NOTE TO THE READER: Paper for ‘Understanding Post-Conflict Institutional Reform: Institutional Interactions on the Local, National, and International Level’, ECPR Graduate Student Conference 2014, 3 - 5 July 2014, University of Innsbruck. The paper forms part of my PhD thesis which investigates the answers to two research questions:

1. What is the role of peacekeeping in building Rwandan national identity?

2. How is peacekeeping constituted by Rwandan soldiers?

State formation through a military construction of Rwandaness.

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State formation through a military construction of Rwandaness.

Post-1994, the Rwandan military went through a process of de-ethnicitisation, institutionalising reforms with the intent of moving soldiers from focussing on Hutu and Tutsi ‘ethnic’ identities to possessing a national Rwandan identity in an effort to build the Rwandan state. The Rwandan national military has emerged as a leading player in the effort to rebuild and reconstruct post-1994 Rwanda. The military has constructed itself as an ideal for what it means to be Rwandan. Through re-socialisation in the military institution, through re-education of the general population and through the image of heroes the military has been a key institution in (re)building Rwanda.

This paper will examine the domestic dynamics of state formation and the role that the military has played in this. The focus will be on the military’s role in peacebuilding in Rwanda in terms of identity formation and re-construction. I will argue that the idea of the military as a school of the nation was adopted by the Rwandan government as a tool for creating security and overcoming a history of conflict.

The foundation for the paper builds upon fieldwork undertaken in Rwanda in 2012. I spend 6 months undertaking interviews, questionnaires and observation with the Rwandan Defence Forces as well as the political leadership in Rwanda.

Civil-military relations impact upon citizen identities and upon levels of security. The relationship between the civilian elites and the military are formed by politics. Civil-military relations in countries that have experienced ethnic or sectarian conflict, are particularly fragile and the way in which the military is utilised in politics influence prospects of peace building and the likelihood of conflict reoccurring. The literature suggests that post-conflict institutions should accept divisions and build a balance of power between them into state institutions through for instance multiculturalism or affirmative action. Many post-conflict societies have adopted ethnic integration in the armed forces as a way to create an inclusive national identity in nation building efforts. Examples of this include Lebanon, whose political divisions were married to sectarian divisions after its independence. However the variations of the link between national policies and ethnic integration varies – South Africa adopted ethnic integration during a the racially sectarian state
policy of apartheid; and Singapore who adopted an inclusive policy of multiculturalism excluded Malay soldiers post 1965 (Peled 1998: 5).

The case of Rwanda presents a different solution to dealing with ethnicity and the armed forces in a post-conflict environment. After the civil war and the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan state had to find a way to encompass the two ethnic parties that had previously been in continuous conflict (as well as the Twa whom had largely remained out of the conflict). The Rwandan elites institutionalised reforms with the intent of moving citizens from focussing on Hutu and Tutsi (and Twa) ethnic identities to possessing one national Rwandan identity. The military (and other state institutions) is utilised to eradicate traditional distinctions that have been made highly salient by recent conflict and erect a new identity. Reforms towards de-ethnicisation will be shown to have been adopted with the purpose of developing an overarching national identity.

The following section will investigate the empirical impact of these policy changes after 1994. I will outline the de-ethnic reform that took place in Rwanda and show how the reform served the elite project of building a Rwandan national identity. I argue that military reform took place in Rwanda because it was in the interest of the new administration that had assumed power following the defeat of the previous government. The Rwandan strategy was based on the belief that ethnic identity could be reduced (based on the constructivist position), and utilised to maintain power and keep security. I will illustrate how reform took place in Rwanda, and the ways in which the political salience of ethnicity was reduced through the military; a military that was positioned to foster a common Rwandan national identity in a process to de-ethnicise society. Positioning the military as a main implementing actor of the de-ethnicisation policy and as an actor in creating national reconciliation is a strategy that is concurrent with international theories of the military as a nation builder.

During the colonial period and in post-independence, the government and the military in Rwanda had been largely mono-ethnic. The RPF government, in an effort to redefine and re-categorise Rwandan social relations to prevent further violence from reoccurring and to maintain political control, needed to create a new Rwandan national identity. Fearing that maintaining ethnic categories could lead to future conflict and pose a threat to their newfound power position, de-ethnicitisation was perceived as the best way to re-align identity and create and maintain peace in
Rwanda. De-ethnicisation should enable people to identify ‘by nationality and not by ethnicity’ (Hodgkin & Montefiore 2005: 6). The preamble of the 2003 Rwandan Constitution clearly resolves to ‘fight the ideology of genocide and all its manifestations and to eradicate ethnic, regional and any other form of divisions’. Several laws have been passed to punish ‘genocide ideology’ and ‘sectarianism’, which would challenge the common ‘national consciousness’. As such de-ethnicisation was an institutionalised state project.

**Building a Rwandan national identity through the military institution**

The military in Rwanda was positioned as one of the main implementers of the policy reform from ethnicity to de-ethnicisation. The theory is that multi-ethnic forces can be an integrative factor and as such contribute to longer-term de-ethnicisation by constructing and consolidating a common national identity. This model has been seen elsewhere in the world (for instance Nigeria, Lebanon, and Bosnia) (see e.g. Ellinwood & Enloe 1979; Johnson 1962). But fear that violence may break out within the military among former enemy fighters has caused some governments to apply alternative policies to create reconciliation (Gaub 2011: 133-134). The strategy of linking the military

