

The Forced Migration of the Rohingya in Myanmar: A Case of Azar's Protracted Social Conflict Theory

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Abstract: The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar have long endured systemic marginalization, culminating in what has become one of the most protracted and complex displacement crises of the 21st century. This paper applies Edward Azar's (1990) Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) theory as an analytical framework to interrogate the structural and historical underpinnings of the Rohingya forced migration. By employing the PSC model's four core 'Genesis factors': communal content, deprivation of human needs, governance and state function, and international linkages, this paper provides a comprehensive examination of how entrenched identity-based inequalities and governance failures have transformed a long-standing communal grievance into a protracted social conflict. Through this lens, the Rohingya case is not merely a humanitarian crisis but a paradigmatic instance of state-led structural violence, reinforced by regional politics and international inertia. The findings underscore the enduring relevance of PSC theory in understanding identity-driven conflicts and forced displacement in contemporary state systems.

Keyword: Rohingya crisis; Forced migration; Protracted Social Conflict (PSC); Ethnic Conflict; Identity-based Conflict

JEL Classification: O33

1. Introduction

Since 1948, the year of Myanmar's independence, the Rohingya, a minority ethnic community principally made up of Muslims, have lived in one of the nation's poorest regions, the Rakhine (Arakan), where there is a dearth of opportunities and basic facilities (Smith 1996). The Rohingya can trace their descent to the fourteenth century, when tens of thousands of Moslems arrived in what used to be the Arakan Kingdom. When Rakhine was overseen during the period of colonialism as a part of British India in the late 19th as well as early 20th century, substantially large number of people migrated there. Since the country's independence in 1948, subsequent administrations of Burma, which was rechristened Myanmar in 1989, have refused the Rohingya people's historic claims and declined recognizing them as one of the nation's one hundred and

thirty-five recognized ethnicities. Even though many of the Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for myriad of decades, they are still regarded as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh (Albert and Maizland 2020).

Between 1824 and 1886, the British waged three wars that resulted in the annexation of Myanmar. Over 60 years of Myanmar's history were spent under British rule. Inter-ethnic harmony existed in Myanmar prior to the British occupation, until the undesirable interference of British control in the nineteenth century. Ethnic tensions persisted amongst many populations throughout this time, dangerously stoked by the colonial government's divide-and-rule strategy. Consequent upon this split, the varied ethnicities developed economically and politically in immensely separate ways, which frequently led to acts of communal bloodshed throughout their history. The British were blamed by Myanmar's historians for favouring ethnic minorities while they were under colonial control and for having equally detrimental effects on ethnic minorities' aspirations because ethnic minorities' lands were carved up into separate political districts and none were superintended according to nationality (Smith and Allsebrook 1994).

Conflicts between Myanmar's Buddhist majority and Rohingya Muslims emerged in 1962, when General Ne Win's military regime seized power. The crisis began to develop when Rohingya Muslims were denied access to their fundamental civil rights due to a purported dread of Islamism (Crouch 2016). Consequent upon the upheaval occasioned by the stance of the government of General Ne Win, the Rohingya Muslims had no choice but to turn to alternative means of self-defense in order to defend themselves against state violence. Like in other cases involving minority rights during the Cold War era, the Rohingya Mujahedeen established a separatist movement for the Rohingya in the 1970s. To wrest back the control apparatus of the Arakan territory (Rakhine State) from the Myanmar government, the movement launched a number of actions. Consequently, in February 1978, the Myanmar government launched 'Operation Nagamin', alternatively referred to as 'Operation King Dragon' in Rakhine State as reprisal, that culminated in the death of heaps of Rohingya Moslems. Prior to the national census, the objective of the operation was to oust the so-called aliens out of Rakhine province.

Denoted as discriminatory on the basis of ethnicity, the Citizenship Law was promulgated and implemented in 1982 in Rakhine State, allowing the government to unanimously revoke Rohingya citizenship. The 1982 Citizenship Law, which is a component of other discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, is the main rationale behind the Rohingya population's de facto statelessness. The Rohingya do not even qualify as one of the national races and without even the rights of a second-rate national, hence they lack a meaningful legal status (Human Rights Council 2018: 8–11).

