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# GENDERED CONTRIBUTIONS TO MILITARY AND STATE RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN POST-INDEPENDENCE AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UGANDA, KENYA, TANZANIA, AND RWANDA

**Abstract:** *This article examines the gendered dimensions of military and state reconstruction processes in post-independence East Africa, focusing on Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda. While postcolonial scholarship has extensively analysed state formation and security governance in Africa, limited attention has been given to the historical and contemporary roles of women in shaping the security architectures of newly independent states. Drawing on a mixed methodological approach that combines historical–analytical and empirical inquiry, this study traces women's contributions from the liberation movements and early postcolonial armies to their participation in contemporary peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery frameworks. Archival sources, oral histories, and secondary data are integrated with field-based interviews and policy analysis to interrogate how gendered participation reconfigures notions of citizenship, authority, and legitimacy within evolving state and military institutions. The findings reveal that women's involvement has been simultaneously transformative and constrained expanding the moral and organisational basis of state reconstruction, while remaining circumscribed by patriarchal political orders and securitized governance structures. Comparative insights from the four countries demonstrate divergent pathways of institutionalisation, policy inclusion, and symbolic recognition. By bridging feminist security studies and state capacity theory, the article advances a gendered reinterpretation of post-independence military and governance trajectories in East Africa. It concludes by proposing policy directions for inclusive security sector reform and gender-responsive state-building as integral to sustainable peace and regional stability.*

***Keywords:*** *Gender, Military, State Reconstruction, East Africa, Post-Independence, Security Governance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The gendered dimensions of state reconstruction and military formation in post-independence Africa remain one of the least theorised yet most politically consequential aspects of African security studies. While classic state-building analyses have emphasised coercion, institutional consolidation, and elite bargaining (Mann, 1984; Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol, 1985; Herbst, 2000), they have rarely addressed how gendered participation shapes the legitimacy and capacity of emerging states. This analytical omission has produced a narrow conception of state power, obscuring women's historical and contemporary roles as agents in both the making and remaking of state and military institutions (Mama, 2007; Tripp, 2015).

In East Africa, the transition from colonial rule to sovereign governance involved not only the creation of national armies but also struggles over citizenship, belonging, and authority (Young, 1994; Mamdani, 1996). Across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, women participated in liberation movements and post-conflict reconstruction through roles that ranged from combat and intelligence to logistics, mobilisation, and peacebuilding (Byfield, 2000; Lyons, 2004). Yet, in the aftermath of independence, their contributions were largely domesticated within patriarchal state systems, which recognised their symbolic value but rarely institutionalised gender equality in security governance (Aidi, 2013; Mwiine, 2019).

### 1.1 Research Problem

Despite increased scholarly attention to gender and security, a major analytical gap persists: the absence of a systematic, comparative understanding of how women's contributions to military and state reconstruction influence the broader evolution of state legitimacy and capacity in post-independence Africa. Most existing works privilege either the policy discourse on gender mainstreaming or the historical narrative of liberation, but seldom integrate the two (Whitworth, 2008; Shepherd, 2016). This disconnect limits our understanding of how gendered participation historically reconfigured, and continues to reshape, the political architecture of East African states.

### 1.2 Research Hypothesis

This study hypothesises that women's active involvement in military and state reconstruction processes enhances state legitimacy and resilience by broadening the social basis of authority, yet its transformative potential remains constrained by enduring patriarchal and militarised institutional cultures. In other words, gendered inclusion is both a driver of and a mirror for the quality of postcolonial state formation in East Africa.

### 1.3 Analytical Objective and Approach

To address this gap, the article adopts a mixed methodological design combining historical–analytical and policy–empirical approaches to support and examine the continuum between women's roles in liberation movements and their participation in contemporary security governance. Using archival sources, oral histories, and policy document analysis, the study compares Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda to illuminate variations in institutional trajectories, policy adaptation, and social transformation.

The analysis is anchored in Feminist Security Studies (Tickner, 2001; Enloe, 2014) and State Capacity Theory (Mann, 1984; Evans et al., 1985), thereby integrating micro-level gendered agency into macro-level theories of state formation and resilience. The study's contribution lies in demonstrating that gender is not a peripheral social variable but a constitutive dimension of state power and post-conflict reconstruction.

Ultimately, the article argues that understanding gendered participation in military and state-building processes provides a more complete and inclusive conception of national security one that is critical for developing sustainable, people-centred governance and security architectures in East Africa.

## 2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Integrating State Capacity Theory and Feminist Security Studies

Our analysis of gendered contributions to state reconstruction in East Africa is anchored in two complementary theoretical perspectives: State Capacity Theory (SCT) and Feminist Security Studies (FSS). State Capacity Theory, classically advanced by Mann (1984), Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (1985), and later refined by Herbst (2000), emphasises the institutional, coercive, and infrastructural dimensions of state power, that is, the ability of states to implement decisions, enforce authority, and deliver public goods.

However, traditional applications of this framework have largely overlooked gender as a constitutive dimension of state legitimacy and capacity.

