

Rohingya issue ‘more economic than identity crisis or religious’

(The article has done through the discourses of three distinct causes behind the Rohingya as a problematic issue of Myanmar)

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Introduction:

The Rohingya is a Muslim ethnic minority group living in the western Rakhine State of Myanmar (Burma). Apparently their forefathers were in the country since the 7th century with a distinct history. From the mid 20th century to the present days the Rohingya is considering as a „problematic issue.“ The Burmese government does not recognize Rohingya people as the citizen of the country.

The objective of this assignment is to discourse the causal factors behind the Rohingya issue. The exercise will analyze why Rohingya is a problematic issue. What the major causes are behind the issue. The assignment will give arguments emphasizing on economic factors along with other significant causes.

An overview of the issue:

According to Refugees Daily report, “approximately at present 800,000 Rohingya live in the country and are one of the most persecuted minorities in the world”. (Refugees Daily, 2012) By denying citizenship the government of Burma imposed several official and non-official restrictions on all Rohingya. The Religious conflicts between the Rohingya Muslim and the majority Buddhist of Rakhine State have been taking place for several years.

Certainly after passing the Citizenship Law (1982) of the country Rohingya has been the victim of silent genocide and defacto-statelessness. In the Law, Myanmar government has denied to recognize Rohingya as the citizen as well as the ethnic groups of the country. From the late 20th century, Rohingya becomes one of the spotlight and international attentions because of various massacres. Now Rohingya are the people without a state and national identity. Dr. Habib Siddiqui writes, "In my decades of studies I have not found a people that are more persecuted than the Rohingyas of Myanmar." (Siddiqui, 2012)

The persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority by national and regional government authorities have forcibly displaced thousands of Rohingya people since the outbreak violence in 2012. After years of persecution, tensions reached a critical level in 2012. Violent clashes resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Rohingya and left a further 140,000 homeless; many are now trapped in internal displacement camps. Since the violence erupted, the UN predicts that 100,000 Rohingya have fled Burma by sea. According to the BBC report, on 14 June 2012 10000 people have been displaced by violent clashes between Buddhists and Muslims (BBC, 2012). In search of security of life and just of basics human rights the neglected and tortured Rohingya people are leaving Myanmar by sea route with life risk. The Aljazeera report says, since 2012, more than 110,000 people left in flimsy boats to the countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia and they are mostly Rohingya. According to the CNN report, in January 2014, Thai police found hundreds of Rohingya men, women, and children in a trafficking camp (Hutcherson K and Olarn k, 2015).

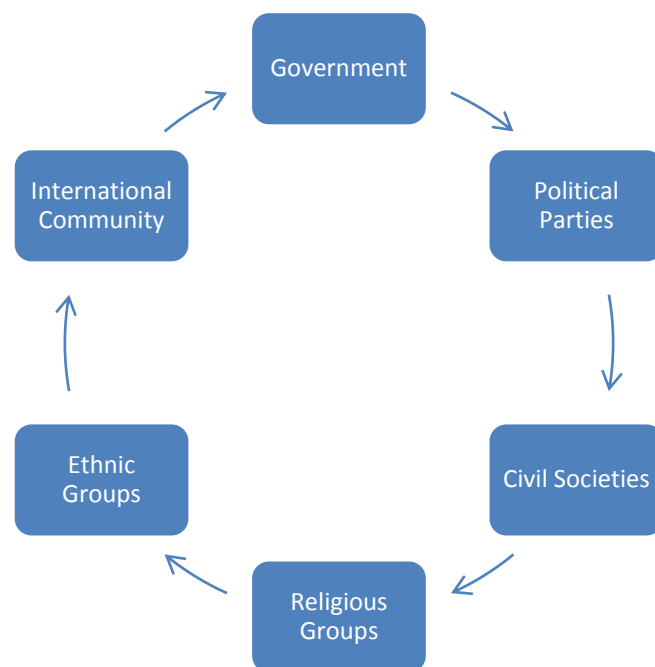
In the first three months of 2015, the number the boat people doubled from a year earlier to 25,000 (Safdar, 2015). The State security forces and non-state actors of Myanmar have been committing human rights violations against Rohingya. Some of which are can be described as crimes against humanity. The indicators of additional atrocity crimes, including genocide are also present against the Rohingya.

