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Militarisation of governance after conflict: beyond the rebel-to-ruler frame – the case of Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we develop and expand the rebel-to-ruler literature to go beyond ‘rebel transformations’, in order to examine the transformation and militarisation of the entire post-genocide society in Rwanda. Through a historical and socio-political analysis of the military’s influence in post-genocide Rwanda, we argue that the adoption of military norms and ethos, drawn from an idealised and reconstructed pre-colonial history rather than simply an insurgent past, motivates the military’s centrality and penetration of all society’s sectors, economically, politically and socially, with the ultimate aim of retaining power in the hands of the rebels turned rulers. As such, the case demonstrates the need for an expansion of the rebel-to-ruler literature (1) beyond its concern with parties and regime type to a broader palette of governance effects and (2) beyond its singular focus on insurgent past and towards a *longue-durée* understanding of complementary causes.

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Introduction

In states where rebels have become rulers, and especially in cases where rulers hail from a victorious insurgent group, there is a heightened risk of an authoritarian shift and an imposition of *de facto* one-party states.¹ In East Africa, the examples of Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda have all confirmed this assumption.² There is also a growing literature related to the conditions that make the transformation from rebels to political parties, and ultimately rulers, possible, just as there is more knowledge on how historical trajectories influence former rebels’ governance style.³ Yet, up to date there are relatively few studies examining how the historical trajectory and the military legacy of the armed struggle have influenced, and in some cases shaped and militarised, the post-conflict state.⁴ In this article we develop and expand the rebel-to-ruler literature to go beyond ‘rebel transformations’, in order to examine the transformation and militarisation of the entire post-genocide society in Rwanda. In other words, we do not focus on rebels turned leaders on an individual or party/group level, but rather on how the rebel leaders’ governance has managed to militarise Rwandan society.

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The famous Voltaire quote 'Where some states have an army, the Prussian army has a state' could well apply to Rwanda. The military historian of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) Brig. Gen. Frank Rusagara wrote that '[i]t is the military that played the most central socio-political role in what became of Rwanda (...) [T]he RDF today not only ensures security for all, but provides a model of national unity and integration that continues to inform Rwanda's socio-political and economic development'.⁵ In short, the army is the core institution for the implementation of state policy, the key space for the socialisation of the elite and a link to the citizenry.⁶

While the military has considerable influence in many countries across the world, in particular where former rebels have taken government positions, we argue that the army as an institution and military values are exceptionally pervasive in Rwanda. They penetrate the entire society, from top to bottom. A remarkable feature of this dominance is its historical depth. Precolonial Rwanda too rested on military organisation and warrior ethics. After a century long parenthesis under colonial rule (1895–1962) and the first two republics (1962–1994), the winner of the civil war, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), picked up the thread again. The backward-looking 'invention of tradition' serves as a forward-looking social engineering project. The current period 'represents both a return to the (precolonial) period and the creation of something new'.⁷ Rwanda is then a uniquely well-positioned case to study militarisation of governance after conflict.

In this article we aim to understand how militarisation has come to characterise the governance and society of contemporary Rwanda. To accomplish this, we provide an analysis of the military's role in Rwanda over time, focusing on continuity between the precolonial and post-genocide periods and inquire into why and how these defining characteristics were revived after a 100-year gap. Two aspects of this continuity and pervasiveness of militarisation in contemporary Rwanda are examined: firstly, the army's socio-economic influence on society, and secondly, the reach of military ethos and values across the entire society.

In terms of method and material, the article builds both on a literature review of various secondary sources, such as academic articles and reports, and primary sources, such as official documents, interviews, focus groups and observation with key actors. The interviews were conducted by one of the authors during field work for seven months between 2008–2009, and are used to support section IV. Methodologically, this study represents an in-depth case study of what could be considered a 'deviant' case in the rebel-to-ruler literature, due to the range and depth of militarisation after rebels' came into power.

The article starts with an analysis of the main tenets and key findings of the rebel-to-ruler literature and locates the present paper in reference to this emerging literature. We then turn to a historical reminder of the role of the military institution and the values associated with it before we analyse the military's socio-economic and normative impact on contemporary Rwandan society, followed by a concluding discussion.

We believe these questions to be relevant in order to understand Rwandan regime behaviour and its effects both domestically and internationally. Domestically, the omnipresent role played by the army gives it a remarkable autonomy, while the militarised narrative allows the RPF to impose its view on society. Externally, post-genocide Rwanda has adopted an interventionist stance that has engendered conflict, at one moment or another, with each of its four neighbours. This links up with the precolonial expansionist record, but also with the RPF's own experience, which has shown that bold military action can deliver more than

can negotiations and peace accords.⁸ The findings are also relevant beyond the case of Rwanda as they open new pathways to view the effect of militarisation on governance.

