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## Political Extremism of Buddhists: A Case Study for Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar

## Budistlerin Siyasi Aşırıçılığı: Myanmar'daki Rohingya Müslümanları İçin Bir Vaka Çalışması

 Chaman HUSSAIN\*  Mahboob HUSSAIN •

## Özet

Müslüman azınlık olan Rohingyalar, yıllarca ötekileştirmeye ve aşağılanmaya maruz kalmışlardır. Myanmar Devleti'nin Rakhine Eyaleti'nin yerlileri olan Rohingyalar, 1982 yılından beri bir devlete sahip olamayıp Burma vatandaşlığı almaya çalışmaktadır. Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Örgütü'ne göre Rohingyalar, dünyadaki en çok tehlike altındaki mülteci gruplarından biri olup farklı bölgelere dağılmış, çoğunluğu ise Bangladeş içerisindeki mülteci kamplarına yerleştirilmiştir. Myanmar'daki askeri diktatörlük, ülke içerisindeki isyankâr azınlıklara olumlu bakmamış ve herhangi bir muhalefeti şiddetle bastırmıştır. Resmi olarak tanınmış sayıca 135 azınlık grubunu içerisinde barındırmasına rağmen, Myanmar çok kültürlü bir topluma sahip olabilmekten oldukça uzaktır. Myanmar'ın etnik ve dini yapısı, Rohingyaları sistematik olarak dışlayan bir ulusal kimliğin gelişmesinde önemli etkiye sahip olmuştur. Bu çalışma, Myanmar içerisindeki Budist nüfusun siyasi radikalizminin Rohingyaların dışlanmasına sebep olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, politik Budistliğin Myanmar'daki Rohingyalara yapılan ayrımcılıkta nasıl kullanıldığını, görüşlerin veya felsefelerinin analizi yoluyla incelemektedir. Sonuç olarak, Budist politik aşırıçılığının, Rohingyaların Myanmar'da marjinalleşmesine önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ancak bu tek neden değildir; geri kalmışlık ve yoksulluk da önemli etkenler içerisinde yer almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Budist, Göçmen, Myanmar, Rohingyalar, Siyasi Aşırıçılık

## Abstract

The Muslim Rohingya minority has endured decades of marginalization and harassment. They are natives of western Myanmar's Rakhine state. Since 1982, members of the Rohingya minority have been stateless and are attempting to get Burmese citizenship. The Rohingya are one of the most endangered refugee populations on earth, according to UNHCR, and are widely dispersed, living in refugee camps located in Bangladesh. The military dictatorship in Myanmar did not have a favorable view of the nation's rebellious minority groups and violently put down any minority dissent. Despite having 135 officially recognised minority groups, Myanmar is far from having a multicultural society. In Myanmar, ethnicity and religion have had a significant impact on the development of national identity that systematically excludes Rohingya. This study makes the case that the alleged political radicalism of Myanmar's Buddhist population is to be responsible for the exclusion of the Rohingya. This study explores how political Buddhism may be used to understand the segregation of Rohingya in Myanmar through an analysis of views or their philosophy. The conclusion is that Buddhist political extremism has significantly contributed to the marginalisation of Rohingya in Myanmar. However, it is not the only one; underdevelopment and poverty are also significant contributors.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Migrants, Myanmar, Political Extremism, Rohingya.

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## Introduction

Myanmar became separate from the United Kingdom in 1948, and up until 1962<sup>1</sup>, it was a parliamentary democracy. Yet the democratic administration in Myanmar was deposed in a coup in 1962 by the military<sup>2</sup>. After seizing control, General Ne Win disbanded the legislature and outlawed all political parties. As a result, ethnic Burmans are in charge of military dictatorship in Myanmar with a repressive attitude toward the nation's minorities. The military invoked ethnic instability and impending nation fragmentation as justifications for the coup. An example of the suffering experienced by ethnic minorities in Myanmar is when the military accused the Shan minority of planning to undermine the government intentionally. This accusation led to hardship for the Shan minority and highlights the mistreatment of minority groups in Myanmar.<sup>3</sup> Those who identified as Muslim Arakans and lived in western Myanmar's Rakhine State make up the Muslim minority community known as the Rohingya.<sup>4</sup> Rohang, one of the early names of Rakhine State, is where the word "Rohingya" originates.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the British colonization of Myanmar, the region was known by another name: Arakan. About 800,000 of the two million Rohingya people live in Myanmar's Rakhine state.<sup>6</sup> The Rohingya say they are nationals of Myanmar, but the government there denies this and says they are undocumented immigrants. The results of this study show that the Burmese government targets the Rohingya because they are Muslim and an ethnic minority in comparison to the remainder of Myanmar.<sup>7</sup> The politicization of ethnicity and faith in order to advance the interests of the dominant Buddhist Burman population is known as the political extremism of the Buddhists.<sup>8</sup>

