

Contributor Profile: Burundi

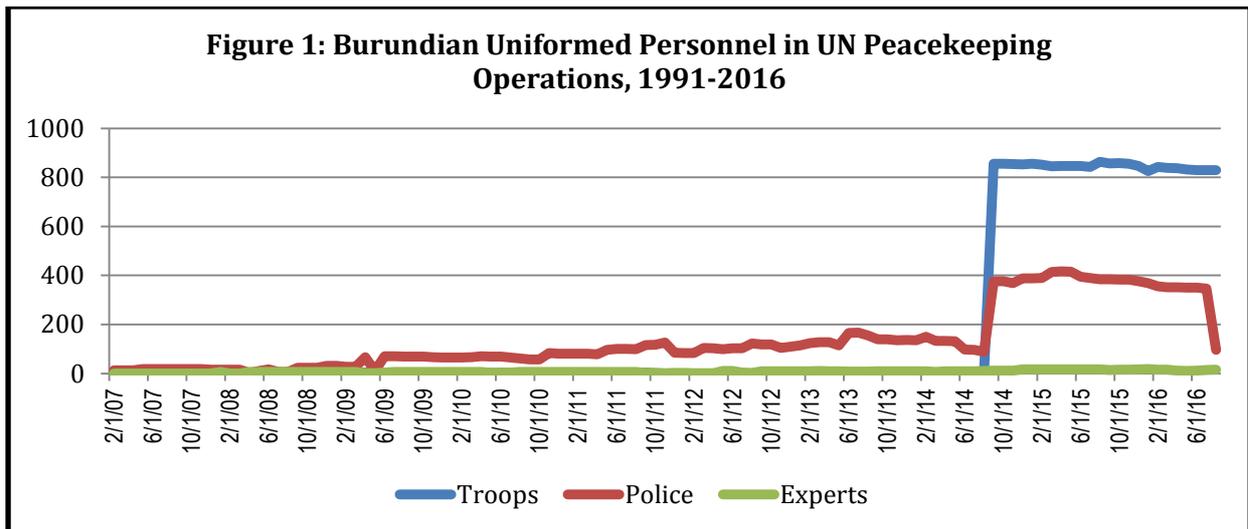
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Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
20,000 Army World Rank (size): 95 + 31,000 Paramilitary	6 2 Attack 2 multirole 2 transport (medium)	2015: US\$66m (2.09% of GDP) 2014: US\$62m (2.01% of GDP) 2013: US\$66m (2.41% of GDP) 2012: US\$62m (2.47% of GDP) World Rank (budget): 122	941 (13 female) 31 Aug 2016 Ranking 31st (20 th largest African contributor; 19 th largest African Union contributor)	MINUSCA 858 (826 troops, 24 police, 8 milex) MINUSMA 14 police MINUSTAH 13 police UNAMID 39 (31 police, 5 milex, 3 troops) UNISFA 2 milex UNOCI 28 police	AMISOM: approx. 5,400 troops
Defense spending/troop: US\$3,100 (compared to global average of approx. US\$79,396) ²					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Since 2008, Burundi has become an important troop-contributing country (TCC) in particular to African Union (AU) peace operations but also to UN peacekeeping. Burundi's history of ethnic massacres and its internal conflict, which lasted more than a decade, has made Burundi a relative newcomer to peace operations. Yet the decision to become a TCC in the midst of its own post-war security sector reform at the end of 2007 has proved durable. Burundi is now the second largest contributor, after Uganda to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which hosts six rotating Burundian battalions or over [5,000 troops](#). Its heavy investment in AMISOM might explain why its UN contribution remains relatively small. This bias for AU operations could also be linked to Burundi's troubled history with UN during and after its own conflict, which has been characterised by the Burundian government's demand for independence from the UN's supervisory role. A number of [expelled UN officials](#) contribute to this somewhat problematic relationship. Yet, today, the Burundian armed forces (FDN) have contributed to several UN missions on the continent, including UNAMID in Darfur, MINURCAT, MISCA and later MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, UNOCI in Ivory Coast, and MINUSMA in Mali. The deployments here remain nevertheless minor in comparison to its investment in AMISOM.



Part 2: Decision-Making Process

Peacekeeping deployment is not enshrined in any particular legal document. Decision-making therefore rests with the President, the Minister of Defense and the Chief of General Staff. The analysis of the situation and the decision take place at the strategic level, i.e. the Military President Cabinet and the Defence ministry, thereafter the operational level (Chief of Army Cabinet). Despite constitutional demand for parliamentary oversight of the decision-making process, this appears to be absent. The governmental time frame for decision-making is sequenced in two semesters within a financial year, with action plans conceived in September. These plans must integrate the peace operation and clearly show battalion rotations for both training and deployment.³

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: The decision to contribute troops to international peacekeeping operations is used by the Burundian government as a political and diplomatic tool in both domestic and international relations. In the international context, the troop contributions are used to generate some leverage in negotiations regarding its domestic affairs, but also in order to get more influence in multinational organisations. The Burundian government has therefore been keen to [underline its new role as a peacekeeper](#) abroad in order to push for withdrawal of UN agencies at home, emphasising its shifting identity from that of a post-war state to a peacekeeper. It is also the troop contributions to AMISOM that are considered the main reason behind its [admission to the African Union's](#) Peace and Security Council.

