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O Peace, Where Art Thou? Exploring Practical Solutions of a Lasting Peace For Rohingyas in The Rakhine State

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O PEACE, WHERE ART THOU? EXPLORING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS OF A LASTING PEACE FOR ROHINGYAS IN THE RAKHINE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Rohingya Muslims face the immediate threat of ethnic cleansing from the Rakhine Buddhists and the Myanmar state. Through the British "divide-and-rule" approach in British Burma since 1885, religious tensions were aggravated with systematic and institutional discrimination persisting after independence in 1948. The extent of persecution magnified after the 1982 Citizenship Law, in which Rohingyas were stripped of their citizenship, with consequent waves of mass expulsions and state-sanctioned violence in the 1980s and 1990s. While the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2010 and the democratic transition from the military leadership in 2011 were thought to be the ray of hope for peace, the reignited series of violence from 2012 until today evidently indicate otherwise. Given Rohingyas are undoubtedly among the heavily oppressed ethnic groups in the world, immediate yet effective peacebuilding efforts must be established. However, difficulties in implementing proposed solutions to this conflict illustrate its inherent complexity, especially in reprogramming ingrained societal norms and cutting the flow of external resources to prop the oppressive military. After traversing the practicality of various proposals, this paper advocates a 'X+Y' approach that attempts to redefine the non-intervention clause in the ASEAN Charter while increasing bilateral and multilateral dialogues with Myanmar.

Keywords: *Rohingya, Myanmar, genocide, peacebuilding, 'X + Y' approach*

INTRODUCTION

Myanmar is undoubtedly on the brink of genocide. The Human Rights Watch 2018 Country Report found that over 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh between August 2017 and December 2018 to escape ongoing state-led ethnic cleansing campaigns in the Rakhine State of western Myanmar. Violent military crackdowns in the region have also destroyed almost 400 predominately Rohingya villages through demolishment or arsons, confined over 100,000 Rohingya and other Muslim minorities in detention camps within the Rakhine State, and led to various forms of human rights abuses, systematic and institutional discrimination, and sexual violence by Myanmar authorities (Human Rights Watch 2019). Unfortunately, the horrific scale of oppression and persecution faced by the ethnic minority are nothing new. Since the 1962 military coup by General Ne Win, there have been at least five waves of large-scale and systematic crackdown of Rohingyas: 1978 Operation Nagamin ("Dragon King"), 1992, 2012, 2016, and 2017. In addition, they were officially denied fundamental human rights after their citizenship was revoked due to the discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law, which subjectively defined ethnic groups who migrated to Myanmar before 1823 as non-indigenous people. The Myanmar state allegedly justifies its atrocities against Rohingyas on the basis of their citizenship status. Often implemented under the guise of suppressing violent separatist movements or deporting illegal immigrants, these crackdowns frequently led to the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Despite the magnitude and circumstances of violence towards Rohingyas mirroring those of the

Bosnian War, the international community has remained largely silent in confronting the Myanmar government to end the targeted persecution. Thus, are there any other approaches that can offer a durable solution to this religious conflict or would they eventually face a similar fate as the Palestinians – a lifetime of suffering with no peace in sight?

Given its coverage in the literature, this paper aims to contribute new insights towards a durable solution for the Rohingya crisis. Peacebuilding proposals in Myanmar often emphasise on enhancing domestic institutions, such as democratic resilience, consociational democracy, and inclusive citizenship laws (Nemoto 1991, Lewa 2009, Kipgen 2014, Southwick 2015, Wolf 2017). To reflect the complicated nature of this issue, there are also more comprehensive solutions that include international or regional interventions (Bashar 2012, Azad and Jasmine 2013, Kundu 2017) and intersectional domestic-international strategies (Parnini 2013, Marston 2017). The discourse on the Rohingya issue arguably tilts to the lens of refugee management, with recommended policies addressing the security consequences of large-scale, often generational, Rohingya refugees in the region and their dire living conditions in crowded and under-resourced refugee camps in Bangladesh (Cheung 2011, Parnini, Othman and Ghazali 2013, Milton, et al. 2017). Therefore, it is the interest of this paper to offer practical approaches towards peace in Myanmar that should address the root causes of the mass refugee phenomena. There is also an academic motivation to outline a Malaysian stance in mainstream discussions of ending violence on Rohingyas. That is, an overemphasis on the roles of global superpowers and ASEAN in promoting peacebuilding initiatives in Myanmar, as exemplified by Zhou (2017), Amini (2017), Fan and Reilly (2018), Hassan (2019), among many, presents a literature gap on outlining potential contributions by individual countries that face direct consequences of the conflict. This paper is structured as follows: firstly, an introduction and background of the Rohingya crisis. Subsequently, an examination of proposed solutions that encompass both domestic and international angles. Finally, a comprehensive synthesis of a proposed 'X+Y approach' to impose international pressure and encourage domestic-driven changes in societal norms in hopes to end violence in the Rakhine State.

BACKGROUND OF THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

While this institutional violence is evidently rooted in the ethno-religious tensions between the Buddhist majority and Rohingya Muslims, what would cause such animosity and how has it been translated into a state-led persecution? While this paper acknowledges the nuances of conflating both Buddhists and the Burman ethnic majority, the former will be used as an umbrella term to include the latter for the sake of brevity, unless mentioned otherwise. Nonetheless, the notion of an inherent incompatibility between both religions being the major factor of this conflict seems rather unlikely given their relatively peaceful coexistence under the rule of the Buddhist Mrauk-U Kingdom (whose religion remains disputed by Rohingya historians) in the 15th century. Conversely, portraying Rohingyas as illegal Bangladeshi migrants, despite the presence of Muslim settlements in Rakhine State centuries prior to the establishment of the modern Myanmar state (Azad and Jasmine 2013, Leitich 2014), suggests a fundamental political issue at the heart of this conflict. Hence, to demonstrate further the political nature of this conflict and how religion came into the picture, the relationship between both groups and their conflicting narratives throughout Myanmar's history – particularly in the medieval dynastic period, British colonial rule, and post-independence era – must be examined.

