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## Rwanda: In Brief

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February 26, 2016

**Congressional Research Service**

7-....

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R44402

## Summary

Rwanda has become known for its rapid development and security gains since the devastating 1994 genocide, in which over 800,000 people were killed. The minority ethnic Tutsi community was targeted in the genocide, along with politically moderate members of the Hutu majority, in a state-backed extermination campaign. (Hutus make up some 84% of the population and Tutsis 15%.) The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Uganda-based insurgent group at the time, ended the genocide and took power in mid-1994. Since then, RPF efforts to improve health systems, the economy, and gender equality have received substantial support from foreign donors, including the United States, and development indicators have improved markedly. However, poverty remains widespread.

President Paul Kagame has been in office since 2000 and previously served as Vice President and Defense Minister in post-genocide transitional governments. Kagame appears likely to seek to remain in office past 2017—the date of Rwanda’s next elections—after a constitutional referendum removing his current term limit passed in late 2015. U.S. officials and other observers have expressed concerns about the referendum, Kagame’s decision to seek a third term, and broader limits on political space in Rwanda. Human rights groups also report harassment, restriction on opposition parties and the media, disappearances, and assassinations. Rwandan officials reject allegations of human rights abuses, while arguing that some restrictions on civil and political rights are needed to prevent the return of ethnic violence and asserting that the country is gradually liberalizing. Nevertheless, some observers contend that limits on political and civil rights may threaten Rwanda’s stability by depriving opponents of peaceful avenues for activism.

The United States and Rwanda have cultivated close ties since the late 1990s, although in recent years the Obama Administration and some Members of Congress have expressed concerns about Rwanda's domestic and regional policies. While praising Rwanda's progress, U.S. officials have criticized its constraints on political and civil freedoms. The United States is also concerned about the Rwandan government's history of backing rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and reports of Rwandan support for rebel activity in Burundi. Most recently, a political crisis in Burundi has sparked growing international concern over ethnic violence and Rwandan intervention, which could have broader implications for U.S. engagement in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

Substantial U.S. engagement and aid is focused on supporting economic development, health outcomes, good governance, military professionalism, and Rwandan participation in international peacekeeping. U.S. bilateral aid to Rwanda has grown significantly, from \$39 million appropriated in FY2003 to more than \$177 million in FY2015, not including peacekeeping support. U.S.-Rwanda trade, however, is limited, and U.S.-Rwandan relations could be impacted by growing international concern over Rwanda’s role in Burundi, as well as the direction of Rwanda’s democratic trajectory. Congress may examine U.S. engagement on Rwanda’s role in regional security and its 2017 election when considering humanitarian aid, security assistance (including for peacekeeping), trade authorities, and policy oversight.

## Contents

Overview .....	1
Political and Human Rights Concerns .....	1
Peace and Security .....	2
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).....	3
Burundi .....	4
Economic Growth and Development Issues .....	5
U.S. Relations and Aid.....	7
Legislative Restrictions on U.S. Security Assistance to Rwanda .....	8
Outlook and Issues for Congress.....	9

## Figures

Figure 1. Rwanda at a Glance.....	3
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## Contacts

Author Contact Information .....	10
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## Overview

Rwanda has achieved rapid development and security gains since the devastating 1994 genocide in which over 800,000 people were killed. The minority ethnic Tutsi community was targeted in the genocide, along with politically moderate members of the Hutu majority, in a state-backed extermination campaign by Hutu extremists. The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an insurgent group at the time, ousted the genocidal regime and took power in mid-1994. Since then, RPF efforts to improve health systems, the economy, and gender equality have received substantial support from foreign donors, including the United States, and development indicators have improved markedly, although most Rwandans remain poor. For some observers, the facts that Rwanda is at peace, state services function well, and its economy is dynamic are evidence of successful governance. Others, however, are concerned by restrictions on political and civil rights, and some question whether these may ultimately undermine Rwanda's stability and, possibly, stability in the Great Lakes<sup>1</sup> region.