1. Rwanda and the rebel-to-ruler literature

A relatively young rebel-to-ruler transformation scholarship has been trying to tease out links between military legacies and governance. The key research questions have centred on the transformation from military organisations to political ones: What are the challenges of switching from armed to non-armed modes of organisation, and how does a military past influence post-war party politics? Are former rebels more prone to (re)produce authoritarian regimes? What determines former rebels' success at the ballot box?⁹ Does armed group mobilisation and the way wars end shape later rebel-to-ruler transformation? Does a rebel past influence everyday internal party politics?¹⁰

The rebel-to-ruler literature is a useful lens through which we can understand the Rwandan post-war militarisation. Rwanda is not a unique instance of rebel-to-ruler transformation in the region, as Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and the DRC are other examples of states governed by former rebels.¹¹ The Rwandan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean politico-military elites all came to power through armed revolutions against dictatorial regimes. Each of them also framed their revolution around fundamental political and societal transformation, with the focus on liberation from domestic and international oppression, and they all relied on some sort of support from one another to defeat the enemy and establish a post-liberation state.¹²

These cases confirm one of the main arguments of the rebel-to-ruler scholarship: that political parties rooted in armed struggle are more likely to take an authoritarian shift and impose de facto one-party states.¹³ They also demonstrate Lyons' argument that protracted civil wars in relatively confined territories with little external intervention and with significant experience in wartime administration of liberated territory are likely to transform into strong authoritarian ruling parties – in contrast to cases where short wars are fought over large territories with significant external assistance which tend to favour incoherent leadership.¹⁴ These conditions apply to the RPF, although it can also be argued that the leadership was 'born powerful', in the sense that it was a strong, centralised leadership with strict discipline and a propensity to use violence to resolve crises from the beginning,¹⁵ aspects that continue to characterise the RPF today as a party.

More recent writings on the rebel-to-ruler transformation have avoided the strong dividing line between rebels and political parties and examined rebel parties as 'hybrid politico-military organisations'.¹⁶ From this perspective, rebel groups are not only shaped by the political dynamics of civil war, but also by pre-war authoritarian regimes against which they launched armed resistance in the first place. Political education and civic training therefore occupy important places in these organisations. Compulsory political education at times combined with military training was incorporated into TPFL (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front), EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), NRM (National Resistance Movement) and RPF structures from early on, with sessions often led or dominated by senior intellectuals and leaders.¹⁷ This focus on political education and military training is also an aspect that has been most prominent in post-genocide Rwanda. This arguably makes Rwanda unique in comparison to other rebel-to-ruler cases, where the political indoctrination decreased after the rebel group had come to power, rather than increased as in Rwanda. In the case of

the RPF it could also be argued that an idealised and altered vision of precolonial times has shaped the organisation, which is evident in today's glorification of Rwandan precolonial history.

Yet the RPF also resembles some of its neighbouring rebel-to-ruler leaders in that they too often continue to engage in violence especially around election time.¹⁸ Indeed, as the rebel-to-ruler scholarship suggests, including former rebels into the post-war political system may encourage impunity and undermine democracy and the rule of law.¹⁹ This is perhaps most evident in the Rwandan regime's refusal to have its soldiers tried for crimes committed during and after the civil war. This impunity has allowed the RPF military to cultivate a 'hero status', which in turn has reinforced militarisation.

How do we add to this emerging literature? Should we see Rwanda as merely an exceptionally intense laboratory of dynamics observed elsewhere? There are two ways in which we hope to extend debates on the rebel-to-ruler transitions. We argue that the available literature captures neither the full gamut of factors that *condition* militarisation nor the full scope of its *effects* on governance. On conditioning factors, the militarisation cannot be merely seen through the RPF guerrilla past, or through experience with previous governments as it grew in exile. On effects, the available literature focuses almost exclusively on authoritarian shift as seen through party politics, or on the selective deployments of violence around times of succession. These frameworks leave out key pathways of effect on both aforementioned sides.

On the causes of militarisation, we have to look to the RPF's broader social project of nation-building and the way it is structured around revivalist historical imaginaries, claiming to restore a 'golden age' of the Rwandan nation, which coincides with a centralising, expansionary and militaristic state heritage. In other words, militarisation is not reducible to a guerrilla past but is rather to be understood through a much longer history, particularly the post-genocide exigencies of historical revival in name of social reconstruction, where the projects of building pride (*ishema*), dignity (*agaciro*) and unity (*ubumwe*) are sourced from the pre-colonial militaristic worldview.

On the side of effects on governance, we cannot constrain our analysis by looking at the ways in which military men transition to politics. We need to consider the new role and the new centrality of the military as an institution in the post-war state, and understand how military ethos and values permeate society in attempts to shape political subjectivities and everyday political norms of behaviour, how these consolidate and nurture consent and reproduce the dominant party's ideological outlook and its staying power. These are key pathways that together explain the extent and depth of militarisation of the state in Rwanda; pathways not captured in the available literature.

