

**MULTICULTURALISM, SEPARATISM,
AND NATION STATE BUILDING
IN BURMA**

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PREFACE

This book is based on our research series entitled Multiculturalism, Separatism, and Nation State Building in Myanmar that had completed by Research Center for Regional Resources, Indonesian Institute of Science (PSDR LIPI) written by us over the year in 2005. Studying about Multiculturalism in Myanmar is a third research from the serial research activities that we make for three years. Three researchers from different background undertake the study i.e. anthropology, politics, and histories. Each researcher focus on several different topics, but they are all part of common research agenda. For over a years we have tried to understand the problem of ethnicity especially Muslim Minority in Southeast Asia that which we tried to connect with politics recognition, multiculturalism policy, resistance movement and history of nation state building.

The case study of Myanmar (2005) is different from the previous research, because *first*, the Muslim in Burma – so called Rohingya, has a different history background from the southern Muslim in Philippines and Thailand. There's humanitarian crisis in Northern Arakan State and the driving force behind refugee exodus to Bangladesh lie in the government policies of exclusion and discrimination against the Rohingya. *Second*, in the theoretical framework not only said about the politics recognition, conflict forms, issue of separatism and their resolutions but also about policy state to multiculturalism. *Third*, the data collection was not only conducted in Bangkok but also in Chiang Mai and Thailand-Myanmar borderland for getting comprehensive information's. Thailand we chose for get data collection since very difficult entering Burma with this sensitive topic.

The Burma characteristics are same as Thailand and Philippine related to the Moslem minority problem. The research report maps the problems happening as an impact from Burma forced assimilation and discriminative policy to Muslim Rohingya since its independent day and after military coup d'etat 1962. The effect of forced assimilation process are conflict between government with Burman as majority ethnic and Muslim minority ethnic, injustice in economic and resource distribution, lack of relationship between government and local community, polarization in social-politic-economic-and culture, and the inequality of ethnic composition formal sector. The report also describes the symbols of Rohingya people resistance to the Burman government.

The success of this report is also because of our colleagues in Thailand given some assistance and information to this research. We would like to thank to Prof. Kosum Saichan Associate Dean for Research and Foreign Affairs Faculty of Social Sciences Chiang Mai University; Poksak Nilubol and Usamard Siampukdee Researcher & Lecturer Dept. of Political Science Chiang Mai University; our friends from THE BURMA FUND: Aung Naing OO, Toe Zaw Latt, Tin Maung Than, Nyong Ohn Myint, Naw Din, Win Min and Christina Fink, Ph.D.; Dr. Lian H. Sakhong General Secretary Ethnic Nationalities Council (Union of Burma); Prof. Mark Thamthai Director Institute For The Study Of Religion And Culture. Payap University; Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond Director Thailand and Southeast Asian Studies Center Chulalongkorn University; Dr. Thanet Aphornsuvan Director Asian Studies Program. Faculty of Liberal Art Thammasat University; Jahir Uddin and Enayet Ullah from Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand (BRAT); and some informants which cannot be mentioned one by one.

This report has been passed many debates through not only discussions but also seminars, held by Research Center for Regional Resources (PSDR-LIPI). It has been revising base on critic and suggestion that given from many colleagues. We want to say thank to the researchers Paulus Rudolf Yuniarto, Erni Budiwanti and Devi Rizkianingrum and our administrative staff who gave the assistance and the cooperation to us. We realize that our report have some lack and weakness as well as the limitation. We are really thankful if there are any suggestion and input for our report to make it perfect.

Jakarta, December 2005

Director
Research Center for Regional Resources,
Indonesian Institute of Science

Dr. Yekti Maunati, MA

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABIM	: The Malaysian Youth Movement
AFPFL	: Anti Facist People's Freedom League
AHRO	: Arakan Human Rights Organization
ASEAN	: Association of South-East Asian Nations
ARIF	: Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front
ARNO	: Arakan Rohingya Nationalization Organization
BMO	: Burma Muslim Organization
BMC	: Burma Muslim Congress
BSPP	: Burma Socialist Programme Party
BRAJ	: Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan
BRAT	: Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand
BRCA	: Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia
DPDC	: District Peace and Development Council
FRC	: Foreigner Registration Cards
GCBMA	: General Council of Burma Muslim Association
HRW	: Human Rights Watch
ICS	: Islami Chhatra Shibir
IMA	: Itihadul Mozahadin of Arakan
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IOJ	: Islami Oikyo Jote
IRAC	: Islamic Religious Affair Council
HuJI	: Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami
JeI	: Jamaat-e-Islami
KNLD	: Kaman National League for Democracy
MFAA	: Mayu Frontier Administration Area
MPU	: Members of the Parliament Union
MNC	: Multi-national corporations

NAM	: Non-Aligned Movement
NaSaKa	: Military force of the Burmese junta deployed all along the Bangladesh border. Administration Force and comprises five different government agencies: the police, military intelligence (MI), Lone Htein (riot police), customs, and immigration.
NCGUB	: National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma
NDF	: Ethnic Nationalities Council of the Union of Burma
NDPH	: National Democratic Party for Human Rights
NGO's	: Non-governmental organization
NLD	: National League for Democracy
NLD	: National League for Democracy
NUP	: National Unity Party
OIC	: Organisation of Islamic Conference
RLO	: Rohingya Liberation Organization
RPF	: Rohingya Patriotic Front
RNC	: Rohingya National Convention
RSO	: Rohingya Solidarity Organization
RYDF	: Rohingya Youth Development Forum
SAARC	: South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation
SLMD	: Students and Youth League for Mayu Development
SLORC	: State Law and Order Restoration Council-name of the ruling military junta until Novembre 1997
SLMD	: Students and Youth League for Mayu Development
SPDC	: State Peace and Development Council-Ruling military junta (ex SLORC)
UDHR	: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNLD	: United Nationalities League for Democracy
TPDC	: Township Peace and Development Council
VPDC	: Village Peace and Development Council
Village Tract	: Equivalent of a big village, grouping several hamlets

CHAPTER I

NATION STATE BUILDING AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN BURMA

Paulus RUDOLF Yuniarto

'If we want the nation to prosper, we must pool our resources, manpower, wealth, skills, and work together. If we are divided, the Karens, the Shans, the Kachins, the Chins, the Burmese, the Mons and the Arakanese, each pulling in a different direction, the Union will be torn, and we will all come to grief. Let us unite and work together...'

Aung San, Panglong Agreement, February 1947

I.1. Introduction

The integrated development of a nation state is a series of continuing processes in the effort to achieve state management within the context of the life of social groups. Society must take an attitude against forms of social diversity so that the social communities are treated equally in an integration process to unite cohesively, functioning to fulfill each other's social needs to support the development of a nation state. The core in the state implementation process based on social integration, among other things, is the willingness to accept other groups equally as a unit, without regarding the differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, language or religion. However, in the arrangement of the idea of diversity being a principle in the recognition of the diversity itself (politics of recognition), we still face problems ending in conflicts because of the failure in regulating relations among both majority and minority groups, forced assimilation of minority groups, marginalization of the traditional society, etc. The point is that, the nation state building in its management must be able to admit and magnify the social differences equally, both

individually and communally. This fact is in line with the concept of multiculturalism now developing where social life management cannot stop only at ethnic diversity because in its implementation emphasis must be given to diversity in equality.

In relation to Southeast Asian nation state building since the end of the colonialism era, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma and Indonesia face almost identical problems, namely, national integration in accommodating the interests of the various ethnic groups. The effort at integration in those countries is made by emphasizing social development to improve or increase social progress in all aspects of life through state regulation. This is made to carry out the distribution function of all resources within society to all human group categories without differentiating between ethnic groups or races, religion, gender, age, social and economic condition in order to integrate all social elements.

However, later problems arise where state intervention in managing political life tends to accommodate only the interests of the majority ethnic groups, so that they become dominant over the minorities. As a result, those situations contribute to national instability thus affecting social economic development in conflict areas. In the case of the Philippines and Thailand, the Muslim minorities represent the social development gaps. This can be seen when the Muslim communities are under the control of non-Muslim authorities. Thus the problems that frequently appear are the appearance of unbalanced development, social problems demanding the freedom to obey Islamic law in their social lives, the demand of equality in citizenship rights with non-Muslims and some other social guarantee demands related to their needs. This fact arises as a result of the gap in development due to repressive and exploitative socio-economic, political and cultural life by the majority over the minority thus causing conflicts among the people (PSDR LIPI Research Report 2002-2003).

As a prologue to a series of discussions concerning nation state formation, ethnic violence and tolerance among equal social groups (multiculturalism)

in Burma, this first chapter explains the context problem and point of view by looking at those three processes. This context problem and point of view are put in relation to the study being conducted by the Asia Pacific Research Center, Regional Resources, LIPI on the ideas of multiculturalism, separatism, and nation state building in Southeast Asia. The objects analyzed in these three countries concern the Muslim minority, namely, the Moro in the Philippines (2003), the Pattani Muslims in Thailand (2004) and the Rohingya Muslims in Burma (2005). Continuing the study begun in previous years, in 2005, the focus was on the form of interaction in the Burmese political system, by concentrating on the relations between the majority and minority ethnic groups as a continual process of nation state formation. The background of this study is connected with some important aspects occurring in Burma at present. Among other things; nation state building processes, accommodation policy response, ethnic diversity assimilation and minority rejection actions are the result of the implementation of repressive political and cultural policies by the Burmese government.

I.1.1. Military Politics and Nation State Building of Burma

The military junta, democracy and ethnic violence are three important matters when discussing Burma's political development. Since 1962, Burma has been under a military dictatorship where the military control almost the whole political, social and economic life of the Burmese people. It is no wonder then that the process of Burmese national integration is based on the military model and point of view.

Before entering the military governmental phase, Burma was initially a traditional kingdom often waging wars with neighboring countries. In the colonization era in the 16th and 17th centuries, Burma was a British colony and one of the provinces of British India until 1937. Burma got its independence in 1948 through warfare. Civil and constitutional government was then formed but only lasted until 1962 when the military took over the reins of authority because the civilian leadership failed to overcome the various complex prob-

lems related to the economy, treachery and people's rebellion in the 1950s that triggered further conflicts. Until 1960 when a general election was held, the Burmese civilian government could not manage the horrifying conditions.

The unpleasant state conditions threatening national unity forced the military to carry out a bloodless coup d'état on 2 March 1962 under the leadership of General Ne Win. He took over the authority from the civil government led by Prime Minister U Nu. The coup d'état can be said to be the beginning of military control in Burmese state management (Firas 2003:129-130). Since 1962, Burma has been governed by the one political party, that is, the *Burma Socialist Program* led by General Ne Win, with the political basis of this government party cooperating with and close to the military power. The governmental system run by General Ne Win was established with a central governmental pattern, which tended to have the style of an authoritarian dictatorship. The BSPP as the sole official party recognized by the government was established with a supportive basis towards socialist programs for nation state formation in Burma. Besides, as a means to restore security and order, it also increased the living standards of Burma's people, which were never achieved by the U Nu government. The membership of this party was dominated by the military.

Faced with a difficult situation in building the country, the new government then ran a socialist program inspired by the people oriented development system. The socialist idea was then interpreted in government documents, the *Burmese Way to Socialism* issued in April 1962 and the *Burma Socialist Program Party Philosophy* issued in 1963. The government tried to instill the socialist idea by implementing programs to improve the living standards of the people by, for example, reducing unemployment with every citizen obliged to work to gain prosperity through the country's cooperative communities and collective units all on an economic basis (Bowers 2004: 9-11).

To support the social aims, the military government then formed the *Revolutionary Council* erasing laws and dissolving the Burmese parliament established by the previous government because these were considered to have

failed in building socio economic unity. To support the integrity of the country, the government, through the junta, nationalized all banks and big companies in February 1963. People were not allowed to choose their own leaders since all political decisions was made by the military leaders in Rangoon (Firmas 2003).

The new Burmese nationalism based on socialist ideology, shows development and nationalism stood on the principle of joint ownership. Such a development model had the aim to create a state integration system where all powers in the country were expected to become the one unit in the state of Burma. The Burmese government implemented the understanding of this new ideology by executing an integration policy in areas that were previously separated. One of the examples of the national integration policy was the government decision to erase the frontier areas claimed by certain ethnic groups, in 1964, for example, the Mayu and the Arakan¹. The Burmese government later took over again the areas previously separated, into the one union of Burma. Unfortunately, the integration process was not carried out by a diplomatic process and merely relied on coordination under the Burmese Ministry of Defense to avoid national dissension. The implication of this policy was that the areas that were geographically inhabited by various ethnic groups were forced to integrate due to political pressure.

Under the flag of the 'Revolutionary Council', the significant changes in Burma's social system were regional consolidation especially in the rural areas and the formation of administrative councils responsible for arranging the security in their areas and for development in villages, including developing the social and economic sectors. The Revolutionary Council politics tended to monopolize authority make large contributions to national deterioration and

¹ The Frontier area between Mayu and Arakan is the Southern region of Burma inhabited by Muslims. Previsiously it was a different territory as a result of the division during British colonial period. The initial Burmese government thought that it belonged to Burma and wanted to conquer the area by taking it by force. Arakan (around 17th century) used to be independent and had its own governmnet. Now it is a province in the Union of Burma.

create hypocritical religiosity and self-righteousness. Socialist ideology established by the military government created classes of civil servants, civilians and military so that social treatment and law enforcement were different for those three classes.

A development model using the top down system gave rise to crises in various social sectors; among other things; increasingly weakening national unity; rebellion against government programs; economic crisis like that occurring in the 1980s, a low level of education and worsening relationships with other countries. This situation triggered a change of leadership as a result of the national stagnancy, so that finally General Ne Win stepped down on 18 September 1988. The government authority was then taken over by General Saw Maung who became the next national leader. In reality, the change in leadership cannot be interpreted as a change in the direction of the national development in Burma. It was only a change from the old military government to the new military government, from Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) with Ne Win's Revolutionary Council to the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

The policy of the SLORC military leadership was still without any basic changes in the governmental system or state ideology. The issue of national identity was still based on the largest ethnic group, that is, the Burmans so that the majorities Burmans were dominant in political life and all social strata. The 'Burmanification' program was the most real form in the domination of the executive government system under the control of the Burman military and ethnic groups. This was a follow up to the policy of the Burman ethnic cultural hegemony that was dominant in almost all public strata including authority over culture, politics and the economy. Domination also took place in the control of the state resources and assets. The worst was the issue over the claim to ownership of resources, sometimes acquired brutally by robbery, violence and rude military actions (Matthew 2001: 12).

The hegemonic attitude of the military government and ethnic Burmans led to authoritarian dominance of state leadership. The effort in nation

state building put much emphasis on the needs and interests of a single majority where ethnic Burmans strongly dominated the governmental and military sectors. There is much evidence that shows the effect, such as the rejection of the SLORC, on the election result on 27 May 1990² (Firnas 2003). Various people's protests were handled by military repressive actions. At the end of 1991, SLORC started to launch intensive campaigns to crush the strength of the opposition in urban areas as well as in minority areas. Practically, this weakened the civilian position in the political arena of Burma. Until now, under the control of General Than Shwe, although the SLORC has changed its name into the Peace Development Council (SPDC), in reality this institution still performs the function of the previous institution, that is, it controls the socio political life of the Burmese people.

Since Burma's independence in 1948, the discourse on the Burmese nation state is still a historical project continuously sought for, as is the answer to the frequently faced problems of violence. Even though the militaristic government and its repressive stance against the people cause increasing international pressures on Burma. For example, the European Union Community and the US Congress have imposed many economic and military sanctions on Burma. Nevertheless, because Burma has no economic, military or logistic dependence on those countries, international pressures cannot weaken the powerful military regime (Firnas 2003). In the general election, the NLD (The National League for Democracy) managed to win 392 out of the 485 seats in the national parliament. This result was beyond the previous military prediction. The SLORC was sure that the government National Unity Party (NUP) would win the election.

Some ideas of socialism, such as freedom from famine, were at least successfully achieved by the military regime and are made a justification for its survival. From General Ne Win until General Than Shwe, national state

² In this general election the NLD managed to win 392 out of 485 seats in parliament. This was a result beyond military prediction. Previously, the SLORC was sure that the National Unity Party would win the election.

building has been carried out with the same policies, namely, the non-democratic socialist program which is still centralistic, militaristic and authoritarian.

I.1.2. Ethnic Minority Politics: Case of Rohingya Muslim

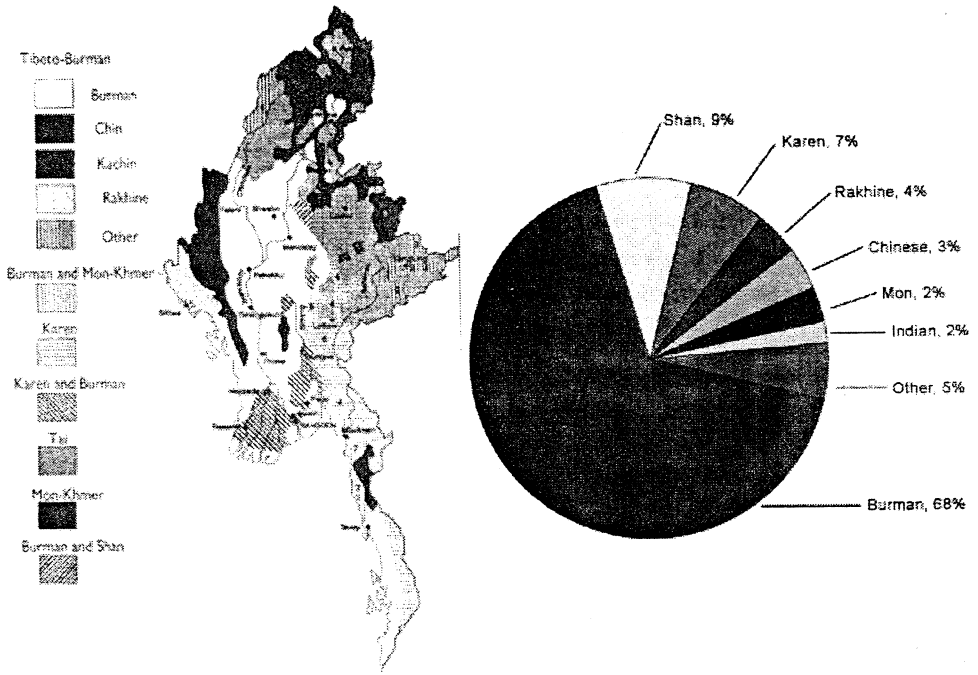
Since the establishment of Burma, ethnic conflicts have become part of the development process. Many conflicts have occurred caused by the failure of the government to unite the ethnic minorities. This failure was reflected by the many wars based on ethnicity, waged against the government. The rebellions occurred because the Burmese government failed to accommodate the minority interests.

Burma has about 130 ethnic groups with the Burman as the biggest, with almost 68% of the total population of 52 million people. Others are Mon and Shan tribes 11%, Karen tribe 7%, Kachin tribe 6%, Chin and Naga tribes 3%, and the 5% Rakhine tribe that is majority Muslim. In religion, 89.2% of the Burmese are Buddhists while the remainders are Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and other (Daga 2001: 8).

The ethnic composition shows that ethnic groups in Burma are diverse. This fact has placed the Burmese government face to face with the problem of ethnicity where some social minority groups in the frontier area³ demand their rights and obligations as citizens. Ethnicity problems have appeared since independence in 1948. Hostility was seen more and more especially in the western Burma frontier, namely, in the Arakan Province bordering Bangladesh, in northern Burma bordering the southern part of the Chinese Province of Yunan, and in the northeast side of Karen, bordering Thailand.

³ A frontier area can be assumed as a geographic position of dislocation of minorities far from the government administration center and principally with differences in history and culture from Burmese majority

Figure 1.3 Map of Ethnic Minorities and Burma Ethnic Composition



Source: Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books, 1999.

A frontier area may be interpreted as a geographical position of dislocation of the minority groups far from the center of the government and principally with differences in history and culture from the Burmans.

The nation state formation process tending to 'Burmanification' from the administration of U Nu (1948-1962), Ne Win (1962-1988), Saw Maung (1988-1990) up to General Than Shwe (1991-present) has given a very small and non democratic space for a program of assimilation of minority groups in

a system of development and national unity. It resulted in cultural and political degradation of local ethnic groups because of the implementation of the enforcement of socialization in the life of military politics and the cultural dominance of ethnic Burmans. The Burmese ethnocratic government also based nationalism on Buddhism (religion of the majority) and historical factors to support the state in carrying out administration centered in Rangoon. This fact in national life development on the contrary, caused frustration over the conditions in racial relations because the majority and the authorities have never been willing to accommodate the needs of the minorities and local culture. The result caused in the context of social integration was that almost all the minority ethnic groups tended to resist the dominant power extensively (Matthews 2001: 12).

There are many factors causing confusion to Burmese ethnic groups. Historical factors are a stimulant to the occurrence of a discriminative attitude against the minority groups. The present territory is considered as belonging to Burmese people inherited over generations. Historical records show that the Burmese have always fought with their neighbors both when Burma was still a kingdom and since. These struggles were to maintain the sovereignty of their territory.

This is the case in the hostility towards the Burmese Muslim Rohingyas, the focus of study in this book. The Burmese people and the military government feel that their rights to manage their country were high jacked when the British colonial government dominated Burma and made it a province of India. On the other hand, in administrative affairs, the British gave quite a big space to Muslim groups (from India) to regulate the administrative system in Burma. When the colonials withdrew in 1948, the new Burmese government took control of the situation and ethnic Burmans began to dominate, using a great deal of violence, the areas formerly under the control of the Muslim groups.

One of the forms of regional domination of the Burmese government was their strong action against the Rohingya Muslim minority group mostly

residing in Arakan. The Burmese government restricted their social, political, and economic lives. Apart from that, the Burmese government tried to evict the Muslims through various military operations. An example of which is the racially/religiously inspired 1978 Naga King operation, a military operation to evict the Rohingya Muslims from Burma, which had been their residence for a long time.

The Burmese government also discriminated against the Muslim groups by issuing citizenship regulations against the Rohingya Muslims, declaring that they were not Burmese citizens. The effect of this regulation was further large-scale migration of Rohingya Muslims, from 1981 to 1991, when about 30,000 went abroad. This too was a military operation (Sihbudi 2000: 52).

The military operations were basically taken in order to expel the Rohingya Muslims. The planned military operation used very inhuman methods; such as robbing them of property and belongings, raping women and destroying religious buildings. These activities eradicated a number of villages and expelled their inhabitants. The marginalization of the Rohingya Muslims did not only take place in religion but also limited their broad life spectrum; such as their economy, politics, and socio cultural lives.

In economics, Muslim merchants and businessmen could not compete because of the high taxes. They were no longer free to run their activities and businesses. Those who could went underground by surrendering all their business to Buddhist Burmese but they still had to pay high taxes.

In politics, the military junta government issued a new regulation called the Citizen Law. The regulation made the Rohingyas formally lose their rights as citizens. They were not allowed to take part in general elections or claim their rights as citizens like other Burmese. This regulation increasingly separated the minority groups from social and political life.

In socio cultural life the pressures on the Muslim minority group were in the form of certain prohibitions and obligations. The government forbade the formation of community groups and forbade the appearance of movements

questioning labour rights. Muslims were hired as porters for the military. These actions have been going on until recent times. When anti Muslim riots happened in 1997, the Burmese government was considered to have given sufficient protection to Muslim inhabitants, but it did not protect businesses belonging to Muslims⁴.

This situation made the Rohingya Muslims a marginal group. There are a lot of Rohingyas who are illiterate, weak, and poor, unhealthy, without much hope and dependent economically. Their lives, wealth and dignity no longer have a secure guarantee on life, dignity or property. Killing, torturing, raping, using force, arresting and giving false evidence when a Rohingya was caught were general phenomena faced by the Rohingyas. This also happened to other minority ethnic groups. The authorities actually give opportunity to all ethnic minority groups to stay in Burma as long as they give up all their identity, culture, religion and customs.

The forced assimilation politics in reality was more partial to the majority and favored the government. The Burmese government did not allow mixed marriage between Muslims and Burmese since this muddled cultural assimilation and was actually forbidden in Islam. All forms of restraint that were implemented can be seen as the Burmese government policy to change the Muslim identity into that of the Buddhist majority (Mayu Maung-Mayurkhareir Bhai 2004).

The explanation above shows that; during the last decades there has been marginalization of the Rohingyas by the Burmese government with military and social support. If we look at it closely, there are two ways that the Burmese government could defeat the minority Rohingyas; namely; through ethnic cleansing and cultural assimilation that have direct impact on certain community groups. The impact was that Muslim Rohingyas became refugees

⁴ Essays on Muslim Rohingya Minority in *Problematika Minoritas Muslim di Asia Tenggara*, 2000 research report PPW, LIPI.

because they were excluded from their homelands by the military junta government while the Buddhist majority group through education and jobs made the imposition of cultural and religious identity. What has happened to the Muslim Rohingyas indicates that this type of conflict is within the scope of historical investigation. The development of the conflict points in the direction of religious and structural differences of the minority groups, and also to the marginalization of a minority group as a result of the nationalization and the 'Burmanification' process.

I.1.3. Resistance of the Muslim Rohingyas to Violence

The problematic relationship between the military government represented by the Burman majority and the minority groups represented by the Muslim Rohingya group, produced resistance from the minority groups against the dominant power and repressive rules. If it is compared with the two minority revolt cases in the Philippines represented by the Moro tribe and the Pattani Muslims in Thailand, the resistance of the Burmese minority group shows a weaker position even though the disaffection of the Muslims towards the Burmese government occurred a long time ago.

In this study concerning the resistance movement of the Muslim Rohingya minority group, the spirit of resistance of the Muslim Rohingyas is based on the social, political and cultural life that was repressed and exploited by the rulers. It is very obvious from the expulsions and the implementation of strict regulations that were deliberately imposed only on Muslim groups that are not considered part of the ethnic nationalities of Burma. The stereotype of Muslim Rohingyas in the eyes of the government and Burmese people is that they are ethnic Indians who are Muslims and have an Islamic culture. The Muslim Rohingyas in Burma are considered 'guests' or 'second class citizens'.

Various forms of violence, frequently accompany the exploitation and repression of the Rohingya Muslims. Reports of international institutions such

as the UNHCR state that violence against human rights, disease conditions, deliberate killing and the arrest of religious leaders and politicians occurred in Burma with Burmese soldiers entering Muslim settlement areas in the Arakan Province perpetrating the violence. The actions of the military were mostly in the form of taking control of, closing and conquering places of worship that were then changed into Buddhist temples, confiscating cattle and harvests from farm fields, capturing people for forced labour and expelling Muslims from their homelands. What has been happening to the Rohingya Muslims is tragic. The repeated waves of suffering pushed the Muslim Rohingyas to revolution against the majority.

From the independence of Burma to now, there has been a lot of resistance carried out by Muslim freedom warriors. The struggles were not only carried out by armed force but also by diplomatic means. However, the resistance movement has not had optimum support. At present the struggle stress is rather on the weapon force and the military because the diplomatic process is considered to have failed. A few among the Muslim Rohingya rebel organizations still active now are: the RSO (*Rohingya Solidarity Organization*); the ARIF (*Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front*); the RPF (*Rohingya Patriotic Front*); the RLO (*Rohingya Liberation Organization*); the *Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO)*; the IMA (*Itihadul Mozahadin of Arakan*), etc (Kyaw Zan Tha 2004).

Despite all the revolutionary actions above, carried out by the Muslim Rohingyas, actually the Burmese government was unable to exterminate them fully because of the geographical dislocation obstacles. In the frontier area of Burma, the revolutionary actions are still carried out by minority groups. They cannot actually mount a significant struggle because of the lack of weapons and members. The significant revolts are from Karen, Shan, and Kachin groups because they support their revolution by trading opium. In contrast, the Muslim Rohingya resistance movement is not significant. It is because they are divided into numerous small and big groups and some rebels have surrendered and received government clemency and special residence near military camps.

Although the resistance movements have not had a maximum result, they have had a political effect on the government regarding the Muslim Rohingya existence in Burma: the need for recognition of their presence in the land they have lived in for several generations. The resistance movements have also given awareness to the Muslim Rohingyas to claim an autonomous area that is dominated by the minority groups. However, their struggles are still unsatisfied because the Burmese government considers Muslims a people that create chaos. Evicting, attacking and disarming them show the maneuvers of the Burmese government. The government also takes away their Muslim identity so that they cannot return to their homelands, as there they will be considered illegal immigrants. The government aim through this policy is to reduce the Muslim revolution. The appearance of the Rohingya Muslim resistance movement was caused by the failure of the government to integrate its heterogeneous society.

I.2. Research Question

Based on the explanation of the background of the nation state building process and ethnic violence within the Rohingya Muslim group above, the Burmese governmental system under the control of the military is very militaristic. The Burmese political management system shows that under military control the form of national development and the state government system used the military system. The Burmese government pays very little attention to ethnic nationalism and systematically denies political, cultural, and educational rights to the various communities. The problems in politics and democracy, justice and law enforcement, job and business opportunities, rights of the culture of the community and of the minority groups are being faced by Burma at present.

This study of multiculturalism, ethnic resistance and Burma's nation state building highlights ethnic relation aspects and conflicts between the majority and the minorities in Burma. The minority groups see the relation through

policy responses to the different treatment of the minority groups and the resistance against the Burmese government violence. The explanation in this study uses the ethnic Muslim Rohingyas as the object case. Based on the previous explanation, the questions to be studied in this paper are as follows:

1. Which factors caused the Burmese government to carry out marginalization of the ethnic minority groups, especially the ethnic Rohingya Muslim minority?
2. How is the Burmese military government policy facing the Rohingya minority group and what is the impact of the enforcement of the discrimination policy between the majority and minority groups?
3. What are the factors influencing and back grounding the emergence of the resistance movement of the Rohingya minority group as a response to the cultural policy and the domination of the state of Burma?

I.3. Aims of the Research

The general aims of this study are to try to describe the influential factors on why the Burmese government implements different policies on minority groups and how the resistance movement of the Burmese Muslims against the Burmese government appeared. Besides, this research will describe management relationships in handling conflicts carried out by the Burmese government. This management is seen as a government effort to see the ethnic disparity that is represented by the struggles of minorities. Eventually, this study will look at how Burma builds its own country. The aims to be achieved in this study are as follows:

1. To clarify descriptively the factors, which have become the backgrounds of the integration policies made by the Burmese government on minority groups;
2. To clarify analytically the impact of the integration policies on creating the multicultural relationships among ethnic groups;

3. To look at the elements of structural violence in the political, cultural, and economic integration process and the relationship impact of the integration policy and the growth of the insurgency movement in the minority group;
4. To clarify the typology, approach, and Burmese junta military policies in conflict resolution management and also the response of the minority to those policies;
5. To look at the result of the marginalization, namely, evacuation and other problems later causing international border conflicts.

I.4. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework used in this research consists of looking at multiculturalism including a definition of multiethnic society, forms of violence and problems of conflict causing institutionalized separatism. In a plural society, a certain community identity undergoes transitions in character in carrying out the nationalism process in the country. Several communities lose their identities because they are assimilated with other more dominant groups. The global economics of the development process, country development and communication revolution create a lot of similarity or repression upon minority groups living in a country. In the process, minorities often tend to receive negative treatment and judgment from the majority groups. The efforts of the state represented by the majority groups often threaten the minority groups to be more considered as separate groups.

It is in this context that multiculturalism is connected to the national development process and becomes important in the discussion in this study. Multiculturalism expects society to appreciate differences and protect every group including minority groups through language, custom and ethics codes within it. Multiculturalism tries to perceive a society, a country and a nation as institutions that construct citizens in different cultures. Furthermore, in the context of the individual or group it is easier to recognize their own identity

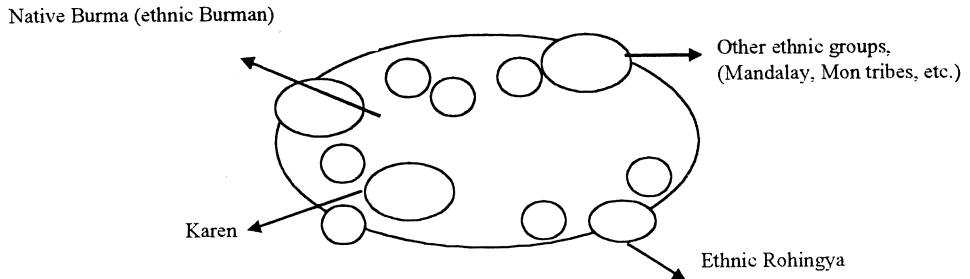
and their existence among the differences respected in different cultural communities. It means that if there is an effort to form a monoculture society, it is the best comparison and effort when every national group feels integrated in the culture, which the state is able to recognize. According to Gidden quoted by John Haba, in some cases, ethnic minority groups are considered a threat to some people in their jobs, safety and national culture. Minority ethnic groups are seen as scapegoats and the ethnic majority is considered a black sheep and this is a continuous tendency (Haba 2003: pp. 75-87).