While the government of Myanmar refused to grant citizenship to Rohingya Muslims unless they abandoned their "Islamic" heritage or abandoned their religious convictions, the Rohingya Moslems declined identifying themselves as 'illegal Bengalis' for the purpose of seeking citizenship in Myanmar. The worry that the state would lose its Buddhist identity as long as Rohingya Moslems maintain their adherence to Islam and identify as Myanmar citizens motivated the Buddhist government to adopt this stance (Baird et al. 2016). The Buddhist government and community's stance has exacerbated the dispute and turned it into genocide. The main causes of forced migration and hardship include inconsistent government policies and enforcements, a lack of access to arable land and other resources that result in food insecurity, as well as a lack of facilities for healthcare and educational resources (Sahana et al. 2019). Correspondingly, Bosson (2007) outlined how the use of coercive tactics significantly contributed to domestic displacement in Myanmar. To him, over time, these authoritarian practices such as forced labour, land grabbing, and mandatory tillage practices operated collectively and resulted in weighty human rights infractions.

The phrase 'forced migration' was employed to denote the mobility of migrants, refugee flows, and in certain circumstances, movement of victims of human trafficking. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) conceptualizes forced migration as a migration that, although having a variety of motivations, entails force, compulsion, or violence (IOM 2019: 77).

South (2007) asserted that there are three types of forced migration occurring in Myanmar. Armed conflict between Buddhists in Rakhine and Moslems in Rohingya, followed by relocation, is the first type of forced migration. Security of people and food was directly threatened by the ensuing hostilities and counterinsurgency operations. The takeover of this border state by the military is the second type of displacement. The primary justification offered for this militarization was the "development" of the area through the seizure of property for the exploitation of natural resources and the creation of infrastructure. Slave labour including other forms of abuses were prevalent in this development-driven activity. Interestingly, the border states and divisions of Myanmar were most heavily impacted by this relocation brought on by "militarization for development." The third type of forced migration and displacement is induced by the fragility of livelihoods, which culminated in both domestic and extrinsic migration.

This paper aims to proffer a critical evaluation of the Rohingya forced migration employing Azar's Protracted Social Conflict (henceforward, PSC) theory. The PSC's Genesis factors perspective, that examines four main conditions converting a peaceful situation to one that is conflictual: communal content, human needs deprivation, governance including the function of the state, as well as international linkages, shall be utilized in thoroughly dissecting the subject matter.

To achieve the stated objective, this paper is divided into five sections. Section one, which is the introduction, provides a historical overview of the crisis and the circumstances that culminated in the forceful exodus of the Rohingya people. A conceptual clarification of terms is made in section two while section three encompasses the theoretical foundation of the paper and comprehensively expounds the concept of PSC. Section four entails a thorough scrutiny of the Rohingya forced migration within the theoretical underpinning of Azar's concept of PSC while the conclusion is presented in section five.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Conflict

To Azar (1990: 5), conflict is a frequent and global social occurrence that involves a set of different players, including people, communities, states, and their collectivities. He characterizes it as the result of parties having aims that are irreconcilable with one another and there being no procedures in place to coordinate or mediate.

2.2 Social conflict

To Coser (1967: 232), social conflicts are tussles over ideals or status claims, authority, including limited assets and expedients which conflicting parties seek not only to acquire the desirable values but to as well neutralize, harm, or exterminate opponents. Social conflicts thus, encompass a multiplicity of social concerns including social stratum, belief, race, ethnicity, and others (Oberschall 1978: 291; Oleksiewicz & Öz, 2023).