The Obama Administration refers to Rwanda as “one of Africa’s most dramatic and encouraging success stories,” and the country receives substantial U.S. development assistance.<sup>2</sup> The United States also trains and equips Rwandan peacekeeping troops, considered to be among Africa’s most committed and effective, under the State Department’s Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance (ACOTA) program and through the Administration’s new African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP).<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, U.S. officials have criticized President Paul Kagame’s decision to seek a third presidential term, and have said that “peaceful transfer of power from one leader to another is the hallmark of stable, prosperous democracies.”<sup>4</sup> U.S. officials have also raised serious human rights concerns and criticized constraints on political and civil freedoms. The Obama Administration has publicly criticized Rwanda’s periodic support for rebel groups in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Congress has imposed related restrictions on U.S. military aid. There is also growing concern over Rwanda’s role in neighboring Burundi’s political crisis, in particular over reports that Burundian refugees in Rwanda have been recruited by Burundian rebels, possibly with Rwandan knowledge and support.<sup>5</sup> (See “Peace and Security” below.) These concerns may affect congressional activities related to humanitarian aid, security assistance and support for international peacekeeping missions, trade authorities, and policy oversight.

## Political and Human Rights Concerns

President Kagame has been in office since 2000; he previously served as Vice President and Defense Minister. He was elected for a second term in 2010, with 93% of votes, and intends to seek a third term in 2017 amid international controversy over his candidacy.<sup>6</sup> President Kagame’s current term is slated to end in 2017, but in December 2015 a reported 98% of voters approved a change to the constitution that allows him to extend his time in office. Under the new

<sup>1</sup> The Great Lakes region of Central Africa comprises Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> State Department, *FY2016 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations*.

<sup>3</sup> ACOTA is part of a larger program known as the Global Peacekeeping Operations Initiative (GPOI).

<sup>4</sup> White House, “Statement by NSC Spokesperson Ned Price on Rwandan Constitutional Referendum,” December 19, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Anita Powell, “Officials: Rwanda Refugees Recruited to Fight Burundi,” *VOA*, December 15, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Reuters, “Rwandan president Paul Kagame to run for third term in 2017,” January 2, 2016.

constitutional amendments, he can run for a third seven-year term and two additional five-year terms, meaning that he could potentially be in office until 2034.<sup>7</sup>

In July 2015, Rwandan parliamentarians voted overwhelmingly in favor of removing the term limit, which was a key step in opening the door for the constitutional referendum. The parliamentary vote took place after a petition in favor of removing term limits received some 3.7 million signatures—representing well over half the electorate.<sup>8</sup> News reports suggested that some Rwandans may have felt intimidated into signing.<sup>9</sup> Kagame did not speak publicly about his intention to run until he announced his candidacy on January 1, 2016, and he claimed he was running due to popular demand, saying, "I did not apply for this. You go and ask Rwandans why they want me."<sup>10</sup> Kagame's supporters point to his leadership as a key reason for Rwanda's development and economic recovery since the 1994 genocide, while his critics argue that the government represses political dissent.

In general, the government does not tolerate public opposition to overarching RPF policies and ideology; nor is discussion of ethnicity tolerated. There are few independent media and opposition groups, and they reportedly operate with difficulty. Critics assert that the government has used intimidation and laws criminalizing "genocide ideology" and "divisionism," along with national security provisions, to suppress dissent, to justify prosecutions of journalists and opposition figures, and to limit reporting by human rights groups. Rwandan officials reject allegations of human rights abuses, while arguing that some restrictions on civil and political rights are necessary to prevent the return of ethnic violence and asserting that the country is gradually liberalizing.

Human rights groups accuse the government of targeting exiled dissidents for assassination, which the government denies. For example, a top RPF defector—a former head of external intelligence who had become active in a diaspora opposition movement known as the Rwanda National Congress—was murdered in South Africa in 2014. President Kagame said in a press interview that "Rwanda did not kill this person ... but I add that, I actually wish Rwanda did it."<sup>11</sup>

## Peace and Security

Rwanda plays a significant role in regional peace and security. Rwanda's military is among Africa's most effective, and Rwandan troops have participated in multiple United Nations (U.N.) and African-led peacekeeping operations. They are generally reported to be disciplined and committed.<sup>12</sup> Rwanda also has a history of unilateral intervention in neighboring countries, particularly in the DRC and, increasingly, in Burundi. It has deployed its military to the DRC on several occasions since the 1990s, and has reportedly backed several armed rebellions there.