I.4.1. Burmese Citizenship Politics

A society is called multicultural when at least one or more social groups within it reaching the majority are separated or more explicitly, there is awareness for an entire togetherness and comprehensive identity to form joint feelings for tranquility and safety. It means that social pluralism must be in the intercultural relations, namely, between the minority groups and their cultures and the majority groups and their cultures. By expecting an understanding from the multicultural society, it means there is a joint life based on the diversity of cultures (Ardana 2002: 126).

By borrowing a model made by Mintzel, a multicultural society is divided into three big schemes of subculture concepts, between public culture and marginal culture with partial culture and with sub culture. What is happening in Burmese society in the minority ethnic conflicts are the model between the public culture and the marginal culture? The dominant culture is assumed as the national culture and on its margins, there are small cultures, as the cultures entering the larger circle. This competes with the dominant culture.

Figure 1.4 (Conceptual framework) General culture – Marginal culture



The model of Burmese society as seen in the diagram above shows the ethnic Burman dominant group which in practice carried out policies to assimilate members of other groups (the ethnic Rohingya, etc.) and later, to control their collective autonomy, rob them of their resources and compel their manpower to serve the interests of the country. The citizenship politics were closely related to the so-called ‘victimization’ that is explained by McGuigan as a series of identifications and togetherness for people experiencing the history of repression, expulsion and struggle (McGuigan in Thung 2002: 56). The story concerning ‘victimization’ was taken from victims feeling the results of centralization by the central government to rob local resources in the interests of the central government with the result obvious in the poverty and misery of the local people such as the Moro, the Pattani Malays (Research Report PSDR-LIPI 2003 and 2005) or the ethnic Rohingya.

In the context of model multiculturalism and nationalism development in Burma, the theoretical paradigm of cultural politics would not only see the construction of identity in the relationship between authority and domination but also ignore material conditions of life and the struggle for power in seizing resources. It also would identify economic and political problems in cultural groups, paying more attention to political and economic aspects of ex-

plottation. Thus, the understanding of discrimination and national policy would be directed also to the model as 'what we jointly own and not only what makes us different from others' that could be articulated in cultural differences and look for a similar expression of the conflicts based on identity which up to now is often discussed.

Burmese citizenship politics are very closely related to the life problem of how to live in a civilized manner or how to live with civility towards one another. The concept of recognition is very important to show that 'first' and 'second' class citizen ideas should be hindered by all methods because citizenship is something universal and undivided (McGuigan in Thung 2002: 62). However, because of the difficulty in accepting the form of difference, it is urgently necessary to hold a cultural dialogue that is able to explain the concept of 'cultural citizenship' as revealed by Bhiku Parekh so that each country; Firstly, can observe cultural diversity; Secondly, the minorities cannot hope to be accepted seriously unless they accept the full obligations of citizenship; Thirdly, minority communities must be allowed to develop themselves in their own way; Fourthly, like individuals, communities can only develop in supportive conditions; Fifthly, the special characters of ethnic communities must be recognized by the state legal system (McGuigan in Thung 2002: 62).

The use of multicultural political concepts is actually marked by friction in the direction taken by the multicultural society motivated by the social universal tendency to be recognized and willing to live with diversity. Besides, an appreciation of the thinking about 'race' is considered not an essential category of being but a cultural construction formed as a result of an interactionist discursive process (McGuigan in Thung 2002: 56). Furthermore it can be explained that discourse supporting primordial claims on nation, religion, locality, race and class is being challenged by the new understanding and practices related to more heterogeneous and mobile views.

I.4.2. Structural Violence in Conflicts

The understanding of violence, in this case in relations between the minority and the majority ethnic groups, includes non-physical violence. Violence sometimes appears indistinctly out of a system and structure operating to carry out violence both intentionally and unintentionally. The discriminative attitude of violence by the state against minority groups can sharpen existing conflicts. In analyzing the conflict between the minority and the majority in Burma from the theoretical perspective, it can be seen that it could become the guidelines, namely, of relative deprivation and group mobilization.

The appearance of social dissatisfaction against injustice is a basic motivation for the formation of political action and leadership; it is therefore necessary to calculate to mobilize existing groups to respond to opportunities in political change. Besides, in the study of '*ethno nationalism*', there are two points of view, namely, the primordial and instrumentalist aspects, seeing that the nationalism of an ethnic group is a materialization of the existing cultural tradition based on ethnic identity primordially and assuming that communal actions are reactions to a difference in treatment (Gurr 1988: 124). Complaints against differences in treatment or injustice and a sense of cultural identity of the group to which it belongs, can cause reactions, movements and demands, which could be formulated by its leaders.

In principle, dissatisfaction of a group is a potential factor for the formation of political mobilization affected by the strength of the group itself. This dissatisfaction gives rise to anger and a wary attitude towards the dominant group. Communal groups in the subordinate status, being suppressed, will harbour a profound dissatisfaction as an instrument to resist the said dominant group, although they are still in doubt about whether, or how to, act (Gurr 1988: 124).

Military and development aid, as well as political support for the third world class, commonly produce over repressive control on minority groups. Burma itself, although not fully dependent on the international society, is un-

der the control of an authoritarian military government. Political dimensions and modernization economics that are not carefully implemented could also cause dissatisfaction in the minority group, which could finally urge them to react and resist in the form of protests and rebellions. Besides, the influence of other minority groups (including those in other countries), has given inspiration and provided strategies for the repressed groups to fight the majority.

Violence, both physical and non physical, has theoretical scientific legitimacy from the past, as explained by Max Weber, C. Wright Mills, and Trotsky (Supriatma 1998: 81). Max Weber said that the exploitation of man by man is usually based on legal means, which are violent. While Trotsky stated that every country is built on violence, C. Wright Mills said that all kinds of politics are basically a struggle for power and the most important thing about power is violence.

Gramsci clarified the understanding of violence in a broader context, as an endeavor carried out by the state to acquire power. Permanent power needs two working tools in the form of compelling acts of violence and intellectual and moral action carried out in the civilian social order. The first, is called state domination of civil society through the state apparatus and the second, is called hegemonic civil society. If domination is manifested in physical violence, hegemony is manifested in the form of command of culture and ideology emptying itself into structural violence, such as by propaganda against the Muslims that they are foreigners, so that the military and state apparatus can crush the infrastructure belonging to Muslims and carrying out oppression in education, social structures, economics, and politics.

From the broader perspective, Johan Galtung (1969) considers that violence occurs if a man is influenced in such a way that his actual physical and mental realization is under his potential realization, which is in line with the level of insight, resources and programs made in his era. Structural violence is invisible and shows certain stability. Ted Gurr (1970) says that this violence is the result of the so called relative depravity, namely, the presence of a gap concerning what should be and what takes place and a nuance of injustice and

even distribution.

Galtung claims that the present social systems will tend to develop a mechanism of structural violence finally enlarging inequality. In the structure of inequality will come a situation in such a way that the lowest agent is really under and absolutely is in a minimum subsystem condition. The social structure does not enable him to organize and build power to face the stronger party because he has no integration or independence.

I.4.3. Ethnic Conflicts and its Implication

Inter ethnic conflicts in this study are conflicts taking place between the majority and the minority ethnic groups (ethnic Rohingya and ethnic Burmans). In the interest of this study, it is important to define some terms, namely, national people and minority people. National people are regionally concentrated groups that have lost their cultural and linguistic distinction and want to protect or re establish some degree of politically separate existence. Minority people have a defined socio economic or political status within a larger society, based on some combination of their ethnicity, immigrant origin, economic roles and religion and are concerned about protecting or improving that status. To make the distinction most sharply, national people seek separation or autonomy from the state that rules them; minority people seek greater access or control of the state (Gurr 1988: 15).

Ted Robert Gurr (1998) divided minority people into three big groups: ethno classes, militant sects, and communal contenders. Ethno classes are minority social groups different in ethnicity and cultures, usually coming from slavery and immigration, with a lower status in society and carrying out economic activities in certain fields. A militant sect is a minority group where its political status is focused to defend its beliefs. Communal contenders are different groups and races in a heterogeneous society fighting for distribution of state power. Communal contenders can be a minority that holds power (advantages) or a minority that is repressed (disadvantages). An ethnic minority

is called powerful if it has a strong bargaining position and can even dominate the majority group both economically and politically. On the contrary, minority ethnic groups often occupy a relatively weak position and become subordinate to the majority. The concept of disadvantage of the communal contenders is in line with Foucault's opinion, quoted by Salahudin saying that the term minority is intended to differentiate ethnic characteristics of the ethnic group who become subordinate to the majority groups in the country (Sihbudi 2000: 5).

The injustice separating the oppressed minority group from the dominant majority group is a heritage of four historical processes, namely, conquest, state building, migration and economic development (Fisher 2001: 34-36). The conflict between the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority often begins with the integration policy of the state against the ethnic minority. The integration policy usually is focused on integration of political administrations of culture and of economic activities.

Cultural integration can use several approaches; namely, majority ethnic domination, acculturation, and multiculturalism. There is majority ethnic group domination if the government forces cultural assimilation policies on minority ethnic groups. For example, the ethnic minority groups are obliged to use language, customs and religion used by the ethnic majority. Cultural acculturation can take place if in the ethnic group mixing none becomes the majority, the political exchange extents to the bargaining power they have. Meanwhile, multiculturalism has to do with the existence of different ethnic groups and races in a society or in a country and where in practice, the religious and ethnic factors no longer are the consideration in relationships between community groups.

Cultural assimilation, as a result of forced integration, is frequently followed by discrimination in economic activities. Stephen Castles proposes that if a country wishes to develop its economy, it must overcome social problems and concentrate on how the market mechanism can be applied in society. This policy will be followed by control in political and security stability and

push minority ethnic groups to adapt with the existing social systems (Castles 1998: 248-250). The manifestation of the country's economic interests often causes injustice in the distribution of economic profits because the country is under the control of the majority group.

I.4.4. Conflict Resolution Management

The approach used in conflict resolution generally consists of two types; namely, the repressive or violent approach and the accommodation approach. Ted Robert Gurr (1988) explains that there are two ways in the accommodation approach, especially in ethnic political conflicts, namely, the granting of local autonomy, assimilation, pluralism and distribution of power. The implementation mentioned above is expected to be able to accommodate the basic interests of the oppressed ethnic group and of its political groupings. Particularly in the case of the ethnic minority, this has not given way to any manifestations.

Each of the approaches has problems, which might become an obstacle in conflict resolution. Granting of regional autonomy has the risk of being rejected by the government by failing to implement the policies fully. As regards assimilation there are two problems, namely, in a few groups in the ethnic minority there are several groups that do not like to be joined and several groups in the majority may use pressure to have accepted people that are not liked.

A few investigations of ethnic conflicts show actual conflict resolution management. Conducted by PSDR-LIPI (2003) on multiculturalism, separatism and nation state building in the Philippines it shows that the existing social reality is just an admittance of pluralism but it has not achieved the ideal multicultural result. This means that it has not given the same opportunity for all citizens to enjoy the public spaces. This dilemma is still going on because majority dominance over minorities continues until the present time. In the Philippine case, autonomy is just a symbolic concept without the realization

to give freedom to the Moro guaranteeing their interests. This is because the government desires an integration process without paying attention to minority aspirations. Multicultural society basically admits dominant cultures, meaning there will be a cultural domination by the larger community over smaller communities. But the attitude to recognition of social plurality must be planted in each individual.

Another research also made by the research team of LIPI (P2P) includes the study of the problems of the minority Muslims in Southeast Asia. It shows how minority groups represented by Muslims, fought in the context of culture, economics and politics and their resistance to the state integration pattern considered discriminative. But, this research only shows few conflict resolutions. This illustration will be more complete if a new proportion is forwarded by using an approach to the multiculturalism concept and method of reading separatism; able to explain further the process of the formation of a comprehensive nation state.

Each place has its own method to facing ethnic conflicts. For example, Switzerland and Spain do not belong among multicultural countries if looked at from the viewpoint of multiethnic diversity. There the ethnic reality does not offer the same context to all parties at the time there is an ethnic problem. However, in the light of what happened in Northern Ireland and in the former Yugoslavia, they can be considered multicultural countries that face ethnic conflicts offering their connections to the problems expected. Besides, there is also an ethnic integration guarantee so that finally it can be said that conflict resolution management also includes meeting and solving problems, so that finally a multicultural society is achieved, a society able to confirm the integrity of ethnic and cultural diversity.

I.4.5. Process of Institutionalizing of Separatism

Ted Robert Gurr (1998) claims that there are three conditions that can cause a revolution by minority ethnic groups: First, the people experience extraordi-

nary pressure psychologically. The pressure will accumulate to a point and explode into revolution; Second, because of the sharp differences in the classes creating social jealousy. Social frustration can easily transform into a revolution; Third, the suspicion of the ethnic minority towards the ethnic majority in dominating their lives. Those three conditions could transform an atmosphere into a revolution (Fisher 2001: 52).

This fact can be seen from the cases of separatism in the rebellion and conflict between the Philippine government and the Moro. The situation triggering factors of separatism were that during the colonialist era, repressive actions against cultural identity unbalanced resource distribution in Mindanao for the Moro and ethnic cleansing. Another example is the conflict between the Thai government and the Pattani Malay Muslims. The separatist movements were motivated by conquest and integration by the Kingdom of Siam against the province of Pattani. The exploitation policies implemented were such as, taking away by force the harvest and forcing assimilation of Muslim Malays into the Thai social system. All these are factors causing institutionalization of this separatism.

The strategy of resistance by the ethnic minority groups in fighting for their demands can be differentiated into three actions, namely, non violent protest, protest with violence, and rebellion. The protest actions were intended to persuade and press the government to change the policy. The armed revolution is directly aimed to create fundamental changes and power relation changes among groups in society. Protest actions are commonly made to demand reform whereas armed rebellion is to force the government to accept changes.

I.5. Research Method

I.5.1. Analysis Approach and Method

This research used the qualitative approach. The analysis method used was descriptive and comparative analysis. Descriptive analysis is meant to explain typology and paradigms; ethnic conflicts between the Muslim

Rohingyas and the Burmese community; conflict characteristics and conflict intensity between the minority Muslims and the Burmese government; discrimination in distribution of economic resources between the Muslim Rohingyas and the central government; state involvement; civil society organizations; armed revolt groups; international and regional organizations in solving conflicts in Arakan; and the correlation between cultural hegemony and seeds of revolution.

The comparative analysis method was used to explain the potential for conflict from the study of multiculturalism models at the level of national society as well as the relations among social groups in the country. This study also explains hegemony and domination forms of the Burmese government to minority Muslim groups as well as the characteristics and the potency of each the Rohingya minority resistance groups. The manner used in this research was the interdisciplinary approach including aspects of history, economics, politics and culture. The data obtained was then analyzed in line with the purpose and aim of the research.

The information was collected through literature, observation, and interviews with several informants during field research, to make a more complete interpretation and get greater understanding concerning the theme of the research. The data collection technique was important because this research needs complete and reliable information such as (1) the nation state history of Burma and the periodicities of the process of the Burmese nationalism process illustrated in outline, (2) The forms and characteristics of the policies applied by the Burmese government in response to the quite big ethnic differences especially in the assimilation policy and development of the minority groups, (3) The forms and characteristics of the resistance by the Rohingya Muslim groups facing repression by the government collectively.

I.5.2. Research Stage

This paper concerning multiculturalism, separatism, and nation state formation in Burma is the final in a series of studies about the Muslim minorities in Southeast Asia, which has taken place over three years. The first research was carried out in the Philippines in 2003. The second, in 2004, was carried out in Thailand and this third year one (2005) in Burma. The important findings in the research in the Philippines and Thailand are that multiculturalism is a concept that is considered (commented on) differently, there is an unbalanced relationship between the majority and the minority groups, the strengthening of separatist movements, as well as the diversity in nation state formation, the internationalization of conflicts and the efforts to form the reconstruction of nationality.

The first stage of this research was to look at Burmese and Muslim minority national history generally. The information on history was collected through previous research. This was needed to identify the character of national change together with its causes such as the changes in politics and leadership. The sources of change facilitated research in differentiating the reactions and results in Muslim groups. The illustration of the characteristics of political crisis and military leadership descriptions was further deepened through the initial interviews with informants in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and some areas between the Burmese and Thai borders. The informants used were selected from academic graduates, NGO activists and senior journalists involved with the Muslim Rohingyas in Burma. The library study was made by tracing information in national and local libraries such as at the Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University and the Center of Islamic Studies in Bangkok.

The choice of Thailand as the location for analytical study of the Burmese ethnic problems was based on the consideration that Thailand had become the first country of choice for ethnic minority groups in Burma trying to escape from pressure by the repressive Burmese government. As a matter of fact, there are many organizations in Thailand representing ethnicity problems. Based on correspondence with some experts in Burma, this research

was quite sensitive so a lot of people suggested conducting the research in the border areas between Burma and Thailand.

The second stage of the research was to map the conditions both geographically and socially the history of the Rohingya Muslim minority. This mapping was made through interviews, observation, literature and document study (location map and statistical data) that were relevant to the research. Based on the results of the observations, the concentration of Muslim Rohingyas in Thailand is various. Geographically, they are scattered throughout in entire country and carry out various activities, such as: trading, organizational activities, labour provision, etc. The selection of the locations was focused on the places where of Muslim groups gather and the refugee camps already provided by the international body UNHCR; as in Ramkhaeng and in the border town of Mae Sot City.

The results achieved from the two stages of research were the identification of the characteristic Muslims outside Burma and information on the condition of Muslims in Burma now. The forms of management of the Burmese political development are related to the building of nation state formation. From this explanation can be found a description of the forms of regional conflict in Burma besides a description of the models of conflict resolution.

The field research was held intensively over two weeks in June and July 2005. Two groups with different interests carried it out. The time for the complete research was divided for the preparation of the research network, literary study, and data collection and processing. Report writing and the completion of the research from the beginning to the end lasted one year.

1.5.3. Composition of Report

This research report consists of six chapters covering the explanation of multiculturalism, separatism, and Burmese nation state development. The arrangement of the theme is an effort at compilation of the informant data and the information obtained. The first chapter is an introduction of the back-

ground of the problems and a clarification of why this study was conducted; it then explains the problem formulation, research aims, and analysis framework and research methodology. This part gives the initial framework of problem substance and how this research was done. This chapter is a way of looking, based on the previous studies, at the problems of research.

The second to the fifth chapters explain the Burmese nation state formation process, the government policies concerning minority ethnic group (Muslims), the resistance from minority Muslim groups and study of multiculturalism in Burma. These chapters show the conditions and history of Burma accompanied by the integrating conquest of the Rohingya minority by the Burmese government. These parts also describe the military junta government policy on the Rohingyas through the political and cultural systems. The aspects analyzed are governmental constituent changes in 1962-1963 marked by ideology changes from a parliamentary and democratic system to a socialist system, the appearance of the Revolutionary Council led by General Ne Win with the Burmese Socialist Party (1962-1988) and the repression still carried out by the military with its parties the SLORC and the SPDC and the regulations issued by the Burmese government limiting the social, political and cultural activities of the Rohingya Muslim minority until the emergence of unbalanced economic development in the Muslim area in the Akyab Province as the territory of the Burmese Muslims..

Another part of these chapters also shows the factors causing the resistance movements, the development of the resistance movements and the international influences, namely, the issues of wars and the oppression of terrorism in the development of the Rohingya Muslim movements. Integration policies have marginalized the position of the Muslim Rohingyas in politics, economics, social life and culture so that it raises collective awareness against the Burmese government. The description of multicultural themes closes these chapters by explaining the national identity political process towards diversity and differences related to the relationship between the majority and the minorities. These chapters analyze the study of multiculturalism with two points of view about cultural diversity.

Chapter six, as the close of the series of studies, discusses the similarity between the description of the history of conflict and the repression of the identity of the Rohingya Muslims, the gist of the reason for the separatist movements, the politics of nationalization having been implemented by the Burmese government that do not recognize the existence of the Muslim Rohingyas in Burma, marginalization in the politics, economics, and culture, revolutionary movement against the government, and contemporary conflict resolution.

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CHAPTER II
NATION STATE BUILDING IN BURMA :
Consensus or Collective Enforcement?

Devi Riskianingrum

Burma lies in the southeastern region of Southeast Asia and is known for its ethnic mixture of people and its military government. Violence and human rights abuses of its people have been common in Burma since the military junta took over the country from a civilian government in 1962. The Rohingya, one of the minority ethnic groups in Burma, like other minorities, suffer from the hostility of their fellow *tatmandaw*. Nevertheless, the Rohingya position has become more vulnerable since the junta began to disregard their Burmese citizenship in 1982. This is worth noting since protecting Burmese unification with its minorities was a goal advertised by the junta to legitimize its coup in 1962. Hence, the reasons for and foundation of Burma's nation state building seem to be dubious. The role and position of the Rohingya in the process of nation state building in Burma are interesting to analyze since the junta has since eradicated their presence.

II.1. Geography and Demography of Burma

Burma lies at 09° 32' and 28° 31' in the north latitude and 92° 10' and 101° 11' east latitude and is 676,552 kilometres² in width. It is located in far eastern Southeast Asia. Burma borders China in the north, Laos in the east, Bangladesh in the west, India in the southwest, and Thailand in the southeast. High mountain ranges stretch in its northwest and northeast, with the Andaman Sea to its south and the Bay of Bengal to its west. To conclude, this country looks like a giant kite with a long tail. The maximum width of this kite stretches for 800 miles from north to south and 500 miles from east to west, while the tail extends for 500 miles to the southeast sharing the peninsula with Thailand

and Malaysia.

Being surrounded by the sea and mountains makes land transportation not an easy matter. Consequently, trade with the outside world always uses sea transportation. This fact caused the growth of large harbors. A big river, called the Irrawaddy, flows for 2,000 km dividing the country into two, east and west. Internally, this river is a vital means of transportation and communication. Due to the fact that the delta and valley of the Irrawaddy River is very fertile, this country is one of the biggest rice growers in the world.⁵

Once known as culturally unique Burma, in 1989, the military junta government changed it into Myanmar.⁶ The country of 7 provinces and 7 divisions is divided into 64 districts, 324 cities and around 7,000 small villages throughout Burma. According to the 2004 statistics report, Burma's population was approximately 43 million with a growth average in 2005 of around 0.42%. In 2004, 21,355,466 were male (49%), while female citizens reached 21,553,998 (51%).⁷

⁵ Handerson, John, et al., *Area Handbook for Burma*, p. 3.

⁶ Country Paper of Burma Endeavours on Drug Control and Alternative *Development Situation*, http://www.alternativedevelopment.net/downloads/regional_asia/Burma.doc, accessed January 2005. Burman means a native ethnic group living there.

⁷ <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bm.html>, accessed 8.07.05



Figure 2.1 Burma paddy field and religion activities

Burma is rich in natural resources. Unfortunately, as the result of the military government control and inefficient policies, this country fell into economic instability. Nevertheless, the generous natural conditions have helped the people survive the instability. We can see this from the fact that the main job of the Burmese is farming. No less than 70% of Burmese work in agriculture, while the number in the service sector is 27%. Industrial sectors absorb only 7% of the total number of inhabitants. Therefore, it is not surprising if the farm sector was the major support of the gross national product in 2004, which was around 56%. The service sector and industry only contributed 34.5% and 8.8% each. Burma's GNP in 2004 reached -\$1,700 with the growth rate of the GNP plummeting to -1.3%, and inflation was about 17.2%. These statistics

confirmed the notion that Burma has the lowest economic growth in the world.⁸

Burma is known as a diverse country in terms of ethnicity and culture. Although it consists of about 135 ethnic groups, only 8 ethnic groups, are legally admitted by the Burmese government; those are Kachin, Kyin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Bhama or Burman, Rakhine, and Shan. Ethnic Bhama, used to known as ethnic Burman, is the major ethnic group making up 70% of the total population of Burma and dominates the social, economic and political aspects in Burma. The Burmese language is the official language of the country used in government administration and education. Ethnic Bhama live on the plains, which are referred to as the 'proper Burma'. In contrast, minority ethnic groups, like the Karen, the Shan and the Kachin, live in the mountain range areas, while the minority ethnic Rohingya live in the frontier area located in Arakan.

In the government system, the highest authority is held by the military applying social militarism. Since assuming the rule of the country in 1962, the military junta has applied the politics of isolationism forbidding cooperation with other countries. This is supported by the Burmese topography. Conflicts have occurred in Burma since its inception. The issue of ethnicity usually triggered off these conflicts. Both a lack of cooperation with other countries and endless internal conflicts worsened the conditions of the Burmese people in economic and welfare terms. Consequently, their welfare rate is low compared with their neighbors in Southeast Asia.

In the religious sector, 80% of Burma's population is Buddhist and, in fact, Buddhism is the official state religion. However, other religions, like, Christianity, Islam or Animism are practiced by certain Burmese. The Christians, mainly the Karen and the Shan, compose 4% of the total population. The followers of Islam also make up about 4% of the total population in Burma, mainly coming from the Rohingya ethnic group in the Arakan Province.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Besides implementing isolationist politics, the military junta government also used repressive measures on minority groups such as the Karen, the Shan, the Karenni and the Rohingya. Unfortunately, due to the differences in physical appearance and religious beliefs, the situation was worse for the Rohingya Muslims, as repressive measures were implemented harshly towards them. The Rohingya ethnic group is not considered a native ethnic group but as immigrants that came to Burma when Burma was under the British colonial power. Therefore, the military junta implemented policies to tighten their number in Burma. This finally led to discrimination against the Rohingya Muslims.

II.2. Burma into United; from from Pre-Colonialism to Independent Burma

II.2.1. Pre-Colonialism in Burma History

The inception of Burma as a state was not separate from the British colonization. There was no local power that could unite all the ethnic groups in Burma until Great Britain came to this country. It is estimated that the first kingdom was established in the 5th century in the valley of the Irrawaddy River. An eminent kingdom, known as the Pagan Kingdom, ruled in Burma in 1044. In the 13th century, the Pagan kingdom reached its golden period with an area of the present Burma and was the biggest Buddhist kingdom. It was recognized not only for its abundant resources and fertile land, but also for its knowledge in science, such as, mathematics, geometry and artisanship. At that time, great temples were built as a symbol of the kingdom's wealth. The fall of this kingdom was marked by the attack of Mongolians in the 13th century.

The ruin of the Pagan kingdom triggered the birth of insignificant kingdoms and a fierce competition to rule Burma raged for three hundred years. A concerted effort to rebuild Pagan was conducted by a kingdom from Pegu in the 16th century. This kingdom was able to swiftly conquer the plains areas and the mountain ranges of Burma, which used to be owned by the Shans. However, this kingdom could not maintain its reign for long and consequently,

once again, Burma crumbled into competing small kingdoms.

In the middle of the 18th century, the Bhamas established a kingdom in Ava near Mandalay. Slowly this kingdom conquered the areas approximating to Burma now. It became one of the powerful kingdoms in Southeast Asia and managed to compete with the Ayudhya kingdom in Thailand. Confident of its strength and power, the Burmese kingdom attacked Ayudhya in 1767 and obtained a great victory over it then the Ayudhyans were captured and sent as slaves to Burma. Because of the attack, the Ayudhyan kingdom in Thailand was ruined. Nevertheless, a few years later the Chakri dynasty launched a lucrative new kingdom in Thailand, which has maintained its reign up to now.

At the end of the 18th century, the Burmese kingdom became the most eminent kingdom in Southeast Asia. However, by the beginning of the 19th century, the power of the Burmese kingdom declined. Unlike the Chakri dynasty, which was open to trade with other countries, the elite of Burma, was not engaged in international trade at that time since they had no vision to progress in such activities.

Trade with Britain increased during the 19th century. While Thailand took advantage and engaged with them, in contrast, the Burmese kingdom tended to avoid them and conceived that they posed a threat that would lessen its power. This attitude led Burma to succumb to British colonization.

II.2.2. Colonialism Era in Burma

In the beginning, the East India Company owned by the British, saw Burma as a buffer zone for their authority in India since the early 17th century. As a buffer zone, Burma became a viable tool to keep the area from the French threat, since they occupied Laos and Vietnam. Although Burma was considered to have great commercial potential, security was still the utmost priority for Britain. Not a single European country was allowed to occupy Burma but the Burmese leaders were forced to admit British authorities in India to maintain stability and security for their trade interests.

Subsequently after the Burmese kingdom gained victory in its war with Ayudhya during the 1820s, it extended its areas to Arakan, an area sharing a border with Bengal in India. Because of the invasion, many Arakanese fled to Bengal. This triggered the Burmese king's anger and he requested the British to return the refugees to Arakan. The British ignored this demand.

Burma really underestimated the British at that time. In 1822, Burmese troops attacked Bengal to push the Arakanese refugees back to Burma. As a result, the British retaliated by sending an armed expedition. Open war between Burma and the British for two years: 1824 to 1826, was inevitable. The advanced technology, weapons and strategy that the British had, along with support from India, made the British win easily. Following the defeat, Burma agreed to release its authority in the Bay of Bengal to the British. Consequently, the British ruled over the Bay of Bengal and established an army post, controlled trading monopoly and exploited agricultural potential in this new area by increasing rice and rattan production for the export trade.

In 1837, the Burmese authority expressed its dislike of the British by closing the post where the British representatives lived. Entering the 1850s, Burma launched a war against the British. The worsened conflict between the East India Company and the native rulers in Rangoon caused the war. The result was that the British occupied several areas on the Burma plain. The main action of the British was capturing and exiling the king with his family to India in 1855. Formally, Burma integrated with the British colonial administration in January 1886.⁹

The main impact of the British rule in Burma was the alteration in the political and social order. Any affairs and collusion practices related to the kingdom were forbidden and the elite thence lost its power. Subsequently, Burma became a small province controlled by the British authority in India. The administrative model applied in Burma was similar to the administrative

⁹www.aseanfocus.com/publication/history_Burma.html accessed on 15 April 2005

model in India. It was implemented by ignoring existing traditions and social structures and provoking the strengthening of each ethnic identity in Burma.

The British governed the plains areas, up to the district level, where the Burman ethnic group was the majority. Many institutions considered able to contribute significantly towards the improvement of the economic resources and trades were established. Meanwhile, in the mountain range areas such as the areas dwelled in by the Shan, Chin, Kachin and other ethnic groups, the British colonialists ignored the prospect of trade growth based on the consideration that it would merely add to their expenses. Therefore, the British let them rule and manage their own areas led by their tribal leaders; this was known as indirect rule. Consequently, this policy of isolating ethnic groups in the mountainous regions widened the gap among the social entities in the Burmese plains areas. In the end, it turned out to be one of the obstacles to Burmese unification.

A king was the highest patron in the Buddhist hierarchy in Burma. Exile of the king meant that the ritual and symbols of the king's power decreased in the country. The parallel powers between the king and the Buddha seemed to disappear from the community social order. Thus, religious institutions in Burma weakened during the colonization era.

The British government introduced a solid bureaucratic system that was supported by the military and the police to guarantee the consecutive system in Burma. New elites emerged following mixed marriages between the British and the indigenous people, in which the non British partner adapted more to western lifestyle compared to their own culture. The conflict relating to the existence of this elite class surfaced after Burma obtained its independence.

The diversity of ethnic groups in Burma increased during the colonization era. This was due to the immigrants that came from India and China. There were many Indian people migrating to Burma to get a better life. As well, they acquired many privileges in facilities from the British government.

They soon became traders or occupied the lower positions in administration as it was assumed that the Burmese were not sufficiently educated to fill the positions. In fact, the British preferred Indians or Karen tribes people rather than Burmese to fill positions in the military. By using troops from the two ethnic groups, the British destroyed the Bhamas ethnic revolt in 1886. This event contributed significantly to the rising hatred by the Bhamas of the Karens and Indians.¹⁰

The British arrival changed the economic condition of Burma. Industry and commerce developed quickly. New mining exploration for minerals and natural resources was carried out on a large scale. The ownership of companies was in British hands and the British built some means of transportation, such as, railways, roads, bridges and telegraph cables. Native Burmese citizens were dependent upon the agricultural sector and the British were reluctant to advance the country into industrialization. The expansion of field crops was increased, from merely 800,000 acres to 6,000,000 acres in 1901. In 1855, Burma managed to export 162,000 tons of rice, then, 2,000,000 tons of rice in 1905-1906.¹¹

II.2.3. Road to Independence Burma

In the early 20th century, Burma gained nationalism awareness akin to countries in Southeast Asia. Japan's victory over Russia and the revolution in China quickly served as supporting factors of nationalism growth; this was furthered by Buddhist school activities called *sangha* as the main media to create nationalist figures. The economic growth in the British colony was followed by the expansion of western style schools triggering the birth of new elites that spread nationalism issues in Burma.