Feminist Security Studies, on the other hand, interrogates how gender relations shape definitions of power, security, and citizenship (Tickner, 2001; Enloe, 2014; Shepherd, 2016). Feminists expose the masculinised underpinnings of military and state-building processes, revealing how women's agency and participation challenge and expand conventional notions of security. The integration of FSS with SCT theories therefore enable a more holistic analytical model: one that links gendered participation to the structural resilience of postcolonial states.

In the East African context, this synthesis helps explain why countries that institutionalised gender mainstreaming in their security and governance frameworks (notably Rwanda and, to a lesser degree, Uganda) exhibit higher levels of post-conflict institutional cohesion and legitimacy (Burnet, 2012; Tripp, 2015). In contrast, Kenya and Tanzania where gender inclusion in defence and public administration remains largely symbolic continue to display lower levels of women's representation in core security decision-making and comparatively slower adoption of gender-responsive budgeting (UN Women, 2023).

### 2.2. Conceptualising Gendered State Reconstruction

State reconstruction after independence or conflict involves both the reconstitution of coercive authority and the rebuilding of legitimacy through inclusion and service delivery. Gendered participation operates at three interlinked levels:

- Institutional representation in military, police, and governance structures.
- Socio-political participation in liberation, peacebuilding, and civic mobilisation.
- Policy and fiscal gender-sensitive budget allocations and implementation of gender mainstreaming policies.

Empirically, the East African Gender Barometer (EASSI, 2022) and UNDP Governance Indicators (2023) show divergent outcomes: Rwanda records 61.3% female representation in Parliament and 30–40% in the military and police command structure, supported by a Gender Monitoring Office and a 5% budget threshold for gender equality initiatives in all ministries. Uganda maintains 35% parliamentary representation and about 20% participation in the UPDF, alongside gender-responsive budgeting provisions since

2015 under the Public Finance Management Act (Ministry of Finance, 2021). Kenya has 23% female MPs and limited integration of gender in defence and security budgets (National Gender Equality Commission, 2022). Tanzania, though committed to gender equity since the Arusha Declaration, allocates less than 2% of its annual defence and internal security budgets to women-focused initiatives (AfDB, 2023). These statistics illustrate the structural link between gender mainstreaming and state capacity where inclusion correlates with policy coherence, citizen trust, and security legitimacy.

### 2.3. Gender Mainstreaming and Budget Politics

The integration of gender in public budgeting what Goetz (2007) terms "gendered accountability", serves as a litmus test for the inclusivity of state reconstruction. Since the early 2000s, East African states have adopted gender budgeting frameworks inspired by the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and UNSCR 1325 (2000). Yet, the extent of implementation remains uneven and politically contested. In Uganda, parliamentary debates on gender-responsive budgeting reveal tensions between fiscal austerity and social inclusion. The 2022/23 national budget allocated UGX 1.27 trillion (about 4.3%) to gender and social development programmes, compared to UGX 4.8 trillion (16%) for defence and security (Ministry of Finance, 2023). Critics argue that while the rhetoric of inclusivity is strong, actual disbursements and accountability mechanisms lag behind (Kabahenda, 2022).

Rwanda, by contrast, has institutionalised Gender Budget Statements (GBS) across ministries since 2008, with measurable impact on women's participation in post-conflict economic recovery and peacekeeping (Rwanda Ministry of Finance, 2022). The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) now allocates specific funding lines for women's deployment in peace missions and reintegration programmes for female ex-combatants.

In Kenya and Tanzania, gender budget allocations remain marginal, with less than 1.5% of total sectoral budgets dedicated to women's empowerment in the security and governance sectors (OECD, 2023). Parliamentary debates often frame gender inclusion as a "soft policy" rather than a strategic component of state security and resilience (Kameri-Mbote, 2021). These fiscal patterns substantiate the central argument that gender mainstreaming is both a site of contestation and a measure of state capacity. States that institutionalise gendered accountability not only advance social justice but also reinforce legitimacy by aligning governance with broader citizen participation (Tripp, 2015; Bariyo, 2021).

### 2.4. Analytical Synthesis

By bringing together the macro-level insights of State Capacity Theory and the micro-political analysis of Feminist Security Studies, this study conceptualises gendered state reconstruction as a dynamic process through which power, legitimacy, and inclusion interact. Empirical evidence from East Africa shows that gender mainstreaming within military and governance structures is not merely symbolic it influences the efficiency of service delivery, the inclusivity of peacebuilding, and the moral authority of the state.

The analytical model proposed here therefore views gender not as an add-on variable but as a core indicator of postcolonial state resilience. States that neglect gendered participation risk reproducing structural exclusions that undermine both social cohesion and security effectiveness. Conversely, inclusive military and governance systems foster trust, responsiveness, and regional stability.

## 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 Research Design and Philosophical Orientation

This study adopts a mixed-method comparative research design, integrating historical–qualitative and policy–quantitative approaches to examine the gendered dimensions of military and state reconstruction processes in post-independence Africa. The design is anchored in historical institutionalism and feminist political analysis, both of which emphasize the co-evolution of state structures and gendered power relations over time (Waylen, 2014; Thelen, 1999).

