

The International Structure of the Ethnic Conflict in Rwanda: From 1959 to 1962

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This article describes the influence of international structure on Rwanda's ethnic conflict during the "Social Revolution" and the decolonization period between 1959 and 1962. Previous studies regard this period as the start of the Tutsi-Hutu conflict in Rwanda and treat the ethnic conflict of the period from perspectives of both domestic and international politics. Studies on the domestic politics of Rwanda analyze the process by which the Tutsi and the Hutu came to antagonize each other, the reason why the Belgian local administration supported the Hutu, and its influence on the domestic conflict. On the other hand, studies analyzing Rwanda from the perspective of international politics describe the way in which the United Nations Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly became involved in the decolonization of Rwanda and put pressure on Belgium in order to achieve Rwanda's independence. Previous studies, however, have not paid sufficient attention to the international relations concerning Rwanda and its interaction with Rwandan domestic conflict. In particular, the policy of the Belgian government toward Rwanda requires further discussion.

By focusing on the policy of the Belgian government and Rwanda's international relations, this article complements previous studies with how international structure affected the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. The following three points are of particular importance. Firstly, the Belgian government supported the Hutu in order to "democratize" Rwanda and establish Rwanda as an independent country under Belgian influence. The Belgians pursued this objective, even applying international pressure. Secondly, the discussions at the General Assembly and the idea of Trusteeship system contributed to worsening the ethnic conflict in Rwanda. And thirdly, the Tutsi and

the Hutu initially did not oppose each other as different ethnic groups and therefore had several opportunities to cooperate. They, however, ended up gradually antagonizing each other along ethnic lines, because the international structure, which the Belgium and the United Nations produced, deprived the Rwandans of the opportunities.