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NEW PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTHEAST ASIA



Rohingya and national identities in Burma

[CARLOS SARDIÑA GALACHE](#) - 22 SEP, 2014

The most controversial aspect of the census recently held in Burma has been the denial of the large Muslim population in Arakan to identify themselves as Rohingya, the term of their choice. The government ban means as many as one million people remain uncounted in Arakan. That is scarcely surprising, as the Burmese government, Rakhine ultra-nationalists and seemingly a majority of the Burmese population have denied for years the existence of the Rohingya identity. According to them, the Rohingya ethnicity is an invention devised by immigrants from Bangladesh to take over the land in Arakan.

Few people have made more effort to deny the claims of ethnicity by the Rohingya than Derek Tonkin, former British ambassador to Thailand and editor of the website Network Myanmar. Mr. Tonkin has reached [his conclusions](#) after digging deeply in colonial British archives, where he has not found a single use of the term *Rohingya*. His command of the British colonial records is nothing less than impressive, but by relying almost solely on these sources he only offers a partial picture, from which I think he draws incorrect conclusions.

The debate on whether the Rohingya ethnicity should be regarded as one of the “national races” or not, assumes – implicitly or explicitly – as its framework of reference the definition to be found in the controversial Citizenship Law passed in 1982. According to this definition, only those ethnic groups which were already in Burma in 1823 qualify as “national races.”

Rather than attempting to defend Rohingya claims, I argue that the notion of “national races” itself, and thus the set of assumptions hitherto determining the terms of the debate, are fundamentally false and do not facilitate any understanding of the history and present social realities of Burma.

This notion has reduced the debate on Rohingya identity to a confrontation between three different historical narratives: what we might call “Rakhine history” and “Burmese History” on the one side (on this point both are basically indistinguishable, albeit there are important divergences in other aspects), as opposed to the “Rohingya history” on the other. As in many other nationalist histories all around the world, these narratives are loaded with myths and distortions. They are also mutually contradictory, making it impossible to find any common ground for all sides involved.

Competing historical narratives

Burmese and Rakhine nationalists often accuse the Rohingya of falsifying their history in order to advance their claims for ethnicity. It is true that Rohingya historians tend to minimize or ignore altogether the importance of the migration of laborers to Arakan from Bengal during colonial times; moreover, some have made claims that are historically incorrect: for instance, Rohingya historians often claim that some Muslim kings ruled Arakan in the 15th century.

Meanwhile, mirroring the distortions of “Rohingya history,” Rakhine historians tend to minimize, or to ignore altogether, the large numbers of Muslims living in Arakan before colonial times and to emphasize only the influx of Bengali laborers during colonial times. Now some Rakhine go so far as to claim that “illegal immigrants from Bangladesh” have arrived as recently as a few years ago and have continued arriving up to the first wave of sectarian violence in 2012, [a highly dubious assertion](#) for which there is no evidence.

On the Burmese side, we find assertions of a history of unity and continuity stretching back for hundreds of years and which was only broken by the traumatic colonial experience. Thus, in 2002, the military ruler, Senior General Than Shwe claimed that “thanks to the unity and farsightedness of our forefathers, our country has existed as a united and firm Union and not as separate small nations for over 2,000 years.”

This extraordinary kind of assertion only makes sense in the context of the state-building project to unify all the ethnic groups under the guardianship of the (Bamar-controlled) *Tatmadaw* (Burmese military). This has been the ultimate goal for the Burmese state since Ne Win staged his coup d'état in 1962. It is in this context that, at least during the last two decades, the generals have been increasingly trying to present themselves as the heirs of the Burmese kings and their mission as that of restoring some sort of “natural Burmese order” which the British interrupted.

There is no doubt that the British colonization of Burma dealt a highly traumatic blow to every dimension of social order in Burma, from which it has yet to recover. The British dismantled completely all the political institutions and cultural structures that had more or less glued together the society of central Burma and replaced them with others that the Burmese often did not understand or refused because they had been imposed by force by foreign invaders.

But pre-colonial Burma was by no means an era of uniform political order and stability. In fact, the centuries between the first Burmese kingdom which managed to unify this territory, the Pagan dynasty (1057-1287), and the colonial times was a period in which central authority was only gradually asserted, at every point confronting many difficulties and including long periods of anarchy when petty states competed for power.

In any case, before the first Anglo-Burmese war, the domains of the Burmese kingdom were never coterminous with those of the present Burmese state: in large areas, particularly in the hills to the North and East, the grip of the Burmese kings was at best extremely weak. And the Arakanese kingdom was only invaded in 1784, just forty years before it was taken by the British.

It is an anachronism to talk about borders, as we understand them now, in Southeast Asia before the arrival of the colonial powers. As the anthropologist Edmund R. Leach [put it](#) more than fifty years ago in his paper, “The Frontiers of ‘Burma’”: pre-colonial Burma was a “wide imprecisely defined frontier region lying between India and China” where “the indigenous political systems which existed prior to the phase of European political expansion were not separated from one another by frontiers in the modern sense and they were not sovereign Nation-States.”

Therefore, it makes little historical sense to classify any ethnic group as a “national race” on the basis that it already inhabited *before* the colonial period a territory demarcated *after* the beginning of the period.

Colonial conceptions of ethnicity

What the Burmese, Rakhine and Rohingya historical narratives have in common is an essentialist and racist conception of ethnic identities as something primordial and fixed in time. Arguably, this is one of the most enduring and deleterious legacies of the British rule in Burma and lies at the heart of the now hegemonic and highly dangerous notion of “national races.”

When the British arrived in Burma, they found a land with a bewildering and confusing (for the external observer) variety of human groups, and where ethnic affiliations were enormously fluid. To make sense of that complex human landscape, they imposed a rigid grid of ethnic classification in which they conflated the mother tongue of the speakers with the category of “tribe” or “race.”

But, as the scholar Victor Lieberman [has shown in his paper](#), “Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma,” ethnicity had virtually no bearing at all as a marker of political loyalty to the different kingdoms which ruled Central Burma during the 17th and 18th centuries. Ethnic distinctions were even more blurred in the “hill areas,” as Edmund R. Leach showed in his classic book *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. The distinction between Kachin and Shan categories was rather vague, and it was not uncommon for “Kachins” to turn into “Shan” or vice versa depending on the social systems in which they decided to live, a phenomenon which, according to Leach, “cannot readily be fitted into any ethnographic scheme which, on linguistic grounds, places Kachins and Shans into different ‘racial’ categories.”

But that is exactly what the British did. And the colonial officials held a set of views of ethnicity and race strongly influenced by the social Darwinist prejudices of the time, and they attributed to the different groups personal and innate characteristics: the Karen or Kachin were stereotyped as simple and honest people, included within the “martial races;” the Burmans were devious and childish, not to be trusted, and so on.

On the basis of these spurious classifications, they recruited people to their armies using ethnicity as criteria, and favored some groups over others. They also tended to employ Indians as civil servants, rather than Burmese, because they had more experience with the colonial bureaucratic system and thus were better trained. These policies reinforced, and in some cases generated, ethnic classifications which are still widely accepted in Burma, and animosities that survive to this day. The anthropologist F. K. Lehman identified the problem more than fifty years ago in his study “Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems.” According to him, before the colonial period, “the Burmans had a reasonably correct tacit understanding of the nature of their relations with bordering peoples, tribal and non-tribal,” an understanding which was lost due “to the importation of very explicit European ideas about nations, societies and cultures.”

Lehman suggested that when people identify themselves as members of an ethnic group, they were merely “taking positions in culturally defined systems of intergroup relations,” and that those ethnic categories were “only very indirectly descriptive of the empirical characteristics of substantive groups of people.” Therefore, local or regional groups were “inherently likely to have recourse to more than one ethnic role system and more than one ‘identity’.”

As a consequence of the fluidity of these roles, Lehman asserted that “we cannot reconstruct any demonstrable discrete ancestral group for some ‘ethnic category’ – no matter whether we define such a possible ancestral group as a discrete dialect group, or as a group with relatively sharp discontinuities from its neighbors.” But this kind of “discrete ancestral groups” is precisely what the notion of “national races” assumes as certain.

Arakan: “The Palestine of the Farther East”

In 1891, the Swiss Pali scholar and archeologist Emil Forchhammer wrote [a small book about Arakan](#) in which he described it as the “Palestine of the Farther East,” because, as he put it, Arakanese Buddhism was the inspiration of the Buddhism practiced in the rest of Burma. More than two hundred years later, the comparison has a different resonance: as in Palestine, Arakan is the land of a conflict with some religious undertones between two communities. As in Palestine, the conflict involves a clash of historical narratives. And, as in Palestine, one of the two communities has been stripped of its political rights.

Arakan is separated by a range of mountains from the rest of Burma, making it relatively isolated from the Irrawaddy delta and central Burma. For most of its history, Arakan’s relations with the kingdom of Bengal in the west were just as rich and close as with the Burmese kingdoms in the north, if not more so, thus creating a culture distinct from that of Burma.

As in the rest of Southeast Asia, there were not clear borders between Arakan and Bengal in pre-modern times, the areas of influence of both kingdoms overlapped and were constantly fluctuating. The historian G. E. Harvey wrote in his classic *History of Burma* that, throughout the Middle Ages, “when Bengal was in the ascendant, some kings sent tribute to Bengal and when the Arakanese were in the ascendant they received tribute from the Ganges delta, ‘The Twelve Towns of Bengal’.” At that time, the Bengali court provided a political model for the Arakanese kingdom, and from the 15th to the 17th century, it was common for the kings to use Muslim/Bengali designations and to issue coins with the *kalima*, the Muslim profession of faith.

Meanwhile, as Harvey points out, though the geographical isolation of Arakan from Burma “rendered her immune to attack on the east, the resultant peace did not give her unity, because her territory is a long thin strip of coast intersected by hill torrents.”

This fragmentation made the Arakanese kings more tolerant than the Burmese kings to the religious beliefs of the different communities under their rule. [In his doctoral dissertation](#), *Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)*, Professor Michael Charney wrote: “In Arakan the royal center was not simply indifferent to promoting one particular religious identity over another, but rather was one of the chief barriers restricting the emergence of a Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy in the Arakan littoral.”

Arakanese kings did not try to establish a “Buddhism kingdom” or centralize the Sangha, as their Burmese counterparts did, but worked through local patron-client networks and tried to present themselves as the patrons of whatever religion was practiced at a local level, be it Buddhism, Islam or even Catholicism in some Portuguese communities in the coast. Charney argues that this prevented for centuries the creation of communal identities based on religious beliefs, Buddhist or Muslim; and that these did not emerge until the late 18th century, and even then only under external influences.

There were Muslims in Arakan as early as the Ninth century but it is likely that their presence was not very strong. It was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the Arakanese and Portuguese communities settled in Southern Bengal (then under the authority of the Arakanese court) started to raid Bengal for slaves and transferring thousands of them to Arakan. The Arakanese kings settled most of these slaves in Northern Arakan, but took the well-educated in Mrauk-U to serve in the court as functionaries.

Before its conquest by the Burmese in 1784, there was already a substantial rural Muslim population in Arakan. “Perhaps up to three-quarters of Danra-waddy’s [northern Arakan, including Sittwe and Mrauk-U] population by the 1770s may have been Muslim,” asserts Charney. Meanwhile, “some Bengali Muslims in Mrauk-U participated in the development of an elite Muslim culture in the royal city, perhaps reflecting their privileged backgrounds in Banga [Southern Bengal].”

It is worth mentioning that the border along the Naf River between the British-controlled Bengal and Arakan did not have the same meaning for the British and the Burmese. If, as Leach pointed out, pre-colonial Burma was a “wide imprecisely defined frontier region lying between India and China,” Arakan was a “frontier region” between Burma and Bengal.

Whatever border there was between Arakan and Bengal, it disappeared completely after the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826), when Arakan passed to British hands. At that time, Charles Paton, the sub-Commissioner of Arakan, [estimated that](#), from a total population of 100,000 people, 60 percent were ‘Mughs’ (Rakhine), 30 percent were ‘Mussalman’ (Muslims) and 10 percent ‘Burmese’. It is clear that those were highly tentative figures, but at the same time it’s impossible to deny that there was a substantial Muslim population in Arakan before the arrival of the British.

It is also undeniable that there was migration of Muslims from Chittagong during colonial times, and that not all of the newcomers were seasonal laborers. This immigration was encouraged by the British, something that was resented by the Buddhist Rakhine population and contributed to reinforce the communal divisions between Muslims and Buddhists in the region. There is no need to repeat here the arguments demonstrating this, the [reader can review the article published by Mr. Tonkin](#) to find extensive evidence for that.

The point is that there was a migratory wave of Muslims from Bengal in colonial times that joined an already sizeable Muslim population made up of the descendants of the slaves taken by the Portuguese and the Arakanese during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Present-day Rohingya are the descendants of both waves of migration, which intermingled to such a degree that now it would be impossible to distinguish who descends from one or the other.

In any case, as Lehman pointed out, it would be impossible “to reconstruct any demonstrable discrete ancestral group” for the people who now have chosen to call themselves Rohingya, as it would be impossible for any other Burmese ethnic group. But that does not imply that the Rohingya ethnicity is not real *now*. In any case, the Rohingya identity was not “invented” recently out of the blue, as some claim; it had been “gestating,” so to speak, for at least three hundred years, and the term itself was not new.

The “R-word”

The first known record of a very similar word to *Rohingya* used to refer to the Muslim inhabitants of Arakan is to be found in [an article about the languages](#) spoken in the “Burma empire” published by the Scottish physician Francis Buchanan in 1799. He

wrote: "I shall now add three dialects, spoken in the Burma Empire, but evidently derived from the language of the Hindu nation. The first is that spoken by the Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan."

