

The Influence of Western Involvement on Rwanda Ethnic Conflicts

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I. Introduction

1. Motivation & Background

On a television show, I saw an incident report about the Rwanda genocide. The pictures of heads piling up and the photos of the slaughtering tools scattered deeply shocked me in front of the screen. I thought repeatedly about what caused the Rwanda residents to vent their hatred on each other and evolved into mutual killings that have caused 800,000 people to be killed and 4 million people to be homeless. We can't help but wonder why people are killing each other like this. What are the reasons behind these problems? Thus, with a sense of curiosity, the Rwanda incident has become the subject of our essay.

2. Research Purposes

The Rwanda incident did not receive much attention in Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwan's textbooks did not mention this matter. Many people only know that there is a country called Rwanda, but they do not know that there have been historical tragedies in this country. By writing this essay, we hope that we can not only know more about the process of the Rwanda incident, but also further study the background and the influence of the involvement of Western forces on the incident.

II. Body

1. The Difference between Hutu and Tutsis

Rwanda did not have a very clear racial distinction at first, although in the 16th century, the Hutu tribe surrendered themselves to the Tutsi without fighting, and the Tutsi established a feudal kingdom. However, the two ethnic groups were basically the same in terms of cultural customs and language. The differences were mainly the status, power and lifestyles. The Tutsi people engaged in grazing and the Hutu people engaged in farming. However, the two ethnic groups were able to marry each other. The poor Tutsi would become Hutu, and the rich Hutu would be promoted to Tutsi. Tutsi and Hutu are more about class distinctions between the two parties.

Until 1890, the Germans occupied Rwanda, and the colonists distinguished Rwanda from European racial distinctions. They declared that the Tutsi were herders from the north, who were whiter and higher; on the other hand, the Hutu were Southern farmers, who were darker and shorter. The Germans used this distinction to control a small number of Tutsi so as to manage the entire Rwanda. The Belgians formally identified the Tutsi and Hutu as two different races by measuring the nose width, height, skin color, education and even family property of the locals.

Table. 1 The difference between Hutu and Tutsis

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	HUTU	TUTSIS
Skin tone	darker	whiter
Height	shorter	taller
Appearance	wide nose	prominent nose
Origin	southern farmer	herders from the north
Career	slave	king , warrior or chief
Education Level	low	high
Property	poor	wealthy
Social Status	inferiority	superiority
Population	80%	15%
Social Identity	vassal	ruler
Number of Cattle	<10	>10

資料來源：作者自行製作

2. Definition of Racial Discrimination and Racial Conflicts

(1) Racial Discrimination

To put it simply, racial discrimination is a skeptical attitude towards people of different cultures or different appearances. It is considered that the status of superior species

is higher than that of inferior breeders and even despise them. Basically, no one is born with racial discrimination. If no one instills in him the idea of racial discrimination, then he will not become a racially discriminator. (黃聖閔，2019)

(2) Racial Conflicts

Racial conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious, the individuals in conflict must expressly fight for their ethnic group's position within society. It can be both destructive and cohesive while playing as a basic process in social life. In some situations, it can be destructive for some groups and act as a cohesive force for others. Racial and ethnic groups may be the source and the result of the two faces of social conflict, acting as a boundary marker between groups that see themselves as distinctive in their interests and values from other such groups. (Wikipedia)

Compared with racial conflict, genocide is intolerable. Genocide means to exterminate a certain ethnic group step by step, with various methods. Usually, crazy and powerful people make a decision, kill everyone in other ethnic groups in an extremely cruel way. Minority ethnic groups are usually the focus. History tells us that minorities (ethnic minorities) are often persecuted. Hutu massacres of Tutsi also occurred in the Republic of Rwanda; the latter was supported by European countries and opposed the former. These two groups had frequent wars during the colonization of the Great Lakes region of Rwanda by Belgium. (黃聖閔，2019)

3. The Belgium Government

(1) Stance

In 1890, the Brussels Conference put Rwanda and Burundi under the German Empire, symbolizing the beginning of the colonial era of Rwanda. During the reign of the Germans (1890-1918), the social structure of the Kingdom of Rwanda did not change drastically. Instead, they influenced the kingdom by supporting the king and delegating power to local chiefs. After the First World War, Germany was defeated and Belgium gained control of the Rwanda and Burundi regions and began a more direct colonial rule there.

In order to facilitate the rule of colonies, colonialism usually divides the local people. (黃聖閔，2019)

The Belgian colonial government also used the Tutsi to rule Rwanda, which led to the Hutu's serious resent and hatred. Under the rule of Belgium, the power structure was simplified and more concentrated. Both German and Belgian colonialism had strengthened the Tutsi, which treated Tutsi and Hutu as different races.