2.3 Intractable, protracted or deep rooted conflicts

Coleman (2000) defines "intractable conflicts" as situations that are protracted, intense, and difficult to defuse or resolve. They are also cyclical in nature and last for a very long time. He contends that this kind of conflict is centred on needs and beliefs, and the sides do not see an alternative to achieving their goals than by destroying the opposing group. These disputes are intractable because they are resistant to diplomatic, negotiating, or mediation techniques.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Protracted Social Conflict Theory

In order to address a gap in the current literature on conflict resolution, Azar (1990) developed his approach and theory. While most researchers classified disputes into endogenous and exogenous dimensions, very few attempted to link the two. Moreover, scholars are disposed to neglecting covert and non-belligerent conflicts while studying and concentrating on blatant and violent confrontations. When Azar developed his PSC theory, among the issues he attempted to address was the difficulty in differentiating as well as identifying domestic and foreign sources and actors' (Ramsbotham 2005: 114). Only an interdisciplinary theory will be helpful in the provision of distinct, quantifiable components out of which conflicts can be assayed to ascertain whether they are, or are on the verge of becoming PSCs because conflict is inherently complicated both as a notion and a phenomenon consequent upon its multidimensional nature (Beaudoin 2014: 2). Thus, within the Genesis factors of Azar's (1990) PSC theory, an attempt will be made to pinpoint and examine the prompts as well as bases of the prolonged hostilities in the northern Rakhine province. These elements set the stage for the transition as well as intensification of the conflict, or as Azar (1990: 12) puts it: 'the metamorphosis of non-conflictual circumstances to conflictive ones'.

3.2 Genesis factors

The society's communal content, which Azar defines as identification groupings on the basis of tribal, religious, ethnical, and cultural characteristics is PSC theory's first factor. Then, two elements are recognized as the primary drivers of the rise in political engagement in varied communal societies: colonial legacies and historic patterns of dispute and rivalry amongst communal actors (Azar 1985: 31). In reality, the concept of divide and rule, which was used by ample colonial empires, is said to be the reason why there are various communal groupings present in former colonial governments. The legacy of colonialism led to governments being dominated by one communal group that was blind to the concerns of the other groups in the community. Consequently, basic societal demands like identity, safety, and recognition are not addressed. This puts pressure on society and finally leads to segmentation and PSC (Azar 1990: 7). As a case in point, the clash between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Nigeria's Anambra State is exemplified by the communal content factor. Consequent upon unequal access to socio-economic as well as political resources during the British rule, these two close communities who share the similar language and have similar cultures have invariably or consistently clashed over land and harbour intense animosity towards one another (Onwuzuruigbo 2011: 567). The conflict in Nigeria is essentially a replication of the well-known divide and conquer strategy utilized by

British colonizers to quell uprisings via providing improved living standards as well as prospects for minorities while excluding the dominant group out of social as well as political life within the colony. Consequently, one group began to harbour and grow a deep-seated grudge against the other.

Azar (1990: 9) cited 'human needs deprivation' such as security needs (housing, nutriment, clothes, and human security); access needs (economic and political engagement), and acceptance needs (recognition and identification needs) as the second component contributing to PSC. Structural victimization is brought on by the deprivation of basic human needs like feeding, accommodation, clothing, medication, and literacy; physical deprivation brought on by undernourishment, illiteracy, joblessness, ill-health, and disability; political discrimination brought on by the failure to recognize individual or collective identity. PSC results when frustrations brought on by such need deprivation go unresolved.

Thirdly, Azar (1990: 10–11) stressed that governments where PSC is likely to exist are typically monopolized dominantly by a single group or an amalgam of groupings that disregard the concerns of other groupings. Consequently, the powers that be is described as inept, insular, brittle, as well as a despotic regime which falls short of providing basic essentials and safeguard its people by offering common goods to its population in an equitable manner. Consequent upon the government's lack of fairness and impartiality, the primary responsibility of the state is no longer respected which leads to instability in the community and society. Take the strife in Cyprus between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots as an instance. This third element of the Genesis factor is demonstrated by the Greek-Cypriot composed or dominated leadership and the government's failure to address Turkish-Cypriot seclusion and debarment by denying them access to social institutions (Leventis and Tsokkalides 2007: 37).