The historical–qualitative component supports the exploration of the socio-political trajectories through which women and men contributed to military reforms, nation-building, and post-conflict reconstruction from the 1960s to the present. This entails a close reading of archival and documented and undocumented policy materials, oral histories, and institutional narratives to reconstruct gendered participation in state formation (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

The policy–quantitative component complements this by empirically assessing indicators such as gender representation in defence institutions, national parliaments, and public administration; post-conflict reintegration statistics; and gender-responsive budget allocations (Kabeer, 2012; Tripp, 2015). The mixed-method framework thus balances interpretive depth with empirical rigour, allowing for both contextual understanding and comparative generalization (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

### 3.2 Comparative Logic and Case Selection

The study employs a most-similar system design (MSSD) (Lijphart, 1971) to compare four post-independence African states Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda which share several structural similarities yet differ in trajectories of gender inclusion and post-conflict reconstruction.

Uganda represents a case of militarized post-conflict reconstruction characterized by women's mobilization through the National Resistance Movement and subsequent institutionalization of gender mainstreaming. Kenya offers a case of relatively stable state evolution with gradual integration of women into national defence and governance structures through constitutional reforms. Tanzania provides a model of early post-independence gender inclusion through the socialist Ujamaa policies and the legacy of the Tanzania People's Defence Force. Rwanda exemplifies a post-genocide transformation in which women assumed central roles in security sector reform and political reconstruction, leading to one of the world's highest female parliamentary representations (Burnet, 2012). These cases are chosen not only for their shared regional and historical context but also for their variation in gendered institutional outcomes, providing analytical leverage for identifying causal mechanisms linking gender participation to state reconstruction processes (Ragin, 1987; George & Bennett, 2005).

### 3.3 Data Sources and Empirical Material

This research employs a multi-layered empirical design integrating primary and secondary data: Primary Qualitative Data; Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Conducted with military officers, defence ministry officials, women's rights activists, and policymakers across the four countries. These captured experiential insights into gendered participation in state reconstruction and institutional reforms. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Organized with veterans' associations, women's cooperatives, and local leadership forums to explore collective memories of participation in liberation and reconstruction efforts. Ethnographic Observation: Undertaken during commemorative and policy events (e.g., Independence Day, Defence Forces Day, gender policy consultations) to capture discursive representations of gender roles in nation-building. Secondary and Archival Data; Archival records, post-independence government white papers, military statutes, and gender policy documents. Reports from the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), UN Women, and World Bank on gender and security reform. Scholarly literature,

biographical works, and media archives documenting women's roles in liberation struggles and state formation.

Quantitative and Policy Data; Statistical data on gender composition in military and security institutions (1962–2024). Gender-disaggregated data on education, political representation, and budget allocations to defence and social sectors. Indices such as the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Global Gender Gap Report, and World Governance Indicators (WGI) to operationalize comparative measures of gendered state capacity.

### 3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Given the exploratory and comparative nature of the study, purposive and stratified sampling techniques are employed (Patton, 2015). Key Informants (approx. 40–50): Selected based on institutional relevance, regional balance, and gender representation (e.g., 10–12 per country from defence institutions, government ministries, and civil society organizations). Focus Group Discussions: Two FGDs per country, each with 6–8 participants (balanced by gender and age), to ensure diversity in experiences of post-conflict or developmental participation. Document Selection: Guided by thematic relevance and historical periodization from independence through major military reforms (e.g., Uganda's NRA integration, Rwanda's post-1994 reforms, Kenya's 2010 Constitution, Tanzania's Ujamaa legacy). This sampling strategy ensures representation of gendered experiences while maintaining feasibility for in-depth comparative analysis.

### 3.5 Analytical Techniques:

The study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods strategy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), whereby qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed separately and then integrated for synthesis. Qualitative Analysis: Thematic coding of interview and FGD transcripts using NVivo to identify recurring motifs on gendered participation, institutional change, and post-conflict reintegration. Process tracing (Beach & Pedersen, 2013) to reconstruct historical sequences of reform and link them to shifts in gendered power dynamics. Discourse analysis of official speeches, national constitutions, and defence policy documents to uncover underlying gender ideologies in state-building narratives. Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics assessing trends in gender participation in security and governance institutions over time. Correlational analysis between gender representation and governance indicators (e.g., human development, corruption perception, political stability). Construction of comparative tables and graphs to

visualize gendered disparities and trajectories across countries. Integrative Synthesis Qualitative and quantitative findings are integrated through triangulation, facilitating a multidimensional understanding of how gendered contributions shape and are shaped by state reconstruction processes.

### 3.6 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Internal validity is ensured through methodological triangulation across data types (Denzin, 2012) and by cross-checking archival data with oral testimonies. Construct validity is reinforced by grounding analytical categories such as "gendered participation" and "state reconstruction"—in established feminist and institutionalist literature (Waylen, 2014; Goetz, 2020).