<sup>7</sup> The referendum shortens the presidential term from seven to five years, but the change does not take effect until 2024.

<sup>8</sup> According to a report submitted to parliament by Rwandan lawmakers who toured the country to engage citizens about the proposed constitutional change, only 10 people—out of "millions of Rwandans"—voiced opposition to extending Kagame's mandate. See Agence France-Presse, "Only 10 Rwandans oppose Kagame third term: report," August 11, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Ludovica Iaccino, "Rwanda Third-Term Bid: Term limits 'nothing to do with democracy' says President Kagame," *International Business Times*, June 22, 2015.

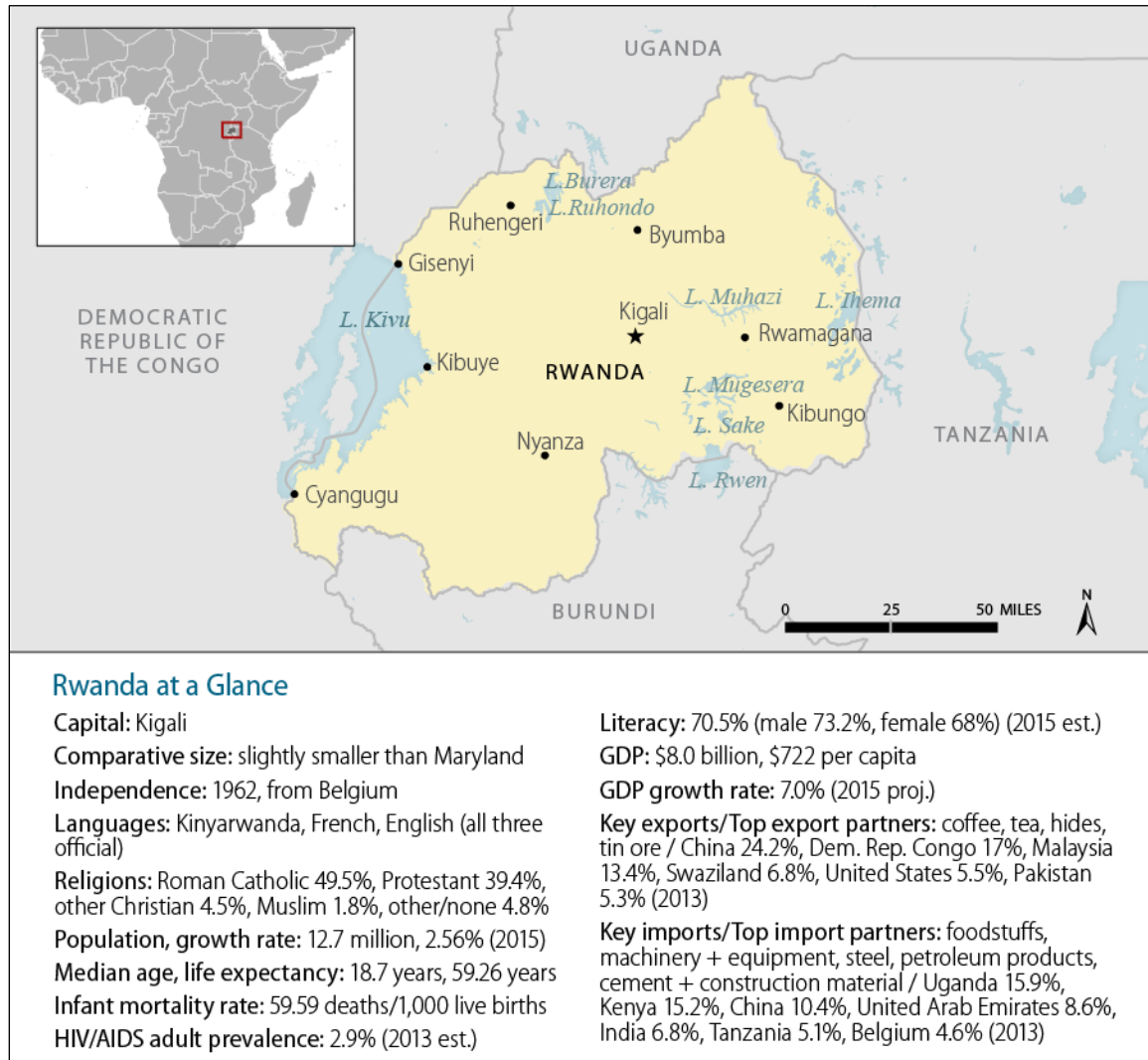
<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Aglietti, "Rwanda counts referendum vote for extra terms for Kagame," AFP, December 18, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Aislinn Laing, "Rwanda's president Paul Kagame 'wishes' he had ordered death of exiled spy chief," *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Danielle Beswick and Marco Jowell, "Peacekeeping Contributor Profile: Rwanda," *Providing for Peacekeeping*, March, 2014.