According to Human Right Watch Report, on 1st May 2015, a joint military-police taskforce discovered at least 30 bodies at an abandoned human trafficking camp in the Sadao district of Songkhla province close to the Thai-Malaysian border. Many were buried in shallow graves, while others were covered with blankets and clothes and left in the open. Police reports indicate the dead are ethnic Rohingya Muslims (Human Right Watch, 2015). ASEAN Parliaments for Human Rights report says, more over 100,000 Rohingya refugees are now living in Malaysia, and several hundred thousand are in Bangladesh, Thailand, and other ASEAN countries combined." (APHR, 2015)

The general perception about the Rohingya as a problematic issue is that it is an identity crisis and which led to religious conflict. The government of the country have been patronizing identity politics behind the Rohingya problem. By that consequence the very basics human rights of the Rohingya people have been undermining for a long time. The world community has been shouting to establish human rights and to solve the so-called problem. Though the Burmese government always says, Rohingya are the migrated people, because of the identity crisis the issue is a problem for the country. But the explanation is not fully sufficient to understand the crisis for the world's community. Along with identity crisis, there are others significant causes behind the ongoing issue. Those are religious fundamentalism, concern for the state security, the role of the government of the country, economic calculation and so on. Each of the mentioned causes bears distinct explanations.

Among the causes, the Economic factors have been playing an enormous role behind the Rohingya as a problematic issue. Because of the influences of economic cause and calculations the issue is getting much more problematic. Not only the identity crisis but also economics factors are making the issue more critical. And for the role of economics factors the others cause are getting place.

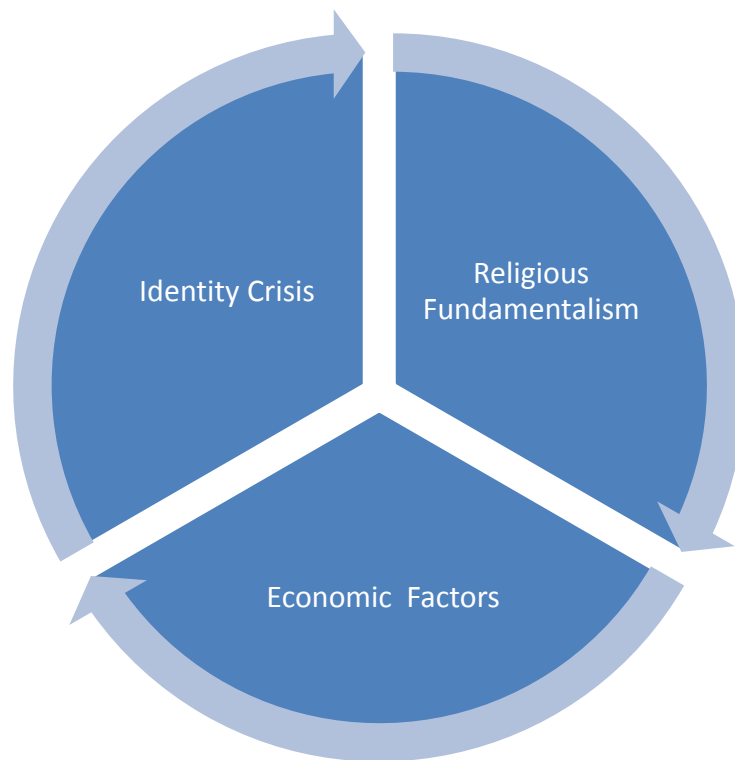
Principal players behind issue:



There are a number of principle players behind the Rohingya issue including government, political parties, civil societies, religious groups, ethnic groups, and the international community and so on.

