

'Reconstructing a Policing System out of the Ashes: Rwanda's Solution,'

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Civil war (1990-94) and genocide (1994) left the Rwandan government with a daunting task in re-establishing internal security. The policing model they have pursued, reflecting their regime ideology, is a hybrid one. It combines a modern professional and disciplined police force with the informal social control mechanisms of popular justice. The article, based on two months fieldwork in 2006, demonstrates that the model has provided an effective, popular and universally accessible policing that is not resource intensive. Yet its success has to be tempered by reflection that civil liberties have been compromised by an intrusive surveillance at the local level and by repressive responses to anything perceived as opposition to the ruling party at the national level. Rwanda's special circumstances make listing durable substantive lessons with widespread applicability unwise. But there is a case for re-examining the potential of using informal security structures with varying degrees of connection to the state in the overall national internal security strategy.