More recently, reports indicate that armed groups are recruiting Burundian refugees in Rwanda with the knowledge of Rwandan security forces.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure I. Rwanda at a Glance**



**Source:** CRS graphic. Boundaries and cities generated by (name redacted) using data from the U.S. Department of State (2011), Esri (2013), and Google Maps (2014). "At a Glance" information from CIA World Factbook (July 2015), IMF (April 2015). Figures refer to 2014 estimates unless otherwise noted.

## Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Rwanda asserts that it faces a national security threat from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a DRC-based militia founded by Hutu extremists involved in the Rwandan genocide. The FDLR is also nominally the target of DRC military operations, and the U.N. peacekeeping operation in the DRC is authorized to forcibly disarm it. However, previous military operations have failed to defeat the group. While denying specific allegations of backing

<sup>13</sup> Refugees International, "Asylum Betrayed: Recruitment of Burundian Refugees in Rwanda," December 14, 2015.

DRC rebel groups, Rwandan officials often voice potential justifications for such actions. Rwandan officials argue that the FDLR, in addition to abusing local civilians in the DRC, is a threat to Rwanda's national security. They cite concerns about links between the FDLR and Rwandan opposition groups, and between the FDLR and the DRC military.<sup>14</sup> Rwandan officials suggest that the idea of peace talks with the FDLR is akin to condoning genocide. Meanwhile, international policy toward the FDLR would also appear to leave little room for peaceful resolution; both the FDLR as a group and selected individuals associated with it are under U.N. and U.S. sanctions.<sup>15</sup> In early 2014, FDLR leaders announced they would disarm voluntarily, but progress toward disarmament has been minimal.

In 2012-2013, Rwanda faced international criticism for providing support to an eastern DRC-based insurgent group known as the M23. Rwandan officials denied allegations of backing the M23, blaming armed group activity and instability on the DRC's institutional dysfunctions, and lack of political will to confront security challenges. In late 2013, the M23 was militarily defeated by DRC forces backed by U.N. peacekeeping troops, and the M23 and DRC government subsequently signed peace declarations in Kenya. In January 2014, U.N. sanctions monitors suggested that remnant M23 forces continued to receive Rwandan support, but the group appears to remain inactive.<sup>16</sup>

## Burundi

As in neighboring Rwanda, Burundi's population includes a majority Hutu community (estimated at 85%) and minority Tutsi (14%). The two countries also share a history of ethnic violence, which has become a focus of Rwanda-Burundi relations since Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza sparked a violent political crisis by seeking a third presidential term in 2015.<sup>17</sup> Opposition to Nkurunziza (a Hutu) spans the ethnic divide and many Burundians and outside observers view his third term, which he won in a disputed election in July 2015, as a violation of a landmark peace agreement known as the Arusha Accords.<sup>18</sup> Even so, the political crisis over Nkurunziza's election has renewed ethnic tensions and prompted concern over potential Rwandan intervention to protect Burundi's Tutsi minority. There are also reports that the FDLR could be active in Burundi, possibly giving Rwanda additional motivation to intervene.<sup>19</sup> Ongoing turmoil over Nkurunziza's presidency has led at least 240,000 Burundians to flee to neighboring states and sparked concern over regional stability.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See U.N. doc. S/2014/428, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> An alleged FDLR leader, Sylvestre Mudacumura, is also sought for arrest by the International Criminal Court for crimes allegedly committed in DRC; he remains at large.

<sup>16</sup> U.N. Security Council, *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, January 23, 2014, U.N. doc. S/2014/42. In June 2014, the current Group of Experts noted the escape of M23 members from camps in Rwanda (where they are awaiting disarmament) but did not report evidence of Rwandan support for the group. (*Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, June 25, 2014, U.N. doc. S/2014/428.)