Economic Rationales: Economically, the troop contributions have enhanced not only the Defense Ministry and individual soldiers' budgets, but also the government's finances. The Burundian government has recently been accused by the anti-corruption agency OLUCOME of using the AMISOM money to [buy a presidential jet](#). It is also widely known that the Burundian government has taken US\$200 from the troops' allowances since at least 2011 but most likely since 2008 when the [EU stepped in to finance](#) both AMISOM allowances and the death and disability compensations. Although the transparency regarding the government's income for the troop contribution to AMISOM is rather limited, in the budget estimations for 2016, the sum of 3,000,000,000 Burundian francs is mentioned as "AMISOM extraordinary income", a significant decrease in comparison with 2014-2015 when the same figure was 29,000,000,000 Burundian francs. No clear explanation for such a drastic decrease can be found in official documents, which adds fuel to the debate about corruption and embezzlement related to troop contributions. Individual soldiers still receive an impressive

sum in comparison with their normal salary through their participation in peace operations. The construction of a [new neighbourhood](#) in Gitega for “veteran” peacekeepers who have invested in building new houses is evidence of this financial influx. Yet the recent crisis has meant that AMISOM soldiers are suffering from delayed payments due to donors’ withdrawal of funds (see Section 5 below).

Security Rationales: Burundi, which is part of a turbulent region, has for the most part avoided implicating itself in regional conflicts. The security rationale for providing peacekeepers lies instead within the domestic context. The decision to deploy troops was taken in the midst of a [forced demobilization process](#) in which mostly former government soldiers (FAB) were demobilized. The troop contribution temporarily halted the demobilization process and alleviated complaints from ex-FAB soldiers, which benefitted from the smooth creation of a new, integrated national army. A [splinter group](#) from the last remaining rebel group FNL, which was integrated in the army after cease-fire agreements in 2009, posed new, internal security threats in 2015 although on a limited scale. Smaller rebel groups following the current political crisis (2016) have not been able to gather significant support and have therefore not constituted a real threat to the government.

Institutional Rationales: Burundi’s decision to contribute troops was taken just three years after the two major former fighting forces had merged into a new army and in the midst of an externally financed security sector reform process. As such, training opportunities and external capacity-building for the joint forces were especially welcome in an effort to reinforce the integration process and professionalize the army. The [US ACOTA pre-deployment training](#) has become the hub around which other international partners’ initiatives turn, including theoretical PSO (peace support operation) courses given by Belgium, French-led training under RECAP (Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities) and to a lesser extent the Dutch long term security sector development (SSD) program. These different types of education have contributed to a progressive transformation of the FDN to a peacekeeping army, where international human rights law is part of the Defence Ministry’s rules and where peace operations doctrine is seen as a guide for soldiers. In addition to these changes the composition of the battalions has been altered to better correspond to peacekeeping operations by combining a greater mixture of different corps, including infantry, marine, doctors and combat engineers. This process of “interarmisation” has progressively and informally been implemented over the last few years without any official doctrine promoting it. A new peacekeeping department was also created in 2009 in order to respond to the new requirements associated with peace operations, which includes a training centre for peacekeeping operations built with external funds.

Normative Rationales: Burundi’s large contribution to AU peace operations and AMISOM in particular is officially explained by its will to contribute to peace in the Horn of Africa. Senior defense officials have also stated that Burundi has a moral obligation to help those who are in a difficult situation, given their own experience of internal conflict. The relatively small contribution to UN peacekeeping in comparison with AU missions underlines its preference for regional solutions, along the lines of the “African solutions to African problems” slogan. Yet this should also be seen against the background of troubled relations with the UN, mentioned above. In any case, its investment in AU operations has also increased its political weight in the region, notably through a seat on [the AU’s Peace and Security Council](#).

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Burundi's contribution to the UN increased significantly with the establishment of MINUSCA in the Central African Republic in 2014. In August 2013, Burundi contributed just 2 troops to UN missions, while in November 2014 the number had gone up to 854 troops, with 852 of those in MINUSCA. This shows that Burundi currently appears willing to contribute troops to both UN and AU missions on the continent. Yet, given its heavy investment in AMISOM it seems unlikely that Burundi will be able to step up its UN contributions in the near future.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Additional UN contributions on top of the current investment in AU operations would evoke questions about the capacity of the army to defend the national sovereignty. Given Burundi's strong emphasis on its sovereignty against international institutions, such as the UN, and the continued existence of multiple rebel groups in the east of DR Congo, such a development appears unlikely.