Early Rohingya Settlements in Arakan

The violence on Rohingyas is motivated by the different perspectives on their origins in Myanmar. The literature presents two contested views that reflect the perspectives of both Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists. Firstly, Jilani (1999) presented discourses that are in favour of Rohingyas. Prior to the arrival of Islam to Arakan (present-day Rakhine State) in the 8th century through Arab Muslim traders, there has already been a majority Rohingya settlement alongside Arakanese Buddhists with the Rohingya language serving as the lingua franca in the region. In fact, Jilani also argued that the independent Kingdom of Arakan (1430-1785), also known as the Mrauk-U Kingdom and the eventual predecessor to the Burmese Empire, was a Muslim dynasty – as demonstrated by the use of Islamic titles and symbols in the royal court – with Buddhist influence, essentially challenging the notion of Myanmar being a Buddhist nation and supporting the idea of Rohingyas being native to Myanmar.

In contrast, Chan (2005) attempts to dissociate the historical links between pre-modern Arakanese Muslims and Rohingyas of today: despite agreeing with the presence of Muslims of Bengali descent in Arakan as of 15th century, the extent of their significance and size is not only often relegated to the sidelines, but also assumed to be distinct from that of modern Rohingyas. For instance, the earliest Muslim settlement in Arakan was only established in mid-1500s with the presence of Muslim Bengali soldiers in the outskirts of Mrauk-U city after the military cooperation between King Narameikhla of the Buddhist Mrauk-U Kingdom and the Sultan of Bengal in 1430 (Chan 2005: 398). However, such a populace remained small until the 17th century with the rise of the Arakanese Kingdom as an economic hub and trading outpost (and the diminishing power of the Bengal Sultanate), in which the Muslim community comprised either captured Bengali Muslim slaves from Arakanese raids into Bengal or groups of gentries serving the courts of the Buddhist Mrauk-U kings (Chan 2005: 398). Given the lack of credible anthropological evidence to provide an exact date of the earliest Rohingya settlements in Arakan, both sides attempt to accentuate and downplay, the existence of Rohingya to redefine the dominant political narratives and reframe the history. This underestimation is arguably essential in promoting the narratives of native Muslims in Arakan being genealogically distinct from modern Rohingyas, since a relatively small size of the former could have not possibly led to the current population of the latter (approximately in the low millions) only over several centuries, if not for large-scale migration. This narrative imperatively legitimises the mainstream perception of Rohingyas as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh rather than being "natives" to Rakhine. But the truth may perhaps lie somewhere in the middle – while they may have not been native to Arakan as early as 8th century, not all are "recent" immigrants from South Asia. That is, Yegar (2002) argued that the origin of Rohingyas could be traced back to the initial Muslim settlements in Arakan from the Indian subcontinent, especially from Bengal, in which there were large migratory flows between the Mrauk-U kingdom in Arakan and the Mughal Empire of India. Despite these two studies representing the opposite ends of a spectrum, there were no mentions of any sectarian conflicts between the Rakhine Muslims and Buddhist communities within the period.

Formation of Cracks in Muslim-Buddhist Relations in The Medieval Era

The somewhat peaceful coexistence between the Muslims and Buddhists in Arakan began to fracture, especially after the fall of Bengal Sultanate in early 16th century. Frequent clashes between Mughal Muslims and Arakanese Buddhists to assume control of Chittagong, a strategic settlement at the southeast of present-day Bangladesh, eventually led to a religious-driven discontent

when the latter was defeated and expelled by the forces of Shaista Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal, in 1665 (Bahar 2010). Given the rather blurred lines between Bengalis and Rohingyas, the latter was targeted in the anti-Muslim riots and were forced to seek refuge in Chittagong in 1670 (Bahar 2010). This incident basically reinforces the idea of religious conflicts serving as an avenue to express unhappiness and anger towards perceived and actual hardships, possibly aggravated due to the sense of shame after being defeated by the Mughal Empire – although there were no further recorded cases of large-scale anti-Muslim or anti-Rohingya movements until the next century. That is, the conquest of the Arakan by the Burmese Empire, under the Buddhist King Bodawpaya, in 1784 displaced hundreds of thousands of Arakanese – both Rohingya Muslims and Arakanese Buddhists – to Chittagong (Ullah 2011). While Rohingyas suffered from another round of systematic violence and persecution, this incident is plausibly not entirely driven by religious animosity considering how local Buddhists were also not spared from such atrocities, perhaps due to the cultural and regional differences with possible attempts to subjugate the autonomous Arakan into the Burmese Empire. Although the pre-colonial oppression of Rohingyas was not completely motivated by religious factors, the fact that the perpetrators in the anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya violence were mostly Buddhists could be perceived by the Rohingya community as an inherent distrust or unwelcoming of one group on the other.

Colonial Economic and Political Anxieties as Roots for Inter-Group Violence

The defeat of the Burmese Empire in the 1885 Third Anglo-Burmese War resulted in its dissolution and the annexation and incorporation of remaining Burmese territories into the British colonial rule. The British style of colonial governance subsequently sowed the seeds of, and eventually further aggravate, racial, religious, and cultural divisions between Rohingyas and the Buddhist majority – particularly through the manipulation of socioeconomic cleavages – with repercussions of which are still experienced today. The decision to place British Burma under the rule of British India instead of creating a separate British administrative colony between 1897 and 1937 feasibly incited anti-Indian resentments among native Buddhists due to ideological and historical factors. For instance, the great shame of failing to defend their symbols of culture and sovereignty from a colonial power (i.e., the sanctity of Theravada Buddhism and monarchy) might inflicted new and opened old wounds, which originated from the defeat and expulsion of Buddhist rule in Arakan at the hands of Aurangzeb, the Mughal military officer, in the mid-17th century (Mahmood 2017). While the Mughal rule of Arakan was not accompanied with recorded instances of anti-Buddhist oppression, it is possible that the genuine fear by the Buddhist majority was derived from a perception that a non-Buddhist ruler would pose credible threats in dismantling centuries of Buddhist privileged position in the mainstream society. As a result, these concerns could be exploited to justify and legitimise the targeted persecution of Rohingyas today – perhaps due to the difficulties to physically distinguish between them and people of Indian descent or the possibly-deliberate misconception between both groups. While this causal argument would require further scrutiny, consequential changes to the social structures and the position of Buddhism after British colonisation potentially remain central to the roots of sectarian division between both groups.