II. From the precolonial to the post-genocide era

Upon seizing power in July 1994, the RPF put the entire colonial and postcolonial period up to 1994 between brackets and set out to restore the 'golden ages' of precolonial Rwanda, allegedly a time of unity, dignity and authentic values, but also an era when militarism lay at the core of statecraft. According to the RPF's military historian, '[t]he colonial and neo-colonial occupation of Rwanda, which took a century, from 1894 to 1994, ensured the desecration of the original Rwandan state and the military institution'.²⁰ After that lost century, the history of Rwanda resumed in 1994 when the RPF took power after defeating the

genocidal regime, and restored the values that were destroyed by colonial rule and the two republics after independence in 1962. The precolonial period is presented as that of a harmonious society in which Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were not ethnic labels but categories referring to wealth and status. The three groups shared the same history, culture, religion and space. While Rwanda was not without conflict, this was never ethnic in nature. The kings belonged to Tutsi lineages, but they lost this ethnic label upon assuming office, and they were the benevolent guardians of all Rwandans' well-being.²¹

In apparent contrast to this image of harmony, at the same time the historical narrative is based on the notion of continuous war and conquest, *ku-aanda* (from which Rwanda derives its name),²² literally 'expansion or spreading out from the centre': 'the principle of *ku-aanda*, which involved annexation and subsequent integration of neighbouring territories, informed the continued expansion and growth of pre-colonial Rwanda.'²³ All the kings mentioned by Rusagara are warrior kings, and the 'Map of *Ku-aanda*' includes large parts of current day Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).²⁴ Given the RPF leadership's insistence on continuities with precolonial Rwanda, we must have a brief look at this history.

The Nyiginya kingdom was founded in the seventeenth century by Ruganzu Ndori. The army – an innovation that he created – along with the *ubuhake* clientship system, became the foundation of power in the realm. While the Nyiginya kingdom was but one of the many that emerged in the region during the seventeenth century, during the eighteenth century it became very different from its neighbours when non-territorial, multiple and permanent armies were put in place.²⁵ The monarchy then took shape, linking military expansion with political centralisation. King Rujugira structured the armies by installing them in permanent camps near the most threatened borders. Two-thirds of these armies were created between his reign and Rwabugiri's, roughly between 1750 and 1895.²⁶

The deepest effect of this new military organisation was 'the institutionalisation of a glorification of militarism and martial violence that finally permeated the whole of Nyiginya culture as the armies became the foundation of the administrative structure of the realm. (...) [U]ltimately, all the inhabitants of the realm were incorporated in the military organisation.'²⁷ The army constituted the administrative framework of the country, and the concentration of power in the hands of the army commanders was an essential step in the unification of the kingdom.²⁸ Under these cultural, logistical and institutional conditions it is not surprising that the history of the kingdom is coterminous with war and violence. Even the narrative proposed by Rwanda's first historian Alexis Kagame is a long litany of wars against neighbours, conquests, punitive expeditions against unruly regions, reprisal attacks, insurrections and their repression, and civil wars. Violence was not only addressed to external enemies and internal opposition, but was also a frequent occurrence within the court and among ruling circles. Kagame's list of royal succession struggles, massacres of entire princely families and those of chiefs whose loyalty was in doubt, rumour mongering and revenge, poisoning and cruel torture, executions and score settling is near endless.²⁹ Vansina too notes that from the reign of Rujugira (late eighteenth century) onward, 'the country was almost continually in a state of war.'³⁰

Similarly, when addressing the most recent period, from the mid-nineteenth century, which is known in quite some detail, all events mentioned by Kagame are wars, massacres, intrigue and competition inside the royal court.³¹ The country was at war two years out of every three during Rwabugiri's reign, and there were 13 military campaigns in less than

20 years.³² The history of militarisation in Rwanda is thus rich and, as we shall see, its repurposing after the genocide has been intense, yet these dynamics (among others detailed in this article) are not captured in the literature exploring links between militarisation and governance after conflict.

This does not mean that historical recollections are the only or even the main explanatory factor for current-day militarisation. The RPF's experience, during both the NRM struggle in Uganda and the Rwandan civil war, is at least as important. Prunier notes that its heavy reliance on military and violent modes is understandable in light of the RPF's past replete with 'atrocities and civilian massacres, committed against them, around them or by them. For them violence was not exceptional; it was a normal state of affairs.'³³ In addition, '[a]s soldiers they only knew the gun, and the gun had worked well for them in the past.'³⁴ Trained as soldiers, the RPF leadership acts in a hierarchical and disciplined fashion, and places great value on security and military power. But since the influence of the insurgency is less surprising, and more firmly established in the literature, here we emphasise the influence derived from the *longue durée*.

III. The Rwandan military's socio-economic influence on society

The Rwandan military's historical central role has continued into the present day and is evident from a socio-economic perspective. The army is comparatively large with a force of approximately 33,000, in addition to paramilitaries known as local defence forces. In 2015, the official number for these local forces was 2000,³⁵ yet it seems likely that there are additional informal forces not taken into account in this figure. In fiscal terms, the defence budget for 2014 was US\$81 million which equals 1.01% of GDP.³⁶ The Rwandan army has become an important economic actor in its own right through its role as a peacekeeper and its involvement in investment groups and military-owned enterprises. It thereby manages to penetrate several sectors in Rwandan society and reinforces its central role in the state. In the following sections, we will look at the RDF's roles as a peacekeeper, an economic entrepreneur and a 'people's army'.