It has been argued that *Rooinga* (or Rohingya) derives from Rohang, the word used in Bengal to refer to Arakan, and thus was just another way to say Arakanese. [Michael Charney suggests tentatively](#) that "Rohingya may be a term that had been used by both Hindu and Muslim Bengalis living in Rakhaing [Arakan] since the sixteenth century, either as resident traders in the capital or as war captives resettled in the Kaladan River Valley." But he is careful to point out that in the past "Rohingya and Rakhaing [Rakhine] were not mutually exclusive ethnonyms. Rakhaing's topography may have led to Rohingya and Rakhaing emerging as separate versions of the same term in different geographical contexts that came, in the eighteenth century to be associated closely with the predominant religious makeup of the local area concerned."

The evidence available shows that the term Rohingya was not widely used to describe a distinct ethnic group until the twentieth century. I would argue that the explanation for this is as simple as that there was no reason for the Rohingya to distinguish themselves in such a manner until the rise in Burma of the Bamar and other ethno-nationalisms against British colonialism.

The beginnings of the Burmese nationalist movement were strongly Buddhist in character, and some of the first nationalist leaders were monks. Thus, Burmese nationalism acquired a religious hue from the beginning. On the other hand, the Burmese have always viewed Indians with suspicion, and particularly Muslims. At that time, the general public did not distinguish much between Burmese Muslims and Indian Muslims, so Burmese Muslims felt they needed to distance themselves from Indian Muslims throughout the country.

The tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in Arakan, which had been mounting during colonial times, came to a head in the Second World War. When the British retreated to India and the Japanese advanced in Arakan, the Rakhine Buddhists sided mostly with the Japanese and the Burmese Independence Army of Aung San, while the Muslims were armed by the British; but the conflict soon turned into a civil war between Muslims and Buddhists. When the war ended, the north was mainly Muslim, the south was mainly Buddhist, and the communal divisions reached a point of no return.

Anti-Rohingya discourses often recall the Mujahid insurgency that took place in Arakan during the fifties. As the goal of some of the insurgents was the annexation of northern Arakan by East Pakistan, Rohingya are accused of disloyalty to the Burmese State. But there was scarcely any popular support for the rebellion, and many of its victims were Rohingya. In fact, some Rohingya leaders demanded U Nu to provide them with weapons in several occasions, a demand which was never met.

Meanwhile in Rangoon, Rakhine nationalists were pushing for a separate Arakan State, while Rohingya politicians, wary of their Rakhine neighbors after the Second World War sectarian violence, demanded a separate region in the north for them ruled directly by Rangoon. And during the Parliamentary period (1948-1962) and the first years of Ne Win's dictatorship, there were not only many Rohingya organizations, both in Arakan and Rangoon, but the government recognized Rohingya as a Burmese ethnic group, [as documents compiled by Dr. Zami show](#).

It was the government of Ne Win and its military successors who denied Rohingya their rights and began to persecute them, from the mid-seventies until now. And it can be argued that, paradoxically, nothing has done more to reinforce the Rohingya identity than the attempts to suppress it.

Burma and its national identities

There is no historical precedent for an independent political entity for Burma as it exists now, and the different groups that make up the complex ethnic tapestry of Burma were never under the authority of a single government before the arrival of the British. Like many other post-Colonial countries, Burma emerged from British rule as a country deeply divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

The Bamar was in some ways an underprivileged group during the colonial era but, after turning the tables in the Second World War, since independence it has become the privileged group. As a result of these competing nationalisms and the repeated attempts of the Bamar majority to impose its centralized vision of a Nation-State, the Burmese state has failed to generate a supra-national identity powerful enough to include and transcend the several ethno-nationalisms that awoke during colonial times.

The Rohingya identity is not more “artificial” or “invented” than any other, but the story of its ethnogenesis does not fit easily in the all too narrow concept of “national races” as is currently understood in Burma: ethnic groups which were already fully formed as we know them now in pre-colonial times. Others would also fail the test, because the test itself stems from a misunderstanding of ethnicity and group formation, but it is the political context that has determined that the Rohingya, and the Rohingya alone, should fail it. Their mere existence as a people is a serious challenge to the weak mainstream historical narrative imposed by the military regime.

This, and the Rohingya’s cultural, religious and linguistic differences, has made them expedient scapegoats in the context of a failed process of nation-building. Nothing glues together a divided community more than a common threat, real or imagined, and nothing has united the Rakhine and the Bamar more than identifying the Rohingya as their common enemy. The consequence is [a campaign of ethnic cleansing](#) that has been going on for decades. In this situation, it would be very naïve to believe that they are suffering such persecution because they have chosen to call themselves *Rohingya*, a claim for ethnicity that they have as much right to make as any other community in Burma, instead of accepting the designation “Bengalis” enforced by the Burmese regime.

If, as Mr. Derek Tonkin claims, the word Rohingya “is offensive to many Burmese,” that tells us more about those Burmese than about the Rohingya themselves. Burmese define themselves and what it means to be Burmese in the very act of exclusion. What is at stake in the way that the Burmese nation treats and identifies the Rohingya and other Muslim communities is not only the future of those communities, but also the kind of Burma that the Burmese want to build for themselves.

Carlos Sardiña Galache is a freelance journalist based in Bangkok. A longer version of this essay is available [here](#). You can visit his website [here](#).

• 320  30  120 RESPONSES

1. [Derek Tonkin](#)

[22 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 11:38 PM](#)

It is really only during the last two years that some of us seeking a practical solution to the appalling and continuing misfortunes of Muslims in Arakan have started to challenge the historical narrative propagated by the international Rohingya lobby.

You seem to be saying, Carlos, that most Muslims in Arakan today are of Bengali ancestry and that they have arrived in Arakan over the last four hundred years or so. I agree. We might even agree that this is true of over 90% of the present Muslim population. I think we would also agree that their Bengali DNA is no good reason to describe their present ethnicity as Bengali, and that the relatively recent emergence of ‘Rohingya’ as an ethnicity should be accepted.

As we are looking for practical solutions to the problem, we should be cautious of endeavours to deny this Bengali heritage. Thus Aman Ullah recently: “The Rohingya are a nation with a population of more than 3 million (both home and abroad) having a supporting history, separate culture, civilization, language and literature, historically settled territory and reasonable size of population and area.”

Such myths run counter to the known ebb and flow over the centuries of Muslim communities between present day Bengal and Rakhine State. It suggests attempts for political reasons to de-Indianize the Muslim communities in Rakhine State and to mould them without any historical justification into a single, homogeneous community with which all Muslims in Rakhine State are required to ‘self-identify’ themselves. This is not the way to resolve problems.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10:00 PM](#)

Wow... Mr Derek Tonkin... You mention ‘DNA’... I never thought you would dare use it these days... Now, it shows you are a biological racist like Rakhine racists (Dr Aye Maung, etc.)! I dare say if Rohingya have Bengali DNA, Rakhine have some too. Look at many of their faces! They look Bengali too. Worshiping Buddha and wearing Burmese dress doesn’t subtract Bengali DNA from them. The best example is U U Hla Saw. He looks very Bengali indeed! And it is common knowledge in places like Yangon and Mandalay that Rakhines look Indian! Lol....



[REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10:11 PM](#)

And I know why you say Rohingya must be registered as Bengali because they are Muslim, wear hijab, are bearded, etc. Interesting theory by Mr Derek Tonkin! And I am surprised that you claim to solve the conflict in Rakhine. How are you solving it? How can your solutions be unbiased and helpful when you are a biological racist? This news is very interesting. <http://www.thedailystar.net/protect-indigenous-rakhines-42955>. Some Bangladeshis are protecting their Rakhine indigenous citizens while the whole people of Myanmar are rejecting Rohingya. I feel very sorry for the loss of rights of those hundreds of thousands of Rakhines in Bangladesh. But I am at the same time wondering where they have gone in these few decades! They must have fled to Rakhine, welcomed with incentives (land, houses, NRCs, etc.) by their Rakhine and Burmese Buddhist brethren. And Rakhines at the same time are clamoring that Rohingya invade Rakhine until now. What nonsense!



[REPLY](#) > Ko Raung Hfee

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:01 AM](#)

To Derek Tonkin, you seemed dear racist sir, very happy to write against the Rohingya. If you are dare enough to compete on Rohingya history, you can visit the site Burma Times as well as you can call for a swift official challenge WITH WORLDWIDE Rohingya. The most distinguishable object which transparently differentiates between Rohingya and other ethnic groups is culture of Rohingya people. The style of ethnic Rohingya in eating and drinking is distinguished from Bengalees, ethnic Rakhines and Burmese. The dal(pulse) cooking style of ethnic Rohingya is concentrated and of Bengalee is diluted. Amidst having regular meal, both ethnic Rakhine and Burmese used to consume alcohol and fish paste (Ngaa pee) while ethnic Rohingya used to consumes salt as taking salt in the beginning of having food is the tradition of Muslims. However, the ethnic Burmese and Rakhine ... persistently deny the existence of Rohingya in Arakan despite concrete historical facts which prove that Rohingya settled themselves there since advent of ethnic Burmese.



[REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9:19 AM](#)

Salt instead of Ngapi is of course as Indian in food culture as drinking alcohol never is with the Buddhist Rakhine and Bamar. Thick daal is also Indian whereas Burmese eat it soupy not gloopy.



[REPLY](#) > Rachael Thompson

[22 MAY 2015 AT 3:12 AM](#)

Excellently put! Where's the Burmese humor now. We're all mongrels whether we live in Burma or not. Stop all this fussing and fighting and get on with nation building. Ordinary Burmese actually enjoys mixing it up. The country is coming along for once, lets share mohingya with the Rhohingyas and move on.



[REPLY](#) > Sandra

[23 JANUARY 2016 AT 1:50 AM](#)

Including Tonkin along with all white people, you should take care of your own nations before you take care of the so called Rohinga. Now the west and the US is going down like crazy; this is the reason the white people have nothing to do but come and argue here without having any common sense. Before you argue, study the history and sociology very carefully!!

period!!

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2. [Nic Dunlop](#)

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:01 AM](#)

'The rights of minorities to self-identify is a central principle of international human rights law' the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma said last July.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > plan B

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:43 AM](#)




There are over 100+ Minor ethnic group that do not fit under any other heading. The insistent of Rohingyas as an ethnic group is historically and practically (Myanmar has a recognized 8 ethnic group) fraud with another secession.

So please do not pontificate w/o knowing the true ins and out of Myanmar.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5:48 PM](#)

But does the principle apply in all circumstances? What if an ethnic group has been created artificially, the name concocted after a series of debates, an impoverished, persecuted population pressurized into conformity, children dragooned to chant "Rohingya! Rohingya! Rohingya!" at visiting UN representatives? This is no solution to their predicament. They need genuine and serious support, not just clever words from a well-funded international lobby

0  0  [REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#) |  [a Galache](#)

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:10 AM](#)

I just find outrageous the claims made often by Mr. Tonkin that the Rohingya identity has been enforced on the Arakanese Muslim population. Of course, Mr. Tonkin, who is so careful always in providing documents and evidence, doesn't present any to prove such kind of assertions. The reality is that, in Arakan, simply saying "I am Rohingya" might land people in jail or get them receiving a really hard beating from the security forces. But Mr. Tonkin seems to be adamant to put the blame on the victims for their plight, not on the real perpetrators.

I don't really know what is an ethnic group "created artificially", is that there are "natural" ethnic groups? Ethnic groups, nations, and so on, as any human community (or virtually any human phenomena, for that matter) are never "natural." Remember that famous sentence uttered by a Nineteenth Century Italian nationalist: "We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians," Mr. Tonkin?

I will try to be fair and will assume that Mr. Tonkin did not talk about "Bengali DNA" seriously or literally.

Mr. Tonkin would like us to believe that the problem comes from the fact that the Rohingya are trying to "de-Indianize" their origins. That is the playing field in Burma and the rules of the game: it's perfectly understandable that the context of the hegemonic, and highly narrow, notion of "national races" as the only bona fide citizens of the country has pushed the Rohingya on that direction. And this notion has really been fostered from above, by the military regime, and has taken even the form of the law regulating who is entitled to citizenship (which Mr Tonkin seems to endorse or at least he refuses to challenge because "the law of each state primarily determines who are its nationals," a most circular and meaningless argument). It takes either a lot of naivety or bad faith to believe that the Rohingya are responsible of their fate because of whatever historical mistakes they can make in their attempt to be recognized as citizens in their country on the basis of a set of criteria seemingly designed to exclude them. But, again, Mr. Tonkin has chosen to put the blame on the victims.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:38 AM](#)

Now see <http://www.networkmyanmar.com/images/stories/PDF18/The-Mujahid-Rebellion-in-Arakan.pdf> which opens up a whole new world about “Rwanga” which up to at least 1955 defined the ‘Arakan Mohamedans’ – their choice of designation and one which, for that very reason, I would wholeheartedly endorse. The “Rwanga” were seen as quite separate from the “Chittagonian Muslims” in Arakan.



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[REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#) | [a Galache](#)

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 11:16 PM](#)

So you would wholeheartedly endorse “Rwanga” (which you admit might have been a forerunner of “Rohingya” [sounds pretty similar, actually] <https://twitter.com/NetworkMyanmar/status/514055780467630080>) but are reluctant to accept “Rohingya”? You say that you would endorse “Rwanga” because it was Arakanese Muslims’ choice of designation, then why don’t accept Rohingya (clearly their choice of designation now and possibly the same word with a different transliteration)? Are we discussing about a mere question of orthography, Mr. Tonkin, or is that you are unwilling to admit openly that there is such thing as a Rohingya ethnicity even in the face of your own evidence?