## History of Burma

The legacy of Myanmar is vital to this study as it illuminates the circumstances that led to the exclusion of the Rohingya at the original place.<sup>9</sup> During the colonial era, the Brits gave ethnic Burmans the shaft while promoting Rohingya as well as other minority communities. Myanmar has a bloody past marked by numerous unfriendly changes of authority. As a result, there has not always been much confidence between the government and minority groups that are outraged. Reviewing some of the historical occurrences that led to the persecution of the Rohingya and other minorities in Burma is crucial. When the British colonized Burma, they laid the groundwork for the political system pertinent to this study in modern-day Myanmar. Burma was forced to submit to British power and become a British colony in 1886, when the British invaded the country for the third time.<sup>10</sup>

British administration in Burma resulted in the suspension of the monarchy, but many provinces and ethnic minorities like the Shan, Chin, and Kachin maintained a high degree of autonomy. Several ethnic minorities in central Burma were Christian and it had formed distinct cultures and identities from the rest of the region. During World War II, when the Japanese invaded Burma, the predominantly Christian minority groups of the Chin, Kachin, and Naga supported the British, while the Burmese Independence Army, under the command of national hero Aung San, aligned with the Japanese. It resulted in a divide between the minority groups who supported the British and the Burmese nationalists who allied with the Japanese, highlighting the complex history of Burma during this period. After Burma gained

1 Nehginpao Kipgen, *Myanmar: a political history*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 32.

2 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 33.

3 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 49.

4 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 50.

5 A.K.M. Ahsan Ullah, "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Seeking Justice for the 'Stateless'". *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*. Vol. 32, No. 3, 2016, p. 286.

6 Kazi Fahmida Farzana, *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees, Contested Identity and Belonging*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2017, p. 46.

7 Ullah, "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: ...", p. 286.

8 Ullah, "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: ...", p. 291.

9 Ullah, "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: ...", p. 296.

10 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 9.

its independence from British in 1947, General Aung San brought together the country's many ethnic minorities to establish the Union of Burma. Regrettably, five months after the country's independence was declared, Aung San was murdered.<sup>11</sup> San's political adversary was found guilty of the murder and given the death penalty as retribution. The United Kingdom formally recognised Burma's independence in January 1948.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the passing of the national hero, Aung San, Burma continued to be a fragile democracy until the military overthrew the elected government in a coup in 1962. As of the 2015 general election.<sup>13</sup> The fights for ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya, intensified after the military junta proclaimed itself in control.

The regime employed counter-insurgency tactics against rebellious minority groups like the Karenni National Progressive Party and the Karen National Union to secure Myanmar's borders. Several Shan communities were also targeted throughout the campaigns, which lasted well into the 1990s. In order to further solidify its hold on power, the regime also founded the Revolution Council, which was later incorporated into the Burma Socialist Program Party in 1974.<sup>14</sup> The adoption of the new Burmese Constitution in the same year introduced stricter citizenship regulations; however, the People's Council was established through constitutional amendments to facilitate civil, administrative, and political participation. Despite this, the Burmese Socialist Program Party retained actual political power.

With the adoption of the new constitution, the Burma Socialist Program Party government took steps to unite the country, eliminate the insurgency organisations, and establish Buddhism as the official religion. The military started dissolving Rohingya political organisations as part of this procedure. "Operation Nagamin" was one of the methods used to combat insurgencies, and it was started in 1977.<sup>15</sup> The operation, according to the regime, was required to unify the nation and gave the government the power to examine everyone's identification certificates and cards.