The RDF as a peacekeeper

The Rwandan government decided to become a troop contributor to international peace operations in 2004, 10 years after the genocide. Since then, Rwanda has deployed approximately 47,000 troops (both military and police) through successive rotations to the UN and AU missions in Sudan and South Sudan. Today, Rwanda is one of the top five contributors to UN peace operations with its main commitments in the hybrid UN–AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).³⁷ Rwanda's choice of Sudan as the focus for troop contribution has been seen as a strategic move, linked to the US Congress describing the situation in Darfur as genocide in 2004. By intervening in a situation labelled genocide, the Rwandan government cements its legitimacy as a 'saviour' and a leadership focused on African solutions to African problems.³⁸

The consequences of Rwanda's involvement in peacekeeping are however not limited to a reinforcement of the government's internal and external legitimacy. Kühnel-Larsen has also shown how Rwanda's new role as a peacekeeper influences the domestic peace process in general and soldiers' individual developments in particular, in a process of constructing a new national identity.³⁹ Rwandan citizens thus share the pride of the army's peace

operations abroad, disseminating a new image of Rwanda as a peacekeeper. As such, the troop contribution helps to maintain and reinforce the military's central role in Rwanda.

Rwanda's involvement in the peacekeeping business also brings a financial influx to the state. Each soldier deployed in a UN operation receives a monthly allowance of US\$1331, an amount significantly larger than the approximately US\$45 per month that an average soldier earns.⁴⁰ The government deducts part of the monthly UN allowance, though the exact amount is unknown.⁴¹ Rwanda is also reimbursed by the UN for providing equipment, personnel and support services. This financial influx suggests that Rwanda can make an important economic profit from its involvement in peacekeeping. Yet Defence Minister Kabarebe argued in 2012 that what Rwanda spends on peacekeeping is not covered by the reimbursements from the UN and that in fact, its participation is a financial loss rather than a benefit.⁴² This seems unlikely however, given the fact that Rwanda is not only compensated for individual soldiers, equipment and material from the UN and the AU, but also benefits from donors supporting the development of the RDF into a peacekeeping contributor.⁴³ Rwanda has for example been part of the US sponsored ACOTA programme which gives pre-deployment trainings for African peacekeepers since the mid-2000s, and has also benefited from paid peacekeeping courses at regional peace academies, the construction of new training centres and a more modern and professional army in general.⁴⁴ Rwanda's involvement in peacekeeping has therefore ensured that the military remains a central actor in the state, in part because of the legitimacy that the 'peacekeeping label' brings to Rwanda in both external and internal relations and in part because it attracts foreign investments to the military.

The RDF as an entrepreneur

In some African states, soldiers are allowed to keep small or large businesses parallel to their work in the military in order to compensate for low salaries. Neighbouring DRC is the example most often cited⁴⁵ but some Rwandan senior officers have also benefited from owning businesses such as hotels and bars and thereby gain an extra income.⁴⁶ This is however a less common phenomenon than in other countries for two reasons: firstly because soldiers and officers all benefit from regular payments to individual accounts in the CSS Zigama bank which gives significant benefits to soldiers in terms of loans and mortgages⁴⁷ and secondly because the government uses military investment groups as leading economic actors which reinforces the RDF's position in society.⁴⁸

The 'military bank', CSS Zigama, started as a microfinance cooperative, created by the Ministry of Defence in 1997. All army personnel are equal shareholders with individual bank accounts comprising compulsory savings each month. The main benefit for the individual is that soldiers are given comparatively low-cost loans and regular pay checks, while for the state it limits the burden on the state budget and ensures the soldiers' basic welfare.⁴⁹ In January 2015, assets stood at close to US\$200 million and there were over 72,000 shareholders after membership was extended to other employees working in the security sector.⁵⁰ Military Medical Insurance (MMI), another military owned venture, has further contributed to the welfare of the Rwandan army by providing soldiers with good quality healthcare.⁵¹ MMI was created in 2005 and has a legal identity and financial autonomy, yet it operates within the Ministry of Defence.⁵²

A 2012 presidential order gave the Rwandan Defence Force a special status with numerous institutionalised benefits, including but not limited to maternal leave, pensions and discount

shopping in army shops. The order also explicitly states that any commercial or industrial profession as well as participation in the management or administration of a private company or any other commercial or industrial enterprise is incompatible with army membership. However, mandates exercised on behalf of the Rwandan state in private enterprises *are* compatible with military activities.⁵³

This exception explains how the government could encourage the Rwandan army to create the holding company Horizon Group in 2007, which has undertaken a number of socio-economic projects and established productive enterprises.⁵⁴ Although the board of Horizon Group does not include any army officers, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was seconded from the military and since the army owns the company, it is accountable to the Ministry of Defence.⁵⁵ Horizon's ownership is divided between CSS Zigama and MMI, as are two new military enterprises, Ngali Holdings and Agro-Processing Industries Ltd.⁵⁶ Horizon's subsidiary, Horizon Logistics has moved into providing logistical support to Rwandan peace-keeping forces in a number of locations, taking over from international firms, which also ties the group closer to the military.⁵⁷ These military-owned enterprises have made high-level corruption unnecessary,⁵⁸ yet they also constitute a way for the government to retain the loyalty of the military hierarchy,⁵⁹ and ensure that the military remains a central actor in society, penetrating all sectors of it.