In addition, the British had politicised group identities in Burma out of political interests, which further deepened the political anxiety faced by the Buddhists. For instance, the census design virtually forced respondents to identify with a religion regardless of their level of adherence that would later serve as an avenue to reinforce sectarian identification (Charney 1999). Institutional social grouping can accentuate intergroup differences, and eventually incite conflict, by creating a

permanent barrier among identities and promoting stronger in group bias (Chandra 2012, Sambanis and Shayo 2013, Ferguson and McKeown 2016). The colonial administration also artificially grouped co-ethnic in distinct social cleavages with minimal consideration of its effects on social structures, and indirectly manifest its notorious "divide-and-rule" approach. For example, descendants of immigrants from British India, i.e., Bengali Muslims from Chittagong, were officially defined as "Mahomedan", an archaic term often used by Europeans in the Indian subcontinent to refer to Muslims, or "Chittagonian" (Chan 2005) despite high social integration between them and ethnic Rohingyas (Nemoto 1991, Yegar 2002). Both groups share a common identity through religion, social customs, and language (Leider 2013: 227). Nonetheless, this classification contestably highlights the "foreignness" of Bengali-Rohingya offspring while simultaneously diluting the fact that Rohingyas are "native" to Myanmar and blurring the lines between "Muslims", "Indians", and "Rohingyas". As a calculated political move, the British empowered ethnic minorities (particularly those of Indian descent) in key administrative and military positions to disenfranchise the Buddhist majority – who were seen as disloyal and rebellious – and discourage uprisings and armed resistances (Yegar 2002, The Irrawaddy 2018). The chaotic realignment of social structures by the British would set a highly divergent path for both Rohingyas and the Buddhist majority, especially after the (re)awakening and (re)definition of salient communal identities.

Moreover, the dissolution of the political border between Burma and British India and the economic necessity to develop the resource-rich, labour-scarce Burma had motivated British to adopt a liberal immigration stance, leading to an intense economic competition between migrant workers from South Asia and the Burmese. An influx of workers from as far as Punjab and Madras facilitated the labour-intensive economy (industrial rice cultivation and exports in the Irrawaddy Delta region) and infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, railways, and ports) in a cost-effective manner (Butkaew 2005, Leider 2013). Chaturvedi (2015) added that Western-educated Indians, upper-class business families, and *Chettiar* money lenders also migrated to Myanmar. This gap between Indian migrants and Burmans – by the virtue of British India being one of the more developed British colonies – left the latter displaced from the expanding colonial economy. For example, in Sittwe, one of the then busiest rice-exporting ports in the world, Indian migrants and their descendants formed 97% of the city's population in 1931 (Chaturvedi 2015: 16), basically proving the perception of foreigners getting better-paying jobs and being placed on a path of greater wealth accumulation than the natives (Fink 2001). Similarly, the tendency for Indians to actively block Burmese people from filling vacant positions in the public and private sectors had led to their economic overrepresentation (Yegar 2002: 30), in which the subsequent economic anxiety and frustration further enhanced animosity towards foreigners. Given how communal tensions were recorded as early as the 1920s with Rakhine Buddhists being "…apprehensive about the … invasion of their countries by hordes of Chittagonians" (Leider 2013: 238), anti-Indian and anti-Muslim riots were prevalent throughout Burma in the 1930s that led to the death of hundreds of Indian workers and destruction of properties (Mohajan 2018).

The culmination of these economic and political anxieties was violently expressed during World War II (WWII). Inter-religious violence was further enflamed during the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942 due to the opposing allegiances between social groups, in which the Burman ethnic majority sided with the Japanese due to their religious similarity and the desire for independence while ethnic minorities – Karen, Kachin, Chin, Rohingyas, and other non-Buddhists – aligned with British in exchange for promises of autonomy (Mahmood 2017). In the Rakhine State, Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists were in direct confrontation as the former joined the British "Force V" while the latter was recruited into the Japanese "Patriot Arakan Force"

(Nemoto 1991). The frustrations experienced by the Buddhist majority also motivated attacks on minorities, such as Rohingyas, due to the perception of the latter enjoying disproportionate social, political, and economic advantages relative to their population size and influence under British colonialism. Furthermore, the religious conflict was exacerbated with the institutionalisation of Buddhist nationalism – of which Buddhist elements were infused into the foundation of Burmese nationalism – to mobilise opposition against colonisation. Although Myanmar is multi-ethnic and multi-religious, the exclusionary crux of Burmese nationalism was contestably motivated by the ethnic diversity of the overwhelming Buddhist populace. Despite Buddhism being practiced by almost 90% of the population, most of its adherents are spread across various ethnic groups. In fact, formulating a new national identity that revolves around Buddhism did not only strengthen the construct of a unity Burma, but also fit the political incentives of the Burman elites to mobilise the ethnically diverse Buddhists against non-Buddhists (Tonning 2014). In other words, politicising salient identities to express political-economic anxieties and mobilise anti-colonial movements has virtually laid the roots for the Rohingya conflict today.