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1 In 2001 the ‘Law Instituting Punishment for Offences of Discrimination and Sectarianism’ was passed (Law N47/2001). Sectarianism is defined as ‘use of any speech, written statement or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising which might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination’ (Article 2, Law N°18). The law prohibiting genocide ideology was passed in 2008 (RoR 2008). Genocide ideology is defined as an ‘aggregate of thoughts characterized by conduct, speeches, documents and other acts aiming at exterminating or inciting others to exterminate people basing on ethnic group, origin, nationality, region, colour, physical appearance, sex, language, religion or political opinion’ (Article 2, Law N°18). April is the month of genocide commemoration, and arrests are particularly high in this month, an example from 2012 was the arrest of a 22 year old who said to a genocide survivor “Bazakomeza Babice” (You (Tutsi) will continue to be killed) (Igihe, 11 April 2012). The genocide narrative, which is ever evident in Rwandan consciousness emphasises ethnicity, and as such is at odds with the eradication of ethnicity utilised as a tool in reconciliation efforts. For instance, initially the term “genocide” was used to refer to the 1994 atrocities, however in the 2003 constitution the term “genocide” was replaced with “genocide against the Tutsi” (RoR 2003a arts 51 and 179). This amendment seems peculiar because it is a well-known fact that also moderate Hutu were killed. In addition, as argued by Mamdani (2001), a new system of Rwandan identities has emerged, anchored in the genocide experience: victims, perpetrators, survivors, returnees, and refugees. Buckley-Zistel (2006b:101) adds bystander, absentee to these. The returnees in particular have refigured Rwanda identity (Bergman 2004:4).
institution to integration and the construction of a common national consciousness is consistent the model of the military as a nation builder. The idea of the military institution as a school of the nation is widely recognised as an international model. The military is considered an ideal institution for creating in individuals a sense of national belonging because the institution is ‘built as a group endeavour that seeks unity, its functioning, purpose and effectiveness depend on collectivism rather than individualism’ (Gaub 2011: 9). Krebs (2004) points out that it has been commonplace for governments to utilise militaries as an instrument of socialisation in seeking to ‘indoctrinate the populace’ into a national consciousness and Rwandan government approach to building a Rwandan national identity is consistent with this model.

As the history of Rwanda has shown, the characteristics taken to define ethnicity are not stable in any particular context. Based on the constructivist position, nationalism was utilised as an ‘integrative ideology’ (Gaub 2011: 16) with a policy focus on the idea that if ethnic differences could be constructed and learned, the concept of ethnicity can also be deconstructed and de-learned. The government narrative that conflict in Rwanda was largely spurred by conditions created by the colonialists and that in pre-colonial Rwanda harmony and solidarity had been dominating characteristics of the country is used in forming a new national identity. The emphasis on commonality, unity and harmony in pre-colonial times, and focus on common descent informed the RPA re-education programmes. Article 8 of the preamble to the 2003 Rwandan Constitution, states that it is ‘necessary to draw from our centuries old history the positive values which characterized our ancestors that must be the basis for the existence and flourishing of our Nation’.

A main strategy in the Rwandan administration in the process of achieving peace have been to create contact between different agents in society; between former enemies, both in and outside the military institution, between former separate ‘ethnic’ groups, and between the civil society and the military. The underlying aim is to create and maintain peace by rebuilding damaged relationships between the agents in society. The re-learning and disremembering of ethnicity as a way of integration and consolidation takes place through pre-colonial institutions, including the ‘solidarity camps’ of Ingando and Itorero². The institutions are built upon pre-colonial military traditions of gathering either in the military before a mission for a brief (Rusagara, 2011), or by community seniors to discuss political/social matters (Mgbako 2005). Itorero combines elements of the military

² The programmes are run by National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
with civilian components. Participants include students, teachers, different levels of local leaders, ex-prisoners, as well as ex-combatants and ex-soldiers. The period spent at the camp range from 2 weeks to several months. Participants undergo aspects of military training (physical fitness, light-weapons training and disciplining exercises) however the main focus is on instruction in civic education including lessons on Rwandan history, government programs and policies, political and socioeconomic issues in Rwanda and Africa; and the rights, obligations and duties of Rwandan citizens. In addition, participants are taught the government narrative on the causes of the conflicts in Rwanda and how the colonial powers fabricated ethnicity as a tool for power and control. Purdekova argues that the main aim of the programs ‘is the catalysis of desired change and the defence of the politics of the state’ (2012: 195). Arguably, the programs seek to construct politically accepted recollections of the past and memories that serve specific agendas within society. One could thus perceive the camps as re-educating the Rwandan population into an agreed official narrative of the past and present.

In a post-conflict society like Rwanda relationships of trust and distrust are created and negotiated with reference to security and memories of violence and conflict. The purpose the programme is therefore to (re)build social trust. As argued by Emmel et. al. ‘Building trust is anticipatory. Trust is developed in situations where we trust that individuals or institutions will commit actions that will be favourable to our needs and interests’ (2007). The nature of civil war and genocide experienced in Rwanda fosters an environment of distrust. Violence has reoccurred several times, and people face an environment whereby it is perceived that violence may break out again. I will argue that security perception is created on imagined potentialities based on a history of violence and that building trust in institutions and amongst population groups is the key to successful peacebuilding. The main objective of the camps is to build social trust and reconciliation. The main tool utilised to achieve trust and reconciliation is to cultivate a new social imagination of national identity and memories of the past. The objective is echoed by military historian and lecturer at Itorero, Gerard who maintains that the aim of the programmes is to ‘deal with genocide issues and seek reconciliation…forget individual grievances and overcome fear, and go (into war or back to society) as Rwandans’ (Interview 29.04.12).

Arguably, trust is created when actors are able to foresee the impact of relationships. Trust is a main part of reconciliation and consequently to restore and maintain peace. In order to be able to predict
how actors will react, parties to the conflict needs to understand the previous actions of actors. Frank Rusagara, Military attaché to the embassy in London and Rwandan military historian argues that, through Itorero and Ingando, reconciliation is achieved by allowing participants to ‘talk about the conflict and its history. What the parties feel about the conflict and about each other is an important barrier that must first be removed. When the parties are not able to first talk about the conflict and their feelings about it, they will never be able to talk about mutual solutions and the future’ (2011). These programmes provide a space for talking about memories of conflict, assumptions of the other parties, and through dialogue encourage predictability and transparency. Mainly, the programmes install in its participants the memory of pre-colonial equality. Participants are encouraged to (re)learn history and reconstruct their recollections of the past. This chimes with the analysis of an instructor who explained that ‘Itorero unites Rwandans and form unity like it was before genocide and before colonialism... it is a traditional form of education that install values of friendship…’ it is a way to ‘change people’s minds; a way to install values and patriotism’ (01.05.12 interview at Itorero).

