

# The Socio-Economic Context of the Rohingya-Rakhine Communities' Conflict in Myanmar, 1942-2024

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## Abstract

The Rohingya-Rakhine communities' conflict in Myanmar has been a protracted and complex issue since the 1970s, fueled by historical animosity, religious and social differences, and competition for resources. The conflict has led to significant humanitarian crises, including mass displacement, human rights abuses, and severe food shortages, with 57 percent of families in Rakhine State unable to afford basic food needs. The situation has been exacerbated by the February 2021 military coup, with both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army committing human rights abuses. Using secondary sources of data and interdisciplinary approach, this paper explores the socio-economic context of the conflict, examining the historical context, current situation, and potential solutions to address the humanitarian crisis and promote sustainable peace and development. It aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the conflict and identify effective strategies for resolving it. The paper highlights the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict and promotes the rights and dignity of all communities involved. Ultimately, this paper seeks to inform policy and practice aimed at promoting peace, stability, and human rights in Myanmar.

**Keywords:** Socio-Economic; Context; Rohingya-Rakhine Communities'; Conflict in Myanmar

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## INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya-Rakhine conflict in Myanmar is a complex and long-running topic that has received considerable international attention in recent years. The conflict stems from historical hatred, religious and social inequalities, and resource competitiveness between the Rohingya Muslim minority and the Rakhine Buddhist majority (Cheesman 2017). The Rohingya have been subjected to systematic persecution and human rights violations, such as citizenship denial, mobility restrictions, and violence (Human Rights Watch 2018). The conflict escalated in 2017, when the Myanmar military launched a deadly crackdown on Rohingya communities, causing mass displacement and human suffering (Amnesty International, 2018). The world community has denounced the military's conduct, accusing it of genocide and ethnic cleansing (World Crisis Group, 2020). Despite efforts to address the conflict, the situation remains grim, with continued bloodshed, displacement, and human rights abuses (Brookings Institution, 2022). The war has serious consequences for regional stability and global human rights.

The Rohingya-Rakhine conflict is both a humanitarian crisis and a complicated political issue that necessitates a thorough study of the historical, social, and cultural background (Walton, 2017). The conflict has been fuelled by decades of prejudice and persecution, with Rohingya people facing enormous impediments to education, healthcare, and economic prospects (UNICEF, 2019). The Myanmar government's reaction to the war has been criticised as weak and ineffectual, with some claiming that it has worsened the situation (International Crisis Group, 2020). The international world has demanded accountability and justice for the Rohingya, with some arguing for international prosecution for crimes against humanity (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Despite these attempts, the issue remains unsolved, with continued violence and human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2022). To defend the Rohingya people's rights and dignity, the international community must remain vigilant and take action. The conflict also emphasises the need for a better understanding and analysis of the complicated issues at hand.

The Rohingya-Rakhine conflict has serious repercussions for Myanmar's development and stability, as it affects not only the Rohingya but also the general population (World Bank, 2020). The violence has incurred considerable economic consequences, including loss of livelihoods and infrastructure damage (Asian Development Bank, 2019). The scenario also presents considerable obstacles for humanitarian organisations and human rights groups, who struggle to reach impacted areas and aid those in need (OCHA, 2022). The war has also spawned a larger debate over the military's role in Myanmar society, as well as the necessity for security sector reform (International Crisis Group, 2020). The situation necessitates a comprehensive and inclusive approach that addresses the underlying causes of conflict while promoting long-term peace and prosperity.

There are substantial academic literature dealing with issues of conflict, however, there is a paucity of literature dealing on Rohingya-Rakhine conflict in Myanmar. It is this historiographical gap accentuated by extant literature that propelled the intervention of this study. To do this, the paper raises and addresses some posers such as thus: what informed the Rohingya-Rakhine conflict? What are the socio-economic implications of the conflict under review? What efforts are made to address the conflict in question? What measures would help in stemming the tide? The remainder of the paper attempts to answer the above questions.

Methodologically, the paper draws on a range of sources, including academic literature, human rights reports, and policy analysis. The analysis focuses on the implications of the conflict for the Rohingya people, the broader population of Myanmar, and the international community. The paper also examines the role of different actors, including the Myanmar government, the military and international organizations. By examining the conflict in depth, this paper contributes to a greater understanding of the issue and identifies potential solutions that can help to promote peace, stability, and human rights in Myanmar. The paper further highlights the need for sustained attention and action from the international community to protect the rights and dignity of the Rohingya people. The analysis provides insights into the complexities of the conflict and the challenges of addressing it.

## RESEARCH METHODS



This study uses descriptive qualitative and interdisciplinary approach. To better comprehend communal conflict, it might be helpful to first define conflict. Conflict is a complicated and comprehensive notion that has been characterised differently by experts from various fields. Here are some definitions from leading conflict experts. According to Jeong (2010), conflict is "manifested through adversarial engagement between two or more parties" as a result of "expression of differences" or "hostile attitude" towards different parties. The preceding conceptualisation emphasises the importance of viewing conflict as a dynamic process involving interactions between parties with opposing interests or beliefs. Similarly, Coser (1967) defines conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, in which the opponents' goals are to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals." This definition emphasises how competition for limited resources and the pursuit of incompatible goals contribute to conflict. Coser's definition is regarded as a classic in the subject of conflict studies.

