Causes and Consequences of Rohingya Refugee Crisis: A Case of Doubly
Alienated People

by

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A Thesis

In

Sociology

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to God almighty, for allowing me to walk through this journey. I am indebted to my thesis chair, Dr. Nadia Y. Flores-Yeffal, and committee member, Dr. Carol Lindquist. Without their generous help and kind feedback, even on weekends, this thesis was simply impossible. I am also thankful to a mentor from whom I have received immense support of every kind: Kazi Nazrul Islam. I am thankful to my deceased mother, who passed away just a few days before I started this master's program. My thanks also extend to my father and my three brothers who were always with me. Special thanks to my husband who has always been by my side during this master's program. My son Shams was born while I was enrolled in this master's program and he had to sacrifice a lot for his mom's graduate education. I want to dedicate this thesis to Shams.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to explore the connection between the causes and consequences of the Rohingya refugee crisis, originating in Myanmar and culminating in Bangladesh, through the theoretical framework of alienation, stigmatization, otherization and dehumanization. Drawing parallels with the previous ethnic cleansings (e.g. the Holocaust) and centuries of dehumanization of ethno-religious groups and immigrants in history, this study shows that despite sharing the same religious faith, a dialect of the national language, and similar skin color, the Rohingyas are still alienated and dehumanized within Bangladesh. The contribution of this thesis to the body of literature is to show how alienation and otherization can operate with the slightest possible differences, fueled by dehumanization and otherization propaganda to serve some diversionary interests of the power elite. Works of Goffman, Durkheim, Said, Foucault, and Marx provide the theoretical framework through which the processes of Rohingya versus two nation state's *biopolitics* are traced and discussed. A mini ethnographic study reveals that the extent of stigmatization has reached a level that the word Rohingya has become a parallel of the "N word" in America. Statistical analyses from a survey data on the hosting population reveals that less interaction is the avenue through which anti-Rohingya campaigns get momentum and can fuel the alienation process. Content analyses of the local Bengali and English newspapers reveal how a nation state, in the absence of freedom of speech, successfully mobilizes the media towards the otherization

and dehumanization campaign. Some policy recommendations are provided at the end to shed light on some strategies which can prevent another refugee crisis from happening in the future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On Sept 13, 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres was asked if ethnic cleansing was occurring in Rakhine State; he replied: “When one-third of the Rohingya population had to flee the country, can you find a better word to describe it?” (Al Jazeera, September 14, 2019). Guterres also warned that: “Grievances that have been left to fester for decades have now escalated beyond Myanmar’s borders, destabilizing the region” (Washington Post Sept 13, 2017). Guterres also said that “The humanitarian situation is catastrophic” (OHCHR, Sept 13, 2017).

The Rohingya massacre in the Rakhine state of Myanmar that took place in the fall of 2017 has far reaching impacts. The United Nations Human Rights Council described this event as a “textbook case of ethnic cleansing” (UN News, September 11, 2017). According to Medecins Sans Frontieres, at least 6,700 Rohingya, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the month after the violence broke out (BBC, April 24, 2018). Nearly 700,000 people have migrated to the neighboring southeastern district of Bangladesh -Cox’s Bazar. However, Myanmar's military denies killing civilians. There are many explanations behind the motive for this genocide on the Myanmar government’s part. These explanations range from security issues to economic interests (Ibrahim 2016; Farzana 2015). Security explanations include but are not limited to the scapegoating of the Rohingyas as a diversionary tactic in an internal power struggle. Economic explanations oftentimes point to the ongoing Chinese development

projects in the Rakhine state, for which the Rohingyas were expelled to ensure stability (Bhaumik, 2018). Apart from the political explanations, there is a need to explore the sociological basis through which the Rohingya people were demonized in order to create the atmosphere in which the genocide could be manufactured and justified. It is true that the same type of sociological studies were conducted following the Holocaust during the WWII (e.g. Arendt, 1964; Marcuse, 1964). However, this thesis not only examines the social forces behind a similar massacre but also distinctively explores a) how those social forces were reproduced in an asylum granting host country which shares same religion, similar skin color and a dialect of the same national language; and b) one exemplary documentation of the social trajectory and influences of such events, because, despite being a major refugee influx (almost 1 million refugees), the Rohingya refugee crisis is inadequately addressed in the literature compared to its other counterparts.

Previous literature (e.g. Ibrahim, 2016, and others) have hinted at the historical political processes that led to the culmination of the Rohingya genocide. In this thesis, I explore how the pro-genocide narrative was produced and legitimized domestically within Myanmar. I do this by analyzing data and documentation of the events that led to this genocide through human rights reports, previous literature and news coverage. The findings reveal that in order to construct a new ultra-nationalist Myanmarism, the Rohingya people have been manufactured as the otherized common enemy of the people. The Myanmar government has utilized this narrative to rationalize and justify this genocide.

The purpose of this study is primarily twofold: a) to analyze the sociological causes behind the mass immigration of the Rohingyas into Bangladesh from the Rakhine state of Myanmar; and then b) to analyze the challenges they faced within their host country Bangladesh's refugee camps. In doing so, using historical precedence, statistical analysis, ethnographic evidence and content analysis of newspaper coverage, the thesis argues that the Rohingya people have faced alienation and even dehumanization both inside their ancestral homeland from which they were expelled as well as in their newly found refuge in Bangladesh. Whether the settlement processes and political dialogs for Rohingya repatriation are enough or not; or how scarce or sufficient were the aids for them are not the focus of this study. Rather, in continuation of the dynamic identity framing of the Rohingya inside their homeland, Myanmar, this thesis focuses on what form their identity took or how well their identity fared inside Bangladesh

In their homeland, Myanmar, the Rohingya faced alienation, victimization and dehumanization which culminated in an ethnic cleansing by their own countrymen from a different ethnic group. In this case, the Rohingya identity was differentiated based on color/race, religion, and language. The state narrative has constructed the Rohingyas as the ultimate nemesis -the other- of the mainstream Myanmarist nationalism. And thus, an ethnic cleansing or genocide of the Rohingya was possible and justified under an authoritarian government.

On the other hand, despite sharing the same religion-Islam, having similar skin color and sharing the dialect of the national language -Bangla (Bengali), the Rohingya

people still faced alienation and dehumanization, although to a much lesser extent, within Bangladesh. The contribution of this thesis to the literature is that it further confirms Feagin's (2013) theory about the internalization of the white racial sub-frame in which the people of color adopt the white racial framing and discriminate against the new "other." The thesis demonstrates that despite sharing the same religion, similar skin color and language, a significant part of the Bangladeshi population, directed and instigated by the Bangladesh government, has participated in the alienation and dehumanization campaign against the Rohingya people. In the later parts of the thesis, the consequences of the ethnic cleansing are explored from a theoretical perspective. Since the primary consequence was manifested in the form of a sudden and immediate refugee crisis within the borders of Bangladesh, this thesis presents the impact of Rohingya refugee crisis in terms of integration into the hosting countries.

In the quantitative analysis part, conforming to the general literature on refugees' impact on the hosting populations' perceptions and my theoretical expectations, the four hypotheses were tested using secondary survey data: 1) infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make the hosting population's perception about assimilation negative; 2) total non-exposure reduces the hosting populations safety concerns about the Rohingya refugees; 3) women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees; 4) negative economic conditions are more likely to make the hosting population's perception negative. Statistical analysis shows support for hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

One brief ethnographic anecdote by the author in Dhaka city, recorded during the winter of 2017, immediately following the influx of the Rohingya refugees, further confirms this claim. News coverage in the local Bangladeshi media is also summarized to showcase the trend of a smear campaign against the Rohingya people, which worked hand in hand with the Bangladeshi government's zeal to repatriate the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar without any kind of protection measures. Through the analysis and cross-fact check of this smear campaign, it is established that the Rohingya people faced another form of alienation from their hosting country -Bangladesh.

Despite all the humiliation and smear campaign against the Rohingya refugees, this thesis documents that the Rohingya people still prefer to stay in Bangladesh before basic rights such as citizenship in Myanmar and the right to return to home under the supervision of a third party have been ensured. The findings from information on basic rights indicators stress the argument that the Rohingya people are suffering a tremendously bad condition in the refugee camps. However, they have refused to go back to Myanmar now, simply because that will be even worse. They fear they might face yet another genocide until a third party, such as the UN, intervenes by creating a safe-zone for them. Apart from this political solution, interesting sociological findings of their lived experience during the genocide and while in the refugee camps tell the tale of a double alienation.

Due to limited time and resources, this study is limited in its scope in the following three aspects: 1) The survey data used in this analysis were only collected from

the hosting population and not from the Rohingyas themselves. It is uncertain whether there is any government restriction on conducting any such survey inside the refugee camps, since all NGO activities are banned now, however, a primary survey of the Rohingya people would have provided very important information. 2) The current survey data seriously lacks some basic demographic information (e.g. age, income, education), which reduces the rigor of the analysis. If an updated survey is conducted, inclusion of the demographic variables will be very useful. 3) I could not find any ethnographic work based in the Rohingya camps which house around 1 million refugees, neither could I conduct one. This is obviously a shortcoming and a possible avenue for future work.

The thesis proceeds as follows: the next section provides a brief review of the literature on the Rohingya people's historic and contemporary sufferings. While doing so, it underscores this thesis's value addition to the existing literature. This section also provides the theoretical framework through which the thesis is analyzed. Then the third section presents the data and methodology of the thesis. The fourth section provides the background of this migration, which was the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas inside Myanmar. This section tries to unearth the sociological factors that enabled and justified the massacre of the Rohingyas. Then, the fifth section presents the descriptive and quantitative analysis of the settlement process and the attitude of the hosting population towards the Rohingyas inside Bangladesh. The sixth section provides a mini-ethnographic study which reveals the level of dehumanization of the Rohingyas. The seventh section presents a content analysis of the smear campaign against the Rohingyas

by the media and the government of Bangladesh. Finally, the concluding section provides a recap and some policy suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Work on the Rohingyas

The first book from western academia on the Rohingya issue, to the best of my knowledge, is Azeem Ibrahim's book (2016): *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*. Ibrahim (2016) argued that the Rohingyas were targeted whenever ambitious and desperate generals and their complicit politicians needed a distraction from something else. In that context, the Rohingyas were targeted and defined as the other by Myanmar's own far right nationalist political camp. Ibrahim argues that the persecution against the Rohingya has been willingly and intentionally orchestrated.