<sup>17</sup> The controversy over Nkurunziza's third term stems, in part, from a dispute over its legality and the credibility of the July 2015 election—although opposition is also motivated by anger at poor governance, corruption, economic freefall, and human rights abuses. See CRS Report R44018, *Burundi's Political Crisis*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

<sup>18</sup> Signed in 2000, the Arusha Accords are credited as the basis for greater stability and political inclusiveness in Burundi over the past decade. The Accords instituted a requirement for "ethnic balance" in the government and military, and reduced Hutu-Tutsi tensions. They also set a clear two-term limit on the presidency.

<sup>19</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *"Alert, Early Warning and Readiness Report Map,"* Outlook Period November 2015-2016.

<sup>20</sup> U.N. High Commission for Refugees, "Burundi Situation: Displacement of Burundians into neighbouring countries," (continued...)

Among African leaders, President Kagame has been the most openly critical of Nkurunziza and his efforts to remain in power. In November, Kagame questioned Nkurunziza's leadership and warned that violence in Burundi could spiral into war or even genocide. Amid concerns over mass violence, some analysts have cautioned against drawing parallels to Rwanda's 1994 genocide, noting the political roots of Burundi's conflict. Many suggest that widespread violence there would more likely target perceived political opposition than a specific ethnic group; however, recent clashes between government and opposition forces may indicate that the ethnic dimensions of the conflict have escalated.<sup>21</sup> Some experts assess that the Rwandan government's legitimacy stems from ending the 1994 genocide and threats to Tutsis in Burundi may sharpen the Rwandan government's fears that ethnic violence there could reignite tensions in Rwanda.<sup>22</sup>

Rwanda has, at times, appeared to threaten military action, and Burundian officials have openly accused Rwanda of having "a hand on the current political crisis."<sup>23</sup> Rwanda has denied playing a role, but in February 2016, a leaked U.N. report indicated that Rwanda was recruiting and training Burundian refugees, including children, with the aim of ousting Nkurunziza.<sup>24</sup> As of February 2016, more than 70,000 Burundian refugees were in Rwanda, but it is unclear how many will remain.<sup>25</sup> In response to U.S. statements that reports of Rwandan recruitment of refugees were credible, the government announced on February 12, 2016, that Burundian refugees would have to leave Rwanda due to "growing risks to our national security" and "misunderstandings in our foreign relations."<sup>26</sup>

## Economic Growth and Development Issues

Foreign assistance, political stability, a reputation for low corruption, and pro-investor policies have contributed to economic growth in Rwanda averaging nearly 8% per year over the past decade. Key foreign exchange earners include a small but growing mining sector, tourism, and exports of coffee and tea. Human development gains since the 1994 genocide have been significant, notably in the areas of life expectancy, child and maternal mortality, and overall health.<sup>27</sup> Still, about 90% of Rwandans remain engaged in agriculture, many for subsistence, and

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(...continued)

February 16, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., *The Washington Post*, "Should we be using the G-word in Burundi?" November 15, 2015. Government attacks may have targeted Tutsis on December 11, 2015; see e.g., Paul Nantulya, "Stopping the Spiral in Burundi." January 29, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Chemouni, "Burundi: what can actually be done?" *African Arguments*, January 27, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> In May, the Rwandan Foreign Minister said, "While we respect Burundi's sovereignty in addressing internal matters, Rwanda considers the safety of innocent populations as regional and international responsibility;" see e.g., Ludovica Iaccino, "Burundi Coup: What do neighboring countries think of Nkurunziza's third term bid?" *International Business Times*, May, 13, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Clement Uwiringiyimana, "Rwanda to send Burundi refugees to other countries after U.S. warning," *Reuters*, February, 12, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> U.N. High Commission for Refugees, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> In testimony before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on February 10, 2016, U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Thomas Perriello said, "We're concerned by reports of Rwanda engaging in destabilizing behavior outside of its border. There are credible reports of recruitment of Burundian refugees including children at camps in Rwanda to fight for the Burundian opposition;" Clement Uwiringiyimana, op cit.