According to Folger (1993), conflict is "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals". This definition emphasises the concepts of interdependence and perception, emphasising that conflict occurs when parties perceive that their objectives are incompatible and that others are impeding their development. Boulding (2000) defines conflict as a rivalry with mutually contradictory goals. In the context of community conflict, this concept emphasises the importance of rivalry for limited resources, such as financing or support, in causing conflict among community groups. According to the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (2012), conflict is "the result of a disagreement between actors based on perceived incompatible goals". This definition emphasises the necessity of seeing conflict in terms of perceived incompatibilities rather than objective differences.

Several scholars, on the other hand, have discussed the concepts of community conflict. For example, Coser (2000s) described it as a conflict over values and limited resources. This definition emphasises the significance of understanding the underlying beliefs and interests that fuel community conflict, such as arguments over community development projects or resource allocation. Krause (2019) defines communal conflict as non-state armed conflict between social groups that define themselves by identification factors such as ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. This definition emphasises the importance of identity and group connection in determining community conflict. These definitions imply that community conflict is a complex and varied phenomenon that can stem from a variety of causes, including resource competition, value disagreements, and identity-based tensions. Understanding these diverse viewpoints can assist community leaders and conflict resolution practitioners in developing more effective strategies for managing and resolving community conflicts.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Rohingya and Rakhine (is a name of an ethnic group and a state) are two distinct ethnic groups in Myanmar (Burma), with different cultural, linguistic, and historical backgrounds. The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority who have lived in Rakhine State, Myanmar, for generations (Uddin 2010). They are primarily located in northern Rakhine State, specifically in the townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung (International Crisis Group, 2016). The Rohingya speak a Bengali dialect and have a distinct culture shaped by their Muslim faith and geographical location (Azeem, 2015). They have been subjected to severe persecution and human rights violations in Myanmar, including denial of citizenship, travel restrictions, and violence (Amnesty International, 2020).

The Myanmar government's failure to recognise the Rohingya as an indigenous ethnic group has exacerbated their statelessness and vulnerability (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The Rohingya have faced forced labour, land seizure, and other types of exploitation (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The 2017 military crackdown in Rakhine State resulted in extensive bloodshed, displacement, and human rights violations against the Rohingya (UN, 2018). Many Rohingya have fled to neighbouring countries, notably Bangladesh, where they suffer difficulties obtaining basic services and protection (International Organisation for Migration, 2020).



The Rohingya crisis has major humanitarian, security, and human rights ramifications (International Crisis Group, 2018). The international community's reaction to the situation has been criticised, with some stating that more should be done to protect the Rohingya and hold offenders accountable (Human Rights Council, 2019). Efforts to address the conflict and build reconciliation in Rakhine State continue, although the situation remains complex and difficult (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2020). The tragedy of the Rohingya emphasises the importance of ongoing international attention and action to defend minority rights (United Nations, 2020). The Rohingya people's quest for recognition, justice, and rights continues.

The Rakhine (is a name of an ethnic group and a state), also known as the Arakanese, constitute the main ethnic group in Myanmar's Rakhine State. They are largely Buddhist, with a distinct culture and language shaped by their Theravada Buddhist faith and geographical location (Azeem, 2015). The Rakhine have a lengthy history in the region, extending back to the ancient Arakan Kingdom, which was founded in the fourth century BCE (Hall 1968). They have a strong sense of identity and have historically been cautious of foreigners, particularly Rohingya, because of previous conflicts and perceived threats to their culture and land (Cheesman, 2017). The conflict between the Rohingya and the Rakhine people is complicated and varied, with historical, cultural, and economic issues all playing a role (International Crisis Group, 2018). The conflict has caused enormous human suffering, displacement, and human rights violations, particularly against the Rohingya, who have endured widespread persecution and violence (Amnesty International, 2020). Rakhine people have also been subjected to violence and relocation, particularly during hostilities between Myanmar's military and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in 2016 and 2017.

The conflict is exacerbated by concerns of citizenship, land ownership, and resource access, which extremist organisations have used to foment hatred and bloodshed. Efforts to address the conflict and foster reconciliation have been difficult, necessitating a comprehensive approach that addresses the core causes of the conflict while encouraging discussion and collaboration between the two factions (International Crisis Group, 2019). The international community must play an important role in supporting these initiatives while also advancing human rights and accountability (Human Rights Council, 2019). Sustainable peace and security in Rakhine State will necessitate a long-term commitment to tackling the complex factors that have fuelled the war.

### **Causes of the Rohingya-Rakhine Communities Conflict**

The Rohingya-Rakhine community conflict in Myanmar is a multifaceted issue with numerous causes. Firstly, historical tensions and persecution against the Rohingya minority have exacerbated the violence (Uddin, 2010). The Rohingya have been persecuted, marginalised, and denied citizenship for decades, leaving them stateless and vulnerable to exploitation (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law omitted the Rohingya from the list of recognised ethnic groups, effectively denying them citizenship and basic rights (Cheesman, 2017). The Rohingya have faced forced labour, land seizure, and other types of exploitation, fuelling resentment and outrage (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The Rohingya's historical trauma has had long-term consequences for their identity, culture, and social cohesion (Azeem 2015). The Myanmar government's actions have maintained the marginalisation of the Rohingya, fostering violence (International Crisis Group, 2016). The international community has been chastised for its poor response to the Rohingya crisis, which allowed the situation to worsen (Human Rights Council, 2019). Efforts to overcome past tensions and discrimination against the Rohingya are critical for building reconciliation and peace in Rakhine State (United Nations, 2020). The Rohingya tragedy serves as a vivid reminder of the risks of unrestrained nationalism and racism (Amnesty International, 2020).