Reliability is maintained through detailed documentation of interview protocols, coding schemes, and data processing steps, enabling replication. External validity is achieved through the comparative scope, allowing cautious generalization to other post-independence African contexts. Ethically, informed consent will be sought from all participants, ensuring anonymity for sensitive testimonies, particularly from military personnel or survivors of conflict. The research adheres to the ethical standards of Makerere University's Research Ethics Committee and the African Studies Association's code of conduct.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Overview: Structural Similarities and Diverging Gendered Trajectories

Across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda the post-colonial states share important structural similarities that shape gendered outcomes in military and reconstruction roles: (a) a colonial legacy that militarized state institutions and shaped early officer corps recruitment; (b) recurring episodes of elite contestation and, in several cases, violent conflict that opened political space for non-traditional actors; and (c) post-1990s waves of international norm diffusion (gender mainstreaming, UN Women programs, and AU instruments) that pressured states to legislate gender inclusion (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Waylen, 2014). Despite these commonalities, the four countries display sharply divergent gender-inclusion trajectories in political representation, security-sector composition, and public-budget priorities differences that are analytically meaningful for understanding how gendered contributions shape state reconstruction. Here, I present a

comparative appraisal structured around (1) political representation and institutional power, (2) security-sector composition and careers, (3) gendered social indicators and budgets, and (4) the relationship between governance capacity and gendered state capacity.

### 4.2 Political Representation and Institutional Power

Rwanda stands apart as the clearest empirical example of exceptional female political representation in the post-conflict period. Since the post-1994 reconstruction and the 2003 constitution's gender provisions, women have occupied a majority of seats in Rwanda's Chamber of Deputies (roughly 60–64% in the most recent parliaments), a transformation well documented by national authorities and comparative databases (IPU; Le Monde) and widely discussed in the literature on post-genocide state building and gender quotas (Burnet, 2012). Rwanda's high parliamentary share has translated into pronounced female presence across ministerial and judicial positions, making political empowerment a salient mechanism through which women shaped reconstruction policy and security-sector reform (Le Monde, 2024; IPU, 2024).

By contrast, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania show more modest levels of female parliamentary representation and more path-dependent patterns for gender inclusion. Kenya's constitution and electoral reforms (notably the 2010 constitution) institutionalized measures intended to increase women's political representation, but progress has been incremental: recent IPU data identify lower-chamber female representation in the low-to-mid 20s percent range (about 23% in the National Assembly at the time of the most recent reporting). Uganda and Tanzania display higher parliamentary female shares than many global averages, but they stop short of Rwanda's parity: Uganda's reported parliamentary share has generally hovered around the low-to-mid 30s percent in recent years (World Bank/IPU series), while Tanzania's combination of reserved (special) seats and party mechanisms pushes its parliamentary female share into the high 20s–30s percent range (IPU; UN Women, 2024). These patterns suggest that constitutional or quota mechanisms (Tanzania, Rwanda) and post-conflict reconfiguration (Rwanda) are stronger predictors of high female legislative representation than slow, incremental legal reform alone (IPU, 2024; UN Women, 2024).

Key empirical anchors: IPU and World Bank gender-parliament series confirm Rwanda's exceptional position and show Kenya (≈23%), Uganda (≈30–34% in recent years), and Tanzania (≈30% with special seats) occupying varied intermediate positions

(IPU; World Bank, 2024). Parline+2Parline+2. Beyond representation metrics, gender mainstreaming shapes state capacity through its effects on human capital, fiscal priorities, and institutional trust. The data reveals that countries with higher gender parity in education and public employment, such as Rwanda and Tanzania, also exhibit higher World Governance Index scores for government effectiveness (World Bank, 2024). Conversely, where budget allocations prioritize defence over social sectors, gender gaps persist, weakening bureaucratic efficiency and policy delivery (World Economic Forum, 2024). These correlations affirm the argument that inclusive governance enhances administrative reach, reduces patronage, and strengthens policy coherence of dimensions central to state capacity (Mann, 1984; Evans, 1995).

**Table 1: Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)**

| Year | Rwanda (%) | Uganda (%) | Kenya (%) | Tanzania (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2000** | 17.0 | 18.5 | 8.1 | 8.0 |
| **2005** | 38.0 | 20.3 | 9.7 | 15.2 |
| **2010** | 56.3 | 27.2 | 9.8 | 25.0 |
| **2015** | 63.8 | 30.6 | 19.6 | 36.7 |
| **2020** | 61.3 | 34.0 | 21.5 | 36.0 |
| **2024** | 60.5 | 32.5 | 23.3 | 35.1 |

### 4.3 Security Sector Composition: Women in The Military and Police

The security sector reveals the sharpest divergence between political representation and operational inclusion. Political gains (especially in Rwanda) are not always matched by proportional gains in military and police careers. Reliable, consistent long-run time series (1962–2024) for women's share in the professional armed forces are sparse; where contemporary snapshots exist they point to three empirical claims:

Rwanda: The government has pursued deliberate gender mainstreaming in security institutions since the post-1994 reconstruction, and academic assessments find institutional efforts to increase female recruitment and gender units in the RDF. However, scholarship also notes societal and cultural barriers that limit voluntary enlistment, such that military share of women remains substantially lower than parliamentary representation (Burnet, 2012; research on RDF gendering). ResearchGate+1

Uganda: Recent reporting and defence-sector commentary indicate that women remain a small minority in the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). Media and defence-sector reporting in 2024–2025 cite figures ranging from ~4% (combat force figure in 2025 reporting) to higher percentages in some support and police services, while police

statistics (Uganda Police Force) reported by regional gender studies show higher female shares (APCOF cites UPF women at ~18.3%) a pattern consistent with women clustering in policing and civilian security functions rather than in front-line combat roles. The difference between UPDF and UPF percentages illustrates occupational segmentation within the broader security sector. Pulse Uganda+1

Kenya and Tanzania: National data are more fragmented. Kenya's constitutional text and public sector employment norms have been interpreted to encourage female recruitment across state services, but the armed forces' numeric female share remains modest (single-digit to low-teens in most published snapshots). Tanzania's TPDF has undergone gender-sensitivity and recruitment initiatives; UN Women reporting indicates progress in civil service and parliamentary representation, and sectoral studies show modest increases in TPDF female leadership roles, but again long-run series are limited. Where exact military percentages are not publicly updated, researchers rely on defense white papers, NGO reports, or national personnel reports (ISS, UN Women, national defence publications). Institute for Security Studies+1

The divergence between political power (parliament) and military representation suggests that (a) formal political quotas do not automatically translate into operational/occupational equality in the security sector; (b) recruitment pipelines, occupational cultures, and gendered social norms strongly condition women's access to military careers; and (c) state capacity to reshape security career structures requires deliberate personnel policies, targeted recruitment, and institutional incentives beyond legislative quotas (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Waylen, 2014).

### 4.4 Social Indicators, Gender Indices and Budget Priorities

To operationalize "gendered state capacity" we combine political and security composition with comparative social indicators and fiscal priorities. Three indices and fiscal measures help clarify cross-country differences: Global Gender Gap (WEF) and Gender Inequality Index (UNDP): Rwanda ranks substantially higher on several WEF Global Gender Gap measures relative to its peers while the 2024 Global Gender Gap report placed Rwanda among the better performing African states (though rankings shifted year-to-year), Uganda and the other East African peers occupy more mixed positions (World Economic Forum, 2024). UNDP's GII tables further reflect heterogeneity: some East African states register gains on education and political empowerment but lag on reproductive health and

labour market parity (UNDP GII data). These indices corroborate the qualitative pattern: Rwanda's political empowerment of women is a major driver of its gender indices, while other countries show uneven performance across the four subdomains (WEF; UNDP). World Economic Forum+1. Education and Human-Capital Indicators: Across the four countries, gender gaps in primary and increasingly in secondary education have narrowed substantially since independence a long-term structural change that supplies a larger pool of educated women able to access civil service and political roles (World Bank gender data; UNESCO). However, educated women's transition into security careers is mediated by recruitment norms and institutional gatekeeping (Kabeer, 2012).

Budget Allocations: Defence Vs Social Sectors: Comparative budgetary trends (defence spending as % of GDP; social sector spending; gender-responsive budget line items) reveal tradeoffs and policy priorities. Where states prioritize security spending (e.g., in active post-conflict recovery or counter-insurgency), limited resources for gender-sensitive services (childcare, reintegration programmes, gender-based violence prevention) can inhibit women's labour market participation and re-integration. Detailed country budgets show important differences over time (World Bank/WDI; national budget documents), but cross-country comparison is complicated by differing budget classifications and off-budget security expenditures (World Bank WGI / national budget sources). World Bank+1

Empirically, Rwanda's post-genocide state devoted resources to targeted reconstruction and reintegration programs that included women's economic empowerment and political inclusion; this pursuit of gendered reconstruction has measurable correlates in its high share of women in parliament and improved performance on certain Global Gender Gap sub-indices (Burnet, 2012; WEF, 2024). By contrast, Uganda's heavy security spending and the historical dominance of the UPDF in national politics produce a political economy environment where security priorities can crowd out the institutional reforms needed to increase women's operational access to military careers (Pulse reporting on UPDF gender balance, APCOF policing data). Le Monde.fr+2Pulse Uganda+2

**Table 2: Defence vs Social Spending (% of GDP**

| Country | Military Exp (% GDP) | Education Exp (% GDP) | Health Exp (% GDP) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rwanda | 2.5 | 4.2 | 6.0 |
| Uganda | 2.8 | 3.6 | 5.2 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kenya | 1.5 | 5.1 | 4.4 |
| Tanzania | 1.3 | 4.5 | 4.9 |