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Moe Aung

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9:58 AM](#)

Not only did they try and de-Indianize their origins they tried to re-Indianize by seeking the three townships that they had ethnic cleansed of the Rakhine to be subsumed into East Pakistan. In fact we have now witnessed a persistent attempt at usurping the Arakanese Muslim identity by this historically Johnny-come-lately group to the dismay and resentment, nay detriment, of the older communities that have not shown any aggressive territorial or proselytizing ambitions.

Their explicit aim was to establish a caliphate just like the ISIS today.

When the generals managed to come up with as many as 135 indigenous races it’s not like they were deliberately skimping on the numbers, were they? The odd one out is just that uniquely predatory.



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[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 11:38 AM](#)

What do you mean by concoction? Did you not comprehend the statement “The first known record of a very similar word to Rohingya used to refer to the Muslim inhabitants of Arakan is to be found in an article about the languages spoken in the “Burma empire” published by the Scottish physician Francis Buchanan in 1799”?

I would like to know how you are genuinely and seriously supporting the alleviation of the sufferings of the Rohingyas in Arakan beyond denying them the right to call Rohingyas?



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[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6:22 PM](#)

During his visit to Ava in 1795 Francis Buchanan met a group of Muslims who told him they came from Arakan. They said they were “Rooinga” which they (not he) interpreted as “natives of Arakan”. We should however note that this was an isolated, indeed unique reference, because neither Buchanan, in his voluminous writings, nor any other of his contemporaries, ever used the expression again. I would therefore be most cautious about regarding this sole reference as evidence of an ethnic label. I see it more as a geographic locator.

In writings which you will find on the website I edit you will see that I have on several occasions supported the right of Arakan Muslims to use the ethnic designation “Rohingya” if that is what they wish. That is the essence of self-determination.



[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[17 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2:05 PM](#)

Even if *they* said they were “Rooringa” which *they (not he* interpreted as “natives of Arakan”, they were there prior to the arrival of the British and they referred to themselves as Rooringa prior to the arrival of the British. That WAS the point in referring to Buchanan’s book.



[Derek Tonkin](#)

[17 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 8:30 PM](#)

Mandy. I’m sure the people Buchanan met in Amarapura wanted to make it clear that they did not come from Bengal, but from Arakan. The fact that there have been Muslims in what is today Rakhine State for a very long time is not in dispute. On that we seem agreed.

But one Buchanan swallow does not make a Rohingya summer. As recently as 2002 Moshe Yegar noted (Page 25 ‘Between Integration and Succession’) that Sunni Muslims in Arakan “call themselves Rohinga, Rohingya or Roewengya” while Khin Maung Yin, a lecturer at the International Islam University in Malaysia, wrote in 2005 about “Rohingya, also known as Rwangya” (Page 164 Intellectual Discourse 2005). This suggests to me that more than two centuries after Buchanan went to Amarapura, there is still some uncertainty about the proper designation of the ethnicity of Rakhine Muslims, though I would accept that after the appalling events of 2012 matters have crystallized in favour of “Rohingya”.

But the Rohingya of today are no longer the “Kulaw Yakain” of Buchanan speaking an archaic language which he recorded with obvious pleasure and delight. Who they are is still a bit of a mystery to me. But I am working on it.



plan B

[17 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6:19 PM](#)

By the same standard that you choose to apply for legitimacy, then the Mongoloid feature of archeological and myriad evidences predated the incas and Indian make the Americas the legitimate domain of Chinese and Japaneses, eh.

A laughable assertion even if all true.

Bama is the majority now. How will the majority decide the status of minority must be the question.

It is not the minority privilege to decide how it will like to be defined beyond legitimate resident. In Myanmar besides the official ethnic groups there are Tayoke, Kala and westerner.

The funny thing is the Jewish people never make a fuss about themselves in Myanmar to this day even though there are quite a large population.

Call yourself whatever you wish just do not ask for special privileges among a citizenry already suffering. The enemy is not the other citizenry rather the government and the west resulting useless careless treatment of Myanmar.

The fact that plenty for every one in Maulamyain is the proof..



[REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 2:03 AM](#)

In this case “self-identity” that rests on aggressively assertive “self-determination” that in turn rested on ethnic cleansing of the northern Rakhine population during WW2.



[REPLY](#) 3plan B

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:08 AM](#)

This author do no justice to the already suffering Kalars within Yakhine with his slick pick of info/hist events.

Mixing Religions, race, ethnicity from which pick and choose to suit his refutation of Derek Tonkin.

Does SG Than Swe view anywhere near what this author is again making a point to debate on? The legitimacy of Rohingyas as an ethnic group. Here we are not a crow accusing the other but rather a crow attacking an Eagle.

IMO Mr Derek TonkYet, is A FEW TRUE/NOT SELF SERVING, westerner 'who has been on the ground' i.e. KNOW VERY WELL FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE RULING HIERARCHY, has already point out clearly the useless careless west legitimization of the Kala in Yakhine, then to vilify the the SPDC, as well as the futility of the concept.

Now a day in Myanmar:

1) Claiming to be a special race especially based on religion other than Buddhism is bound to incur general contempt from everyone else that are still similarly suffering from the west induced misery since the invasion and subjugation by the COLONIST.

2) If the Kalar in Yakhine are suffering from discrimination especially claiming other than Kalar the obvious thing to do is to integrate like other successful majotiry of Kalar in Myanmar instead of relying on this author claiming genocide, an outrageous concept.

Where was this author when Nagis wiped out 100,000 inhabitants of the delta and subsequent genocidal approach of the west that claim much more victims?

If the kalar in Yakhine are to thrive within Myanmar, two things need to happen:

1) Unequivocally recognize and accept Buddhism as the religion, and act accordingly.

2) Point out to the arm chair bleeding hear westerners with own agenda other than to the benefit of themselves that they need to understand the psyche of the ruling clique before advocating with a jaundice eye.



0 0 [REPLY](#) 2. One person

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9:15 AM](#)

It is a complex question. This article provided some thoughts to it but again, I will be careful not to simplify it to just one issue of how is national race defined.

One question I have that I see relevant here is, that Muslims in Burma are also quite diverse. Not all of them were descendants of those who came from Bengal. There were some with bloodlines from Iraq and some from other middle eastern and Persian nations and India that had came to live centuries ago and during colonial times. There have been historical records of them as merchants and also servants or officials in Burmese courts. These group of Muslims do not identify themselves as Rohingya. And most Burmese people do not have problem with this group (except I think recently when now they get grouped into same label which is not fair for them).

It's one thought of many to think about and not consider when trying to figure what it is about the identity Rohiingya that fuels so much hatred and hurt.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > 2. tocharian

[23 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 11:10 AM](#)

This whole thing has to do more with race than with religion. Racism based on skin colour is of course, still quite rampant in Asia. However, that this particular group of very poor Muslims are singled out by the Burmese public in general as a target to project all their "pent-up rage against ugly illegal aliens" is quite intriguing, given that this flared up to this extreme form only over the last 3 years or so, starting with that incident where a Burmese girl was killed supposedly by some Muslim boys (who were executed almost without trial) near Kyaukphru (site of the Chinese naval base and oil/gas terminal). I would think that there is a master plan by some sinister political and economic groups in Burma who are instigating this extreme form of racism in order to deflect something that is perhaps even more menacing and threatening to the sovereignty of the country than citizenship rights for a "couple of wretched Rohingyas". Go figure!

0  0  [REPLY](#) > plan B

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:43 AM](#)

The world largest Democracy, India has the most stringent policy, of Bangladeshi, coming without any legal paper, are summarily shot if caught crossing illegally in to India.

tocharian

Is India motivated by racism too?

Play the race card one too often in the west you might get some leverage no such luck in Myanmar, China or India.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9:21 AM](#)

Come on, plan B! Although I am from Burma too, I am extremely surprised at the level of chauvinism the people of Burma display. You guys naively believe that Bangladeshi Muslims are dying to infiltrate into Rakhine because Rakhine and Myanmar are so rich and great and hospitable! What a joke! Poor Muslims from Bangladesh would draw out Bangladeshi passports and work abroad. Why would they infiltrate into the second poorest or poorest state in Myanmar which is again a very poor country and live under oppression? Be logical! We have to be logical and practical! Don't think Myanmar is way better than Bangladesh! Read the comparative socioeconomic figures of the two countries! You'll know which is hell! And don't even think of comparing India and Myanmar. India is a rising superpower and we a declining hell!

0  0  [REPLY](#) plan B

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:06 AM](#)

Myo Chit

Really do not know which 'Myo' are you anyway definitely understand –

“Money talks BMW walks”

Money represent knowledge(Education), Accept (Economic) realities, Not selling BMW (Staying Healthy) etc.

Give me any instance of your self deprecating examples of CHAUVINISM and I will give you PyinUlwin and Maulamyain to prove you wrong.

Do not encourage westerner who conveniently pontificate over HR principles to make their point w/o knowing the facts on the ground in Myanmar.

Last of all but the least is

“To be uniquely different for the good of all wherever one may be” THE sure remedy to any of your and other BMW including being Kalars, Tayoke, Bamar or any race.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2. Moe Aung

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 9:09 AM](#)

Just love the way the author gives “fair and equal treatment” to all ethnic groups, Bamar as well as the rest, simply ignoring the struggle for supremacy among the four major groups of Bamar, Mon, Shan and Rakhine throughout history with the three Burmese regional land empires of Bagan, Taungoo and finally Konbaung which was brought to an end by the British.

Natural boundaries of rivers and mountain ranges may not seem as final as a coast line, and the fact that these were breached more easily determined the fluidity of such boundaries.

Both the Kokang Chinese enclave in the east on the China border and the Indian one in the west next to East Bengal were either recognised or created by the colonial rulers whatever the composition of the area might have been previously. The difference in both religion and physical characteristics of the Indian Muslim enclave with its aggression and territorial ambitions inevitably marked it out as a cancerous lesion in the body politic.

Since we are where we are, an amicable solution for the problem at hand is highly desirable. Unfortunately neither side has the inclination to “back off” from the ingrained mistrust of the other. No prizes for guessing which party is set to endure periodic and violent backlashes given the intransigence of both. The “Rohingya leaders” have so far wisely evaded the Sri Lankan solution the Burmese generals would have preferred although [Al Qaeda seems willing](#) to walk into that trap.



REPLY > 2. Shwe Byan

[24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 11:32 AM](#)

Independent scholars of Burma/Myanmar are generally agreed that Bengali Muslims are not ethnic to Myanmar and the name of “Rohingya” was only invented after the Second World War when the current Rakhine state became a scene of operations for Mujahideen, the predecessor to the current Islamic Rohingya Terrorists. Neither is there an ethnic “Rohingya” in neighboring Bangladesh where the Bengali Muslims migrated from.

Carlos correctly stated that “the Muslims were armed by the British” during WWII to fight the Japanese. As the British suddenly retreated – the Bengali Muslims quickly used the weapons – not against the Japanese -but they used them to slaughter thousands and thousands of Buddhists and burned down all of the Buddhist villages, pagodas, temples and monasteries in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung areas. About 30,000 Rakhine Buddhist were killed in this absolute genocide, hundreds of villages were burned down, and around 100,000 Rakhine Buddhists were ethnically cleansed from their ancestral lands. By late 1942 the whole Maungdaw-Buthidaung region was firmly in the hands of Bengali Muslims – who were now well armed with abandoned Japanese and British weapons.

Another migration of Bengali Muslims occurred when during the struggle of Bangladesh independence from Pakistan in 1970. During the war of Bangladesh independence, Pakistani army committed genocide on their fellow muslims and their sympathizers from Bangladesh; 300,000 were killed, 300,000 women were raped and 10 million became refugees in neighboring countries including Myanmar. Rakhine and the people of Myanmar hosted these refugees without any international assistance. Let no one accuse Rakhine for lack of compassion.

As far back as 1975, the then Bangladesh Ambassador to Myanmar Khwaja Mohammed Kaiser admitted “there were upward of 1/2 million Bangalee (Bangladeshi) trespassers in Arakan (Rakhine state) whom the Burmese (Myanmar) had some right to eject. “He had implored the Burmese authorities not to press this issue during Bangladesh’s present troubles [COUP of August and November 1975] and had been pleased that the Burmese had not taken advantage of his country’s misfortune in this respect.”

As in other countries, the Muslims of Myanmar have engaged in violence, jihadi terror, and rape of Buddhist girls. And that’s as a minority. Myanmar’s Buddhist are also cognizant that, in neighboring nations like Bangladesh where Muslims are the majority, all non-Muslims are being ruthlessly persecuted into extinction. But even in bordering Thailand, where Buddhists are the majority and Muslims a minority, in the south where Muslims make for large numbers, thousands of Buddhists-men, women, and children-have been slaughtered, beheaded, and raped, as separatist Muslims try to cleanse the region of all “infidel” presence.

The above report by Carlos was prepared to provide cover for jihadi terror by the muslims. In fact, numerous reports from neighboring Bangladesh revealed a the world wide conspiracy to establish a Sharia state within the eastern province in Bangladesh and the entire Rakhine state in Myanmar. Captured terrorists revealed that a foreign intelligence agency as instigating a number of terrorist outfits to stand together by the side of Myanmar muslims to establish a new country “Independent Newrosia”. It was revealed that the conspiracy to create independent “Newrosia” state is getting fullest support from the Muslim population in Arakan province in Myanmar, as well as some of the Muslim nations in the world. Click on the link below for one of the reports.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/122185703/CONSPIRACY-OF-TERRORISTS-TO-CREATE-AN-INDEPENDENT-STATE-OUT-OF-ARAKAN-RAKHINE-STATE-IN-MYANMAR-AND-SOME-DISTRICTS-OF-BANGLADESH>

The Government of Bangladesh has reported the Rohingya Solidarity Organization with links to Al Qaeda and Taliban are training in the Myanmar – Bangladesh border areas. The terrorists published stories and photos of killing many Buddhist monks in a Turkish media as their recruiting tool. Click on the link below:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/214714603/Islamic-Rohingya-Terrorists-The-Al-Qaeda-Taliban-in-Myanmar>

Many of these terrorists are now in Syria and Iraq fighting for ISIS. Undoubtedly, some of the battle hardened terrorists will return and take on the cause of jihadi terror against the “infidels”. Also, Al Qaeda has recently announced that it is setting up a new entity called Qaedat-al-Jihad for operations in India, Bangladesh, and MYANMAR.