The RDF as a people's army

The Minister of Defence explained the motivation behind the strategy of letting the military contribute to development projects as promoting a common understanding between civilians and the military and eradicating the fear which historically has characterised the relations between the two groups.⁶⁰ This strategy is exemplified in the ways in which the RDF is involved and interacting with the 'civilian world'. One concrete example is the RDF's prominent role in construction and infrastructure projects which makes sure that the army is seen outside the military environment.⁶¹ Another is the "Army Week" which occurs a few times a year and during which the RDF provides medical treatment to civilians in rural areas.⁶²

The Rwandan military has also gradually become part of individuals' private lives, through its Gender Desk, established in 2008. Staffed by a legal advisor, trainers and counsellors, it helps to solve conflicts within military families and provides advisory and support services to military personnel and their spouses.⁶³ The aim is to create awareness on gender equality and women's human rights in order to reduce gender based violence (GBV). In cooperation with a local mobile phone company, a free hotline was set up to report cases of violence against women by members of the military.⁶⁴ These initiatives to promote gender equality and erase GBV are not unique to Rwanda, yet the prominent role that the RDF is given in these social projects shows the extent to which the military permeates all sectors of society. The fact that the RDF has a mandate to intervene in the private spheres of families and couples also illustrates how extended the military's reach is in general, a situation that resonates with the military ethos and values that imbue Rwandan society.

IV. Military ethos and military values

In order to grasp the centrality of the military to Rwandan society, we need to reach beyond the military institution itself. Following the genocide, the military ethos and values have come to permeate the whole society with impact on political culture, nation building and

reconciliation, and education and socialisation more broadly, with important feedback loops to political governance. Importantly, the impetus for military exertion in a wider social field cannot be reduced to attempts to 'overcome the fear of the military'⁶⁵ and military demystification, aspects the military itself likes to highlight in narrating its social mission. Instead, the government has come to glorify the military worldview with values shaping the way in which citizenship and political roles of ordinary people are understood in the post-genocide context.

The aura of a successful guerrilla movement has helped to attach a central cultural significance to military values and this has manifested in fields as disparate as politics, development and education. Though the phenomenon can be traced to the RPF's capture of power, it has gradually increased over time. The glorification also draws on a purposeful reconnect to a pre-colonial past whereby current activities and values are repackaged and added further weight through the language of historical tradition and authenticity. In this section, we focus on two mechanisms through which such wider impact is created: the political and civic education dispensed through the *ingando* and *itorero* camps, inspired and framed in the military idiom, and the broader discursive and normative pathways through which military values, ethos and mind-set affect approaches to development and structure political dynamics of control and consent.

The prominent focus on camp-based-education here follows the centrality placed on political education (and 'mindset change' more broadly) by the government and the fact that such education is dispensed primarily, though not exclusively, through camps. The deployment of either political education or camps for mobilisation, loyalty-building and production of consent is not exclusive to Rwanda as other post-liberation states such as Eritrea or Uganda have deployed one or both of these technologies. Nonetheless, Rwanda's use of such technologies is unparalleled and has been increasingly more systematic, capturing wider strata of the population over time. Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans have already participated and the goal is for every Rwandan citizen to take part. Despite the importance of *ingando* and *itorero* to the government's approach to social transformation, the camps have received limited academic attention.⁶⁶ Recently, two book-length explorations based on long-term primary research in Rwanda shed more light on the camps⁶⁷ and it is this research, particularly the original research by one of the authors, that the present section builds on.

The Rwandan *ingando* camps entered the post-genocide scene in the late 1990s, just a few years after the RPF's military victory. The lengthy mass retreats in remote camping sites were organised with the aim of disseminating and promoting the official vision of a 'new Rwanda'. In the tense atmosphere of the post-genocide society, social re-engineering, reintegration and reorientation were certainly intended, alongside a political agenda to win the hearts and minds of the distrustful populace. Returnees both Hutu and Tutsi had to participate, and later released prisoners, teachers, civil servants, students and others. Over time, the courses spanned anywhere from weeks to months, targeted a wide array of people, and consisted of lengthy lessons, light military training and exercises, as well as *umateduni* evening entertainment sessions. The lessons have ranged from economic policy, government approaches to security, unity, reconciliation and health, to the new official historical narrative or philosophy (materialism). *Ingando* has also nurtured a sense of a de-ethnicised nationalism, erasing ethnicity and promoting Rwandanness or Rwandanity instead. The latter is

structured around an assemblage of re-imagined cultural values and a set of citizen duties outlining the participants' role in protecting and fostering the new post-genocide order.