In revealing the background behind their persecution and rampant discrimination before the persecution, Ibrahim (2016, p. 18) traced back the Rohingya identity and existence in the Arakan kingdom prior to the British colonization. With documented political history Ibrahim (2016, p. 45) demonstrated how a "divide and rule" tactic used by the British made the Rohingya into victims. Ibrahim (2016, Chapter 2) also documented the post-British discriminatory institutional structures that made the Rohingya disenfranchised all along. He explained that the so-called democratic openings would allow a genocide to occur, which he argued would be the final and logical step in the long history of discrimination against the Rohingyas (Chapter 5). Ibrahim's (2016) prophecy came to be true within one year of the book's publication.

Ibrahim (2016) persistently deconstructed the anti-Rohingya doctrines preached by the Buddhist-Nationalist elites. One of the key arguments propagated by the Myanmar elite has been that Rohingyas are outsiders who have been late-comers and migrants from Bangladesh, and that the term “Rohingya” is a recent construct so that people don’t simply call them Bengali Muslims. Using extensive archival documentation (e.g. British colonial census data) Ibrahim (2016) exposed the fact that Rohingyas did exist from long before. He argues that the British colonial rulers did not refer to “Rohingya” simply because they classified inhabitants on the basis of religion and not ethnicity, just as they did for any other provinces under their rule. Yet, Ibrahim (2016) presented linguistic and ethnic references to “Rooinga” from 1799 and to “Ruinga” from 1815, which offer evidence for a Rohingya presence and existence in the kingdom of Arakan (p. 39). He could not provide evidence of officials who were involved in commanding positions to execute the discriminatory measures.

Francis Wade’s (2017) *Myanmar's Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of a Muslim 'other'* is the second book on the Rohingya refugee crisis that I was able to find. For decades, Myanmar was portrayed in Western academia and media as a case of men in jackboots maintaining an authoritarian rule over a majority non-violent and tolerant Buddhist population. However, Wade (2017) argues that recent years have told a different story, a story of genocide inspired by religious and ethnic hatred of a minority Muslim population. The strength of Wade’s (2017) work lies in his attempt to

understand the complex ways in which discrimination has been perpetuated and engrained, by looking at the human experience from all sides of the crisis.

Wade (2017) showed how the violence between majority and dominant Buddhist elites and dominated minority Rohingya Muslims that erupted in western Myanmar in 2012 demonstrated a growing divide between religious communities that previously had received little attention from the outside world. Attacks on Muslims soon spread across Myanmar, with hundreds dead, entire neighborhoods turned to debris, and tens of thousands of Muslims incarcerated in internment camps. Wade (2017) accounts a detailed report of the events which shows that the episodes of this violence were spurred on by monks, pro-democracy activists, and politicians amid the democratization efforts! He shows how the manipulation of identities by an anxious ruling elite laid the foundations for mass violence. Wade (2017) also shows that some of the most celebrated and articulated voices for democracy in the West (e.g. Aung San Suu Kyi) have turned against the minority Rohingya Muslim population. It is ironic because this crime against humanity takes place at a time when, due to the democratization of Myanmar, most citizens are beginning to experience freedoms unseen ever before.

Farzana (2015) in a different study argues that at the core of the Rohingya problem is the fact that Myanmar (which the Rohingyas claim as their ancestral homeland) and Bangladesh (where many Rohingyas are unwelcome and/or undocumented refugees) continue to deny the Rohingyas their political rights and identity, each place stressing that the Rohingya refugees are the responsibility of the

other. Farzana (2015) explores the history of the region to investigate how the identities of the people living in the Bangladesh-Myanmar borderlands are developed, in general. The study also explores how Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh identify themselves in the middle of sovereignty claims by two competing countries and a social space that exists across artificially drawn borders, in specific. The value of this research lies in that it addresses the life of the already displaced Rohingya refugees.

Farzana (2015) argues that the real political identity of the Rohingyas can be situated in their collective memory and their everyday political interactions in the borderlands. In this collective memory, Farzana (2015) argues that the Rohingyas' faith in ethnicity, identity, and belongingness are instrumental in shaping their current identity. By documenting the production of cultural artefacts by the Rohingyas (e.g. poetry, songs, social media videos) while in exile, Farzana points to a non-conventional resistance. By non-conventional, Farzana is contrasting with violent or armed resistances here. She also argues that, compared to many other refugee groups who had to seek refuge in far-off places from home (for example, the Syrian refugees in Europe), the Rohingyas are quite close, living across the Naf river. This dilemma creates a completely different psychology of attachment and alienation which needs further attention in refugee studies. On one hand, the Rohingyas are living in close proximity to their homeland and, on the other hand, they are forbidden to return to or visit their homeland. The proximity creates attachment and longing, and the divided borders, constantly patrolled by the armed border guards, alienate them. This creates a different psychology of attachment and

alienation, Farzana (2015) argues, compared to immigrants and refugees who are either living in places far from their home and/or are not forbidden to return to their homes. This is theoretically interesting, and other parallels such as the Palestinians living in the Lebanese refugee camps for decades could be compared in this regard. Farzana's theory of the Rohingya life-politics along the border potentially challenges the contemporary understanding of borderland conflicts within the framework of state-sanctioned boundaries.

Parnini (2012) also argues along the same line as Farzana that the Rohingya crisis is at the root of the Bangladesh-Myanmar crisis. She differs in that she framed the crisis as a non-traditional security problem emanating from the "burden" of housing the Rohingya. She points to the internal problems of the Rohingya refugee camps within Bangladesh which are a headache for the Bangladeshi government. Since this research is a bit dated, it also addressed some earlier problems of arms within the camps, since many of the Rohingya freedom fighters brought their arms with them while taking shelter within Bangladesh, and that created a security problem. But, from what I gathered from newspaper reports, the latest wave of refugees could not carry even their most needed essentials, since they were fleeing an all-out ethnic cleansing, therefore, it would have been very difficult to have brought arms.

However, what the Rohingyas suffered both inside Myanmar when they faced an ethnic cleansing as well as inside Bangladesh as refugees is not anything new. A rich literature has addressed another similar but lengthier, broader, and more intense

dehumanization campaign that existed for centuries in Europe against Jews (Moore 1992; Brustein, 2003; Herf, 2013). This dehumanization campaign culminated in one of the biggest ethnic cleansings of history: The Holocaust (Nova, 1986). Jews were dehumanized in every possible way during the interwar period in Germany. They were compared with rats, mushrooms, venom and what-not (Smith, 2011). Jews were also blamed for all national problems, and a body of scholarship has argued that this collective stigmatization was a psychological prerequisite for the impending ethnic cleansing (Steizinger, 2018). This thesis argues that the Rohingyas faced a similar dehumanization campaign in Myanmar before the ethnic cleansing and afterwar, while inside Bangladesh as refugees.

In a similar fashion, colonizing forces (e.g. Spain, Portugal, England, France) dehumanized and demonized the native populations of the territories they invaded. Losurdo (2014) documented how the natives of Africa were enslaved in chains as wild animals are captured with nets. Afterward, they were baptized by force with holy water and thus stripped of their religions (Losurdo, 2014). Analysis of many of the slave owners' personal diaries and other political documents show that they thought of the slaves as subhuman and the loss of the slaves' lives was identical to the loss of livestock (Losurdo, 2014).

Dehumanization campaigns against immigrants are a consistent feature of U.S. immigration history regardless of what incoming people were arriving in significant numbers. For example, drawings and songs caricaturing the new immigrants as criminal,

childish or even subhuman were commonplace. One cartoon from 1891 claimed “If immigration was properly restricted, you would never be troubled with anarchism, socialism, the Mafia and such kindred evils!” (Library of Congress Classroom Materials). During the Great Depression, the Italian Americans were blamed for taking American jobs. They were stereotyped as the “Mediterranean types’ who were inferior to the northern Europeans (Library of Congress Classroom Materials). Tamburri (2011) documents that discrimination faced by the early Italian immigrants in America range from lynching in the early part of the twentieth century to defamation and stereotypical presentations by the motion picture industry during its inception. Almost identical stereotypes were framed against the early Irish immigrants to America. Jensen (2002) documents that many of the late nineteenth-century American job advertisements used to openly state: “No Irish Need Apply,” which later was turned into a song by the Irish people to showcase the discrimination.

This brings the discussion to the ongoing discrimination and dehumanization against Mexicans in the U.S. This discrimination has many forms and many layers. However, how the anti-Mexican rhetoric has been created and disseminated out is relevant for the current discussion. One particular type of anti-Mexican campaign: “The Latino Cyber-Moral Panic” -a type of moral panic that uses cyberspace to falsely blame and dehumanize Latino immigrants from Mexico and Central America in the United States can be considered to be parallel to the Rohingya alienation (Flores-Yeffal, et al., 2011). The dehumanization process starts with what Cohen (1972) calls the creation of

the *folk devils* by moral entrepreneurs or key public figures. Folk devils are a group of people personified as evil who are portrayed so by stripping off any positive human attributes and replacing them with negative ones (Goode and Yehuda 1994). This folk devil can serve the role of a necessary distraction that the elites might need as can be seen in the case of blaming “Mexicans” for taking away the jobs and engaging in crimes and in the efforts to build a wall along the US-Mexico border (Root, 2018). Election manifestos and other propaganda platforms are often full of accusations against immigrants for stealing jobs, raping native women, being criminals, lowering wages, living off welfare benefits, abusing the system, and drawing down economic growth, despite these claims being mostly not scientifically rooted (Sakib and Osman, 2019). In a similar vein, the Rohingya people have been smeared by the local Bangladeshi media through a variety of campaigns.