The final prerequisite, 'international linkages', is what Azar refers to as the influence of a nation's relationships with other nations on the formation of its internal social and bureaucratic institutions (1990: 11). The surrounding nations are somehow involved in almost every internal crisis. Their function could be affirmative or exploitative. Third parties may contribute to the escalation of the conflict by providing unjust support to one of the parties, or they may assist in its de-escalation by participating in peace negotiations.

Concisely, PSC happens when groups of people are denied the opportunity to satisfy their fundamental needs due to their shared identity. The involvement of the state and the structure of global linkages, however, play a significant role in the complicated chain of causation leading to deprivation. Initiating factors (colonial legacies, internal historical context, and the society's multi-communal makeup) also play significant parts in influencing the outset of PSC (Azar 1990: 12).

Essentially, PSC can be conceptualized as long-lasting hostile encounters punctuated by sporadic flare-ups of open hostilities that vary in prevalence and ferocity. Deep-rooted race-related, ethnical, as well as faith-based animosities could spark and escalate endogenous and exogenous hostilities in these scenarios, which could encompass the groupings within a single nation-state or groups among various nations within the same terro (Azar and Farah 1981: 319–320).

3.3 Process Dynamics of PSC

In light of this, Azar (1990) notes that the situations that sparks open hostilities will be determined by the deeds as well as incidences of process dynamics, which he classifies into three categories: communal action and strategies, state action and strategies, and built-in mechanisms of conflict.

3.3.1 Communal actions and strategies:

The term 'communal actions and strategies' alludes to the likelihood of divergent triggers igniting previous latent conflict, which afterwards escalate into a broader and potentially more ferocious conflict. Following is how Azar summarizes this procedure:

A trigger may at first, but need not be, a little incident (such as affronting someone with strong communal links), but it is not required. However, the seemingly unimportant occurrence frequently marks a turning moment when everyone realizes that each person is being victimized. Collective outrage results organically from the identification of individual complaints or conflicting objectives (Kara 2018). The response to mass protest is typically some form of repression or suppression. As the situation becomes more tense, the mistreated communal groupings start to call the attention of their members to a variety of problems regarding collective security, access as well as security demands (such as socio-economic injustice and selective impoverishment). The proliferation of the incident's effects into many problems gives organizing and resource mobilization more momentum. As communal organization and mobilization increase, communal groups make an effort to develop more varied plans and tactics, which may include civil protest, hit and run tactics (guerilla warfare), or secessionist movements. The degree to which this heightens is partly determined by the capacity of communal groups to efficiently set up and create firm leadership including their propensity to amass foreign or external support, which may culminate in the conflict becoming regionalized.

3.3.2 State actions and strategies:

According to Azar (1990), authorities typically repress or coerce communal concerns by coercive means or through instrumental absorption in order to avoid displaying signs of loss or weakness, particularly in nations with shoddy governance structures (Kara 2018). When dealing with intercommunal resistance, the government typically bases its strategy on a harsh or brutal response. Such a strict strategy demands equally violent responses from repressed populations. Azar (1990) believes that repression rather than accommodation is considerably more likely given the discerned eco-political costs associated with feeble and fragmented communities as well as the 'winner-take-all' norm that still reigns in multi-communal societies. Cooptation or rather absorption could serve to reduce tensions within communities, but it is often viewed as a tactic used to split and divert the opposition. When the co-optation or absorption strategy fails, forceful and repressive actions are further justified, which feeds violent confrontations that are becoming more and more intense.

3.3.3 Built-in mechanisms of conflict

The final factor in Azar's model of the process dynamics has to do with how long-running disagreements affect how individuals discern one another and the manner this can affect how hostile factions act. In other words, conflict resolution analysts thoroughly research built-in mechanisms of conflict after the destructive circle of violence upsurge is sparked.

Azar drew on the research of other scholars in the field to ferret out the mechanism by which mutually exclusive experiences, phobias, and belief systems produce reciprocally bad images that sustain intergroup animosities and deepen protracted social conflict (Ramsbotham 2005).