Buddhist Nationalism as a Tool for Post-Independence Political Legitimacy

Post-independence, Buddhist nationalism stayed relevant in Myanmar to serve the electoral motivations of opportunistic politicians. For instance, to court the Buddhist support in the 1960 Burmese general elections, the-then Prime Minister, U Nu, ran on a religious rhetoric, in which promises to elevate Buddhism as the official state religion further infused the essence of Buddhist and Burmese identities (Sahliyeh 1990). In fact, upon his ascension to the Premiership, he tabled the State Religion Promotion Act that was later passed by the Parliament in 1961, leading to the use of the Buddhist lunar calendar, official observance of the *uposatha* or the Buddhist sabbath, dedicated airtime for religious programmes on state broadcasting radio, and the teaching of major Buddhist scriptures to Buddhist students in government schools (Sahliyeh 1990). A synthesis of this period would also underline the complex inter-group dynamics. There were efforts to rebuild peace between both Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingyas post-independence – as illustrated by the representation of Rohingyas or Muslims in mainstream political-economic spheres. But the religiously motivated secessionist movements among Rohingyas only strengthened the perception of their incompatibility with the Burmese identity. While assuming that Rohingyas have dual loyalty, or are even disloyal to Myanmar, solely due to their religion is inherently problematic, their persistence for autonomy and self-determination implies a somewhat weak sense of belonging. For instance, there were armed resistance and insurgencies against the newly independent government between 1948 and 1950 as some Rohingyas preferred to be under the Muslim-majority East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh), resulting in the government suppression and social ostracisation of the Rohingya community (Nemoto 1991). The amplification of Buddhist nationalism as a post-independence nation-building tool may have inflamed the secessionist sentiments among some Rohingyas, and thus, further reigniting the sectarian division.

However, the politicisation of Buddhism would later be a double-edged sword for U Nu as it emboldened the Buddhist clergy (*Sangha*) to demand greater Buddhist elements in the national legislation, leading to the (re)initiation of sectarian violence between Buddhists and non-Buddhists (Smith 1965). While political concessions were made to appease the ethnic minorities, they were then perceived as disputing the sanctity of Buddhism – in which the subsequent fear of communal riots essentially prompting a military coup by General Ne Win in 1962. At first, the junta-initiated "Burmese Way to Socialism" seemed to imply a move towards inter-faith peacebuilding – with the state-led secularism abolishing state *Sangha* communities and reversing existing religious

policies, among many (Charney 2009, Yutthaworakool 2017) – but it also led to the mass removal of Burmese of foreign descent, nationalisation of minority-held business, and dissolution of non-Burmese political representation (Chaturvedi 2015). Nevertheless, credible potential challenges to its political legitimacy then incited the junta to inflame both Buddhist nationalism and the religious tensions between Rohingyas and the Buddhist majority. That is, Yunus (1994) and Keenan (2013) stated that religious sentiments were exploited – in which non-Buddhists were perceived to conflict with the ideas of a Buddhist Burma, and hence, a common national identity – to serve as a distraction from the public discontent of the autocratic regime, food shortages, and a failing economy. Given how Rohingyas were already depicted as an enabler of British colonisation through their allegiances in WWII, their devoutness to Islam and distinct physical features basically augmented their "otherness" (Haque 2017). This means, future institutional violence and discrimination – namely the 1978 Naga Min mass expulsion of Rohingyas and the 1982 Citizenship Law that constitutionally stripped Rohingyas off their Myanmarese citizenship – were justified to safeguard the Burmese Buddhist and the *Sangha* from a religious adversary (Schober 2011).

Examining the Buddhist-Muslim relations in the Arakan region throughout modern history has virtually underlined the political roots of the violence on Rohingyas. While determining who is "native" to a region and justifying its "cut-off point" in pre-modern nation states are inherently complicated due to historical migratory circumstances, the power of definition usually lies in the hands of the political elites. Religion is merely incorporated to further incite the highly-contested narratives of the origin of Rohingyas – with the lines between "natives" and "foreigners" being intentionally blurred on the grounds of technical definitions – in which religious and cultural differences would be utilised to justify their expulsion and discrimination. Similarly, Zawacki (2013) introduced two complementary yet distinct strands in describing the causes of conflict: the operational angle argues how domestic political, economic, and social structures were purposely designed to encourage systematic and institutional oppression toward minorities – with structural weaknesses within Myanmarese law, administrative policies, and societal practices offering no credible enforcement mechanisms to restrain the state – while the political outlook implies that this violence reflects underlying legal, political, and economic hardships. The 1982 Citizenship Law essentially serves as an example of the former. The exploration of the origins of the Rohingya conflict shares the philosophical nuances of Prasse-Freeman & Mausert, who reinforce the arbitrariness of social categorisation: "…the Rohingya are not hated because they are different, but because there is fear that they are actually the same…" (n.d.: 14).

EXPLORING PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR CONFLICT RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

The consequences of systematic and institutional oppression of Rohingyas go far beyond the humanitarian lenses. Persistent physical and property insecurity threaten democracy with the erosion of social integration, civil liberties, human rights (Przeworski 1995), and long-term socioeconomic growth with potential losses of productive investments in human and physical capital. This risk is basically amplified in Myanmar due to its democratic and economic infancy from only recently opening up after 50 years of a closed socialist economy and a repressive autocracy. In the light of the ongoing military crackdown on Rohingyas, proposed solutions must be comprehensive to protect universal human rights while also averting democratic backsliding and economic stagnation. Drawing inspirations from past religious conflicts and fundamental tenets for durable peace, approaches that could be replicated within the circumstances of the Rohingya conflict are explored: direct international interventions and internationally led empowerment of

both foreign non-state actors and domestic civil societies. Due to changes in the dynamics of inter-state and intra-state relations over the past few decades, they are accordingly reflected in the shifting definitions, functions, and norms of the interventions.