In addition, the operation was a plan to "take actions against foreigners who've already flowed into the nation illegally," according to the Ministry of Home & Religious Affairs. The first definite indication that the Burmese authorities did not regard the Rohingya as legal citizens were Operation Nagamin.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the government's actions in 1978 demonstrated that the Rohingya people have been fighting for at least 40 years. In conclusion, Burmese officials' efforts to unify the nation in the late 1970s involved persecuting rebellious minorities, which is in directly oppose to the concept of a union made up of many ethnic minorities.<sup>17</sup>

Due to Burma's sluggish economic growth in the 1980s, General Ne Win, the head of the Burma Socialist Program Party administration, and his leadership within the party came under scrutiny. In contrast to other socialist countries in East Asia before such China, Burma was unable to raise sufficient government funds and had a significantly lower GDP per capita of USD 556 in 1985. Additionally, the already stagnant economy was worsened by high inflation, leading to people protesting on the streets once again.

The military dictatorship underwent another transformation to maintain control; this time, it changed its name to the State Development and Peace Council. In 2008, the State Development and Peace Council amended the constitution, which allowed The National League for Democracy to re-register as an official political party. The council remained in power until 2011, when a nationwide human rights organization was established as per the United Nations' request, along with other

11 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 11.

12 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 48.

13 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 199.

14 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 48.

15 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 49.

16 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 50.

17 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 50.

democratic changes. This organization was formerly known as the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission. On October 11, 2011, the Commission published a public letter in the official publication, *The New Light of Myanmar*, urging President Thein Sein to release all political prisoners. Following the announcement by the administration that it would release several convicts, a letter was made public. At a United Nations General Assembly conference a few months later, Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin stated that nearly 6300 detainees would be released. However, he did not specify the exact number of detainees who had been released or their identities. Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been released from house detention a year earlier in 2010, was invited by President Thein Sein to speak about the political situation in Myanmar.

### Literature Review

The vulnerability of the Rohingya has been the subject of prior academic study, which is linked to studies on refugee exposure. The Rohingya and stateless people have also been the subject of extensive inquiry. Furthermore, it is clearly recognized from prior studies that the Rohingya people are experiencing a humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, many academics point to national identity formation and ethnicity as reasons for the excluding of the Rohingya. The idea that Buddhist nationalism is a sort of political extremism, a fusion of politicized ethnicity and national Buddhist identity, has not yet been thoroughly described. In this study, political Buddhism is used to illuminate the causes of the ongoing mistreatment of Rohingya in Myanmar.

Review some of the prior research on the exclusion of Rohingya in this part. In order to examine the most accurate and recent research on the Rohingya, I have concentrated on some of the most recent studies. How in Myanmar 'national races' came to Overtake Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya, written by Nick Cheeseman, is published in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. He contends that the notion of different races has sparked fierce conflicts in Myanmar over the Rohingya's definition and identity. The concept of places high priority originated with the 135 various ethnic minorities that make up Myanmar, which are also the ethnic groups that comprise the Union of Burma. Cheeseman is saying that the national races have measured some aspects of acceptance in Myanmar's political society.

### Method

This study has been undertaken as an ideology analysis using a piece of research, where an idealistic type of political Buddhist has been constructed with Myanmar as the case in order to learn how political extremism of Buddhists has been employed to target Rohingya. Most of the publications examined were secondary and included scholarly works on Myanmar and the Rohingya.

### History of Rohingya's

The Rohingya claim to have resided in Rakhine for hundreds of years. Yet there is no concrete evidence connected to archaeological findings that can identify the original settlers in Rakhine.<sup>18</sup> A smaller percentage of Hindus live in Bangladesh and India, but Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the Rohingya. The Rohingya speak their redundant language, have their own culture, and make up the most of Muslims in Myanmar. Rakhine state in Myanmar is home to the majority of Rohingya, but there are also sizeable groups in, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Malaysia.<sup>19</sup> These Diasporas left primarily because of the military government in Myanmar's oppressive policies towards Muslims.