  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:05 PM](#)



Shwe Byan! Since 9/11, you guys started arguing that Muslims of Myanmar have terrorized Myanmar. But I am afraid there's no evidence of it yet. What exists is speculations by Bertil Linter and a few others of the possible link between Rohingya armed groups and the international jihadist network. And no Muslims in Rakhine or elsewhere in Myanmar have ever committed terror or violence. Actually, what has been happening over the last half of the twentieth century in Myanmar is the fightings between the Burmese army and ethnic insurgents.

After 9/11, you guys got a very reason to delegitimize Rohingya. And actually we don't have fundamentalist Muslim terrorists but fundamentalist Buddhist terrorists who are spreading hate messages and terrorizing Muslims in Rakhine and other parts of Myanmar. Muslims of Myanmar have been living in terror over the last couple of years because even a small quarrel could spark a riot. When Buddhists terrorize Muslims, it is self-defence. When Muslims do something or respond, it is terrorism. Come on! You guys are being too defensive!

  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:07 PM](#)

Shwe Byan! Your theories about Bangladesh, RSO, etc. are conspiracies at best and hate messages at worst.

  [REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#)  [a Galache](#)

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:04 PM](#)

Wow! It turns out that I wrote this “to provide cover for jihadi terror by the Muslims”! This utter nonsense could be funny in another context, but this kind of hate speech is actually leading to killings in Burma, so it's not funny at all.

  [REPLY](#) > Allan Beesey

[4 OCTOBER 2014 AT 1:54 PM](#)

Shwe Byan you seem to be saying that because Bangladesh terrorizes minorities it is alright for Burmese Buddhists to terrorize Muslims (I am suggesting other than Rohingya, Banglas if you like). Thai Buddhists live happily alongside Muslims, Christians and other groups, its only the hill tribes and dark-skinned natives that get any racists backlash. The Muslim ‘problem’ in the south is strictly in 3 provinces and has really been a continuous issue since the Brits carved up the border.

  [REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 11:58 AM](#)

Please refer which independent scholars you're referring to? Dr. Aye Maung, the nationalist Rahine?

  [REPLY](#) > [betty](#)

[21 MAY 2015 AT 6:51 PM](#)

Hi, I worked as a Burmese Interpreter in the States, and had a chance to help interpret for the Refugees from Burma. And guess



what? Most of the people were said to be Burmese but all have very Muslim names the wives the children from the camp on the Burmese border but having not Burmese names ! Let truth be told!!

Please may I have the permission to post on my FB page of your very informed reply. Thank you.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Self

[4 JUNE 2015 AT 9:18 AM](#)

What do you mean by muslim names and Burmese names? It is Arabic names, not muslim. In general, Asian Muslims have Arabic names. That doesn't mean that they are from Arab. Similarly Burmese muslims with Arabic names does not mean they are not Burmese. Hope you heard the name of boxer Muhammad Ali. He is from USA, right?

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2.Myanmar Star Forever

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:45 AM](#)

The name 'rohingya' is not only used by the Bengalis but also by the Chakmas. And it means an inhabitant of Rakhine, or a Rakhine, which again is also called as Mog or Mag. The subtle difference is more prominent when the Chakmas say Rohingya Mog, Tripura Mog, meaning a Rakhine living in Burma, and another in Tripura State, India. Again Rohingya Bangal is the term for a Bengali Muslim in Rakhine state. Is there any racist remark here? A minority right can never be considered legal when they manipulate their identity to demand other's territory. Should the Rakhine kings were Muslims, where are the elaborate tombs and mausoleums? Rather we only see great Buddhist temples and pagodas, some of which houses the relics of those Buddhist kings.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:09 PM](#)

Yeah Yeah... Everything in Rakhine is owned by Rakhines. Names, land, resources,... everything... Rohingya is name for Rakhines as well... It seems Rakhines should change their names into Rohingya as well.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2. Chan

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:45 AM](#)

Don't get side tracked by the debate of Rohingya...there's really nothing to debate, this is a fabricated terminology to hide the underlining issues we have in Burma today. Which is call Islamization of South Asia. The radical of Islam are the very culprits behind all these conflicts and issues...just like they are the culprits in the Middle East, Israel, Africa, Europe, Paris, Thailand, USA, etc., Very simple the insertion of Islam into the political arena with the intent to destroy infidels as stated in their doctrines.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > plan B

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:06 AM](#)

Bangladesh is 3X more populous and 5X less area than Myanmar.

With unsustainable economy, education and health care.

Sinking literally and figuratively under it own weight of Islamic ideology. A perennially failing state ONE major incidence away from disaster.

The West, UN and anyone with any geopolitical sense, and yes, the SPDC can see it coming.

Easiest way to ease this looming disaster is allowing Bangladesh to expand by 1/3 such as having Yakhine as the addition.

In order to justify the expansion:

- 1) Legitimization of existing Islamic Kalar's population as unique and therefore has the rights.
- 2) Support this population with means that will eventually create the easing of Bangladesh's looming human disaster.
- 3) Vilify anyone opposing and brain washing others with humanitarian incidences.

Myanmar ruling government and even DASSK is on to this geopolitical undertaking.

Making all citizens of Indian descent as Bama_Kalar will solve this problem.

As for those Kalar in Yakhine who persist on being whatever they want to be called other than a citizen of Myanmar i.e. Bama_Kalar, there is no MULTICULTURALISM or such in Myanmar.



[REPLY](#)

▪ Myo Chit

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:12 PM](#)

Another conspiracy theorist. It seems you guys are very happy to describe Bangladesh as hell. Actually, Myanmar is hell. And Myanmar is sinking into fundamentalist Buddhist ideology spread by 969, Mabatha and Buddhist monks in Rakhine and elsewhere. Don't think Myanmar is heaven, mate! Everyone knows how hellish it is!



[REPLY](#)

▪ [Nicholas Farrelly](#)

[25 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:45 PM](#)

Some interesting discussion here. Earlier in the year I wrote a short essay that sought to put religious conflict in Myanmar in the appropriate Bangladeshi context. My worry is that all sides don't spend enough time trying to learn about conditions elsewhere.

This essay was published in both Myanmar and Bangladesh in May 2014. For the *Myanmar Times* version see [here](#).

Best wishes to all,

Nich



[REPLY](#) > plan B

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 1:21 AM](#)

Nick, I have read the article. Give one a sense of 'hopelessness'.

In Myanmar it is the 'immigration and ROL' that might be part of the solution, so far behind that religion takes priority over anything else.

Let us hope the recent rather successful census will follow with more ROL. As in the persecution of rioters in Mandalay.

ROL development will be the priority in Myanmar.

May be "too little too late" if one follow the news in the Middle East and realize the possibility of Islamist within the borders of Myanmar under the guise of protecting the Rohingyas.



Moe Aung

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:38 AM](#)

Thanks, Nich. The herd instinct is pretty much the same anywhere. Wish I could say the same about governments notwithstanding what they say about how politics is a dirty business and patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel etc., since it does look like some are more Machiavellian than others.



Shwe Byan

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:12 AM](#)

Nick. I read your article when it was first published and I have visited these Buddhist temples in Ramu. While the needless destruction of Buddhist temples and house in September 2012 at the hands of jihadists were horrific, the daily jihadi terror being rained in on the Jumma (mostly Buddhists with Christians, Hindus and animist) people at nearly Chittagong Hill Tracts are over hundreds of magnitude. Since these are mountainous and isolated areas, hardly any news are published. <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-187-2012>.

While the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has tried to steer her country to a more secular footing, Islamist terrorists are abound in Bangladesh and crept to core of the government and security agencies. In fact, the islamist tried to assassinate her in 2004. Should the government in Bangladesh change in the future and the Islamist come to power, all hell will break loose.



Self

[4 JUNE 2015 AT 9:33 AM](#)

West, UN and Bangladesh – all are conspiring against Burma to grab Yakhaine. Why do they bother?:) Who expect anything from Burma?



[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:09 PM](#)

Please educate yourself by looking for Professor Richard Bulliet's lectures at Columbia universty or elsewhere posted on youtube on so called Islamization and the forming a Caliphate which is NOT going to happen.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Shwe Byan

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10:45 AM](#)

Indigenous Rakhine are voiceless with apathy from western media and international organizations as their history is being re-written and reshaped by outsiders' right before their very own eyes. Few western journalists have ever reported on the issue without bias. On the other hand, the political wing of the Islamic Rohingya Terrorists and their supporters have been waging a relentless propaganda war since 1940s, and finding unquestionable acceptance from western media. The terrorists have used

their vast resources and donations from middle-east countries to acquire fake human rights organizations, buy up media and produce yellow journalism. They have established offices in London, Istanbul, Jeddah, and Bangkok. The attempts by western governments in 1990s, for a regime change in Myanmar undoubtedly played a negative impact on Rakhine as well.

Arakan Human Rights and Development Organisation (AHRDO) have been following the developments in Rakhine state and following interviews with local people and extensive ground-work published a 150 -page report titled "CONFLICT & VIOLENCE IN ARAKAN (RAKHINE) STATE, MYANMAR (BURMA)". Click on the link below to see the report

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/157485834/Arakan-Violence-Report-by-AHRDO>

Among other things this report provides details of training of Islamic Rohingya Terrorists by Al Qaeda and Taliban, exposes the storage of arms at Islamic school and found evidence of hate-filled prayers to demonize and destroy non-muslims. The report describes the state sponsored terrorism, i.e. murder, rape of Buddhists often in plain sight of security forces in Bangladesh and driving them of their ancestral homeland, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area. The report also shows that conflict in Arakan has been mis-identified, and assumptions have been made which are – in objective reality – quite erroneous. And that there is a massive amount of manipulative and fraudulent media which has vilified and demonized the real victims of this conflict – the indigenous Rakhine Buddhist people.

A 2011 Government of Bangladesh report stated that there are at least 70 different Islamic terrorist organizations operating in the country including the Islamic Rohingya Terrorists. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/215209705/Understanding-Religious-Militancy-and-Terrorism-in-Bangladesh> To limit the operations of Islamic Rohingya Terrorists, the Government of Bangladesh has taken the unusual step of passing a law making it unlawful for Bangladesh citizens to marry anyone identified as "Rohingya" even though they are muslims and speak the same Bengali language.

Islamic terrorism in Myanmar as in Nigeria by Boko Haram, Iraq and Syria by ISIS is an ideological warfare. There are no other groups in the 21st Century that will behead someone for difference in religious believe and take young school girls as sex slaves. In Rakhine state, girls as young as six have been raped and murdered. To understand this ideology read

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/176865740/Behind-Islamic-Terrorism-in-Myanmar>



[REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:29 PM](#)

Shwe Byan! Your argument clearly shows how ultra-nationalist you are! Yes, we all know that there are few sympathies shown by the international community towards Rakhines. But wasn't it partly because of Rakhines' extreme pride and prejudice? Rakhines never reached out to the international community and to Burmese as well. Rakhines are so proud of their heritage and kingdom, which is understandable. But when you are EXTREMELY proud of your history, it means you have become an ultra-nationalist or extremist. And then you have a big propensity for turning violent too. And when Rakhines responded with extreme accusations of bias of the international community towards Rohingya, it was violent as well. They attacked the facilities of the international humanitarian offices and storehouses in Rakhine with Rakhine state government's complicity. Now, Rakhines have gained notoriety which was brought upon them by themselves. Then, Rakhines started painstakingly showing it was Rohingya who used to terrorize peaceful Rakhines and Rakhines were only being defensive. I understand Rohingya must have made mistakes and committed violence to Rakhines on a number of occasions. But I don't buy it if you say that Rohingya were always eternal bad men. And the Myanmar government was only on Rakhines' side whenever it was about Rohingya. How could such a marginalized and discriminated community terrorize Rakhines, especially from the 1990s onwards? And now, you have a very good reason to show by repeatedly claiming that Rohingya are jihadist. But such cheap accusations only work with stupid, nationalist media back home. You can't buy the international community with such conspiracy theories. Prove them!



[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:14 PM](#)

Indigenous Rakhine are so voiceless that one of them, born in Bangladesh, is now a member in Burmese parliament.

here is the homework: find out what his name is. here is a tip: he wears his Gyaung Paung in the opposite direction.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > 2. Shwe Byan

[26 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 11:42 PM](#)

Myo Chit. No response required other than the facts and references that I had provided. Oh! I forget. Islamic terrorists cannot handle facts unless from a loud mouth mullah shouting to infidels “convert or be killed!”



0 0 [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:22 PM](#)

This again shows how you have taken great pains to homogenize all the Muslims of the world, especially Rohingya and Muslims in Bangladesh, into Jihadists. It resonates with certain voices which are globally popular nowadays. So, your message will always find eager ears from such people. But let me ask you something: Will you be happy if the whole world thinks of all Rakhine and Burmese Buddhists as inherently violent depending on what happened in Rakhine and many other parts of Myanmar? You won't and I won't. So, be careful when you say generalizing comments.