4. Analysis of Rohingya Forced Migration within the Theoretical Underpinning of Azar's PSC

4.1 Genesis factors

Azar starts off his analysis of the PSC by identifying the sequence of events which engender a particular protracted social conflict (Azar 1990: 7). Azar cites four factors in this phase, which he refers to as 'Genesis', which act as the prerequisites for the shift of peaceful circumstances into conflictual ones (Azar 1990: 12). The four factors are: communal content, human needs deprivation, governance and the state's function, and international linkages.

4.1.1 Communal content

A society's communal content is the most significant aspect in PSC, and the identity group — race-related, religious, tribal, cultural, and others is the most effective analytical unit in instances of PSC (Azar 1985: 31). Colonial legacies and historical patterns of conflict and contention amongst community actors are two variables that Azar (1990: 7) cites as the origins of the rise of politically engaged multi-communal societies. On the one hand, colonialists' use of the divide and rule strategy is largely to blame for the presence of several communal groupings in former colonial territories. On the other hand, consequent upon colonial heritage, the administration is controlled by a single communal group in many states, who do not take the demands of the other groupings in society into consideration. As a result, the communal group whose demands in terms of identity, protection, and recognition are disregarded becomes a source of fuel for the "historical patterns of conflict and contention" (Azar 1990: 7).

As was previously established, the British utilized its well-known "divide and rule" strategy to run Burma. A few could argue that Burma was beforehand classified among the most ethnically heterogeneous nations in Asia prior to British colonialism, but the colonial heritage remains relevant in the present instance as the rationale behind the protracted hostilities because the British divide and rule policy solidified the nation's ethnic partition and heightened animosity between one group and another (Walton 2016: 1). This led to the colony being split in twain major administrative regions: the core region, known as 'Ministerial Burma' made up of a Burman majority and also a sizable proportion of non-Burman ethnic nationalities; as well as the Frontier Regions which included the territories on the border at the north inhabited by all other minor ethnicities along with the Shan States, including the territories principally inhabited by Chin as well as Kachin ethnicities (Walton 2016: 2). While the frontier territories were administered indirectly by working with indigenous leaders, ministerial Burma was strictly administered by Indian administrators brought by the British authorities (Walton 2016: 2). Given that the Karen and Kachin were favoured to be part of the colonial military due to their combative characteristics, and the Burman majority was thought to be too tractable and more helpful for farming, the Burman majority was barred from bureaucratic and managerial positions including the military (Charney 2016). This caused Burmans to link other minor ethnicities to colonial control and brutality, and consequently, Burmese nationalism grew, chiefly as an ethnical Burman nationalism aggrieved at other ethnic minorities (Walton 2016: 2).

4.1.2 Deprivation of human needs

To Azar (1990: 9), the root cause of PSC is the deprivation of human necessities. He contends that understanding the grounds and roots of the surge in violence in PSC is crucial in order to understand the fundamental rights to security, survival, and liberty, which also includes protection needs, development imperatives, public access needs, and identification needs (cultural and religious affiliation). Since central administrations do not invest in and develop certain areas of the country, clashes are more prone to emerge in impoverished regions. Moreover, Azar (1990) also takes into account material necessities in his elucidation of this component. He asserts that the privilege to gain access to the establishments of society, like government jobs or opportunities that grants connection to power, forces marginalized groups to handle their discontent extrajudicially since they lack a body of representatives and means for economic and political control. These complaints intensify and become protracted due to the government's inability and lack of motivation to address these fundamental demands.