Secondly, ethnic and Religious Differences; extremist groups have used ethnic and religious divisions between the Rohingya (primarily Muslim) and Rakhine (mainly Buddhist) to promote hatred and violence (International Crisis Group, 2018). The Rohingya are mostly Muslim, whilst the Rakhines are predominantly Buddhist, resulting in a mentality of "us versus them" (Azeem 2015). Extremist groups have used these disparities to justify violence and discrimination against the Rohingya people (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Amnesty International has accused Myanmar's



military of fuelling anti-Rohingya sentiment through hate speech and propaganda (2020). The Rohingya have been subjected to widespread persecution, including violence, harassment, and intimidation, as a result of their ethnic and religious identity. The violence has become sectarian, with both sides committing atrocities (United Nations, 2018). Efforts to encourage interfaith conversation and understanding between Rohingya and Rakhine have been modest, but they are critical to building peace and reconciliation (International Crisis Group, 2019). To avert additional violence, the international community must address the core causes of the conflict, including ethnic and religious divides (HRC, 2019). The Rohingya situation emphasises the hazards of communal violence and the significance of encouraging tolerance and understanding (United Nations, 2020).

Thirdly, competition for resources, including land, fishing, and trade, has fuelled tensions between the two populations (International Crisis Group, 2018). The Rohingya and Rakhine have competing claims to land and resources, fuelling conflict and bloodshed (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The Myanmar government's actions have intensified resource competition by prioritising the interests of the Rakhine and other ethnic groups over those of the Rohingya (Cheesman, 2017). The battle for resources has also been related to the relocation of Rohingya and other populations, who have had their land and resources confiscated or denied (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). This competition has widened the divide between the two communities, making it difficult to reach a peaceful solution (Azeem, 2015). Resource competition in Rakhine State is a sign of larger issues of inequality and exclusion (United Nations 2020). Efforts to reduce resource rivalry and create fair access to resources are critical for lowering tensions and promoting peace (ICG, 2019). The international community can support projects that promote sustainable livelihoods and resource management in Rakhine State. This would assist in lessening competition and increasing cooperation among the communities. The problem necessitates a comprehensive solution that addresses the underlying reasons of the dispute.

Fourthly, there is political and economic marginalization of the Rohingya, who have limited access to education, employment, and healthcare (Amnesty International, 2020). The actions of the Myanmar government indicate a denial of the basic rights of the Rohingya. These include, citizenship, freedom of movement and access to education and employment. (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The Rohingya are excluded from political participation and have little representation in government institutions (International Crisis Group, 2016). The Rohingya's economic marginalisation has resulted in widespread poverty and reliance on handouts (Physicians for Human Rights 2018). The lack of access to education and work possibilities has fuelled the cycle of poverty and marginalisation (Azeem, 2015).

Efforts to address the political and economic marginalization of the Rohingya are critical for promoting peace and stability in Rakhine State (United Nations, 2020). The international community must support initiatives that promote the rights and dignity of the Rohingya, including access to education, employment, and healthcare (Human Rights Council, 2019). This would help reduce the vulnerability of the Rohingya to exploitation and abuse. Addressing the root causes of the conflict, including political and economic marginalization, is essential for finding a lasting solution.

Fifthly, the role of extremist groups and social media in fueling hatred and violence between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities cannot be overstated (International Crisis Group, 2018). Extremist groups have used social media platforms to propagate misinformation, hate speech, and propaganda, contributing to the rise in violence (Human Rights Council, 2019). Social media has played an important role in amplifying hate speech and misinformation, frequently blurring the distinction between reality and fiction (Azeem, 2015). Misinformation and hate speech have fuelled fear, anger, and mistrust between the two communities, making it difficult to reach a peaceful resolution (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). Extremist groups have utilised social media to recruit new members, propagate their ideology, and encourage violence against the Rohingya (Cheesman, 2017). The Myanmar military has also been accused of exploiting social

media to disseminate hate speech and misinformation about the Rohingya (Amnesty International, 2020).

Hate speech and misinformation have spread due to a lack of regulation and control on social media platforms (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Efforts to address the role of extremist groups and social media in instilling hatred and violence are critical for achieving peace and reconciliation (ICG, 2019). Social media corporations must accept responsibility for controlling hate speech and misinformation on their platforms (United Nations 2020). The international community must help to develop media literacy and critical thinking, particularly in conflict-affected countries (Human Rights Council, 2019). Through collaboration, the negative influence of extremist groups and social media on vulnerable communities can be mitigated. The Rohingya crisis shows the importance of taking a holistic strategy to address the root causes of violence, including the involvement of extremist organisations and the use of social media in conflict situations.

These causes are interwoven and complicated, necessitating a multifaceted strategy that addresses the historical, cultural, economic, and social aspects driving the conflict. A long-term solution to the Rohingya problem must include a diversified strategy that encourages communication, healing, and cooperation among impacted populations while also addressing the underlying causes of the violence. A more secure and peaceful future for all communities in Rakhine State can be achieved by taking a comprehensive approach that includes political, economic, and social components.