<sup>27</sup> According to the World Health Organization (WHO), between 1990 and 2013, life expectancy in Rwanda increased from 48 to 65 years; the mortality rate of children under five decreased from 152 to 52 deaths per 1,000 live births; and the maternal mortality rate decreased from 1,400 deaths to 320 deaths per 100,000 live births. (WHO, *World Health Statistics 2015*).



about 45% reportedly live below the poverty line (albeit compared to 56% as recently as 2006, and 78% in 1994).<sup>28</sup> Rwanda has the highest population density in continental Africa, which threatens the sustainability of subsistence farming.

The government is undertaking ambitious efforts to transform Rwanda's low-income, agrarian-based economy into one that is knowledge-based, services-oriented, and "middle income," by 2020. The government is also seeking to lower birth rates and develop domestic sources of energy. Obstacles to transformation include poor infrastructure (though it is better than in much of Central Africa), a lack of electricity in many areas, and a high level of dependency on foreign aid. Economic growth notably decelerated in 2013 after several key European donors reduced or redirected budgetary support in 2012 due to Rwanda's backing of the M23.<sup>29</sup> In response, Rwanda sought new domestic and private-sector sources of finance, issuing international bonds and creating a national "solidarity" fund, which solicits donations. In late 2013, after Rwandan support for the M23 reportedly waned and the insurgency was defeated by U.N.-backed DRC military operations,<sup>30</sup> Rwanda's aid levels and growth began to rebound.

The State Department asserts that Rwanda "presents a number of opportunities for U.S. and foreign direct investment [FDI], including in renewable energy, infrastructure, agriculture, mining, tourism, and information and communications technology."<sup>31</sup> Rwanda scores well on the World Bank's *Doing Business* report, an assessment of business regulations, ranking 46 out of 189 economies assessed in 2015. It performs especially well on indicators assessing the ease of accessing credit, registering property, paying taxes, and "dealing with construction permits."<sup>32</sup> FDI is nonetheless low compared to some of Rwanda's neighbors, at 1.5% of GDP in 2013.<sup>33</sup> The State Department notes that despite a "business-friendly reputation," Rwanda still presents investors with a number of challenges, including "high transport costs, a small domestic market, limited access to affordable financing, inadequate infrastructure, ambiguous tax rules, and an under-skilled workforce."<sup>34</sup> It attributes the shortage of skilled workers, in part, to educational difficulties stemming from Rwanda's abrupt change in 2009 from French to English as the language of instruction.<sup>35</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised Rwanda's overall management of the economy, while noting the ongoing challenge of transitioning from a "public sector-led, aid-dependent economy to a more private sector-led economy."<sup>36</sup> The Fund notes that "delays in donor disbursements also pose risks for growth." It has called on the government to prioritize "mobilizing more revenue, accelerating export growth, and removing impediments to private sector development." Regional economic integration within the East African Community

<sup>28</sup> CIA World Factbook (July 2015); Partners in Health, "Rwanda's Rebirth: A Blueprint for health systems strengthening," 2013.

<sup>29</sup> The World Bank referred to the growth deceleration in 2013 as a "lagged effect of the [2012] aid shortfall." Country Overview: Rwanda, at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>.

<sup>30</sup> See CRS Report R43166, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations*, by (name redacted)

<sup>31</sup> State Department, *2015 Investment Climate Statement – Rwanda*, May 2015.

<sup>32</sup> World Bank, *Doing Business*, "Ease of Doing Business in Rwanda," 2015.

<sup>33</sup> *2015 Investment Climate Statement*, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> *2015 Investment Climate Statement*, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> The government stated at the time that the change was designed to facilitate integration into the global economy. It also reflected diplomatic tensions between the RPF-led government and France, which had close ties to the genocidal regime. Many RPF officials, including Kagame, also grew up in exile in Anglophone African countries and are more comfortable in English.

<sup>36</sup> IMF, *Rwanda: Third Review under the Policy Support Instrument*, May 12, 2015.

(EAC)—which includes Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania—could also boost foreign investment and trade, but poor infrastructure and political differences among EAC members, including over the recent political crisis in Burundi, have hindered progress.