You want references and quotes? I am afraid I can't provide the references and quotes which are as biased and ultra-nationalist as yours are. For example, I have never seen such a report couched in inflammatory language and poor logic as that produced by so-called Arakan Human Rights (human rights only for Rakhines?) and Development Organization and lead-authored by an American musician, which you proudly quoted above.

If you'd like independent reports: see these but you will reject them as biased and incorrect because they portray a different story. But since you wanted them, here are a few:

Human Rights Watch, “The Government Could Have Stopped This”:

Sectarian Violence and Ensuing Abuses in Burma's Arakan State: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/07/31/government-could-have-stopped>

Human Rights Watch, “All You Can Do is Pray”:

Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray-0>

Physicians for Human Rights, “Patterns of Anti-Muslim Violence in Burma

A Call for Accountability and Prevention”

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/reports/patterns-of-anti-muslim-violence-in-burma.html>

But I know you won't accept them. That's why I didn't provide them in the first place.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > 2. [Derek Tonkin](#)

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 2:46 AM](#)

The discussion on Mr Galache's article has, not surprisingly, aroused considerable emotion. He has himself been subject to personal attack on several counts and has clearly resented these attacks. I would however point out that he himself set the tone of the debate by basing his remarks on a scurrilous and totally unjustified attack on me personally, alleging that: “Few people have made more effort to deny the claims of ethnicity by the Rohingya than Derek Tonkin.....”.

This is a preposterous allegation. I have since 2013 issued six balanced and independent commentaries on the problems facing the long persecuted, stateless and impoverished Muslim community in Rakhine State, endeavouring above all to contribute fresh historical materials and a new perspective to the problem. These six articles may be found by scrolling down <http://www.networkmyanmar.org/index.php/rohingyamuslim-issues>. This webpage also contains a selection of reference materials from a wide range of sources, including the most ardent supporters of the Rohingya including Dr Mohammed Yunus, Dr Habib Siddiqui, Nurul Islam, Ba Tha, Chris Lewa, Maung Zarni and several others. On other pages I have carried articles by contributors to “Rohingya Blogger”.

On no occasion have I denied the claims of a separate ethnicity by Muslims in Rakhine State, and I spoke in strong support of this claim at the recent Burma Studies Conference in Singapore. What concerns me however is the identification of precisely which Muslim communities in Rakhine State voluntarily claim a "Rohingya" ethnicity when until Burmese independence in 1948 no such ethnicity was claimed by any Muslim community in Arakan, nor was it known to anyone in Burma or the outside world.

I accordingly wish to reject as totally unacceptable the allegations made by Mr Galache, for which he has produced absolutely no evidence.



[REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#) | [a Galache](#)

[10 MAY 2015 AT 4:19 PM](#)

Derek Tonkin was outraged because of my allegedly "preposterous allegation" that "few people have made more effort to deny the claims of ethnicity by the Rohingya than Derek Tonkin". He even takes that as a "personal attack". It should be noted that I have never attacked him personally (as others have undoubtedly done), in any case I have attacked his arguments, which is quite different. Now, in his most recent article (whose shenanigans I don't wish to comment in full here), Tonkin leaves clear his position, recommending:

"Countries which choose to use the designation "Rohingya" on the grounds that this is how the Rohingya community have self-identified themselves and that in any case they need to be given an identification of some kind, should make it clear that this does not mean that they in any sense "recognise" the designation Rohingya as an ethnic identity (as Maung Zarni alleges they all do) or accept the Rohingya narrative, which is little short of preposterous."

<http://www.networkmyanmar.org/images/stories/PDF19/Shenanigans-in-Oslo.pdf>

I stand by my words: "Few people have made more effort to deny the claims of ethnicity by the Rohingya than Derek Tonkin." It would be nice that Mr. Tonkin had the intellectual honesty and courage to stand by his and stopped pretending he doesn't hold the positions he actually holds.



[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[10 MAY 2015 AT 11:18 PM](#)

The British Ambassador in Yangon put the position of the British Government on "recognition" of the Rohingya rather well when he told Mizzima in an interview on 8 May last year: "Generally, in the UK and in Europe, ethnic groups are allowed to call themselves by the name they want to use, whether or not that name has any historic validity. Of course, when we use it, that's not to say that we're expecting some sort of special status or a recognition of the Rohingya as an ethnic group. That is for the Burmese parliament to decide."



[REPLY](#) > 2. Azmi

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5:53 AM](#)

Why the ethnic problems have created by Burmese military regime?

As a speaker of Rohingya language I am trying to give you some examples here.

Because, when the military regime and their supporters are going on by giving disinformation against the aboriginal of Arakan State (Rohingya Arakanese) and about Rohingya language whose are suffering by the way of ethnically, culturally, politically, religiously rights around the world.

History couldn't be forgotten easily.

Because, I have had research around in the European libraries where I have seen the historical map of Arakan State and its historical background.

Now, the criminal military regime has changed the real name of (Arakan state) and its capital (Akyab).

Now, such as Rakhine and its capital is Sittwe by showing negative remarks around the world.
 In the Eroupe in Scandinavian countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland (Swedish and Finish) and Denmark.
 These countries are spoken similar languages and writings but they have their own pronunciation.
 They understand each other easily and they have little bit difference in vacubularies.
 When they introduces, they never introduces themselves by telling false nationality or country.
 Furthermore, Germany ,Austria,Luxemburg,liechtenstein and Switzerland.
 These all countries speaks similar Deutch languages (Deutsch) but they have their own pronunciation and differenciation etc.
 In Asian countries for examples Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan,Uzbekistan are spoken in Turkish language and have similarities but they have difference pronouciation.
 Pakistan (since 1947 national language Urdu), Punjabi, Sindhi language are spoken and written in Arabic alphabets however in India (Urdu (mix with Hindi), Sindhi and Punjabi languages are spoken and written in Hindi.
 Both countries languages have similarities but they have difference pronunciation and writings.
 Iran speaks 100% persi language, Tajikistan (Tajik persi and 20% Russian) and Afghanistan (Dari language 80% persi,20% mix) are spoken in Persian language.
 They have similarities but they have difference pronunciation.
 Some illiterate people are trying to compare or combined Rohingya language with Bangla language, by lack of information in this subject.
 Actually, Bangla has completely difference writing, pronouciation just like Hindi alphabets in writing .
 Bangla Language has similarities with Hindi language too much.
 Rohingya language is formed from the word of Urdu. Hindi, Arabic, English, Bangla and Burman etc.
 However,we Rohingyas never reads, writes or speaks Bengali language in the past or present.
 We have some similarities just like Iran (Persi language) and (Afghanistan Dari language), not at all but the pronouciation is completely difference.
 Today, the brutal Military Burmese Govt. blames or claims that the Rohingyas are from Bangladesh or foriegners.
 It seems that those are hypocrites, discriminaters, deceivers, cheaters, enemies of peace, enemy of human being, enemy of human rights, mischief makers, wrong doers and killers of the nation.
 Whose are seeking to create new problems time by time by doing unlawful actions against nations, instead of giving the rights to live on this earth to another nation.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2. Azmi

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5:57 AM](#)

Rohingya community does not depend to Bengali language, script and culture any where around the world.
 So, please don't play blame game any more.
 If you are true then come face to face with your leadership , Bengali leadership and Rohingya leadership in the table talk.
 Azmi

0  0  [REPLY](#) > 2. plan B

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:16 PM](#)

Myo Chit 9.1.1

Will you please define “fundamental Buddhists ideology” for everyone here sake.

Since Islamic Ideology is well understood here.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Myo Chit

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 12:24 PM](#)

plan B: as long as you use your religion to be exclusive, divisive and violence-prone towards peoples of other religions, your religion fundamentalist, whatever it teaches you!



[REPLY](#) > 2. plan B

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 2:20 PM](#)

Homogenize is for milk!

And in that process one “beat the hell out of” (emulsified) to achieve ‘uniform or similarity’.

Myo Chit the most fundamental of Buddhism is – Tolerance or more descriptive: Denying Oneself. That makes your insinuation of Buddhism as a source of violence as rather lame. If Muslim Kalar in Yakhine is not a face of Islam then 969 is not the face of Buddhism.

In Myanmar Kalar, Tayoke etc. as well as the majority Bama coexisted well.

Read this next line carefully;

It is the Power Than Be (PBT) manipulation of incidences to achieve what has happened conveniently using Buddhism convincing ignorant.

That said what has happened might still have happened yet.

The ultimate sin is the PBT in Myanmar doing little or sometimes nothing to diminish the attacks against Muslim Kalars until now.

I and my ilk hearts sank every time one of Myanmar Citizenry is hurt by any useless careless cause.

A few years ago when the Karen or refugee in Thailand was inhumanely treated by some Thai no one blame the Thai Government, Police or majority.

In fact this inhumane treatment is counter with native Thai HR Solicitors using ROL to bring these “refugee that’s worth less than a dog” attitude to an end.

The atrocities documented against the Muslim are real. Unlike refugees in Thailand the difference is most of the incidences started with provocations.

Be that as it may, dwelling in the past will be a repeatedly stating of Historically documented atrocities, a useless careless reminder.

Until Citizenship/residency status are clarified and thee ROL strengthen this cycle serves nobody but more arm chair critic that will hurt a country citizenry as a WHOLE rather than improve the condition of the persecuted.

Myanmar is similarly Hellishly poor compared to Bangladesh. Yet moving on we must with out dignifying further anyone especially from outside Myanmar, who will never know Myanmar rather pick and choose one group suffering to pontificate.



[REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi | a Galache](#)

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 3:27 PM](#)

Plan B:

It’s simply not true that nobody has criticized the Thai government for its treatment of Burmese refugees and immigrants. Just two recent examples should be enough, but there are more, of course:

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/09/12/ad-hoc-and-inadequate>

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/09/01/two-years-no-moon>



[REPLY](#) > plan B

[27 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 4:08 PM](#)

Mr Galache

Dig deep enough, just enough couple with HRW stuff aka always self serving junks and anyone can be the devil.

This is the very pontification: reading reports, document and testimonials sans being on the ground.

Take a long walk, stay awhile, talk among the natives after gaining trust and most of all observe and you will see the big picture of a whole Myanmar Citizenry and realize how ridiculous/self serving almost all that you have had read.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Moe Aung

[28 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 8:57 AM](#)

People by and large judge the horrible “racism” of the native Rakhine based on the events of recent times as if it were primarily a matter of ethnicity, colour or creed without paying due consideration to [its origins from the wartime violent and genocidal conflict](#) when *they* were on the receiving end.

The crucial demographic change happened with Chittagongian immigration in colonial times following the Burmese defeat in the First Burmese War as British historians call it (the first of three Anglo-Burmese Wars to the Burmese) which exponentially swelled the numbers in the northernmost townships bordering East Bengal.

The rest as they say is history very well [summarised by Martin Smith in 1995](#).

It cannot possibly be anything like balanced or fair critique where you conveniently forget the Mujahideen rebellion in 1947 with the explicit aim of carving out territory for an independent sultanate before Burma even gained independence, after the leaders of this immigrant enclave had approached Jinnah unsuccessfully for the three townships to be subsumed into East Pakistan.

The Americans may have pulled it off in Texas at the expense of Mexico. Well, not bloody likely in Burma.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Moe Aung

[28 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5:45 PM](#)

As a Bamar I don't blame the Rakhine's “racist” hatred of us ([their nationalism is alive and well](#)) going back to Bodawpaya's conquest of the Arakan in 1874, also [here on p 399](#). The Great Image (Mahamuni), the prized booty, albeit in compassionate contemplation, sits in testimony at the most sacred of Buddhist shrines in Mandalay.



[REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[28 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5:47 PM](#)

Correction: Bodawpaya's conquest of the Arakan was in 1784. Sorry.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Ohn

[28 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7:11 PM](#)

Of all the Rohingya defenders seen around here and elsewhere this Myo Chit is distinctly most composed and agreeable.

This one was initially a complex problem now -almost-unsolvable.

It does appear all the current descriptions about the problem floating around parallel those of the proverbial 6 Ponnas with the elephant. First there was the scene.

The people in northern Arakan seem to be coming in and out like waves- naturally- at various time for various reasons so that it would be foolhardy to say who they were from or which time they came just like those Burma' newest best friends- Jews-

claiming to be in the promised land- promised by Belfour alright to Rothschild- since only two thousand years ago summarily driving off another type of Kalars resident there called -for the lack of proper name- Palestinians who no one wants incidentally.

Anyway, currently present Kalars- whatever name one prefers to call- could very well have more sympathy to and from Pakistan than with Bangladesh. Hence Urdu. Pakistan war was the only war in history based on language (of course intolerable bullying and oppression by the Urdu speakers towards the Bengali speakers- Hanabi all the same). And Wahhabi Salafist rather than majority Hanabi. And Awami League would have less sympathy for them than Khaleda Zia's BNP.

Then that famous word "Rohingya". Whatever is its origin or existence, the prolific use definitely was for caliphate aim since about the "A-le-than-kyaw conference" which put out several demands. And for sure there has been well planned seated officials in various international organizations. And indeed in Burmese government as for the Burmese, Arakanese were the real "enemy" for long, long time at least since the theft of the Pagoda. For sure the way the children and adults acted during recent video-opportunities in those notorious concentration camps they are most heinously put in do seem contrived.

Some curiosities as well. Perhaps the very first public outcry regarding the word "Rohingya" came about following Anna Jones' 2010 report on BBC. Sai Latt did a lot of follow up articles here. Now we find Derek Tonkin – another English person- coming in from, at least seemingly, opposite direction.

Another curio is the incessant and studious demand of all the involved parties- human rights organizations, UN subsidiaries and affiliates, academia, "exiles"- for the citizenship and asking to recognize "Rohingya" just like "Mon" or "Shan". That is funny as the military government (now in clown's clothes)- being liberal and enlightened- have shown equal opportunity for torturing and killing regardless of any citizenship, of any religion and national race in the last 60 odd years.