The Government is the main principle player that is imposing various restrictions and patronizing majority Buddhist religious fundamental groups against the Rohingya. The other principal players are playing multiple roles and there is a distinct connection among the players. Political Parties are silently supporting the role of government. Even the peace Nobel winner democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi is almost silent on the issue. Civil Societies of the country are little chance to raise their voice on the issue. As Marte Nilsen said, civil society organizations have to work under difficult conditions. They have to maintain a very careful balance of their work to keep their status as officially registered organizations (Nilsen 2013). Religious Groups especially the Buddhist fundamentalism and anti-Muslim sentiment are leading the violence. Because of their interest other Ethnic Groups are also shouting against the Rohingya. International Community such as United Nations, the USA, Human Right Watch, WTO, and Bangladesh are raising their voice against the inhumanity of the Rohingya. But in the long run, the government of the country is playing an arrogant role.

Major Causes:



The Major three causes behind the issue are Identity Politics, Religious Fundamentalism and Economic factors which are interlinked and playing a vast role through distinct circumstances. Here distinctly economics influences are connected with all other causes. The other causes are important as same but driven and influenced by economic factors very strongly.

Identity Crisis:

The Government of Burma claims that Rohingya are the migrated people from the other part of the world and especially from the western part of Bangladesh. By denying citizenship, the government has been imposing various restrictions on the Rohingya, which are extremely against basics human rights including restrictions on freedom of movement, marriage, childbirth, and other aspects of everyday life (APHR, 2015). “The violent events of 2012, as well as those of 1978, 1992, 2001, and 2009, can be attributed to systemic discrimination against the Rohingya.” (Zawacki 2012-2013)

In Myanmar the constitutionally defined ethnic categories are often described as derive from the colonial state. But the contemporary scholarship would not support the inflexibility of such categories of the ethnic identification because it rejects the reification of ethnic distinctions and the obscuring of recesses of ethnic change.

The Rohingya Muslims are living in Arakan since 1400s CE. The majority Buddhist Burmese conquered Arakan in 1785 and started to execute the Rohingya from the region. In 1826, the British took control over Arakan and encouraged farmers from Bengal to come to the depopulated area of Arakan. “The sudden influx of immigrants from British India sparked a strong reaction from the mostly-Buddhist Rakhine people living in Arakan at the time, sowing the seeds of ethnic tension that remain to this day”(Kallie S, Asian History). In the aftermath of Britain's withdrawal from Indian subcontinent, religious conflicts between Muslim and Buddhist took place in several times. In 1962, General Ne Win occupied the power of Burma and started to deny Burmese citizenship to the Rohingya people. “Since that time, the Rohingya in Myanmar have lived in limbo” (Kallie S, Asian History).

The Burmese Government is always claiming the Rohingya are migrated from the British India and from the western part of Bangladesh. But the previous notes show the distinct history about their living in Burma. Rather than “during the four decades of Burmese rule (1784-1824), because of ruthless oppression, many Arakanese fled to British Bengal. According to a record of British East India Company, about thirty-five thousand Arakanese had fled to Chittagong District in British India to seek protection in 1799” (Chan, A 2005).

Making the question of Identity the Government are introducing intolerable misbehave to the Rohingya. By making law, the government has candled the citizenship of Rohingya. According to the Burma Citizenship Law 1982:
(Retrieve from: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4f71b.html>)

Chapter II – Citizenship

3. Nationals such as the Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine or Shan and ethnic groups as have settled in any of the territories included within the State as their permanent home from a period anterior to 1185 B.E., 1823 A.D. are Burma citizens.

4. The Council of State may decide **whether any ethnic group** is national or not.

Here the Rohingya are not included and farther they are treating as the stateless people. By making unlawful identity question the violent identity politics have been taking place which led various massacres and religious conflicts in Burma.