¹⁰ Handerson, John, et.al, *op. cit*, page.36

¹¹ www.aseanfocus.com accessed on 15 April 2005

The British implicitly created nationalism in Burma. In 1917, the British government in India handed over power to India to manage its own administration and government in an effort to bring about an independent country, integrated with Great Britain. This policy was set in order to obtain sympathy and cooperation with leading Indian nationalist figures. The policy known as Dyarchy, started being implemented in India on 1919, but Burma was a different case. The British refused to adopt the policy in Burma, as it was believed that due to unfavorable growth in the political climate, Burma was not ready to accept reforms. This led to vast protests and boycotts as well as demonstrations on a large scale from university students in Rangoon. Eventually, the British decided to apply the policy in Burma on 1923.

The era of the 1930s was important in the nation state building process of the Burmese people towards independence marked by the birth of the nationalist movement with various platforms, such socialist, democratic, and Marxist communist. A new constitution was introduced in 1935. It embraced the notion of separation of Burma's administration from India's for materialization of an independent government. It was planned that the constitution would be enacted in 1937.¹² However, this constitution did not receive positive response as shown by demonstrations in 1936, attributable to the failure to gain independence from the British. Mobilized by students, these demonstrations grew to be a turning point in the radical movement against the British colonization with Marxism as the source of inspiration to return the people's sovereignty in Burma.

Burma's nationalist movement had a unique characteristic, as the Bhamas ethnic group dominated it. They promoted the Burmese language and culture as a symbol of Burma's nationalism. This provoked suspicion among the minority ethnic groups that the Bhamas wanted to hold authority in Burma. Moreover, the Buddhist culture that was introduced as the symbol of nationalism in Burma marginalized the non Bhamas, especially those who were Chris-

¹²Hall, D.G.E. *Sejarah Asia Tenggara*, page. 786-790.

tian or Muslim. Furthermore, this movement spread anti Indian and anti Chinese views as the two ethnic groups had commercial interests dominant in Burma. Therefore, the movement tended to struggle for the majority interests instead of the interests of minorities to regain power.¹³

Japan seemed to give new hope to the Southeast Asian countries, including Burma. Anti colonialism propaganda won the sympathy of the Burmese political figures, including Aung San and Ne Win. In 1941, Aung San and Ne Win, along with other figures, willingly accepted the military aid and training in Hainan, from Japan. Next, they named themselves the 'Thirty Comrades' and formed the Burmese Independence Army (BIA). In contrast, the minority ethnic groups such as the Karen, the Kachin, the Chin, and immigrants from China and India were still loyal to Britain by helping the British government to fight against Japan. BIA eventually managed to defeat the British in 1942.

The fact that the Japanese were more vicious than the British, made the Bhamas realize that they had merely changed masters. In 1944, Aung San and his colleagues from the Thirty Comrades fought back against Japan. Together they established the Anti Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and developed a vision for Burmese independence.

Japan abruptly surrendered to the allied forces in March 1945. However, Aung San seized Rangoon in May 1945. Subsequently, the British returned to Burma determined to regain their control. This was opposed by the AFPFL, the Communist Party and other ethnic group organizations, demanding their own independence. In fact, the British ignored the protests launched by Burma's political figures and appointed a Governor General to affirm its control and return Burma to direct rule. As a response to the measure, there was widespread discontent in cities, revolts in districts and demonstrations on issues triggering anger and conflicts among parties in post World War II Burma.

¹³ Cammilla Buzzi. *Burma – Twelve Years After 1988*, at <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/CB-Word.doc>. accessed in April 2005

Inflation and scarce main supplies prompted civil officials to join the strikes against the colonialist government. Responding slightly to the atmosphere, the British then announced the bestowal of self-determination in Burma in December 1947, invited Aung San, and other Burmese politicians to negotiate an agreement in London in January 1947.

The Treaty of London in 1947 stipulated that in a year's time Burma would gain its independence and was free to determine whether to join the Commonwealth in April 1947. Aung San and his colleagues who attended the conference were then appointed as representatives of a contemporary cabinet. They were also in charge of negotiating with the frontier league in order to achieve Burma's unification.

Frontier people became an important subject to the British, as they felt obliged to fulfill their promise to the Karen, the Kachin, the Chin, the Rohingya and other ethnic groups to give them autonomy in return for their joining the British army before and after World War II. At the same time, the British accepted the AFPFL terms to form the Union of Burma consisting of frontier areas. The British dualism brought dissent to Burma. Aung San as the Peace Delegation leader embraced a meeting with minority ethnic groups in Panglong in February 1947. This meeting served as a medium to convey the vision on the establishment of the new Burmese government. This meeting also discussed the minority position in independent Burma. On 12 February 1947, they agreed that frontier people would get equal treatment in democracy and attain full autonomy in the frontier areas. The agreement known as the Panglong agreement is still a major reference for the minority ethnic groups to ensure access to their autonomy rights. Regrettably, the agreement did not have political enforceability. Moreover, Aung San made this agreement with representatives from the Kachin, the Chin, and the Shan without involving other ethnic groups such as the Karen, the Karenni, the Mon, and the Arakan. The success of the Panglong agreement merely depended on the personal relationship between Aung San and these ethnic group leaders. Hence, following the

tragic death of Aung San, this agreement lost its political legitimacy.¹⁴

The General Election held in April 1947, was to determine Burma's political fate after its independence from the British. The AFPFL won the election and Aung San was elected as Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the losing opponent killed Aung San and his six cabinet members, while they were in the process of formulating the constitution for new Burma. Aung San's death aggravated the effort to create an independent country. U Nu, the Deputy Prime Minister, was then invited by the British to fill Aung San's position. Finally, they succeeded in writing the constitution and it was approved in September 1947 by establishing the Union of Burma apart from the Commonwealth. On 4 January 1948, the Union of Burma was officially established with U Nu as the first Prime Minister with a temporary cabinet until a general election could be held.

The governmental system of the Union of Burma was a parliamentary one. Executive power was in the hands of the Prime Minister who had, however, limited power and was elected indirectly by the parliament. Legislative power in parliament is called *pytthu hluttaw*. Parliament was divided into local and national representative councils. Local representative council members were elected through a general election and their number was twice as large as of the national representative members. The local representative council voted for the members sitting in the national representative council. Not all the minority groups had their representatives at the national level so it invited envy, which led to separatist movements.

There were three revolutions following independence. These revolutions, allegedly by the Karen, continuing up to now, the Arakan and the Mon from 1948-1949. Following these, the Shan and the Kachin ethnic groups carried out another revolution at the end of the 1950s. The AFPFL political opponents that brought the communism platform also mounted the revolutions. This was prompted by the widespread dissatisfaction with U Nu and his cabinet performance. The central government, with its power, tried to halt and eradicate the

¹⁴ *Ibid*, page. 4

revolutions by means of the military, agreements and cutting support from other countries for these groups.

The core problem of the ethnic revolutions was that numerous ethnic groups in Burma assume that Burma's independence was the victory of the Bhamas over the British. The Bhamas ethnic group with its armed forces dominated the country, therefore, the minority ethnic groups were afraid of losing their identities and cultures. The phenomenon of '*Burmanification*' increased in every part of life. At institutional level, the Bhamas undercut minority representation in the national council by reducing their influence and number. Burman language became the official language in administration and universities in Rangoon. This forced other ethnic groups to speak the Burman language to engage in state administration and to have access to better jobs and higher education.

In the period 1948-1962, civilian democratic government was in force in Burma. In the middle of a chaotic situation, Burma succeeded in holding general elections twice, in 1951-1952 and in 1956, both of which were won by the AFPFL. However, the elected Prime Minister, U Nu and his cabinet, failed to meet the people's needs and expectations to improve their economic and safety measures. The government effort to create social consensus was catastrophic and corruption practices were rampant. The failure, of course, created distrust in the U Nu government. The military finally took over the power from the civilian government to manage the failure. Along with General Ne Win holding the leadership, the military took command officially over the government authority for 16 months, from 1958 to 1960.

The military eventually returned the authority to U Nu in 1960, as the situation was under control. U Nu took reconciliatory measures with the representatives of the ethnic groups by carrying out the federalism idea. The military were annoyed to know that such ideas prevailed. On 2 March 1962, General Ne Win on radio announced that the military had taken over the country for the sake of the nation's unity. It marked the ruin of the democratic era in Burma as the civil government was taken over, by force, by the military. Ac-

ording to Ne Win, this action was taken to avoid Burma's disintegration. After it succeeded in conducting a bloodless revolution, the military quickly arranged a revolutionary council, dissolved the parliament and constitution, and imprisoned U Nu and his cabinet along with several ethnic group leaders.

On 30 April 1962 the Revolutionary Council announced the *Burmese Way to Socialism* as Burma's new ideology. This manifesto became the guideline for the Revolutionary Council that explicitly deprived the country of parliamentary democracy. Subsequently, the military formed the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) as the only party legalized by the military. During Ne Win's tenure, Burma applied tight foreign policy regulations to avoid foreign influence on cultural, social and economic life. Ne Win also halted the development of business elite from the Chinese and Indian migrants. He believed that the socialist idea could forge the country's economic independence.

Ne Win ruled the country for 26 years and considered to have failed to develop Burma's economy. In fact, when the military ruled, this country became one of the poorest countries in the world.

Up to now, although Burma has experienced leadership changes, the military junta still holds a key influence over the government. Due to the pressure from students and society in 1988, the BSPP was reformed and altered into the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLOCR). In 1990, SLOCR decided to hold a general election. The general election was held as a repercussion of international pressure on Burma against the civil rights abuses in 1988. However, the military junta did not recognize the legality of the election result, which was a triumph for Aung San Suu Kyi from the Pro Democracy party. In 1997, the military junta changed their cabinet into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). However, the governmental system in Burma did not change at all. The adoption of the new name was aimed at diverting the attention of pro democracy rebels and international pressure, without any major change in policies. The military junta in Burma continues to maintain its power over the civilian government. It seems that a change in the political system in Burma would lead this country to economic and political improvement.

II.3. The Role and Position of Rohingya on Nation State Building Process in Burma

The Rohingya is a group that has a complex position in Burmese society. Generally, Burma's society ignored their existence. In their opinion, the Rohingya were a consequence of British colonialism in Burma. This is based on the fact that the Rohingya have similarity in culture and religions with the people of Chittagong in Bangladesh. However, due to their lengthy period of living in Burma, they feel that Burma is their homeland. An intense argument about recognizing the Rohingya in Burma with regard to the historical issue became a source of debate concerning the legality of the Rohingya ethnic group. Various evidence and inscriptions are presented to seek the historical truth. Debates continue, in accordance with the violence perpetrated by the military junta on the ethnic Rohingya, based on the historic resentment to maintain its power to rule Burma.

II.3.1. History of the Rohingya

History is a past reflection on present existence. For the ethnic Rohingya, their history has become the reflection of their existence in Burma. Although the Burmese people repress and attack their expressed historical values, they keep revealing their history, believing in its truth, so that debate is still going on.

The name Rohingya derives from the word *Rohang*, the original and ancient name of Arakan. An area once occupied by the Hindu, Buddhist and animist Rakhine people. When the Arabs arrived many decided to settle and mingle with the local residents. They then developed a different culture from their original one inherited by Arab nations: Moor, Pathan, Moghul, Bengali and Indo Mongoloid. This community was then called Rohingya.¹⁵

¹⁵'*Toward Understanding Rohingya*' by Shau Khat (MSK Jilani), Kaladan Press, 6 March 2005 also in '*Rohingya: The Forgotten People*' by Habib Siddique in <http://usa.mediators.net> published 15 August 2005. The term *Rohingya* is used by the Rohingya to claim legality of their historic values. Meanwhile, according to Buddhists, *Rohingya* is a term used politically by most Islamic societies in admitting their existence. According to them, Rohingya does not refer to an ethnic group or race but to political will to distort Burma's history. Therefore, the term *Rohingya* is still debatable.

The first Muslim settlement in Arakan was in the 7th century. In the 8th century, an English historian in Burma revealed that Muslim seamen stranded in Rambree were sent to Arakan where they finally settled.¹⁶ Since then, Islam spread in Arakan. Islamic development occurred significantly when an Islamic kingdom was established in Bengal in 1203 with Arakan as a subordinate kingdom in 1430.

In 1404, the king of Arakan, who was deposed by the king of Burma, asked for protection from the Sultan of Bengal. The Sultan of Bengal sent 50,000 soldiers to fight the Bhamas tribe and to return the crown to the king of Arakan. Unfortunately, Wali Khan, crowned himself the king of Arakan. The Sultan of Bengal oppose this and sent his army to depose Wali Khan and return the crown to the legal king of Arakan in 1430. After succeeding in executing their duty, the Sultan's army preferred to live and form a Muslim community in Arakan. They strengthened the Arakan kingdom, including during the Mrauk- U Dynasty and acculturated with the local inhabitants. The custom to use Islamic titles or names for Arakanese kings continued until 1683. The system of government, at that time, adopted much of the Islamic culture and terminology. The Arakanese kingdom's official symbol also used an Arabic inscription that meant 'Of One God on Earth'. Besides, the king issued a coin, bearing the five Muslim precepts, in Arabic. It shows that Islam had a big influence in Arakan in the 1600-1700s.¹⁷

From 1685 to 1790, Arakan was independent, not integrated with India or Burma. Until 1784, when the area politically under the Muslims, was defeated by King Bodawpaya of Burma. The Burmese army killed Arakanese, both Muslim and Buddhist and destroyed mosques and other places of worship. Under the tyranny of Burma for 40 years, from 1784 to 1824, the Arakanese suffered and many fled to Chittagong in Bengal.

¹⁶ R.B. Smart, *Burma Gazetteer – Akyab District*, vol. A, Rangoon, 1957, p.19 in '*Rohingya The Forgotten People*' by Habib Siddique

¹⁷G.E. Harvey, *Outline of Burmese History*, Longmans, London, 1947. pp. 94-96.

The presence of Burma in Arakan disturbed the British that had colonized India. Moreover, arrogantly, the Burmese king asked India to return the Arakanese refugees. This demand was rejected and ended with the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824. The British who then ruled Arakan easily won the war.¹⁸

Under British control, Arakan became a semi autonomous area with the authority given to the native inhabitants. At that time, like other Burmese areas, Arakan was open to immigrants. Those Arakanese that fled to Chittagong when Bodawpaya conquered Arakan also returned to Arakan. At British colonization, one third of the Arakanese people were Muslims. Arakan became one of Burma's provinces by ignoring local residents' wishes when Burma was relieved of the management of British-India administration in 1937. In the end, Arakan became a part of the Burma that declared its independence in 1948.

For generations, Buddhist and Muslim communities could live in peace. The fissure happened when Japan entered Burma in 1942. The loyalty of the Muslim Arakan defending the British to realize the British promise for an autonomous area triggered Buddhist community anger. The Buddhists were allied with Japan. By provoking the Buddhist community with racial issues, the Buddhist community expelled ethnic Rohingya by considering them as illegal immigrants and defenders of colonialism. The Buddhist community helped by Japan destroyed Rohingya houses and places of worship, expelled the Rohingya from Arakan and tortured them from December 1942 to April 1943. Fortunately, the British colonialists came back in January 1945 and controlled Arakan again by expelling the Japanese from Arakan. Arakan was under control again but the two ethnic groups continued their resentment from that time until now.¹⁹

¹⁸ D.G.E Hall, *op. cit.* pp. 560-576.

¹⁹ Clive J Christie, *A Modern History of South East Asia; Decolonization, Nationalism, and Separatism*, pp. 164-167.

Post independence, a revolution of Muslims, based on disappointment that the government ignored their existence, occurred. This was provoked by the changing of the Muslim apparatus by the central Buddhist apparatus and by the extension of Buddhist housing. In one year, the rebels conquered northern Arakan. Actually, the Rohingya did not want independence but an autonomous state in the Union of Burma.²⁰ In the end, the central government could control the revolutionary movement of the Mujahid in 1951-1952. This movement sporadically and on a small scale lasted until 1954.

To control the situation in Arakan, U Nu, Burma's Prime Minister, announced that Rohingya was one of the native Burmese ethnic groups through his state speech via radio on 25 September 1954. He also announced nationally via Burma's radio station, a Cultural Exhibition Program of Rohingya in Rangoon. Next, the name Rohingya was recorded in the Encyclopedia Burmanica and appeared in school textbooks.²¹ It shows the government good will to solve ethnic and religious conflicts between the Rohingya and the Buddhist majority.

Eventually, in 1960, the Burmese government promised to give a semi autonomous status to Arakan. The Rohingya community readily accepted this. Nevertheless, prejudice came up when the government established the Maya Frontier Administration area, under temporary control, directly under the military, of areas where Muslims were the majority such as Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung in 1961. Hope for an autonomous area for the Muslim Arakan disappeared after the military coup de etat in 1962. The prejudice became real when the temporary control of the military of the Mayu frontier increased to the control of their behavior. Rohingya lost their former hope to be separated

²⁰ *Ibid.* The idea to be independent created the *mujahiddin* movement inspired by the Islamic movement in Pakistan mobilized by Ali Jinnah. Meanwhile, the Muslim community in Burma, including the Rohingya, wished for a *frontier state* in the Union of Burma separate from the Buddhist community. This was based on an agreement of Muslim representatives gathered in Maungdaw in April 1947 to determine their fate in Burma.

²¹ Mayu Maung. *Who are Rohingya?* Rohingya Times, 10 February 2004.

from the Buddhist community and they were finally trapped in a very bad condition under tight control by the brutal military.²²

The military junta under Ne Win's leadership did not like the existence of the Rohingya Muslims in Burma. This was shown in the treatment and state discriminative regulations on the Rohingya Muslims. Ne Win saw them as illegal immigrants who had no right to live in Burma. For Ne Win Burma was for Buddhist Bhamas. He limited the space for Rohingya so that they were forbidden to go outside northern Arakan. Furthermore, in 1974, the junta government issued an emergency immigration act containing the limitation of mobilization and citizenship of the Rohingya. In 1982, the junta issued a new regulation on citizenship that made the Rohingya Muslims lose their identity and citizenship. Officially, the regulation erased Rohingya citizenship and forbade them to take part in general elections.

In 1978, Ne Win conducted an expulsion operation called the Nagamin or Dragon King operation. The junta burned down the villages, killing, raping, torturing and taking away all Rohingya belongings. Because of this operation, more than 200,000 Rohingya fled from Arakan to the frontier area of Burma-Bangladesh. The military junta, because of the pressure from the international community, was forced to accept Rohingya repatriation to Burma under the control of the UNHCR.²³

The change in military power from the BSPP to the State Law and Order Restoration Council in 1988 did not change the situation for the Rohingya at all. Discrimination and violence continued. In 1991, the junta again carried out genocide and ethnic cleansing operations on the Rohingya called *pyi thaya*. Again around 250,000 Rohingya went to Bangladesh to avoid the cruelty of the military force or *tatmandaw*. The UNHCR tried to solve the refugee problems by involving the two countries. They agreed that the refugees had to return to Burma. The military junta had no choice but to accept them and give

²² Clive J Christie, *op. cit.* pp. 170-171.

²³ Martin Smith. *Burma: The Time For Change*, p. 19.

them their civil rights. The repatriation program was applied on 22 September 1992.²⁴ However, violence towards the Rohingya Muslims continues until now. The ethnic Rohingya now choose to live in refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar or find asylum in other countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, the US and Australia rather than face the ruthlessness of *tatmandaw*.

II.3.2. Rohingya's People in Burma; Their Role and Its Position from Colonialism to the Latest Condition

Role and Position of the Rohingya Community from Colonialism to now, the Rohingya, like other people in the world, want a peaceful life. Unfortunately, this hope is still a dream as long as the military junta holds the authority in Burma. The junta ignores all aspects of Rohingya life by denying them as Burmese citizens. Their rights are not considered because the government does not admit their existence.

Like other followers of religion, the Rohingya want to implement Islamic principles in their lives. This never happens if prejudice and resentment come between the Rohingya and the Buddhist majority. It benefits the junta to sustain their power in Burma by provoking issues on religion, so that peace never occurs in Burma.

In the beginning, the Rohingya and Buddhist communities lived harmoniously in Arakan. Their arrival was well accepted both before and after British colonization. British authority over Burma made Arakan an open area for immigrants from China, India and especially Bengali Muslims who spoke the Chittagong language. The Bengali Muslims mingled with and were acculturated in the surrounding community. In fact, at that time, Arakan was a multicultural region.²⁵

²⁴ *Ibid.* also in A.F.K Jalani. *Historical Background of the Rohingya in Arakan*. <http://www.rsdm.org> accessed 3 October 2004.

²⁵ Clive J Christie, *op. cit.* pp. 164-165. Multicultural in the classical meaning, is an area that consists of various cultures respecting each other.

The Rohingya Muslim community in the British colonization era worked as lower class administrators in government offices or as soldiers but generally, they worked in agriculture and trade by opening wholesale shops. Culturally, the Rohingya applied Islamic principles in their daily lives. Mature men usually grew a beard as the Prophet Muhammad did. Rohingya women used head covers called hijab as a symbol of their faithfulness to God's commands. They built mosques as places of worship and madrasah, Islamic boarding schools, in their regions. The Rohingya realized the importance of education so that they sent their children to the madrasah and like Buddhists; they could send their children to university in Rangoon.

As the idea of nationalism occurred in Burma, the Rohingya did not want to get involved in it. It was because the term nationalism referred to 'Burmanification' that is, Burma for Buddhist Bhamas. The Rohingya who were Muslims, the ethnic Karen who were Christians and the Buddhist ethnic groups such as the Shan, the Kachin and the Chin did not want to be involved as they were not a part of the Bhamas ethnic group. Immigrants from India and China became the target of attacks because of the suspicion of a social gap. They were considered colonialist allies that should be expelled from Burma. This situation worried the Rohingya since they were similar physically and in religious beliefs.²⁶

The entry of Japan in 1942 was acceptable to Burma's nationalist figures. Some of them were trained by the Japanese to help take over authority from the British. The Rohingya, on the contrary, opposed the Japanese arrival. Next, they joined the V force, the guerilla army on the frontier line between the British and the Japanese armies. The army formed in September 1942 had an important role in helping the British to take the authority back in Arakan by giving information about the conditions, guarding the British army and punishing those who worked for Japan. In 1944, the V force played an important role in taking the authority back in Akyab, Mangdaw, and Buthidaung. The

²⁶ John W Handerson, *op. cit.* p. 40.

fortitude of the Muslim soldiers in helping the British was in response to the promise of an autonomous region in the Maungdaw subdivision.²⁷

The loyalty of the Rohingya Muslims to the British was utilized by Japan to spread religious suspicion. Besides, the V force actions triggered anger because those punished were mostly Buddhist. Since then, conflicts between Muslim and Buddhist people increased and riots occurred with the eviction of the Muslims.

The fact that the British left Burma without fulfilling their promise disappointed the Rohingya Muslims. The British, on the contrary, offered full authority to Burma's nationalist figures and agreed on union state formation. The disappointment was deepened as Aung San invited only four ethnic groups to the Panglong meeting to discuss the form and the future of the country. The meeting, called the Treaty of Panglong in 1947, became the reference of agreement for minority ethnic groups on a union state. Regarding this, the Muslim community in Burma, including the Rohingya, held a meeting to discuss their position in the newly formed state in April 1947. As a result, they agreed to integrate with the Union of Burma but demanded an autonomous area to practice Islam peacefully. The demand was rejected and Arakan became a province under the authority of the Union of Burma.²⁸ Therefore, it can be concluded that the ethnic Rohingya do not have any role in the process of Burma's nation state building since their existence as citizens and dignity as human beings are disregarded and dishonored.

The worst situation existed when the junta ruled in the country. They cancelled the basic civil rights of the Rohingya and implemented discriminative regulations against them. In 1963-1964, the new military regime held a national census to estimate the total population of Burma. From the census, it became known that the ethnic Rohingya were spread out in Rangoon and around the Mandalay delta. It worried Ne Win that they would spread out even more

²⁷ Clive J Christie. *op. cit.* pp. 166-167.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

widely. He then formulated a regulation to forbid the movement of the Rohingya from Akyab. Again in 1974, the junta issued a regulation that the Rohingya Muslims were prohibited to go out of Arakan to other industrial states. Besides that, Ne Win widened the issues of *Khala-Bhamas* and *Khala-Rakhine* that made conflicts sustainable. Consequently, the issues encouraged the Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist community to assault each other.²⁹ After succeeding in expelling 200,000 Rohingya in 1978, Ne Win proudly announced that he had succeeded in expelling *Khala*. It was done to obtain sympathy from the Burmese in cities. Up to now, violence and human rights abuses continue by the junta against the Muslims. They again expelled the Rohingya in 1991-1992 from Arakan but the international community could not help much except by providing places for the refugees.

The discrimination destroyed the Rohingya's basic needs; their land and homes. They lived under pressure and in terror. The junta confiscated their land for military barracks and punished them with forced work. Thus, they could not work or plant their land, which then led them into poverty. Consequently, they could not afford to send their children to school or university. It was difficult for the Rohingya to get a job and, worse, since 1970, the military forbade ethnic Rohingya to work as civil servants or in the military.³⁰

Culturally, they were prohibited the performance of Islamic ritual. The government destroyed mosques and banned the Rohingya from building madrasahs. In marriage, the government forced them to use contraception to avoid pregnancy. Thus, the number of babies born was tightly controlled.³¹ In fact, Rohingya women were forced to marry Buddhist men in order to make them Buddhist.

²⁹*Khala* has a connotative meaning of unnecessary immigrants. The Rohingya were named as *khala*. *Ibid*.

³⁰ Nurul Islam, *Facts about the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan*, at www.rohingya.org.htm. Wednesday, 10 March 2004.

³¹ *ibid*

The condition of being without citizenship status and the prohibition of working on the Rohingya are still going on up to today. Although Ne Win has long been out of power, discrimination is still rife. Even in the Than Shwe era, violence is continuing in Burma.

Currently, Rohingya can be found in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. In Burma, there are about 2,000,000 surviving Rohingya in Arakan and other provinces. The number of Rohingya refugees is about 600,000 in Bangladesh, 350,000 in Pakistan, 400,000 in Saudi Arabia and approximately 100,000 spread over Thailand, Malaysia, the US and other countries. It seems, they feel more secure and comfortable living in exile rather than in Burma.³²

Burma's people have become accustomed to living under military control; the best way for them is to be able to adapt with their current conditions. Joining the military has become the children's and young people's ideal occupation. The parents persuade their children that the military are a respected profession, although it degrades aspects of humanity. It seems that it is still a long way to conceive harmonious conditions living in Burma for the Rohingya as long as the junta still holds the authority.

³² Data from Nurul Islam. He is the president of the Arakan Rohingya National Organization, a central organization for the Rohingya movement all around the world. The ARNO head office is in Bangladesh and exists until now to give the newest information about the Rohingya. The life of the Rohingya illegal migrants in Thailand was obtained through an interview with Enayet Ulla, the general secretary of the BRAT—the Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand and visiting the Rohingya community in Min Buri on 25-27 July 2005. Up to now, related associations are also found in some countries such as the BRAJ—the Burmese Rohingya association in Japan, the Burmese Rohingya association in Australia, the Burmese Rohingya in Britain, etc

II.4. Conclusion

From the previous explanations, it can be concluded that throughout its history, Burma has always experienced ethnic group conflicts; in competing to conquer one another. The competition ended when the British colonized the country in January 1886. Since then, Burma experienced traditional value and social structure transformation in communities. The endorsement of the British of Burma widened the gap between the minority ethnic groups in the frontier and mountain range areas and the Bhamas majority in the delta areas. It occurred as the British applied direct control in the plains areas and indirect supervision over the frontier and mountain range areas. The British power over Burma created new market access and induced immigrants especially from India and China to come. The immigrants generally acquired better positions since the British were confident of their skills; consequently, this constructed social disparities among the communities.

The effort to achieve Burma's independence came along with the growth of nationalism in the Southeast Asian region. Conducted by western educated elite groups generally from the Bhamas ethnic group, Burma's nationalism was rooted in the Bhamas culture, the glories of the Bhamas kingdom and Buddhism. Thus, ethnic groups living in the mountain ranges such as the Karen, the Chin, the Shan and the Rohingya did not support such nationalism. Because of Aung San, a nationalist figure who had a vision of a united country, minority ethnic groups were willing to comprise a dialogue in instigating a state form. Unfortunately, Aung San invited only four ethnic groups to the dialogue: the Shan, the Kachin, the Chin and the Karen. Meanwhile, other ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, were not invited. The agreement known as the Treaty of Panglong of 1947, subsequently became the base for Burma's unification. However, the agreement became fragile since many ethnic groups felt that the temporary cabinet was disregarding their existence.

The tragic death of Aung San exterminated any integration endeavour among the minorities in Burma. U Nu, as parliamentary representative, continued to accomplish this objective in different ways. He again utilized Bud-

dhism, the glories of the ancient monarchy, and Bhamas culture as a platform to obtain majority support. As an outcome of dissatisfaction in new state materialization, revolution and disintegration movements flourished and highlighted the situation in newly independent Burma.

The fact that the Rohingya ethnic group was not invited to Panglong increased their disenchantment with the government. However, they kept demanding an autonomous area in the Union of Burma, which unfortunately, the government rejected. Thus, the Union of Burma materialized without deliberating the aspirations of the Rohingyas. This emphasized that the Rohingya ethnic group were not involved in the nation state building process of Burma. Additionally, Burma's nation state building is more likely a collective enforcement than a consensus of its people. Without exertion, they were required to consent to be a part of the Union of Burma.

The military coup of the civilian government in 1962 led to boundless misery for minority ethnic groups in Burma. The junta government disregarded the existence of minority ethnic groups by committing violence and human rights abuses against them since the ideology instigated, seemed to suggest that Burma is only for Buddhist Bhamas in order to regain the glories of the ancient monarchy. Rohingyas, the local inhabitants of the Arakan region, were subjected to discrimination and violence like other minority ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the distinction in physical appearance, dialect, culture and religion led the Rohingya to be inflicted with exacerbated discrimination. The Rohingya were assumed to be immigrants who came at the time of the British arrival, considered as strangers although they were born and have resided for generations in Burma. They have similarity in dialect and culture to the Chittagonians in Bangladesh who are also Muslims. Officially, the junta withdrew their citizenship in 1982 and forced them to be alienated on their own country.

If only their fundamental rights were respected, the Rohingya might respond by joining the Union of Burma. Conversely, in democratic civilian government, the existence of the Rohingya was marginalized and deteriorated,

moreover it worsen on Junta reign as considered them outsiders that should be eradicated as initiators of social disorder in Burma. Hostility, land confiscation, forced labor, sexual harassment; torment, expulsion and other forms of violent behavior are the situation faced by the Rohingya up to now. Living in exile turns out to be the only alternative for them. Being stateless, without citizenship is a fate to deal with as either legal or illegal refugees stretching out around the world.

Figure 2.2. Bogyoke Aung San (b. 13 Feb 1915 - d. 19 July 1947)



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CHAPTER III

THE MILITARY JUNTA'S POLICIES TOWARD THE ROHINGYA MUSLIM MINORITY IN ARAKAN

Erni Budiwanti

III.1. Introduction

The Rohingya have long-been uprooted from the fabrics of Burma society. It is a problem of religious and political persecutions, and a systematic cleansing of ethnic Muslim minority from their homeland. This chapter focuses primarily on the military regime's policies for its minority Muslim group, the Rohingya in particular that, conclusively shows massive abuses of human right standard. Violations by the state over a wide range of the Rohingya's basic human needs remain to be the main policies of the Burmese military authorities. The overall human rights situation in Burma is far from being satisfactory.

III.2. Nation and State: Are They Inter-Twinning Variables?

I would like to start this paper by raising a crucial question regarding to the term of nation-state. Does nation-state represent a single term? Nation and state be joined together into a single term and are likely to be understood as having an interlock or interconnected one to another. A nation is commonly understood as a compilation or collection of people who, despite their cultural backgrounds, share one official (national) language, live together within a specific territory (living geography), are bound or unified by certain ideology, and abide by certain rules and regulations. While the state generally denotes to a specific locality or area where the nation lives. The state thus refers to political space where all sorts of interaction in political, economic, socio-cultural spheres, are managed. The state denotes to those holding the control over management system of all resources available and allocated within its territo-

rial boundary³³.