Flores-Yeffal, et al. (2017), working on fearmongering about Latino immigrants in the U.S., found that social media has become a public sphere in the cyber world where users’ activities reinforce and are reinforced by a white racial frame that is responsible for the spread of a moral panic and reinforces systemic racism in the society at large. They argued that the discursive tools of the social media sites, e.g. hashtags, and other modes of interaction continuously target Latino and undocumented immigrants. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, although racially (including skin color which is only slightly different), religiously, and linguistically speaking (with a slight difference that they speak a dialect of Bengali which

is almost identical to the dialect spoken in the Southeastern region of Bangladesh) most Bangladeshis are not that different from the Rohingyas.

However, due to the fact that this phenomenon is very recent and still unfolding, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been any research exploring the different layers of dehumanization and alienating impact on the Rohingya people. However, this study is particularly significant from a sociological perspective due to the way Bangladeshi people racially profile and alienate a population based only on a slightly different skin color, having a noticeably malnourished body in general, and a different dialect of the language. This is a particularly important example of outgroup bias created from a slightly differentiated identity scenario.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Myanmar's official narrative regarding the cause or background of the most recent Rohingya refugee influx is a small rebellion by the Rohingyas to which the Myanmar army responded with an indiscriminate and extremely disproportionate military crackdown. In explaining why the Myanmar army used the most repressive measure: ethnic cleansing against the Rohingyas, Durkheim's framing of collective consciousness is useful. Durkheim (1933) writes:

We must not say that an action shocks the common conscience because it is criminal, but rather that it is criminal because it shocks the common conscience.

We do not reprove it because it is a crime, but it is a crime because we reprove it (p. 81).

Clearly, after decades of repressions and scapegoating of the Rohingyas, the Myanmar army could have used any action or inaction on the Rohingyas part to criminalize them. Rohingya peoples' demand for basic human rights shocks the common conscience of the Myanmar elites not because it is criminal, but rather it is criminal because it shocks the common conscience that even the "subhuman" Rohingyas want the same level of human rights and citizenship rights.

Before the all-out ethnic cleansing of the Rohingyas, it was necessary to otherize the Rohingyas in the collective consciousness of the Myanmar elite and masses. Said (1978) in his *Orientalism* showed how the orientalist colonial enterprises essentialized and otherized the people of the Orient as the *other* as a category antithetical to the European *self*. In a similar appropriation, the Myanmar military government has otherized the Rohingyas as the infiltrators from Bangladesh, and they are called "the Bengalis" (Ibrahim, 2016). Wade (2017) uses extensive first-hand testimony to show how the Rohingyas were made "the other" within the national Myanmar context. These haunting testimonies reveal the poverty, violence and systemic discrimination faced by the Rohingya. Wade (2017) also took the testimony of other groups from Myanmar's Rakhine state which detailed their experiences and even prejudices about the Rohingya, which are important to understanding the roots of this discrimination. Wade's (2017) work documents that in northern Rakhine, state prisoners belonging to the majority

Burmese ethnic groups from other parts of Myanmar have been resettled to change the area's demographic balance to downplay the otherized Rohingya majority demographics.

The Myanmar army's indiscriminate and disproportionately violent response to the Rohingyas can be expounded by the framework of Foucault's *biopolitics*. Foucault (1978) argues that although governments have been historically referred to as several practices, ranging from religious guidance of the soul to ruling over a territory and its inhabitants, in the modern state context it essentially means governing a population. As the modern state has to take care of the life and wellbeing of its population, therefore, Foucault calls it biopolitics. In the context of the Rohingya massacre, the Myanmar government took the most extreme measure, which is extermination of a segment of its population that it had already otherized. Myanmar state has done this to gain a diversionary advantage in domestic politics and to achieve the rally-round-the-flag effect (Mueller, 1970) in support of an extreme nationalist ideology. Foucault shows that the practices of government are always enabled and justified by a specific type of reasoning or rationality. This specific rationality defines the government's ends and justifies any suitable means necessary to achieve them. To understand power as a set of relations means that is necessary to understand how such relations are rationalized. It means examining how forms of rationality engrave themselves in practices. Thus, even a crime against humanity, as in the case of Rohingya ethnic cleansing, was justified and rationalized by the logic of biopolitics: in the name of Myanmarist nationalism. This is resonated in a *New York Times* investigative report (Beach and Dean, 2019). The

interactive report commented that, in their efforts to prove that no massacre happened in Myanmar, the Myanmar government seemed to believe their own propaganda, and they erroneously thought there were no traces left for the reporters to see. However, this demonstrates the strength of the logic of biopolitics that Foucault discusses in which the government's ends and means are always justified and rationalized.

The later parts of this project demonstrate how the Rohingya alienation was manufactured in the collective psyche and memory of the hosting population in Bangladesh. The tool of collective shaming of the Rohingya refugees inside Bangladesh is stigma. Goffman (1963) defines stigma as is the common reference for a personal trait or characteristic that reduces the stigmatized population's humanity in the eyes of others. For the Rohingyas, these traits include the different dialect of Bengali that they speak and the slightly darker color of their skin, which was exactly what Goffman (1963) mentioned: skin color as a belittling tribal trait, i.e. a feature of an ethnic group. Additionally, the evidence from Chapter 6 (*Ethnographic Case Study: Struggles of Assimilation or Integration*) suggests that the stigmatization has reached such extensive level that the very name Rohingya has become a derogatory slang word, akin to the parallel of the "N word" in America.

Goffman (1963) talks about blemishes of characteristics that societal "normals" would find unusual or even repulsive. This could come from being perceived as "weak willed," which is how Goffman describes people who allow the whim of others to govern them, rather than trying to control their own universe (1963). Also, Feagin (2013), in *The*

White Racial Frame, mentions that whites carry a (usually unconscious) sense of what he calls moral Velcro in their regard of people of color, a recurring suspicion that darker persons are likely to behave immorally. This perceived immorality is recognized and responded to as a serious problem. For the Rohingya people, the most frequent blemishes found in the hosting population's perspective and documented in newspapers (e.g. Shishir, 2019) are that they are "drug addicts," and they "breed like mice" and thus add to the overpopulation problem of Bangladesh. The "breed like mice" and "drug addict" stigmas are strikingly similar to a Nazi propaganda children's book against the Jews titled: "Poisonous Mushrooms" (German: *Der Giftpilz*), which has a cover (Figure 1) depicting Jews in the forms of mushrooms and holding smoking instruments.

Figure 1: Cover of "Poisonous Mushrooms" (German: *Der Giftpilz*: Hiemer, 2016)

Karl Marx (1932) talks about the alienation of folks from what he called the essence of their species as a result of living in a society of stratified social classes. The alienation from one's self is an artifact of being a mechanical part of a social class, which, by its very nature, strips off a person's humanity. In the context of the Rohingya

people, the above theoretical discussion demonstrates that the Rohingyas were alienated when they were inside their homeland, Myanmar, as they were stripped of their citizenship and faced a number of demonization and apartheid campaigns. It also shows that the Rohingyas did not receive treatment befitting an equal human being inside Bangladesh, rather they faced the same alienation of being forced to live in ghettos and other kinds of dehumanization that were faced by many other forced immigrants throughout history. This double alienation is documented and explained in this thesis, using statistical analysis, mini-ethnographic depiction, and content analysis of historical and contemporary accounts of the lived experiences of the Rohingyas.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

I use secondary data for this project which were taken from a) international English news coverage of the Rohingya genocide, the settlement in the refugee camps, and the repatriation process; b) local news coverage, both in Bangla and English; c) United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs survey data: “Bangladeshi Host Community Perspectives on the Rohingya Crisis, June-July 2018”; and d) reports by Human Rights Watch (2019)

The survey data are used to run three logistic regression analyses to measure popular perceptions about a) whether respondents think that the Rohingya people have integrated well into Bangladeshi society; b) whether the hosting population thinks that the Rohingya people should be allowed access to public facilities such as schools and hospitals; and c) whether respondents feel safe around Rohingya people.

The only primary data used for this thesis is a mini-ethnography I conducted during my fieldwork in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh) during my visit in the fall of 2017, while residing in a middle class neighborhood in the city, which now hosts a considerable number of Rohingya who fled the refugee camps in the southern bordering districts. These Rohingya people who migrated internally within Bangladesh did so to seek better employment opportunities. During my visit, I noticed the extent to which the Rohingya people were discriminated against by the Bangladeshi people who lived in Dhaka.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT CAUSED THE MIGRATION

Since any analysis of the integrations and alienations of the Rohingya people must trace the process through which the Rohingya people become refugees, this section discusses the context that led up to this forced migration. Forced migration of refugees has been considered a political phenomenon. In the sociological literature of immigration, thus, refugees themselves have had relatively smaller importance. Although some migration literature considers forced refugees (Peterson, 1958; Jenny, 1984), the primary focus of the literature is exclusively on voluntary migration (Lee, 1966) and thus sheds minimal light on the sociological analysis of refugees.

The few instances of sociological migration literature which specifically discuss refugees (Richmond, 1993) do so primarily to distinguish refugees from voluntary migrants rather than to explain in detail the phenomenon of forced migration itself. Schmeidl (1997), using 19 years of pooled time-series data (1971-90), found that the biggest contributing factor behind forced migration was civil wars and not economic hardship.

Similarly, the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar has caused an upsurge of refugee migration into Bangladesh. Almost a million Rohingya people were forced to migrate to the bordering southeastern district of Bangladesh -Cox's Bazar. This was a very recent and massive case of forced migration in which an entire ethnic group faced "ethnic cleansing" in their homeland and were forced to flee to the nearest possible land in which

they could live free from oppression. Even their transition or migration was not free of threats. They faced structural obstruction because of the scarcity of transportation and hence tried to sail the river separating Bangladesh and Myanmar – the Naf River – in makeshift boats; and they faced legal and humanitarian barriers after reaching Bangladesh -a country primarily not-so-willing to welcome the refugees. Amnesty International has verified reports of landmines remaining active along the Bangladesh border of the Rakhine state of Myanmar, of injuries caused by landmines, and that the Myanmar army was responsible for installing landmines in these areas. Those with better luck, a small minority, of course, found their refuge in other countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia. This section is an attempt to present a primary enquiry into the factors that led up to this forced migration and how their settlement in the refugee camps inside Bangladesh proceeded.