Then there is this legacy of the military who are ruthless, most racist and at the very height of their power supported by seemingly all the western world keen to exploit the land and their (western world's) own muse Aung San Suu Kyi, always trying to make things up to create a situation for their hold on power.

To top it off, there is another but deeper and bigger legacy of the "West". Everywhere the "West" has been around the globe with their Midas touch there immediately follows riots, indiscriminate killing, and division of societies- starting with central and south America, oh, sorry, was it the Middle East?, never mind literally everywhere including Eastern Europe now!- which have hitherto been peacefully living together for centuries. These typically follow various accusations between easily identifiable groups distinguishable by ethnic or religious differences or in case like Rwanda just a bit of lighter skin and taller stature.

It also appears all parties are trying to emphasize the division more and more in the name of finding a solution and are somehow or other benefiting from it, like being aid workers or Rohingya advocates or in the case of people like Wirathu getting support from people like Aung Thaung (on behalf of Than Shwe) and those rabid murderous Fascists from Sri Lanka where he currently is.

Of course the Chinese have their own interest to foment instability along their key port (which they own) and the Pipe and divert the attention from the suffocating Chinese' vice like grip on economic and social scene and ruthless excavation of the land. And exploitation of women.

The effect of such diversion and chaos though is most destructive for the people of Burma who are seriously at risk of losing whatever meager possession they have now unless they wake up and act wisely.

After all, it comes back down to the people of the land which way they want to behave. Understanding and collective action.

And be mindful that none of the above would justify any human to shamelessly ill-treat any other human regardless of Fascist incitement and own irrational fear.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > 2. [Derek Tonkin](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 2:35 AM](#)

It does not seem to me that the 1973 and 1983 Censuses made any attempt to impose the ethno-linguistic matrix of over 140 groups used by the British in the 1921 and 1931 Censuses. The choice in 1973 and 1983 was a simple one from among the

eight main ethnic groups: Chin, Kachin, Mon, Rakhine, Burman, Shan, Kayin, Kayah. For those Muslims in Arakan who did not fit into any of the eight groups, the only alternatives were “Indian” (48,574) or “Bangladeshi” (497,208).

My supposition is that the “Indians” were what the British called “Arakan Mohamedans” known in Burmese as Yakhain Kala. After the Second World War this community sought to redefine their own ethnicity and created the designation “Rwangya”, but for use only among themselves. Clearly, they did not want to continue to be called “Yakhain Kala” in an independent Burma and they rightly felt change was needed, not to their actual ethnicity as such, but to the designation which they should use.

Outside the “Rwangya” community there was discussion (which I have seen on other papers) about what the term actually meant. “Roang” was one of several names by which Arakan was traditionally known in Bengal, from which you can posit *Rwang with the suffix -gya, giving you the notion of “Arakaner” in Bengali. But this particular choice might also have been deliberately designed to reflect (I read) the Tibetan-Burmese concept of “rwm”, that is, a person who is neither a stranger (kala) nor an intimate, but a person who is midway between these notions. I only note this, as I have no specialist knowledge to comment, but it seems a possible explanation to me and would indeed be a felicitous designation.

My supposition also is that the “Bangladeshis” in 1983 were those who had sought to be enumerated as Bengalis, but found themselves finally listed as foreign nationals – Bangladeshis. These would have been those who were enumerated in 1921 and 1931 as “Chittagonians” or “Bengalis”, that is, persons who had migrated to Arakan during and after the arrival of the British in 1826. Under the Indo-Burma Agreement of 1941, these people would have qualified as permanent residents of Arakan if the Agreement had been implemented.

It also seems likely to me that the “Chittagonians”, noting what their co-religionists had done, might well feel that they too should seek to regularise their position in an independent Burma where “Chittagonian” or “Bengali”, though accurate enough as a description of their geographic and racial origins, was not how they would wish to be known either in an independent Burma. So the search began for another designation, to reflect the ethnicity which they had developed over the years. I have noted on other papers a range of appellations which were considered, with “Rohingya” eventually emerging as the first choice over Rowanya, Rwahaung, Rahingya, Ruhingya, Rahinja, Roanangya, Rowunhnyar, Ronjan and Roewengya. (I would add in this context that Francis Buchanan’s unique and isolated record of a conversation with “Kulaw Yakhaing” or “Rooinga” at Amarapura in 1895, that is, over 200 hundred years ago, provides no evidence whatsoever of any ‘ethnic’ appellation at the time, though others may contest this.)



But this is where the problem arises. What has happened to the “Rwangya”? Have they been subsumed by the “Rohingya”? Who exactly is a “Rohingya” nowadays? What has happened to the Myedus and “Burmese Muslims” in Arakan? Before the war, Muslims in Arakan provided a rich tapestry. You could sense (so some tell me) ethnic differences from village to village – from which wave of migration they had descended, often going back scores if not hundreds of years. An ebb and flow of migration between Bengal and Arakan going back a very long time. But not the monolithic, integrated, homogenous community of de-Indianized people which “Rohingya” ideologues would have us believe, though I can well understand the concerns of the Muslim population in Arakan to unite for their own protection against hostility from Rakhine extremists.

A letter dated 3 March 1956 from the British Embassy in Rangoon to the Foreign Office (on File DB 10399) about immigration issues between Pakistan and Burma, quotes the Burmese Controller of Immigration at the time, U Soe Nyunt, as saying that “illegal immigration of Pakistanis was a much more serious problem than that of Indians or Chinese. In some parts of the frontier area only about 5 percent of the population is of Burmese origin; the remainder are Muslims of Pakistani origin and are only too ready to help their friends and compatriots to cross the border.”

No wonder the notion of “illegal Bengalis” is now firmly fixed in so many Burmese minds. No wonder there is some hell of a problem these days in defining who exactly the Rohingya might be.

The good news, though, is that there are still many, many metres of Foreign Office archives which I haven’t yet had the time to investigate. I may well be wrong on several aspects. Time will tell. Provided I can score at least 20 negative marks on this comment, I shall know that I am broadly on the right lines.



0  [REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#)  [a Galache](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 4:40 PM](#)

Dear Mr. Tonkin,

I see that you continue avoiding the elephant in the room, the big issue that I tried to address in my article: the notion of “national races” and the exclusionary citizenship law based on it.



[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:04 PM](#)

To find your elephant, you need to go into the ‘Citizenship’ room. You won’t find it in the ‘Census’ room from where my comment was made.



[REPLY](#) > [Carlos Sardi](#) [|](#) [a Galache](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6:57 PM](#)

I guess that’s the non-answer of a diplomat... So much for giving a “new perspective to the problem.”



[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 8:31 PM](#)

Not at all. My answer is perfectly logical. The information collected at a census is confidential and may not be used for any other purpose, such as taxation, voter registration, or citizenship.

I personally do not like citizenship laws based on ethnicity like the 1982 Citizenship Law. Such laws are in my view outmoded, jingoistic and discriminatory. But this has no relevance to any analysis of the 1973 and 1983 Censuses in an attempt to discover how Arakan Muslims were enumerated under those Censuses.



MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:31 PM](#)

With your comment of “To find your elephant, you need to go into the ‘Citizenship’ room. You won’t find it in the ‘Census’ room from where my comment was made.”, you have lost complete credibility with me Mr. Tonkin.



[REPLY](#) > [Moe Aung](#)

[29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10:59 PM](#)

To us the [elephant in the room is the military elite](#), so the dog in the manger is perhaps more apt in this instance. And it doesn’t go, “Moo!”



[REPLY](#) > [Myo Chit](#)

[3 OCTOBER 2014 AT 11:08 AM](#)

Yes, the umbrella of Rohingya seems to have subsumed under it Myedu and other non-Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine. But how about Rakhine ethnicity? How come you look so sure about the authenticity of Rakhine identity? How come you are so sure about all 2-3 millions who say in unison that they are Rakhines, pure and unmixed! But in reality, there is no such thing as a pure race! It seems if you are a Buddhist in Rakhine State, you are a Rakhine! That’s it!

0  0  [REPLY](#) > plan B

[3 OCTOBER 2014 AT 3:56 PM](#)

There are 8 official ethnic groups. Ifa Tayoke or Kalar can claim to be a Shan or Yakhine what is your grope. Especially the claimants do not insist on some special group that require special recognition because, some self serving NGO says so?

This census offer a unique opportunities to be Bamar_XXXX. There are NO pure blooded Bamar or any other ethnicity except may be Muslim that insist they are pure blooded.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Ohn

[3 OCTOBER 2014 AT 7:40 PM](#)

Plan B has got an excellent point here. Paradoxically, it is in agreement with tocharian. toch has said, surely more times than he could remember, that the Chinese have long demonstrated it does not need one to be one of the family or has citizenship or this or that crap niceties to easily and prolifically (sometimes literally) screw the Bamar and their Bamar Land.

Again, the military screws everyone anyway. So the historic and persecution and all those arguments become more and more hollow. Especially with growing industry feeding many staffers. It does appear that line of argument is having devastating effect on poor people on the ground while the action of oppressors are unconscionable.

0  0  [REPLY](#) > tocharian

[4 OCTOBER 2014 AT 1:17 PM](#)

Right, even I can claim to be a Bamar whether my ancestors came partly from India or partly from China. I don't care (fortunately, I didn't have to fill up that stupid census form or buy a fake Burmese ID). There are other things I care more about:

1. The poor and helpless people of the country losing their farmlands and getting screwed. LGBT has a different meaning in Burma: Land-Grab-Bullying-Tactics
2. The destruction of the pristine natural environment and the peaceful social fabric of the country.
3. Obscene income inequity perpetuated by corruption, coercion and control of the rich upper-class (mostly Chinese or Chinese cronies)
4. Hypocrisy and double-standards which leads to intolerance and religious fervour.

I can go on, but you get the drift!

Burma's problems are not going to be solved by retired diplomats digging up old colonial archives or by naive NGO's spouting buzz words and half-baked ideas they learned in some politically correct seminar room at some mediocre University (I work at one so I should know!)

It's the Chinese, stupid!

0  0  [REPLY](#) > Ohn

[4 OCTOBER 2014 AT 3:10 PM](#)

Loss of land, livelihood, millennial old forests, one of the most important fresh water supply, rich coastal line, women.... It is easy and simply to lump every thing to the Sit-tut. But if one looks around the Burmese cyber field and even people on the street, the sentiment seems to be to become like Singapore or leading the world or Asia or this or that at any cost mentality.

Talk about easy prey! Even the most vicious and voracious predators might get embarrassed.

0  0  plan B

[8 OCTOBER 2014 AT 3:29 AM](#)

Ohn

The British Colonist have been the one who created the present quagmire:

- 1) Creating a Burma as a province of India.
- 2) Allowing the unmitigated migration of Indian, Hindus and Muslim for cheap labor.
- 3) Starting this Rohingyas as an ethnic entity to create another front to vilify SPDC.

Now meddling through NGO, UN and HR organizations when ever it suit their dirty moral needs.



[REPLY](#) > Ohn

[8 OCTOBER 2014 AT 3:01 PM](#)

No doubt about that because it was exactly what they say in Yes Prime Minister. But it is the job of cheaters and liars to do their dirty work, and it is the incumbent upon the “victims” how they respond to it. With knowledge, resolute-ness, dignity and courage. Your Burmese (all in the country) have been found to be lacking in all of those unfortunately. And accordingly will now soon pay through their butts, literally.

If anyone wants to refute that show up Burmese with knowledge, dignity, courage and resolution.



2. Moe Aung

[4 OCTOBER 2014 AT 7:02 AM](#)

Claiming Bamar Muslim as ethnicity has been rejected from the start even if people can recognise it as an entity or group similar to Rakhine Muslim. Rakhine Kalar/Bamar Kalar on the other hand is ethnicity, as is British Asian or Chinese American but not British Muslim. The term Bosnian Muslim as an ethnic group is an anomaly.



[REPLY](#) > 3. Monique

[5 OCTOBER 2014 AT 12:44 AM](#)

“Bosnian Muslim” is hardly an anomaly, anymore than Kosovar or Albanian Muslim. In fact, Rohingyas themselves are just as anomalous as Bosnians. Why are Bosnians anomalous? Just because many have blond hair and lightly-pigmented eyes? Or is it because the Bosnians became Muslims later in history than the Arabians or the Turks? So what. So did the Albanians. So did Cat Stevens (Yusuf Islam). I notice no dearth of Bosnians or recent Western converts to Islam going off to fight for IS (or ISIS or Daesh, if you prefer). The Bosnians and Albanians, once rather secular, are not quite as secular now, as when Tito and Enver Hoxha, respectively, controlled their affairs. Thus, your comment is anomalous. Bamar Muslim is hardly anomalous, though I doubt you will find many Bamar who have converted to Islam. No one is claiming Islam as an ethnic group. Who is, please? Of course, claiming Islam as an ethnicity is anomalous, since Islam is a religion and way of life, but no ethnic group that claims Islam as their creed is anomalous simply by following Islam. However, one may say a particular individual who is Muslim may be anomalous in the context that their profession of faith is unexpected and unusual. Anomalous is a description that reflects a statistical aberration, which is not reflected in one’s personality. A well-known former Nixon Administration Cabinet member converted to Islam years ago; his prior ideological views seemed inconsistent with his conversion. One may describe his conversion as unusual or unanticipated, but not anomalous.