The actual origin of the Rohingya is disputed; however, it is known that they descended from Persian & Arab traders who arrived in Arakan as early as the 9th century. Because Arakan is geographically separated from the remainder of Burma by the Arakan Yoma mountainous region, one explanation for why Rohingya have a distinct culture and identity from the rest of Burma. Nonetheless, Arakan was a Buddhist nation during the Middle Ages, just like the Burmese Kingdom. However, in 1406,<sup>20</sup> foreign forces conquered the Arakan Kingdom, as well as the Arakense King escaped to the

18 William J. Topich-Keith A. Leitich, *The History of Myanmar*, Greenwood Press, UNHCR, 2018.

19 BBC News, "Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis", 2018-01-16.

20 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 42.

nearby Muslim Bengal. The Arakan King was able to retake power with the aid of a Bengali army, and during his imprisonment, the king had been exposed to Islam beliefs, which he revived in Arakan. A heterogeneous society emerged in Arakan/Rakhine throughout the ensuing centuries. When the Burmese Emperor Bodawpaya attacked and absorbed Arakan within his Burmese Empire in 1784, the prosperous times ended.<sup>21</sup> Following widespread instability in the area, hundreds of Arakanese moved to Bengal, which is now a British colony. These incidents accounted for both the Rohingya's persistent suspicion of the Burmese and their preference for the British among the Arakanese Rohingya.

### The Legal Status of Rohingya

As previously established, the 1982 Nationality Law led to the statelessness of the Rohingya. Statelessness has four leading causes, according to the UNHCR: inconsistencies in national laws; migration from one country to another; the creation of new states and shifting borders; and the ability of states to strip former citizens of their national identity through laws that are frequently based on discriminatory criteria like race or ethnicity.<sup>22</sup> Another explanation might be that the affected individual has spent a significant amount of time living outside of the nation of his or her birth, leading to statelessness. The fourth justification for statelessness is most relevant to the Rohingya. When the Citizenship Law only excluded the Rohingya from identification as a minority group in Burma, it discriminated against their rights. The Rohingya minority has virtually limited legal rights and is stateless. The laws do not protect de facto stateless individuals' rights. On the contrary hand, The Final Act to the 1961 Convention on the Elimination of Statelessness includes a declaration saying: "that individuals who are stateless de facto should as far as practicable be considered as stateless to enable them to obtain an effective nationality". Despite this decision, the existing human rights system has led to the rejection of rights related to nationality.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, UNHCR has set a 2024 deadline for abolishing statelessness. Preventing statelessness is as crucial to achieving that aim as restoring nationality to those who are already stateless. This mentality is crucial for Rohingya because every person born also becomes stateless. To sum up, the majority of Rohingya are regarded as "resident foreigners" in Myanmar but have minimal rights. Since the Rohingya who have been forced to flee Myanmar are covered by the 1951 Convention regarding the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, they actually have more legal rights than those who remain in Myanmar.<sup>24</sup>

### Rohingya People's Civil and Political Rights

The Rohingya are not considered to be Burmese nationals and are not covered by the liberties and rights guaranteed by the Burma Constitution.<sup>25</sup> Despite having limited civil and political rights, the Rohingya community was able to participate in the 1990 elections and cast their votes. Rohingya were granted temporary identity cards, sometimes known as "white cards," which allowed them to vote in the general elections of 2008.<sup>26</sup> The Union "must ensure every person to have equal rights well before law & shall equitably provide legal protection," states the Myanmar Constitution. Nonetheless, Rohingya are not afforded the same legal protections that Burmese citizens would, and in 2015, their temporary identification cards were cancelled, limiting them the ability to cast ballots.

Civil rights for Rohingya have also been disregarded in other situations. With 78 percent of the people living in poverty, Rakhine state is one of Myanmar's poorest states.<sup>27</sup> Between the Muslim Rohingya as well as the Rakhine Buddhists in the area, there is a great deal of mistrust due to a combination of the region's extreme poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of economic opportunities. As a result, the entire region is affected by the aforementioned negative factors, but the Rohingya minority has been particularly susceptible. According to Human Rights Watch, rape and acts of violence were committed against women of Rohingya in Rakhine even during the fall of 2017. Political and civil liberties are meaningless and nonexistent when one's life and personal safety are under risk. Everything becomes secondary to surviving.

21 Farzana, *Memories of Burmese ...*, p. 43.

22 Ullah, "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: ...", p. 286.

23 Kipgen, *Myanmar: ...*, p. 147.

24 Jessica Riley "The State of the Stateless People: The Current Rohingya Crisis", *The Michigan Journal of International Law*, Vol. 39, Associate Editor, 2018.