There are few explanations of the motive behind the Rohingya genocide and subsequent refugee flow. These explanations vary from security threats to economic interests. This thesis argues with evidence that the most pivotal reason behind the genocide lies in the Myanmar government's interest in creating a new Burmese identity which is a mix of a particular interpretation of Theravada Buddhism and an aggressive Myanmarist nationalism. Analyzing documentation of the genocidal events through news coverage, NGO reports, etc., this report argues that in order to build a new ultra-nationalist Myanmarism, the Rohingya people were manufactured as the common enemy of the Myanmar people.

Although the latest indiscriminate civilian genocide, which led to the influx of Rohingya migration, is framed by the Myanmar military as a response to a rebellion by a small secessionist group, the persecution of the Rohingya people is an institutionalized superstructure that was in place for a long time. Immediately after the genocide, the Myanmar military banned the region from receiving any humanitarian assistance, denied entry to a UN exploratory group, to the media, and to rights groups, making it virtually impossible to independently verify its claim of a terrorist attack by a small Rohingya group -the pretext that the army used to justify the genocide. From widespread secondary data sources (e.g. interviews of the fleeing refugees) it was corroborated by a large number of respondents that even if there was a rebellion attempt for independence in 2017, the supposed response by the Myanmar army was extremely disproportionate, indiscriminating, and it targeted civilian children, while weaponized rape was also used against Rohingya women (Beyrer et al., 2017). It was an all-out ethnic cleansing. It was an extremely disproportionate response because there were few or no casualties reported during the insurgency, whereas the ethnic cleansing burned at least 200 entire villages to ground which is identified as a *textbook case of ethnic cleansing* by rights groups such as HRW and Amnesty International. The Myanmar army, however, has claimed that the Rohingyas actually burned their own homes as a sabotage activity. At least 6,700 Rohingyas were killed in the first month of attacks, according to the international medical charity Doctors Without Borders. The military junta also purportedly shot at fleeing civilians and planted land mines near the Bangladesh border. Due to this evidentiary basis

and the subsequent exploitation of this incident in the national politics, this thesis argues that as a continuation of previous policies of alienation and to score temporary political points, the Rohingya people were made the scapegoat, once again. Even in recent history, this was not the first time that the Rohingya people faced displacement. In 2012, communal violence was carried out against the Rohingya by Buddhist extremists. Since then, around 120,000 Rohingya have been resided in miserable camps within Rakhine that were built for internally displaced Rohingyas. Figure 2 shows the satellite images that depict the before-and-after scenarios as the Rohingya villages were burnt to ground during the ethnic cleansing. Figure 3 shows a map with at least 200 villages that were burnt.

Figure 2: Satellite images of before and after burning the villages (before: left, and after: right, burning the Nwar Yon Taung village, Northern Rakhine, Myanmar. Source: Human Rights Watch, 2019).

To understand the current refugee crisis, we have to look back at the events and circumstances that led to the current situation. Rakhine State (changed from the Arabized “Arakan” state name in 1989) is a state that borders Bangladesh to the north and the Bay of Bengal to the west. The Rohingya and the Rakhine are the two major ethnicities that live in this state. The Myanmar military claims that the Rohingya are illegal Bangladeshi

intruders in Myanmar. However, there are academic publications, which presented counter-evidence to contest it. Mahmood et al (2017) cited a report published in 1799 by the Scottish physician Francis Buchanan, who practiced medicine for 15 years in the then-Arakan (now Rakhine). Before Britain's 1826 conquest of Burma, Buchanan reported that Arakan was also known as "Rovingaw," among "Mohammedans [an old oriental way of naming Muslims, which in this case obviously means the Rohingya], who have been settled in Arakan since long ago, and who call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan."

Figure 3: Burnt villages on maps (Human Rights Watch conducted an analysis of satellite imagery, counting at least 200 villages: the red dots, burned down in the offensive; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

This thesis argues that there are active apartheid-like institutions in place for the Rohingya people. For example, Rohingya couples in a few localities are only allowed to have two children. In 1994, the government stopped granting the Rohingya children birth certificates (Lewa, 2009). Rohingya women and men must seek permission to marry, which requires photographs of the bride without a headscarf and the groom with a clean-

shaven face (Albert, 2017). These regulations were put in place deliberately to contradict the Muslim religious traditions which highly recommends headscarves for women and beards for men. To move to a new home or travel to even outside their towns, Rohingya must gain government approval (Ullah, 2011). These types of apartheid structures as well as occasional military operations have been going on for at least five decades. Due to a military operation by the Burmese military, the first wave of Rohingya refugees came to Bangladesh in 1978 (Zarni and Cowley 2014). Around 200,000 Rohingyas took refuge in Cox's Bazar. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) managed initiatives resulted in a repatriation deal, which allowed the return of nearly all refugees. These waves of Rohingya migration and repatriation are arguably, proof that the Rohingya refugee crisis has never been resolved permanently, rather, it was always a constant problem that reappears occasionally. In 1982, a new citizenship law was passed in Burma, and the junta did not list the Rohingya within its 135 scheduled ethnic groups. Whereas, census documents show that Rohingya people were in Burma as early as the fifteenth century. During the post-colonial, short-lived democratic period, there were Rohingya representatives in the Burmese parliament beginning in 1947. This evidence shows that there is a deliberate discriminatory legal apparatus actively working against the Rohingya people, which ultimately culminated in a total ethnic cleansing against them in episodic bursts.

To elaborate on how and why the demand for genocide was socially manufactured in Myanmar, one may look at how stances about Rohingya are framed in the Myanmar

national narratives. Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Myanmar's state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, for example, has refused to acknowledge that any genocide or ethnic cleansing has actually taken place. One might be curious as to why someone of Suu Kyi's stature would turn a blind eye to such atrocity? This thesis argues in line with Peng (2017) that Suu Kyi's silence stems from a political payoff scenario in which she couldn't risk her hard earned political freedom by enraging the largest demographic group: Burmese Buddhists. Also, the Western champions of the Rohingya ethnic-cleansing denier Aung San Suu Kyi continue to collaborate with her in the hope of so-called democratization in Myanmar. Marcuse (1964) documents how reaping the benefits from an accomplice of crimes against humanity was not uncommon following the Holocaust:

In this general necessity, guilt has no place. One man can give the signal that liquidates hundreds and thousands of people, then declare himself free from all pangs of conscience, and live happily ever after. The antifascist powers who beat fascism on the battlefields reap the benefits of the Nazi scientists, generals, and engineers; they have the historical advantage of the late-comer. What begins as the horror of the concentration camps turns into the practice of training people for abnormal conditions – a subterranean human existence and the daily intake of radioactive nourishment. A Christian minister declares that it does not contradict Christian principles to prevent with all available means your neighbor from entering your bomb shelter. Another Christian minister contradicts his colleague and says it does. Who is right? Again, the neutrality of technological rationality shows forth over and above politics, and again it shows forth as spurious, for in both cases, it serves the politics of domination (p. 82-83).

Burmese Buddhist monks, in a similar fashion to the Christian minister described by Marcuse (1963), mixed an extreme interpretation of Theravada Buddhism and Burmese Nationalism to identify the Rohingyas as the “intruder Bangladeshi Muslims.” It is in fact true that the Rohingya people speak a dialect of Bengali (such is the case in at

least two states of India) that is spoken in the southeast part of Bangladesh, and they are Muslims. However, the effort to portray them as foreigners or Bangladeshis is factually unfounded. Ibrahim (2017), using a large amount of primary archival documents, persistently deconstructed the anti-Rohingya doctrines preached by the Buddhist-Nationalist elites. He argues that one of the Myanmar elite's key arguments has been that Rohingyas have been late-comers and migrants from Bangladesh, and that the term "Rohingya" is a recent construct to eschew calling them Bengali Muslims. Using vast archival documentation (e.g. British colonial census data) Ibrahim (2017) exposed the fact that Rohingyas did exist from at least the 15th century CE. He argues that the British colonial rulers did not call these people as "Rohingyas" simply because they classified residents not based on ethnicity rather based on religious beliefs, just as they did for other provinces in Burma under their rule. So, all the Rohingyas were classified as Muslims. Yet, Ibrahim (2017) presents ethnic and linguistic references to "Rooinga" (a variant spelling of Rohingya) from 1799 and to "Ruinga" from 1815, which present evidence for a Rohingya existence in the kingdom of Arakan. All these pieces of evidence and the counter-constructed arguments by the Myanmar elite point out the deliberate attempt to manufacture the Rohingya as "the other" or alienated identity.

On otherization, Bauman (1990) notes:

In dichotomies crucial for the practice and the vision of the social order, the differentiating power hides as a rule behind one of the members of the opposition. The second member is but the other of the firsts, the opposite (degraded, suppressed, exiled) side of the first and its creation. Thus abnormality is the other of the norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, barbarity the other of civilization, animal the other of the human, woman the other

of man, stranger the other of the native, enemy the other of friend, “them” the other of “us”, insanity the other of reason, foreigner the other of the state subject, but the dependence is not symmetrical. The second side depends on the first for its contrived and enforced isolation. The first depends on the second for its self-assertion (p. 14).

Clearly, Rohingya identity is first constructed as “the other” or alien by pointing to their different (or failed to assimilate, inferior) religious, linguistic, ethnic, economic (nearly 78% of the Rohingya lacked any formal employment) status, and then legal, social, and political institutions were set up to enforce the otherization. The case of the Rohingya is an example of the multilayered otherization which culminated in a “final solution” or military solution called ethnic cleansing. So, this is the type of conflict which Kaldor (2001) calls the “new war” which is framed and fought over identity.

CHAPTER 5

SETTLEMENTS IN REFUGEE CAMPS INSIDE BANGLADESH AND PERCEPTION OF THE HOST POPULATION

Fleeing for their lives, when the Rohingya migrated to Bangladesh the transition was not smooth. They migrated to the Bangladesh–Myanmar border, which had already sheltered about 400,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar from previous waves of violence and mass dislocation. Logistically, the journey was very difficult due to the lack of open communication between these two moderately hostile countries that were separated by securitized borders. Sociologically, the Rohingya faced Bangladesh's inner xenophobia at many levels. This is not to downplay the fact that numerous religious and other NGOs, as well as national and international aid efforts, played a crucial role in mobilizing considerable relief activity at the beginning of the crisis.