One of the consequences of the killings and destruction carried out by the military during the Rwandan genocide is that parts of the civilian population live in fear and deep distrust of the military. An instructor at Intorero exemplified this tendency: ‘during the genocide, and before, people would fear the military. A soldier had so much control, they could instruct a civilian to kill because of the fear’. The soldier had profligate power over the civilian to make the person obey any order, even the killing of fellow citizens. Fear of the soldier and the military institution is believed to be counter to the state project of creating a Rwandan national identity and maintaining peace. Therefore, the military component of Itorero and Ingando is utilised, amongst others, as a strategy to build trust and eradicate fear in the military profession. By familiarising the civilian participants with the military uniform and elements of the military way of life civilians’ perceptions of the military institution is reconstructed: ‘we are getting the civilians used to the uniform, to show them that it is nothing…we are creating a close relationship between the army and the civilians, before the gap was too big. We remove the fear and narrow the gap’ (Instructor 1 at Itorero). All participants wear a military uniform. The discourse of unity is inseparable from the destruction of ‘division.’ The uniform helps to present an image – it is an indicator of uniformity and an eradicator of division. ‘Putting on a uniform means that they are one’ (Instructor 2 at Itorero). The demystification of the military profession is hoped to create a common understanding, and
eliminate fear and cleavages that previously was dominating in Rwanda, and which still persist in the society.

A main strategy to build a Rwandan national identity and to construct peace has been for the Rwandan military to ‘win over the hearts and minds’ of their own citizens. David Kilcullen senior adviser to General Petraeus, defines the ‘winning over hearts and minds’ aspect of United States of America’s counterinsurgency policy as follows: “Hearts” means persuading people their best interests are served by your success; “minds” means convincing them that you can protect them and that resisting you is pointless. Note that neither concept has to do with whether people like you. Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts’ (2006, 105). The Rwandan government had to find a solution to the prevalent post-conflict distrust and fear. They installed the military to create trust in the local population and the assurance that the citizen’s interests would be served. The main tool employed in this endeavour was the creation of a narrative of the ‘Peoples Army’.

The Rwandan military term themselves as a ‘People’s Army’. The Peoples Army narrative, and the imagination of the national military are socially created to construct a collective national identity. Chief of the Army, Frank Kamanzi characterises the way that the Military uses this strategic tool:

…what makes us the RDF is that we are a Peoples Force, a Peoples Army…even when you look at our deployment, or the way we do business every day, we work with the people, we are deployed in the villages, so that makes the whole difference. The RDF is not a force that is there just to work, but to work for the people, that informs the basis of everything we do…(Interview 21.08.12, Kigali, Rwanda)

The Rwandan military has played significant state-building roles in various sectors of Rwanda’s socioeconomic development and modernisation. The military is the institution, perceived by the soldiers, as in charge of building and shaping the country after the civil war and the genocide. The military is perceived as the institution for development. Rebuilding the country and ensuring internal security has been a main task for the RDF.

The universally prescribed principal role for military institutions is external defence, yet this role can be surpassed by other, more ambiguous tasks. In Rwanda the military has adopted a national-
representative role, and thus moved beyond the traditional tasks of self-defence and protection of the nation. The RDF entails a marked ideological element that regards soldiers as the promoters of national identity whereby they undertake tasks traditionally thought of as policing and civilian tasks, namely internal security and internal development. In addition to providing a model of national unity and integration the RDF also participate in internal socio-economic development. Article 173 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003 entitled the RDF ‘to contribute to the development of the country’ and ‘to participate in international peacekeeping missions, humanitarian assistance and training’.

The officers interviewed considered the internal development activities that they carry out as a main apparatus in building trust and combatting fear in the civilian population. In the aftermath of sustained violence the military has needed to change its image in society in order to create trust and understanding between former enemies and victims. As one officer explained ‘the military was part and parcel of starting the genocide. From that bad history, we had to play a big role in developing our country. The development of our country is a major part of the military’ (R21). Changing the perception of the military is an essential part in the process of building a lasting peace. Military historian Gerard characterises the post-conflict problem of eradicating fear in the military institution and (re)-establishing national common feelings: ‘the gap between the military and the civilians needs to be closed. We have to have a common understanding and feeling of community. The military is part of the community; that creates a close bond and make the military work better for the country, we work for one vision; a common vision’. It was the understanding of the officers interviewed that their participation in community activities create a common national culture which the military is part and parcel of, and breaks down the perception amongst the civilian population that the military is a threat to their safety, but rather safeguards their safety. The goal is that the narrative of the military as a Peoples Army will aid in the national transcendence of a violence history.

The RDF’s contribution to the development of Rwanda takes, amongst others, the form of participation in community work sessions (Umuganda). Umuganda\(^3\) was established during Habyarimana’s rule in 1974 (Mamdani 2001: 146; Uvin 1998:131; Schaefer 2001; Verwimp 2003;  

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\(^3\) The killings during the genocide were termed as a duty as part of ‘a special *umuganda’* (Des Forges 1999; Verwimp and Cook 2004).
Verwimp and Cook 2004). The policy of Umuganda builds upon the pre-colonial policy of Uburetwa. However rather than being a labour contract to the “chief”, Umuganda is a service to the state which aims to rebuild and develop the country and boost the economy, in addition to installing nationalism and unity. Umuganda entails various activities needed by the local community including cleaning the streets, constructing houses for vulnerable people, building bridges, constructing schools and hospitals. Umuganda is obligatory unpaid labour that requires universal participation, including the president. It takes place usually on the last Saturday of every month with additional sessions if needed (for instance in the rainy season to clean up mudslides). Authorities report and fine individuals 5,000 RWF if they do not attend, and their social reputation and standing in the local community can be tarnished. In addition to undertaking Umuganda, a major component of the political strategy of building the country is “Army Week”. During Army Week, the Rwandan military, using soldiers from the RDF’s regiment of medics, deliver medical treatment including dental care to civilians.