25 Nick Cheeseman, "How in Myanmar 'National Races' Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2017, p. 471.

26 Eleanor Albert, "The Rohingya Crisis", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2018-01-05.

27 Eleanor Albert, "The Rohingya Crisis".

### Buddhist Political Extremism in Myanmar

Political Buddhism is the practice of using Buddhism for political and nationalistic ends, such as excluding non-Buddhists and fostering a sense of belonging. Being Burmese has always been important to the Burmese way of life, and nationalism and ethnicity are used to promote political Buddhism.<sup>28</sup> Political Buddhism is a concept that is not specific to Burma; but also applies to Islam or Hinduism. Yet, given that the Rohingya is predominantly part of community with a Buddhist majority, this analogy is not going to be further developed. Nevertheless, Rohingya became a target of political Buddhism because they represented a group, which did not belong to the Myanmar identity; they were the “others”. Noteworthy is that other minority groups, such as political Buddhists have targeted the Christian Karen, who because of their faith were favored during the British colonial rule.

The Burma Nationality Law of 1982 divided the inhabitants of Myanmar into three groups: citizens, associate citizens, and naturalized citizens. According to the law, persons who related to the “national races” of the nation or whose ancestors had arrived in Burma before 1823 were considered citizens. The population of Burma was divided into three groups under the 1982 Citizenship Law: citizens, associate citizens, and naturalized citizens. According to the law, persons who related to the “national races” of the nation or whose ancestors had arrived in Burma before 1823 were considered citizens.

The government of Myanmar recognises 135 “national races,”<sup>29</sup> “but the Rohingya do not belong to them. As they are not recognised as a national race as well as exceedingly difficult to substantiate that your forebears have resided in the country since 1823, this makes it practically impossible for Rohingya to obtain citizenship.”<sup>30</sup> Associate citizens are individuals who lack the necessary documentation to qualify as citizens while legal residents are those who can demonstrate that their parents resided in Myanmar before to the country’s 1948 declaration of independence. Those who are entitled to citizenship underneath the Union Citizenship Act of 1948 but do not meet the requirements of the Citizenship Law of 1982 are also eligible to become associate citizens. The Rohingya are not considered associate citizens under either the 1948 law or the 1982 statute, making it nearly difficult for them to fall into any of the three categories.

Myanmar specifically targeted the existence and identity of the Rohingya. They did so as it was a natural part of the military government of Burma’s political strategy. The systemic, decades-long violence against the Rohingya has been carried out in a systematic manner. This systematic use of violence has become to be a crucial instrument for political Buddhism. Political Buddhism eliminates the minority group since the Rohingya are not seen as part of the Burmese nationhood and are therefore perceived as unlawful insurgents, making them the targets of justified brutality. Muslims from Rohingya claim to that will band together in opposition to the ongoing atrocities. As mentioned, political Buddhism has found success with the using of violence as a technique. The Burmese government claims that it uses its counterterrorism activities as a justification for its treatment of Rohingya. A counterterrorism operation provides code for a Buddhist political campaign to attack Rohingya Muslims.

The Rohingya identities have not been destroyed, and the language, songs, and lifestyle they lead have been preserved throughout their existence in refugee camps despite the harmful use of political Buddhism. Rohingya’s destruction has been referred to as a contemporary genocide. The Rohingya are not a recognised ethnic group in Myanmar, hence the commission established by the government to look into these claims denied the claims of ethnic cleansing. Although Rohingya are not nationals, one can, wonder if Myanmar still has to defend everyone living on its soil, regardless of citizenship.

Nationalist movements there have strengthened the individual self of Burma. The regular activities of national Buddhist movements include recruiting followers. For instance, Muslim business

28 Jobair Alam, “The Rohingya of Myanmar: theoretical significance of the minority status”, *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2017, p. 181.

29 Kazi Fahmida Farzana, “Boundaries in Shaping the Rohingya Identity and the Shifting Context of Borderland Politics”, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2015, p. 50.

30 Ullah, “Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: ...”, p. 91.

owners of numerous slaughterhouses in Rakhine state were primarily impacted by attempts to forbid Buddhist monks from consuming beef. In general, movements promising to uphold ethnicity and faith have succeeded in modifying even international legislation. Finally yet importantly, these forces have worked to delegitimize Islam and link Rohingya to international extremists. Burmese nationalists have asserted that if Rohingya are granted citizenship rights, they will use it to try to coerce Buddhists into accepting Islam.