The combined terminologies of the nation and the state could be misleading if they are understood to have an equivalent meaning. If both words are intertwining and equivalent in meaning, why then a state can be falling apart and then divided itself into several small states with their own nationalities? For examples are the war in Balkan between the Serbian and Croatian which ended up with the Bosnian war marking the break down of Yugoslavia, the fall of the Soviet union leading to the establishment of new small countries named by their ethnic nationalities, such as Lithuanian, Kazakhstan, Kurdistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan. And last but not least is the on going war between the Russian military troops and the Chechen militia struggling for an independent state, separated from Russia. Those are among a few of the examples, showing us that the state and nation are not equally interlocked one to another. If we would like to see some countries more closely, many countries in this world comprises of many nations. Canada for instance is inhabited by French offspring, English, other migrants and refuges from Europe and Asia. Australia has the aborigine, the European, and the Asian migrants. And so for Malaysia, calling itself as truly Asian for its citizens comprise of different sorts of nationalities i.e. Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Such a cultural mosaic of people can also be found in the USA, Belgium, Swiss, Sri Lanka, India, Egypt, Fiji, Singapore, South Africa, and so forth.

Long history of colonization and migrations has contributed not only to the plurality but also to the complexities of relationships between the outside conquerers (colonizers) and those who are conquered (colonized), native inhabitants and the migrants, and the old migrants³⁴ and the new recently coming migrants. This proves that to fuse all of those nations and tie them up to a

³³ See F.Budi Hardiman. 2003. "Pengantar: Belajar dari Politik Multikulturalisme (Learning From the Politics of Multiculturalism: An Introduction)". In Will Kymlicka. *Kewargaan Multikultural*. Jakarta: LP3ES.

³⁴ Those categorized as the old or previous migrants include people brought as part of the colonial policies for commercial plantation and mining in the conquered area

single identity of a nation-state is similar to denounce the global structure of the world. Quoting from Delanty:

A nation-state is thus “a response to the disappearance of community as a shared face-to-face world and its replacement by large scale territorial societies organized around a state. The nation is above all an imagined community which is able to provide narrative of meaning for individuals”³⁵.

III.3. Ethnic Minorities vis-à-vis the State

A nation generally constitutes of different sorts of ethnic nationalities. The ethnic nationalities here can generally be divided further into those belong to the majority group and others classified as the minority groups. Not all the states succeed in dealing with their minorities. Some of them even show high level of human rights violations against members of ethnic minorities, and continued to commit human rights violations in ethnic minority areas with complete impunity. This gives the reasons why some ethnic minorities stand against the state authorities, organizing themselves to lead insurgencies movements. In such activities they fight for an independent or a separate nation-state. The Morro Liberation Movement in Southern Philippines, Pattani Liberation front in Southern Thailand, and RPF (*Rohingya Patriotic Front*); RSO (*Rohingya Solidarity Organization*) in Myanmar are some of the examples. In relation to this problem, this chapter attempts to reinforce on the humanitarian issues in the way the Myanmar state deals and copes with its ethnic minorities. One among them is the Rohingya Muslims group. The limitation on having comprehensive understanding over all minority issues in Myanmar, has led us to restrict our focus on the Rohingya Muslim minorities living in the state of

³⁵ See Gerald Delanty. “Nationalism: Between Nation and State”. 2001. In George Ritzer & Barry Smart. *Handbook of Social Theory*. London: Sage Publications Ltd. pp 472-484. See also Benedict Anderson.

Arakan only. This does not mean that other problems faced by other ethnic minorities, such as the Karen, the Shan, the Kachin, and so forth are neglected. To be able to cover wide ranges of issues encountered by the whole ethnic minorities in Myanmar, a further research study needs to be done, including the one faced by the Rohingya.

III.4. The Rohingya Muslims of Arakan: Problematic Number and Position

According to Burmese government statistics, nearly 90 per cent of the 50 millions of the country population are Theravada Buddhists. The minority comprises one third of Myanmar's people. Four percent of the country's population (2 millions) is Muslims. Some scholars and expatriate estimate this figure much higher, a few of them even claim that Muslims constitute of 16 percent of the Burma's total population (or 8 million)³⁶. The wide differences about these figures reflect that a large number of Burma's Muslim is not considered citizens. They were not included in the last census held in 1993 when the military government of Yangoon³⁷ simply dismissed them as illegal immigrants. Besides this, quite a lot of Burma's population have fled out of the country and lived in refugee camps in Bangladesh and Thailand.

Islam failed to reach the heart of the country; the influence of Islam left its mark on Arakan only. This world religion is brought mostly by the Muslim migrants from India and Bengal, and persists among those local Buddhist women converted to Islam after being married by Muslim migrants, and their offspring only. Most of other parts of Burma are never the targets of any powerful Muslim state wishing to spread its religion. Neither was there any missionary activity by Muslim preachers, aiming to create large numbers of

³⁶ See Andrew Smith. 2003. *Burma's Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised*. Canberra-Australia: The Australian University.

³⁷ Yangoon is the capital city of Burma. Yangoon replaces the word Rangoon. Recently the capital city is moved to Pyinmana, located about 350 kilometers away to the north of Yangoon.

converts, as occurred in the Malay Archipelago. As a result, Burma's Muslim community developed mainly through immigration and exogamy, giving it a unique character.

Limited proliferation of Islam in Burma was because this country was already strongly Theravada Buddhist by 12th century and neither the royal court nor the general populations were susceptible to new religion. Also, Buddhism became strongly woven into the fabric of Burmese politics, society, and culture. This shows that Buddhism in Burma functions much more than simply a religion. And as later Christian missionaries discovered along with the conquest of the British colonialist who were mostly Christians, this religion largely impervious to outside influences.

The largest Muslims community in Burma today is still the Rohingya. Some of them are the offspring of the Bengali Muslims who came around 15th and 16th centuries. They were those who mostly live in Arakan state and married with the local Buddhist women. Their offspring resulted from that intermarriages are called the *Zerbadees*. Up until now Arakan has the largest Muslim concentration. The Rohingya Muslims mainly reside in Northern Arakan. Rakhine is replacing the name of Arakan later. Bengali became East Pakistan in 1947 and the independent People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971. In 1986 Muslim Rohingya were estimated to constitute about 56% of the 3 millions Rakhine total populations. By 1992 this proportion had increased. It was estimated that the Rohingya Muslims comprise of 56% of the Rakhines' total population. By 1992 this proportion had risen to 70% of the state's estimated 4 million people.

Another source mentions that the whole Arakan region has the largest Muslim concentration settling in the North. The constitute 70-80% of the whole population. However, due to the massacre of 100,000 Rohingya in 1942 as well as the constant persecution, some areas in Arakan have less Rohingya and finally become the territories of non-Rohingya. Actual figure of the Rohingya are indefinite, as the Burmese military regime has been deliberately tampering with the number and engaging in a statistical genocide. Military

rulers have made the Rohingya to look fewer than their real number³⁸. The military government does not recognize them as one of the 135 'national races'.

It is estimated that there are nearly over 1.5 million of Rohingya expelled from their homeland to avoid terror and extortion. At present many of them are now living in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Uni Arab Emirate, and Malaysia. They have long been subjected to terror and genocide particularly since 1962 when the military rule in Burma. Their situation today at the repressive hands of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) invites humanitarian concern, as well as the Amnesty International's intervention.

Bangladesh has been the nearest and the main country of refugees for the Rohingya Muslims coming from Burma's Arakan state. The most recent flow of them to Bangladesh took place in 1991 and 1992. It was the time when more than 250,000 Rohingya refugees fled to prevent themselves from forced labor, rape, extra judicial killings, religious persecutions, and other human rights violations committed by the army. Most of these refugees returned between 1993-1997 under a repatriation program arranged by the UNHCR. After being repatriated through what so called reintegration program, their numbers are still undocumented for most of them have no legal documents or any identity card representing their status as Burmese. There are now around more than 21,000 Rohingya in Thailand who resist forced repatriation

The military regime has set a systemic program of ethnic cleansing as well as political and religious persecutions toward the Rohingya to get rid the Rakhine state of the Muslim population. The problem faced by the Rohingya is that they are stateless and refugees living on the merit of the Burma's neighbouring country i.e. Bangladesh and Thailand, and other international relief agencies. The present situation of Rohingya clearly marks the state failure in recognizing their official (legitimate) status as parts of Burmese nation.

³⁸ See Enayet Abdulah. "The Rohingya Problem". Unpublished paper presented on the BRAT (Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand) annual meeting in September 2005.

Politically, economically, and culturally, the military junta, also called the SPDC, has failed in providing their basic human needs and rights in almost every aspect of lives. The issue of Rohingya also represents a fragile nation building in Burma. It shows the weaknesses and the incompetence of the regime to embrace the whole ethnic minorities, protect, and unify them peacefully into a basic common identity i.e. the Burmese nation.

State's failure in recognizing the Rohingya's status and basic rights has invited further international condemnation and sanction. Not only the Amnesty International, ILO as the United Nation's body, many countries such as America, Japan, European Community, and Canada have also given the Burma government arms and economic embargos for the human right abuses it conducts.

III.5. Types of Human Right Abuses Toward the Rohingya

III.5.1. Denial of Citizenship

For so long the Rohingya Muslims in Burma have become the major subjects of various forms of discrimination, violence, and extortions. They are deemed by the military regime to be illegal aliens. They are also being ostracized by the majority Buddhist population. They are not recognized as being truly Burmese citizens. And this label is legitimized by rules and regulation. After 1962, most Muslims were obliged to carry Foreigner Registration Cards (FRC). In 1982 the official designation of their illegitimate and inferior status was reinforced by new citizenship regulations. In these regulations the government defines Burmese nationals include those who could trace a direct line to forebears living in the country before 1823 or pre-1823. This was just prior to the conquest of parts of lower Burma by the British. Thus most of Rohingya families migrated to and settled in Arakan during the British colonial period, which began in 1823, are excluded from citizenship.

Even for those Rohingya whose families settled in the region prior 1823, the onerous burden of proof has made it nearly impossible for all to

secure citizenship. In order for children to attain Burmese citizenship, at least one parent must already hold one of three types of Burmese citizenship. In this respect, the citizenship laws was conflicting government's obligation to fulfill the rights of the child as stipulated by Article 7 of the UN Convention, stating that the child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right to a name, and to acquire a nationality. The Burmese government ratified this convention in 1991 and is obliged to grant citizenship. The 1982 citizenship law has perpetuated the Rohingya citizenship crisis. The provisions of 1982 citizen laws detached most Muslims in Burma, including those whose ancestors came to Burma from the sub-continent, and who had been living in Burma for generations and considered themselves patriotic Burmese

Rohingya who cannot provide conclusive evidence of their lineage or history of residence are ineligible for any class of citizenship. And because of their formal legal status classified as illegal migrants, they are subject to restrictions on their freedom of movement, and are denied access to higher education and are restricted from holding public office. The 1982 citizenship regulations had made the Muslims could not join the arm forces or police force, serve as the heads of government bodies or run for political office. The label of Muslims as illegal migrants has made the Rohingya to get special permission even to cross-township boundaries, and their children are denied access to state-run schools beyond primary level. The number of pilgrims permitted to make the hajj to Mecca has also been restricted.

In 1977 Burmese migration officials and military authorities conducted Nagamin (Dragon King) Operation, intended to register citizens and expelled foreigners who has no legal status i.e. official documents (identity card) before conducting national census. The expulsion was marked by a widespread brutality of the army through out the village such as rape and murder. More than 200,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh by May 1978. This operation, which brought the exodus of Rohingya, as claimed by Burmese authorities, signified their illegal status in Burma.

III.5.2. Freedom of Movement

Based on the Registration of Foreigners Act and Rules of 1940, the Burmese government requires Rohingya villagers to obtain a travel permit from their local Peace and Development Council chairman to go across the townships and state boundaries. This is the way the Burmese government restricts Rohingya from traveling within Arakan, to other parts of the country, as well as abroad. A valid permit allows a Rohingya to travel up to forty-five days. A copy of the travel permit must also be handed down to authorities upon departure and arrival at the destination. When a Rohingya wants to stay overnight in a village within the township, a similar permit must be obtained and then presented to the headman of the home village and the village visited. Heavy fines of up to 10, 0000 kyats (Rp 300,000) and detention have been imposed on those violating these requirements. The Rohingya must pay bribes to the authorities to gain travel document. The documentation has exposed Rohingya to exploitation by corrupt officials. A strict screening procedure for those who wish to make pilgrimage has also invited bribery.

When the Rohingya needs to travel to a village in the same township they must apply for a local travel pass at the VPDC. If they want to go further to another township, they have to apply for a different kind of travel license at the Immigration Department at the NaSaKa camp, called form 4. In some instances Rohingya were able to travel to a neighboring village without a travel pass, but in general they needed to apply and pay for it, besides to mention the reason for making such a traveling. Restriction on the freedom of movement for Rohingya has increased since 2003. Tighter control on the Rohingya's movement has been imposed especially after the Sittwe incident³⁹.

One of the main consequences of the restriction of freedom of movement is the impoverishment of the population, whose economic activity is

³⁹ After the communal violence broke up in Sittwe in February 2001 – the capital city of Rakhine State – between the Muslim and the Buddhist, travel restrictions on Rohingya increased.

directly affected. Such a restriction brings a big problem for those who depend their daily living on trade. For example, those living in Buthidaung cannot sell their farming products, livestock and cattle at a much higher price at township, such as in Maungdaw. The restriction has also prevented people to make their living in another village or township as traders, fishermen, carpenters. Without freedom of movement, the Rohingya are unable to seek employment outside their village, trade and produce goods, unless they have official permission and obtain a pass, which they must pay for. Only small rich elite can afford a license to go to another village or township. Most Rohingya cannot afford to pay on a regular basis for these permits, as estimated half of the Rohingya are poor day laborers. Such restriction also makes them impossible to Sittwe in case of serious illness to visit the doctor, or even attending a funeral of a relative.

For the poorer ones, the constraints of freedom of movements are substantially an economic problem, for the less vulnerable ones (like the city dwellers, who are not strongly affected), the restrictions are viewed more as an issue of respect. They feel humiliated, and are treated like animals. They feel that the only right they have is the one to be alive.

The restrictions of the freedom of movement are actually imposed on Rohingya only, not on members of other ethnic nationalities in Rakhine. They have serious negative impact on the lives of Rohingya who have not committed any offence. These restrictions contain violations of basic human rights for the Rohingya, which include the right to work and to enjoy an adequate standard of living.

III.5.3. Education and Employment

Leaving Rohingya with no citizenship has caused them unable to have access to state schools beyond primary school. The junta militaristic government excludes the Rohingya from secondary education, since it reserves secondary education for the Burmese citizens only. Rohingya's exclusion of citi-

zanship right has not only prohibited them from higher education but also prevented them from obtaining positions in the civil service. Many Rohingya cannot work as civil servants, teachers, health workers, and other jobs serving the public interests. They are also not permitted to participate formally in local government body, and to involve themselves in local politics.

In 1977 Burmese migration officials and military authorities conducted *Nagamin* (Dragon King) Operation, intended to register citizens and expelled foreigners who has no legal status i.e. official documents (identity card showing status as citizens) before conducting national census. The expulsion was marked by a widespread of brutality of the army through out the village, such as murder and rape. More than 200,000 Rohingya had fled to Bangladesh by May 1978. Result of this operation, which brought the exodus of Rohingya, as claimed by Burmese authorities, signified their illegal status in Burma.

III.5.4. Confiscation of Property and Forced Labor

The NaSaKa⁴⁰ is the border task force consisting of the police, military intelligence, and internal security or riot police, custom officials, the immigration and man power department established in Rakhine State in 1992 under direct command of the SPDC with its headquarter in Sittwe. With highly military presence especially since the Sittwe riot broke out in 2001, and with the central government's incapability to supply food and equipment for estimated 450,000 army battalions, soldiers have forcefully required villagers to provide them with rice and livestock. The army placed in Rakhine turned themselves to robbers extorting local people for food supplies and labors to facilitate the military basic needs while they are on duty. Extortion takes the form of food confiscation and demands for bribes at check points. Rohingya pay higher fees for traveling than the Bama.

⁴⁰ It is the Bama acronym for Nay Sat Kut-kwey Ye.

The NaSaKa or Local Peace and Development Council Members organize the forced Labour. The officer will usually come to a village in the morning and passed down the demand of labors to the village head. They leave the message to village headman to instruct villagers to report to the work site. Wealthier villagers can escape the labor by paying someone else to take their place. Others have to send their family members to the site to take the forced labor. The construction of model villages does not only confiscate Rohingya's lands, but also force the Rohingya families to provide labor and building materials. The Burmese government initiated the model village program in 1988 to encourage Burman Buddhist villagers from the Irrawady delta to move voluntarily to Rakhine. With this program, the military government is accused of driving out the ethnic Rohingya out of the population of Arakan. Arakan is designed in longer time to be free from the Muslim population and become a completely Burmanised Buddhist region. In brief, the military government imposes a policy of moving Burmese Buddhist into northern Arakan in an effort to displace the Rohingya Muslims called by the government "foreigners". The population transfer has intensified further the persecution of Rohingya living in the area. Rice yields has been confiscated to build housing complex called Village Model for the new up coming Buddhist migrants from other parts of Myanmar. Many of the occupants residing in model villages built 1999, come from Rangoon. They were actually rural villagers working in the construction industry. These people were finally left without jobs when the construction works evaporated along with the Asian economic crisis. The government has moved them out of the city to minimize the risk of urban unrest and settle them in model villages. Model villages are designed exclusively for Buddhist; the Muslims are not allowed to occupy them.

Human Rights Watch reported in August 1999 that in one area of Maungdaw, each Rohingya village was responsible for building two houses in the model village. Villagers had to collect wood from the forest, cut into boards, and build each house from scratch. This process, according to HRW, took several hundred hours of labor per house. For the construction for another model village in Buthidaung in 1999, Burmese confiscated approximately 250

acres of land, including prime farmland, from nearby Rohingya villagers. They are often forced to build houses, provide building materials, and other facilities of the model villages without any pay. Rohingya continue to be subjected to more onerous jobs, infrastructure projects, portering and military camps, besides on the model villages. They have to work in excess of seven days a month without payment

The villagers experienced difficulties in securing food for their families, since the confiscation of Rohingya's land to build model villages has deprived them of opportunities to sustain their livelihood. Forced labor without food and payment has further contributed considerably to the increasing poverty and food insecurity. The Rohingya whose land were confiscated, received no compensation and they were even being forced to work on the same field previously belonged to them. Land confiscation is also used to build and extend military camps, mainly for the NaSaKa. NaSaKa also confiscated land for commercial activities, such as to establish shrimp farm and rice fields for themselves.

III.5.5. Arbitrary Taxation and Other Restriction

Arbitrary taxation varies from tax collecting firewood and bamboo to fees for the registration of deaths and births in the family lists, on livestock and fruit-bearing trees. The types and the amount of tax that the people have to pay are applied on arbitrary fashion and vary from place to place, depending on the local authorities. The heaviest burden for rice paddy farmer in Rakhine state is the rice tax. Farmers were required to sell a portion of their harvest at fixed price to the state Myanmar Agricultural Products Trade

The rice tax was abolished in 2003; however the authorities have imposed several other taxes and have increased the existing ones, such as on football matches. Another example is the one who are landless, but still own only a yard around the house had to pay money to the VPDC chairman about 8, 000 kyats. The taxes were collected only from the Muslims, not from the Buddhist Rakhines.

There have been several other reports of Rohingyas being arrested and accused of breaking various regulations, such as having been to Bangladesh. If they are able to pay sum of money, they can be released. This payment varies from one place to another.

Every family is also obliged to report to the local authorities when there is a change of the family members. In this regard the Rohingya are forced to pay fees to the VPDC for the registration of births and deaths in the family. The amount of this is different from place to place. It varies from 1,000 to 8,000 kyats. A pregnant woman had to register herself in person at the nearest NaSaKa camp.

The Rohingya in Northern Rakhine State are required to ask permission to get married. This rule is imposed only among the Muslims living in this area, but not to the Buddhist Rakhine nor to the other smaller minority groups living in that state. Rohingya and other Muslims living in other parts of Rakhine State, including the capital Sittwe, seem not to be affected by this policy. Local authorities especially since 2003 have started to demand large amounts of money for people asking permission to get married. They also tend to limit number of permission given every year. This, in some cases, causes people have had to wait for about one up to three years to get permission although they have paid large amount of money. They, consequently, had to go to the NaSaKa camp for over several times to get their request fulfilled.

The payment to get marriage permission varies from one place to another. Generally the Rohingya couples have to pay between 50,000 to 300,000 kyat. After payment, the permission is not automatically given. Amnesty International received a report that in some villages there has been no marriage at all because of this restriction. Some of young couples even have to flee to Bangladesh to be able get married. After this flight their names are often removed by the authorities, which make them unable to return home. Some people go for a serious debt in order to gain marriage permission, and consequently have fled to Bangladesh

III.6. International Response

From the above discussion, it is very clear that the military junta (SPDC) adopts inhuman policy toward its own minority groups, the Rohingya in particular. The Rohingya experience discrimination almost in every aspect. The human rights violations also occurred in the context of counter-insurgency operations against the armed ethnic oppositions⁴¹. However, ethnic minorities living in areas where cease-fire have been agreed or where there is no arm conflicts are also become the target of extensive forced labor, relocation, and pottering.

The forced labor and other human rights abuses of the minorities bringing in a flow of refugees to neighboring countries. There are estimated around 200,000 refugees live in Thai cities and in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. Most refugees to whom the Amnesty International interviewed said that they had fled because they could no longer survive under severe forced labor and relocation program conducted by the SLORC.

The arrest and sentences of the NLD members⁴², after it achieved landslide victory on the 1990 election, and the attempt to silence peaceful political opposition, has even exacerbated human right conditions in Burma. The military dictatorship refused to hand over power to the civilian representatives.

The poor human rights records in dealing with ethnic minorities and opposition party have, consequently incited international concern, which even followed further by sanction and embargo for instance when Burma is in-

⁴¹ Ethnic minority opposition groups live in the states of Kayin (the Karen), Kayah (the Karenni), and Shan (the Shan). Located in Eastern Burma.

⁴² NLD-National League for Democracy is a leading opposition party led by Aung San Su Kyi. Her party won more than 80% of the vote on May 27, 1990 election. It gained a total of 392 of the 485 seats contested in a new National Assembly. However, the military junta completely ignored this election result. Jail cells instead of parliamentary seats awaited many of the winning candidates. Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD senior leaders are subjected to restricted of movements and surveillance by the military intelligence. She has been detained under house arrest.

cluded as member of the ASEAN. The inclusion of Burma has evoked widespread protest from non-governmental organization (NGO's) in ASEAN nations. They are objected to admitting a new member with such bad human rights record. The Malaysian Youth Movement (ABIM), for instance, said that Myanmar membership in ASIAN should be delayed because its government was "harassing Muslim communities". In relation to this problem, Forum Asia, a consortium of Asian NGO's based on Bangkok issues a statement:

By admitting Burma, the military junta will seek the protection of ASEAN and forestall any international pressure it receives due to the gross human rights violations it commits against the Burmese peoples⁴³.

Due to these human right abuses, the military regime in Myanmar poses a major regional security issue for the country's new ASEAN partners. In Thailand massive flow of refugees had caused border security problem as well as an economic instability.

International sanction also comes from the USA and its allies. The USA has continued on 1988 policy of isolating and punishing Burma. On 16 May 2003, President Bush extended the 1997 order, which prohibited new investment in Burma by US citizen. The US sanction is not merely based on the way the Burma regime treat its minority groups, but also because of the detention of popular opposition leader and Noble Prize Winner, Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. Washington's critics and sanctions were mainly based on the Burma military regime's denial over the landslide victory of the NLD on the 1990 election, Aung San Suu Kyi house arrest, the military junta long record of human right abuses, and the regime's tolerance of narcotics trafficking.

In July 1991 the European community formalized a de facto arms embargo and called for a worldwide arms embargo. Legislation is pending in the

⁴³ Amnesty International Report. July 1997. *Myanmar Ethnic Minority Rights Under Attack*. p 1.

US House of Representatives and the Burmese military regime. The resolution asks the administration to call “privately and publicly for an end to China’s arm sales and economic support to the Burma government until all political prisoners are released conditionally, martial law is lifted, and the result of 1990 election are completely implemented.

Vancouver-based mining company, True North Gems Incorporation, which is developing several gemstone properties in Canada and Greenland, has imposed trade sanctions against Burma as an opportunity to promote its ruby business⁴⁴.

Japan has a crucial position to promote an arms embargo and to increase pressure on SLORC to make human rights improvements. This is because Japan is a key trading partner of Burma. Japan also maintains close ties with members of ASEAN countries, and is giving China more than US\$ 6 billion in yen loans over a five period (1990-1995). America is expected to be able to encourage Japan to use its influence to urge Beijing to cut off its arms supplies to Burma. Japan should press Burma, as a condition for continued aid, to cease the persecution of Rohingya people, and free all political prisoners.

III.7. Conclusion

The Rohingya experience and suffer from deep discriminatory policy ranging from the denial of citizenship, severe restriction on movement, forced labor, forced eviction, extortion, arbitrary taxation, confiscation, robbery, and other forms of religious persecutions. All of these are crimes against humanity as well as offenses against the International Standard of human rights. Under strong military pressures and abuses, it is almost impossible for the Rohingya to gain their basic rights for existence and thus to possess an adequate living standard.

⁴⁴ See The Irrawady. May 2005, Vol 13, No 5, p. 5.

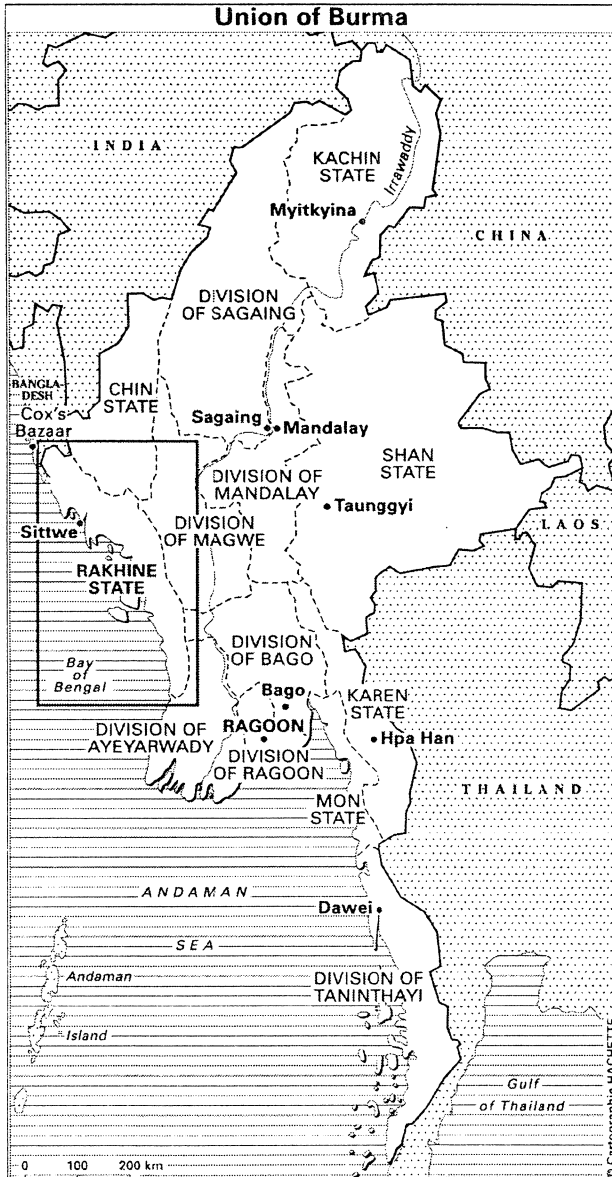
Ethnic insurgencies and the government's counter insurgencies against armed ethnic movements in Burma are manifestation of the complexities of state and ethnic minority relations. It is also expressing the Burma's fragile nation-state building. It shows us that to establish and maintain a nation state like Burma, divided by religious, cultural, and ethnic lines, proves to be an uneasy task. The military policies implemented to overcome all sort of differences seem to be heavily contained with violation over minority rights. As a result, it has produced strong protests and condemnation from the outside world.

Policy of denial has left the Rohingya with no identities and deprived them from basic rights to sustain their own life. The military regime has taken away from them important resources, enabling them to live properly and normally according to a normal human standard. The way the military officials treat the Rohingya as well as other minority groups (the Karen, the Shan, the Chin, and the Kachin) tells us that Burma is governed by the wrong hands of the military. Poor political, socio-economic, and cultural arrangements especially in dealing with minorities like the Rohingya, has categorized Burma as a country which is undemocratic, showing no respect to human right values. For so long this nation-state is torn apart by ethnic insurgencies leading to further extortion and persecution of innocent civilians. This phenomenon strengthens further Ted Gurr's notion on the poor relations of the state and the ethnic minorities:

The government often undermines the relative power and position of ethnic groups. Once ethnic demands have been raised, the need to reformulate a national policy to respond such demands and the development of conflict arises. The states subordinate special interests and autonomies of ethnic groups to their own conception of national identity and interest. State policies, almost everywhere in the Third World has meant policies aimed at assimilating communal groups members, restraining their historical autonomy, extracting their resources, revenues, and labor for the state (1998:131)⁴⁵

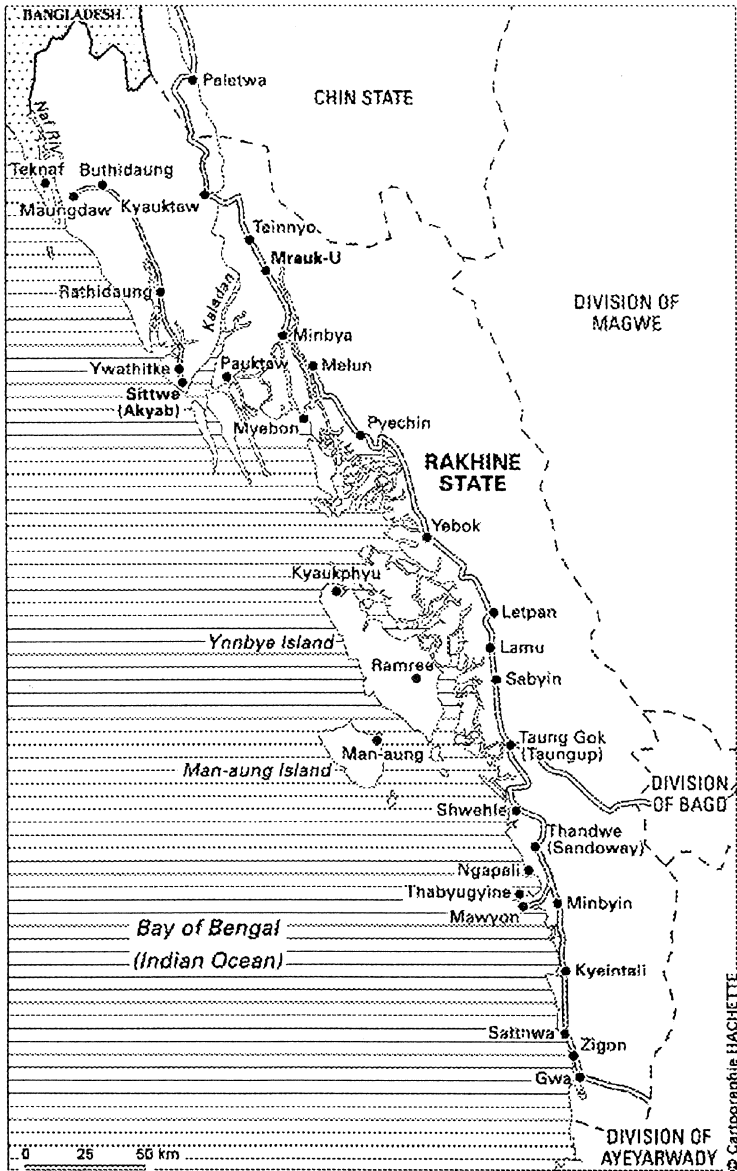
⁴⁵ Ted Robert Gurr. *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of ethno Political Conflicts*. Washington DC: united States Institute of peace

MAP OF BURMA AND ARAKAN



MAP OF ARAKAN AREA

Rakhine state



CHAPTER IV
DYNAMICS OF MUSLIM ROHINGYA'S INSURGENCIES
MOVEMENT

Paulus RUDOLF Yuniarto

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

IV.1. Introduction

Rohingyas are Muslims who want to live according to the Quran and the Sunnah in peaceful coexistence with all their neighbors in struggle for the establishment of justice and peace. Before independence in 1948, the ethnic Rohingya were considered a native tribe of Burma, with representative members in the parliament, actively involved in the state development process with certain position in the government. However, since the military took over authority in 1962, the government systematically took away their social and political rights. Widespread discrimination struck the ethnic Rohingya through the issued citizen legal regulations which made them as 'foreigners' and not a part of Burma's national ethnic make up. The Muslim Rohingyas did not only live under pressure but also experienced a dehumanization process as Muslims were considered an ethnic group that had to be eradicated.