Approach 1: Direct International Interventions

From being largely limited to maintaining and monitoring peace in disputed territories, direct international interventions have found their way into institutional reconstruction and nation-building, especially within failed and fragile states, because of the emergence of complex threats to state legitimacy and the redefined nature of statehood post-Cold War. Despite their ambiguous effects, how do foreign interventions maintain their relevance as a foreign policy instrument in the context of contemporary internal conflicts and civil war? Their effectiveness in helping to end inter-group violence and promote durable peace feasibly remains under heavy scrutiny given the humanitarian and institutional failures in Libya and Somalia – although credit must be duly given to the success stories in Sierra Leone and Timor Leste. Even with their well-wished intentions to safeguard the physical security and individual dignity of those facing credible threat to their livelihoods, external interventions raise a complicated dilemma since they fundamentally contradict the inviolability of national sovereignty and ideologically manifest the features of 21st-century colonialism (Ottaway and Lacina 2003). Yet, the disastrous consequences of the global inaction in the Rwandan Genocide virtually underline how such interventions are still, in theory, the better alternative. Therefore, with a range of diverse approaches (diplomatic, economic, or military) and deployment timing (either as a pre-emptive prevention or a direct response to ongoing conflicts), interventionist policies – especially those that are multi-pronged in nature – can influence the incentive structures of political elites.

Diplomatic interventions could be simply defined as the processes of external negotiations and engagements involving the relevant stakeholders of a domestic matter, especially in the cases of violent conflicts in the complex multipolar and multiplex world today. Such initiatives present a non-coercive, non-violent, and non-binding approach in preventing further escalation of societal tensions and nudging the perpetrators to alleviate escalations. These policies intend to promote a compromise based on the centrality of elite bargaining, in which both sides would be willing to forego their most preferred outcome in exchange of the best situation given their circumstances – an essence that is possibly comparable to Pareto efficiency. However, there are also instances of negative diplomatic interventions, such as visa bans for diplomatic officials, suspension of high-level bilateral engagements, and cultural, academic, and sporting boycotts to signal breakdown in negotiations (Hazelzet 2001). To illustrate the diverse nature of diplomatic instruments that perhaps could be replicated to end the violence, Wolff and Dursun-Ozkanca (2012) have listed five examples of diplomatic interventions: 1) conditionality, in which peace serves as a prerequisite towards further access and benefits to the international community; 2) fact-finding missions to obtain a grassroot understanding of a conflict and prepare better policy outcomes; 3) mediation, of which an external polity would guide the warring parties at the negotiating table; 4) confidence-building measures that often redesign the domestic structures to promote peace; and 5) international judicial measures that empower the prosecution of crimes against humanity. In fact, the ethno-religious conflict in Yugoslavia witnessed the range of diplomatic interventions, both positive and negative, that managed to thwart and bring justice to the systematic atrocities – from issuing travel bans on the perpetrators of violence in Bosnia to implementing the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Hazelzet 2001, Wolff and Dursun-Ozkanca 2012).

Despite their rather coercive nature, economic-motivated interventions – i.e., the infusion of economic tools into foreign policy instruments – have arguably become more relevant in today's globalised world, in which the greater intertwining of economies today have left countries more sensitive to abrupt disruptions in economic processes. These interventions exist in various forms, as encapsulated by two distinct umbrella terminologies: "carrots", or positive approaches, and "sticks", or negative approaches. An in-depth exploration of these categories outlines a spectrum of economic instruments, of which economic "sticks" consist of direct and indirect trade embargo, restrictions on investments and borrowing (i.e., capital flows), denial of access to international or foreign financial systems, suspension of non-humanitarian aid, and seizure or freezing of assets in foreign banks. Conversely, economic "carrots" may range from conditional development aid to promises of favourable trade and investment opportunities. While credible threats of economic punishment and guarantees of economic assistance can have a myriad of implications to both recipient and sender countries, their ability to force offenders of human rights to shift their incentive structure at a relatively low humanitarian and financial cost essentially places them in the middle ground between the extreme ends of military operations and policy inaction. In the context of developing countries, "carrots" can provide the much-needed capital for economic growth while "sticks" can magnify the extent of economic hardship among the public, which potentially encourage top-down and bottom-up policy or leadership changes. For instance, apartheid South Africa faced comprehensive economic sanctions in the 1980s by the US, Europe, and Japan due to its institutional discrimination of non-whites, in which the average annual net capital outflow was 2% of the GNP throughout the sanctions – although their actual effectiveness on promoting political change was questioned given how South Africa was already facing structural economic weaknesses (Ch. Hefti 2002). Moreover, Hufbaeur et al. (2007) also outlined how the failures of sanctions to restrain alleged human rights violation in Iran, Cuba, and North Korea could be attributed to design and implementation flaws rather than those of intuition.

Despite their high financial, human, and diplomatic costs, military interventions would often be the subsequent response to severe breaches of international humanitarian laws by the warring parties in the unfortunate breakdown of diplomatic and non-aggressive channels. For example, the recorded cases of systematic war rapes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide in the Bosnian War between April 1992 and November 1995 – which saw over 200,000 people killed and many more displaced due to extreme ethno-religious fragmentation – were essentially reflected in the scale of international military responses. That is, NATO forces conducted series of airstrikes on the perpetrators (i.e., Bosnian Serbs who are loyal to Serbia and are mostly adherents of Eastern Orthodoxy) and aided in military operations to prevent further crimes against humanities – namely on the Bosnian Muslim plurality and to a lesser extent, the Bosnian Croats who are loyal to Croatia and mostly of Catholic religion. Consequently, the military assistance managed to shift the balance in power against Serbia, which would then force the three sides to return to the negotiating table and sign the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace for Bosnia and Herzegovina (or the 'Dayton Agreement'). On the other hand, military interventions can also take the form of foreign peacekeeping missions during and after violent conflicts. As illustrated by the Bosnian War once again, the earliest peacekeepers comprised the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) that was responsible to ensure safety of Bosnian civilians and to escort humanitarian aid. Their presence in Bosnia remains until today, albeit at a much smaller extent, to preserve the implementation of the Dayton Agreement: the NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) from 1995 to 1996, the NATO Stabilisation Force (SFOR) from 1996 to 2004, and the EU Force (EUFOR) from 2004 until today – technically exemplifying how military interventions could contribute to peacebuilding strategies.