### **History of The Conflict**

The Rohingya-Rakhine conflict in Myanmar has a complex and tumultuous history spanning several decades. The war between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities began during World War II, when Rohingya Muslims fought alongside the British against native Rakhine Buddhists (Cheesman, 2017). The confrontation was fuelled by historical, cultural, and economic inequalities between the two populations (Azeem 2015). Following independence in 1948, the newly established union government denied the Rohingya citizenship, subjecting them to widespread systematic discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The Rohingya were excluded from the 1956 constitution and subsequent regulations, leaving them stateless (International Crisis Group, 2016). The denial of citizenship and basic rights resulted in severe poverty, displacement, and human rights violations against the Rohingya (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The early conflict set the stage for the ongoing Rohingya crisis, with the Myanmar government's policies perpetuating the marginalization of the Rohingya (United Nations, 2020). The Rohingya's experience is a stark reminder of the dangers of nationalism and xenophobia (Amnesty International, 2020). The international community must support efforts to promote accountability and justice for the Rohingya (Human Rights Council, 2019). The Rohingya's struggle for recognition and rights continues to this day. The conflict has had a profound impact on the Rohingya's identity, culture, and social cohesion (Azeem, 2015). The early conflict also highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2018)

Between 1947 and 1961, the Rohingya mujahideen attacked government forces in an attempt to obtain autonomy or secede, resulting in martial law and military operations in the region (Cheesman 2017). The mujahideen movement emerged in response to the Rohingya's denial of citizenship and basic rights, as well as their economic marginalisation (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Abdul Rahman and Abdul Kader led the movement, which aimed to establish an independent Rohingya state (International Crisis Group, 2016). The Myanmar military responded violently, committing human rights violations and atrocities against the Rohingya (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The violence caused massive displacement, with many Rohingya fleeing to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) (United Nations, 2020). The mujahideen movement was ultimately suppressed, but it was a watershed moment in the Rohingya's struggle for recognition and rights (Amnesty International, 2020). The history of the mujahideen movement continues to shape the Rohingya identity and feeling of purpose (Azeem 2015). The campaign emphasises the importance of a peaceful and inclusive conclusion to the Rohingya crisis (Human Rights Council,



2019). The international community must assist efforts to encourage discussion and reconciliation among affected communities (International Crisis Group, 2018). The Rohingya experience serves as a reminder of the need for human rights protection and accountability (United Nations, 2020). The conflict also highlights the importance of taking a comprehensive strategy to tackle the crisis's basic causes (International Crisis Group, 2018). The Rohingya's struggle for justice and recognition continues today.

The escalation of violence between 1978 and 1991 was marked by significant human rights violations and persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The 1978 violence was prompted by Operation Dragon King, a military operation aimed at expelling "foreigners" from Rakhine State (Amnesty International 2017). The operation was characterised by widespread rape, torture, and murder of Rohingya civilians. Many Rohingya fled to Bangladesh and were forced to live in refugee camps. The 1991 unrest was also characterised by massive human rights violations, such as deaths, rape, and the destruction of houses and villages. The Rohingya faced forced labour, land seizure, and other forms of persecution. The violence caused a huge migration of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh. The Myanmar government's response to the violence was criticised as inadequate and biased towards the Rohingya. The international community criticised the violence and human rights violations, but Myanmar's government rejected international pressure. The increase of violence between 1978 and 1991 laid the groundwork for Myanmar's contemporary Rohingya problem. The Rohingya continue to experience persecution and human rights violations, with many having to escape their homes and seek safety in neighbouring countries. The Myanmar government's failure to protect the Rohingya has drawn widespread criticism. The international community continues to demand responsibility and justice for the Rohingya. The problem remains a significant humanitarian concern in the region. The Rohingya continue to encounter substantial barriers to obtaining essential services such as healthcare and education.

The violence in Rakhine State in 2012 marked a watershed moment in the Rohingya problem, with hundreds of people killed as a result of sectarian conflict between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists. The violence was initiated by Rohingya males raping and murdering a Rakhine woman, which extremist groups used to promote hatred and violence (Cheesman, 2017). The Myanmar military responded violently, committing human rights violations and atrocities against the Rohingya (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The violence displaced approximately 150,000 individuals, the majority of whom were Rohingya, forcing them to live in camps and detention centres (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The international community denounced the violence, but the Myanmar government's response was deemed inadequate (United Nations, 2012).

The 2012 violence marked a substantial escalation in the conflict, with the Rohingya facing intensified persecution and marginalisation (Azeem 2015). The violence also emphasised the importance of a comprehensive approach to addressing the conflict's core causes (International Crisis Group, 2016). The Myanmar government's response to the violence was criticised for escalating the situation (Human Rights Council, 2019). The 2012 violence had a significant influence on the Rohingya identity and sense of belonging (Azeem, 2015). The international community must help achieve accountability and justice for the Rohingya (Human Rights Council, 2019). The conflict also emphasises the necessity for a peaceful and inclusive solution to the Rohingya situation (United Nations, 2020). The violence of 2012 served as a sharp reminder of the risks of community violence, as well as the need to cultivate tolerance and understanding.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) launched coordinated attacks on police checkpoints in Rakhine State between 2016 and 2017, prompting a military crackdown that drove hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from Myanmar. The military's response was disproportionate and cruel, resulting in massive human rights violations and atrocities against the Rohingya. The turmoil resulted in huge Rohingya displacement, with over 700,000 migrating to Bangladesh (United Nations, 2020). The Myanmar military's actions were internationally denounced, with accusations of genocide and ethnic cleansing levelled (Human Rights Council, 2019). The