The origins of the camps betray their military character. Though official discourse ties the camps to the pre-colonial military practice of *kugandika* (temporary encampment focused on reflection/strategy), interviews with RPF officials and organisers suggest a much clearer link to post-colonial political education and mobilisation practices in the Tutsi diaspora aimed at dissemination of the RPF ideals and platform in the late 1980s, and subsequent mobilisation of support during wartime in the early 1990s. According to Tito Rutaremara, the aim was to 'bring people together and share the ideals of the RPF'.⁶⁸ Taking inspiration from other such practices in the region, notably Uganda's *chaka mchaka* camps, Rwanda's *ingando* represents institutionalisation of political education from wartime to peacetime.

Ingando is not a military training camp primarily, but the military idiom is reflected and put to work on a number of levels. As such, it frames a particular way of learning, and a particular vision of national belonging and political subjectivity. Places like the Peace and Leadership Academy at Nkumba in the Northern region are modelled on the RPF guerrilla experience and are run like boot camps. The participants wear military uniform, follow a military formation, eat what the guerrillas used to eat in the bush, undergo physical exercises, gun demystification exercises, learn call-and-reply slogans and sing patriotic and warrior songs celebrating the RPF guerrilla struggle. The camps are run by military personnel and many instructors (including those teaching philosophy) hail from the Ministry of Defence. Participants learn about military strategy, self-defence, military parades or how to assemble and dismantle a gun. Lessons on history glorify pre-colonial kings' expansionism through military exploits, which ties into the importance of Rwanda's warrior history as evidenced earlier.

But it is not simply the content but context to learning that matters. There is accent on discipline, order and hierarchies in the camps. The military format also enacts a very specific form of unity and nationness through its accent on sameness, uniformity and coherence. Participants feel the same because they dress, eat, behave and are even punished the same (i.e. collectively). Military parades and exercises are where the *kos* (the appellation of the participants) literally become a piece of a larger whole, where through coordinated physical exercise they are meant to experience the more intangible sense of a social unity. But here is also where submission to authority overrides critical thinking as a priority. The unity fostered is not one of togetherness in individuality but togetherness of uniformity.

The *ingando* closing graduation ceremony at Nkumba is in many senses a hallmark of the ways in which the military idiom structures both learning and the imaginary of the new citizen. Performing for the high dignitaries of the state, the students enact a perfectly coordinated military march, bearing bamboo sticks in lieu of guns, pounding their gumboots while singing. The perfect formations in motion are perhaps the most potent symbol of a nationalism sifted through the military paradigm.

Over time, the sort of militarised and militarism-promoting education modelled through *ingando* has only expanded. In 2007, a parallel programme of *itorero ry'igihugu* (*itorero* in short) was introduced, this time decentralised and less selective than *ingando*, with the aim of targeting Rwandans on a more expanded scale. This has been achieved through a dual programme of both camp-based education (for trainers of trainers, such as administrators, public servants, teachers or informal police) and locally-based education whereby residents attend weekly sessions in local schools or public spaces. The curriculum contents and military

inspiration remain almost identical to *ingando*⁶⁹ perhaps brought to a finer definition in *itorero*. The *itorero* graduates become *intore*, originally a name given to soldiers of the pre-colonial kings, today insinuating model citizen behaviour to be acquired through the programme. The *intore* identity 'rings with army attributes'⁷⁰ being an assemblage of glorified pre-colonial warrior images, RPA fighters and the current RDF.

Ingando graduates continue the 'work' of civic education through unity and reconciliation clubs (SCURs) in their education institutions. The *itorero* graduates sign *imihigo* performance contracts – pledges of concrete contributions to wider development goals – which local *itorero* committees oversee long after the training is over. *Imihigo* is again traced to the pre-colonial military custom of verbal vows, essentially oaths of achievement that soldiers would articulate before their king. Through both its ideals of *intore* and duties of *imihigo*, *itorero* schools signal a tight conflation of notions of defence and loyalty; loyalty not only to the physical integrity of the country but now to government policy and vision. *Intore* graduates are to become the soldiers of development.

The military mind-set also structures the political field through the polarities of friend versus foe and unity versus division.⁷¹ Rwandan post-genocide governments have accentuated the continuous need to combat internal and external enemies, maintaining a simultaneous sense of insecurity, need for securitisation and call for alertness among the population. While wars abroad have been legitimised through the presence of threats and enemies beyond Rwanda's borders (i.e. the FDLR rebels, reconfigured from the remnants of genocidal militias), securitisation at home has been driven by the prerogative of rooting out enemies in the form of divisionism, genocide denial and ideology and, most recently, the sympathisers or accomplices of 'terrorism'. A mind-set of combat and struggle has thus been translated from wartime to peacetime, excusing heightened surveillance and control, and calling for suppression of dissent or simply political opposition, which is often persecuted on security grounds.