Finally, what is anomalous is the rabid anti-Bamar rhetoric on New Mandala, which is unacceptable. Not every Bamar is Ashin Wirathu or a member of 969, but you wouldn’t know it on NM. The hypocrisy of these people who care not one whit when Yazidis (a unique, but not anomalous people), in Iraq, are being slaughtered by IS and their Salafi Muslim adherents, who also say nothing about the 220,000 Syrians slaughtered by fellow Syrian Muslims, but carefully

examine with a fine-tooth comb, if perchance, one Rohingya might have had one single hair out of place, and scream bloody murder at the Bamar if one Rohingya child has dysentery, is the very definition of ANOMALY. And if the Rohingya are not synonymous with Bangladeshi Muslims, why is it that my Bengali colleagues can carry on a complete conversation with them, with absolutely no misunderstanding at all, in standard Bengali as spoken in Dhaka or Calcutta ? Rohingya are Muslim Bangladeshi migrants and nothing more.



[REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 9:53 AM](#)

Monique,

You'd be surprised to learn how often someone would put down Bamar Muslim as ethnicity. Granted it was King Mindon who recognised them as an entity for their loyal service during his reign, but it's not the same as ethnicity. Why can't they say Bamar, Kalar or Bamar Kalar? Likewise Bosnian Muslims are Turkic Slavs. Albanian Muslims just Albanians, aren't they?



[REPLY](#) > tocharian

[6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 1:04 PM](#)

I would put down Homo-Erectus-Atheist as my ethnicity.

Enough of this primitive racial classification rubbish I better go read "Mein Kampf" LOL



[REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 5:13 PM](#)

Whilst so many of us are actually mongrels there comes a time when you have to say what ethnicity you are. So choose one, and you toch, can tick the Other Oriental/Asian box... LOL.



[REPLY](#) > tocharian

[7 OCTOBER 2014 AT 2:05 AM](#)

Ethnicity is not the same as race.

(By the way, in many civilised countries there is no box for ethnicity in census forms)



Moe Aung

[7 OCTOBER 2014 AT 9:32 AM](#)

Just as nationality is not the same as race. They listed 135 national races although of course mixed race ethnicity is commonplace in Burma. Still who's going to stop people claiming whatever they want to be (the Rohingya being the exception to the rule)?

So those countries that require ethnicity in a census form, [such as the United Kingdom](#), also [in surveys for statistical purposes](#), in your opinion, are uncivilised?



tocharian

[7 OCTOBER 2014 AT 11:38 AM](#)

Yes, to a certain extent, since I believe modern civilisation which should be based on scientific rational ideas and not on some primitive human behavioural tribal patterns. As I said, the Nazi's pushed this racial ideology to the extreme and we all know what came out of that.

To continue this train of thought, I also don't believe in affirmative action (which is partly why the US government wants to know your ethnicity) and "politically correct" extreme multiculturalism (we know how militant Muslim recruiters for ISIS are exploiting that in the UK). You might think this is a right wing view, but actually it can be a position from the extreme left (post-Marxist). Race, religion, ethnicity (and even sexual preferences to a certain degree) are for me private matters and a modern State should stay out of these things as best it can. Separation of State and Church was a classic struggle in the history of Western civilisation. It seems now that a lot of "States" in Asia and elsewhere (not to mention Caliphates and ISIS) are reversing history by defining a Nation State in terms of Race, Ethnicity or Religion. This is for me obsolete and oxymoronic.



Moe Aung

[8 OCTOBER 2014 AT 10:10 AM](#)

Not sure what you mean by extreme left, toch. Left libertarian more like, but running a country involves knowing the numbers, ethnicity perhaps arguably less relevant in immigrant nations like the US. How many of them do we have? Mainly former Anglo-Saxon colonies.

Hispanic immigration nonetheless matters in the southern states of the US (payback time perhaps for grabbing Texas from Mexico), Australia too with its newcomers especially the coloured ones, even the old imperial states in Europe with the new white Slavic immigration, Muslim Albanians included.

Since we do not live in a Left libertarian utopia notwithstanding Noam Chomsky whom I do admire, territorial ambitions hand in hand with proselytizing doth not make for a harmonious union, federal or whatever, and I am sure Chomsky knows only too well from long experience analysing the Middle East.

Yes, you're probably right about the separation of church and state even if such expressions as God Save America, the Bible Belt or the Tory Party in prayer and international Jewry or Zionists indicate not an altogether clean break. Fundamentalism whilst one religion gets particular notoriety indulging in is by no means a monopoly of the said religion, although I am bound to say others have tended to emerge as a backlash to it. There's no condoning this sort of tit for tat, but it does get into a vicious circle that is well nigh impossible to break.

Dare I say your own Sinophobia is a case in point about race and ethnicity. You don't want to know the rising numbers of Chinese immigration into Burma? Not even of the Kokang Chinese within our borders?



tocharian

[8 OCTOBER 2014 AT 4:47 PM](#)

It's complicated, but let me make some easy remarks:

1. Marx didn't talk about race. Hitler did.
2. Nowadays, race and ethnicity play a much bigger role in the US than even in Germany, which is ironic.
3. Asians in general are quite obsessed about physical racial characteristics and tend to look down upon darker-skinned people (even black Americans) which is again ironic, since Asians like to complain about the white people being racist against them.
4. I am a scientist and a free-thinker, so I am not a follower of any particular political ideology, but I find hypocrisy and double-standards despicable. If one is evil or corrupt or racist at least one should be honest about it, but as you said the real world is not like that and that's why I can only write comments but I cannot become a human rights icon and a popular politician Lady Suu Kyi!



Moe Aung

[9 OCTOBER 2014 AT 6:07 AM](#)

That makes two of us, toch. I mean the hypocrisy and double standards bit as well as “a moon that shines only inside the hollow of a bamboo” compared with the Lady bit.

Endless ironies, huh? Perhaps they are only outwardly so. From Burma to the east have we not always been rather like that towards Indians and blacks? I am bound to say however that it's quite different from white racism in the sense that it in normal circumstances exhibits no nasty kind of discrimination or aggression but mainly concerns intermarriage which interestingly is becoming a rare thing in white societies. Everyone is entitled to complain about racism.



MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:45 PM](#)

I agree that “Bamar Muslim is hardly anomalous” but most Bamars are still looking for this *elusive” identity of “Burmese” requiring to be a Buddhist and have no comprehension that the term Burmese Muslims just means a national of Burma.



[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:55 PM](#)

How you can be callous about the persecution of the Rohingyas by comparing to the mess in the middle east is beyond me.

But I will say this: Just because your Bengali colleagues can carry on a complete conversation with Rohingyas does not mean they are synonymous and you know it. I am sure YOU KNOW THAT a Hindi-speaking Indian can carry on a complete conversation with an Urdu-speaking Pakistani as well. Are they synonymous in their identities?

With the statement “Rohingya are Muslim Bangladeshi migrants and nothing more”, you have shown your true prejudice. May I ask why do you Bamar feel so insecure and feel threatened about a people who wants to call themselves Rohingyas?



[REPLY](#) > Hang Tuah

[17 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:04 AM](#)

Wait while I get my violin and hankies. Oh, please, stop the nonsense. The Rohingya are, have been, and will always be, Bengali or Bangladeshi Muslims, whether they migrated into Myanmar 2000 years ago or yesterday. No amount of anthropological mumbo-jumbo will make them indigenous to Myanmar. No, Hindi IS NOT THE EXACT SAME LANGUAGE AS URDU, just because an Indian Punjabi can comprehend a Pakistani Punjabi. Incorrect analogy. Bengali spoken by Rohingya is Bengali spoken by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh: IDENTICAL. Are you identical with other ethnic Chinese from Burma who use Western first names? Are you identical with Bamar people who don't? Your point is silly, every individual has personality differences. This is about ethnicity, not about Sigmund Freud. You have shown your typical academic faddish anti-non-Muslim-phobia that prevents most of academia from even addressing any aspect of adherents of Islam, and your generalisations about non-Muslim Burmese are gratuitous.

Why do you Islamophiles constantly feel the need to defend Islam and Muslim at every opportunity, but feel no such need to defend the victims of Islam, from Morocco to Indonesia? It is your GroupThink that is callous and your refusal to recognize that you apply a double standard. Rohingya are merely Bangladeshi Muslims and nothing more and if you care so much about them, tell Bangladeshi Nobel Prize Winner, Muhammad Yunus, an intelligent man, to advise Bangladeshis to use birth control.



[REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[17 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 2:20 PM](#)

So you are telling me, a true full-blooded Bengali whose parents speak the Bengali dialect spoken by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (Dacca dialect) is IDENTICAL to the dialect spoken by Rohingyas? That is the best entertainment I have got so far from Rohingya deniers.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > Monique

[6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 1:56 PM](#)

Moe Aung,

For the same reason “Why can’t they just say “Rohingya” when they mean a Buddhist Rohingya ? And you have met how many Buddhist Rohingya, exactly ? As many as Muslim Bamar, then ? Fine with me, whatever you want to call them, but that’s not how they will be defined, rightly or **WRONGLY**.



0 0 [REPLY](#) > MandySwe

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 12:58 PM](#)

Rohingya Buddhist is not a term in Rakhine or Burmese language and hence no need of the term Buddhist Rohingya.

Instead of calling the Rohingyas Bengalis, why don’t the Buddhists call them (the Rohingyas) Rakhine Muslim in Burmese or Rakhine language? Care to answer that?



0 0 [REPLY](#) > Ohn

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6:36 PM](#)

This Rohingya thing is stupid surrogate, isn’t it? Main issue here is easily identifiable people in the north of Arakan has well planned and hatched international connections and lobbyists and feeling now upper hand via media, and feel-good international organizations **DEMAND** for their own caliphate.

Doing so people on the ground are simply trampled worse and worse every single day as Alice would say by ruthless junta now equally internationally pampered and sucked up for their possession of keys to the last virgin land businessmen the world over want to swoop up and devour.

Put short and simply, the word Rohingya means neither this nor that. So long as the world- or business people who really own the world- is sucking up to the regime in Kyat-pyae no one has any chance for any justice or chance to be treated decently.

Why not simply ask for simple decent treatment of people on the ground rather than these esoteric demands?



0 0 [REPLY](#) > Moe Aung

[16 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 8:06 PM](#)

Always wondered how their astrologers interpreted the name Kyatpyay for them (depending on how you spell Kyat, as in the currency or alternatives such as would mean “evil spirits flee” or “tight run/crisis flee”) when they decided to move to Nay Pyi Taw (*sic*).



0 0 [REPLY](#) > 2.Moe Aung

[6 OCTOBER 2014 AT 5:31 PM](#)

Monique, Unfortunately you’re missing the point. A group known by their faith in a wider society claiming the said faith erroneously as ethnicity is wrongheaded. Burmese in general would say Burmese Buddhist but not when asked what ethnicity they are when they’d drop the religion.

A convert one way or the other retain their ethnic origins, and they're not all that uncommon although I dare say B to M is mainly through marriage but there are Burmese women who wouldn't convert to Islam even in such a union.

So Rohingya however concocted certainly can be considered an ethnicity, no need to add Muslim. Likewise Rakhine is ethnicity, be it Muslim or Buddhist.



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[REPLY](#) > 2. Manhar

[1 JANUARY 2015 AT 12:07 PM](#)

Burma does not need to take care of these illgal immigrants cos they are danger for peaceful buddhist community so they should be deport form Burma. Burma is budhist country they are islamic jihadist and muslim terrorist in Burama.



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[REPLY](#) > Ohn

[4 JANUARY 2015 AT 3:57 PM](#)

It would be so simple only if half of what is written were half true. But at the very least people called Rohingya are neither illegal nor immigrants. Left to their own devices, not danger either in much of the history. And most of all there is no evidence that they are jihadists or terrorists.

For deportation, no one would take them, either screaming sonni countries like Saudi, Pakistan or trying hard to be moderate when it suits, Malaysia.

Only solution seems to be people on the ground realizing how they are abused, manipulated and used as pawns by their own leaders- on both sides, for their own gain, spawning immense "Human Rights Industry" and champions and companies with financial interest in the region they reside.

So long as they sing to the tune of all these outsiders -including their own diaspora-, and opportunists, lives will continue to be barely worthwhile living for all the inhabitants.



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[REPLY](#) > tocharian

[5 JANUARY 2015 AT 3:19 AM](#)

Burma a "peaceful buddhist community". Is that a joke? There are tens of thousands of ethnic insurgent groups (Wa, Shan, Karen, Karen, Chin, Palaung, ...) fighting the central government ever since Burma's independence 67 years ago today. Some of the ethnics, such as the Karen, Kachin and Chin are also not Buddhists. U Nu tried to make Buddhism the State religion. It didn't work, so what now? I know that there is a surge of "protectionist, xenophobic, nationalistic" style of Buddhism spreading around in Burma, and monks are involved. 969, mabatha, interreligious marriage laws, buddha figure with headphones and all that rubbish. If a Buddhist monk would follow the exact 227 bikkhu precepts then he shouldn't be involved in politics at all. That's not what a venerable Buddhist monk should be doing, but Buddhism is no longer what it used to be. I am not saying Muslims are better. ISIS is definitely a lot worse.

I personally believe that religion is an obsolete piece of evolutionary junk that humans should get rid off, but I am in the minority, i guess.



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[REPLY](#) > tocharian

[5 JANUARY 2015 AT 3:17 PM](#)

Sorry about "doubling up" on the Karens! I meant Kachin, Karen etc.



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[REPLY](#) > 2. Allan Beesey[3 JANUARY 2015 AT 7:50 PM](#)

I am sorry Manhar, you have your beliefs but I, and many others no doubt, more would see them as ignorant and racist. Jihadist Muslims in Burma would be rare, and you, like other seemingly aggressive (not peaceful) Buddhists are inflaming the situation. In southern Thailand Buddhists and Muslims lived alongside each other in harmony since borders were demarcated, with only politics and outside aggression causing the rifts leading to conflict. I am sure it is the same in Burma. You make it worse by confusing religion, migration, territorialism and ethnicity. It is a complex picture and will not become clearer through simplistic analysis and aggressive language and actions.