## U.S. Relations and Aid

The United States and Rwanda have cultivated close ties since the late 1990s. Substantial U.S. aid is focused on supporting economic development, health outcomes, good governance, military professionalism, and Rwandan participation in international peacekeeping. U.S.-Rwanda trade, however, is limited. U.S. imports from Rwanda totaled \$40 million in 2014 (nearly none under the African Growth and Opportunity Act or AGOA, which provides trade benefits for exports from certain African countries to the United States, and was recently reauthorized in P.L. 114-27); U.S. exports to Rwanda totaled \$21 million in 2014.<sup>37</sup> Rwanda is also under the purview of the U.S. Special Envoy to the Great Lakes.

Since 2010, Obama Administration officials have periodically expressed concerns over Rwanda's role in the region as well as political and human rights conditions in Rwanda. Examples include:

- **2012-2013:** U.S. officials publicly criticized Rwanda for supporting the M23.
- **2015:** U.S. officials assessed that political repression in Rwanda was becoming a “disturbing precedent” for the continent and said that the Administration is “troubled by the succession of what appear to be politically motivated murders of Rwandan exiles.”<sup>38</sup>
- **January 2016:** The State Department issued a statement expressing “deep” disappointment over Kagame's decision to seek a third term and emphasized concern over changes to “rules to stay in power ... that favor one individual over the principle of democratic transitions.”<sup>39</sup>
- **February 2016:** Assistant Secretary of African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield said, “We have seen a number of reports from our colleagues in the field that suggest the Rwandan government has been involved in destabilizing activities in Burundi.”<sup>40</sup>

Such statements reflect a change in tone compared to the approach from the late 1990s, when the United States avoided public criticism of Rwanda. This was in part implicitly due to allegations that the United States did not act more forcefully to help prevent or end the genocide. Recent U.S. criticism has provoked strident objections by Rwandan officials, including President Kagame.<sup>41</sup>

U.S. bilateral aid to Rwanda has grown significantly, from \$39 million appropriated in FY2003 to more than \$177 million in FY2015, not including peacekeeping support. In part, this reflects overall trends in U.S. aid to Africa, which increased substantially during the same period,

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce data, consulted at <https://dataweb.usitc.gov/>. January 26, 2016; figures reflect imports for consumption.

<sup>38</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Steven Feldstein testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights, May 20, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> State Department, “Reaction to Rwandan President's Decision To Run for Third Term,” January 2, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield testimony before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, February 10, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g., Rwandan News Agency, “Rwanda/Security: President Kagame Denounces American Sanctions,” October 5, 2013; Paul Richardson, “Rwanda's Kagame Rejects U.S. Criticism of Plan to Extend Rule,” *Bloomberg*, January 4, 2016.

particularly for health programs. It also reflects a widely held view that Rwanda has demonstrated effectiveness in achieving donor-assisted development outcomes. The Obama Administration has requested \$161 million in bilateral aid to Rwanda for FY2016 and is requesting \$138 million in FY2017.<sup>42</sup>

U.S. aid programs in Rwanda are largely focused on improving health, food security, economic growth, and other development goals. According to the State Department, the primary goal of these programs is “to support the country’s commitment to confront its daunting development challenges to achieve fundamental, broad-based economic and social transformation.”<sup>43</sup> Rwanda is a focus country for several U.S. global development initiatives, including Feed the Future (agricultural development), the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI), and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

U.S. support for Rwanda’s international peacekeeping deployments is provided separately from these bilateral aid allocations. The United States has resumed bilateral military professionalization assistance to Rwanda, after several years of suspension due to legislative restrictions (see below), and the Administration has provided substantial military equipment and training to Rwanda under APRRP, of which Rwanda is a focus country.<sup>44</sup> APRRP is designed to help selected African countries develop relatively high-level capabilities for use in African Union and U.N. peacekeeping operations. It is designed to fill gaps in and complement the existing ACOTA program; targeted areas include military logistics, airlift, field hospitals, and formed police units, as well as equipment transfers.

### **Legislative Restrictions on U.S. Security Assistance to Rwanda**

Between FY2012 and FY2014, the Administration restricted some types of U.S. security assistance for Rwanda, pursuant to legislation enacted by Congress. First, the Administration applied provisions in foreign aid appropriations measures that prohibited Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Rwanda if its government provided support to DRC-based rebel groups, citing its support for the M23. Second, for FY2014 the Administration applied a provision in the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA; P.L. 110-457, as amended) that prohibits most types of security assistance to countries whose national security forces or state-backed forces employ child soldiers, citing the M23’s use of child soldiers. As a result, International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding for Rwanda was also suspended. Most aid in support of Rwanda’s peacekeeping deployments is exempt from these provisions, and thus continued during this time.

