

The Structure of Rwanda Genocide: Focusing on Mobilization of People and Their Participation

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In 1994, the Rwanda genocide killed more than a half million people in only three months. It is often argued that ethnic conflicts between the Tutsi and the Hutu led to this tragedy. It is true that the conflicts between the two ethnic groups formed the political background of the genocide, but at the same time most people had lived in harmony before the genocide started. We therefore need to analyze how the friendly ethnic relations among these people suddenly broke down through the agitation by Hutu hardliners.

By connecting two movements of the Hutu hardliners and ordinary people, we will find the fact that the Rwanda genocide was escalated by a number of factors. The genocide was started by an attack against Tutsi people led by Hutu regional leaders, but at this stage they did not have the ability to kill hundreds of thousands of people. The massacre was escalated only after poor Hutu people, who wanted to obtain land or money by the genocide, took part in the attack. I argue that both mobilization of people and their participation were necessary to execute the genocide. In fact, a large scale massacres amounting to genocide could be executed with the constant mobilization by regional leaders and through the even larger participation of Hutu people who feared the punishment against them if they refused to take part in the killing. The Rwanda genocide was a dynamic movement that had developed into extensive massacres stage by stage and gave rise to the tragedy that “a neighbor became a killer”.