Creating community togetherness and national identity is an essential part of Umuganda. In addition to developmental activities, Umuganda provides a space and forum for communication and the nurturing of mutual understanding and trust. Umuganda draws upon pre-colonial traditions and norms of how Rwandans should interact in order to resolve conflict and create peace. Citizens discuss issues of national and local importance. The fostering of dialogue between the national military and the civilians is believed to aid in building a national identity. One officer explained: ‘the respect between the civilians and the army is like a responsibility because this is something essential that can give us peace and for a soldier to respect the civilian and vice versa is important in building the unity and togetherness… Them fearing you to the extent of not talking or not enjoying together, that is out’ (R12). Officers interviewed mentioned that working together with the civilians in development tasks erased fear. Through socialisation the military became de-formalised and familiar. Familiarisation increased community feelings and aided in building a national consciousness. One of the offices illustrated that contact eliminate fear and constructs feelings of togetherness ‘For us as RDF soldiers we go close to the civilians so much so that they don’t fear us

4 Umuganda is constructed around the philosophy of social solidarity and communal responsibility. It is related to other African thoughts such as the South African concept of ubuntu. Ubuntu is connected to the Nguni proverb ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ which is commonly translated as ‘a person is a person through other persons’ (Gade 2012: 487).
so we feel we are the same’ (R48). In addition to providing state services to communities and developing the country, it seems that trust in the state and in the military institution is build through social policy initiatives such as Umuganda. As a civilian told me ‘we used to be afraid of soldiers, we would run when we saw them and hide, but now with the activities they do, like army week, we like them, they help us’. Garnering greater trust by attending to needs of population is a strategic strategy to build a Rwandan national identity. Minister of Defence James Kabarebe further explains this policy ‘involving the military in the development of the society and engaging with the local community creates a common understanding, and eliminates fear, and cleavages that previously was dominating in Rwanda, and which still persist in the society’. The disremembering of ethnicity and the learning of new national Rwandan identity is constituted through social development.

In Rwanda there is an institutionalised presence of military in civilian sphere. The relationship between the civilian authority and the military is presented as a partnership in national development and internal and external security. As a post-conflict society, the remnants of wartime military violence is transformed through military support to these political and economic transition processes. Chief of the Army, Frank Kamanzi chimes this analysis when he explains that that military and the civilian population in Rwanda ‘are one’. He argues that:

In addition to securing our borders, to international engagements, what we do in peacekeeping; we also need to help and be part of national development. National development is an endeavour that involves the government but principally the population. And for you to achieve that, you need to understand what the population wants or needs. And for you to do that you need to be part of that population, you understand what the issues are and the problems and to define them and then help finding the solutions. That is different from a force that is in the barracks somewhere with polished clean shoes. When you are called upon to do something, for us it is part of our thinking and our business although it is not traditionally our job, but it stems from our history as a force.

Kamanzi maintains that the position of the post-conflict military in Rwandan should be amongst the population. The transition of wartime security systems, in this approach, starts with rebuilding the population. In this way a new national identity is created as a system that ensures security.
The model in Rwanda of involving the military in political, economic development and in internal security matters, is contradictory to civil-military theory that holds that military involvement in internal affairs is threaten to democratic consolidation. The challenge is to reconcile a military strong enough to do anything civilians ask them to, with a military subordinate enough to do only what civilians authorise them to. Nonetheless, in Rwanda the military has been tasked with non-traditional military roles as a way to cope with internal development and security and achieve post-conflict reconciliation. The continued commitment to, and involvement in, tasks not traditionally thought of as military is seen as an essential part of the national strategy to build a Rwandan national identity. As such, security threats encompass socio-economic and political issues.

The military institution socialises and moulds the individual into a soldier. The transformation from civilian into a military person means a transition from civilian life. Nonetheless, in order to create a safe environment for comprehensive post-conflict reconciliation and progress, the line between civilian and soldier in Rwanda is constructed as blurred. This is an intentional strategy and part of the People Army narrative. The military personnel cooperate intensively with the civilian actors in Rwanda in the development of society, in addition to its traditional roles as managers of violence. Rwandan military historian (Gerard) exemplifies this trend:

The RDF is not a conventional military, even the way it was born; it is a revolutionary army. We are a people’s army. Other militaries also work in the interest of the people but they are not a people’s army. We don’t live in military camps, we would rather live with the people otherwise how could you protect them. We need to know the interests and problems of the population. It is colonial to live in barracks; those people are the government or presidents army, we are the people’s army not the leadership army (interview on evening patrol).

Being a People’s Army is emphasised in policy as well as in culture. The officers interviewed emphasised their origins as civilians, and that being a soldier was, for the most parts, a state that they undergo until they again return to civilian life. The identity as soldier was therefore not viewed as constant but something that they would transcend. This account of the soldier aided an equal and linear relationship with civilians. Major General Jack Musemakweri in charge of Civil Military Corporation terms this a main RDF philosophy. He argues that ‘before coming to the military we
were civilians and we work closely with the civilians and when we retire we go back to civilians, so it’s just our philosophy and our population perception towards RDF is always positive’. The narrative of the People’s Army is used to (re)build relationships with civilians and helps solve issues of fear and distrust. Through this narrative focus is on national harmony between the military and the civilians. One officer maintained that ‘the RDF is a military family that has its roots in the civilian population. When we are putting on our uniforms we are doing our work but that doesn’t mean that we can’t be approached by the civilians when they have problems that they want us to solve for them. And when we take off our uniforms we socialise with them’ (R27). The strategy of involving the military institution in internal development is a strategy to achieve long-term peace in addition to development. It is a strategy to achieve reconciliation, and create a common national identity. Major General Jack Musemakweri posits that ‘the civil military activities have transformed not only the country but also the thinking of our people’. The strategy seeks to change minds as well as changing the socioeconomic landscape of Rwanda.