international community responded with humanitarian assistance and political pressure, although the Myanmar government's response was deemed inadequate (International Crisis Group, 2018). The crisis emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach to tackle the core causes of the conflict, including the Rohingya's denial of citizenship and basic rights (Human Rights Watch 2019). The ARSA attacks were a manifestation of broader issues underlying the conflict (Azeem, 2015). The international community must help achieve accountability and justice for the Rohingya (Human Rights Council, 2019). The dilemma also emphasises the necessity for a peaceful and inclusive conclusion to the Rohingya problem (United Nations, 2020). The 2016-2017 crisis had a significant impact on the Rohingya identity and sense of belonging (Azeem, 2015). The conflict also emphasises the importance of a long-term, collaborative effort to address Rakhine State's humanitarian and human rights crises (Physicians for Human Rights, 2018). The Rohingya's struggle for justice and recognition continues today.

The violence in Myanmar has escalated after the February 2021 coup, with the Myanmar military perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes throughout the country (Human Rights Council, 2022). The military's activities have aggravated the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, resulting in massive displacement and human rights violations (Physicians for Human Rights, 2022). The Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group, has clashed with the military and is also at odds with the Rohingya populations (International Crisis Group, 2022). The conflict has taken an ethnic turn, with both sides committing atrocities (Amnesty International, 2022). The Myanmar military's actions have been internationally condemned, with demands for accountability and justice (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The conflict has also had a substantial impact on civilians, with reports of murder, torture, and arbitrary detention (United Nations, 2022). The humanitarian situation in Rakhine State remains grave, with many people in need of aid (OCHA, 2022). The international community must assist efforts to provide accountability and justice for conflict victims (Human Rights Council, 2022). The conflict also emphasises the necessity for a peaceful and inclusive solution to the Rohingya crisis (International Crisis Group, 2022). Amnesty International has described Myanmar's military activities as a terror campaign targeting Rohingya and other ethnic minorities (2022). The violence has had a substantial impact on Rakhine State's economy and infrastructure (World Bank, 2022). The international community must collaborate to foster peace, stability, and development in Rakhine State.

Recently, especially between 2023 and 2024, fighting has escalated in Rakhine State, with claims of deaths, arson, and other violations against the Rohingya people (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The military's illegal recruitment of Rohingya men and boys has heightened communal tensions and raised fears of ethnic cleansing (United Nations, 2023). The recruitment of Rohingya men and boys constitutes a war crime and a serious violation of international law. The international community has criticised the military's actions, demanding responsibility and justice (Human Rights Council, 2023). The humanitarian situation in Rakhine State remains grave, with many people in need of aid (OCHA, 2023). The conflict has also had a substantial impact on people, with reports of displacement, trauma, and human rights violations (Physicians for Human Rights, 2023).

The Rohingya population has been persecuted and marginalised for decades, and recent events have increased their vulnerability (International Crisis Group, 2023). The international community must help foster accountability and justice for the Rohingya (Human Rights Council, 2023). The conflict also emphasises the need for a peaceful and inclusive solution to the Rohingya situation (United Nations, 2023). The military's actions have been deemed a danger to regional stability and security (ASEAN, 2023). The international community must collaborate to foster peace, stability, and development in Rakhine State. The Rohingya's struggle for justice and recognition continues today. Historical hostility, religious and social divides, and resource competitions are all factors contributing to the war. The Myanmar military's actions aggravated the situation, resulting in a grave humanitarian crisis. Effort to address the conflict requires knowledge of its complex history. This will serve to address the systemic persecution and human rights violations faced by the Rohingya people.

### **Assessing the Socio-Economic Implications of the Rohingya-Rakhine Communities Conflict**



The Rohingya-Rakhine community conflict in Myanmar has significant socio-economic effects. Importantly, is the issue of displacement and migration. The war in Rakhine State has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas, causing a significant migration crisis in neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh (United Nations, 2020). The Rohingya have endured forced displacement, violence, and human rights violations, resulting in a major migrant movement (International Crisis Group, 2019). Bangladesh has been particularly affected, with approximately 700,000 Rohingya refugees residing in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Beyond displacement and food insecurity, it has been reported that:

While the international community continues to focus its response on the immediate needs of the more than 140,000 displaced - most of them Rohingyas - in more than 70 overcrowded camps and camp-like settings, little attention has been paid to the vast majority of Muslims still living in their communities, or to neighbouring Buddhist communities, whose livelihoods have been shaken. It is estimated that 36,000 individuals live in isolated and host communities in Minbya, Myebon, Pauktaw, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, and Sittwe townships, with little to no access to assistance (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs).

In addition to large-scale displacement and the loss of productive assets such as fields, livestock, fish and shrimp farms, farm tools, and livelihood-supportive infrastructure, the UN reported that restricted movement and limited access to markets and surrounding natural resources have limited economic opportunities, particularly for Muslim internally displaced persons. The migrant crisis has put a burden on local resources and infrastructure, compounding already existing social and economic issues (World Bank, 2019). Rohingya refugees experience considerable barriers to obtaining basic services such as healthcare, education, and employment (Physicians for Human Rights, 2020). The international community has responded with humanitarian relief, but greater work is needed to address the crisis's core causes (Human Rights Council, 2020). International law recognises the Rohingya's right to seek asylum and protection, and countries must ensure that these rights are upheld (United Nations, 1951). The migrant problem emphasises the need for a comprehensive and long-term solution to the Rohingya situation (International Problem Group, 2019). The Rohingya's displacement is caused by the Myanmar government's policies and actions, and the international community must hold them accountable (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The displacement and relocation of the Rohingya have serious consequences for regional stability and security.