(2) Policies and Action

In the recent past, there was a regional and ethnic quota system for government jobs and positions in institutions of higher education. According to existing (although largely undeclared) government policy, the ethnic and regional share of jobs and positions in educational institutions reflected the demographic composition of each region and ethnic group.

- Policy of using foreigners to subdue foreigners:

The Belgian government believes that the Tutsis look similar to Europeans. Because of their light skin color and high noses, it believes that its ethnic identity is better than Hutu. Since then, the Tutsi have become a tool of European indirect rule. Then give the Tutsi people who are closer to the power class to implement apartheid in education, work, and residence.

- Identity card system:

In 1935, Belgium introduced a new identity card system, which indicated that the cardholder was a Tutsi, Hutu, Twa or a naturalized person. Moreover, this identity was passed on from generation to generation, and descendants could not change their identity. Intermarriage and racial conversion were virtually prohibited. In the past, those especially wealthy Hutu people still had the possibility of becoming Tutsi in reputation, but the new identity card system made it impossible for any change between different classes.

Rwandese citizens had to carry identity cards which indicated their ethnic origin. Government critics had, in the past, claimed that this identity card system was used mainly to discriminate against the Tutsis.

- Marriage Policy:

The policy of prohibiting intermarriage also makes the separation and opposition between the two races even more serious. Ethnic integration that could have been achieved through intermarriage has disappeared.

(3) Problems

After the Second World War, the United Nations took over the colonies, and Belgium followed the instructions of the United Nations to assist Rwanda in founding the country. After leaving, Belgium still adhered to the principle of "majority rule" and returned the regime to the Hutu ethnic group, which was the majority. After Rwanda got rid of Belgian rule and became independent in 1962, the government failed to properly deal with the issue of antagonism between ethnic groups. Even the Tutsi adopted a policy of racial

discrimination, which led to increasing hatred among the Tutsi ethnic group, escalating the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

We find that the Belgian government had sowed the seeds of the Holocaust, and the Rwandan government's takeover did not narrow the gap between the two ethnic groups; instead, it had sped antagonism, hatred and discrimination, and hastened the massacre in the end.

4. The Process of Rwanda Massacre

After gaining power, The Hutu could not suppress the grief that had been hidden for many years, and began various revenge against the Tutsi. In the beginning, a civil war happened in 1990, and finally a massacre broke out in 1994. The fuse of the Rwanda massacre was on April 6, 1994. An aircraft carrying a Hutu president was shot down near Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Both Hutu presidents were killed. It remained unknown that who shot down the passenger plane. Some pointed out the Tutsi guerrillas, and there were rumors that Hutu radicals had planned the assassination. The Hutu people in power at that time generally believed that this was a conspiracy of the Tutsi people, which reignited the old hatred of these two races. Therefore, in Rwanda, crazy bloody revenge was launched against the Tutsi people, and then the nationwide massacre began. In just three months, the Hutu people recklessly killed the Tutsi and Hutu right wing. The massacre involved Hutu military, militia groups, and numerous self-organized Hutu people. In 100 days, about 1 million people were slaughtered, about one-seventh of them were Tutsi, and 250,000 Tutsi women were raped.

Although the whole incident seemed to be a racial conflict within the country, in fact, many western countries should also take on the responsibility behind this conflicts and huge casualties. According to research from anthropologists, originally the Tutsi and Hutu peoples should not be divided into two different races. It was the colonial policy of the Belgian government that has caused hatred between the two ethnic groups. At first, Belgium was involved in the civil war, but later it withdrew from the country, taking away all the weapons, on the grounds that 10 Belgian soldiers were killed. In 2000, Belgian Prime Minister Wechvstad apologized for failing to stop the massacre immediately.

As a permanent member of the UN, the United States got involved in the civil war in Somalia two years before the massacre in Rwanda; however, it failed due to the strong resistance of the local forces, causing many casualties and being condemned by European and the third world countries. Therefore, the US did not want to get involved in this conflict. In the end, the United States did not intervene in time, but on July 15, 1994, it announced that it would no longer acknowledge the Rwanda Hutu government, and also announced that it would provide \$ 100 million as assistance for Rwanda refugees.

In order to avoid political crisis, then US President Clinton even announced that there was no massacre in Rwanda. However, public opinions flooded in and President Clinton had

to apologize publicly in 1998. As for the Great Britain, it was always on the side with the United States and did not sent troops to assist Rwanda.

France, which had huge benefits in Africa, had a close relationship with the Hutu government before the massacre. Supporting the Hutu regime, France even sent paratroopers to participate in the Rwanda civil war directly, setting up obstacles to prevent Tutsi soldiers from entering Tutsi gathering areas to protect civilians, and even provided shelter for suspects. Afterwards, France launched an investigation in 1998 and proved that France was not guilty.

