

*Development and Genocide in Rwanda: a political economy analysis of peasants and power under the Habyarimana Regime*

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*Abstract of the dissertation*

The dissertation describes and analyses the relationship between economic development, political power and genocide in Rwanda during the Habyarimana regime. It has four parts.

In the first part, speeches made by the president show that he adhered to a peasant ideology. He said that the Rwandan farmer was the basis of Rwandan society and he glorified the peasantry. In a speech at the university of Butare in 1973 he already said that “*the one who is not willing to work is harmful to society*”. Habyarimana wanted to re-value manual labour. The latter was the object of decay, he argued, because of the introduction of money, the generalisation of education and the increase in jobs outside agriculture. Habyarimana was convinced that Rwanda would remain an agricultural society and he would do everything to keep it that way, e.g. the rules preventing migration into Kigali.

In a second part, political economy models describing the behavior of a dictator are analysed. Economic models are generic and reality is often too complex to be captured in one model. The first model shows that a dictator balances the tax revenue of the economy with the possibility of removal from office by a productive group of citizens. He will therefore tax this productive group more. A second model analyses the political power of a dictator in an economy that entirely depends on the revenue of one export crop. When the price of this export crop decreases, one can derive from the model, the power of the dictator diminishes. The latter therefore has to substitute repression for a generous price policy in order to remain in office.

In a third, empirical part, the author presents the results of eight months of field work in Rwanda. In the 1999-2001 period, 350 rural households were visited and interviewed. Data collected by other researchers and organisations were also used. The first empirical paper analyses under-nutrition, harvest failure and the reaction of the regime to this in southern Rwanda. The second paper uses unique data to deal with the double genocide question, namely whether or not the FPR also committed genocide in Rwanda. The third paper analyses the economic profile of perpetrators of genocide. It turns out to be too simple to blame the poor among the peasants. A fourth paper describes the speed and the mechanisms of genocide with data on victims from the prefecture of Kibuye in western Rwanda.

A fourth and last part searches for the logic behind the genocide. The author analyses the participation of people in political violence. He argues that collective action, executed by the control and mobilisation of the peasantry, paralleled by the rhetoric of overpopulation and the precarious economic situation of the peasant population are an important part of this logic.