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[REPLY](#) > 2. [betty](#)[21 MAY 2015 AT 9:39 PM](#)

This whole issue is just 'storm in a teacup'. I heard from my mother who is a Bama Rakhine told me about 60 years ago, that Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Anyway, there is an element of 'Islamization' going on, in Rakhine as in all over the world, Europe, USA, etc.

However, the underpinning cause, is the 'One World Order.'

So, what can I say, just 'Repent and Believe.' As I'm a born again Christian, converted from Bama Buddhist to this very discriminated belief.



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[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)[22 MAY 2015 AT 4:15 AM](#)

[This](#) is worth close attention in this context. In this document the Muslim League of North Arakan made a number of what might seem to be quite preposterous assertions about the historical origins of their community. But these assertions were only part of what the Council no doubt regarded as necessary ritual in their forlorn request at the time to secure greater control over their affairs.

There is firstly the required denunciation of British colonial 'divide and rule' policy, which the Council allege was responsible for setting Muslim against Buddhist, even culminating in the 1942 massacre of so many Muslims, and then Buddhists. Secondly you have the assurances of total loyalty and attachment to independent Burma, exemplified by the denial of any historical links whatsoever to Chittagong, whose culture is said to be totally separate from that of Muslim Arakan. This is highlighted by reference to the archaic language which they claim to speak, a mixture of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Arakanese and Bengali. Finally there is the assertion that the Council speaks for "our people" – "Ruwangyas or Rushangyas" – who are said to be 95% of the local population.

Not for a moment do I suppose that the Council actually believed what they were writing. But no doubt they felt there were certain formulae which it was important to deploy in order to curry favour with their new masters, however remote these formulae might be from historical truth. They were no longer appealing to the White Raj, as they did in a similar, somewhat submissive appeal the previous year to Arthur Bottomley, British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, but to the rulers of newly independent Burma, and they only said what they thought was expected of them. At the time the Burmese Government, while likewise not believing a word the Council said, would not have taken umbrage, for it only showed that the Council knew their place in the new Burma.

To achieve this, though most probably themselves of Chittagonian extraction, the Council have donned the mantle of the indigenous 50,000-strong Yakhain-kala, embracing and consuming them as their kith and kin, archaic language and all. An identity usurped.

It would have been somewhat galling to the Council had they known at the time that WH Drysdale, who had been evacuated to India with his wife and family in 1942, had been retained as a British expert in Special Branch after independence and was privy to the contents of their memorandum, and that the Permanent Secretary of the Burma Foreign Office felt that the paper need only be filed away under "Arakan Insurrection" after the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs had read. What the Minister for Home Affairs, or U Nu himself did with the petition is not yet known.

The mythology of the Council, alas, has persisted to this day. It is no longer folk-lore, but through constant repetition has become reality.



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[REPLY](#) > Aung

[22 MAY 2015 AT 8:30 AM](#)

@Derek

I wonder why can't anyone find any document indexed with keywords "Rohingya", "Rohinga" in the national archives of UK dated earlier than 1960s. I understand British are very meticulous in archiving documents. Burma, especially Arakan, was ruled as part of British India (which Bangladesh included) since early 1800s. And yet we cannot find any document dated earlier than 1960s.

My conclusion is that Rohingya as a race never existed contradicting what most of their lobbyists claim.

What is your take on that? National Archive below which you can search documents FOC.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>



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[REPLY](#) > Peter Cohen

[22 MAY 2015 AT 10:12 AM](#)

Aung,

All "Rohingya" are Bangladeshis or, prior to East Pakistan's reversion to Bangladesh, were simply Bengali Muslims from West Bengal State under British India (which included Burma). There is no mention of "Rohingya" for a reason, Aung. There were, and are, no separate ethnic group(s) known as "Rohingya" except to those individuals, who wish to ideologise a people who are members of a 166 million population, known as Bangladeshis. You are correct, I believe, in using the term "lobbyist". It is accurate, more so than the putative origins of this much "maligned" group. Sheikh Hasina Wajed will go on, for hours, about the suffering "Rohingya", but won't take any of her brethren back. No doubt, historically, Bengali Muslims have suffered at the hands of Punjabis and Sindhis, who tried to snuff out Bengali language and culture, that led to the genocide of 2 million Bengali Muslims, and the ultimate formation of Bangladesh. This is recorded history and cannot be revised, by Pakistan. This is no way is diminished by the re-invention of the "Rohingya", but the fact remains that the "Rohingya" are Muslims of Bengali origin, indivisible from Bangladeshis.



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[REPLY](#) > [Derek Tonkin](#)

[22 MAY 2015 AT 4:35 PM](#)

Unfortunately the Mandala HTML tag system (which I don't understand) cut off the first line of my post, which read:

<http://tinyurl.com/nr3x2k3>

I have not been able to insert this as an active URL.

The content suggests how in 1948 the Jamiatul-Ulema North Arakan set the tone for the next 10 years as they worked studiously to fashion 'Rohingya' from a range of possible ethnic designations. They no doubt had the best of intentions, but had not perhaps understood how the dragooning of separate Muslim communities in Arakan into a monolithic political entity might upset the Rakhine community, who got along reasonably well with the indigenous Kaman and Yakhain-kala, who spoke Arakanese, but not the more recent Chittagonian settlers who were rather too industrious for their liking.



Aung

[22 MAY 2015 AT 8:39 PM](#)

Thanks Peter and Derek!



Peter Cohen

[22 MAY 2015 AT 10:25 PM](#)

You're welcome Aung. I noticed that Malaysia and Indonesia will resettle some "Rohingya: temporarily. It will be interesting to see how that will sit with local non-Muslims, as well as Malays and Indonesian Muslims. The thoroughly corrupt nation of Gambia, run by madman "Dr" Yahyee (who thinks Mangoes treat homosexuality) has agreed to take all 3000 "Rohingya" who have never even heard of Gambia. Gambians themselves are trying to leave this hell hole in droves. The Gambian leader is trying to demonstrate his Islamic Zakat (Charity), but I doubt anyone would want to be under his thumb.



2. Peter Cohen

[22 MAY 2015 AT 6:54 AM](#)

@ALL "ROHINGYA" GROUPIES:

Bangladesh discriminates against Shi'ites, Sufis and Ahmadi Muslims, who are often killed by Hizb-ut-Tahrir and other Islamic terrorist groups, as well as numerous Islamic vigilante groups directly aided and abetted by the government in Dhaka and not a word in the Press about Bangladesh's horrific human rights situation. This has been the reason, along with natural migration, for the existence of the "Rohingya" in Myanmar. The mtDNA (and, please, don't try and compare contemporary anthropology with Geertz. That died out years ago. All anthropology is molecular today) of the "Rohingya" is identical with any Bangladeshi from Bangladesh. The mtDNA of any of Myanmar's other numerous ethnic groups do not match that of the "Rohingyas". The Rohingyas are Bangladeshi who have migrated into Myanmar, and Bengali Muslims from West Bengal who migrated into British Burma, which was regarded as a "backwater" by the British Colonial administration in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. The Rohingyas have no ethnic and cultural ties to Myanmar. as easily evident in their Bangladeshi cultural habits; furthermore, thanks to a recent photo on Yahoo, we know see that some "Rohingya" are not all the quiet Shaf'i Sunni Muslims, that they have been traditionally. A photo showed several "Rohingya" women dressed in the very un-Bangladeshi Niqab and Burqa. This can be seen increasingly in Bangladesh as well. It is called ISLAMISATION, something the naive Left claims does not exist, or does and they support it (the postmodern dichotomy of the Leftist-Islamist alliance is a total betrayal of all liberal principles, none of which can in any way, shape or form, defend Salafi Wahhabism). Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Jaish-e-Islami, al-Qaeda and other groups are progressively turning Bangladeshis on both sides of the border into Islamic fanatics. A majority of Bangladeshis now support Shari'a Law and Hudud, and I doubt the "Rohingya" are any different. Given Malaysia's quick progress from Shaf'i Islam to Hanafi or even Wahhabi Islam, the "Rohingya" might well find a home there; too bad they don't look more "Malay". Why should Myanmar be held responsible for Bangladeshi male incontinence with the condom? It is not Myanmar's problem that Muslim men next door can't control themselves. It is not Myanmar's problem that Bangladesh is the most densely populated nation on the planet, and some seek better lives in Myanmar. The claim that Buddhist Bamar are "forcing" Rohingya

out is nonsense. There are still a million left in Rakhine State, and I see no Press coverage of the persecution of Arakhine Muslims (of Tibeto-Burman origin) by Bangladeshi "Rohingya". Perhaps they just don't have the right color to be sponsored by NGOs and armchair "radicals" in the Academy. U Wirathu made the cover of Time Magazine (most of you probably don't remember that U Nu, Burma's first democratic leader, also made the cover, around 1958-1959). This "Palestinisation" of the Rohingya is not about helping destitute people; if it was, the OIC could subsidise their exile in Muslim nations in 24 hours. Instead of picking on Myanmar and snidely suggesting that DASSK is somehow a Burmese fascist, direct your energies to all the Islamic nations who talk a good game about the Ummah and brotherhood, but in a crunch, none of the Middle-Eastern or South Asian nations are to be found anywhere. There is a reason that Bangladesh does not want the Rohingya back (and "back" was used by the PM of Bangladesh). Bangladesh would be happy to offload 50 % of their population as it currently stands.



[REPLY](#) > Pann Thazin

[24 MAY 2015 AT 5:17 PM](#)

Peter Cohen

I can't agree with you more. The root of the problem is Bangladesh's overpopulation fueled by lack of birth control. Myanmar is only a scapegoat. Instead, the attention and international pressure should be directed to the Bangladeshi government.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Sohol

[23 MAY 2015 AT 11:05 PM](#)

I see Racism and Islamophobia rules the day!

Anyway excellent article Mr. Galache!

Two points to add: 1) there are many Buddhists of the 'Confucian race' on this side of the now Bangladeshi border. Their situation is very different: they have full citizenship rights in Bangladesh. Even then they fight for an independence Buddhist state, supported by UN and the Western states. They have so far achieved autonomy, which restricts rights of 'Bengalis' in these parts of Bangladesh. 2) the rights of Rohingya Muslims citizenship and existence in their land had been signed away by the British before the handing over Burma.



[REPLY](#) > Peter Cohen

[24 MAY 2015 AT 3:37 AM](#)

@Sohol

You write patent nonsense. Ethnic Asiatic minorities in Bangladesh, like the Chittagong Hill tribes and other non-Indo-Aryan Muslims are persecuted savagely in Bangladesh. Buddhists do NOT have "full" citizenship rights in Bangladesh, as neither do Hindus, Christians, Ahmadi Muslims, Ismaili Muslims and Shi'ite Muslims, all of whom are attacked and massacred by Islamic fanatics in Bangladesh, especially Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Jaish-e-Islami all originating from Pakistan. Islamic vigilantism is rampant in Bangladesh and BOTH minority Muslim sects and non-Muslims are the targets. This is on record at the UIN and by Human Rights Watch and Sheikh Hasina Wajid has done nothing to improve Bangladesh. Sohol, your comments are ridiculous and have no basis in reality.



[REPLY](#) > 2. Sohol

[24 MAY 2015 AT 11:36 PM](#)

This former British official and co. have clear agenda, which has nothing to do with the truth or reality.

Keep repeating your own propaganda and reality will catch up with with sooner or later!



[REPLY](#) > planB

[25 MAY 2015 AT 10:34 AM](#)

#30

Can you rather would you enlighten us with the clear distinguishing characteristic of Rohingyas vs Bangali Kalar.

The Tayoke in MYanmar, has long abandon the idea of ancestry from China e.g Hunannese, Cantonese, Fukienese, Haka, WA, Chewchow etc all with distict dialect and characteristics.

Integrated well into Myanmar SOciety without much ado beyond special recognition.

ANy reason the Kalar in Yakhine deserve a special status?

If the Kalar can pay to get out then they can surly migrate to other Part of Myanmar w/o much ado.



[REPLY](#) > Sohol

[26 MAY 2015 AT 1:13 AM](#)

I wouldn't want to, because I don't subscribe to these racist notions.

The point I was making in my first post is that, indeed, the people of the region are mixture of people (and all people are creation of God); so, in a border region of now Myanmar (Burma) with now Bangladesh you will, of course, find people of 'Bangladeshi' origin, and in turn, in border region of Bangladesh you will find people of 'Confucian civilization' (a term I borrowed from Huntington's the 'clash of Civilization' thesis). This further supported by 'races' such as 'Nepalese' – are they Indian, or Tibetans or Chinese? They are a mixture of all three and perhaps more. The truth is as are human beings are much closer than we think – but these rational arguments does not suit the racist agenda, especially during this era dominated by the 'clash of the civilization' agenda.

This supports the point Mr Galache made in a scholarly manner, which can not be said of many of the racist and Islamophobic posts here!



[REPLY](#)

2. [Statelessness series \(5\): The future of the Rohingya – The political barriers and solutions | The Global Health Journal](#)

[25 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 12:40 AM](#)

[...] [16] Galache, C. 2014. Rohingya and national identities in Burma. New Mandela. Available at: <http://www.newmandala.org/2014/09/22/the-rohingya-and-national-identities-in-burma/> [...]



[REPLY](#)

3. [State Racism Meets Neoliberalism – DeMockeryCy](#)

[18 JANUARY 2018 AT 7:11 PM](#)

[...] issued the current list of national races, which has met with some controversy ever since: it arbitrarily excluded the Rohingya, subsumed some groups under others with which they have little or no linguistic [...]



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- **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



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