**4.5 Synthesis: Pathways from Gendered Contribution to Reconstruction Outcomes**

Bringing the comparative evidence together suggests three interrelated causal pathways linking gendered contributions to the quality and durability of state reconstruction: Representation → Policy influence pathway: High female presence in legislatures (Rwanda) correlates with visible gender-sensitive legislative agendas, stronger gender mainstreaming in national policy, and higher prioritization of social reconstruction programs. Political representation here is a lever for shaping reconstruction priorities and for institutionalizing gender norms in state apparatuses (Burnet, 2012; IPU data). Parline

Recruitment & occupational pipeline pathway: Where recruitment, career-development, and occupational cultures are reformed (explicit recruitment targets, family-friendly service policies, gender units), women's operational roles in security forces expand, with downstream effects on the gender responsiveness of security operations. In most cases studied, such reforms have been slow and partial (RDF efforts; Uganda's police showing higher female shares than UPDF), indicating that occupational reform is the crucial bottleneck to convert political gains into operational parity (research on RDF & APCOF reporting). ResearchGate+1

Capacity and budget pathway: Fiscal priorities condition the capacity of states to implement gender-sensitive reconstruction (e.g., reintegration of ex-combatants, psychosocial services, childcare for female personnel). Countries with coordinated post-conflict reconstruction budgets that explicitly include gender components (Rwanda) show better co-movement between political representation and social outcomes; countries where security spending predominates (certain phases in Uganda and Kenya) show weak translation of political gains into operational equality. The World Bank and national budget documents reflect these tradeoffs and limitations (World Bank WGI; national fiscal reports). World Bank

**Table 3: Summary of Comparative Indicators per Country**

| Country | Women Parliament (%)2024 | Military Exp (%t GDP) 2023 | Global Gender Gap Score 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rwanda | 63.8 | 1.2662 | 0.805 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Uganda | 33.93 | 1.9821 | 0.7249 |
| Kenya | 23.4 | 0.90582 | 0.712 |
| Tanzania | 37.8 | 1.1517 | 0.734 |

### 4.6 Limitations and Data Caveats

Three methodological limitations are salient: Historical time-series gaps for military gender composition: Long-run (1962–2024) disaggregated data on women in the armed forces are unevenly reported by national ministries and often omitted from standard international databases. Researchers must therefore rely on a mix of official defence white papers, NGO/UN reporting, and journalistic snapshots a limitation that constrains precise longitudinal claims about the military occupational gender share. Where possible, this study triangulates fragmented series with qualitative interview evidence and police data (which are often better reported). (Pulse Uganda; APCOF; RDF literature). Pulse Uganda+2apcof.org+2. Comparability of fiscal categories: Defence and social sector classifications differ across national budgets and across time; off-budget security items complicate strict cross-country fiscal comparisons. I therefore rely on normalized indicators (defence spending % of GDP, social spending % of GDP) while noting classification caveats (World Bank WDI; national budget documents). DataBank

Indigeneity and causal inference: Political representation, social indicators, and security-sector composition evolve in mutually constitutive ways. While the comparative design (MSSD) and process tracing help identify plausible mechanisms, causal claims should remain cautious and framed as conditional on institutional forms (quotas, recruitment rules), historical shocks (conflict/post-conflict), and policy choices (gender budgeting).

### 4.7 Concluding Reading of the Findings

Empirically, the four countries illustrate a spectrum: Rwanda shows the strongest alignment of political empowerment with reconstruction outcomes; Tanzania exhibits moderate gains mediated by legacy socialist institutions and quota mechanisms; Uganda presents a case of political representation gains in some spheres but persistent occupational segregation within the security sector; and Kenya stands as a medium-progress case shaped by constitutional reform but constrained by institutional culture and slow recruitment reform. In short, political quotas and formal representation matter, but they are not sufficient to produce gender-equal security sectors or to fully mainstream gender into

reconstruction without complementary personnel reforms, budgetary commitments, and cultural change (Waylen, 2014; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis underscores that gendered contributions to military and state reconstruction are both symbolic and structural. While Rwanda and Uganda demonstrate that institutionalized gender quotas and post-conflict reforms can yield inclusive governance, Kenya and Tanzania reveal the persistence of structural constraints linked to fiscal priorities and social norms. Sustainable progress requires integrating gender-sensitive planning within broader state capacity frameworks.

Key policy recommendations include: Developing reintegration programs for women veterans and ex-combatants. Balancing budget allocations between defence and social development, emphasizing gender-responsive budgeting. Strengthening independent oversight institutions and gender recruitment laws to protect women's rights. Establishing regional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and engendered budgeting through the EAC and AU frameworks. Aligning national policies with international standards such as UNSCR 1325 to ensure institutional accountability and inclusivity.

This comparative study of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda demonstrates that gendered contributions to military and state reconstruction are both structurally conditioned and politically contingent. Across the four cases, long-term structural factors — colonial recruitment legacies, occupational norms in security forces, and the political economy of post-conflict reconstruction set strong constraints on whether formal advances in political representation translate into operational equality in the security sector. At the same time, policy choices and institutional designs (quota laws, recruitment rules, targeted reintegration programming, budget prioritization) produce sharply different outcomes: Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction shows how coordinated institutional reform, dedicated financing, and political will can produce rapid gains in political representation and measurable advances in gendered reconstruction outcomes; by contrast, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania show mixed or partial translations of political gains into meaningful security-sector parity because occupational pipelines, budget priorities and organizational cultures were less recalibrated (Burnet, 2012; Waylen, 2014).