Therefore, the claim of the government cannot be sufficient as logical. Because the so-called identity crisis is the outcome of long time military regime type in the country. By taking the advantages of the identity question, the military-backed Government of the country is supporting the massacres and religious conflicts. The Identity Politics are making the Rohingya as a problematic issue. Rather it can be solved by taking some political decisions. “Despite the discontinuity of the relationship between power and territory caused by the British colonial rule and perpetuated by the military’s authority, „bumanization” – this time as an inclusive (from the bottom) and non-discriminatory process – of new spaces,

meanwhile, continued in the form of hierarchical interactions between the Burman majority and other populations. (Bountry M, 2012)

Religious Fundamentalism:

Making Rohingya as a problematic issue religious fundamentalism is responsible very distinctly. In Myanmar, interreligious relations are very complex. The Rohingya Muslims are confronted with a deeply-entrenched Islamophobia in a predominantly Buddhist society and state. The majority Buddhist religious group do not believe in the changing circumstances of the world as well as the country's History. The anti-Muslim phenomena, propaganda against Muslims and Buddhist fundamentalism are leading the violent and inter-religious conflicts. And ultimately the intolerable consequence of the violence goes to the Rohingya Muslim minority group.

In Rakhine state the majority part of the population is Buddhist. Along with denying the citizenship of the government the majority part of the society began to behave as an inhuman to the Rohingya people. The fundamentalists very distinctly claim and believe that the country's Buddhist culture and society are under siege by the Muslims. The Rohingyas are seen as a threat to Buddhist lifestyle and faith as well as a gateway to Myanmar's Islamization. (Siegfried 2015)

The feature begin violent can be traced by the lens of religious fundamentalism towards the Rohingya specially. ASEANHR report says, at present almost 1.3 million „Rohingya Muslims“ and several million more „non-Rohingya Muslims“ are living in the country (ASEANHR 2015). But the fact is that the situation for Rohingya Muslims is deeply different than that of other Muslims in Myanmar. There are many of the dynamics that contribute to discrimination against Rohingya Muslims. Even the religious fundamentalism leads and forced to the government to be inhuman to the Rohingya. Sometimes government has taken some stapes to search the continuity of the problems but Buddhist fundamentalist denies the process. “In 2014, the Ma-Ba-Tha monks successfully campaigned to force the government to deny the Rohingya minority to register their ethnic identity in the first national census in three decades.” (Zin, M 2015)

The distinct anti-Muslim phenomena of the Buddhist fundamentalist are continuously leading to the government against the Rohingya. Because of their arrogant mind setup, that the Rohingyas are the threat to Buddhism, the issue is getting more and more problematic. The horrible riots of 2012 again opened an inhuman anti-Muslim sentiment in Rakhine state. Using the „hate speech“ and „dehumanizing“ language a growing network of ultranationalist Buddhist monks propagates fears of an existential threat to the Rohingya. The network has worked to build up anti-Muslim sentiment through the well-organized propaganda campaigns and boycotts of Muslim shops and Goods. (ASEANHR 2015)

Law enforcement group and non-state actors in Myanmar have been committing serious human rights violations against the Rohingya people. Some of which have been mentioned as crimes against humanity by qualified human rights organizations. Buddhist fundamentalism leads the courage of Law enforcement group. In the early 2015, the government conceded

another demand of the religious fundamentalist over disenfranchising over 1 million Rohingya and other minority groups. By revoking their temporary registration certificates, known as white cards government fulfil the demand of majority Buddhist.

Another horrible concept of „bumanization or „myanmafication“ through the religious fundamentalism or by saving the Buddhist interest is leading violent. Maxime Bountry described, the idea is totally based on dominant ideology and the decision making level sought to broadcasted Buddhism and the Burmese language through an educational system (Bountry, M 2012). Accordingly the idea leaves to make any room for others minority languages. These dynamics have contributed to outbreaks of violence across the country. (APHR, 2015)

Economics Influences:

Along with the other causes economic factors have been playing a significant role to the Rohingya as a problematic issue. Identity politics and religious fundamentalism lead the issue to violence, and these causes are fostering by economics calculation and mechanism. The new dimensions of conflict between the Buddhist and Muslim populations in Burma are the merits of the preview on the Burmese nation“’s building process. Surely in the nation building process economic factors have major role.