Approach 2(a): Empowering Foreign Non-State Actors

The growing legitimisation of international interventions has subsequently led to the increased presence of external non-state actors in the processes of conflict management, resolution, and reconciliation. The international community has demonstrated that individual human security is no longer limited to the responsibility of a state. The (relatively) well-funded and structured non-state actors now have a greater role to play. For instance, UN-associated agencies and international humanitarian organisations (IHOs), such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Doctors Without Borders, have amplified their involvement in the Rakhine State after the large-scale violence on Rohingyas in early 2010s, namely to deliver basic needs to thousands of victims of the conflict. However, current domestic political dynamics have altered the circumstances of such interventions. The perception of these external non-state actors being biased towards Rohingyas while ignoring the plight and hardships of Rakhine Buddhists – a belief, corroborated by xenophobic and nationalistic sentiments – have resulted in public discontent towards, attacks on, and the eventual suspension of these organisations (Perria 2017). In addition, members of the UN Human Rights Council Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar were threatened with travel bans, which eventually would force them to utilise remote testimonial collections – an approach that could allow Myanmar to challenge the legitimacy of the entire Mission (Human Rights Watch 2017). Given their exclusive access to conflict areas and an inherent commitment to human rights, IHOs should not confine themselves only within the realm of humanitarian provision. The international community should indirectly enhance the organisational and technical capacities of these non-state actors not only to enlarge the extent of their humanitarian delivery, but also facilitate transmission of grassroot information to better inform policy choices – though at an arm's length to maintain their perceived neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

As alluded to by the growing clout of globalisation on international relations, Multinational Corporations (MNCs) could also leverage upon their economic prowess to influence domestic policies. The notions of reputational risks and ethical investments have basically encouraged firms to be equipped with a greater awareness of the political environment in their prospective country of interest. For instance, Western oil and gas corporations in Myanmar have been rather reluctant to expand their operations, investments in infrastructure, and development of future fields given the reputational risks of being associated with a state that engages in systematic persecution and borderline ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas (Economist Intelligence Unit 2018). Simply put, given the perceived rise in ethical consumerism, public perception can exert political and economic pressures – perhaps through advocacy movements and calls of boycotts – on firms to alter their behaviours because of the threat to their profits (Pellandini-Simanyi 2014, Davies 2016). Thus, to empower the role of benevolent corporations, governments can incentivise such behaviours by establishing guidelines on international commercial transactions. For instance, the Norwegian Ministry of Finance released an ethical guideline for the management of the Government Pension Fund of Norway, the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, which prohibits investments in firms that are directly or indirectly involved in violations of human rights – ranging from producers of cluster ammunitions, nuclear weapons, and weapons of mass destruction to abusers of labour rights and beneficiaries of illegal Israeli colonial settlements in Palestine. While the Rohingya crisis has not completely deterred foreign firms, especially those in the region, to invest in Myanmar, declining investments in its gas industry have potentially led to disruption in immediate power supply and losses in revenue (Economist Intelligence Unit 2018).

Approach 2(b): Empowering Domestic Civil Societies

Local civil society organisations (CSOs) are often no stranger to peacebuilding initiatives. They played a substantial role in contributing to a sustained peace agreement in the aftermath of civil wars in Mozambique (1992), Guatemala (1996), Sierra Leone (2000), and Liberia (2003), among many (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). The ability of Colombian CSOs to participate and successfully push their policy agenda in the peace accords between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a far-left guerrilla group, further illustrated their influence during conflict management processes (Losnegård 2017). These "achievements" were probably possible due to their (relative) proximity to the grassroots, in which CSOs can offer a platform to manifest non-elite representation, and thus, occupying a legitimate political and social clout in the mainstream society (Barnes 2006, Paffenholz 2014). Local CSOs are somewhat allowed to operate with greater flexibility than those with international links since the latter could be perceived as a more credible threat to the political regime. However, the extent of this statement might be less applicable in Myanmar given how domestic democratic resistance towards the junta was inherently attributed to foreign influences by the virtue of its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, being educated in United Kingdom (Clapp 2007). Since effective CSOs would require a comprehensive civil network and mature institutional capacity to exert credible political pressure on the state, the international community should provide technical assistance and financial support, to ensure their organic development. CSOs should also avoid prolonged "institutional competition" with mature external entities, in which such a parallel presence can limit the extent of institutional building. Thus, the tensions between a systematic sectarian conflict and the realm of peacebuilding and conflict reconciliation would possibly require CSOs to prioritise the dissemination of democratic instruments and social harmony, a task that is no mean feat especially in autocracies.

Democratic institutions have often been proposed as a tool for conflict resolutions by promoting consensus among contesting social cleavages and addressing sectarian conflicts (Ake 1996). Kipgen (2014) outlined how consociational democracy, i.e., a power-sharing mechanism in divided societies, can accommodate the divergent preferences and interests of competing social cleavages. In the context of Myanmar, the government could allocate quotas for minority representation to alleviate the grievances faced by ethnic minorities and break perceived stereotypes through increased inter-group interactions. However, given how the government has adamantly expressed its refusal to integrate Rohingyas into the mainstream society, domestic civil societies can then fill the vacuum to promote peacebuilding democracy. Despite criticisms of civil society reflecting the notion of privatising state functions and being mostly dependent upon the quality of citizens (Berman 1997, Ishkanian 2007), they can serve as a counterbalance – or even an alternative – to the state (Bahmani 2016, Cooper 2018). Moreover, Kenyan CSOs have illustrated how CSOs can challenge authoritarian regimes to promote democratisation processes through concerted pressures and mass mobilisation (Ndegwa 1996, Murunga and Nasong'o 2007) and training for political leadership and opposition movement (Mutunga 1999). There is a rich literature on the presence of civil societies in promoting democracy, especially in the context of the former Soviet Union, with the biggest recipient of USAID democratic aid between 1990 and 2003 being Eurasian countries (USD5.8 million) whereas Asian countries only received around USD1.3 million (Finkel et al. 2006). While the international community and foreign CSOs can contribute to the empowerment of domestic groups in many ways, a particular emphasis is needed on enhancing the domestic groups' ability to both shape and transmit effective democratic narratives for local and external consumption. This approach empowers CSOs to exert some influence on such narratives, which could then minimise the likelihood of the government to conflate democracy with regime change, and therefore, block promotion of democratic mechanisms.