Traditional media and social media alike were flooded with reports or appeals of aid efforts. Neighborhoods in every part of Bangladesh saw mosques and other organizations mobilize to collect all forms of aid. Whether the political settlements and negotiations for Rohingya repatriation were enough or not; or how scarce or sufficient were the efforts are not the focus of this study. Rather, in continuation of the dynamic identity framing of the Rohingya inside their homeland -Myanmar, this section focuses on what form their identity has taken and how well their identity has fared inside Bangladesh. Castles (2003) argued that forced migration has become an integral part of North-South interactions and is closely related to recent processes of worldwide social change. He elaborates that in this process human agency and social networks play a

major part. The Rohingya refugee crisis, in my findings, followed a similar trajectory with the exception that it is still a south-south relationship, i.e. the migration here is happening between two countries of the global south, and it is not happening with a hope of upward economic mobility, rather simply to save life. Castles (2003) justifiably argued, however, that the line between forced migration and economic migration has become obscured due to the fact that there is hardly any difference between those migrants that are escaping extreme poverty and those who are escaping persecution. Castles' (2003) proposition that the study of forced migration is of a true interdisciplinary nature which showcases the need to bring sociology, anthropology, demography, history, cultural studies, political science, law together is also understood through the Rohingya crisis, as this case cannot be studied in isolation from all these fields.

5.1 Quantitative Analysis

However, the “honeymoon period” for the Rohingya people did not last long. Following the general trend in other cases (e.g. the intensification of far-right, anti-refugee rhetoric in Europe following the influx of Syrian refugees) a segment of the Bangladeshi population and the majority of the media, instigated by the government, began to express a variety of negative attitudes toward the Rohingya. The effort of the media in a full-scale smear campaign is discussed in section 7, which discusses the dehumanization campaign against the Rohingya. In this section, I use quantitative data from the Bangladeshi Host Community Perspectives on the Rohingya Crisis survey to argue that the demonization of the Rohingya people in conventional and social media,

coupled with non-exposure and non-interaction with the Rohingya people, is primarily responsible for the fear and hatred of the Rohingya refugees. Negative perception in the data is measured across three different dimensions through three variables: 1) perception about the level of Rohingya integration; 2) whether the Rohingya should be allowed to access the public facilities such as schools and hospitals; and 3) if the respondent feels safe being around the Rohingya refugees.

Martinovic (2010), in a quantitative analysis, found that interethnic communications between immigrants in developed western countries have resulted in more successful integration of the immigrants. The voluntary immigrants who communicated more with natives of other ethnicities have stayed longer in the Netherlands, the study also found. Following this finding, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make the hosting population's perception negative.

One caveat here is that, if a hosting neighborhood is totally segregated from the Rohingya people, concerns for safety because of the perceived threat faced by the proximate neighborhoods is absent. In other words, neighborhoods isolated from Rohingya camps are expected to not care much about safety threats from the Rohingya people. Sakib and Osman (2019) found that the European countries that received most of the Syrian refugees (e.g. Germany, Sweden and Austria) saw an upsurge in anti-immigrant rhetoric by their political parties, and the refugee influx causally increased the anti-immigrant rhetoric, while the countries that did not receive significant numbers of

Syrian refugees (e.g. Finland, England, etc.) did not see a causal change (increase) in anti-refugee rhetoric. So, even if the part of the hosting population not residing in close proximity to the refugee camps perceives the Rohingya as threatening, their immediate threat perception is not strong because they are not in proximity with the Rohingya neighborhood. Hence the second hypothesis:

H2: Total non-exposure reduces the concerns about safety from the Rohingya refugees.

Also, since women's labor-force participation in Bangladesh (on the national level) is still 36.3% (Raihan and Bidisha, 2017), it is quite understandable that the rate of concern would be much lower in the region considered. This is because the southernmost district of Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar, is generally a very conservative and traditional district. Women's labor force participation and too much outside exposure are still viewed negatively in traditional rural Bangladeshi society. So, it is reasonably understood that women in this district have significantly lower exposure to public workplaces, so they have a much smaller likelihood of interacting with the Rohingya population, and thus women are more likely to have a more negative view of the Rohingya people. The contrast of this argument with hypothesis 2 is that, for hypothesis 3, women are expected to have limited or indirect exposure, as opposed to the total non-exposure in the previous case. This limited exposure can create many avenues for misinformation, gossip, and fear-mongering, etc. The concerns regarding safety seem

plausible because of this proximity. On the other hand, in the cases where Rohingyas are not close by, the threat is perceived as not real. Thus, the third hypothesis:

H3: Women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees.

Finally, following the literature that stresses the perceived or real increased economic and social problems, such as unemployment, poor housing, and crime, that are due to immigration and that make the public feel nervous and threatened (Chaping, 1997; Leggewie et al., 1990), this argument leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Negative economic conditions are more likely to make the hosting population's perception negative.

These data are taken from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs survey: “Bangladeshi Host Community Perspectives on the Rohingya Crisis, June-July 2018.” This dataset was collected in Bangladesh between the months of June and July, 2018.

The large-N quantitative data were taken from a cross-sectional survey, which was conducted in two of the eight sub-districts (upazilas) that make up Cox’s Bazar district: Teknaf and Ukhia. The population was projected to be 229,380 adult Bangladeshis living in a Union (sub-district) within Teknaf or Ukhia (126,563 and 102,817 adult Bangladeshis, respectively). The survey method employed a disparate random sampling.

The survey sample consisted of 1,697 Bangladeshi adults living in Teknaf (56%) and Ukhia (44%), the two sub-districts in which the vast majority of the Rohingya population is temporarily rehabilitated in the refugee camps. The survey was done in Bengali with the use of a questionnaire which was circulated through an online data-collection application across more than 71 villages.

Respondents were provided with privacy and verbal permission which was ensured before continuing with each survey. The sample size was 1,697, and it can be considered generally representative of the total adult Bangladeshi population residing in Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas, on a 95% confidence level; the margin of sampling error stands at 2.37.

The questionnaire included multiple- or single-choice, yes/no (closed-ended), and open-ended questions. The answers to the open-ended questions were immediately translated by the enumerators from Bengali to English. All quantitative data collected were translated back into English. Table 1 shows the descriptions of all the dummy variables that were created to be included in the statistical analyses.

Table 1: Description of Variables

Variable Name	Variable description:
Male	(1 if male, 0 otherwise)
Enough_Income	Does your head of household's income cover your household's expenses? (yes=1, no=0)
Allow	According to you, should the Rohingya be allowed access to the same facilities (e.g. schools, hospitals, mosques, community centres) and services as the locals? (yes=1, no=0)
Integrate	Do you think the Rohingya integrate well into the local Bangladeshi community? (yes=1, no=0)
Safe	Do you feel safe having the Rohingya community living nearby? (yes=1, no=0)
Every Day	equal to 1 if the interaction was every day and was equal to 0 otherwise
Interact 5-6 days a week	equal to 1 if they only interacted 5-6 days a week and it was equal to 0 otherwise
Interact 2-4 days a week	equal to 1 if the interaction was 2-4 days a week and 0 otherwise
Once a week	equal to 1 if the interaction was once a week and 0 otherwise
Once a month	equal to 1 if the interaction was once a month and 0 otherwise
Never	equal to 1 if the interaction never happened and 0 otherwise

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Selected Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VARIABLES	N	mean	sd	min	max
Male	1,697	0.526	0.499	0	1
Enough Income	1,697	0.907	0.290	0	1
Allow	1,698	0.362	0.481	0	1
Integrate	1,697	0.814	0.389	0	1
Safe	1,697	0.150	0.357	0	1

5.2 Dependent Variables

A brief discussion of the variables is provided below:

“Integrate” is one of three dependent variables that tests the hosting population’s perspective about the Rohingyas. Immigrant or refugee integration is an issue of much importance and debate in the immigration literature. This variable measures the respondents’ answers to the question: “Do you think the Rohingya integrate well into the local Bangladeshi community?” There were only two options provided to the respondents: yes or no. If yes, the response was coded as 1, and no was 0. This variable captures a crucial perspective about the Rohingya people.

The dependent variable “allow” is another dependent variable that tests the hosting population’s perspective about the Rohingyas. This variable measures the hosting population’s attitude about sharing public services. Respondents answered the question:

“According to you, should the Rohingya be allowed access to the same facilities (e.g. schools, hospitals, mosques, community centers) and services as the locals?” There were only two options provided to the respondents, yes or no. If yes, the response was coded as 1, and no was 0.

This dependent variable “safe” captures the hosting population’s perception of whether they may have any safety concerns about having Rohingya refugees nearby. This variable represents the literature on the impact of the immigration crisis on crimes. This is also a dichotomous variable with two possible answers: yes or no. If yes, the response was coded as 1, and no was 0.

5.3 Independent Variables

The regions under this survey are part of a southern rural area, which traditionally has been a conservative region where women’s labor force participation outside of the home is minimal. This is why women’s likelihood of establishing interaction with the Rohingyas through work, buying and selling products, etc., is minimal. This background makes the impact of gender on the perception about the Rohingyas crucial. In effect, this is a proxy measure of interaction. Male is coded as male=1, and otherwise=0.

This variable measures the respondent’s own perception about their economic well-being. It records the answer to the question: “Does your head of household's income cover your household's expenses?” The answers are coded 1 if yes, and 0 if no. While

this is a crude measure of household income, unfortunately, it is the closest approximation of a household income variable found in the survey data.