In the Rohingya case, even though there is historical evidence of their presence in Rakhine state dating back centuries, Rohingyas are denied opportunities to social and bureaucratic establishments consequent upon their racial and religious heritage. They are also not considered nationals of Burma but are viewed as immigrant Bengalis. Consequently, they are stateless. Their rights to get married as well as have kids are restricted. Their access to jobs and education has been restricted by successive administrations which have disenfranchised them. Their freedom of movement is likewise restricted, and they risk paying steep fines if they leave their settlements without permission. The availability of humanitarian and medical services supplied by global entities like the United Nations including Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is constrained and varies depending on the geopolitical atmosphere at the time. High rates of malnutrition among Rohingya children leave them vulnerable to infectious diseases, and there is a lack of obstetric care for expecting mothers. Further, the Rohingya have been forced into economic and political servitude by the government of Myanmar. Their children's access to education was constrained by the government. As a result, they now have a roughly 80% illiteracy rate. The Rohingya have been prohibited from serving in the military ever since they gained their freedom from British colonial authority. Their people in the civil service were replaced and had their rights limited (Mahmood et al. 2017). Besides, Myanmar's government also uses numerous other methods to oppress the Rohingya, including forced labour, property confiscation, exploitation, sexual as well as gender-related abuse (OHCHR 2018: 143). By and large, the Rohingya community's rights are not respected, protected, nor guaranteed by Myanmar's government, in violation of the country's constitutional duty to do so.

4.1.3 State provision

Azar (1990: 10) adduced that "Majority of nations that undergo PSC are likely to be characterized by ineffective, biased, weak, and dictatorial regimes lacking the capacity to meet fundamental human necessities." As mentioned earlier, states in long-running social disputes frequently become monopolized hegemonically by a singular group or an amalgam of groupings that do not bear the needs of other groupings in mind, despite the fact that the state's fundamental function is to manage and safeguard its citizens by delivering societal goods in an unbiased manner. States no longer "promote communal cohesion and social harmony" and are no longer fair and unbiased. A hegemony group thus uses the state as a tool to further their own interests at the expense of others.

The Bamar community of Burmese Buddhists, who make up an estimated 60–70% of the nation's population, has controlled Myanmar's government for more than 50 years. They are regarded as the country's largest ethnic group. Since then, the Tatmadaw has cited the so-called 'ethnic' danger to national autonomy as well as territorial unification as justification for dominating the nation (OHCHR 2018: 22). The loss of non-Burmans' political rights will also enable one communal group to monopolize the state while ignoring some of the other communal groups' most fundamental demands, in addition to the government being entirely composed of the majority of Buddhist Burmese. Notwithstanding, the 1982 Citizenship Law, which was passed, effectively ended the political rights of some non-Burmans, particularly Moslem minorities like the Rohingya including others having Indian or Chinese ancestry. (OHCHR 2018: 113–115).

By and large, it is evident that the government falls short of proffering fundamental human essentialities such as political rights including the right of citizenship and the right to exercise their franchise. Furthermore, even though the country is broadly impoverished, the territories and localities on the border in which non-Burman ethnic minorities live are even impoverished than the centre of the country where heaps of the Burman Buddhists live. Consequently, the government falls short of fulfilling its fundamental responsibility, which is to manage and safeguard its citizenry by proffering societal goods equitably. Moreover, the Tatmadaw, a military junta remains visible in ample areas where ethnic minorities are dominant and are thus maltreated by soldiers in ample ways, has attacked and harmed its citizens since a few years ago. These actions include coercive grabbing of lands belonging to civilians, enslavement, forced ejection, expropriation of foodstuffs including cattle, sensual and gender-related brutality, inhuman treatments, massacres, and much more (OHCHR 2018: 2–3). Following the bloody rioting between the Muslim and Buddhist populations in Rakhine State in 2012, the state's partiality became abundantly obvious when it chose to uproot Moslems and put them in camps so as to keep them

apart from the Buddhist majority. However, as the state cut back on funding because of the conflicts, it made the already dire situation for the Moslem as well as Buddhist populations even worse (CDNH 2015, 28–31). Thus, social peace and stability among communities were not encouraged by the military regime; on the contrary, they were made worse.

4.1.4 International Linkages

Exogenous variables influencing the likelihood of a clash developing into a PSC are taken into account as Azar constructs this prerequisite. Economic dependence and links with political and military clienteles are two categories of international linkages, which are both intended to indicate external factors impacting a potential PSC (Azar 1990). The independence of the state and its capability to meet the varied demands of some of its constituent populations are both affected by this two factors. Nearly every internal dispute includes the surrounding nations in some way. They could play a helpful or exploitative role. Third parties may contribute to the escalation of the conflict by providing biased support to one of the parties, or they may assist in its de-escalation by participating in peace negotiations.