Conclusions: militarisation and governance

The prominent place taken in the political system by the military and intelligence services caused an analyst to call Rwanda a 'securocracy'.⁷² This prominence dates back from before the RPF seized power. Its defeat at the September 1993 local elections in the demilitarised zone made the RPF understand that it could not accede to power through the ballot. Guichaoua noted that this experience was a turning point, 'anchoring the deep disdain of the RPF's military leadership for the "democrats", as well as their rejection of the electoral process'.⁷³ So the militarisation serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, references to pre-colonial Rwanda and the armed struggle that 'liberated' the country are tools of legitimisation. On the other, it allows to reign in dissent and to ensure the RPF's continued hold on power. Clearly, this has been a centrally devised strategy rather than an incremental bottom-up phenomenon.

As the RPF won the war, it did not have to strike deals or engage in compromise with other social and political forces (although it temporarily gave the impression it did). Dorsey has shown how the army and the intelligence services soon became the pillars of the regime and how strict physical control was an utmost preoccupation from the beginning of the war.⁷⁴ Most civilian politicians incorporated into the government after the genocide were either co-opted or forced out of politics altogether by the end of the 1990s.⁷⁵

More importantly, the reliance on armed force, in addition to its sense of entitlement for having 'liberated' the country, makes it less desirable and less pressing for the RPF to think in terms of civilian politics, or to seriously entertain a democratic perspective: 'Its self-perception (...) will continue to clash with ideas of compromise, relativism and empathy that are integral parts of democracy.'⁷⁶ Formal institutions – cabinet and parliament – became the screens of the networks that are really in charge. The RPF has kept the shell of these institutions, but stripped them of any effective power.⁷⁷ As Verhoeven said, '[p]ower does not reside in formal positions, but in a shadow state'.⁷⁸ This is well shown in three trends highlighted by Jones: important policy questions are decided by a small circle around the presidency; certain state functions are administered by officials in the military; and extra-legal behaviour, for instance in fiscal and budgetary matters, are indicative of a shadow state network of revenue and command within the military.⁷⁹ The high-ranking officers occupying this central node of power almost exclusively come from the Ugandan Tutsi diaspora.

This paper has found a striking continuity between the precolonial and post-genocide eras, specifically concerning the ways in which the new elite reconstructs the military heritage to fit the exigencies of post-genocide governance. As shown, the aspect of military men in politics is only one way to glance militarisation of the political space. This cornerstone of the rebel-to-ruler literature needs to be expanded by considering other areas and pathways of influence including the military as an institution and military values and ethos as they make inroads into a wide range of projects from reconciliation to development.

The military's many different roles, as a 'peacekeeper', an economic actor and a social actor, exemplified in the expression a 'people's army', makes its influence omnipresent in the Rwandan state. The military institution is therefore one that transcends and permeates traditional civil–military relations and boundaries and as such it influences the ways in which ordinary Rwandans are taught to relate to politics and the state.

Through its permeation of key social processes including the reconstruction of citizenship and state-society relations, the military ethos has framed and moulded political governance in Rwanda. With regard to the regime's form, it has helped entrench and promote authoritarian values by upholding unquestioned loyalty, foregrounding discipline and submission to a greater goal. The *ingando* camps have been socialising Rwandans of different walks of life into defending not only the nation but the policies of the government.

With regard to the nature and structure of the state, the military ethos promotes a strict hierarchy and expectations of selfless dedication to a higher ideal, with people asked to contribute in multiple ways to its accomplishment. The *imihigo* contract system exemplifies the ways in which individuals and households are incorporated into the state, performing on its behalf. They are meant to be the soldiers of development, blurring the lines between 'state' and 'society'. As Purdeková said, the government harnesses the society as one does a guerrilla army; it is the dominant style of governance and political culture since the genocide and the RPF coming to power.⁸⁰ What we witness in Rwanda are the twin dynamics of a 'People's Army'⁸¹ whereby the army self-projects as an institution requiring presence and involvement in development at the most local level, and perhaps more importantly for the purposes here, of a 'People's Army' as the official cultivation of a 'development corps'⁸² among the wider citizenry shaped by the military idiom. As such, the case of Rwanda expands the existing rebel-to-ruler literature to encompass a broader perspective whereby the legacy of the armed struggle and the glorification of the military not only is mirrored in the governance of the state, but in society as a whole.

Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. Höglund, "Violence in War-to-Democracy Transitions"; Lyons, "From Victorious Rebels."
2. Fisher, *Eastern Africa's Second Liberation*; Lyons, "The Importance of Winning"; Lyons "From Victorious Rebels."
3. See Söderberg Kovacs, "When Rebels Change their Stripes"; Wittig, "Politics in the Shadow of the Gun"; Lyons, "Victorious Rebels and Postwar Politics."
4. Exceptions include but are not limited to Lyons, "Victorious Rebels and Postwar Politics"; Lyons, "The Importance of Winning"; Muller, "From Rebel Governance to State Consolidation"; Hensell and Gerdes, "Exit from War."
5. Rusagara, *Resilience*, back cover.
6. Jones "Between Pyongyang and Singapore," 240.
7. Sundberg, *Training*, 66.
8. Verhoeven, "Nurturing Democracy," 267.
9. See Söderberg Kovacs, "When Rebels Change their Stripes."
10. See Sindre and Söderström, "Understanding Armed Groups."
11. Fisher, *Eastern Africa's Second Liberation*.
12. Ibid.
13. Höglund, "Violence in War-to-Democracy Transitions."
14. Lyons, "Victorious Rebels and Postwar Politics."
15. Fisher, *Eastern Africa's Second Liberation*.

16. Wittig, "Politics in the Shadow of the Gun," 141.
17. Fisher, *Eastern Africa's Second Liberation*.
18. Wittig, "Politics in the Shadow of the Gun," 142.
19. Söderberg Kovacs, "When Rebels Change their Stripes."
20. Rusagara, *Resilience*, xix.
21. This presentation can be found in many official statements and documents, see Republic of Rwanda, Office of the President, *The Unity of Rwandans*; Republic of Rwanda, Office of the President of the Republic, *Report on the Reflection Meetings*; Republic of Rwanda, National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, *The Rwandan Conflict*; Courses taught in *ingando* reproduced in Penal Reform International, *From Camp to Hill*, 83–112. For a summary of the government's reading of history, see Buckley-Zistel, "Nation, Narration, Unification?" 33–38.
22. Rusagara, *Resilience*, xiv.
23. *Ibid.*, 1.
24. *Ibid.*, 208.
25. Vansina, *Antecedents*, 196.
26. Chrétien, *The Great Lakes*, 160–161.
27. Vansina, *Antecedents*, 61–62.
28. *Ibid.*, 78.
29. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire*, passim.
30. Vansina, *Antecedents*, 75.
31. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'histoire*, 13–128.
32. Vansina, *Antecedents*, 182–184.
33. Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 13.
34. *Ibid.*, 22.
35. *Military Balance*, 464.
36. *Ibid.*, 481–492.
37. UN, "Financing Peacekeeping"
38. Beswick, "Peacekeeping, Regime Security," 743; Wilén, "A Hybrid Peace," 1331.
39. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, chapter 7.
40. UN, "Financing Peacekeeping"; Wilén and Birantamije, "L'engagement du Burundi et du Rwanda," 36.
41. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 232.
42. James Kabarebe cited in Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 231.
43. Beswick and Jowell, "Contributor Profile: Rwanda."
44. Wilén and Birantamije, "L'engagement du Burundi et Rwanda"; Beswick and Jowell, "Contributor Profile: Rwanda."
45. Stearns et al. "The National Army."
46. Jowell, "Cohesion through Socialisation," 285.
47. Chemouni, "Paying Your Soldiers."
48. Behuria, "Centralising Rents and Dispersing Power."
49. Chemouni, "Paying Your Soldiers."
50. Behuria, "Centralising Rents and Dispersing Power," 9.
51. Jowell, "Cohesion through Socialisation," 285.
52. Behuria, "Centralising Rents and Dispersing Power," 8.
53. Presidential Order, n°05/2012/OL, Chapter III. Art.44.
54. Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, "Developmental Patrimonialism?" 400.
55. Behuria, "Centralising Rents and Dispersing Power," 7.
56. *Ibid.*, 8.
57. Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, "Developmental Patrimonialism?" 401.
58. *Ibid.*, 392.
59. Behuria, "Centralising Rents and Dispersing Power," 3.
60. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 161.
61. Wilén, "A Hybrid Peace," 1330.
62. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 161.

63. Holmes, "Gendering the Rwanda Defence Force," 326.
64. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 167.
65. Ibid.
66. Mgbako, "Ingando Solidarity Camps"; Thomson, "Reeducation for Reconciliation."
67. Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*; Sundberg, *Training for Model Citizenship*.
68. Interview in Kigali, 14 January 2009.
69. See Sundberg, *Training for Model Citizenship*.
70. Ibid., 95.
71. Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*.
72. Sidiropoulos, "Democratisation."
73. Guichaoua, *Rwanda. De la guerre au génocide*, 135.
74. Dorsey, "Violence and Power-Building."
75. Jones, "Between Pyongyang and Singapore," 235. By 2000, Kagame was the only 'survivor' of the cabinet put in place in 1994.
76. Verhoeven, "Nurturing Democracy," 271.
77. Dorsey, "Violence and Power-Building," 314.
78. Verhoeven, "Nurturing Democracy," 273.
79. Jones, "Between Pyongyang and Singapore," 236.
80. Purdeková, "Civic Education and Social Transformation," 194.
81. Kühnel-Larsen, *Peace by Peace*, 152.
82. Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*, 225.

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