This variable measures how frequently the hosting population directly interact with the Rohingyas in the forms of conversation, buying and selling, etc. It serves to capture the extent of direct communication and possible socialization with the Rohingya, which can allow the hosting populations to hear the stories of the Rohingyas themselves. This question had six possible answers and is coded in the following way: The variable “every day” was equal to 1 if the interaction was every day and was equal to 0 otherwise. The variable “5-6 days a week” was equal to 1 if they only interacted 5-6 days a week, and it was equal to 0 otherwise. The variable “2-4 days a week” was equal to 1 if the interaction was 2-4 days a week and 0 otherwise. The variable “once a week” was equal to 1 if the interaction was once a week and 0 otherwise. The variable “once a month” was equal to 1 if the interaction was once a month and 0 otherwise. And the variable “never” was equal to 1 if the interaction never happened and 0 otherwise.

The limitations of the quantitative analysis are important, as demographic information such as age, level of education, and income are not available in this survey data.

I ran three logistic regressions predicting the following three dependent binary variables, which capture the host population’s perception about: a) Integration: whether they think that the Rohingya people have integrated well into the Bangladeshi society; b) Allow public services: whether they think that the Rohingya people should be allowed

access to public facilities such as schools and hospitals; and c) Safety having Rohingyas nearby whether they feel safe around Rohingya people.

The three binary-dependent variables measure negative perceptions and hatred toward the Rohingya refugees. The first model presented on Table 3 tests the hosting population's perceptions about whether they think the Rohingya have integrated well into the local Bangladeshi community.

To control for the region-wide differences in exposure to the Rohingya community as well as for the economic opportunities available to them in those different regions, the Unions (sub-districts) of residence were added into the logistic regressions as control variables. The unions in which the survey was conducted are Baharchhara, Haldia Palong, Jalia Palong, Nhilla, Palong Khali, Raja Palong, Ratna Palong, Sabrang, Teknaf, Whykong. A dummy variable was created for each of these categories. The reference category in the logistic regression analyses is the dummy variable for the union of Nhilla, which has the largest number of respondents in the dataset.

5.4 Logistic Regression #1: Integration

Table 3: Logistic Regression predicting the hosting population's perception about the Rohingya people's integration into the local Bangladeshi community

	Odds Ratios	95% CI
Male	1.518*	(1.057 - 2.180)
Enough Income	1.267	(0.827 - 1.940)
Interact 2-4 days a week	12.75***	(7.365 - 22.08)
Interact 5-6 days a week	15.32***	(8.476 - 27.69)
Every Day	11.15***	(6.370 - 19.50)
Once a month	3.638***	(2.047 - 6.466)
Once a week	7.436***	(4.258 - 12.99)
Baharchhara	0.141*	(0.0286 - 0.699)
Haldia Palong	0.0865**	(0.0197 - 0.380)
Jalia Palong	0.0495***	(0.0113 - 0.217)
Palong Khali	0.0134***	(0.00318 - 0.0564)
Raja Palong	0.167*	(0.0376 - 0.739)
Ratna Palong	0.0305***	(0.00651 - 0.143)
Sabrang	0.0784***	(0.0178 - 0.346)
Teknaf	0.0659***	(0.0153 - 0.284)
Whykong	0.115**	(0.0262 - 0.505)
Constant	8.573**	(1.937 - 37.95)
Observations	1,697	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The statistically significant results from the logistic regression predicting the hosting population's perceptions about the Rohingya people's integration into the local Bangladeshi society are shown in Table 3. The results in Table 3 show that for males, the odds of having the view that Rohingyas are well integrated into Bangladeshi community are 1.52 times larger than that for females. The results support Hypothesis 3: women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees. Since women have limited opportunities for interaction with the Rohingyas, this result provides a proxy support for Hypothesis 1 as well: Infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make the hosting population's perception negative.

The statistically significant odds of having a positive view about Rohingya integration into the Bangladeshi society among those who interact 2-4 days, 5-6 days, and every day are, respectively, 12.75, 15.32 and 11.15 times bigger than those who never interact with the Rohingya (the reference category). Less-frequent interactions, such as once a week and once a month, are associated with the respective odds 7.436 and 3.638 times bigger compared to the reference category (never interact). The result supports my Hypothesis 1: Infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make hosting population's perception negative.

5. 5 Logistic Regression #2: Access to Public Services

The second model in Table 4 presents the logistic regression results predicting the hosting population's opinion on whether the Rohingya refugees should be allowed access to public services. This model is an attempt to test the hosting population's view on the

Rohingya population from the perspective of entitlement to public resources. The motivation behind this question is to examine whether any fear of being left out of the public good is driving the negative attitude toward the Rohingya people.

Table 4: Logistic Regression predicting the hosting population's opinion on whether the Rohingya people should be allowed to receive public services (e.g. public schools and hospitals)

	Odds Ratios	95% CI
Male	48.68***	(31.36 - 75.56)
Enough Income	1.695	(0.746 - 3.853)
Interact 2-4 days a week	12.97***	(5.402 - 31.14)
Interact 5-6 days a week	11.37***	(4.706 - 27.49)
Every Day	2.963*	(1.200 - 7.318)
Once a month	20.96***	(7.791 - 56.41)
Once a week	27.86***	(11.03 - 70.35)
Baharchhara	0.0260***	(0.0107 - 0.0633)
Haldia Palong	1.150	(0.459 - 2.883)
Jalia Palong	0.0499***	(0.0242 - 0.103)
Palong Khali	0.0192***	(0.00946 - 0.0389)
Raja Palong	0.428*	(0.221 - 0.828)
Ratna Palong	0.108***	(0.0463 - 0.253)
Sabrang	0.240***	(0.125 - 0.461)
Teknaf	0.239***	(0.135 - 0.423)
Whykong	0.283***	(0.157 - 0.511)
Table 4 Continued		
Constant	0.0134***	(0.00388 - 0.0462)
Observations	1,697	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Statistically significant results from Table 4 show that for males, the odds of having the view that Rohingyas should be allowed access to public services such as schools and hospitals are 48.68 times as large as the odds for females. The result support Hypothesis 3: Women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees. However, the unusually large odds ratio signals that more in-depth research is needed for a more accurate explanation.

The odds of having a view that the Rohingyas should be allowed access to public services, e.g. public schools and hospitals, among those who interact 2-4 days, 5-6 days, and everyday are, respectively, 12.97, 11.37 and 2.963 times bigger than among those who never interact with the Rohingya (the reference category). The results are statistically significant. The result supports my Hypothesis 1: Infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make hosting population's perception negative. Surprisingly, less-frequent interactions, such as once a week and once a month, are associated with the respective odds 27.86 and 20.96 times bigger compared to the reference category: never interact. However, more research is needed to see why those who interact less frequently, compared to those who never interact, are more likely to believe that the Rohingya should have access to public services.

5.6 Logistic Regression #3: Safety Having Rohingyas Nearby

Table 5: Logistic Regression predicting the hosting population's perception about whether they feel safe living with the Rohingyas nearby

	Odds Ratios	95% CI
Male	2.683***	(1.848 - 3.896)
Enough Income	0.593*	(0.379 - 0.930)
Interact 2-4 days a week	0.0988***	(0.0574 - 0.170)
Interact 5-6 days a week	0.788***	(0.0422 - 0.143)
Every Day	0.136***	(0.0780 - 0.237)
Once a month	0.222***	(0.113 - 0.438)
Once a week	0.140***	(0.0776 - 0.252)
Baharchhara	30.12***	(10.07 - 90.06)
Haldia Palong	2.893	(0.929 - 9.004)
Jalia Palong	6.191**	(2.051 - 18.68)
Palong Khali	14.22***	(4.899 - 41.29)
Raja Palong	5.178**	(1.736 - 15.44)
Ratna Palong	4.639*	(1.386 - 15.53)
Sabrang	4.616**	(1.506 - 14.14)
Teknaf	11.86***	(4.104 - 34.27)
Whykong	2.423	(0.757 - 7.755)
Constant	0.0126***	(0.00406 - 0.0391)
Observations	1,697	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5 shows the results of a logistic regression predicting the hosting population's perception about their safety having Rohingyas nearby. Results on Table 5 show that for men, the odds of feeling safe living with the Rohingyas nearby is 2.683 times as large as the odds for being female. This finding is significant at a 99% confidence level. The result supports my Hypothesis 3: women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees.

Compared to those who don't have enough income, those who have enough income earned by the head of the household were .41 (1-0.59) percent less likely to answer "yes" when asked whether the respondent felt safe living with the Rohingyas nearby. This finding cannot be explained through my theoretical framework.

Table 5 also shows that those who interact 2-4 days, 5-6 days, and every day are respectively 0.9012, 0.212, 0.864 percent less likely to say they feel safe having the Rohingyas nearby compared to those who never interact. Those who interact once a month and once a week are 0.78 percent and 0.86 percent less likely, respectively, to say they feel safe having the Rohingyas nearby compared to those who never interact. All of these statistically significant findings support Hypothesis 2: total non-exposure reduces the concern about safety from the Rohingya refugees. The theoretical framing behind this finding is the fact that someone living in a neighborhood which is not in proximity to the Rohingya camps, might not share the same safety concerns as those who live close to the refugee camps. This is because, as the respondents who are in the neighborhoods that

have no Rohingyas are most likely to respond with “never” to this question, they are less likely to be bothered about the Rohingya people, as well.

In conclusion, the quantitative analysis finds statistically significant support for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, which are: infrequent interaction with the Rohingya refugees is more likely to make hosting population’s perception negative; total non-exposure reduces the safety concern about the Rohingya refugees; and women are more likely to have a negative view of the Rohingya refugees. The results support previous findings, e.g. Martinovic (2010), which found that interethnic communications between immigrants in developed western countries have resulted in more successful integration of the immigrants; and Sakib and Osman (2019), which found that the European countries that received most of the Syrian refugees (e.g. Germany, Sweden and Austria) saw an upsurge in anti-immigrant rhetoric by political parties, and the refugee influx has causally increased anti-immigrant rhetoric.