Yet, the history of the nation has shaped Myanmar's unique ethnic terrain, and the military junta's discriminatory policies have led to the marginalization of minority communities. Since Bangladesh and Myanmar, both exclusionary practice politics, the Rohingya nationality has been shaped by both a hostile climate and those policies. The Burmese government has utilised political Buddhism as a weapon against ethnic minorities like the Rohingya.

### **Response on a Global Scale**

The UN sees the Rohingya situation primarily as a humanitarian catastrophe requiring immediate help. The UNHCR is the principal organisation working in the region, and it offers three basic solutions to problems involving refugees: local integration, voluntary repatriation, and resettlement. The UNHCR has primarily employed the voluntary return option concerning to the Rohingya situation.

Nevertheless, not all Rohingya refugees have shown a wish to return to Burma. According to a UNHCR study, less than 30% of respondents wanted to return to Myanmar. The UNHCR and the Myanmar government agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding in November 1993 that allowed the organisation access to Rohingya settlements in Rakhine state. The UNHCR faced criticism for the coercive procedure, but they maintained that working with both Myanmar and Bangladesh during the resettlement process was difficult.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will be permitted entry into Myanmar, according to news that surfaced as late as April 2, 2018, a few weeks after Suu Kyi's trip to Australia. Officials from Myanmar granted permission for the UNSC to visit Rakhine state on May 1 after giving it a few weeks later, on April 30, 2018. The Security Council team initially toured refugee camps in Bangladesh on April 28 and 29, and on April 30, they met with Aung San Suu Kyi and senior military figures in Naypyidaw. The repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar has to be "safe, voluntary, and dignified, under with international norms," according to a Memorandum of Understanding recently signed by the UNHCR and Bangladesh. The Security Council team pressed Burma to sign the pact while they were there. The delegation also reminded Myanmar that it must adhere to international law, which includes, among other things, supervising the return of migrants in accordance with international norms, to be a UN member and a state-party to state party conventions. Karen Pierce, the British ambassador to the UN, believes that allowing UN personnel full access to Rakhine is the wisest course of action. The Rohingya refugees addressed the Security Council with a number of demands while they were meeting with them in, Bangladesh.

The list of demands included the following: 1) return to their own homes; 2) stop construction of IDP camps in Rakhine, which Rohingya fear will serve as detention facilities for refugees who return; 3) recognition of Rohingya as Burmese citizens; and 4) action by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to bring charges against Myanmar for genocide.<sup>31</sup>

It is too early to draw any conclusions from the visit, and it remains unclear how the Burmese government will respond to the requests made by the Rohingya. While it is unlikely that Myanmar will fulfill all the requests made, there is still a possibility that some of the requests may be considered.<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Despite being in Myanmar for generations, as history demonstrates, Muslims from the Rohingya ethnic group are not allowed to participate in Burmese culture. Having citizenship is a condition for being able to exercise all rights and entitlements within a sovereign state. When the

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31 Eleanor Albert, "The Rohingya Crisis".

32 Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Rohingya trapped in dehumanizing apartheid regime", (2017-11-21).

Rohingya are denied citizenship, they are deprived of their fundamental human rights. Political Buddhism is not the only factor contributing to the exclusion of the Rohingya; poverty and inequality are also significant factors. However, political Buddhism remains an influential force that drives identity-based conflicts and divisions. In the past, many religions have coexisted in Myanmar's ethnically varied culture, regardless of the political regime. However, there is little optimism that a Rohingya reconciliation process can happen anytime soon.

Political Buddhism's impact can partially account for the persecution of the Rohingya, but it does not provide the whole story. According to Farzana, young individuals who grew up in refugee camps have impressions that affect their adult lives and shape how they perceive other people and society. Being a long-term inhabitant in a refugee camp changes life and develops self-awareness and a "refugee identity" that becomes a part of the individual's personality. The Rohingya are experiencing this: they are unable to make peace with their painful and adrift past due to their refugee status. Living in refugee camps, the Rohingya are consistently reminded of the limited duration of their lives. However, it is crucial to consider the underlying reasons for their refugee status, which have been explained earlier. In Myanmar, political Buddhism and religious nationalism have created a society that marginalizes the Rohingya and allows violence against them. A glimmer of optimism that the grave situation of the Rohingya could be rectified appeared when the UNSC was allowed to enter Rakhine state. Clearly, there is still much work to be done to integrate Rohingya into Burmese society fully. So, this cannot be accomplished without ensuring Rohingya Burmese nationality, which currently does not appear to be very feasible. The ideology of political Buddhism is likely to persist, and it is not a prerequisite for the reconciliation between the Rohingya and the Burmese people.