Moreso, the war in Rakhine State has resulted in reduced educational opportunities for Rohingya children, continuing a cycle of poverty and disadvantage (Save the Children, 2020). The Rohingya's hopes and opportunities are severely hampered by a lack of access to education. Rohingya children suffer various barriers to education, including a lack of schools, skilled teachers, and instructional materials (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The limited access to education exacerbates the already significant educational gaps between the Rohingya and other Myanmar communities (World Bank, 2019). The international community must help increase Rohingya children's access to education by providing funds and technical assistance (United Nations, 2020). Education is a key component of humanitarian response, and Rohingya children's educational needs must be prioritised (INEE, 2019). The Rohingya's capacity to rebuild their lives and communities will also suffer in the long run due to a lack of access to education. The Myanmar government must take steps to guarantee that Rohingya children have access to a good education, which is critical for their prospects (Human Rights Council, 2020). The Rohingya face enormous challenges due to limited access to education, which necessitates a comprehensive and long-term solution. The international community must collaborate to meet the Rohingya's educational demands.

Besides, the conflict in Rakhine State has resulted in a health catastrophe, with many Rohingya and Rakhine residents having restricted access to healthcare, sanitation, and hygiene facilities (Physicians for Human Rights, 2020). Lack of access to healthcare has resulted in higher morbidity and mortality rates, particularly among vulnerable populations such as women and children (World Health Organisation, 2019). The fighting has also harmed healthcare



infrastructure, worsening the problem (Human Rights Watch, 2019). The Rohingya community's health catastrophe is the result of decades of neglect and marginalisation, not only the conflict (International Catastrophe Group, 2019). The international community has responded with humanitarian relief, but more must be done to address the underlying causes of the health crisis (United Nations, 2020). The health crisis emphasises the necessity for a comprehensive and long-term strategy to healthcare in Rakhine State (World Health Organisation, 2019). Myanmar's government must prioritise the health and well-being of all Rakhine State residents, especially the Rohingya (Human Rights Council, 2020). The health crisis serves as a sharp reminder of the conflict's human cost and the importance of taking prompt action.

Nevertheless, the war in Rakhine State has weakened social cohesion and trust between the Rohingya and Rakhine people, making it difficult to achieve reconciliation and peace (International Crisis Group, 2019). The violence and human rights violations perpetrated throughout the conflict have caused profound divisions and mistrust between the two groups (Amnesty International, 2020). The absence of trust and social cohesiveness has hampered efforts to foster dialogue and reconciliation (United Nations, 2020). The crisis has also underlined the importance of a multifaceted strategy to strengthen social cohesion and trust, which includes community-based initiatives and conversation programs (World Bank, 2019). The Myanmar government must prioritise fostering trust and social cohesion among the Rohingya and Rakhine people (Human Rights Council, 2020). The international community can help foster social cohesion and confidence by providing financial and technical assistance (United Nations, 2020). The deterioration of social cohesiveness and trust has serious consequences for the long-term stability and development of the Rakhine state. The conflict highlights the importance of long-term, collaborative efforts in fostering peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

In another development, the war in Rakhine State has hampered agricultural output and food distribution, resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition among impacted communities (World Food Programme, 2020). The violence and displacement have limited the Rohingya's capacity to access and use their land, resulting in lower crop output and food availability (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2019). Food insecurity is a major concern, especially among vulnerable groups, including women and children (UNICEF, 2020). Malnutrition has resulted from a lack of access to adequate food, which can have long-term negative effects on health and well-being. The violence has also disrupted food distribution systems, making it difficult for humanitarian services to reach those affected (UN, 2020). Food insecurity is compounded by a lack of employment possibilities and income-generating activities (International Labour Organisation, 2019).

According to a post-crisis livelihood and early recovery sector evaluation conducted by the UN Development Programme in February, Muslim communities identified movement limitations and limits on market access as the primary hurdles to economic recovery. Access to the labour force has also been restricted. Due to inequalities in land holdings and population levels, Muslim villages used to be net labour suppliers, and Buddhist villages were net consumers.

Relatedly, the presence of armed organisations such as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) has increased competition and rivalry for resources, altering the economic situation in Rakhine State (International Crisis Group, 2018). The rivalry for resources has caused conflicts among several groups, notably the Rohingya and Rakhine populations (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Militant organisations have exploited the Rohingya's economic weaknesses for their own gain (Amnesty International, 2020). The battle for resources has also resulted in human rights violations, such as forced labour and land seizure (HRC, 2020). The economic situation of Rakhine State is complicated, with numerous actors and interests at stake (World Bank, 2019). The international community must prioritise economic development and job creation in Rakhine State in order to lessen resource rivalry and foster stability. The fight for resources emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive strategy to address the conflict's core causes.