Three theoretical and empirical lessons follow. First, representation is necessary but not sufficient: quotas and parliamentary gains create policy windows and improve the normative environment for gender reform, but without complementary personnel and

budgetary reforms they will not close occupational segregation in militaries and police (UNSCR 1325; AU Strategy for GEWE, 2018–2028). Second, fiscal choices structure implementation — countries that align reconstruction budgets with gender-sensitive programmes (reparations, livelihoods, psychosocial services, childcare and family support) are better placed to convert political empowerment into social outcomes (World Bank; GRB literature). Third, DDR/reintegration processes have historically excluded women unless explicitly designed to be gender-responsive; incorporating women's specific needs and contributions (including roles as supporters, combatants, abductees, care-providers) is essential to durable reconstruction (UN Women; IDDRS 5.10; UNIDIR guidance). These lessons point to a policy architecture that treats gender as a cross-cutting structural axis (legal, fiscal, organizational, and regional), not merely as an add-on. (References supporting these conclusions: UNSCR 1325 (2000); AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018–2028; UN Women DDR guidance; IDDRS 5.10 on Women, Gender & DDR; World Bank guidance on gender-responsive budgeting.) Open Knowledge World Bank+4Security Council Report+4African Union+4

## 6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are prioritized, concrete policy measures for national governments, security institutions, and regional organizations (AU, EAC) to advance gender-inclusive military and state reconstruction. Each recommendation includes immediate actions, institutional leads, indicative costs/financing options, and measurable M&E indicators.

### 6.1 Design and Scale Gender-Responsive Reintegration Programmes for Women

Women (ex-combatants, abductees, wives and caregivers) have specific reintegration needs—livelihoods, childcare, psychosocial care, stigma reduction, and legal redress—that are commonly overlooked in DDR packages (IDDRS 5.10; UN Women). Gender-responsive reintegration strengthens social cohesion and reduces recidivism. UNDDR+1

Create dedicated Women's Reintegration Units (WRUs) within national DDR agencies or the relevant ministry (e.g., Ministry of Gender/Ministry of Defence joint unit). WRUs should co-design services with women's organizations and survivors. Offer a modular package: vocational training + guaranteed seed capital (microgrants), trauma-informed psychosocial support, legal aid, and community reconciliation programming. Use

conditional cash transfers where appropriate to stabilize households during reintegration. Make reintegration community-centred: fund local cooperatives and women's savings groups to absorb ex-combatants' skills and reduce stigma.
1.4 Pilot a "women's reintegration voucher" tied to accredited training and small business support; evaluate with randomized or quasi-experimental design in two districts over 18–24 months.

Indicative financing and partners: reallocate a small share of reconstruction funds, donor pooled funds (UN Women/UNDP), and AU complementarity grants (AU GEWE instruments). Cost-estimate templates: start with a USD 1–3 million pilot per country (adapt to population scale). M&E indicators (minimum): percentage of female ex-combatants accessing services; employment/self-employment rate 12 months post-intervention; psychosocial well-being scale change (baseline → 12 months); community acceptance index. (Data required: program registries; household follow-ups; KAP surveys.) UNDDR+1

**6.2 Rebalance budget allocations using gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to engender security and social development priorities**

Budgets determine implementation. GRB ensures that defence, social protection, and reconstruction budgets reflect differentiated impacts on women and men and funds essential services that enable women's full participation in security institutions and public life (World Bank; UN Women GRB guidance). World Bank Blogs+1

Mandate a gender budget statement in national budgets that documents how defence, reintegration, and social reconstruction spending addresses gendered needs (adopt PEFA/GRB templates). Require ministries of finance to publish gender-budget notes alongside budget proposals. Introduce ring-fenced budget lines for women's reintegration, gender units in defence institutions, family support for female personnel (childcare subsidies, maternity benefits), and GBV prevention in conflict-affected areas. Condition donor reconstruction funding on GRB compliance and gendered M&E results; establish donor-government pooled funds for gendered reconstruction. Train parliamentary budget committees in GRB (short courses, toolkits, guidebooks) to strengthen legislative oversight. M&E indicators (minimum): share of national reconstruction budget with explicit gender components; % of defence budget allocated to gender units/training/benefits; public reporting of gender budget statement; budget execution rates for gender lines. (Use PEFA/GRB checklists.) Open Knowledge World Bank+1

### 6.3 Strengthen Legal Frameworks and Independent Oversight for Women's Recruitment, Career Progression, and Rights in Security Institutions

Legal protections and oversight prevent discrimination and ensure parity of opportunity. Without independent monitoring, recruitment targets and anti-discrimination rules are often poorly enforced (UNSCR 1325; AU GEWE). Security Council Report+1