It is considered essential to rebuild relations and create contact at the inter-personal level, in addition to at the political elite level. The leaders in Rwanda post-1994 has used closeness to build trust and commitment and to overcome a disconnect. Being close to the people also enables them to better control perceptions. One officer explained the impact of President Paul Kagame being close to the military personnel: ‘In the past we used to have leaders who were not close to their subordinates but for him he is a good leader, he is always near his subordinates, he solves their problems and advises them’ (R24). Within the military the closeness between the different levels of the organisation is emphasised as essential in peacebuilding. It was the perception of the officers interviewed that closeness builds community and strengthens affiliation and feelings of belonging. Many of the officers interviewed mentioned that their leaders had inspired them to build up a strong and personal bond with their subordinates. One officer explained: ‘just like Fred Rwigema I have to love my subordinates and I have to be close to them just like he used to be. He loved the soldiers and he used to be close to them and that is why I myself I have to do that (R46). Another officer talking about Paul Kagame said that:

what we learned from him is that he used to be closer to the soldiers he was leading, he would advise them and also increase their morale…You increase their morale when you do the work together and you explain to them the objective and show them
what you have to achieve so that you can change what is taking place and also solve the problems that you are having on those operations that you are doing’ (R47).

The military institution creates integration through continued and close contact. This aids in building a new Rwandan national identity.

**Contact in the military institution create peace**

The essential emphasis is on commonality rather than individuality based on the military thinking that ‘armed forces are able to sustain themselves only as long as individual members commit themselves to collective goals’ (Gaub 2011: 11). Several studies, including Janowitz and Shills (1948) has illustrated that when comradeship, in terms of in-group trust and solidarity is high soldiers will be more likely to continue fighting, than if the group is dominated by dis-trust and division. In the military institution strong bonds are built with other individuals undertaking training, or who are carrying out the same mission.

Intergroup Contact Theory (developed by Allport 1954) holds that intense contact and interaction between individuals who have been in conflict with one another will improve relations by decreasing prejudice and discrimination. Allport (1954) specified four conditions under which contact may erase division; equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support. The assumption is that prejudice is based on lacking information about the ‘other’, and that intergroup contact will enable a reconceptualization of group categories because individuals gain a more wholesome picture of each other (Allport 1954). Thus, ‘marked by distrust and the experience of neighbourly violence, what post-conflict societies need, aside from security and stabilisation, is the reestablishment of social bonds – i.e. integration’ (Gaub 2011: 3).

In the military strong bonds are built with other individuals undertaking training and conditioning. Arguably, the civilian family is largely replaced by this new group of people whom are undergoing the same identity transformation process and thus have a shared understanding of ‘military’ life (Goffman 1961). The military institution creates integration through continued and close contact between different actors. As Rusagara points out, the Rwandan national policy of unity ‘had to begin with integration, first within the military and then within the wider society’ (2009: 191). In
the military, as well as in Itorero and in Ingando contact is strong because individuals spend prolonged amount of time together. As an instructor at Itorero said: ‘they will be together, Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, they eat and sleep together, everything’ (Interview 01.05.12).

Throughout Rwanda’s history the military has largely been mono-ethnic. A military that does not reflect the social composition of the wider society is likely to be distrusted or feared by the groups not represented (Adekanye 1996: 37-68). The military in Rwanda has undergone two main processes that resulted in making the institution both increasingly multi-ethnic, and enabled the institution to stand as a symbol of de-ethnicisation. Firstly, in line with the 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement, which provided for integration of the RPA into FAR, ex- FAR\(^5\) (defeated by the RPA in July 1994) and members of “armed groups” (AGs)\(^6\), began to be integrated into the RPA. According to the Arusha Accords the RPF was to be fused with the national military, once a ‘Broad Based Transitional Government’ had been installed. This integration of the two armed forces would create one new national army; totalling 19,000 soldiers and 6,000 police. RPA and FAR were to evenly divide command posts between them and the RPA were to make up 40 per cent of the soldiers (Protocol on Integration of Armed Forces, art. 74). Building upon this peace agreement, the post 1994 Rwandan state integrated 49.700 ex-FAR and militia into the RPA between 1995 and 2002 (Rusagara 2011), of these Waldorf estimates that 15.000 ex-FAR were integrated between 1995 and 2001 (Waldorf, 2009: 19), and the process is continuous.

In order for the integration to be successful both armed forces would have to demobilise a significant number of their soldiers. Waldorf mentions that at the time that the accord was signed ‘the FAR (30,000 soldiers) and the RPF (20,000 fighters) would each have to demobilise half their forces’ (2009: p6). Following the victory in the civil war, the military underwent two phases of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) (phase one 1997-2001; phase two 2001-2008). It is essential to note that the strength of both the RPA and FAR are disputed. Prunier for

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\(^5\) According to Demobilization and Reintegration Commission FAR was the national military until April 6, 1994. After this date, which marked the beginning of the genocide, fighters were considered militia rather than career soldiers (Ministerial Order No. 066 of 13 September 2002, “Determining the Eligibility Criteria for Demobilisation of Members of Ex-Armed Groups” and Annex, published in the Official Gazette on September 23, 2002, 25–27).

\(^6\) Armed groups is used as a concept to include all ‘organised’ groups ‘that engaged in military fighting against Rwanda Defence forces either on the territory of Rwanda or that of the Democratic Republic of Congo’ (Ministerial Order No. 066, art. One)
instance points out that RPA numbered approximately 12,000 (almost half of what Waldorf note, and Prunier estimates the FAR to have had 50,000 men when the genocide started in April 1994 (Prunier, 1995: 132). Regardless of the true number the strength of the Rwandan military in terms of staff and budget seem to have been decreased due to DDR (Waldorf 2009: 19).