The insurgency movements of the Muslim Rohingyas were aimed at regaining their position in society and being readmitted as legal citizens; to obtain peace and justice by fighting the Burmese military junta through both force and organization. The northern area of Burma, which directly borders the Bay of Bengal and Bangladesh, became a rampant conflict area because most of the Muslim Rohingyas occupied this area. Differences in ethnicity and religions in three main areas of the Muslim Arakan Province (Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung) became the potential insurgency areas.

This paper attempts to analyze the root of the problem, i.e. why the Muslim Rohingyas adopted the insurgency form as their means of rebellion against the government and describes how the increase in the insurgency movements took place in accordance with the development of multicultural society relationships in Burma.

IV.2. The causes of Moslem Rohingya Revolution

The hostility in Arakan, near the Bangladesh border, between the Muslims and the Buddhist Burmese actually began when Burma declared its independence. Disappointment of the Muslim Rohingyas increased especially when the new government (1948) denied their being a Burmese ethnic nationality. The accumulated disappointment of the Rohingya Muslims eventually triggered them off to struggle for their minority rights which, for so long, had been denied by the government. This was attempted through diplomacy as well as armed struggle. The core of the Muslim Rohingya revolution was to strike against the Burmese military force in the discrimination and expulsion of Muslim people and all the repressions in the Arakan area. Before discussing this further, there are three major causes contributing to the Rohingya insurgency movements:

IV.2.1. Discrimination and Violence History Towards Moslem Rohingyas

There are two versions of the basic theory for the Muslim Rohingya existence in Burma. *The first theory* claims that the Muslim Rohingyas are the descendants of immigrants from Moorish tribes, Arabs and Persians, including migrant soldiers from among the Moghuls, Turks, the Pathans and Bengalis that traded around the area in the 15th and 16th centuries. The immigrants assimilated through marriage with local people and finally settled in the Arakan area. The Muslim Rohingyas are a mixed community that has various ethnicities in its offspring and has relationships with certain races. This statement was repeatedly made to assert the political side of the existence of the Muslim

Rohingyas, including statements from experts and scientists looking at the backgrounds of the Rohingyas⁴⁶.

This trader group, later known as the ethnic Rohingya with Islam as their religion, lived in the Arakan area when Burma was still a kingdom. The area became a Muslim community endowed with different customs from other national communities and religions in Burma. Socially the ethnic Rohingya have a stronger bond with people from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan than with those in Burma. They also have a strong Bengali dialect. Therefore, the Rohingya community is culturally different from others in Burma, which have beliefs, customs, language and principles based on Buddhist teaching, radically different from Islamic principles, based on the Koran.

The second theory defined the Muslim population in Arakan as having come from Bengal. Bengal, initially a part of India, was divided into West Bengal and East Pakistan, the latter, now independent, is called Bangladesh. The Muslim Rohingya, mixed with the Indians and migrated during the British colonization era. This theory is assumed from the fact that most Rohingya people speak the Bengali language with a strong 'Chittagong dialect'. They do not speak the Burmese language and are commonly called 'illegal immigrants' who come from Bangladesh⁴⁷. The Burmese government and the majority of the Burman Buddhist people believe this second theory⁴⁸.

Those two theories show differences. The judgment on ethnic identity in the following explanation, will serve as a basic theory for the understanding of identity and group characteristics of the Muslims and the Burmese government. The frequent occurrence of discrimination and violence against the

⁴⁶ D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 3rd edn., Macmillan, London, 1968 Nurul Islam, *The Rohingya Muslims of Arakan: Their Past and Present Political Problems*, *THE MUSLIM MINORITIES*, Proceedings in Sixth International Conference of World Assembly of Muslim Youths (WAMY), vol.I, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1986.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* D.G.E. Hall, 1968 and Nurul Islam, 1986.

⁴⁸ U Ohn Gyaw, Foreign Affairs Minister. 21 February 1992.

Muslims can be ascribed to those theories. Each group tries to defend its claim to the truth of its historic background in Arakan. These two theories give a clear description of the effort of 'justification' of their existence in the Arakan area, which they now believe is their right.

The Muslim group thinks that the violent actions and the impact on the Muslim Rohingyas are carried out by the Burmese military, a situation not appropriate with the historical facts which they believe. In contrast, the Burmese government thinks that the Muslim Rohingya is their enemies and defeated hostages from when Burma was a kingdom. The Burmese government fighting the Muslim Rohingyas in Arakan uses this construction of opinion. Muslim people do not have rights to the land or their freedom now. These two different points of view have triggered off conflicts in the Arakan area. The understanding by each group of its history is an ideology that only it has the authority to dominate the Arakan area.

From the historical point of view, it can be explained that the wave of violence and conflicts between the two groups has occurred since long ago. Before 1784, the Arakan area was an independent coordinative region. Arakan was not under Burmese or Indian authority but had its own regulations to manage its region (semi independent area). During 1785 – 1825, Arakan was conquered and ruled by the Pagan Kingdom led by Burmans. In the 1784 was the end of the period of Muslim emperors in Arakan, previously ruled by the Mrauk U dynasty. The end of the Muslim authority was marked by the Pagan Kingdom aggression in Arakan. At that time, the armed forces in the Burmese kingdom killed thousands of ethnic Rohingya and Buddhist followers and destroyed mosques and temples. About 40 years ago, under Burmese power 2/3 or around 200,000 Arakanese people were forced to flee to Chittagong (Bengal). Afterwards, all Islamic characteristics were eradicated, e.g., pagodas, etc replaced Islamic schools.

The advent of the British Kingdom that ruled India and nearby regions provoked *The First Anglo-Burmese War 1824-26* that ended on 24 February 1826 with the Burmese kingdom as the defeated party. The defeat of the Bur-

mese Kingdom made the Arakanese people come back to their homeland. It also made Burma sign the Treaty of Yandabo consisting of the taking over of Arakan and Tenasserim areas by India to be ruled by Britain. At that time, almost 1/3 of the Arakan population was Muslim. The British sent Indian people flocking to Arakan, Tenasserim, Pegu and Burma as a labour force⁴⁹. In quantitative terms, this transmigration policy created the consequences of the increase of the Muslim population in Burma. Besides as a labour supply, Indians who transmigrated also became vendors or traders with some owning shops and companies⁵⁰.

World War II heated up the global political climate. Resistance from the colonizing country also gave rise to anti imperialistic demands from the colonized countries to be independent. Burma later was separated to be a province of British India on 1 April 1937, under the Government of India Act of 1935. The British subsequently set up their colony in Burma. This policy had a direct impact on Arakan which finally became a unit of British Burma. The fusion of the Arakan area as a federal country in Burma was actually rejected by the Arakanese people who were majority Muslim, however, the Arakan area became an independent province of Burma in 1948⁵¹.

For centuries, the Muslim Rohingya settled in Arakan lived peacefully with the Rakhine Buddhist people⁵². There were infrequently occurring conflicts between the Muslims and the Buddhists. This condition changed when Japan attacked Burma in World War II. Japan and Burma allied in AFPFL (Anti Facist People's Freedom League), conducted open warfare with the British and tried to make Burma as independent country. As a matter of fact, Japan promised to give Burma its independence. Communal riots between the Brit-

⁴⁹ Sultan Mahmud, *Muslims in Arakan*, The Nation, Rangoon, 12 April 1959.

⁵⁰ *ibid* Sultan Mahmud

⁵¹ *op. cit.* D.G.E. Hall, 1968 and Nurul Islam, 1986.

⁵² Genocide in Burma against the Muslims of Arakan, Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF), Arakan (Burma), 11 April 1978, pp.2 – 4; Dr Mohammed Yunus, *A History of Arakan Past and Present*, 1994, pp.158 – 159.

ish groups supported by India, the Muslims in Arakan finally took place, and Japan Burma won.

The defeat of the British side in this Japan-Burma war brought disadvantages to Muslim groups in Burma. Violence colored various actions to reject the existence of the Muslim Rohingya. Muslim groups that lived in Arakan were considered the colonists' right hands because they were loyal to England. In the Burmese community, hatred towards the Muslim Rohingyas became one of the conflict sources that resulted in an anti Islamic movement on 28 March 1942 when around 100,000 Rohingya people were killed and around 80,000 people had to flee Arakan⁵³. Almost 294 of houses were also destroyed. Since then, the relationships among the different groups in society worsened.

When Burma got its independence from Japan, discrimination and violence continued, against the Muslim Rohingyas. Discrimination which occurs until the present in Burmese regulations and law. In the Burmese draft constitution, Muslim groups, especially the ethnic Rohingya were not classified among the national minority groups, although, in fact, Muslim groups had the same number of representatives as the other ethnic groups. The disappointment towards the government that did not accommodate Muslim interests in the nation caused the Muslim Rohingyas to struggle for their interests whether by force or by organization.

The Muslim Rohingya demanded an autonomous status after Burma's independence in 1948, by conducting armed revolution, which failed. The demand created a bad reaction from the Burmese government because the

⁵³ Dr Shwe Lu Maung, Dr Aye Chan, U Mra Wa, Dr Khin Maung (NUPA) and Major Tun Kyaw Oo (President of the Amyothar Party) recognize the Rohingya birth rights as well as genuine citizenship. Even Dr Than Tun, Rector of Mandalay University and former professor of history, Rangoon University makes strong recommendations on the Rohingyas as an ethnic group and bona fide citizens of Arakan. (Ref: <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs3/BN12005-03-08.htm>)

Muslim Rohingyas were considered to be against the government. The next action taken by the Burmese was relocating their houses, imposing limitations on movement and confiscating the property belonging to the Muslim Rohingyas⁵⁴. Discriminative treatment continued under the military regime led by General Ne Win. Since 1962, Muslim Arakanese people had the label 'illegal immigrants' in Burma. The label was the result of historical construction given to the Muslim Rohingya. The Burmese government tried to expel Muslim Rohingyas out of Burma. The action was implemented by denying their legal citizenship. The 1974 Emergency immigration Act that consisted of rejection of the citizenship to any except ethnic Burmans made the Rohingya people lose their citizenship. So the Muslim Rohingyas were considered foreigners in their own land.

Until 1999, there had been 20 operations and campaigns by the Burmese military government to force out the Rohingya people. The campaigns over 20 years were the results of the application of the Rohingya Extermination Plan where the Federal Nation Council under the direct control of the SPDC executed expulsion operations of the Rohingyas with the code name King Dragon Operation⁵⁵. This operation was the biggest and cruelest operation and it was noted as the best Burmese military operation in 1978 of a sweeping action in the biggest Muslim area in Sakkipara, Akyab by sending fast moving air force to arrest Muslim men and women. Everyone was tortured, while women were raped. The mass killing made Muslims in Akyab and in other cities in northern Arakan worried and frightened.

In March 1978, the operation spread to Buthidaung and Maungdaw. Hundreds of Muslims were goaled, tortured and killed. The fright caused by the operation created uncertainty in their lives. Muslim Rohingyas also lost their belongings and dignity. Most of them, therefore, left their homes through

⁵⁴ UNHCR, Myanmar 'Reintegration programme at a crossroads, Note on Issues of Concern to UNHCR', 1997.

⁵⁵ Note A.F.K JALANI <http://www.rsdm.org> data downloaded 3.10.'04 2:02:37 p.m.

the border area of Burma-Bangladesh⁵⁶. In only three months, more than 300,000 people became refugees and lived in dirty camps provided by the Bangladeshi government and the UNHCR. They labeled the refugees from Burma as pure refugees and tried to conduct freeing operations or send these refugees home.

On 18 July 1991, the Burmese government once again mounted an expulsion activity that was as cruel as the previous one. The military government campaigned for the determination operation named 'Pyi Tha Ya'. This was to kill the Rohingyas, rape Rohingya women, and destroy the Muslim Rohingya property including houses and places of worship. This internationalized the refugee matter in the border area between Burma and Bangladesh. International institutions forced the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments to solve the problem related to refugees. At the end of 1991, Muslim Rohingyas were allowed to return to Arakan as the result of a bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Burma. In fact, many Rohingya people were afraid to return to their homes considering the cruelty of the Burmese military government.

Related to the implementation of the area division policy during the British colonization, Burma was separated from India and Arakan was integrated with Burma. The area division provoked the deterioration of the relationship between the ethnic Rohingya and the Buddhist Burmans. The Burmese people and the Rakhine became the worst enemies of the Muslim Rohingya in history. The Burmese people and the Rakhine seemed to employ every effort to clear Arakan of Muslim Rohingyas⁵⁷. The Muslim Rohingyas were denied their legal citizenship, were taken out of their ancestral areas and became illegal immigrants in Bangladesh.

⁵⁶ Special Issue, The New letter of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, April 2000 n°290/2. Repression, Discrimination and Ethnic Cleansing in Arakan. p.15

⁵⁷ Budiwanti in Sihbudi Problema Problema Minoritas Muslim di Asia Tenggara Kasus Moro, Pattani, dan Rohingya, Seri Penelitian PPW-LIPI, Jakarta, 2000, No. 06. p. 145

IV.2.2 The failure of Burmese Assimilation Politics

A long history of identity differences between the Muslim group and the Burmese gave rise to hostility in both groups. The conflict between the government and the Muslims is the effect of differences that could not be overcome to unite the Burmese customs and the Islamic culture⁵⁸. In the national development program accomplishment, the Burmese government imposed many policies forbidding the Muslim Rohingyas to implement their religious teachings.

This case is related to the Burmese military monolithic concept of the process of national community development where the government promoted the assimilation process more than the integration process for the minority ethnic groups in Burma. In Arakan, the military junta applied expulsion policies to the Muslim group and the assimilation process in Buddhist Burma through introducing their cultural characteristics or 'Burmanization'.

This process became the source of conflict that had roots in the socio-cultural daily lives of the Muslims. The problem of social-cultural discrimination that occurred repeatedly caused the massive conflict affecting the minority Rohingya group. The government issued tough policies on the Rohingyas, such as: having to pay some money for the country's development, forbidding schools and Mosques to be built and operated, difficulties in obtaining passports, being forbidden to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and censoring the Koran as a government project against the development of Islam. Buddhism, however, was always encouraged.

These ways in the development of social life created problems in the relationships. The Burmese community and the government conducted a very effective strategy of divide and rule. The strategy was to reject all the citizenship rights of the Muslim Rohingyas and label them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The military government and the Burmese community used vari-

⁵⁸ Nuryanti *ibid.* p. 61

ous ways to satisfy their interests. Besides, the Burmese government forced assimilation and abeyance from the Muslim Rohingyas. They were considered as foreign enemies and forced to adopt all forms of Buddhism, which, in fact, worsened the conflict.

Problems of ethnicity and the insignificant number of Muslims (less than 2 million people) caused imbalance conflicts in the Muslim area in Arakan. The extermination of identity by forcing 'Burmanization' could mean 'Buddhanisation' for Muslims. The eradication of Islamic teachings was not only in the context of ritual worship but also in the form of culture. The basis of the identity rejection was part of the national integration process, fully carried out by the government to achieve the national identity unity process. As a result, not all integration and socio-cultural assimilation processes carried out by pressuring the Rohingyas worked well and the Muslim Rohingyas revolted and rejected the processes. Consequently, the government kept making efforts to weaken socially and culturally the Muslim minority groups.

The failure of the assimilation project of the Burmese government caused the Rohingya minority group to become marginal in Burma. The Muslim Rohingyas developed in separate areas that were not the centers of the economy and politics in Burma. The Muslim Rohingyas could not be blamed if they wanted to establish an exclusive group in response to the government's repressive actions. Assimilation policies emphasized the similarity of the majority cultures and caused the minority cultures to be politicized. The conditions imposed by the government did not give them the chance to develop their religion and culture. It seems that the Burmese government was obsessed to build Burma as a completely Buddhist country.

The admission to being citizens or part of the Burmese national ethnic grouping would benefit the Rohingyas not only to get their citizenship but also to have a chance to participate in politics and in wider areas of life. Opinions on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh created questions about Muslim Rohingya loyalty. Their existence, however, was thought to produce fear. Both groups, in fact, could live side by side peacefully although they had differ-

ences. The implementation of Islamic teachings that were different from Buddhist teachings should be accepted as part of the national variety. Although the Burmese government stated that Muslim Rohingya could enjoy religious freedom, actually, they were still restricted in politics and religion.

IV.2.3. Discriminative Policy Practiced by Junta military

The form of discrimination and policies of expulsion that were applied to the Muslim Rohingyas by the Burmese military regime made it difficult for the Muslim groups to improve themselves socially or economically. The Burmese government supported the Muslim Rohingyas to leave their homes and move to Bangladesh. These policies, which amounted to ethnic cleansing, were push factors for forced migration and therefore constituted the root causes of the ongoing refugee exodus. The discrimination in the Burmese government policies towards the Muslim Rohingya can be summarized up as follows:

Figure 4.3 Discriminative Policy Practices of Junta Military

MAIN ISSUES	IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION
Denial of citizenship	Burma's Citizenship Law of 1982. By the implementation of the law, the Rohingyas lost their rights to legal residency.	Burma admitted just 135 ethnic groups to be 'national races' and the Muslim Rohingyas do not figure among them. It means that the Burmese government did not admit the history of the Rohingya ancestors that had dwelled in Arakan since 1923 under the colonialism of England. The law issued by the government in 1978 shows that the Rohingyas did not have citizenship rights. They did not have legal rights including international rights, so that de facto, they were stateless.
Restrictions on freedom of movement	Since February 2001, the Burmese government has issued the edict that Arakan is a forbidden area for the Muslim Rohingyas from northern Arakan	The Rohingyas that were forced to obey the limitations finally struck against the government by rebelling because they could not be mobile outside their villages. They had to obtain permission even to visit their relatives in the neighboring village. In addition, they had to pay for it. They were limited in doing many things such as going to market, job opportunities and the poverty of health and health facilities. The trip notice was used to control them from moving to another area. If it happened, they would find it difficult to go back to their villages because their names were removed from their family name lists.
Obstacles to Family System Development	Birth control to limit the population of the Rohingyas in Arakan	Other discriminative regulations to differentiate the Rohingyas from other ethnic groups were that they had to ask permission to get married. They had to bribe with a high amount of money and pay another amount afterwards, they were forbidden to practice polygamy and widows had to wait for three years to get married again and they had to pay a large amount of money when they registered their newly born babies. In some areas, women's dignity was offended as when they had to report their pregnancies to the Burmese police (NaSaKa ⁵⁹) and sometimes to show their stomachs. Moreover, when they wanted to build or just renovate their houses, they had to ask for a permit from the local government so that by the time the permission came the condition of their houses was very bad.

⁵⁹ The NaSaKa is the Border Administration Force and comprises five different government agencies: the police, military intelligence (MI), Lone Htein (riot police), customs, and immigration.

Construction of 'model villages'	Determination of the <i>resettlement</i> of Buddhist 'model villages' (Rakhine and Burmese people) to Muslim land areas since 1950	The purpose of the building of the 'model village' was as a demographic ploy designed to balance the ethnicity composition in Muslim areas. There are 26 model villages for Buddhist settlement of about 100 houses in each model in northern Arakan. The Muslim Rohingyas were compelled to build these houses through confiscation of their own houses and forcing them to build Buddhist settlements. This program triggered off conflicts among the ethnic groups.
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Besides the human impact on the Rohingyas, an economic policy of underdevelopment was applied. Although this policy also applied to other minority ethnic groups, the Rohingyas suffered most because many of their people had no land so that they were dependent on others. As a result, they had insufficient food stocks and famine was rampant. This could, of course, be the reason to flee from their hometowns to other areas. The main elements were:

Figure 4. 4. Discriminative policy practices of Burma's Military

MAIN ISSUES	IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY	FORMS OF DISCRIMINATIONS
Forced Labour	The obligation to do forced labour that must be done by Rohingyas for the military and the Nasaka	In the document issued by the ILO at the beginning of 2003 ⁶⁰ , forced labour was still going on in northern Arakan. The Rohingyas must build and maintain the construction of their guard posts, carry heavy things, be the workers when houses are built make bricks, collect wood and bamboo in the forest, etc. In northern Arakan, non-Muslims do not do forced labour. The poor Rohingyas who cannot offer bribes must do forced labour so that they cannot work to support themselves. Besides, local entrepreneurs sometimes ask them for money.
Arbitrary taxation	Tax collecting which was done rudely and all forms of extortion were commonly found in the minority Rohingya group	Informal Tax collection was applied on ownership of cattle and all forms of voluntary donations or cash made by the local government ⁶¹ . Local entrepreneurs would ask for higher amounts of money from those who rejected or did not want to do their duty as a replacement for the loss that the local entrepreneurs suffered. The strategy to arrest those who did not want to work or to take more money from the Rohingyas was frequent.
Control of economy through a monopoly system	All economic sectors were controlled under a monopoly system based on government license that totally forbade all forms of free business initiative.	Business monopoly was created as an exchange because there were many rebellions against paying the high bribes. Someone who worked in any economic activity had to sell his products to a license holder below the market price or pay tax on selling his products. The economic pattern was that when a business was run, the monopoly system was applied. The government would give or withdraw the license every year and would give the guarantee for those who made higher offers.

⁶⁰ Based on the note of the ILO Liaison that visited Arakan State in January 2003, GB.286/6 in March 2003 states in paragraph 7: *'While it is the impression that there is probably less use of forced labour in central parts of Myanmar, the situation in areas near to the Thai border where there is continuing insecurity and a heavy presence of the army, as well as in northern Rakhine State, is particularly serious and appears to have changed little'*.

⁶¹ UNHCR, Myanmar – 'Reintegration programme at a crossroads, Note on Issues of Concern to UNHCR', 1999

Paddy procurement	The rice tax was based on the determination of a rice quota that was determined by the government.	All the rice harvested had to be sold directly to the government at a very low price and then bought back at a higher price. This fact reduced the amount of the farmers' rice harvest by 50%. This policy was loosened in April 2003 when the SPDC issued a policy about rice selling, that if the farmers harvested their rice at the end of 2003, they were permitted to sell their rice through local trader committees. Nevertheless, many people doubted this policy because they believed that the government would apply another monopoly system.
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From the explanation above, it can be seen that the policies made it difficult for the Rohingya Muslims to get a better life. It also shows that the Burmese government did not want to integrate and develop a proper life for the Rohingyas. Until now the policies have not changed. Muslim Rohingyas always live under pressure and keep moving out of their homelands.

IV.3. The Period of Muslim Rohingya's Insurgencies Movement

Various hard pressures and discriminations experienced by the minority Muslim Rohingyas in Burma inspired a desire to struggle for the freedom and identity that had been taken away from them. From the previous explanation, there are three main reasons why the Rohingyas revolted; **(1)** violence to and discrimination against the Muslim Rohingyas; **(2)** the failure of Burma's assimilation politics; and **(3)** discriminative policy practices of the military junta. The attempts to regain the identity and rights by the Muslim Rohingyas were made through negotiations and armed force against the Burmese government. The resistance of the Rohingyas can be divided into two different periods; that before 1962, when Burma started to build its national system post independence in 1948 with a civil governmental system and after 1962, when Burma started to be ruled by the military that executes the state authoritative system.

IV.3.1. Before 1962

The Rohingyas were against the government because the government, as described above, treated them unfairly. Burma, especially in the first phase after independence, did not give minority rights to Muslim Rohingyas such as, quotas in legislative positions and special guarantees in the legal status for Muslim matters. Christie⁶² states that Burmese Muslims had difficulties in getting admittance to nationality. Muslims were in a difficult position because geographically they were in a transition area in a non-Muslim world. This situation was also supported by the war between British and Burma/Japan where the Rohingyas supported British against Burma/Japan. As well as Muslims tended to integrate with India rather than with Burma.

In 1942 – 1945 most northern Arakan states were part of the administrative structure of the peace committee, an area that was categorized as a free zone not involved in wars. However, the hostility between British– Burma had triggered open conflict between the Muslims and Burma. British tended to make use of the position of the Rohingyas to maintain their border area between Burma and India. Consequently, in 1942, Burmese soldiers set up an extermination program for Muslims. Around 100,000 Muslims were killed and around 80,000 people fled to Bangladesh. During the killing time, Maghs Rakhine soldiers destroyed around 307 Rohingya villages⁶³. This was important as a beginning of hostility in northern Arakan. The impact of it was that the Rohingya became distrusted by Burma.

The impact on the Rohingyas post Burmese independence was fatal. Buddhist officers replaced many Muslim officers in northern Arakan. The wish to slaughter became a national sentiment where the government and the Buddhist community tried to rebuild the villages that had been left during the war. The steps taken were acquiring Muslim lands by force. Post war stigmatization of Muslims as a revolting ethnic group pushed the new Burmese government not to admit the Rohingya ethnic group, as explained below:

“In actual fact, although there are 135 national races in Burma today, the so-called Rohingya people are not one of them. Historically, there has never been a “Rohingya” race in Burma... Since the first Anglo-Burma war in 1824, people of Muslim faith from the adjacent country illegally entered Burma Naing-Ngan, particularly Rakhine State.”⁶⁴.

The bad situation pushed the leaders to build an organization to fight for their rights as part of the state although they were a minority group. Some organizations formed were: the GCBMA (General Council of Burma Muslim Association), the Pathi Congress, the Islamic Religious Affairs Council and the BMO (Burma Muslim Organization)⁶⁵. These organizations were established at the beginning of the independence period to support Burma’s nationalist movement and to defend the rights of the minority Muslim group in Burma so that they would be admitted in Burma.

The BMC was an organization established by the members in AFPFL (*Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League*) with the purpose to join the Burmese nationalist movement organizations. However, on 30 September 1956, the Prime Minister U Nu, issued an anti Muslim decree by dispersing the Burma Muslim Congress (BMC) that had become a member of AFPFL. The dispersal was because the BMC tended to be a religious organization and this was not in line with AFPFL’s purposes. Besides, the Muslim community at that time, in the government view, was oriented to supporting Pakistani nationalism to separate from India. The reason for dispersing the BMC was to support the national unity consolidation of AFPFL in the Burmese community that was multi ethnic and multi religious. This was to overcome the trend of isolationist and regionalist policies.

⁶⁴ Spesial Issue from The New letter of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues April 2000 n°290/2. Repression, Discrimination And Ethnic Cleansing in Arakan.page 5

⁶⁵ *ibid.* Budiwanti, 2000, p. 145

The BMC dispersal did not weaken the Muslim organizations. A BMC figure, U Khin Maung Lat, kept struggling to affiliate with the government by forming the *Islamic Religious Affairs Council* or IRAC. This organization aimed at unifying all Muslim elements under the one flag, with the vision to become one Muslim minority group the status of which could be gained through negotiation under the government flag. To accomplish these purposes, U Khin Maung Lat formed the *Ranggon University Students' Association* that was oriented to empower Muslims without confrontation with the government.

On the other side, the dissolution of the BMC created disappointment among Muslims with the government and they established a radical organization. In 1958, the disappointed group formed the Communist National United Front and, in 1960, it changed into the Pathi Congress. This organization supported revolution as a struggle for the human rights of minority groups.

The Muslim group that hated the political process and liked the cultural and symbolic struggle then established the Burma Muslim Organization or BMO. The organization led by U Rashid tried to raise Muslim nationalism to demand their rights. The BMO was oriented to building Muslim schools and building religious dialogue at regional level to discuss religious matters, education and social problems in the Muslim community. The BMO also networked with universities in Islamic countries by sending talented students to study abroad. However, the BMO sometimes involved itself in political issues; for example, they denied the belief that Buddhism was the state religion. U Nu campaigned on this issue in 1960. This group also formed a *Muslim Central Fund Trust* in 1952 to collect finances. The Trust had branches in some cities that gave scholarships, built universities, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools.

Overall, those organizational activities were through negotiation and diplomatic aspects to reach expected goals. In the next development, these Muslim organizations lost their influence and then dispersed or were dispersed by the government.

Because they failed in the organizational struggle, the Muslim Rohingyas used armed force. The biggest fight by the Rohingyas was the *Mujahid Revolt in the State of Arakan*⁶⁶. The basis of the struggle was the revolt which took place in 1950 in many Muslim communities. Nevertheless geographically, they failed to be part of the Burmese integration and nationalism because they dwelled in mountainous areas. This movement was effective considering that the mountainous areas were near the border area with Bangladesh, that is, Maungdaw, Butidaung and some areas in the Rathidaung district.

The inhabitants in these areas were ethnic Indians and since the pre independence era, this community was a cultural enclave⁶⁷. The revolt action initially was organizational but because it failed, the government then took military action. The government with the Burma Territorial Force was against the Mujahids. The Mujahids fled to East Pakistan and finally surrendered because they were cornered. Their struggle ended in 1959 when authority was seized by the military.

In 1954, there was a movement on behalf of the Muslim Rohingyas in Muslim majority areas (Rathidaung, Buthidaung and Maungdaw) to build an Islamic country. Mir Kasiim was a young militia, not educated well enough to lead the movement. His intention was to make Arakan part of East Pakistan. Over a short time, he gathered many followers. This movement led by Mir Kasiim was also supported by Pakistan which gave financial and weapon support. Pakistan also trained the members of the organization in how to use weapons. Nevertheless, after several years, Pakistan doubted the future of this organization and stopped sending support. Meanwhile, the Burmese government tried to keep an eye on and stop what the movement did. The Burmese government provided 2,500 Kyat for anyone who could catch Mir Kasiim. The re-

⁶⁶ Kyaw Zan Tha, *Background of Rohingya Problem*, 2004. www.rakhapura.com data downloaded 4.2.'04 09:50.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* Kyaw Zan Tha

ward helped the government to weaken the movement. On 13 September 1966, an unknown man in the refugee area in Cox's Bazaar killed Mir Kasiim. With the death of Mir Kasiim, the movement automatically ended⁶⁸.

There were reasons why the Mir Kasiim movement could not spread out widely. First, Mir Kasiim lacked the charisma and strength to lead the Muslim national movement because when he led the movement he liked to ask people for help so that people considered him just a robber in the border area. Second, the intention to build an independent 'Islamic state' in East Pakistan was impossible because Arakan had different ethnicity, culture and language from other tribes.

The unfavorable and hostile conditions that occurred in Arakan continually made the Burmese government reorganize the border areas between Burma and Bangladesh. The Burma Territorial Force attacked the rebels as far as the East Pakistan areas. They were against all Muslim rebellions. On 1 May 1961, the Burmese government set up the *Mayu Frontier Administration Area* that controlled the Maungdaw, Buthidang, and western Rathidaung areas. This policy pushed the Rohingyas into a very confined situation and many of them surrendered to the government. The policy of the *Mayu Frontier Administration Area* was continued until it was taken over by the Domestic and Internal Affairs Ministry in February 1964.

Since the war between British and Burma, anti Islamic sentiment became bigger and bigger. A conflict in southern Arakan where the Buddhists were the majority, made the sentiment worse. They expelled Muslims so that they fled to the northern area. However, the conflict also triggered the northern Arakan Muslims to take revenge. In addition, the aggression among those parties happened over a long time. The replacement of local officials by Buddhist officials worsened the situation. At the same time, fundamentalist Bud-

⁶⁸ Khan, Abdul Mabud. *The Liberation Struggle In Arakan (1948-1982)*, CLIO, vol. III June 1985, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

dhists often campaigned so that people doubted the Rohingya's nationalism, as they were pro Bangladesh and other Islamic countries.

In response to the revolution in Arakan the Burmese civilian government was judged to have failed to bring peace through diplomacy. The revolution spread out widely and the government could not eradicate it. However, the Muslim Rohingyas could not become influential because they were fragmented in small groups.