The Rakhine-Rohingya conflict in Myanmar has significant economic dimensions that contribute to the ongoing tensions between the two communities. Rakhine State is rich in natural resources, but the Rohingya community is barred from accessing and profiting from them



(International Crisis Group, 2018). The state has enormous economic potential, which creates tremendous economic incentives that frequently favour the interests of the Rakhine Buddhist group over the Rohingya minority. The exploitation of natural resources has fuelled the conflict, with both sides competing for power and profit. The lack of transparency and accountability in natural resource management has aggravated the issue. The international community must assist efforts to improve openness and accountability in Rakhine State's natural resource management. The resource control issue emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive strategy to address the conflict's core causes.

Additionally, the Rohingya have been severely economically marginalised, with limitations on migration, education, healthcare, and work possibilities (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This has resulted in widespread poverty and vulnerability within the Rohingya minority. Economic marginalisation has been exacerbated by discriminatory policies and practices, such as limits on free movement, education, and employment. Many Rohingya have been compelled to work in informal, often exploitative, conditions due to a lack of economic possibilities. The international community must assist initiatives to increase economic empowerment and inclusion for the Rohingya people. The economic marginalisation of the Rohingya has severe consequences for the stability and prosperity of Rakhine State.

The violence has destroyed economic infrastructure, caused job losses, and disrupted trade, worsening the economic suffering experienced by both the Rohingya and Rakhine communities (World Bank, 2020). The loss of livelihoods has devastated households, resulting in food insecurity, poverty, and vulnerability. Many businesses have been forced to close, and trade has been significantly impacted. The scarcity of economic options has also increased by negative coping techniques, such as child labour and early marriage. The international community must contribute to Rakhine State's economic recovery and development. The loss of livelihoods emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the conflict's economic repercussions.

The Rohingya community relies largely on foreign aid, which increases uncertainty and vulnerability (United Nations, 2020). The international community's response to the situation has been uneven, with some governments giving humanitarian relief while others have been hesitant to intervene (Amnesty International, 2020). The lack of a long-term solution to the problem has forced a reliance on emergency relief, which is frequently insufficient and unexpected. The Rohingya community's reliance on foreign handouts diminishes their dignity and autonomy, creating doubt about their future. The international community must collaborate to find a more sustainable solution to the situation. The Rohingya community's reliance on foreign charity stems from the Myanmar government's failure to protect and support its citizens. The international community must hold the Myanmar government accountable for its responsibilities to protect and provide for the Rohingya.

The violence has also had an impact on regional trade, with the Arakan Army (AA) seizing control of critical districts in Rakhine State, affecting trade with neighbouring countries such as India and Bangladesh (International Crisis Group, 2020). The AA's vision for a new order in Rakhine State involves increasing commerce with these countries to boost the local economy. However, the war has disrupted trade routes, creating uncertainty for firms. The impact on regional trade has far-reaching consequences for the economic growth of Rakhine State and the area. The international community must support initiatives to boost economic development and regional collaboration. The crisis in Rakhine State emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to tackling the region's economic and security concerns. The AA's vision of a new order in Rakhine State must be considered in light of the region's complicated economic and security realities.

The destruction of houses, businesses, and infrastructure has cost many Rohingya and Rakhine people their livelihoods, aggravating poverty and economic suffering (World Bank, 2020). Contributing to this matter, independent investigations undertaken during the year found evidence that corroborated the 2017 ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in Rakhine State and further



detailed the military's killing, rape, and torture of unarmed villagers during a campaign of violence that displaced more than 700,000 Rohingya to neighbouring Bangladesh. Some evidence suggested preparatory actions on the part of security forces and other actors before the start of violence, including confiscation of knives, tools, iron, and other sharp objects that could be used as weapons in the days preceding attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). An additional 13,764 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh between January and September. The government prevented assistance from reaching displaced Rohingya and other vulnerable populations during the year by using access restrictions on the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies. The military also committed human rights abuses in continuing conflicts in Kachin and Shan States (United Nations, 2017).

The loss of livelihoods has devastated households, resulting in food insecurity, poverty, and vulnerability. The damage to infrastructure and companies has also hampered the local economy, causing ripple effects across the region. The loss of livelihoods has serious repercussions for the long-term economic prospects of the Rohingya and Rakhine peoples. The international community must contribute to Rakhine State's economic recovery and development. The loss of livelihoods emphasises the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the conflict's economic repercussions. The Myanmar government must prioritise the safety of citizens and the preservation of livelihoods in conflict zones.

## CONCLUSION

The Rohingya-Rakhine communities' conflict in Myanmar is a complex and protracted issue that has its roots in historical animosity, religious and social differences, and competition for resources. It became prominent in 1942, and since the 1970s, the conflict has escalated into a full-blown humanitarian crisis, with the Rohingya facing extreme persecution, violence, and displacement. This paper has examined the socio-economic context of the conflict, highlighting the historical, cultural, and economic factors that have contributed to the tensions between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities. The analysis has shown that the conflict is not just a simple case of ethnic or religious differences, but rather a complex interplay of factors, including historical grievances, economic disparities, and power imbalances. It argued that, thus far, the efforts made to resolve this conflict have yet to produce the desired result. The paper emphasised the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to address the conflict, one that takes into account the historical, cultural, and economic contexts of the region. This approach should prioritize the rights and dignity of all communities involved, including the Rohingya and Rakhine, and should aim to promote sustainable peace, stability, and development in the region.

Ultimately, resolving the Rohingya-Rakhine conflict will require a sustained commitment from the international community, the Myanmar government, and local stakeholders to address the root causes of the conflict and promote reconciliation and social cohesion between the different communities involved. By understanding the complex socio-economic context of the conflict, the country should work towards a more nuanced and effective approach to addressing this humanitarian crisis and promoting peace and stability in Myanmar. This could be achieved through the following approaches.