Last but not, the situation has gotten worse due to Aung San Suu Kyi's passivity and her steadfast refusal in denouncing the brutality experienced by the Rohingya. When asked about her interview with the BBC, Suu Kyi said, "No one informed me I was supposed to be questioned by a Muslim," in an off-the-record statement. Of course, such remarks merely feed the already tense situation by inciting more animosity. Suu Kyi's hesitation to denounce the violence against the Rohingya may have something to do with the fact that she spent a very long time gaining power and now that she has it, she is reluctant to anger her Buddhist, ethnically Burmese supporters. In Myanmar, the diseased war between Buddhists & Muslims will undoubtedly continue as long as political Buddhism fosters division.

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### Extended Abstract

For many years, the Muslim Rohingya minority in western Burma's Rakhine state has been persecuted and marginalised. The Rohingya have been stateless since 1982 and are currently attempting to seek Burmese citizenship despite not receiving formal recognition from the government of Myanmar. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Rohingya are one of the most vulnerable refugee populations in the world and are spread throughout refugee camps in Bangladesh.

The complicated background of ethnic and religious diversity in Myanmar has been used to subjugate minorities. The rebellious minority groups in Myanmar were not well-liked by the military dictatorship, which mercilessly put down any minority opposition. The State Counselor & Head of State, Aung San Suu Kyi, has refrained from speaking out about the Rohingya's ongoing cruelty despite Myanmar's progress towards democracy. Myanmar is far from having a cosmopolitan society, despite having 135 legally recognised minority groups. In Myanmar, the creation of a nationalism that intentionally excludes the Rohingya has been significantly influenced by ethnicity and religion.

This paper argues that the exclusion of the Rohingya is due to the purported political extremism of Myanmar's Buddhist populace. Political Buddhism describes the targeting and repression of marginalised people believed to be non-Burman using extreme nationalism, the Burmese ethnically, and the suppression of other beliefs, including Buddhism. Buddhist political theory has been invoked to support the genocide of the Rohingya minority.

This paper examines how political Buddhism contributes to the isolation of the Rohingya in Myanmar through a philosophical and belief examination. According to the verdict, Buddhist political extremism has been a major factor in the marginalisation of the Rohingya in Myanmar. This exclusion has resulted in a number of violations of human rights, such as citizenship denial, travel bans, forced labour, sexual assault, and extrajudicial executions. The Rohingya have been compelled to flee to Bangladesh and other nearby countries because of these assaults.

Political Buddhism's origins can be found in Myanmar's colonial past. Religious and ethnic identities in the nation were greatly influenced by British colonialism. There was an attempt to classify the populace according to religious allegiance during British colonial control. Buddhism was seen as the predominant religion, while other faiths like Islam and Christianity were deemed alien and dangerous to the national identity of the nation. The division caused by this categorisation led to the marginalisation of minority groups, especially the Rohingya, and divided the general populace.

Political Buddhism grew in popularity after Burma earned independence from British colonial authority. The Buddhist monastic community of Burma, known as the Sangha, had a tremendous influence on the politics of the nation. The Sangha joined anti-colonial and nationalist activities, and by doing so, they contributed to the perception that Buddhism was the cornerstone of the nation's identity. The idea of a Burmese ethnic identity was actively promoted by the Burmese Buddhist Sangha, which further aided in the isolation of minority communities.

Political Buddhism is currently cited as justification for the genocide of the Rohingya. The belief that Myanmar is a Buddhist nation and that other religions, notably Islam, pose a threat to the nation's identity is promoted by the Buddhist nationalism movement in Myanmar. The oppression of the Rohingya, who are viewed as a danger to the nation's Buddhist identity, has been justified using this movement. State actions that have denied the Rohingya citizenship, limited their mobility and rights, and forced them to live in filthy refugee camps have perpetuated this marginalisation.

The study also notes that the isolation of the Rohingya in Myanmar is not solely attributable to Buddhist political radicalism. Underdevelopment and poverty are two other significant elements are involved.

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