IV.3.2 After 1962

The development of the Rohingya people's struggle organizations increased after Burma came under the rule of the military following the coup d'état in 1962. The increase in the people's struggle was due to the government's application of a centralization policy. Christina Fink says that the central government tended to concentrate on only the Burmese ethnic groups. The military government forbade all parties except the Burma Socialist Program Party. Besides forbidding the freedom of organization, the government also conducted a program to nationalize state and foreign companies, closed down the mass media that did not support it and forbade all institutions based on citizen independence⁶⁹. The ultra nationalist development was implemented because of the deteriorating situation in the 1960s because the Rohingya revolution was more difficult to control.

The impact on the Rohingyas following the implementation of central development oriented towards the ethnic Burmans, were physical extermination through genocide and ethnic cleansing of the ethnic Rohingya in Arakan and the attempted Muslim cultural assimilation of those that lived throughout Burma. The main purpose of this program was to destroy Islamic teaching in Burma. This program tried to strategically change Muslim Arakan into a Bud-

⁶⁹ Christina Fink, *Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule*, Zed Books, London, 2001.

dhist area by reducing the Muslims to illegal residents. De-Islamization was aimed at controlling all Muslim minority interests⁷⁰.

This reality of course, created riots and the Muslim Rohingya revolution. The people's struggle organizations that fought for Rohingya freedom were as follows: the RPF (*Rohingya Patriotic Front*); the RSO (*Rohingya Solidarity Organization*); the ARIF (*Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front*); the ARNO (*Arakan Rohingya Nationalization Organization*) along with the RLO (*Rohingya Liberation Organization*) and the IMA (*Itihadul Mozahadin of Arakan*)⁷¹.

According to Bertil Linter (2003)⁷², the Muslim movement organizations post military junta had developed in the 1970s in the border area between northern Arakan and Bangladesh. Historically, there was a mass political movement that was armed: *The Rohingya Patriotic Front* (RPF) established in 1974 by Muhammad Jafar Habib⁷³. The program was carrying out resistance guerrilla activities against the government, in the areas near Bangladesh, by using terror and sabotage on government facilities. This organization was a continuation of the previous ones that failed. The reasons for

⁷⁰ Nurul Islam, *Facts About The Rohingya Muslims Of Arakan*. <http://www.rohingya.org/summary.htm> 5:22 p.m. data downloaded 10 March 2004

⁷¹ opcit. Kyaw Zan Tha

⁷² The impact of the centralistic policy of the Burmese government is its rejection from all ethnic minorities including the Muslim Rohingyas. The rejection from the Rohingyas was because the government did not give them freedom. The government fought the rejection by an expulsion operation called Min Dragon in 1978. Many international institutions gave help to the Rohingya refugees such as *Saudi-Arabian Charity Rabitat al Alam al Islami* that started to give aid in 1978. Rabitat also built many hospitals and schools in Ukhia, south of Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh near the border area that has now become a centre of Islamic activities. The Rohingya struggle organization was *The Rohingya Patriotic Front* (RPF).

⁷³ Muhammad Jafar Habib comes from Buthidaung in Arakan. An educated man, he graduated from Rangoon University. His concern for the Rohingya pushed him to make some approaches to get international community support but most of the approaches failed.. He also established a camp from which guerrilla activities were conducted.

establishing the RPF were (1) to form an Islamic independent country in Arakan; (2) to create a democratic society; and (3) to create a community free of oppression.

The actions of the RPF can be said to be the seed of the Muslim Rohingya moderate revolt movement which inspired the Muslim Rohingya struggles. Unfortunately, the RPF was divided into two factions: the *Rohingya Liberation Front* (RLF) and the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) itself. In 1978, some radical elements of the Muslim Rohingyas separated from the organization which declined in activity and did not bring improvements for the Muslim community. The breaking up of the RPF was also due to the differences in the ideology in the RPF. The RPF did not mount systematic struggles and society did not fully support it. The main figures in the RPF also had different interests to bring to the organization. Some parties used the RPF by making use of the Rohingya oppression. These parties tried to get donations from other Islamic countries but the fund was only for them. Consequently, the RPF failed to get international support.

Some RPF members finally established another organization named the *Rohingya Solidarity Organization* (RSO) in the 1980s with Muhammad Yunus as the leader⁷⁴. The RSO was a militant organization consisting of radical Rohingyas, operating in the Burma – Bangladesh border area. The RSO held religious ideology as its basic tenet against Buddhism. At the beginning the RSO got much sympathy from Muslims from Burma and other countries such as the *Jamaat Islamiyah* in Bangladesh and Pakistan, the *Gulbuddin Hizb-E-Islami Hekmatyar* in Afghanistan, the *Hizbe-Ul Mujahideen* in Kashmir and the *Angkatan Belia Islam se-Malaysia* (ABIM) including the Islamic youth organization from Malaysia. The RSO also received military training from Afghanistan in camps along the border area of Bangladesh and Burma. The

⁷⁴ Dr Muhammad Yunus is a Muslim doctor who graduated from Rangoon University. He is a native Arakanese, sent to the university but he was finally more interested in politics.

RSO sent around 100 people to train in the Afghanistani Khost Province led by the Hizb-E-Islami Mujahideen⁷⁵.

The basis of the RSO power was from the Muslim Rohingya that lived in refugee camps in Bangladesh and the military force with its main location near a hospital named Rabitat in Ukhia. Initially, the RSO was fully supported by various armed groups that had ammunition such as rocket launchers, RPG-2, made in China, some cannons, AK-47, grenades and explosive materials. Their full force was their main capital for guerrilla activities. Based on Bertil Linter's notes (2003), they smuggled the weapons from Thailand and Cambodia. The weapons, made in China, were used in the Vietnam War. The remaining weapons were then sold by the soldiers, under the slogan: 'buy from us, we will provide it', to the groups that needed weapons.⁷⁶

The support for the RSO was not only from other Islamic countries and illegal weapon distributors but also from the Burmese mass media that covered the growing activities in the border area. Some media from Bangladesh also supported this organization such as: *The Jihad Movement*, *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI)*, *Islami Oikyo Jote (IOJ)*, *Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)*, *Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI)*⁷⁷ etc.

To recruit members, the RSO gave training not only to the Rohingyas in the border area but also to students from Chittagong University which was known as a university of liberation that did much training and support for the struggle movements between the Islamic militants and the modern right wing. The RSO was initially a small organization outside Burma, which finally obtained support because it fought for religious ideology in its movement and

⁷⁵ Note of Bertil Lintner in 'Tension Mounts in Arakan State,' Jane's Defence Weekly, 19 October 1991. 'The story was based on interviews with Rohingyas and others in the Cox's Bazaar area in 1991. I also visited a Rohingya army camp near the border with Burma'.

⁷⁶ Bertil Lintner *Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation*. Faultlines, vol. 14, Institute of Conflict Management, New Delhi, July, 2003. p.4.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* Bertil Lintner, pp. 11-14

was against the government's discriminative treatment by the Burmese military. It tried to be against the forced imposition of Buddhist cultural assimilation.

The RSO struggle increased at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. The local and international publicity support made the government angry. The government fought back by adopting a policy to 'clean' the border area of anti government groups. In December 1991, Tatmadaw (Burmese soldiers) went to the border area and attacked those military posts that had no authority from the Burmese government. This worsened the relationship between Burma and Bangladesh but the Muslim Rohingyas felt the greatest impact. The expulsion of the Rohingyas was still going on in April 1992 when more than 250,000 Muslim Rohingyas were expelled by force from Arakan.

Rohingya refugees were put in south of Cox's Bazaar, an area near fishing villages in the southeast of Bangladesh. The case of the refugees caused another problem for Bangladesh and made it ask for help from the international community. The UN commission on refugee affairs, the UNHCR, tried to help by negotiating with the Burmese government to take the refugees back to Arakan. However, around 20,000 people rejected returning to their homes and stayed in camps in Cox's Bazaar and the border area. In addition, more than 100,000 – 150,000 Rohingyas still lived in camps out of UNHCR coordination.

The expulsion and attack on posts in the border area were Burma's strategy to numb the increase in struggle movement activities in Arakan. However, some progressive groups were born in the 1980s. Besides the RPF, another moderate Muslim Rohingya organization was the *Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front* (ARIF) established in 1986. This organization was a follow up organization of the RPF that was built by the former RPF members who struggled by using more ways that are modern. Nurul Islam, an educated lawyer from Rangoon, led the ARIF which used armed force as well as dialogue as the bases for Muslim problem solution. The ARIF activities were similar to

those of the previous organizations that were trying to create a Muslim autonomous area and build a democratic community free of exploitation.. Generally, the ARIF was an organization to defend northern Arakan with armed force and diplomacy towards Burma's oppressive military. It encountered military action mounted to control Rohingya activities.

Actually what the ARIF did, was no more than arm its troops. Their weapons were mostly the remaining old weapons from war looting in the colonial era, such as, guns made in England: 9mm L2A3 and sub-machine weapons. In 1998, the ARIF changed its name to *Arakan Rohingya National Organization* (ARNO) aimed to spread the struggle nationally and help the nationalism of the Rohingyas. The ARNO was established with an ideology that was more general, by using more moderate ways, with the basic defense in Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar to avoid contact with the Burmese military.

Two opposition forces, the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), allied their armed forces to become the *Rohingya National Alliance* (RNA). The RNA was the military of the Muslim Rohingyas. The armed force was charged to be the defense group, to fight and sabotage Burma's military. Their activity was to operate on a small scale to control the border area of Burma-Bangladesh. Each troop consisted of 36 soldiers who were not skilled soldiers but were to counter all Burmese threats.

In 1998, the RSO and the ARIF that struggled through diplomacy joined the ARNO. The ARNO was formed as a concerted action after the expulsion and the mass killing of the Rohingyas in 1991-1992 in Bangladesh. It aimed to improve the condition of the Rohingyas and save their lives from the brutality of the military junta. The ARNO was established in response to the awareness and in the hope that all Rohingya people could become one in the struggle for their lives. Therefore, the leaders of the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), Nurul Islam and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), Dr. Yunus and Professor Mohammad Zakaria agreed to unify their organizations in the one national ideology, the *Arakan Rohingya National Organisation* (ARNO) in

the hope that they could solve the problems faced by the Muslim Rohingyas with Nurul Islam as the leader.⁷⁸

To run its programs, the ARNO applied the steps formulated through policy points read at the general meeting on 25 October 2000, as follows:

1. That the national liberation struggle of the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) is but a continuation of the Rohingya people's long and heroic resistance movement and is to be continued till the inalienable right of the people of Arakan to 'self-determination and independence' is achieved.
2. That we are committed to the preservation and growth of Islamic culture among the Muslim community in Arakan without prejudice to the preservation and growth of other religious and indigenous culture in Arakan
3. That about 1.5 million rohingya, who have been expelled from the country, are taking shelter in many countries of the world while hoping to return to their ancestral homeland of Arakan. The Rohingya masses, whether in the homeland or in the place of Refuge, comprise one national front. They are an internal part of Ummah as well as part the third world and of the oppressed colonised humanity everywhere in the world.
4. That we will organize, inspire and activate the entire people of Arakan and undertake necessary programmes to train and motivate them for improving their basic human qualities and consciousness. In this connection, we urge upon all the power of national unity for the steady victory of our national liberation struggle for self-determination and independence.

⁷⁸ <http://www.rohingya.org/downloaded> 15.7.2005

5. That we will undertake all programmes that may be needed from time to time for the uplift of the people of Arakan in socio-cultural, economic, educational and technical fields.
6. That the military regime is trying to obliterate and erase Muslim entity in Arakan by distorting historical facts, destroying archeological remains, mosques, madrasahs, shrines and graveyards in order to wipe out the Islamic cultural heritage. The regime is engaged in statistical genocide in an effort to make our people look insignificant as part of an evil design to deny us of our rights and prepare the minds of the peoples of the world for the appalling consequences of genocide. We shall leave no stone unturned to preserve the true history of Arakan and cultural heritage and their actual statistical figures.
7. That we will establish a welfare society based on equality, liberty, democracy, human rights and freedom for all people without distinction as to race, color and religion. Economic deprivation, exploitation, injustice and discrimination of any kind will be eradicated.
8. That we will revive and strengthen our traditional friendship and work hand in glove in full cooperation and understanding in the interest of all people of Arakan, including that of the highlanders distributed among different tribes or indigenous people — such as Chin, Mro, Hami, Dainnet, Thet, etc. — so as to charter the future of the all people of Arakan and that of their generation to come. Meanwhile, we urge upon all to be vigilant against the machination of the enemies.
9. That we support the entire national liberation movements and democratic forces in Burma and aspire to co-operate and fight together against the common enemy and to put the dastardly military autocratic rule to an end.

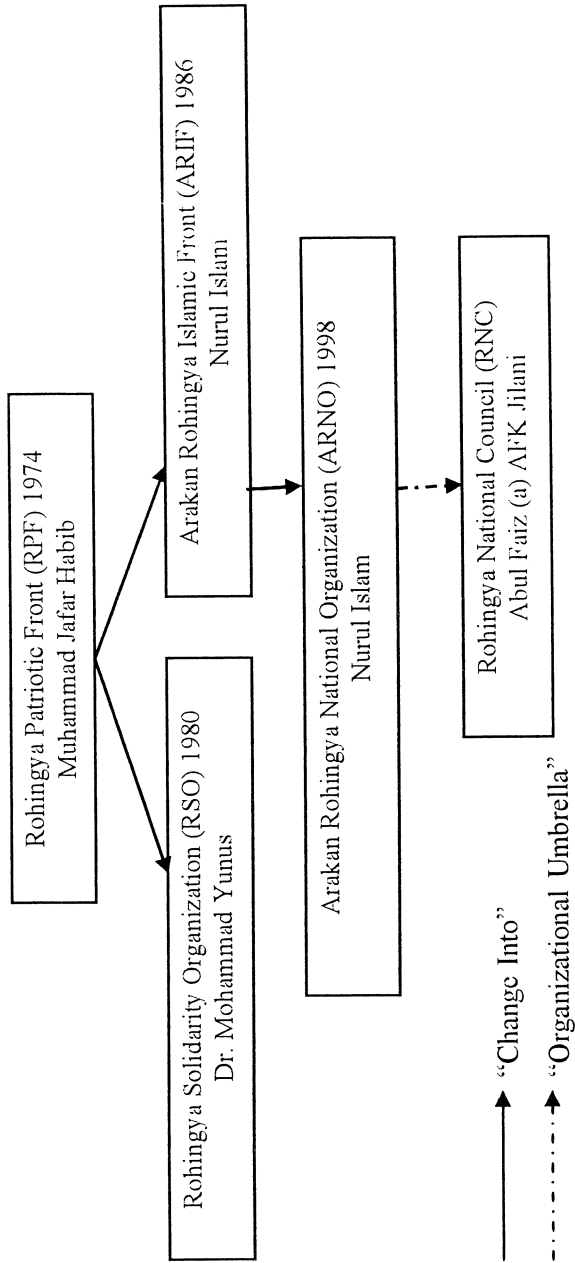
10. That Bangladesh is our neighborly country, which practically shares the experience of tragedy besetting the people of Arakan. Having deep traditional and historical relationship in the bonds of Islamic fraternity and contiguity in geographical position, the people of Bangladesh have had the opportunity to closely view the historical process that led to the present position of our people. Besides, the atrocities upon our people have direct affect on her; particularly a huge number of Rohingyas have been taking refuge in Bangladesh over the decades to escape persecution at home. We, however, believe that Bangladesh being a neighborly country has historical and moral obligation to endeavor for a permanent and viable solution of the problem in the interest of peace and regional stability.
11. That it is well known that our women and girls have borne that brunt of oppression by Burma's military regime. The soldiers and officers of the regime in systematic campaigns have most horrendously abused them. We salute the female Rohingyas' courageous efforts to survive, even as refugee widows and orphans. For the future, we support the rights of our women and girls to education, health and economic empowerment, in a new atmosphere of utmost respect and absolute safety and security.
12. That as the dangerous narcotics flowing out of Burma with its military regime's full involvement poses a terrible hardship to all peoples of Asia and the world. We oppose this deadly trade. We will educate our youths of the dangers of drugs (including AIDS infection) and firmly obstruct any such narcotics trafficking through our land.
13. That we call for a halt to the present grievous ravaging of the forests of our homeland by greedy Burmese military regime. For our future generations' heritage we pledge to protect our

environment, including forests, rivers, wetland, Coastline Ocean. We shall save our land from unsustainable logging; killing of endangered species, all forms of pollution, and over fishing, to preserve a green haven fro our children and the world.

14. That we reject and boycott against all multinational corporate investment with the Burmese military regime. In the future, any investment and development must only be done with the wishes and welfare of our people in mind and with their full informed consent and oversight. Future development must be sustainable, appropriate, clean and beneficial to t eh common people.
15. That we appeal for all out support of the international community, the Governments of the world and World Bodies, including United Nations Organisations (UND)), Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), ASEAN, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), other humanitarian and human rights.

Until now, the ARNO still fights for the existence of the Rohingya Muslims together with other minority ethnic groups in Burma that have been oppressed for years. The ARNO now is an organization that represents the Muslim Rohingyas both inside and outside Burma. Generally, the detailed descriptions of the Muslim Rohingya organizational movement after 1962 are:

Figure 4.5. Muslim Rohingya Organizations after Junta Military 1962



IV.4. Dynamics of Moslem Rohingya Struggle

IV.4.1 Moslem Rohingya National Congress

The Burmese military junta government by its policies and practices has obviously denied the Muslim Rohingyas. In April 2004, the UN Commission for Human Rights said:

“The Government renders full and equal treatment to these people, as with other races, in matters relating to birth and death registration, education, health and social affairs. In the official records, they are listed as a Bengali racial group of the Bengali race and are recognized as permanent residents within Burma”⁷⁹ .”

As the result of the numerous oppressions of the Muslim Rohingyas, the Muslim Rohingyas realized that they must have common solidarity against the Burmese government. The form of the solidarity was actualized in a congress involving all the Muslim Rohingyas both inside and outside the country. The most recent congress held on 14-16 May 2004 was the Rohingya National Convention (RNC). The RNC was attended by some organizations that have Muslim Rohingya members, such as, the ARNO, the Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ), the Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia (BRCA), the exiled leaders from the National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPH), the Students’ and Youth League for Mayu Development (SLMD), the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Arakan and some other organizations along with their formal and informal leaders inside and outside Arakan, including the Rohingya Youth Development Forum (RYDF), the Arakan Human Rights Organization (AHRO), some former Members of Parliament (MPs), elite Rohingya members in Bangladesh, academia and professional bodies, religious groups and community leaders as well as individual

⁷⁹ A note from an officer in U Ohn Gyaw, “Press Release,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Burma, Yangon, 2004

Muslim Rohingyas from the US, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Thailand and Malaysia who stated their support for this convention⁸⁰.

Delegations and members discussed the current political conditions and development of Muslim groups by identifying all matters relating to important issues of the Muslim Rohingyas in Arakan. The RNC also supported fully what the ARNO had done in struggling for Muslim Rohingya life. In this congress, the committee set up an 'executive committee' that was charged to form the Arakan State Constitution. This constitution tried to create a democratic model and a federal government for Burma in the future.

The convention with a homogenous voice declared that⁸¹:

1. Muslim Rohingyas are a native ethnic group coming from Arakan; therefore, they are part of national ethnicity of Burma. Ethnic Rohingya- supported by the historical existence, different cultures, civilization, language and literature, and population- try to maintain, develop, and educate the next generations about their ancestor's history, stabilize their tribe identity as a basis to continue their existence in community in accordance with their own cultures, social institution, and laws.
2. Muslim Rohingyas have rights to determine their own life based on what they have owned all these times and have an autonomy area in a line with their own choice. This concept is the future way for Muslim Rohingyas and Rohingyas choose to be in the federal government that have been agreed together in accordance with the initial ideal of the union of Burma.

⁸⁰ <http://rnc.bravehost.com/declaration.htm> downloaded 15.7.2005

⁸¹ *ibid*

3. Convention emphasizes on the need of the unity feeling among all Muslim Rohingyas with Burmese society by noticing the different aspects of the cultures, language, religions, tribe background to create democratic federal Burma that are concerned on political and autonomy life, independent cultural identity, rights equality, democracy, justice and human rights for all citizens.
4. Convention calls out Rohingya leaders and politicians to avoid propaganda and negative activities for the sake of Muslim Rohingyas in Arakan. The politicians are hoped to give a commitment to support unity and diversity of society, respect differences, change confrontational policy with cooperative behaviors to create peace for the next generations.
5. Convention supports Burmese opposition groups, democratic parties and minority ethnic groups to struggle for a better condition like cooperating with Members of the parliament Union (MPU), United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD), Ethnic Nationalities Council of the Union of Burma (NDF), and National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.(NCGUB)
6. Convention supports the general election result in 1990 that was won by Aung San Suu Kyi as the leader and other members such as National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPH) and Kaman National League for Democracy (KNLD)
7. Convention puts attention on the strength of SPDC diplomacy to support tripartite dialog to solve the problems faced by minority ethnic groups in Burma including ethnic Rohingya supported fully by the UN.

8. Convention curses terrorism that was done by SPDC on the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi and the followers where hundreds of people were report to be killed and wounded. Convention demands SPDC to release political prisoners including Muslim Min Ko Naing in Akyab jail.
9. Convention supports USA and European Community to do renewing actions in Burma and keep giving sanction to SPDC to create a democratic Burma and find solutions for military government in Burma to solve their problems.
10. Convention calls out international community, UN, UNNHCR, and other countries to help Rohingya refugees that still live in bad refugee camps because since 1948 until present around 1,5 million Rohingyas have been expelled and they live under protection of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Middle-East countries, Thailand and Malaysia. They are waiting to return home in Arakan.
11. Convention states its concerns on the human rights abuses that have been experienced by Muslim Rohingyas. Convention asks SPDC to stop their brutality to Muslim Rohingyas.
12. Convention curses SPDC on the limitation and humiliation towards freedom movement, socio-economic activities, religions, and culture of Rohingya. Convention calls out junta to stop treating Muslim Rohingyas as animals and junta must give freedom to Muslim Rohingyas.
13. Convention states that Muslim Rohingyas are a native ethnic that has the same rights to own, develop, and control all natural resources for the sake of community welfare.

14. Convention delivers its gratitude to the Bangladesh government that has helped Muslim Rohingyas by providing food and place. Convention asks the Bangladesh government to approach the Burmese government to solve the problems together.
15. Convention asks all neighbor countries especially Bangladesh, India, China, and Thailand to create democratic and human rights space in Burma.
16. Convention asks UN and its members including Islamic committee and ASEAN to create changes in Burma and to create democracy and human rights in Burma for the sake of peace and stability in this country.

IV.4.2. Internationalization of the Rohingya Struggle Movement

A struggle movement needs stable, complex and adaptable institutions. The Muslim Rohingyas have organizations that have become their tools against the government. Although the organizations are not as strong as the Moro and Pattani nations, the Muslim Rohingyas have the potential to get support from inside and outside the country. Rohingya freedom organizations attempt to gather support inside and outside the country to reach the goals of the organizations. The organization members, in their own areas, achieve social cohesion based on their similar identity (language, religion, and tribe) that is supported by one life feeling: as a minority that has been oppressed by the rulers' policies.

On the regional scale, they have succeeded in attracting the neighboring countries, e.g., the RSO succeeded in getting Bangladeshi support especially when the Burmese government expelled the Muslim Rohingyas in 1991 when Bangladesh asked the UN to help them with the assumption that this matter influenced the Burmese government. Since their establishment, some

Muslim Rohingya organizations have made warm relationships with countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. Many young Muslims study and work in Malaysia and Thailand. They go to those two countries because the countries facilitate this by giving them prospects for a better life.

As an example, around 2,500 Muslim Rohingyas fled to Malaysia in 1991-1992 as the result of the violence of the Burmese military. However, most of them had to return to their homes supported by the UN. Based on the notes of the UNHCR, until 2003, there were 14,000 Muslim Rohingyas immigrating to Kuala Lumpur. They, along with the Buddhist people, left Burma because they could not stand the violence of the military government. They then asked for international community help such as from the Organization Islam Committee, western countries, the UN and Amnesty International for human rights.

Muslim progressive groups finally used the situation in immigrant places by building strength and solidarity among the Muslims in Burma. They formed organizations, such as, the Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ), the Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia (BRCA), the Burmese Rohingya Association in Thailand (BRAT), the exiled leaders from the National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPH) out of the country, Students' and Youth League for Mayu Development (SLMD) and some organizations along with their formal and informal leaders outside Arakan including the Rohingya Youth Development Forum (RYDF).

Because of the boycott actions of some Rohingyas, the situation was disadvantageous for the Burmese Muslim immigrants. One of the actions was the burning of Burma's embassy by three people in Malaysia. One staff member was wounded as stated by Myint Win to AFP reported on 7.4.2004. According to Win, the three men who attacked the member of staff, were supposed to be Muslim Rohingyas, frustrated after they had to wait for three days in order that their documents be verified by embassy staff. They then tried to burn the building. Fortunately, the firefighters controlled the fire.

The action was a form of rejection of the oppression by their government in their country in the hope that they could attract international attention. This is also used by the extremist Muslims in Jihad actions, recruited by the Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and in other places. In an interview in a local newspaper in Karachi, Ummat, on 28 September 2001, Bin Laden said: *There are areas in all parts of the world where strong jihad forces are present, from Bosnia to Sudan and from Burma to Kashmir.*⁸² For cases in Burma, perhaps, only a small number of people do jihad actions in the border area of Bangladesh-Burma.

Local groups in the movement must cooperate with international movements to maintain their political struggle. It is important to get financial support from other countries and provoke another country (the third party) to interfere to solve the problems. The 11 September terror in New York and the USA intimidation by the Taliban in Afghanistan and the radical Muslim Rohingyas that joined the action, made the situation worse. On one side, the organizational struggle must keep a distance from radical Islam or get sanctions from more moderate Islamic countries and on the other, some militant

⁸² Bertil Lintner *Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation*. Faultlines, vol. 14, The Institute of Conflict Management, New Delhi, July, 2003. p. 14. In an article about an interview by CNN in December 2001 about 'Taliban' America, John Walker Lindh considered that the Al-Qaeda Brigade directed the ansar ('helpers' of the Prophet) in Afghanistan with the brigade members divided into some different language groups, such as, Bengali, Urdu (Pakistan) and Arabic. The Bengali speakers are people from Bangladesh and Arakan who were significant in number. At the beginning of 2002 the Foreign Affairs Minister of Afghanistan, Dr Abdullah, told a western journalist: 'We have caught one person from Malaysia and two followers from Burma'. Many Rohingyas, as members of jihad action, are put in dangerous positions in the war field. According to Asian intelligence officers, jihad members from the Rohingyas are paid 30,000 Bangladeshi taka (Bangladesh monetary unit) (\$ 525) and they are given a salary per month of 10,000 taka (\$ 175). If they die, their families are given 100,000 taka (\$ 1,750). The recruited people usually go via Nepal to Pakistan. They are trained in Afghanistan. Although no exact number have been reported, it is believed that some Muslim Rohingyas have joined this jihad action.

Muslims from the ethnic Rohingya, think that they have committed jihad by being against the government. In the global context that introduces the arrangement of space that does not know geographical limits, there is a mission to spread the ethnic separatism movement, whether it is oriented to terrorism or not, outside the limits.

IV.5. Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are some factors that have become the causes of the Muslim Rohingya struggle movements; those are the failure of the Burmese government assimilation policy that did not pay attention to natural assimilation by the normal political education process. The unnatural assimilation was marked by oppressive rules. The Burmese government forced the majority cultures that respected the ethnocentrism of the local Burmans to destroy the Muslim Rohingya identity (culture and religion). In those phases, the accumulation of suspicious feelings, prejudice, hate and the government programs triggered rejection actions including the illegal ones such as terror.

Besides the assimilation process, the Burmese government also applied discrimination. The impact of the discrimination was that the Muslim Rohingyas found it difficult to improve themselves, economically and socially. The repressive actions were to expel the Muslim Rohingyas from their area. Ethnic Burmans and Buddhists forced migration as a way to make the Muslim minority marginal in their own area. Ethnic cleansing was a systematic effort to pressure Muslim groups.

The efforts expended by the Muslim Rohingyas in facing the pressures show that some Muslim groups have practiced open confrontation and demonstrations to disobey Burma's symbols. The actions ended with revolution. Defending life in exclusive groups was what the Rohingyas could do to keep their identity which was no longer a socio-cultural characteristic, but a political force that later fought for their political life.

The Muslim Rohingya movement developed from an armed force movement to a political movement. It involved wider parties such as politicians and civilians. It tended to cooperate with the government to empower the Muslim Rohingyas in Burma's politics. The Muslim Rohingya cases cannot be considered the same as the nationalist pro-democratic opposition force. Here, the minority Rohingyas were late in unifying their organizations. In Burma, the military has the biggest authority to control the country and implement policies on the Muslim minority tribe (the same as what they do on the national level). The Muslim Rohingyas finally made an organization to reconcile peacefully through conventions such as the Rohingya National Convention. In this convention, some efforts to improve negotiations were made to get a better life for the Rohingyas.

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CHAPTER V

THE FATE OF ROHINGYA UNDER THE MILITARY JUNTA: MULTICULTURALISM REVISITED

Erni Budiwanti

V.1. Introduction

The main problem faced by a minority group like the Rohingya, is when the ‘wrong hands’⁸³ of the military high officials govern the state. Then their basic needs and rights for existence are ignored and their sense of dignity and self esteem is destroyed. This chapter, in general, focuses on matters concerning the military regime’s unsuccessful effort to create a multicultural atmosphere. When it has to deal with its own nation divided by ethnic and cultural diversities, the military government tends to adopt monoculturalism instead of multiculturalism. This is obvious from the way the military government treats one of its minority groups i.e. the Rohingya Muslims who, for so long, have been forced to live in misery under military pressure.

V.2. Multiculturalism: Between a Concept and a Working Agenda

Human beings are born with an instinct for survival. For this reason survival becomes a basic need and right of every individual. The very basic right of survival includes the need to produce and reproduce themselves as

⁸³ It means to emphasize that the state power had already been in the hand of civilians represented by the NLD (New League for Democracy) Party, if the military did not intervene. On May 27, 1990 election the NLD won a landslide victory, gaining 80% of the vote, and a total 392 of the 485 seats contested in the 492 -members assembly. The military backed party i.e. the NUP –(National Unity Party), formerly was the Burma Socialist Program Party led by late dictator Ne Win, captured just 10 seats. The military junta completely ignored the election result for the NLD’s victory had fuelled their fears that if they gave up power they might face trial for massive human right abuses.

individuals. The need to sustain and maintain one's existence includes both material and nonmaterial needs. The nonmaterial ones contain the need to maintain dignity and self esteem. Basically human beings are created with a sense of self esteem, pride, and dignity. For this reason, everybody feels a strong need to keep and if possible, even to increase something which he/she conceives and values highly. Being fully accepted and recognized by others is one important indicator to gain and build self esteem and dignity. To be acknowledged by others for anything one has produced and reproduced is an important aspect of maintaining self esteem and dignity. As a member of a particular cultural group, the need of individuals to be accepted as well as recognized by, what is called, cultural others' is essential for enhancing social relationships and capacity building. Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) expresses clearly that 'everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law'.

The need to gain social recognition, of being recognized by others, strongly relates to the need to maintain dignity and equal rights, as mentioned in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' ...and Article 2 of the UDHR:

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

Both the articles suggest that everybody is granted cultural rights, which includes the right and freedom to own and maintain a particular language, religion and other cultural traits and values. Due to this right (need), one should, not be discriminated against because of his/her personal and socio cultural backgrounds.

The right to gain cultural recognition in the form of language, religion, race, social or national origin and having other opinions, as mentioned above, develops along with the increasing tendency towards democratization. The world community feels a strong need to have an equal recognition of culture. Democratic values propound that every culture should be treated equally. This means that no culture should be seen or treated as superior to others. People belonging either to the western or eastern culture, should be treated in an equal manner. In other words, we are discouraged from discriminating against others based on their cultural characteristics and practices. This view is the root of multiculturalism in which a mutual respect and recognition are established above all sorts of differences. Only through such an approach can a cross-cultural dialogue and understanding be generated to overcome differences.

Taylor cites that there are three interrelated factors contributing to the birth of multicultural thought i.e. globalisation, human rights awareness and democratization. Globalisation is marked, among other things, by a free market and information technology. It occurs hand in hand with the progressive development of free trade market mechanisms as well as of information technology. A free, open world market and the progressive and massive development of communications technology contributes to the acceleration of globalisation. Through a free trade mechanism, buyers and sellers can transcend the physical boundaries of different countries. For example, do products or consumer goods sold by transnational or multinational corporations (MNC) enter the world market and are bought by worldwide consumers?