After the country's military putsch in 1962, the affinity of Burma with the United States including some UN member nations in Europe became tense. The US imposed sanctions on Burma as a result of the government's brutal suppression of peaceful protests by citizens, the imprisonment of political opponents, and the inhumane treatment of the Rohingya. Whereas the military government ended in 2010, the opening up of the nation's political and fiscal system, as well as the release of political prisoners assisted in the removal of some sanctions, more human rights abuses and acts of violence the Tatmadaw perpetuated in response to the 2012 as well as 2017 developments having to do with racial rebellions have prompted the US including other nations to reimpose stringent sanctions on Myanmar as well as the Tatmadaw's leaders (Kocamis 2019). Sanctions are imposed to deter Myanmar from furthering its inhuman treatment of the Rohingya people.

When the US and European nations criticized Burma's autocratic government and inflicted economic sanctions, driving Burma into political isolation, China backed Burma. China thus profited from this seclusion. In contrast to the US and other Western nations, China does not have any requirements regarding human rights or democratic values, therefore, Burma also sought to gain from Chinese help and investment. Also, China frequently obstructed the Security Council's vote on a UN resolution against Burma by promoting its principle of non-interference in the domestic policies of other nations (Kundu 2018). This did not assist in settling the Rohingya situation. The fact that China is acting by offering financial incentives to ethnic armed factions to

persuade them to be a party to government-sponsored conciliatory meetings, however, may be seen as a contradiction in China's statements and actions.

Back in the 1990s, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was aware of the Rohingya Muslims' dire situation. The situation had been acknowledged by nations like Malaysia and Thailand. As a huge number of Rohingya people entered Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Thailand, the governments of those countries made it clear that they did not consider the crisis to be a national one because it could provide a temporary source of human suffering. Unfortunately, the Rohingya issue was ignored by ASEAN when Myanmar and ASEAN merged, which amply demonstrates the different hardships Rohingya Muslims experience as a result of other states and may pose a danger to regional unity (Rahman 2015). However, ASEAN has been under fire from the international community for operating ineffectively and for abdicating its duty to address the Rohingya predicament (Parnini 2013).

5. Conclusion

The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, when examined via the analytical framework of Edward Azar's Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) theory, emerges as a paradigmatic case of identity-based structural violence. The PSC framework, particularly its 'Genesis factors', shed light how ethnic, political, economic, and international variables coalesce to create a conflict that is not only protracted but intricately woven into the architecture of the state.

This paper has demonstrated that the denial of citizenship and legal identity, the chronic deprivation of basic human needs, and the monopolization of state power by the dominant Burman-Buddhist majority have together cultivated a context in which communal grievances are left to fester without meaningful avenues for redress. The Rohingya are systematically excluded from social, political, and economic life, deprivations that are constitutive of Azar's core criteria for PSC. The government's incapacity or unwillingness to equitably distribute state resources, coupled with the repressive response to communal mobilization, has exacerbated rather than mitigated the conditions of conflict.

The role of international linkages, both supportive and obstructive, further complicates the conflict landscape. While global actors have expressed concern over the Rohingya's plight, inconsistent and politically motivated international responses have inadvertently emboldened the status quo. As Azar argues, PSCs are rarely confined to national borders; they are shaped and sustained by international alliances, strategic interests, and global power asymmetries.

Ultimately, this paper concludes that the forced migration of the Rohingya is not an isolated humanitarian emergency, but a structural outcome of a long-standing social conflict rooted in colonial legacies, exclusionary nationalism, and chronic governance failure. Azar's PSC theory not only offers a robust explanatory model but also enables a deeper scholarly understanding of how identity, deprivation, and political exclusion interact to drive displacement and conflict. Therefore, it is important to understand the Rohingya crisis as an instance of protracted social conflict whose resolution necessitates structural transformation rather than just humanitarian assistance.

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