Resistance in the military: There is no visible resistance to troop contributions in the Burundian army. Deploying peacekeepers is on the contrary something that most soldiers see as beneficial, both for their careers and for the financial benefits. Senior officers appear to share this vision, as peacekeeping missions are likely to enhance professionalism in the army and provide international career opportunities.⁴

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The Burundian army has long been seen as the most successful result of the peace process and a stabilizing force in the country. Yet, the president's bid for a third term generated massive protests in Burundi and revealed divisions within the army even before the elections in July 2015. The most visible of these was the [coup attempt on 13 May](#) (2015), by a former Chief of Staff and Head of the Burundi Intelligence Service, Major General Godefroid Niyombare. Nevertheless, the army has remained united and neutral during the past decade, despite a number of diverse crises. At the beginning of the crisis in 2015 the army was also hailed as professional and neutral in particular in comparison with the police corps, which used violent crackdowns on protesters. Yet, after security forces' violent response to attacks on three military bases in Burundi on 11 December 2015, which killed close to 90 people, the army's reputation as neutral and professional has suffered. However, in spite of [external partners withdrawing](#) support for deployments, the Burundian government has maintained the usual rotation of battalions (only the police contribution has seen a decrease in 2016), refusing to withdraw any troops in spite of mounting pressure from domestic civil society. Burundian civil society and internal opposition have increasingly interpreted troop deployment as a means to compensate officers and soldiers for their pro-government stance during the current crisis which has led to extensive monitoring of the soldiers sent abroad and several social media campaigns with the aim of bringing the troops back home. Two of these campaigns have resulted in [four Burundian officers](#) being sent home for human rights violations committed in their home country, Burundi – a first for the UN. Previous military [involvement in the current political crisis](#) has also sullied the image of a professional army.

External donors have reacted against the current crisis by cutting funding to Burundi in general and the security forces in particular. In accordance with Article 96 of the Cotonou Accord, in March 2016 the EU suspended its cooperation program with Burundi. In order to limit the government's revenues from the troop contribution to AMISOM, the EU has both [cut its funding of AMISOM allowances](#), and is in the process (October 2016) of trying to find a way together with the AU to [pay the Burundian soldiers directly](#), without passing funds through the Burundian government. So far no solution has been found and in the meantime,

[Burundian soldiers in AMISOM have not been paid](#) since the EU imposed the sanctions. The situation poses a delicate problem for the AU which is in an awkward position between the Burundian government and its main donor, yet it seems unlikely that the AU would try to force a Burundian withdrawal of troops, given its [hesitant stance towards the Burundian crisis](#) in the past year (2016).

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

The president has showed his support and admiration for the Burundian army's troop deployment to peace operations. The senior leadership of the army have also been keen to showcase its peacekeepers as a sign of success for the new, integrated army.⁵ During the recent political crisis, Burundi's peacekeepers have also proven to be a useful means of leverage for the Burundian government in order to avoid external intervention. The president has therefore no interest in withdrawing peacekeepers any time soon. The internationalization of the army has also contributed to a certain pride among the military members. The number of Burundians in high level international positions has exploded in recent years where former President Buyoya was first the head of AFISMA, then, since 2012, High Representative of the AU in Mali. Brigade General Domitien Kabisa became the [new Force Commander](#) of EASF in March 2014. In addition, Brigade General Athanase Kararuzza became the Deputy Force Commander of the MISCA in Central African Republic, while Silas Ntirwurirwa became the first Burundian AMISOM Force Commander in December 2013.⁶ However, the recent political crisis has augmented divisions within the army, which has manifested itself both at home and during deployment in AMISOM.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The Burundian army has an infantry with high mobility vehicles and engineering and medical enabling units, yet for airlifts, the Burundian army is dependent on external partners. For example, the [US airlifted](#) the troops that recently deployed to the Central African Republic. With regard to rule of law functions, the army has investigators, prosecutors and correction officers, however, it remains uncertain to what extent they have independent powers. The Burundian army is almost entirely French speaking with relatively little knowledge of English, which occasionally poses problems for communication in international trainings and settings. External donors in collaboration with local actors have recently attempted to increase the number of female soldiers and integrate a gender perspective in the army. This has had mixed results, with the numbers of female soldiers staying below 1%.⁷

Part 8: Further Reading

Curtis, D., "The International Peacebuilding Paradox: Powersharing and Postconflict Governance in Burundi", *African Affairs*, 112/446 (2012).

Ndayiziga, C., "L'enjeux autour de l'intervention du Burundi en Somalie," *Egmont Africa Policy Brief*, no.7, Nov. 2013.

Samii, C., "Perils or Promise of Ethnic Integration? Evidence from a Hard Case in Burundi", *American Political Science Review*, 107, n°3 (2013): 558-573.

Wilén, N., Ambrosetti, D., Birantamije, G., "[Sending Peacekeepers Abroad, Sharing Power at Home. Burundi in Somalia](#)," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9:2 (2015): 307-25.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2016).

² Armed Forces spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016*.

³ Author's (GB) interview with Director of Peacekeeping Centre, Mudubugu, June 2015.

⁴ Author's (NW) interviews with FDN officers, Bujumbura, March 2013.

⁵ Author's (NW) interview with Former Minister of Defense, Pontien Gacyubwenge, Bujumbura, 8 March 2013.

⁶ Wilén, Ambrosetti, Birantamije, "Sending Peacekeepers Abroad," p.9.

⁷ Wilén, N., "Security Sector Reform, gender and local narratives in Burundi," *Conflict, Security and Development*, 14:3 (2013): 331-354.