The alleged association between state-initiated mobilisation of Buddhist nationalism and the military crackdown on Rohingyas essentially accentuates the deficiencies in the discourse of state functions in Myanmar, in which there is a clear failure of the state to protect the physical security of Rohingyas. Although they are arguably *de facto* Myanmarese, the 1982 Citizenship Law has made them *de jure* statelessness, which would essentially absolve the government from any responsibilities of providing Rohingyas with any protection – thus, propelling domestic CSOs to prominence albeit from the perspective of mediating social tensions. Their inherent ability to serve as a potential platform to represent civilians who often disproportionately suffer from violent conflicts suggests that civil societies can then initiate meaningful yet effective dialogues and engagements among other social groups and the government (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008). For instance, there could be a dichotomy between Rakhine Buddhists and the political elites – of whom most reside outside the Rakhine State – on the Rohingya conflict. The Rakhine Buddhists might be less eager for sustained violence on the political elites due to the retaliatory nature of repressed social grievances. But this notion seems to be on the fringe, if it exists after all, considering how the current active engagement of Buddhist monks has revitalised the role of religion, with flourishing anti-Islam civil societies attempting to conceptualise anti-Muslim sentiments (Lee 2015: 26). Nevertheless, the fact that rational actors would prefer peace than violence underlines the potential hope for pro-peace CSOs in Myanmar. Civil societies can play two overarching cultural roles to promote dialogue, justice, and peace from the angles of individual-community and community-community relations (ISESCO 2015). Civil societies too could be the mediator between the individual and the society, in which the society provides the individual with an outlet (e.g., a peace-themed World Poetry Day) and relevant assistance express and promote its cultural visions for peace, while also occupying the power to frame narratives of peace and harmony when interacting with other communities (ISESCO 2015). In the context of Myanmar, these two approaches would hypothetically take the form of Rohingya-based societies highlighting the longing for peace within the community and disseminating such expressions to build a theoretical bridge to other societies.

The complexity of the state-led persecution of Rohingyas is basically reflected in its proposed solutions to achieve vision of lasting peace and a violence-free future. To offer a comprehensive overview of effective and practical approaches that embody these sentiments, best practice from contemporary intra-group conflicts and divided countries have been explored. Although religious demographics and dynamics in Myanmar may differ from those of the countries covered, the comparable magnitude of victims, extent of human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, and sectarian nature of the conflict imply their relevancy and replicability as a peacebuilding tool. Both direct international interventions and empowerment of domestic entities have demonstrated their ability to redefine the country's domestic political structures by altering diplomatic, economic, political, and social, among many, incentives – with hopes to end violence. However, to ensure that these approaches can be successfully replicated in Myanmar, a thorough understanding of both their fundamentals and the overarching local structures is needed.

IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS IN THE RAKHINE STATE

Despite the wide range of recommended solutions on the Rohingya conflict from both domestic and international perspectives, promoting a peaceful, genuine, and durable peacebuilding and reconciliation would require an approach beyond their carbon replication. Considering how they were largely inspired by similar contemporary cases in other countries, there is an utmost need to adjust such proposals to better fit the local circumstances and context. Failing to reflect

the unique nuances and domestic socio-political-economic configurations in Myanmar could lead to, at best, the preservation of status quo, while at its worst, the worsening of sectarian relations. For instance, lessons from Bosnia have suggested how external-driven peacebuilding initiatives must be complemented by genuine domestic motivations and institutions to promote a credible perception of justice. The rushing of democratic elections without concrete state institutions and capacities merely led to the reinstatement of the previous regime, of which some were directly or indirectly complicit in the violent conflict (Riskin 1999). Rees (2003) observed how the sense of post-conflict "normality" in Bosnia is still missing among victims due to the reluctance or inability of political elites to bring most war criminals to justice. Since some sort of international intervention is needed – either to directly pressure the Myanmar state or strengthen domestic institutions for an internal change – there is an immediate need to circumvent the effects of decades of insular and autocratic military rule, which has potentially instilled a deep distrust of foreign involvement. To prevent such interventions from posing a moral dilemma and setting a negative precedent, the essence of the interventions in Myanmar should operate around existing regional (e.g., ASEAN) and international multilateral (e.g., UN General Assembly) mechanisms.