Based on the advances in information technology supporting the world market, Kenichi Ohmae⁸⁴ interprets globalisation as a process where the physical boundaries, separating countries and nations, decline. To a certain extent, they are even broken down.

⁸⁴ Kenichi Ohmae. 1996. "Berakhirnya Negara Bangsa". *Analysis*. Jakarta: CSIS. Thn XXV No 2, Maret-April.

Globalisation makes the lives of human beings more open, closer, unified and dependant upon one another, as everything around the world is easily and rapidly connected by information technology. Globalisation can simply mean an interrelated situation in which, as Giddens explains, “the world has become a single social system as a result of growing ties of interdependence”⁸⁵. The increasing interdependence among members of the world society, in Giddens’ view, is an important characteristic of globalisation.

The interdependence marks the social, political and economic connections, which cross borders of countries and has introduced people from different parts of the world with various types of culture. The rapid and progressive development of information technology has enabled people to make cross cultural contacts and dialogue. Different sorts of culture are easily and quickly encountered by people. In such an interrelated world community, people become aware of their own cultural characteristics as well as of others with all the distinctions and peculiarities. In this situation, people are expected not only to be able to recognize their own cultural characteristics that distinguish them from others. They are also required to know and understand others by showing respect and tolerance of others’ differences. Only through such a multiculturalism perspective, a mutually benefiting and harmonious relationship, based on tolerance and respect of others’ differences, can be built. In conclusion, an attitude of multiculturalism can be developed along with the massive globalisation encountering the world community with various cross cultural interactions. A global cross cultural interaction can also, however, invite socio cultural problems marked by a clash of civilizations, especially when mutual recognition and understanding do not come up through such interaction.

Democratization can come or occur along with the process of globalisation. Democratization will always promote the fulfillment of human rights values. One of which is the right to be free from all sorts of oppression,

⁸⁵ Anthony Giddens. 1989. *Sociology*. Great Britain: Polity Press, p. 520.

domination, suppression of one individual by another, of one cultural system by another. One of the measurements of democratization is the record of human rights performed by a country. Since human rights are valued as the main, important component of democratization, this means that a country can simply be judged as establishing democratic rules, or not, by the record of its human rights performance shown to the outside world. If a country, based on the standards of Amnesty International, proves to have a high level of human rights abuses, it can easily be categorized as undemocratic. When it successfully demonstrates a good human rights record, it will be conclusively judged as democratic.

Democratization is not valued by the fulfillment of political rights only, such as the right to vote and the people's right to congregate and associate according to their own interests. The need to remain distinct as a separate cultural group contains human rights values and thus can be a measure of democratization. The right to be (socially and culturally) different is something that inherently attaches to anyone belonging to specific cultural characteristics.

There is a strong relationship and interrelated values meaning among democratization, human rights, and multiculturalism. Democratization does not work until human rights standards are fulfilled. The fulfillment of human rights means that the recognition and acceptance of others to their maximum degree and capacity are taken into account. The development of multiculturalism that strongly promotes the attitude to live in coexistence with others in mutual respect and tolerance, will in turn maintain and strengthen the value of human rights standards and thus revitalizes democratic values.

Ever since the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948, every country or nation is encouraged to behave according to the human rights standards stipulated in its preamble and articles. This declaration strengthens further the need and importance of maintaining human dignity.

and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms’.

James A Banks⁸⁸ mentions four different concepts to deal with ethnic and cultural heterogeneity i.e.: segregation, salad bowl, melting pot, and multiculturalism. Segregation is when each group lives in total seclusion, marked by no contacts or social interaction at all of one with another. In this situation each group tends to maintain its own physical and cultural boundaries in the face of other groups. Members share and form relationships with people within the group (insiders), while at the same time, tending to keep the social distance from others (outsiders). The main picture of segregation is distancing one’s self as well as denying the presence and the role of the other considered to be an outsider. Physical, as well as social traits such as a different skin colour, social status such as caste, place, ancestor and history of origin are subjects of cultural and political segregations. In India, for instance, those belonging to a higher caste cannot touch or talk with those of a lower one. The politics of apartheid set apart the white from the black people in South Africa.

Prejudice and stereotypes easily develop among people living in complete seclusion one from another. Since they never meet directly, by engaging in a face to face interaction with other groups, what they usually perceive and hold are misconceptions, wrong images and false beliefs about the other (outsiders). Such misconceptions are made on the basis of generalization. A particular characteristic of an individual is usually employed to represent all the characteristics of every member of the group. Labeling, stigmatizing, creating prejudice and stereotypes of the other group are ways of generalizing others.

In a salad bowl theory, one usually finds all sorts (a variety) of vegetables mixed together in one container. Each vegetable, though it is mixed with others in the same bowl, has its own taste and flavour. In this approach,

⁸⁸ James A. Banks & Cherry A Mc Gee Banks (eds.). 2001. *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

different people live in a single (common) place but they do not interact or build a deep relationship with one another. They lead their own lives without being dependant upon the existence and role of others. They seem to be physically integrated, in terms of the locality they live in but in fact, they are separated. People are mixed with others, but in real life they do not care one for another. Every group takes care of and carries out its own business and role. It does not bother about the presence of others. In short, each group lives side by side with others with an absence of cross cultural dialogue and inter personal communication. Relative harmony of living in co existence with others is, to some extent, created through the salad bowl approach. The salad bowl approach, to some extent, is similar to Furnival's concept of a plural society⁸⁹. Here every group is aware of the presence of others in its vicinity, however, strong relationships marked by interdependence do not come up.

The melting pot approach explains that people are not only aware of the presence of the other. They are also able to recognize the other as being different. Through such recognition, the need to immerse and synthesize themselves in the prominent group comes up. They have reconciled with themselves by referring together to one culture considered to be the prominent one. This is a synergy or a synthesis where all sorts of different cultures meet and agree to submit to one particular culture valued as the outstanding or the most influential one. The prominent one among them, in this situation, takes a leading role, acting as the canopy that embraces and protects all the differences. Hawaii is one of the good instances. This is the place where all sorts of migrants from different countries of origin, such as, Europe, Japan, China and other parts of Asia are tied to their own cultural entity, while at the same time, proving themselves to be well integrated into the American society. American English seems to be the prominent language of expression that unites the migrants, living in Hawaii, all together as US citizens.

⁸⁹ J.S.Furnival. 1948. *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*. New York: New York University Press.

Multiculturalism emphasizes the value of equality of each culture. Every culture is seen and treated equally. Equal recognition, respect and opportunities are given to every group bearing specific cultural characteristics. Multiculturalism is strongly influenced by cultural relativism. Cultural relativism views that none of any culture is considered to be superior or inferior to others. None shall be considered to be better or worse, to be higher or lower in the face of or by comparison to the other. For this reason, one culture should not value and judge others by using its own standard of measurement. Every culture has its own value orientation. It also shows great variations of moral standard, proper codes of conduct and ethical behaviour. However, there should be a universal standard of morality and justice⁹⁰, accepted and followed by each culture and universal ideas and values adhered to by every human being, that is, the values of humanity and human dignity.

V.3. Does Multiculturalism Really Exist in Myanmar?

What has the military junta done so far to deal with the various ethnic minorities in Burma? Does it really recognize ethnic pluralities and differences of the more than 135 of its ethnic nationalities, which eventually contribute successfully to increase the multicultural atmosphere in Myanmar? These questions are crucial to be analyzed to identify whether multiculturalism really exists (works) or not in Myanmar.

Having read through the previous chapters, it is obvious that what the junta does, especially to the Rohingya Muslim minority, strongly indicates a massive number of human rights abuses. In terms of civil liberties, for instance, the government has given people the right to vote but not to win the

⁹⁰ There was certain culture that used to sacrifice a living human being in the ritual of sacrifice. This value has finally been changed, and an animal substitutes a living human being. The Tengerese people living on the hill of mount Bromo in East Java used to throw a living virgin into the mountain. During the Dutch colonial time, the ceremony sacrificed a goat, instead of a living human for that ceremony.

election. This was evidenced in the 1999 general election, when the NLD (National League for Democracy), the opposition party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the election. Instead of acknowledging the landslide victory, the junta jailed the main supporters of this party, including its top leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, without trial, for an unlimited period.

Looking more closely, especially since the military junta seized power from 1962 up to the present, high ranking military officials have not yet made fundamental changes to improve the living quality of the Rohingya. They remain the main subject and target of discrimination, humiliation and elimination. The military has abused the power, taken forcibly from civilian (NLD) hands. The abusive (dehumanizing) policies have proved to be detrimental and demolish the Rohingya sense of dignity. Such policies are obvious from the military government regulations that denounce the very basic existence of the Rohingya in Arakan. The citizenship law, for example, has excluded the right of the Rohingya and their offspring, coming and living over centuries in Arakan, to enjoy their status as nationals of Burma beside other ethnic nationalities. The government has deprived them of becoming a part of Burma's nationality, by labeling them illegal migrants. The citizenship law clearly violates Article 15 of the UDHR:

- (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

No rights of citizenship, given by the government, make the Rohingya unable to move freely to other villages, towns or states. The military junta sets regulations to prevent the Rohingya from traveling across the village borders unless they pay for the travel pass. The further they go, such as crossing the township and state boundaries, the more they have to pay for a travel permit. Regulations restricting Rohingya movements are against Article 13:

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

- (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Bearing the degrading status of illegal migrants, who are not entitled to any category of citizenship, brings more terrible consequences. Not only are their movements curbed and controlled but their chance for better education and employment is also restricted. In this regard, the government designs the future of the Rohingya to be stateless, to have low education with few or low skills and a low standard of living and prosperity as a consequence.

The Rohingya are exempted from the right and the opportunity to gain higher education. Primary education is the only level of education that they can enjoy in Myanmar. Discrimination against the Rohingya to get access to higher education obviously violates Article 26 (3) of the UDHR: 'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.' As well Article 27 (1), stipulating:

"Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."

The exclusion from achieving a higher degree of education has, for the Rohingya, prevented them from obtaining better jobs and better services for an adequate living. Due to the low education, they have very limited skills and access to job vacancies.

Only those with better education are usually employed for better work. It is almost impossible for the Rohingya to find an office job or other professional work in the government bodies and in non government agencies. This is not to mention other services such as in the military and police where every citizen should ideally be given an equal chance to be recruited, no matter what his/her ethnic background is. Low education and skills have hindered the

Rohingya from gaining better careers that would sustain better living standards. Without good education, there will be no good jobs and no adequate standards of living. The discrimination against the Rohingya in employment opportunities abuses their very basic right to living as mentioned in Article 23 of the UHDR:

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

The military government also imposes taxes on marriage registration. The Rohingya have to pay a certain amount of money to the local authorities to get marriage permission. They have to pay hundreds of thousands of kyat before the government allows them to be married. This rule has forced those who cannot afford to pay for marriage registration to run away to the bordering area of Bangladesh to be married there. Regulations concerning marriage that are burdensome is an offence against Article 16 of the UDHR:

“Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.”

The discrimination and extortion against the Rohingya goes beyond the limits a human being can bear. The Military and police force the Rohingya to do excessive jobs, such as building and repairing roads, bridges, military barracks, model villages, work on plantations, provide firewood to camps, fetch water, carry bricks and various military equipment as night porters and perform other services without being paid and with no food served. Some are paid below the market rates, which are not enough for the Rohingya to feed their families. The forced labour has, consequently, increased poverty and food scarcity among the Rohingya. For they have limited time to do their own jobs;

to earn money for their families. Ironically, other ethnic groups are exempted from forced labour. This is one of the discriminatory acts performed by the government.

The unpaid labour in excessive jobs taking excessive time obviously violates Article 4: 'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms'. It is also against Article 24 that explains:

'Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay' and Article 25:

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing and housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All Children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection

Besides the Rohingya's having to do forced labour, their land was confiscated to build houses within the complex of the model village, military barracks and camps. Their rice fields and farm land, as well as the food crops (rice, fruit and vegetables), livestock and other agricultural products are also robbed to feed military officials who are on duty around the Rohingya villages. Illegal confiscation of the Rohingya land property and their deprivation of various agricultural products are really against Article 17 of UDHR which states that

- (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property

Working without payment and food also violates Article 23 (3) of the UDHR:

“Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.”

The government policy of giving no citizenship status to the Rohingya is because of their historical heritage. The ancestral history of the Rohingya and their country of origin that differentiates them from the Bama ethnic majority, is the main reason for not allowing them to have any category of citizenship. As explained in Chapters II and IV, the majority of the Rohingya ancestors were originally from Bengal who migrated to Arakan between the 15th and 16th centuries. East Bengal, as mentioned before, became East Pakistan in 1947 and the Independent People’s Republic of Bangladesh in 1971. The offspring, born through inter marriage between the Bengali migrants with the local Buddhist women, are called the Zerbadees. Some of the Rohingya ancestors also came from Arab, Persian, Moghul and Turkish backgrounds.

From such a historical heritage, it is not very surprising that the present Rohingya people maintain the Bengali vernacular as a medium of expression with a strong dialect of the Chittagong area. Differences, in terms of historical heritage, the descendants of migrants, in language, religion and other cultural traits such as in the way the Rohingya dress and eat, are used by the junta to discriminate against them. Discrimination goes to the extent where it is finally legalized by means of state regulations and public support. As has been explained in the previous chapters the Bama (Burman) Buddhists are the majority people in Burma. Numbers of high ranking military officials ruling in Myanmar really represent the ethnic proportion. The Bama, dominate the military government body even more. It is obvious that stark differences between the Rohingya and the Bama are not only distancing the relationship between the two. They are also being used by the Bama ruling elite to embark on policies of denial against the formerly mentioned group.

Following the General Assembly resolution of the UDHR, it is clear that the junta fails to bridge cultural differences. The differences, marking a distant relationship between the two groups, have led the junta to entirely recognize the superiority of the Bama, while at the same time suppressing the cultural characteristics belonging to the Rohingya.

It is not unusual for the Rohingya to inherit land belonging to their ancestors who had been living for over 5 centuries in Arakan. It is natural and legitimate for the present generation of the Rohingya, as the direct descendants of their ancestors, to maintain a claim upon their ancestral land. Being branded as illegal immigrants with no entitlement to land rights or to other rights, which an ordinary citizen commonly enjoys, such as in education and employment, is committing a serious crime. Article 2 of the UDHR says that:

“No distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it is independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.”

Referring to the above article, it can be concluded that by depriving the Rohingya of their land ownership and other rights as mentioned above, the junta has really committed severe offences against humanity as well as international rules designed by the General Assembly of the UN.

The policy of denial was also employed, to a large extent, in the form of destroying the religious system of the Rohingya. As a Muslim community, the Rohingya are not entitled to build mosques, to run religious schools (madrasah), to hold informal teaching and learning of the Al-Quran (pengajian). Since 1952, Muslims were strictly prohibited from building new mosques and Islamic schools. Some old mosques in certain places have even been demol-

ished, and replaced by Buddhist temples and Islamic schools were closed. Some Muslim graves were destroyed and replaced by markets and shopping centres. Parts of the legacy of the Rohingya ancestors i.e. the archaic building and other archeological artifacts, such as the palace of the Muslim sultanate of Arakan and the old Qur'an, were also ruined by the junta. In short, Islam as a body of teaching and a way of life is not allowed to develop in Burma. This phenomenon clarifies that Buddhism as the official (state) religion of Myanmar, is officially recognized as the sole religion of Burma, regardless of any other beliefs. Prohibition of Islamic teachings and practices in the mosques and schools evidently violates Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance

And Article 27 of the UDHR, granting that:

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Religious values that influence the thoughts and the daily behaviour of the Rohingya can be included in what is called 'cultural life' in the above article.

What the junta has done so far is a complete and systematic elimination of the Rohingya's basic rights to existence. By doing this, the government expects that in the long run, the Rohingya Muslims will be cleared away from Burma. Arakan, a place where the majority of Muslims have lived and procreated since the 15th century will be entirely free of the Muslim community.

This is an area, which in the long run, aims at being occupied primarily by the Buddhist majority. Transmigrating a considerable number of Buddhist people from other parts of Burma to Arakan has become the government plan to vacate Arakan of the Rohingya. A plan which has also forcibly exhausted the Rohingya resources and deprived them of everything they used to have, such as, land, labour (man power) and building materials to build what are called model villages for the new settlement of the recently arrived Buddhist migrants from different parts of Myanmar.

The destruction of all institutions marking the Rohingya as an Islamic community has terribly marked the junta's monocultural approach to marginalize them. As in the eyes of the government and the Bama majority, their presence is unnecessary, consequently their existence is also seen to be obstructive, hampering the monolithic foundation of the state, which is strongly based on Buddhism and the cultural supremacy of the Bama.

V.4. Conclusion

It is unbelievable that in a state with a strong Buddhist character, the value of the goodness of human nature does not work. Many policies and rules of the junta are against the fundamental values of humanity and democracy. What are the main points, necessity and intention, of maintaining membership in the UN when what the military government has produced so far are policies and rules against the values of humanitarianism and democratization? The Myanmar membership in the ASEAN, one of the regional cooperative bodies in Southeast Asia, is also questionable and arouses big controversy. The massive exodus of refugees of the Kachin, the Shan, the Rohingya and the Karen into Thailand, has invited border security problems as well as economic insecurity and instability. The Myanmar military regime seems to get nothing in return for such membership but international condemnation, sanctions and embargos as explained in the previous chapters.

The future development of the Rohingya seems to be greatly hampered by those controlling the state. There seems to be no future left for them as long as their very basic rights and needs of existence are troubled by the military regime. The present military high officials are a nightmare for Aung San Suu Kyi and her party supporters as well. This is an ordeal for the entire civilian society in Myanmar. Their struggle to win civil rights and liberties for so long has been defeated by the military coercive power. Mediocrity of managing a complex nation state like Myanmar is a curse of democracy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

By : Research Team

After Burma became independent in 1948, the country experienced civil war, insurgency, corruption and mismanagement. In the late 1950s, Burma held new elections but in 1962 the armed forces intervened again, staging a coup, arresting members of the government, suspending the constitution and ruling initially by decree. Since 1962 Burma has been a one party state ruled by the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) of General Ne Win, closely allied to the armed forces. Particularly from the time when Ne Win's (BSPP) grasped the state authority, he claimed one nationality for all ethnic minorities in the country. The central government of Burma tended to concentrate on only the Buddhist Burmese ethnic groups and centralized the state system in military hands.

Under strong military pressures and abuses, it was almost impossible for the ethnic minorities, including the ethnic Rohingya Muslims the focus of attention in this research, to gain their basic right to exist and thus to have an adequate living standard. The Burmese government carried out marginalization of the ethnic minority groups as part of the development of state military politics. A policy of one nationality and Buddhist assimilation carried out by the Burmese government did not work as a fair naturalization process. The Burmese government pushed the majority identities (culture) respecting the local ethnocentrism of the Burman nation and Buddhism in appropriating assimilation. This consequently broke the identity (cultural and religious) of the Rohingya Muslims.

While this research was being done, the Burmese government continued its repressive and discriminatory policies against the Rohingyas Muslims, which translated into massive and systematic human rights violations, notably the systematic resort to forced labour, denial of citizenship and lack of free-

dom of movement, progressively forcing the Rohingyas into exile. The repression of Muslims in the Rakhine State was part of the gross and consistent pattern of human rights violations committed by the Burmese government against all forms of political opposition and dissent, targeting the vulnerable and weak sectors of the Muslim population, who the military authorities suspect may not support their national ideology.

The Rohingya Muslims, in the government view, are illegal immigrants who had settled in Burma during British rule. The central government took measures to drive them out, starting with the denial of citizenship. The 1974 Emergency Immigration Act stripped the Rohingyas of their nationality rendering them foreigners in their own land. The denial of citizenship remains the root cause of the Rohingyas endless cycle of forced migration. The combination of abuses creates human insecurity and makes life in Arakan unbearable.

Forced exodus in 1978 and in 1991–92 due to repression and discrimination, made tens of thousands of Rohingyas once again leave the country, forced by the slow; steady ethnic cleansing at work in Arakan. Over the last decades, the Rohingyas have progressively lost their citizenship and become stateless. With no rights in Burma, they settle clandestinely in Bangladesh to flee from the terror and utter precariousness imposed on them by the Burmese junta. Unlike earlier refugees, they are not granted refugee status. The Rohingyas no longer have any legal existence; neither citizens of a country that rejects them, nor citizens of a country that does not want them, they are not recognized by the UNHCR either.

The denial of citizenship policy has left the Rohingya with no identity and deprived them of basic rights to sustain their own lives. The status of the Rohingya is officially unrecognized by the military regime of Burma. The military regime has taken away from them important resources that had enabled them to live properly and normally according to an ordinary human standard. The way the military officials treat the Rohingya as well as other minority groups, (the Karen, the Shan, the Chin, and the Kachin) tells us that the wrong people in the military govern Burma. Poor political, socio-economic

and cultural arrangements especially in dealing with minorities like the Rohingya, have categorized Burma as a country, which is undemocratic, showing no respect for human rights values. The Rohingya are excluded from the nation state building of Burma and indeed, are uprooted from the socio-political, economic and cultural fabric of Burma.

The root causes of the humanitarian crises in Northern Arakan State and the driving force behind refugee exoduses to Bangladesh actually lie in the government policies of exclusion and discrimination against the Rohingya. The military regime uses the nationality issue as a weapon, and their strategy has proven effective in compelling the Rohingya to leave Arakan. The Muslims are the main targets, while the wealthier enrich the authorities through bribes and taxes and act as agents to oppress the Muslims in exchange for military government interest.

The state policies produce a poor human rights record and invite international sanctions and condemnations. The Muslim basic identity and living possibilities are terminated. The efforts made by the Muslim Rohingyas in facing the pressures of the military in the next process show that several Muslim groups have conducted open confrontation and demonstrations to disobey Burma's symbols. The actions ended with insurgencies. Defending life in exclusive groups was what the Rohingyas could do to keep their identity. In the next phase, accumulated suspicion, extreme dislike and separation from governmental programs crystallized in the spirit of insurgency, organized and institutionalized in many liberation movements (Moslem Rohingya Liberation movement) by using legal and illegal (a kind of terrorism) methods.

Various extreme pressures and discriminations experienced by the minority Muslim Rohingyas gave birth to a desire to fight back for freedom, identity and rights that have been taken from them. There are three main reasons why the Rohingyas revolted: violence and discrimination towards the Muslim Rohingyas; the failure of Burma's assimilation policies; and discriminative policy practices of the military junta. The gaining of the identity and rights back for the Muslim Rohingyas was attempted through negotiations

and armed force with the Burmese government. The resistance movement of the Rohingyas belongs to two different times: before 1962 when Burma started to build its national system post independence in 1948 with a civil governmental system; and after 1962 when Burma started to be ruled by the military that executes the state authoritative system.

The Rohingya Muslim resistance movement is still alive, awaiting the acknowledgement of their existence together with the other minority ethnic groups in Burma that have been oppressed for years. The resistance movements carried out by the Rohingya Muslims was in response to the Burmese government's lack of attention to the process of natural assimilation, as through political education, to integrate social life in Burma. Forced assimilation marked by the penetration of values and regulations created hatred, suspicion, protests and resistance. In the long run, it is difficult to maintain the unification and harmonious relations between the Muslims and the Burmese government, unless the government is willing to respect the rights of the Muslims in this region, in all aspects of life.

The nation state building of Burma was built under the hegemony of the military junta with Burman majority over the Rohingya Muslim minority. In the context of multiculturalism, established on the basis of fulfilling minority rights, it remained the ideal in discourse developed between the academics and the rhetoric of the elites. In practice it never worked. Burma now has to cope with international embargoes and economic sanctions for its failure to build democracy, respect minority rights, improve its human rights records. It is therefore, getting isolated from the global communities and organizations. It can be concluded that multiculturalism has not worked in Burma due to the state's failure to recognize the rights of ethnic minority groups or the opposition parties.

Recommendations

The solution to the Rohingya problem entails new policies to be put in place, to eradicate their statelessness and respect their fundamental human rights. Political will is required to end the policies of exclusion and discrimination and to improve the lot of the Rohingya people for, as long as they are considered illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, there is little hope of a significant betterment of their status or living conditions.

While it is optimistic to expect any positive moves from the military junta, there is also no guarantee that discriminatory policies would be abolished with the emergence of a democratic government. The Rakhine Buddhist population, the general public opinion in Burma, as well as the pro democratic movement, are not disposed towards recognising the Muslim population of Arakan as people of Burma. The Rohingya organisations have been consistently blocked from joining umbrella groups. Opposition leaders, both inside and outside Burma, hold views that the communal situation in Arakan can only improve with a transition to democracy, they suggest that, under a federal system of governance, ethnic states would enjoy self determination and, therefore, the fate of the Rohingya should be decided by the people of Arakan State. This implies that the Rakhine Buddhists alone would be expected to determine the future of the Rohingya community.

The intransigence of all protagonists makes it difficult to find a solution, but until then, providing assistance and protection to the Rohingya population is both a moral and a legal obligation of the international community. International society must urge the authorities to ensure that the Burmese security forces do not ill treat, kill unlawfully, or arbitrarily arrest Muslims or members of other ethnic minorities. All allegations of ill treatment, rape and extra judicial killings should be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated. Those found responsible for such human rights violations should be prosecuted and compensation should be given to the victims of ill treatment and the families of those who were unlawfully killed. Thorough investigation of all allegations and the prosecution of those responsible would send a clear

message that human rights violations would not be tolerated and that those who commit such acts would be held fully accountable.

Multiculturalism is an ideal alternative solution. Multiculturalism means that a society is established under a variety of values orientations. It leads a country to embrace and accommodate different ethnic nationalities. In trying to adopt a multicultural approach, the Burmese junta in this regard then, should be able to:

1. Identify and recognize the multi characteristics of its people's cultural mosaic and maintain their basic needs to be culturally distinct from others;
2. Give equal access and opportunity to education, all sorts of occupations, i.e. in local politics, the military and police forces and other public offices in order that the Rohingya can enjoy a good standard of living like the majority of the Burmese;
3. Stop any type and model of discrimination against minorities, followed by violence, humiliations and eliminations;
4. Respect absolutely the indigenous rights of the local ethnic minorities in all aspects of lives and allow them to express themselves culturally, socially, economically and politically through their representatives. In other words, the minorities should be given freedom of expression and enjoy civil liberties. Aung San Su Kyi as well as the other NLD leaders should be released unconditionally. The military government in Burma should stop abusing its own people and provide them with civil rights and freedoms.

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ENCLOSURE



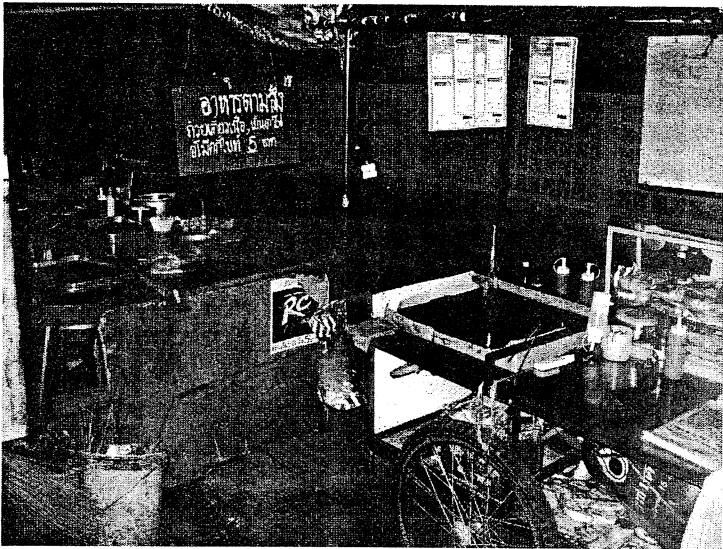
Research team and our informant (Burmese Rohingya Muslim) in their house remain Thailand, July 2005



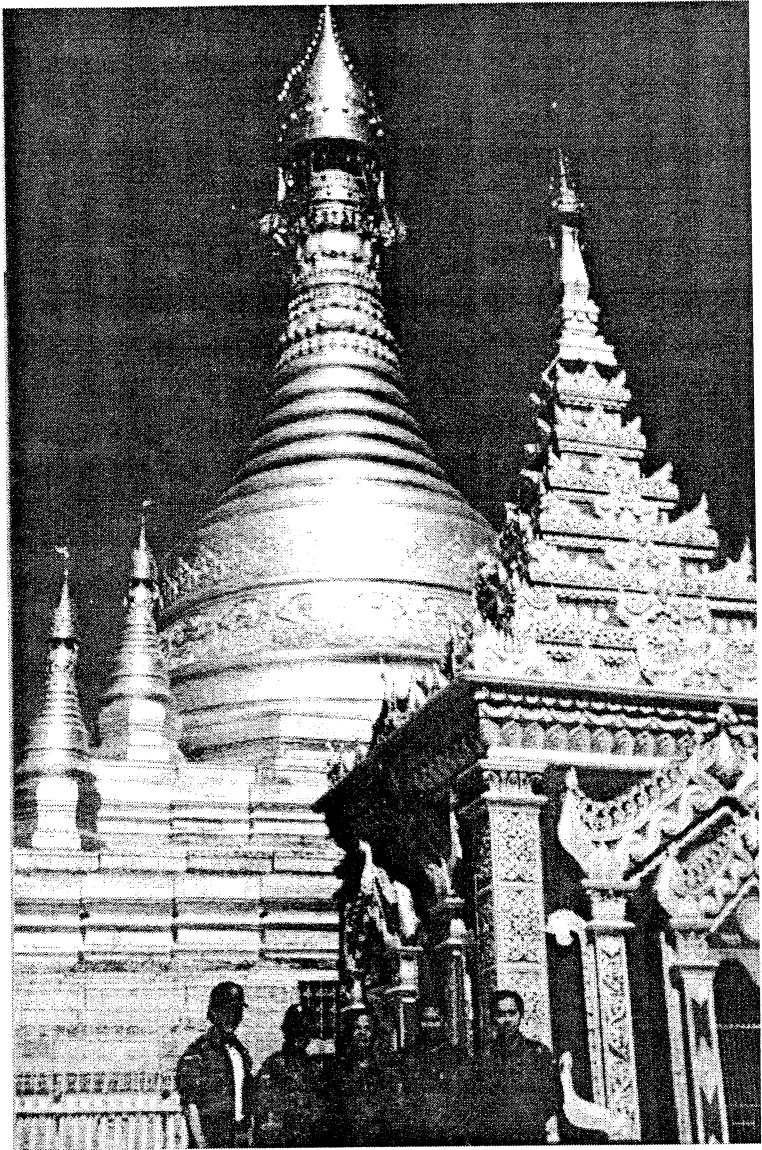
Muslim Rohingya Community in Mae Sot City near Thailand-Burma borderland. They live in relocation camp held by UNHCR



Burmese Rohingya Muslim condition in their house remains.
One house for three families.



Daily economic activity Rohingya Muslim in Thailand,
Selling food in front of house on unpretentious a scale



Burmese Tatmandaw with Buddha temple background,
They still taken authority in military hands

Executive Summary

MULTICULTURALISM, SEPARATISM, AND NATION STATE BUILDING IN BURMA

**(MULTIKULTURALISME, SEPARATISME DAN
PEMBENTUKAN NEGARA BANGSA DI BURMA)**

MULTIKULTURALISME, SEPARATISME DAN PEMBENTUKAN NEGARA BANGSA DI BURMA

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Gagasan mengenai multikulturalisme dalam proses pembangunan negara bangsa merupakan respons atas kebijakan baru yang dilakukan terhadap bentuk-bentuk keragaman (*equality*) dimana komunitas-komunitas masyarakat diperlakukan sederajat dalam suatu proses kesatuan berbagai kelompok menyatu secara kohesif, berfungsi dan saling mengisi. Inti dari pandangan multikulturalisme adalah kesediaan sikap untuk menerima kelompok lain secara sama sebagai kesatuan, tanpa mempedulikan perbedaan budaya, etnik, jender, bahasa, ataupun agama. Multikulturalisme adalah gagasan mengatur keberagaman dengan prinsip dasar pengakuan akan keberagaman itu sendiri (*politics of recognition*). Lebih jauh lagi, gagasan ini menyangkut pengaturan relasi antara kelompok mayoritas dan minoritas, keberadaan kelompok imigran, masyarakat adat, dan lain-lain (Suparlan, 2002:98). Penjelasan tersebut memperlihatkan bahwa multikulturalisme adalah sebuah ideologi yang mengakui dan mengagungkan perbedaan dalam kesederajatan, baik secara individual maupun secara kebudayaan. Oleh karena itu konsep multikulturalisme berbeda dengan semangat keanekaragaman secara sukubangsa (*pluralism ethnic*) atau kebudayaan sukubangsa yang menjadi ciri khas masyarakat majemuk, karena multikulturalisme menekankan keanekaragaman kebudayaan dalam kesederajatan.