Demobilisation and integration were important mechanisms in the de-ethnicisation of the Rwandan military. The integration of ex-Far and AG’s who predominantly were considered Hutu changed the ‘ethnic’ makeup of the military and moved the image from being a Tutsi dominated military building upon the liberation movement, towards a new united national military composed of all sections of society. Indeed, Article 3 of Law No 19 provides that the Rwandan military is ‘open to any voluntary Rwandan citizen, who meets conditions determined by Specific statutes governing Rwanda Defence Forces, without any discrimination’.

To reflect the transformation that the national military had gone through, in 2002 (Law No 19) the RPA was renamed the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF). It is important to note that the process of transforming the military into the RDF was one of integration, meaning the process of complete absorption, through policies and programs of ‘forced’ integration, of groups into the RPA. The end state, the creation of a national army is based on the idea of fully absorbing the various groups into the norms and values of the state. Arguably, it is therefore a process of becoming similar to the ruling party/state culture. Consequently, integration in this sense does not allow for institutional change that would accommodate structural needs of (ethnic) differences.

That said, the integration of ‘others’ inevitably impact upon the dominant culture. Several of the officers interviewed chimed this transformation of formalised identity. One officer concluded ‘we were no longer RPA when we became the government because there was integration of other forces like FAR, and when those who were in FAR joined us it became necessary to be a national army’ (R47). Politically the integration effort, and the ‘inclusive culture’ in the military, is seen as a continuation of the RPF strategy for creating a Rwanda inclusive of all parts of society. Many of the members of RPF/A had previously been excluded from the Rwandan society, and they wanted to live as an integrated part of the nation state, not as an addition to, or alongside the previous habitants of Rwanda. Rwandan military historian (Gerard) explain that ‘the RPF/A ideology…has
always been inclusive rather than divisive like MRND or its predecessor Parmehutu, both of which were exclusive in practice (ethnic quotas, IDs, etc.). For example number one in RPF political program is unity’. The military in Rwanda has consequently been positioned as a forging house for creating a national identity. Its role is to act as an integrator in a dis-fractured society.

**Joint deployment: A Tool for Reconsolidation**

The Rwandan military faced a security threat from displaced Rwandans in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The security threat faced by Rwanda, from the former genocidal government that sat up a de facto ‘government-in-exile’ in eastern Zaire (now DRC), the extremist Hutu militia (Interahamwe) and defeated army, meant that the Rwandan military on their deployment to DRC were fighting Rwandans, many of whom had been implicated in the genocide. The deployment of the Rwandan military to Zaire is termed amongst people interviewed as a ‘joint deployment’ of the RPA and integrated elements. The term ‘joint’ posits that separation between the two groups is still evident and that the military at the time was not seen as homogenous. Indeed, the ‘joint deployment’ was frequently mentioned as a tool to create togetherness in the military. It was a method used to unite the forces and to show that all Rwandans had a role to play in the military.

Frank Rusagara, Military attaché to the embassy in London and Rwandan military historian points out that the joint deployment ‘facilitate bonding between the troops through demystification of any differences and misperceptions they may harbour about each other’ (2011). The soldiers’ fight side by side, on the same terms, the same conditions and with a common goal supported by the government authority, thus fulfilling all four of Allport’s theoretical conditions for erasing division. Greater security is inextricably associated with the prospects for Rwanda’s reconciliation of the various groups of society. Interview participants talked about how contact between these various groups of society on the mission to DRC had contributed to reducing prejudice and conflict by improving social relations:

there was limited time to mediate the conflict between the two parties so the politicisation was on the battlefield. Hutu and Tutsi identities does not exist and prevail on the front line, you share with the man next to you and you protect each other. Also, the guys were now Rwandan; they were fighting for the Rwandan cause deep in Congo. Initially many perceived the Hutu fighting for Rwanda as mercenaries
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fighting for the Tutsi, but we have transcended that. The cohesion and the nation of Rwanda was born on the frontline (Frank Rusagara, interview 10.07.12).

It was evident from interviews that ‘ethnic’ divisions may somehow still be present in the barracks but when the officers expressed that when they are on missions, be it Congo or Darfur, they are transformed into one coherent core. While divisions between groups may exist in Rwanda, mission deployments encourage a more inclusive society. Military deployments assist in creating one common national identity and add to the reconsolidation effort that is still taking place in Rwanda. When the soldiers are on mission they represent Rwanda, not any specific group within the Rwandan society.

Deployment on military missions is therefore additionally utilised as a political tool for reconciliation and for building a new Rwandan national identity. The strategy from the political and military leadership was to create togetherness, commonness and transcend (ethnic) differences through joint deployment. The idea was the through the duration of the deployment the soldiers would increasingly see each other not as representatives of their former ethnic groups, but through familiarisation the individuals would grow together as comrades.

This war in Congo it helped us to form the Rwandan army now, because when we went to war to fight the genocidere – the interhamwe, we were going there as Rwandans; as brothers. Before there were some suspicions but after all they saw that we were treated equally. If he (Hutu) was injured we helped just like any other. We were given the same amount of food. That suspicion against Tutsis became, hmm, this experience in Congo helped us become more Rwandan than before, it was a good experience, even if we are divided in the country now, we are going to another country to fight a common enemy and we live together (interview with Military historian Gerard, RDF headquarters 26 April 2012)

A main task in the post-conflict military is to reinstall and fostering mutual trust amongst former enemies. Trust is high between soldiers who have fought alongside each other and whom have experienced battle together:

In the time of the war people die, others get injured and because of that love and that togetherness we have, when my colleague gets injured and he losses a leg or arm I
carry him…this makes me or my friend happier because of the good heart that is visible, this is why people go on seeing love in each other more than when they first joined and this is visible during the war, It happened to me, as it happened to my colleagues (R18).

The joint deployment to DRC could be seen as a test of the integrated parts loyalty to their new affiliation to the Rwandan military; because they were sent to fight the people whose side they had been fighting on; as such they were fighting their former colleagues. The integrated soldiers from ex-FAR and AG’s had been residing and fighting in DRC. During the two Congo wars, the integrated soldiers were consequently fighting their former colleagues. As one (Tutsi) officer explained ‘the ex-FAR agreed to fight the people they had been with… they had agreed to join the RPA to show that they had not been part of the genocide and to distance themselves from those who had’. When these groups of soldiers were fighting for Rwanda it was a strong illustration of their devotion, allegiance and trustworthiness.