The FY2015 Consolidated and Further Appropriations Act (P.L. 113-235) prohibited FMF for Rwanda, except for certain purposes (including peacekeeping), if the Secretary of State were to find that Rwanda was providing support for armed groups in DRC. The Administration did not make such a finding and thus did not apply the provision. No such provision exists in the FY2016 appropriations act (P.L. 114-113). The Administration did not request any FMF assistance for Rwanda in FY2013-FY2017. The Administration waived the CSPA-related prohibition for

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<sup>42</sup> Final FY2016 allocations for countries and programs not specifically designated in the FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 114-113) are determined through consultations between appropriators and executive branch officials. The Administration’s FY2016 request for Rwanda is provided as an indication of its intent in early 2016; the final allocation may be different.

<sup>43</sup> State Department, *FY2017 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations*.

<sup>44</sup> In FY2015, Rwanda received more than \$12 million in APRRP funding, to build its logistics and engineering capabilities. In congressional staff briefings, Administration officials have specifically referred to the possibility of providing Rwanda with the capacity to operate a military field hospital under APRRP.

FY2015, citing the end of the M23 rebellion, and did not list Rwanda under the provision for FY2016. This unlocked FMF funding as well as \$500,000 in IMET in FY2015-FY2016; the Administration is requesting the same amount in FY2017 for IMET.<sup>45</sup>

## Outlook and Issues for Congress

Since 1994, Rwanda has made remarkable economic and development strides, and it has become a key troop-contributing country for peacekeeping missions. At the same time, Rwanda's current governance trends and its role in regional security dynamics are of increasing international concern. In particular, conflict between Rwanda and its neighbors—either through proxy actors or direct intervention—could reverse years of progress.

These trends present numerous challenges for policymakers. Congress has shaped U.S. policy and assistance to Rwanda through its authorization and appropriation of U.S. assistance and through oversight activities. Some Members may wish to consider how reports of refugee recruitment by rebel forces could impact U.S. aid, including under CSPA. Members may evaluate lessons learned from Rwanda's response to U.S. criticism of its role in the M23 conflict and the related suspension of some security assistance. Congress also may continue to seek evidence to corroborate reports of political assassinations.

Heading to elections in 2017, questions remain around how the United States can best support Rwanda's continued stability and growth. Congress may examine the impact of, and resources devoted to, U.S. democracy promotion in Rwanda, and assess U.S. support for greater political pluralism and freedom of expression to help build on Rwanda's record of progress. Members may also wish to consider U.S. support to developing Rwanda's domestic energy resources and opportunities to expand trade under AGOA. Members might similarly consider how Kagame's third term bid could affect Rwanda's AGOA eligibility.

Burundi's crisis presents a challenge for Rwanda's security interests, as well as U.S. interests in regional peace and security. Members may seek to assess the potential for violence in Burundi to spread over the border and inflame ethnic tensions in Rwanda. If unchecked, the conflict in Burundi could also lead to increased refugee flows into Rwanda and its neighbors, presenting new demands for humanitarian aid, or heighten Rwandan apprehension over FDLR operations in the region.

The evolving situation between Burundi and Rwanda also has implications for U.S. efforts to promote democratic transfers of power in Africa. Given Burundi's violent political crisis and opposition to efforts by other incumbent leaders in Central Africa to change presidential term limits (including in neighboring DRC),<sup>46</sup> Kagame's candidacy presents a challenge for U.S. efforts to promote democracy in a region where the transfer of power through elections is rare. Congress may continue to assess the implications for governance and stability in Central Africa when longtime leaders like President Kagame seek to extend their time in office.

<sup>45</sup> See Presidential Determination, *Determination with Respect to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008*, September 30, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Like Rwanda, the Republic of Congo amended constitutional term limits in 2015 so that its long-time president could run in March elections. At the same time, the president of DRC is widely expected to delay elections in 2016 in an attempt to evade a constitutional term limit. Both efforts have faced public outcry and protest.

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