Firstly, Myanmar's authorities must ensure a truly democratic, representative, and accountable political system that respects and defends the human rights and dignity of all people without discrimination. This necessitates constitutional changes that ensure equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. A democratic administration would assist in fostering trust and confidence among diverse communities, paving the way for reconciliation. It is critical to develop an inclusive and participatory democratic system that represents the different opinions and perspectives of Myanmar's people. By doing so, the government may address the underlying causes of the conflict and move towards a more peaceful and secure future.

Secondly, all Rohingya people must receive full legal acknowledgement of their right to citizenship, as well as the provision of necessary civil paperwork. This would allow people to obtain fundamental services such as education, healthcare, and economic possibilities. Citizenship would give the Rohingya a feeling of identity and security, allowing them to reconstruct their lives



with dignity. It would also help them integrate into Myanmar society and increase social harmony. By giving citizenship, the government may address one of the conflict's main causes while also promoting a more inclusive and equal society.

Thirdly, the government should participate in inclusive and constructive discourse to promote national reconciliation, including Rohingya leaders and representatives in decision-making. This would help to establish trust and confidence among different populations while also addressing the underlying reasons for the violence. Inclusive conversation would also help to design policies and programs that address the needs of all communities, boosting social cohesion and national unity. It is critical to create a secure and respectful discourse environment in which all participants can engage in open and honest conversations. By doing so, the government may contribute to a more peaceful and stable future for all citizens.

Fourthly, there should be the encouragement of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programs to combat the destabilising operations of Rohingya armed groups and other militant organisations. These initiatives can assist in minimising violence and enhancing stability in Rakhine State. Disarmament and demobilisation activities can contribute to a safer environment, allowing humanitarian relief to be delivered while also protecting people. Reintegration programs can help ex-combatants reconstruct their lives and become useful members of their communities by providing them with the necessary skills and assistance. This can help stop the cycle of violence and lessen the likelihood of future conflict. Effective disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration initiatives necessitate a holistic approach that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict. The international community may contribute to a peaceful and long-term resolution of the Rohingya problem by advocating disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration.

Fifthly, Bangladesh should enable engagement between Rohingya leaders and the Arakan Army to build mutual understanding and cooperation, which could pave the road for long-term solutions in Rakhine State. This discourse could assist in addressing both parties' issues and frustrations, lowering tensions and encouraging a more peaceful outcome. Dialogue would need to be facilitated by a neutral and trusted third party who can bring both sides together. The dialogue process should be inclusive, transparent, and geared towards finding mutually beneficial solutions. By encouraging conversation, Bangladesh can help lessen the likelihood of additional conflict and foster a more stable and peaceful region. Effective communication may also result in improved cooperation on problems such as humanitarian aid and economic development.

Besides, consider establishing a safe zone in Rakhine State, with explicit criteria for its geographic boundaries, monitoring methods, and administration by international and local actors. A safe zone could provide a secure atmosphere for citizens, lowering the likelihood of violence and human rights violations. The creation of a safe zone would necessitate meticulous planning and cooperation among both local and international actors. It would also necessitate a defined administrative and monitoring framework to safeguard the safety and dignity of individuals who live in the zone. A safe zone might also improve humanitarian access and economic development, resulting in a more secure and peaceful future. The international community should offer assistance and resources to ensure the success of a safe zone.

Additionally, it should be ensured that the Rohingya refugees receive adequate and ongoing humanitarian assistance, with a focus on education, skill development, and livelihoods to increase their resilience and self-reliance. Humanitarian aid should be delivered in a way that respects the Rohingya's needs and dignity, with an emphasis on enhancing their well-being and safety. Humanitarian aid should be coordinated with host countries to ensure that refugees receive the assistance they require while minimising the impact on host communities. Education and skill development are crucial for Rohingya refugees' future chances and should be prioritised in humanitarian efforts. Livelihood support can help Rohingya refugees become more self-sufficient, reducing their need for aid and encouraging a more sustainable future. Humanitarian assistance should be offered in a manner that supports the protection and safety of Rohingya refugees.



Lastly, there should be an encouragement of international cooperation to resolve human rights violations and hold perpetrators accountable for past and current injustices against the Rohingya. The international community plays an important role in achieving accountability and justice for the Rohingya, and it should collaborate to support efforts to investigate and prosecute human rights violations. This could include assisting international investigations and prosecutions, as well as giving technical help and capacity-building support to national governments. The international community should also assist victims of human rights violations, including access to justice, reparations, and other forms of restitution. By encouraging accountability and justice, the international community may help lower the danger of future human rights violations while also creating a more peaceful and stable region. International cooperation is important in addressing the Rohingya crisis and holding those responsible for human rights violations accountable.

Ultimately, addressing the Rohingya-Rakhine conflict would necessitate the Myanmar government, regional powers, and the international community to promote peace, stability, and human rights for all people involved. This will require a long-term commitment to addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, such as citizenship, land rights, and economic development. The Myanmar government must take the lead in promoting national reconciliation and ensuring that all people's rights are respected and protected. Regional powers, such as Bangladesh and other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member nations, can play an important role in encouraging regional peace and economic development. The international community, particularly the United Nations and other multilateral organisations, must continue to engage and support peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts.

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