Enact or amend national legislation to prohibit gender discrimination in recruitment, promotions, and assignments in armed forces and police; include explicit provisions for maternity leave, family support, and protections against sexual harassment and assault. Establish an Independent Security Sector Gender Ombudsperson (ISSGO) or strengthen existing national human rights institutions to monitor compliance with recruitment targets, grievance handling, and disciplinary procedures. ISSGO should have subpoena power to access personnel records for auditing. Require defence and police forces to publish annual Gender Equality Reports with disaggregated data (recruitment by rank and role, retention rates, complaints and outcomes, training statistics). Public transparency increases accountability and creates political incentives for reform. Integrate gender competencies into standard military/police professional education (command courses, leadership training) and create career pathways that recognize non-combat contributions (civil-military liaison, community policing, human-rights units). M&E indicators (minimum): existence of anti-discrimination law covering security forces; number of institutions with published gender equality reports; change in female recruitment/retention by rank; complaints resolved ratio; percentage of senior leadership with gender-sensitivity training certificates. African Union Peace and Security+1

### 6.4 Develop Regional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming and Engendered Budgets (AU/EAC Model) Using Existing Continental Instruments

Gendered reconstruction is cross-border (refugees, insurgencies, transnational recruitment). Regional coordination creates economies of scale for training, harmonized norms, and pooled financing mechanisms (AU GEWE Strategy 2018–2028, AU DDR operational guidelines). African Union+1 AU/EAC joint framework: implement the AU GEWE Strategy (2018–2028) at regional/regulatory level by establishing a regional Gender & Security Platform to harmonize DDR reintegration standards, share best practices (e.g., women's reintegration voucher), and coordinate donor funding. Create a regional GRB facility (AU/EAC) to support member states' gender budget statement preparation, capacity

building for ministries of finance, and pilot cross-border social protection schemes for female ex-combatants and displaced women. Standardize gender-disaggregated reporting for defence and DDR across the region (harmonized data definitions, joint dashboards) to permit cross-country benchmarking and peer review. Use AU's operational DDR guidance for women as a template. Promote regional professional exchanges (military academies, police colleges) that mainstream gender into curricula, with scholarship quotas for women officers and cross-posting of gender advisors. M&E indicators (minimum): number of member states with harmonized GRB templates; regional fund disbursed; number of cross-border reintegration pilots; existence of a regional gender & security dashboard with regularly updated indicators. African Union+1

### 6.5 Institutionalize Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) Plus Research Partnerships

To move from pilot projects to system change, continually measured evidence is critical. Concrete measures. Require all programmes (national + donor) to embed MEL plans with gender-sensitive indicators, baseline surveys, midline and end line evaluations, and a public lessons-learned repository. Fund independent impact evaluations (randomized/quasi-experimental where feasible). Build national research partnerships (universities, think-tanks, gender institutes) to sustain longitudinal tracking of women's military inclusion, reintegration outcomes, and budget execution. Institutionalize an annual Gender & Security Scorecard published jointly by the AU and a trusted research partner (e.g., UN Women/UNDP) measuring political representation, security-sector inclusion, GRB compliance, and reintegration outcomes. M&E indicators (minimum): existence of MEL plan; number of independent evaluations published; availability of annual Gender & Security Scorecard. UNDP+1

### 6.6 Implementation Sequencing and Risk Mitigation

Short term (0–12 months): set up WRUs as pilots; require gender budget statements for next fiscal cycle; enact interim transparency rules (annual gender report) for security institutions. Medium term (12–36 months): scale WRUs nationwide; legislate recruitment protections and establish ISSGO; run GRB trainings for parliament & ministry of finance; begin regional pilots via AU/EAC. Long term (36+ months): institutionalize GRB in law;

formalize regional GRB facility and the Gender & Security Scorecard; mainstream gender in security career ladders and curricula.

Risk mitigation; Political resistance from security establishments: use phased, incentive-based approaches (performance grants, international technical assistance) and pair reforms with leadership training and buy-in from senior commanders. Budgetary constraints: prioritize cost-effective interventions that unlock multiplier effects (childcare for female personnel increases retention; small grants linked to microenterprise). Use donor co-financing for pilots. Data gaps: begin by institutionalizing minimum data standards (disaggregated HR records) and partner with

National trajectories in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda demonstrate that gender-inclusive reconstruction is not an automatic by-product of formal political representation: it requires coordinated institutional redesign, targeted financing, legal protections, and regional cooperation. Where these elements coalesce as in Rwanda's post-conflict architecture women's political empowerment has tangible effects on reconstruction priorities and social outcomes. To generalize such gains across East Africa, policymakers must invest in gender-responsive DDR/reintegration, rebalance budget priorities through GRB, strengthen independent oversight of recruitment and women's rights in security institutions, and institutionalize regional mechanisms for harmonized policy and financing (UNSCR 1325; AU GEWE Strategy; UN Women; World Bank GRB guidance). Implemented together, these measures will help convert symbolic representation into operational parity and sustainable peace. Open Knowledge World Bank+3Security Council Report+3African Union+3. AU/UN agencies for capacity building.

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