. Trevor Findlay (1996) *Challenges for the New Peacekeepers*. Stockholm/Oxford: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute/Oxford University Press, pp. 7–10 (SIPRI Research Report).
59. Acting under the principle of extraterritoriality of Spanish justice regarding crimes against humanity, Judge Fernando A. Merelles ordered the arrest of 40 Rwandan soldiers, including

- General Karake, for crimes of genocide and terrorism that occurred in the 1990s and cost the lives of nine Spanish nationals. BBC (2008) España busca justicia en Ruanda, *BBC World*, 6 February.
60. Colum Lynch (2008) Rwanda threatens Darfur pullout if U.N. removes general, *Washington Post*, 24 July.
 61. Louise Mushikiwabo (2010) *Letter from the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Rwanda to the Secretary General of the United Nations*. Kigali: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Rwanda, 3 August 3, p. 4.
 62. It is interesting to notice that when the report was released, Uganda supported Rwanda by threatening to withdraw from AMISOM should this report lead to any legal actions.
 63. Beswick (see note 45), pp. 749–750.
 64. Jorgic Drazen (2012) U.S. expects Ugandan peacekeepers to stay in Somalia, *Reuters*, 5 November.
 65. James Karuhanga (2014) Rwanda deploys more choppers to South Sudan, *The New Times*, 27 November.
 66. Beswick (see note 45), pp. 741–742.
 67. According to the World Bank, the USA provided in 2012 and 2013, respectively, 18% and 14% of Rwanda's total official development assistance and aid.
 68. *Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement* (see note 23).
 69. UN (2014) *Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 30 June 2014*. UN document A/RES/68, 30 June.
 70. UN (2014) *Results of the Revised Survey to Establish the Standard Rate of Reimbursement to Troop-Contributing Countries, as Approved by the General Assembly in Its Resolution 67/261 on the Report of the Senior Advisory Group on Rates of Reimbursement to Troop-Contributing Countries Report of the Secretary-General*. UN document A/68/813, 26 March 26.
 71. In 2013–2014, the UN reimbursements amounted to around USD 120 million. Ivan R. Mugisha (2014) Budget revised up by Rwf24bn, *The New Times*, 6 March.
 72. UN (2006) *Review of the Methodology for Rates of Reimbursement to Troop-Contributing Countries Report of the Secretary-General*. UN document A/60/725, 17 March.
 73. Johan Pottier (2002) *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 202.
 74. Samantha Power (2014) *Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at an Open Debate on Regional Partnerships and Peacekeeping*. New York: United States Mission to the United Nations.
 75. United Nations (see note 35).
 76. Athan Tashoa (2014) UN turns to Rwanda for more female peacekeepers, *The New Times*, 1 September.
 77. Out of the 3837 respondents in the sample, 98.7% trust the president and 96.2% the FAR. This is far ahead of the police (86%) or parliament (84.7%). Senate (2014) *The Constant Quest for Solutions through Dialogue and Consensus in Rwanda: The Mechanisms for Dialogue and Consensus*. Kigali: Republic of Rwanda, p. 112. Although this report was criticized by the opposition, it gives a clear vision of the most important institutions in Rwanda. See Emmanuel Rutayisire (2014) Rwandan Senate report generates heat as co-ordinators, opposition tussle, *The East African*, 7 June.
 78. Traore (see. note 1), p. 6.
 79. Eduard Jordaan (2006) Inadequately self-critical: Rwanda's self-assessment for the African peer review mechanism, *African Affairs*, 105(420), pp. 342–343.
 80. Jordaan (see note 79), p. 333. The 2015 Fragile States Index, which quantifies a country's level of institutional fragility, shows that Rwanda is among the least fragile countries in the area. With a score of 90.2, it is less fragile than Uganda (97), Burundi (98.1) and especially the DRC (109.7). Among its neighbors, only Tanzania does better (80.8). See Fund for Peace (2015) *Fragile States Index 2015*. Washington DC: Fund for Peace, fsi.fundforpeace.org, accessed June 2015.

81. Beswick (see note 45), p. 743.
82. In May 2015, under harsh international pressure against its candidature for a third presidential term in Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza threatened to withdraw his country's troops from the AU's operation in Somalia, where they are the second largest contingent.