Berkaitan dengan berkembangnya rasa nasionalisme dan etnisitas dalam pembangunan kebangsaan di kawasan Asia Tenggara semenjak berakhirnya era kolonial. Negara Filipina, Thailand dan Myanmar termasuk Indonesia menghadapi persoalan yang hampir sama yaitu masalah integrasi nasional dalam mengakomodasi kepentingan berbagai etnis yang berkembang semakin

meluas. Upaya integrasi nasional bila diperhatikan telah dilakukan melalui pembangunan sosial (*social development*) sebagai usaha melakukan perbaikan yang terus meningkat atau kemajuan sosial (*social progress*) dari semua segi kehidupan melalui pranata-pranata yang berfungsi untuk membagi secara adil semua sarana (*resources*) dalam masyarakat kepada semua kategori kelompok manusia sehingga seluruhnya dapat terintegrasikan.

Persoalannya, intervensi negara dalam pengelolaan kehidupan bernegara lebih banyak memihak (mengakomodasi) etnis mayoritas dan melakukan dominasi terhadap hegemoni etnis minoritas. Masih munculnya sikap dari pemerintah maupun kelompok masyarakat yang menerapkan perbedaan antara etnis/ras, agama, gender, umur atau keadaan sosial ekonomi antara satu kelompok masyarakat dengan kelompok masyarakat yang lain terutama yang terjadi pada kelompok etnik minoritas. Akibat yang ditimbulkan dari kepentingan minoritas yang tidak terakomodasi tersebut telah banyak memberikan kontribusi akan situasi ketidakstabilan secara nasional dan tentu saja mempengaruhi pembangunan sosial ekonomi di wilayah-wilayah yang berkonflik. Pada kasus negara Filipina dan Thailand, representasi perbedaan identitas dapat dilihat melalui contoh marginalisasi dan diskriminasi terhadap kelompok Minoritas Islam. Benang merahnya dari kasus negara Filipina dan Thailand menunjukkan bahwa ketika komunitas Muslim berada di bawah bayang-bayang kekuasaan non-Muslim, maka permasalahan yang sering timbul adalah kebebasan menjalankan Syariah Islam dalam kehidupan sosialnya, tuntutan persamaan hak dalam kewarganegaraan dengan non-Muslim dan beberapa jaminan sosial lainnya berkaitan dengan kebutuhan mereka kemudian dikembangkannya kehidupan sosioekonomi dan politik-kultural yang menindas dan eksploitatif oleh kaum mayoritas terhadap kaum minoritas (Sihbudi, 2002; 189-190). Pada proses perkembangan selanjutnya keadaan ini turut memperpanjang konflik dan mengakibatkan berkembangnya gerakan perlawanan terhadap kekuasaan pemerintah negara.

Latar belakang mengenai konsep/wacana multikulturalisme, resistensi minoritas Muslim dalam sejarah pembangunan negara bangsa ini akan dilihat dalam studi ini dengan mencermati kelompok Minoritas Muslim Rohingya

Myanmar sebagai contoh kasus. Myanmar sebagai obyek studi pada dasarnya merupakan bangsa yang terdiri dari beragam etnik (multikultur). Perubahan cukup drastis situasi kenegaraan terjadi dari pola pemerintahan parlementer menjadi negara diktatorial yang dipimpin oleh seorang jenderal dan hanya memberlakukan satu partai. Dibawah kontrol militer ini, pembangunan kebangsaan dan sistem pemerintahan menjadi sangat militeris, dimana pemerintah Myanmar kurang sekali menunjukkan perhatian pada nasionalisme etnis, dan secara sistematis menolak hak-hak politik, kebudayaan, dan pendidikan keanekaragaman masyarakat. Persoalan yang muncul seperti politik dan demokrasi, keadilan dan penegakan hukum, kesempatan bekerja dan berusaha, hak budaya komunitas dan golongan minoritas adalah hal-hal yang kerap yang dihadapi oleh pemerintah Myanmar saat ini termasuk didalamnya persoalan yang dihadapi terhadap kelompok minoritas Muslim Rohingya dan munculnya gerakan perlawanan minoritas Rohingya.

Kedudukan dan Peranan Rohingya dalam Pembangunan Negara Bangsa di Burma

Rohingya adalah sebuah ras yang memiliki kompleksitas kedudukan dalam masyarakat Burma. Umumnya masyarakat Burma mengabaikan eksistensi etnis ini di tengah-tengah mereka. Menurut mereka, keberadaan etnis Rohingya di negeri ini tidak lebih dari sekedar akses atas kolonialisme Inggris di Burma. Memang, Rohingya lebih memiliki kedekatan ras dan budaya dengan masyarakat Chittagong di wilayah Bangladesh. Namun demikian, rentang waktu yang lama atas keberadaan mereka di Burma membuat mereka menilainya sebagai tanah air. Perdebatan demi perdebatan bermunculan seiring usaha masyarakat etnis Rohingya untuk diakui eksistensinya sebagai salah satu etnis yang ada di Burma.

Sepanjang perjalanan sejarahnya negara Burma, wilayah negara ini selalu diliputi oleh persaingan antar etnis untuk saling menguasai. Kompetisi ini berakhir saat dengan gemilang Inggris menganeksasi wilayah ini pada 1 Januari 1886. Sejak itu, selain menjadi wilayah kolonisasi, Burma mengalami

perubahan nilai-nilai tradisi dan struktur sosial di masyarakat. Perjuangan merebut kemerdekaan tumbuh seiring dengan semangat nasionalisme di Burma. Dipimpin oleh kaum elite berpendidikan barat, nasionalisme Burma lebih didasarkan kepada kebudayaan Burman, kejayaan kerajaan Burma dan Buddhisme sebagai pemersatu dengan mengabaikan keberadaan kaum etnis minoritas dan agama lainnya. Oleh karena itu, nasionalisme Burma seolah merupakan milik kaum mayoritas Burman. Hal ini mendorong tidak didukungnya gerakan nasionalisme Burma, terutama oleh etnis minoritas yang tinggal di pegunungan, seperti Karen, Chin, Shan, Kachin, dan Rohingya.

Buddhisme, kejayaan monarki masa lalu, dan kebudayaan Burman merupakan bentuk nasionalisme yang tidak mengindahkan keberadaan kaum minoritas ini mampu terwujud dalam bentuk sebuah negara kesatuan dengan meninggalkan jejak perseteruan di negeri yang baru berdiri. Ketidakpuasan atas satu bentuk negara baru mendorong terjadinya pemberontakan dan gerakan untuk perlawanan diri dari negara kesatuan. Hal ini termasuk didalamnya upaya Muslim Rohingya untuk mendapatkan hak sebagai warga negara.

Kenyataan tidak diundangnya etnis Rohingya dalam nasionalisme Burma mendorong kelompok Muslim ini untuk mendapatkan sebuah wilayah otonomi yang tergabung dalam negara kesatuan Burma. Sayangnya, permintaan ini ditolak. Selanjutnya, negara kesatuan Burma pun terbentuk dengan mengabaikan aspirasi etnis Rohingya untuk memiliki kekuasaan otonomi di dalam negara kesatuan Burma. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa etnis Rohingya sama sekali tidak memiliki peranan dan kedudukan apapun dalam pembentukan negara bangsa di Burma. Pembangunan negara bangsa Burma bagi etnis Rohingya lebih merupakan sebuah keniscayaan yang harus mereka terima dibandingkan sebagai suatu kesepakatan. Tanpa mampu melakukan perlawanan yang berarti, mereka terpaksa menjalankan kesepakatan sebagai bagian dari negara kesatuan Burma.

Pengambilalihan kekuasaan dari tangan sipil oleh militer di tahun 1962 membawa mimpi buruk yang berkepanjangan bagi etnis minoritas di Burma.

Dengan mengusung ideology Burma untuk orang Burman yang beragama Buddha demi mengembalikan kejayaan monarki, pemerintah Junta mengabaikan keberadaan etnis minoritas, dengan melakukan kekerasan dan pelanggaran terhadap hak asasi manusia. Rohingya sebagai salah satu etnis yang berdiam di wilayah Arakan pun mengalami nasib yang sama dengan etnis minoritas lainnya di Burma, yaitu keberadaan yang diabaikan. Namun demikian, perbedaan bentuk fisik, dialek, budaya, dan agama, semakin memperparah diskriminasi yang mereka terima. Etnis yang dianggap tiba di Burma seiring dibukanya wilayah ini oleh Inggris, dinilai sebagai warga asing, walaupun mereka telah tinggal lama bahkan lahir di Burma. Mereka lebih memiliki kedekatan dialek dan budaya dengan masyarakat Chittagong di Bangladesh yang beragama Islam. Secara resmi hak kewarganegaraan mereka telah dicabut oleh Junta pada tahun 1982 yang menyebabkan mereka menjadi orang asing di negeri sendiri.

Hak-hak fundamental Muslim Rohingya kurang sekali dihargai, akibatnya etnis Rohingya tidak berbahagia bergabung dalam bendera negara Burma. Pada era pemerintahan otoritas militer, keberadaan etnis Rohingya sedemikian menderita dengan terpinggirkan dari kehidupan, terlebih pada saat pemerintahan Junta menganggap mereka sebagai warga asing yang mengganggu dan harus dieliminasi dari kehidupan bernegara di Burma. Tindak kekerasan, perampasan tanah, kerja paksa, pemerkosaan terhadap perempuan Rohingya, sampai pada pengusiran harus dihadapi Etnis Rohingya hingga saat ini. Mengungsi menjadi satu-satunya pilihan mereka saat hidup tidak banyak memberikan pilihan. Menjadi masyarakat tanpa kewarganegaraan menjadi keseharian yang harus dijalani mereka dengan berstatus pengungsi legal maupun illegal, tersebar di seluruh belahan bumi.

Praktik Kebijakan Diskriminatif Junta Militer

Akar sejarah perseteruan dan pertikaian antara Muslim Rohingya dan pemerintah Burma menyebabkan diberlakukannya praktek kebijakan

diskriminatif untuk melakukan pengusiran yang dikenakan terhadap Muslim Rohingya. Pemberlakuan kebijakan diskriminatif oleh rejim militer Burma mengakibatkan kesulitan bagi kelompok Muslim untuk melakukan pengembangan diri baik secara sosial maupun ekonomis. Pemerintah Burma sangat mendorong Muslim Rohingya agar meninggalkan tanah mereka dan sangat mendorong mereka pindah ke Bangladesh. Kebijakan ini—yang mengarah pada pembersihan kesukuan (*ethnic cleansing*), merupakan faktor pendorong migrasi yang dipaksakan dan mendasari sebagai penyebab utama dari arus pengungsi yang terus terjadi hingga saat ini. Bentuk dari kebijakan diskriminasi pemerintah Burma terhadap Muslim Rohingya dapat diringkas sebagai berikut:

Tabel 1
Praktik Kebijakan Diskriminatif Militer Burma

ISU POKOK	PENERAPAN KEBIJAKAN	BENTUK DISKRIMINASI
Penolakan Kewarganegaraan	Hukum Kewarga negaraan Burma 1982 (<i>Burma's Citizenship Law of 1982</i>). Melalui penerapan hukum tersebut Muslim Rohingya telah kehilangan kewarganegaraan mereka	Pemerintah negara Burma hanya mengakui "ras nasional" sebanyak 135 etnis. Muslim Rohingya sama sekali tidak termasuk dalam daftar etnik nasional tersebut. Artinya bahwa pihak pemerintah tidak mengakui sejarah nenek moyang Muslim Rohingya yang telah mendiami wilayah ini secara turun temurun sejak tahun 1823, hingga saat dimulainya koloni Inggris di Arakan. Hukum yang telah diumumkan secara resmi tidak lama sesudah peraturan repatriasi tahun 1978, menunjukkan bahwa Muslim Rohingya tidak memiliki hak kewarganegaraan. Mereka tidak memiliki kedudukan secara hukum termasuk di dalam hukum internasional, akibatnya secara de facto mereka tidak memiliki kewarganegaraan.

<p>Pembatasan Pada Upaya Pembebasan</p>	<p>Sejak Februari 2001, pemerintah Burma mencantumkan peraturan pelarangan di wilayah Arakan sebagai daerah terlarang bagi Muslim Rohingya yang berasal bagian Utara Arakan.</p>	<p>Orang-orang Rohingya dipaksa tunduk kepada pembatasan melakukan pergerakan. Keberadaan mereka hanya terbatas pada wilayah desa/kampung saja. Bila hendak bepergian, orang Rohingya diwajibkan membawa surat jalan walaupun hanya untuk mengunjungi tetangga desa mereka. selain itu mereka memiliki kewajiban untuk membayar pula. Muslim Rohingya kehilangan mobilitas sebagai konsekuensi dari peraturan pelarangan tersebut, pembatasan akses mereka ke pasar, tidak mendapat peluang ketenaga-kerjaan, buruknya fasilitas kesehatan dan akses kepada pendidikan yang lebih tinggi. Penggunaan surat jalan yang diberlakukan kepada mereka digunakan sebagai alat untuk mencegah mereka agar tidak dapat melakukan perpindahan dan bila hal tersebut terjadi mereka akan mendapat kesulitan kembali ke tempat asal karena nama mereka telah dihapus dari daftar nama keluarga.</p>
<p>Hambatan Dalam Pengembangan Sistem Kekeluargaan</p>	<p>Pengendalian kelahiran untuk membatasi meningkatnya jumlah polulasi Rohingya di wilayah Arakan.</p>	<p>Peraturan diskriminatif lain yang dikenakan, yaitu perbedaan perlakuan dengan etnis lain di Myanmar: orang-orang Rohingya harus mendapat ijin untuk menikah, dimana untuk mendapatkan ijin menikah, mereka di haruskan untuk membayar uang suap yang cukup tinggi yang hanya berlaku untuk beberapa saat hingga mereka dimintai uang kembali. Bentuk poligami juga dilarang, dan para janda harus menunggu sedikitnya 3 tahun untuk menikah lagi. Untuk mendaftarkan kelahiran anak-anak mereka, orang tua dibebankan pembayaran selalu meningkat dari tahun ke tahun. Di beberapa wilayah, martabat wanita-wanita sangat direndahkan, diantaranya mereka diharuskan mengumumkan kehamilan mereka kepada <i>Nasaka</i> (Polisi Burma) dan kadang-kadang sambil menunjukkan perut mereka. Lebih dari itu, untuk membangun rumah yang baru, ketika akan dilakukan perbaikan rumah atau akan membangun hunian yang baru juga memerlukan ijin dari pihak penguasa setempat, akibatnya kondisi pemukiman menjadi sangat buruk dan sesak.</p>
<p>Pembangunan Pemukiman</p>	<p>Penetapan <i>resettlement</i> "model desa" Buddhist (Rakhine dan Orang burma) ke wilayah Muslim/ bagian tengah telah berlangsung sejak tahun 1950.</p>	<p>Tujuan dari dijalankan pembangunan tersebut merupakan rancang-bangun demografis untuk mengimbangi komposisi etnisitas di daerah Muslim. Terdapat sekitar 26 model desa bagi pemukiman kelompok Budhist yang menampung sekitar 100 rumah masing-masing di Utara Arakan. Namun bagi Muslim Rohingya justru mendapat larangan dalam pembangunan rumah-rumah untuk mereka sendiri. Hal ini berdampak pada bentuk-bentuk penyitaan rumah yang dibangun dan mereka dipaksa kerja dalam membangun pemukiman Budhist. program seperti ini malah berperan meningkatkan ketegangan antar-golongan.</p>

Selain dampak kemanusiaan yang terjadi pada penjelasan di atas, praktek kebijakan tersebut juga bertujuan untuk menekan kehidupan ekonomi Muslim Rohingya. Kebijakan yang berlandaskan ekonomi diberlakukan agar orang Rohingya tetap berada dalam keadaan tidak sejahtera (*underdevelopment*). Walaupun kebijakan ini berlaku pula pada kelompok etnik minoritas yang lain, namun, mempertimbangkan bahwa 60% populasi orang Rohingya adalah kelompok yang tidak memiliki tanah dan tergantung bantuan orang lain, terkait dengan hilangnya pendapatan maka sangat berperan ketidaktahanan pangan. Hal tersebut nampak sebagai usaha yang sengaja untuk meningkatkan kelaparan dan memicu arus pengungsian. Unsur-Unsur yang utama adalah:

Tabel 2
Praktik Kebijakan Diskriminatif Militer Burma

ISU POKOK	PENERAPAN KEBIJAKAN	BENTUK DISKRIMINASI
Kerja Paksa	Kewajiban untuk bekerja paksa yang diberlakukan oleh pihak tentara dan Nasaka terhadap Muslim Rohingya	Dalam dokumen yang dikeluarkan oleh ILO awal tahun 2003, kerja paksa masih terjadi dan belum teratasi di wilayah Utara bagian Arakan. meliputi tugas-tugas; membangun konstruksi dan pemeliharaan dari pos penjagaan mereka, sebagai kuli pengangkut barang, sebagai petugas prajurit jaga, sebagai pekerja bila akan dibangun pemukiman baru, kuli perkebunan dan kebun udang milik militer, sebagai tukang pembakar batu bata, pengumpul kayu dan bambu di hutan, dan lain lain. Di wilayah Arakan bagian utara, warga non-Muslims pada umumnya justru terhindar dari kerja paksa ini. Bagi mereka yang lemah dan miskin, tidak bisa membayar uang suap untuk menghindari beban tugas yang diberikan kepadanya dan justru dipaksa untuk melaksanakan pekerjaan yang dibebankan hingga mereka tidak dapat melaksanakan pekerjaan mereka sendiri. Selain itu mereka juga kadang diminati uang atas pekerjaan yang mereka lakukan oleh para penguasa lokal.

Pengumpulan Pajak	Pengumpulan pajak yang sewenang-wenang dan segala bentuk pemerasan adalah hal umum terjadi pada kelompok Minoritas Rohingya.	Pajak yang dipungut secara informal ini berlaku dari mulai kepemilikan hewan ternak hingga segala bentuk sumbangan sukarela yang dibuat oleh pemerintah setempat dalam segala bentuk maupun uang tunai. Penguasa lokal akan menarik uang yang lebih tinggi bagi mereka yang menolak atau tidak mau melakukan tugas yang telah dibebankan sebagai ganti atas kerugian pendapatan yang penguasa lokal dapatkan. Siasat dari penangkapan orang-orang yang menolak bekerja dan menarik uang lebih banyak bagi pembebasan mereka juga telah sering dipraktikkan.
Kontrol Ekonomi melalui Sistem Monopoli	Semua sektor ekonomi dikendalikan melalui suatu sistem monopoli yang didasarkan pada lisensi pemerintah, yang secara total melarang segala bentuk usaha bebas hasil inisiatif siapapun.	Monopoli bisnis diwarisi sebagai bentuk pertukaran karena banyaknya penolakan untuk membayar uang suap yang telah begitu tinggi. Seseorang yang mulai bekerja pada suatu kegiatan ekonomi diharuskan menjual produknya kepada pemegang lisensi di bawah harga pasar atau membayar pajak hasil penjualan produknya. Pola ekonomi yang diterapkan adalah begitu sebuah jenis usaha dimulai maka sistem monopoli juga langsung diterapkan. Pihak penguasa mewariskan atau menarik kembali lisensi yang diberikan tiap tahun dan akan memberikan jaminan monopoli sistem perdagangan bagi mereka yang memberikan penawaran tertinggi.
Pengumpulan Padi	Pajak padi didasarkan Penetapan kuota padi yang telah diwajibkan oleh pemerintah (dalam bentuk keranjang padi)	Setiap hektar sawah dan setiap padi yang dihasilkan diharuskan dijual secara langsung kepada pemerintah secara murah di bawah harga pasar namun dijual kembali dengan harga mahal. Kenyataan itu dapat mengurangi hingga 50% dari jumlah produksi padi petani. Namun pemerintah kemudian melonggarkan peraturan tersebut di bulan April 2003, dimana SPDC mengeluarkan kebijakan mengenai penjualan hasil produksi padi dimana petani yang memanen di akhir tahun 2003, diijinkan untuk menjual produksi mereka melalui komite pedagang lokal. Namun kebijakan ini banyak diragukan dan percaya bahwa suatu sistem monopoli yang baru akan segera diberlakukan bila kebutuhan padi pemerintah meningkat.

Dari penjelasan dampak kebijakan diskriminatif terhadap Muslim Rohingya menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan tersebut sangat menyulitkan Muslim Rohingya untuk mencapai taraf hidup yang lebih baik. Selain itu menunjukkan pula bahwa tidak ada kesediaan pihak pemerintah Burma untuk mengintegrasikan dan mengembangkan kehidupan yang layak bagi Muslim Rohingya. Hingga saat ini kebijakan di atas masih terus berlangsung dan belum dirubah. Keadaan Muslim Rohingya akan terus dalam keadaan tertekan dan gelombang pengungsian akan sulit dihentikan.

Perlawanan Minoritas Muslim Rohingya Myanmar

Berbagai tekanan berat dan diskriminasi yang dialami oleh minoritas Muslim Rohingya selama berada dalam wilayah Myanmar dan dengan masyarakat Myanmar telah membentuk suatu kesadaran kolektif kaum Muslim Rohingya untuk memperjuangkan identitas maupun hak yang telah lama dirampas dari mereka. Terdapat tiga hal utama penyebab munculnya gerakan perlawanan Muslim Rohingya terhadap pemerintahan Burma; (1) Kekerasan dan diskriminasi pemerintah Burma terhadap Muslim Rohingya, (2) Gagalnya politik asimilasi Myanmar, serta (3) Praktik kebijakan diskriminatif junta militer.

Penyadaran identitas dan perjuangan hak masyarakat Muslim kemudian diwujudkan dalam bentuk upaya negosiasi maupun melakukan perlawanan dengan pemerintah Myanmar. Secara garis besar gerakan perlawanan Muslim Rohingya dapat dibagi dua menurut rentang sejarah; sebelum tahun 1962 ketika negara Myanmar baru mulai membangun sistem kenegaraan paska kemerdekaan 1948 melalui sistem pemerintahan sipil dan sesudah tahun 1962 ketika Myanmar mulai dikuasai oleh pemerintahan dan kekuatan militer yang menjalankan sistem kenegaraan secara otoriter.

Stigmanisasi Muslim sebagai etnis yang memberontak dan sikap pemerintah Myanmar yang tidak mau mengakui keberadaan etnis Rohingya, dapat dilihat dari pernyataan berikut; *"In actual fact, although there are 135*

national races in Myanmar today, the so-called Rohingya people are not one of them. Historically, there has never been a "Rohingya" race in Myanmar... Since the first Anglo-Myanmar war in 1824, people of Muslim faith from the adjacent country illegally entered Myanmar Naing-Ngan, particularly Rakhine State.". Situasi buruk yang menimpa kaum Muslim Myanmar paska kemerdekaan 1948 mendorong para tokohnya mendirikan organisasi guna memperjuangkan hak-hak sebagai bagian warga negara walaupun sebagai kelompok minoritas. Beberapa organisasi yang sempat terbentuk diantaranya GCBMA (General Council of Myanmar Muslim Association), BMC (Myanmar Muslim Congress), Pathi Congress, Islamic Religious Affairs Council dan BMO (Myanmar Muslim Organization). Seluruh organisasi ini pada awal kemerdekaan dibuat untuk mendukung gerakan nasionalis Myanmar sekaligus sebagai upaya mempertahankan hak-hak kelompok Muslim yang ada di Myanmar agar diakui secara nasional.

Perkembangan organisasi perjuangan rakyat Rohingya semakin mengalami peningkatan setelah Myanmar di kuasai oleh rezim Militer yang melakukan kudeta tahun 1962. Peningkatan aksi perlawanan disebabkan karena pihak pemerintah menerapkan strategi pembangunan yang sentralistik. Cristina Fink seorang antropolog yang mencermati masalah Burma menyebutkan bahwa pemerintah pusat cenderung menerapkan kekuasaan yang terkonsentrasi pada golongan etnis Burman. Pemerintahan militer melarang seluruh partai politik yang ada kecuali partai yang diakui oleh pemerintah yaitu Partai Sosialis Myanmar (*Myanmar Socialist Programme Party*).

Kenyataan ini tentu saja menimbulkan pergolakan dan perlawanan Muslim Rohingya akibat sistem pembangunan negara yang memarginalkan kelompok mereka. Di bawah ini tercatat beberapa organisasi perlawanan yang memperjuangkan nasib kaum Muslim Rohingya. diantaranya; RPF (*Rohingya Patriotic Front*); RSO (*Rohingya Solidarity Organization*); ARIF (*Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front*); ARNO (*Arakan Rohingya Nationalization Organization*) dan beberapa organisasi yang juga sempat aktif memperjuangkan nasib kaum Muslim diantaranya RLO (*Rohingya Liberation Organization*); IMA (*Itihadul Mozahadin of Arakan*).

Hingga saat ini organisasi perjuangan ARNO masih terus dan berkibar memperjuangkan nasib Muslim Rohingya yang bersama-sama dengan etnis minorits lainnya di Myanmar berada dalam keadaan tertekan oleh pemerintah militer Myanmar. ARNO saat ini merupakan organisasi yang mewakili perjuangan yang cukup besar serta mendapat dukungan dari warga Muslim Rohingya yang berada Arakan maupun masyarakat Muslim Rohingya di luar Myanmar. Selain dukungan dari organisasi internasional yang mendukung gerakan mereka.

Model Masyarakat Multikultural di Burma

Minoritas Muslim di Myanmar yang terdiri dari kaum pendatang maupun yang dilahirkan dari hasil kawin campur antara pendatang (India) dan Burma relatif lebih menikmati kebebasan di masa kerajaan dan koloni Inggris dibanding di masa pasca kolonial atau kemerdekaan. Pada saat itu, hubungan antar keduabelah pihak umumnya dikenal relatif sangat toleran dan menjamin kebebasan beragama termasuk disini adalah menjamin hak-hak dari kaum pendatang Muslim (imigran) untuk mengawini wanita Burma dan memberi kebebasan bagi anak-anak yang dilahirkan dari kawin campur (Zerbadees) untuk dibesarkan dalam sistem nilai-nilai keagamaan yang dianut ayahnya. Demikian juga halnya di masa kolonial Inggris, mereka berpranan dalam menambah proporsi Muslim Burma lewat imigrasi dan lahirnya kaeturunan campuran Burma dan India.

Namun sejak kepemimpinan dan pemerintahan junta militer, yang berkuasa khususnya semenjak 1962, banyak melakukan berbagai macam kekerasan fisik, diskriminasi, dan bentuk-bentuk pelanggaran HAM lainnya terhadap kaum Muslim Rohingya. Kebijakan yang melahirkan tindak kekerasan tampak dalam bentuk: menolak kewarganegaraan, membatasi mobilitas fisik, menggusur dan menyita tanah dengan semua hasil-hasil pertanian maupun ternak, menerapkan kerja paksa (tanpa upah), menerapkan diskriminasi di bidang pendidikan dan kesempatan kerja, memungut pajak, mengusir, merusak

tempat dan sarana ibadah, membunuh secara massal. Kenyataan ini menjelaskan bentuk-bentuk *state violences*, yang tertuang dalam berbagai kebijakan Junta Militer Burma, terhadap minoritas Muslim Rohingya yang tinggal di Rakhine State dengan berbagai dampak, dan implikasi

Bila dikaitkan dengan relasi konteks kehidupan yang mengedepankan asas multikulturalisme akan memperlihatkan bahwa hubungan yang terjadi di Burma sangatlah tidak manusiawi. Masyarakat yang pluralistik senantiasa mengidamkan kondisi multikultur yang mengakui, melindungi, menghormati, dan menjamin hak-hak minoritas. Jaminan perlindungan terhadap hak-hak minoritas idealnya diwujudkan dalam bentuk terciptanya situasi yang kondusif bagi pemberian kesempatan yang sama (*equal opportunity and access*) dalam mendapatkan (memperebutkan) semua sumber-sumber penting dalam segala aspek kehidupan. Jaminan pengakuan (perlindungan) bagi hak-hak minoritas idealnya tercermin dari sikap publik dan pemerintah untuk menyediakan ruang publik (*public sphere*) yang merepresentasikan kepentingan-kepentingan minoritas dalam setiap aspek kehidupan (*political, cultural, social and economic representativeness of the minorities in public sphere*). Kebijakan ultra nasionalis yang merekonstruksi identitas masyarakat Burma (melalui representasi agama Budha yang diwakili oleh pemerintah Burma) yang monolitik (*creation of Burma Buddhist as a single/sole identity*) telah menghancurkan sendi-sendi multikulturalisme itu sendiri dan menyalakan semangat resistensi. Dalam perkembangannya, kebijakan diskriminatif bila tetap diteruskan akan menjadi kendala bagi proses pembentukan negara bangsa Burma di kemudian hari.

Penutup

Sentralisasi merupakan mekanisme yang dijalankan oleh pemerintah Burma dengan kewenangan dan kontrol penuh (*exercising full authority and control*) atas wilayah-wilayah (bekas) di seluruh negara yang secara absah dan legal menjadi bagian integral dari kedaulatan Burma. Namun model integrasi

politik dan proses pembangunan negara dalam arti untuk membangun *sense of belonging* sebagai satu kesatuan bangsa Burma dan *sense of loyalty* pada negara di kalangan kelompok Muslim Rohingya tidaklah berujud seperti yang diharapkan. Kenyataan ini disebabkan pemerintah Burma tidak pernah mensosialisasikan harmoni antar beragama etnik atau kesatuan nasional sebagai suatu kebijakan. Bahkan cenderung membuat segregasi antar etnik dan mempertajam antagonisme sosial di antara mereka.

Pluralisme yang menjadi landasan kebangsaan Negara Burma pada kenyataannya memperlihatkan kesatuan perbedaan keberagaman berbagai etnik yang ada. Rasa ketidakadilan bagi minoritas melayu Muslim Rohingya yang muncul ke permukaan dalam berbagai bentuk aksi kekerasan dan aksi balas dendam dalam kurun waktu pemerintahan militer semakin menegaskan hubungan pemerintah dan masyarakat Muslim semakin tidak kondusif. Politik militer untuk meredam aksi kekerasan dengan memperkuat identitas Budha menunjukkan bahwa Muslim memiliki perbedaan dengan bangsa Burma yang mayoritas, baik dari segi etnisitas, bahasa, agama, budaya, dan lokalitas tempat tinggal. Perlawanan kelompok minoritas Muslim justru menjadi berkembang dan semakin populer di wilayah Barat laut Burma.

Hal yang cukup penting bagi Pemerintah Burma dalam mengakomodasi hak-hak dan kepentingan kelompok Muslim adalah menjalankan langkah-langkah kebijakan yang secara substansial menjamin hak-hak orang yang tergolong dalam katagori kelompok minoritas dengan memenuhi sebagian atau sepenuhnya apa yang menjadi hak-hak hidup mereka. Sekiranya pemerintah Burma sebagai pemegang kendali tertinggi perlu untuk mengambil sikap demokratis agar dapat menjamin kebebasan dasar dari kelompok minoritas, menjamin keadilan dan persamaan hak mereka dengan etnik lainnya di mata hukum, tanpa diskriminasi, apapun bentuknya terutama kelompok Muslim yang digolongkan sebagai kelompok minoritas dari segi etnisitas, agama, bahasa, dan budaya.

Research Center for Regional Resources INDONESIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

BACKGROUND

Based on the dearth of interdisciplinary studies focused on other nations, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) decided to establish a Research Center For Regional Resources (PSDR) in July 2001. The embryo of this Center was the program of Southeast Asia Studies, founded by Prof. Dr. Taufik Abdullah in 1993. The research center undertakes comprehensive and comparative studies on the dynamics of society, culture, politics and economy in the region of Southeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific and Europe. The objective of research center to develop long term, in depth studies on Southeast Asia, the Pacific regions and Europe.

OBJECTIVE

To develop long-term, in depth studies on Southeast Asia, the Asia Pacific regions and Europe.

AIMS

- To supplement the existing body of social theories with ideas from an Indonesian perspective.
- To prepare and contribute materials for policy makers.

PROGRAM

- Interdisciplinary studies; Research themes from 2002 to 2007 (Economic Crisis, Tourism, Impact of Globalization, Labor Movement, Ethnicity and Nationalism, Transnational problem, Immigration policies and social Conflict)
- Discussions/ Seminar/ Workshops
- Publications and Documentation
- National and International Cooperation's

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