The relationship between RPA soldiers and ex-FAR and AG’s was initially dominated by distrust. These soldiers have been fighting against each other for years in the civil war and have continued to do so in the two Congo wars. In addition to these years of fighting, their forefathers fought each other in the previous violent conflicts in Rwanda. As any other war-affected society, Rwanda, and the relationship between the former enemies was marked by distrust based on their experience of war. Officers who had been in the RPA recall the civil war and their feelings towards the adversary, arguing that the FAR could not be trusted, ‘the Habyarimana forces that we were fighting never followed any laws…when my colleague was shot and Habyarimana forces captured him they would kill him brutally so we would fight so hard so that he would not be captured because they would kill him brutally’ (R18).

Fortifying mutual trust among former enemies has demanded strong leaders and a strong nation-building project so as to avoid further violence. ‘It is our duty to protect Rwandans, you don’t kill Rwandans you integrate them; the ex-FAR and the rebels’ (which interview?). Killing is avoided due to a national duty; building trust is a longer-term project. The relationship between the former enemies at an individual or group level are perpetually negotiated and renegotiated as they comes into contact each other over the course of time.
We were in Congo but unfortunately we could not heal that stupid country but now we are contributing to rebels, who were originally spoilers, now they are on the payroll that is a challenge. That ability to change is within the framework of society; and society starts with the military. We are doing integration (Frank Rusagara, Military attaché to the embassy in London and Rwandan military historian, interview 12.07.12).

The changing image of Rwanda

Because the RPA gained power through military victory, and because it largely consisted of people from exile, part of the population viewed them as a foreign occupying force. The integration of ex-FAR soldiers helped establish the image of the RPA as the national and inclusive military of Rwanda and influence the communities as an example of integration (Cook 2005: 239; Rusagara 2011). ‘The increased incorporation of former FAR into the RPA reduced reprisals and made the army a credible coercive force as it focused on protecting the civilian population and engaging the ex-FAR’ (Cook 2005: 241, 239).

Nonetheless, fear of the government and fear that the military would take revenge for the genocide, consequently distrust in the reconciliation programme in Rwanda, has caused large sections of the displaced population to remain in the DRC. Despite a peace framework in place in Rwanda a significant proportion of armed actors based in DRC has not voluntarily self-demobilised. One reason may be that ‘many senior FDLR fighters profit from the exploitation of valuable mineral reserves in the DRC and face prosecution for their involvement in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, so they are unlikely to disarm through DDR’ (Zena 2013: 2). In addition, the legacy of distrust has dissuaded armed combatants in DRC, associated with groups of the former genocidal government and military, from disarming and repatriating.

Distrust disrupts the potential for cooperation, and is a main disincentive for returning to Rwanda. As one former child soldier, who had returned to Rwanda only months prior to the interview, said ‘they (the FDLR rebels) told me that I would have no life in Rwanda, that my family would not recognise me and that I may even be killed because I was a soldier and an enemy’. Nonetheless,
conditions in the ‘bush’ are often so bad that many do decide to flee and return to Rwanda. The same former child soldier said ‘I am fine now, at first it was hard to come back…I didn’t want to die in the bush, we didn’t have enough food and I was always hungry’ (interview at Goethe institute). Some of the soldiers interviewed mentioned that in the beginning of the reintegration efforts, interpersonal trust amongst the soldiers had been an issue:

When we started we had some problems, what can I say, to combine the ex-military it is not easy. On our side there was no problem, but the problem was on those who had come back because they were thinking of themselves as having committed some crimes, and they thought that something is going to happen to them, but with time they found that there was nothing behind it (R38).

Thus, there may be a link between ex-combatants’ experiences of the reintegration process, and their subsequent degree of trust in the military and in state.

It was a strategic choice to repatriate and reintegrate the displaced population; rebels as well as civilian refugees. The repatriation and reintegration was a method utilised by the military, not only to create internal reconciliation as a conflict preventive mechanism, but it was also a tool for winning the war in DRC. The military in Rwanda was marked by years of fighting in the civil war, but integrating ex-FAR soldiers into the RPA, the military gained strength in numbers and expertise. In addition to reducing prejudice, the integration of different groups in the RDF increased its military strength. Rwandan military historian, Gerard, emphasised the strength in numbers over reconciliation policies pointing out that FAR soldiers had been ‘captured and integrated’ into the RPA ‘to gain military strength; it was a strategy to win the war’.

This strategy had been employed already during the liberation movement where Hutu from inside Rwanda were recruited to the RPA in order to increase numbers of fighters and the military strength. Gerard explained that ‘it is hard to tolerate the one you were fighting against, but that was a strategy to win the war rapidly. As the Tutsi of the diaspora only, liberation would have taken many years. Ours took only four’ (email). Integrating Hutu into the RPA and ex-FAR into the RDF was not only beneficial in terms of numbers but also in terms of gaining invaluable intelligence and
insight into the tactics of the adversary that helped counter the security threat and win the war (Cook 2005: 239; Interviews).

Because the RPA soldiers were returnees to a, for them, essentially foreign country, ‘most discovering it for the first time’ (Reyntjens 2004: 15) in 1994, they had little to no knowledge about Rwanda. The new Rwandan state, and the new military, was lacking information the country they were ruling and protecting. The integrated and demobilised ex-FAR advised the RPF/A on issues related to the development of the country. As one officer explained: ‘we could learn a lot from these soldiers in the beginning. We didn’t know this country the way that they did, so they advised us on many things, for instance what crops to grow where’ (Interview). This was a sentiment shared by the majority of the officers interviewed. Another officer similarly articulates this sentiment:

It was a good opportunity because for them (ex-FAR) they knew much about this country but for us (RFP/A) we were born outside this country. So we learnt a lot from them about this country that we didn’t know in the first place. For us when we were joining the war our main purpose was just to fight and liberate the country but what happens after? After the fighting and liberation of the country, we found that we didn’t know much about this country but for them they had the knowledge about this country and they would advise us to buy a plot of land in this and this area…Otherwise after the liberation of the country because we were still young one would only think about enjoying this newly found freedom and waste your money, but they would advise us about how we could buy plots of land, about building our own house (R52).