CHAPTER 6

ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY: STRUGGLES OF ASSIMILATION OR INTEGRATION

During my last visit to Bangladesh during October 2017-January 2018, I observed a new sociological phenomenon in a post-Rohingya refugee influx scenario. During my entire visit, I resided in the capital, Dhaka. However, this phenomenon allowed me to get a proxy understanding of how the influx of Rohingya in the southeast part of Bangladesh might have sent social shockwaves throughout other cities, especially in the capital. There was (and still is) a clear smear campaign going on against the Rohingya along the line that the Rohingya were creating negative pressure on the local economy. Also, it is not improbable that many Rohingya did actually go to Dhaka for jobs and in pursuit of a better life which might have triggered this, however, the smear campaign was definitely out of proportion (discussed in the next section).

To observe the ordinary people's attitude toward the incoming Rohingya refugees, I went to talk and observe everyday lives around some of the slums in the Mohammadpur sub-district. From my conversations with shopkeepers and housemaids I noticed nothing of importance. It is to be noted that it is not very easy to distinguish the Rohingya people from ordinary Bangladeshis, because they share almost the same skin color (except the Rohingya people generally have slightly darker skin) and appearance. Myint Aung, a Burmese envoy in Hong Kong once described the Rohingyas as being as "ugly as ogres" and not sharing the "fair and soft" skin of other Burmese ethnic groups (*Washington Post*, 2015). However, the Rohingya people speak a dialect of Bengali,

which is difficult for an ordinary Bangladeshi to understand. So, if these slum residents had interacted with the Rohingya people they could have easily noticed the difference in language. Another alternative possibility is that it is not very difficult for a Rohingya to obtain a workable knowledge of standard Bengali language. In any case, the ordinary people in Dhaka whom I observed and talked to seemed to be not particularly interested or concerned about the Rohingya people or the ensuing refugee crisis, nor did they remember interacting with any Rohingya.

Then, one afternoon, I first noticed a darker-skinned and poorly clad adolescent boy being mockingly called, “Oi Rohingya!” (meaning –“Hey you Rohingya!”). I could not follow the interlocutors, because the person who called that name was a rickshaw driver (three-wheeled passenger cart) on a running rickshaw who made the comment to a fellow rickshaw driver who was running parallel (and who might have played foul). Later, I talked with friends and family to figure out that “Rohingya” has become a derogatory swear word to denigrate someone of a lower social standing. Before coming to the U.S., I had lived my entire life in Bangladesh and my entire adult life in Dhaka, and I had never heard the word Rohingya being used as an insult. Observing this phenomenon, it immediately reminded me of the parallel “N-word” in America. During my stay in Dhaka, I noticed the same incident once more, interestingly, near Dhaka’s Geneva Bihari Camp (another historically non-Bangladeshi refugee community lives there under the Geneva convention). In this case, a bus driver was shouting, “Oi Rohingyar bacha, daine shor,” meaning, “Hey, you son of Rohingya, stay out of my

way.” This phenomenon is a vivid representation of the type of stigma that Goffman (1963) mentioned. The stigmatization of the Rohingyas has reached a level that just being a darker-colored, impoverished, ordinary Bangladeshi teenager can result in being called a Rohingya now. This is a demonstration of a segment of Bangladeshi society’s inner otherization, to use Said’s (1978) idea, in the process of otherizing the Rohingyas.

Moreover, a Google search revealed that someone wrote in a top Bangla online news portal about the phenomenon that the word Rohingya has become an insult in the common parlance of street Bengali (Antar, 2018). This phenomenon is a symbolic case which demonstrates that the Rohingya people, despite sharing the same religion and a dialect of the language of the land, face Bangladesh’s inner xenophobia. In my opinion, the nature of this xenophobia is no different than that faced in the struggles of each of the successive new immigrant communities in assimilating to the “mainstream” or to the new native U.S. society, as argued by Nee and Alba (2012).

What might have triggered the xenophobic usage of Rohingya as a derogatory term may vary from case to case. Thus, many theories could be at work. Castles (2003) notes that in the post 9/11 global order refugees have been labeled as a menacing global threat to national security – even though none of the 19 September 11 terrorists were refugees or asylum seekers. Refugees and immigrants have been progressively linked to security concerns since the end of the Cold War, leading to the advent of the new research field of “political demography” (Weiner and Russell 2001). There are some theories in Bangladesh that suggest that a few of the Rohingya were radicalized due to

the torture they faced, and that theory, in turn, framed the Rohingya issue in security terms (Rahman, 2009). Some Bengali nationalist newspapers even reproduced the Myanmar junta's narrative that the Rohingya are to blame for their own persecution. Such factors might have triggered the adoption of Rohingya as an insulting term.

As a concluding thought for this section, as I have discussed how the Rohingya people have faced different layers of alienation at home and abroad, my findings match the argument posed by Farzana (2015) that the real political identity of the Rohingya refugees can be situated in their collective memory and their life-politics in the borderlands and not in the artificially created political geographies in which two nation states each claim that the displaced Rohingyas are the responsibility of the other.

CHAPTER 7

DEHUMANIZING MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN IN HOSTING COUNTRY

This thesis argues that the media campaign to dehumanize the Rohingya people is an organized and deliberate act in conjunction with the Bangladesh government's current policy to send back the Rohingyas Myanmar. The media has portrayed the Rohingya people as a national security threat (discussion follows) who are conspiring to take over Bangladesh. An onslaught of misinformation and conspiracy theories about the Rohingya people was orchestrated by the media. It is also to be noted that press freedom has significantly been curtailed in Bangladesh in the last decade. In April, this year, Bangladesh slid four notches lower, and it is now 150th on the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. The global media watchdog said Bangladeshi journalists have been among the leading collateral victims of the tough methods adopted by the ruling party. It stated:

The campaign leading up to her [Sheikh Hasina's] reelection in late 2018 was accompanied by a disturbing increase in press freedom violations, including violence by political activists against reporters in the field, the arbitrary blocking of news websites, and arbitrary arrests of journalists (Reporters Without Borders, 2019).

This kind of siege in the media made it possible to coordinate and execute a smear campaign against the Rohingyas using the dominant pro-government, corporate-owned media houses.

In order to present evidence for this argument, I will provide a little background of the incidences that led up to the media campaign. As I am writing this thesis, a few

new developments have taken place regarding the Rohingya issue. Around the time of the second anniversary of the Rohingya massacre (August 2019), the Bangladeshi government wanted to hastily repatriate the Rohingya people back into the very same place -the Rakhine state of Myanmar- from which they were bloodily driven out. The Rohingya people, the UN, and human rights organizations all demanded that the Myanmar government must provide assurance that the Rohingyas would be safe if they went back. However, since the Myanmar government has not yet recognized the Rohingyas as citizens, the Rohingyas in the refugee camps were not willing to go back to Myanmar. In the words of a Rohingya refugee woman: "They [the Myanmar army] killed my father and two brothers in front of my eyes. I ran for my life. If I go back there, I will die."

Despite this dire situation and the credible threat of a possible extermination effort on the Myanmar government's part, the Bangladesh government is willing to repatriate the Rohingya people back into Myanmar (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). The proximate or economic reasons behind this willingness are not clear, because the Bangladesh government receives handsome remunerations from international donor and intergovernmental organizations as well as from individual Western governments who do not want to see another iteration of the Syrian refugee influx in their backyard (Reliefweb, 2019). For example, the UK has provided £129 million since 2017 (DFID News, 2019).

Due to this willingness to repatriate the Rohingyas into Myanmar as soon as possible, the Bangladesh government is implementing various measures to make the lives of the Rohingya difficult within the refugee camps. When the Bangladesh government failed to repatriate the Rohingyas, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen immediately warned the Rohingyas of “lessening comfort” in their camps. Referring to the NGOs that were working with the Rohingyas, the foreign minister also said that legal action would be taken against those organizations that were motivating them to stay in Bangladesh. Later, 41 NGOs, working in refugee camps to make lives of the Rohingyas livable, were expelled from the camps.

The Human Rights Watch (2019) and international media have reported that the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) ordered telecommunication operators to shut down mobile phone services in the Rohingya refugee camps on September 1, 2019. While the Bangladesh government said the shutdown was for security purposes, they have not explained how. BTRC shut down 3G and 4G services in the refugee camps each day between 5 p.m. and 6 a.m. The 13-hour daily shutdown keeps around one million refugees in the dark. The refugees cannot even access health or law enforcement services during those hours. This shutdown of mobile services has also affected the Bangladeshi local population living in areas neighboring areas of the refugee camps. Even local government officials say they have problems using basic mobile phone services, because the mobile phone frequency is shut down

centrally for the Rohingya hosting areas, and the shutdown cannot discriminate between Bangladeshi and Rohingya users.

Three days after the mobile phone shutdown decision, on September 4, Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense proposed building a security fence around the refugee camps. A standing committee member, Muhammad Faruk Khan, said:

We have been observing the Rohingyas are freely moving around the camps and outside. Therefore, to ensure security we recommended taking measures so that no one can come out of the camps and no one can enter inside the camps.

Creation of similar containment areas (ghettos) for demonized populations is a straightforward standard measure by governments in the escalation of persecution of such groups. Examples include but are not limited to walls and "security" gates in Jewish neighborhoods in Germany, Poland, and other European countries under the Nazis and internment camps for Japanese immigrants and U.S. citizens with Japanese heritage by the U.S. during WWII. Such ghettos in Jewish neighborhoods were common not just under Nazis, but they existed in many European cities for more than 1,000 years. The U.S. has interred many social groups in similar controlled camps: Native Americans, Japanese immigrants and their families, Chinese workers, and now migrants at the border with Mexico. The fact that similar camps do not exist along the U.S.-Canadian border signals that this is a discriminatory institution based on race and/or national origin.

All these clamp-downs are, arguably, a response to the Rohingya people's unwillingness to be repatriated. When the government, law enforcement, and

government-party cadres wanted to forcefully repatriate the Rohingyas Myanmar on August 22, 2019, Rohingya refugees allegedly killed a local government-party member. In retaliation, police killed four Rohingya refugees who allegedly were involved in the murder. The killing was carried out in execution style and officially framed as a “crossfire,” a story frequently used by security forces in Bangladesh in cases of rampant extrajudicial executions that were previously used arbitrarily and disproportionately against the opposition.