'X+Y' Approach: Redefining ASEAN While Engaging Myanmar

There is a need to reconstruct the approach in engaging Myanmar judging from how current engagements have technically failed to shift the incentive structure of the regime. Despite the initial targeted economic and diplomatic sanctions on senior military generals by the US and the plan to impose broader economic sanctions by the US and the EU, political elites in Myanmar are perceived less motivated to change due to the nature of domestic political-economic structures (Economist Intelligence Unit 2017). These individuals are mostly insulated from Western economic pressures since they have greater stakes in military-run corporations and conglomerates, such as the Myanmar Economic Corporation and the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings, with such enterprises relying more on regional economic networks from China, Thailand, and India – countries that are allegedly less concerned about the domestic affairs of the recipient country (Economist Intelligence Unit 2017). In fact, Myanmar is further resistant to threats of Western sanctions given its strategic importance to China's Belt and Road Initiative – as illustrated by the signing of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between both countries in April 2019 on the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the provision of a USD148 million grant to Myanmar (Economist Intelligence Unit 2019) – in which the vast expansion of economic linkages and networks remains an utmost priority to China's global ambitions. Thus, an effective pressure on or intervention in Myanmar would virtually require the "consent" or participation of regional actors, especially of China, albeit the prospect of such an event occurring seems highly unlikely. Nevertheless, Malaysia could perhaps initiate a more reprimanding approach on Myanmar within the ASEAN platform, in which there exists the possibility to further escalate this matter to the East Asian Summit – of which both ASEAN and China are among the members – to strategise a more concerted effort in inducing changes on the political-economic structures of the elites in Myanmar.

ASEAN has a vested interest in the Rohingya crisis for reasons beyond the humanitarian realm – as Myanmar's regional neighbours, ASEAN member states are confronting the spillover of the domestic issues with the mass influx of Rohingya refugees. The notion of strength in numbers would imply ASEAN's ability to exert greater pressure on Myanmar relative to unilateral and individual actions from the member states. Yet, in its existing structure, ASEAN faces institutional difficulties and restrictions in imposing credible force when engaging with Myanmar. Currently,

most of its responses are perceived limited to generic statements of concerns and general calls for actions with no genuine attempts to even denounce the complicit military and political elites – although Malaysia has delivered a rather lashing statement on the need to bring the perpetrators of the violence on Rohingyas to justice during the otherwise lackadaisical ASEAN Summit in Bangkok (The New Straits Times 2019). This approach clearly opposes the Article 1(7) of the ASEAN Charter, which highlights its core commitment towards promoting and protecting human rights. However, Limsiritong (2017) discovered that ASEAN's institutional and organisational design prioritises and safeguards the principles of non-interference over those of human rights and other matters. This strict adherence to such principles can possibly be justified by the relative peace and non-alignment in the region, in which the idea of equality of sovereignty reinforced by the non-interference policy minimises potential tensions among ASEAN member states (Ramcharan 2000). Moreover, the fact that all of its member states then managed to escape the Cold War relatively unscathed – with none falling into the direct orbits of either the Soviet Union or the United States – further highlights the successes of its political configuration in supporting regional peace. However, this same principle can also be seen as a double-edged sword when it comes to human rights abuses in the region. Although ASEAN could justify its idleness during the Khmer Rouge genocide – which occurred less than a decade after the former's establishment in 1967 – on the basis of institutional infancy and weak political legitimacy, it risks doing the same even five decades later – despite its perceived organisational capacity – in the light of the Rohingya conflict.

Since the existing approach of ASEAN's two-pronged "internal diplomacy" – in which the public commitment towards non-interference is simultaneously followed by the private, face-saving, diplomatic interventions (Ramcharan 2000) – has essentially failed to stop the violence, ASEAN must be bold in revisiting the idea and consequences of such principles. While its member states could opt for individual and unilateral interventions, e.g., the hypothetical case of Malaysia imposing sanctions on Myanmar, the abject failures of such practices by the West should be a cautionary tale. Despite interventions on the basis of human security are no longer restricted within the realms of multilateral politics (e.g., under the purview of UN General Assembly) and may reflect the foreign policy interests of an individual country, obtaining a regional consensus would not only reinforce the legitimacy for humanitarian intervention, but also exert a greater political pressure on the basis of the ASEAN Consensus. The failure to redefine the non-intervention clause can also increase the likelihood of individual member states undermining ASEAN's structural integrity, in which the lack of consensus and consultation among member states could threaten to shake the growing regionalism initiatives in the organisation. In other words, an unsolicited intervention by ASEAN countries could set a policy slippery slope, in which Myanmar, or other member states, could conduct similar interventions with a relatively weak justification in the future. The complexity of this approach inherently reflects the magnitude of the Rohingya conflict. While the idea of reinventing the core of ASEAN will surely face substantial opposition from member states – potentially arising from the uncertainty upon opening the non-interference Pandora Box – it is worth noting that the spillover of the Rohingya conflict to the shores of Malaysia and Thailand, which would possibly intensify with the ASEAN inaction, could also threaten to undermine the existence of ASEAN.

CONCLUSION

The latest series of violence on Rohingyas have painted a rather pessimistic outlook on the prospect of national reconciliation and puts peace far out of reach. Although the conflict is

mostly motivated by sectarian tensions, its roots are arguably found in the politicisation of religion, and identity in general, which essentially masks an entrenched political, social, and economic issues in Myanmar. That is, hardships from the closed socialist economic system and an oppressive junta rule have basically failed to mitigate colonial-era economic and political anxieties, which were made worse through nationalistic and xenophobic mobilisation of the Buddhist majority. Although the Rohingya conflict is essentially a domestic issue, the international community cannot afford to remain silent on the prolonged suffering faced by Rohingyas – especially for ASEAN given that it is occurring in its backyard – because of the scale of the humanitarian crisis and the overarching consequences. Its implications have extended far beyond Myanmar's borders as the mass exodus of Rohingya refugees in the region, mostly bound for Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia, is posing substantial security threats and severely straining regional relationship. Given how this paper has drawn inspirations from contemporary cases of inter-group violence to outline best practices to end the violence and promote genuine reconciliation, the Rohingya conflict plausibly needs a creative yet bold stance – i.e., the "X+Y" method of redefining the non-interference clause in ASEAN while maintaining multilateral engagement with Myanmar to exert greater pressure on this issue. However, with the potential implications of opening up ASEAN to regional interference and scrutiny, a further in-depth study is required to avoid any unintended consequences. Nonetheless, the eventual ASEAN solution must be fundamentally rooted in addressing complex human emotions, such as fear, prejudice, and perceptions of injustice for effective peacebuilding.

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