Security and insecurity is largely dependent upon trust. Suspicion and fear create conditions ripe for violence. (Re)establishing trust in the state institutions, including the military, is therefore essential for successful peacebuilding. In the military institution cooperation and high levels of interdependence are required. Through a political and institutional commitment to building trust, and thus reconciliation, the military institution was one forum for contact between the various groups. Through contact, information about the ‘other’ was accumulated and animosities were decreased. Trust is an essential part of the peacebuilding process and without trust violence might reoccur. Thus trusting may be a strategic decision, rather than a desired emotion. Talking about the time after 1994, one officer said:
There is a big change. First of all, there are people whom we used to consider as our enemies, the ones we used to fight, but now we are living together and working together. They have been integrated into our force and we are now together so this is a big change. At first it was not easy, there was always suspicions, this was among the lower ranking soldiers. But the people at the strategic level knew that it would be possible; they had planned for it. But for us, one side would always be suspicious of the other. But as time passed and we talked about our cause and they also talked about what had led them to do what they had done, they found out that they had been misled and given a bad ideology by their leaders. And after finding out about our ways, and how we did it and how we want to work with them, they felt happy about it (R52).

As a result of the RPF strategy of social reengineering of identities, and the retelling of history, ex-FAR soldiers are made to believe that what they had fought for was a falsely constructed ideal. Hutu power could not exist, because ethnic identities were artificial. Trust is created and established through the retelling of history and through a process of assimilation of former antagonists into the new state identity. Positive experiences of integration become associated with positive experiences of the peacebuilding process. Negative experiences will create distrust and cause a security threat. Because of distrust, the Rwandan government had to give the militia in DRC incentives to return to Rwanda by providing reinsertion support.

The reintegration of combatants into the RDF has been fairly successful and has helped mitigate the treat of potential relapse into armed struggle that is thought to pose a severe risk to security and stability. On this issue one of my participants said that Paul Kagame ‘has managed to bring these militaries together and now they are together without any problem. Where our country has come from and where it is now it is something that makes everyone happy’ (R25). Transcending conflict, a main part of the nation-building project has been a state construct rather than an organic development. The state has used its power to impose a common national identity and culture, in a country that has been cleavage by perceived ethnicities. With the wish to ensure protection from violence, a single nation, from which any differences based on ethnicity is eliminated, has been built.
Groups have to subsume their ethnic identity within a national cultural identity. The imperious imposition of national culture on all Rwandans can be viewed as an offence against individuality as there is a demand for homogeneity or identitylessness of a common culture. The monochromatic nature of the nation project comes at the cost of diversity, yet that may be the price for peace.

What I enjoy about being in the RDF is that when I was in the RPA, the people we were fighting now we are together and this makes me happy...having some of them change and join us that makes me happy ...RDF managed to convince those people that they were fighting for no reason...In my job as a soldier I have managed to continue teaching those groups (ex-FAR and AG’s) that have joined us. In my briefings to them I try to show to them how it has changed since the killings that took place. The divisions that were there at that time where children were segregated in schools, but now no child has left school saying that he or she is being treated unfairly by the teacher, they are all enjoying their rights, I keep on telling them about the changes that are happening (R25).

This ideology echoes the official line and is characterised by antipathy towards fundamental forms of diversity and a hankering for the (re)homogenisation of society. Thou, its tolerance and openness is conditional on former enemies changing, and adapting to the RDF/RPF ideology, thus behaving according to the basic norms of the elite. The integration demanded for a change in the minds of the former enemies, that they fought for no reason, thus rewriting their memories. Re-engineering their memories of their past and the reasons for why they fought. The differences and memories that are tolerated relate to those things that do not disturb the established order.

The military now comprises the two ‘ethnic’ groups and the institution threatens them equally in an effort to create a larger and inclusive national identity. Erasing certain aspects of one’s identity, an aspect that has been cause of violent conflict over a long historical period, is, however, not as easy as renaming it. Although the name has changed from Hutu and Tutsi to Rwandan, and from RPA to RDF, changing deep-rooted identity understandings will require a strong commitment and time. Individuals in Rwanda still use ethnicity as a set of meanings that they impute to their membership of society. It is one of the attributes that bind them to some sections of society and not others, and which distinguish them from others in their relevant environment. Beneath an explicit discourse of anti-ethnicity lays a strong awareness of difference.
As a counterweight to the violence experiences and to the negative potentiality of violence reoccurring, the state elites, political and military therefore institutionalized reforms and social programs with the intent of transforming identities with potential for violence to a Rwandan national identity which is considered to entail prospects for continued peace. The Rwandan military as for forerunner of change recreated itself from a mono-ethnic institution to a national representative by integrating all parties to the conflicts and reconciling with the past. The military has been a main informer of national identity by conducting programs and educating the public in new recollections of the past and deconstructing ideas of self by retelling stories of the past and present. The elite blame the constructed identities, which was the perceived reasons for violence, on the colonial powers. The elite educate the population in pre-colonial harmony and the reinstallation of this condition in current society. The military involvement in social programs and development as well as their focus on communality with the civilian population, and the creating of a linear rather than strictly hierarchal relationship, aids in building social trust. Social trust is essential to peace building in Rwanda. The integration of ex-FAR and FDLR fighters have changed the composition of the post-genocide military. Through joint deployment and rebranding of the military as RDF the military has been utilized as a main actor in the internal peace-building project. It was used to eradicate identities perceived to potentially create conflict. The strategies employed has enabled peace to persevere and allowed the political elite to stay on top. The Rwandan military has therefore been defined by the experience of genocide, in terms of composition, roles and place in society/nation building. State formation is happening through a military construction of Rwandaness.