Alarmingly, this is not the only such incident. Within a month of this occurrence, a Rohingya couple was arrested on September 21 and found dead the next morning in another “crossfire.” Law enforcement claimed that the couple was part of a robbery network.

The Human Rights Watch has extensive documentation and coverage of this phenomenon called crossfire (2015). The Bangladesh government’s initiation of using the crossfire tactic adds a new dimension to this refugee crisis for a number of reasons, including the simple fact that this is not merely an extrajudicial killing of its own people, but, rather, it is an extrajudicial killing of people who are not citizens. The Bangladesh government enjoys immunity from these crossfires, just like the crossfires that kill its own citizens, because Rohingyas do not have the legal protection of any nation or international body.

In collaboration with ongoing government efforts to make life difficult for the Rohingyas, a considerable part of the local media, has participated in a smear campaign.

For example, immediately following the above-mentioned incidents of “crossfire” of the Rohingya people, the pro-government national Bengali daily newspaper *Kalerkontho* published a news story with the title (mentioned by Shishir, 2019), “Rohingya camps are locally made arms depot.” The report claims that the Rohingya refugee camps are rife with locally produced firearms, such as low-capacity guns, sharp weapons such as axes, swords, big knives, hoes, and steel rods. Apparently, due to the rampant usage of these weapons, the local Bangladeshis were living in a fearful environment, according to the report. It claimed that at least 600 weapons were seized by the police. One of the oldest and most credible national dailies, *Ittefaq*, also reported on this incident with pictures of hoes that were seized.

However, local government officials said they were not sure whether the seized elements were weapons at all, but rather that they were agricultural instruments (see Figure 4). Furthermore, these instruments were actually produced by a government-registered local NGO for distribution among local Bangladeshi disadvantaged farmers. Then, the relevant question becomes, why would the Bangladeshi media spread such false news stories incriminating the Rohingyas?

Figure 4: The supposed weapons seized from the Rohingya camps. (Source: *Ittefaq*, 2019.)

This thesis argues that from the chronology of these events, the narrative style, and consolidated coverage it is clear that the media ran a targeted campaign against the Rohingya people to dehumanize them and to justify the ongoing government clampdown. Not only was the news falsely produced to manufacture fear about the Rohingyas among the native population, but, also, the content of the reports is ridiculous to begin with. As is evident from the picture above, even if these items were owned by the Rohingyas, which they were not, the dramatized headings and narrative of the reports were disproportionately negative. This campaign has is similar to the subconscious fear of otherized people in the subconscious psyche of the white population in the U.S., as Feagin (2013) mentioned. According to Feagin (2013), the framing of African Americans takes the form of deeply embedded associations with animals and animalistic traits (subhuman), deviant gender roles, hyper-sexuality and threat to white sexual performance, criminality, violence and danger, dirt and ignorance, claimed “ungrateful”

and oppositional orientation (p. 163), and an incapacity for self-determination or self-protection, all of which require and justify white paternalism and care. Feagin (2013) concludes that the primary emotional message is that African Americans are to be feared (p. 110). When the *New York Times* was allowed to go to an internment camp for the Rohingyas inside Myanmar, the reporters reported that the government appointed armed guards to accompany them who pointed to the garbage that, without any social services, had piled up in the camp. “So dirty,” the government agent said. “They are like that” (Beech and Dean, 2019). Apparently, the Bangladeshi-pro government media’s framing of the Rohingyas demonstrates an inner xenophobia and out-group bias toward an ethnic group which is merely a little different in terms of language and color. The Bangladeshi media also harshly reported on a gathering of the Rohingyas commemorating the second anniversary of the genocide, terming it “ungrateful.”

As further attestation to the ongoing smear campaign against the Rohingyas, very recently (September 2019), a Rohingya girl was expelled from a local private university in Bangladesh’s Rohingya hosting district -Cox’s Bazar (Kumar, 2019). The student’s name is Rahima Akter, who was born and raised in Bangladesh by Rohingya parents who fled an earlier episode of anti-Rohingya violence in 1992. However, the recent, bigger influx, the new visibility of public disapproval, and the ongoing smear campaign against the Rohingya led to her expulsion from the Cox's Bazar International University. Rahima had been hiding her identity as a child of Rohingya refugees, as Bangladesh does not allow the Rohingyas to enroll in schools or colleges except the non-degree-granting,

makeshift schools within the Rohingya refugee camps. However, university authorities came to know about Rahima's identity through media reports that commented unfavorably on the fact that a Rohingya was studying in a Bangladeshi university (Shishir, 2019). This was, however, not the only case of its kind, as many Rohingyas were able to pass higher secondary schools or attain a bachelor's degree, and the Bangladesh government used to overlook this. But, recently, due to the consolidated efforts of the government and the media to dehumanize and blame the Rohingyas with a variety of false accusations, for the Rohingyas it is probably no longer possible to pursue education in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, when the Rohingyas gathered for a prayer to mark the second anniversary (August 25, 2019) of the Rohingya Genocide Day, a major Bengali newspaper's front-page story title was: "The Rohingya showdown: conspiracy to destabilize the country." However, the video footage of that program reveals that the Rohingya people thanked the Bangladeshi government and people for hosting them. The smear campaign against the Rohingya people was also well-documented by an Indian newspaper in which news headlines about the Rohingyas from some leading Bangladeshi newspapers and TV headlines read: "Rohingyas turned into a threat," "Rohingya-fear everywhere," "Endangered for being compassionate" (referring to the hosting Bangladeshis), "Socio-economic losses due to Rohingyas," "Rohingya: The pus must be washed out right away," etc. These headlines clearly conform to the classic examples of dehumanizing from other periods in history. A leading news portal, citing

undisclosed officials, claimed that the Bangladesh government spent Tk 72,000 crores (almost \$84 billion) for the Rohingyas over two years. This is a ridiculously high amount, given the size of Bangladesh's economy, which totalled \$250 billion in GDP (2017). In fact, the Bangladesh government allocated only Tk 400 crores (\$48 million) for the Rohingya in the 2018-19 budget, and we have to remember that all the international contributions for the Rohingya are included here, because only the government is allowed to use that money. These baseless and ridiculous news stories represent the nature of the smear campaign that demonizes the Rohingyas as a parasite eating up all the resources of Bangladesh and conspiring against the natives. This kind of depiction is very similar to a rich body of literature that documents dehumanization campaigns by the power elite against a part of the population to serve political purposes. It has similarities with similar dehumanization campaign against Jews in Europe for centuries (Moore 1992; Brustein, 2003; Herf, 2013), World War II-era representations of the Italians and Japanese Americans in American popular culture (Guglielmo, 2000), and the ongoing social media campaigns against Mexicans (Flores-Yeffal, et al., 2011). These targeted smear campaigns clearly demonstrate how the alienation process against the persecuted Rohingyas within the hosting country operates.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This thesis presents the causes and consequences of one of the worst refugee crises and yet one of the least-talked-about and covered stories of modern history. By documenting the sociological process through which many Rohingyas were massacred in Myanmar, and survivors were forced to become refugees, this thesis presents the story of a persecuted social group without any state, which is doubly alienated. Firstly, they were dehumanized and subsequently massacred in their ancestral homeland, and, secondly, they were dehumanized again within their hosting country, Bangladesh. Using almost all available previous studies on the Rohingyas, extensive news coverage, survey data of the perceptions of the hosting population, and ethnographic fieldwork, this thesis concludes several points.

Firstly, from the existing literature documenting the historical roots of the Rohingya people within Myanmar from at least the 15th century, this thesis establishes that the Rohingya people's lawful and historical ancestral land is the state of Rakhine (previously Arakan) in Myanmar. Secondly, the "textbook case" of genocide on the Rohingya people was made possible through a prior dehumanization campaign, thus *manufacturing consent* (Herman and Chomsky, 2010) for the impending genocide.

Thirdly, the logistic regression analysis from the survey data of the hosting population's perceptions about the Rohingyas show that the more a respondent was likely to have enough household income earned by the head of the household, be male, and live

at a significant distance from the Rohingya people, the more likely the respondent was to have: a more positive view about the Rohingya integration in the Bangladeshi society, a more positive view about whether the Rohingyas should be allowed access to public services, and would feel more safe about the Rohingyas in general.

Fourthly, the consolidated negative campaign against the Rohingya in the local Bangladeshi media shows that this kind of vilification has had a real impact on the lives of the Rohingya. This campaign is not merely an intellectual attack, rather, it has created real life-costs for the Rohingyas, as it has justified extrajudicial killing of the Rohingyas in the host country, since they are constructed as a threat to national security. The ongoing media campaign is part and parcel of the ongoing process of making the lives of the Rohingya difficult.

8.1 Policy Recommendations

From the findings of this thesis it is evident that there are misperceptions among the hosting population about the Rohingyas. When the hosting population interacts more with the Rohingyas, they seem to nurture a more positive view about the refugees, they are more inclusive about providing the Rohingya with public services, and they feel safer being near of the Rohingya camps. The aid agencies as well as the developed states who provide financial aid for the Rohingyas can initiate small campaigns in the neighborhoods of the Rohingya camp to educate the hosting population about the Rohingya suffering. This could possibly create a more humane attitude toward the Rohingyas.

Donor countries should negotiate with the Bangladesh government to ensure that no extrajudicial repressions, killings or rapes of the Rohingyas are repeated. If the major donor countries make their Rohingya-related aid conditional on fulfilling this basic prerequisite, the rights situation could improve significantly. Donor countries should also pressure the Bangladesh government so that the Rohingyas are not repatriated to Myanmar – sent back to the dungeons in which they were slaughtered, against their will. Until basic human rights, e.g. citizenship, installation of oversight by a third party to ensure personal safety (e.g. a UN-mandated safe zone), and farmlands and job opportunities are reinstated, the Bangladesh government should provide shelter to the Rohingyas.

Finally, the major donor countries in Europe and America should continue to donate funds as well as to audit that the money is properly used for Rohingya rehabilitation. The Rohingyas now are like a time bomb, because they have nothing to lose. If all of these factors are not ensured, there is always a credible fear that another crisis like the Syrian refugee influx could reach the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific, in a worldwide movement of persecuted people.

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