Rakhine is one of the natural resourceful states of the country. Despite being resourceful it is one of the country“’s poorest areas. The nature of the anti-Muslim campaign in Rakhine state is for its resourcefulness. The government is always ready to take over the resource from the area but not to take any initiative for developing the infrastructures as well as the others facilities. Currently, the issue raising the highest interest, both from the government and the international perspective is that of economic openness. “However, beyond the huge needs in terms of development of infrastructure and services, the achievement of national unity is still a main obstacle for the recognition of the country.” (Bountry M, 2012)

The Rohingyas are considering as an additional serious economic burden to the country. As they compete for the few available jobs and opportunities to do business. Accordingly “the jobs and businesses in the state are mostly occupied by the Burmese elite.” (Siegfried O. W, 2015)

The government is always supporting Rakhine Buddhist fundamentalists to safeguard their interests in the resource-rich state. And when the interest of the majority groups is in threat by any means conflict are taking place ultimately. It is also true that if any of the conflicts takes place in the region the government along with other groups make condemn to the Rohingya. These economics factors are the major reasons to rise of intercommunal, interethnic and interreligious conflicts in the Rakhine state. (Siegfried O. Wolf, 2015)

Another important phenomenon is to boycott the goods and businesses of Rohingya people. “Several campaigns continue to call for a boycott of Muslim businesses, including the foreign telecom giant Ooredoo; disrupt Muslim or Muslim-sympathetic speakers in public lecture

events; threaten boycott against the 2014 census” (Zin M, 2015). The Muslim-owned shops and goods, schools, and mosques have been singled out for destruction in the Mandalay riots and Meiktila massacre, and in the period of violent episodes in Lashio. The phenomenon is getting popular amongst the Buddhist fundamentalist because of their own business interest.

The situations of anti-Muslim phenomena are not changing ever. As part of an intended boycott of Muslim businesses „969“stickers and the special Buddhist flags have been used to be separated and delineate Buddhist shops from Muslim ones as part of an intended boycott of Muslim businesses. The inflammatory anti-Muslim sentiment and propaganda campaigns have also led indicators of atrocity crimes such as the destruction or plundering. ACHR reported that, “the so-called 969 movement has organized boycotts of Muslim shops and encouraged anti-Muslim sentiment. A worker at a charity health clinic run by a monastery in Mandalay told that leaders of the 969 movement say things like Muslims are taking everything, and this is why you are poor. They are trying to shift peoples’ anger towards the Muslims.” (ACHR, 2015)

The central, as well as the local government and the local administration, provide all assistance to the monasteries. This practice derives from instruction in the military to establish Sayar-Dagar-Setsanye between Buddhist monasteries and battalions in their respective areas to co-opt the clergy. The government asks the business cronies to assist Ma-Ba-Tha monks with lavish donations.

Zin M says, “According to sources I spoke with, senior officials in the government have informally encouraged chief ministers of regions and states to approach and support local Ma-Ba-Tha monks by building „Sayar-Dagar-Setsanye“ (a patron-supporter relationship) between Buddhist monasteries and regional administrative leaders”(Zin m, 2015). These initiatives led violence amongst the minority groups in the Rakhine state. More that is, to a political, social, and economic system-manifested in law, policy, and practice designed to discriminate against this ethnic and religious minority. (Zawacki 2012-2013)

Conclusion:

Behind the Rohingya problem rather than other causes, economic influence is much more significant. Because of economics factors the identity crisis is playing as a background. The religious fundamentalism is also run by the economics influences. If the Rohingya is in main stream then the majority Buddhist will be threatened in case of getting job, doing monopoly business and other facilities. The Buddhist fundamentalist and the monks will lose the economic facilities that are getting now. To solve the problem government has to take the initiative to economic sufficiency and equal justices in the respective region. “Buddhist resentment against the Rohingyas is not only religious; it is also political and economically driven” (Siegfried O. W, 2015).

It can be said that, the Rohingyas are not the extremists or separatists group. They never thought to be separated or independent from the country. They are just struggling for existence, peace and basic human rights. They want to work together with other Burmese

groups as well as the governments to ensure democracy in the country. But distinctly because of economic calculations the Rohingya is considering as a problematic issue.

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