In addition to investigating the massacre, France also investigated the air crash and pointed out that the person who shot down the presidential plane that year was Kagame, who later became President of Rwanda. After the investigation, and the two countries broke up. Later, diplomatic relations resumed in 2009, France immediately admitted to making a major mistake, but did not apologize and respond to the accusation made by the Rwanda authorities. French President Marc Macron promised to investigate France's responsibilities within two years and planned to mark a national anniversary on April, 7th .

In fact, the United Nations had predicted the massacre after the civil war, but it did not do anything. The United Nations found that the civil war in Rwanda had begun and that the maintenance forces had been attacked and the situation was beyond control. Coupled with the unwillingness to send troops, the United Nations was forced to start withdrawing from the maintenance forces. On April 21, 1994, the UN Security Council passed *Resolution 912*, reducing the 1,500 soldiers originally stationed in Rwanda to 217 , and authorized them to mediate the ceasefire and provide humanitarian assistance.

At the time, the United Nations was indifferent to how the Rwanda genocide was calmed down, and its attitude was very negative. It only sent about 260 peacekeepers to Rwanda for symbolic assistance. What's more, the Belgian government is much more indifferent to how the Rwanda genocide subsided. They even withdrew all the troops stationed in Rwanda and took away a large number of weapons. These undoubtedly made Rwanda out of order during that period, which brought a great negative impact, and the scars left in the hearts of the people of Rwanda could no longer be recovered.

5. The Impact on Rwanda

(1) Society:

The massacre in Rwanda has had a huge impact on Rwanda society. This massacre killed a total of one million people, which directly reduced the population of Rwanda by one-eighth, resulting in a shortage of labor in Rwanda, increasing the factors of national and social unrest. As a result of the numerous killings, there were a large number of widows and children. Nearly 100,000 children became orphans. Countless raped women suffered from AIDS, which caused huge public health risks. In addition, a large number of Hutu people in

Rwanda flowed into neighboring countries, causing a refugee wave and bringing great hidden dangers to other countries' security. What is even more unacceptable is that the soldiers who carried out the mission during the slaughter could be released with confession and remorse, deepening the scars and grief in many Rwandan people.

(2) Economy:

Rwanda was originally poor. The quality of life and standard of living were not high. Per capita income was also at a relatively low level in the world. Many people could barely make ends meet for a year and struggled on the margins of survival. This unprecedented genocide worsened Rwanda, which was originally poor. Because of this incident, Rwanda not only lost a large amount of labor, but also changed the population structure of the entire country, which put the entire country's economy directly in a state of collapse. The multiple blows made the lives of the people of this already poor country more difficult.

6. Rwanda nowadays

Twenty years after the massacre, Rwanda, now known as “Singapore in Africa”, is one of the most progressive and cleanest nations in Africa. Rwanda has been regarded as a successful case of international development in recent years. After the massacre, Western countries felt guilty about the inaction of the slaughter and invested a lot of money to help rebuild Rwanda. Like Uganda, foreign aid accounts for up to 50 percent of the annual budget for the entire year. President Rwanda hoped to make this place in the center of Africa by 2020.

In terms of coffee, Rwanda is not a large traditional coffee producing country, but in the past few years, due to government promotion and privatization, Rwanda coffee has gradually emerged in the international coffee market.

In addition to coffee, Rwanda has also achieved many firsts in the world. First, Rwanda has had a GDP growth rate of 8% for fourteen consecutive years, with per capita GDP from \$ 575 in 1998 to \$ 1170 in 2012. Second, it is the world 's first country with more than half of its female members in the parliament, now 61% of its members are women. Third, Rwanda is the first country which bans plastic in the world. The plastic banning policy promulgated in 2003, which is still a difficult goal for many developed countries.

Various indicators indicate that Rwanda has reborn in the past 20 years. President Paul Kagame's strict ruling and controversial policies on development have allowed Rwanda to prosper from the Holocaust within 20 years and become one of Africa's fastest growing countries.

III. Conclusion

The history of the colony planted the seeds of hatred in the heart of people in Rwanda; the negative attitude of the United States, Belgium, and even the United Nations at the time was also an important reason for the outbreak of this massacre. For many years of peaceful coexistence, due to the intervention of Western forces, they raised their swords and slashed their fellow citizens. The benefits between big countries often tied in the fate of small countries. We could say that without colonialism, there would be no massacre. At present, Western powers still rely on their strong economic strength to infiltrate powers all over the world, and they all bear the names of maintaining international justice, freedom and democracy, and humanitarian relief. In fact, the real reason is often the "economic" factor. As long as interests are taken into consideration, future tragedies are unavoidable. Therefore, both the United Nations and the international community should take on the responsibility for preventing the Holocaust from happening again.

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