

The International Politics of the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: China, Japan, and the United States

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Amid of global security threats and severe competition between China and the U.S., international pressures on Myanmar relating to the Rohingya crisis has dramatically increased.
- Behind the Rohingya crisis, international politics especially China, Japan and the U.S. are heavily involved in the United Nations and international realm, but their positions such as their interests and concerns are known to few people especially in Myanmar.
- While the U.S. and the West focus on human rights and democracy, Japan and China focus on their economic interests and national securities.
- While the U.S. has adopted sanctions against Myanmar's military leaders, Japan has maintained its relations with both Myanmar's civilian government and the military, and China has strategically promoted its ties with both sides in Myanmar.
- While the U.S. and Japan view China as a global security threat, China also views that the U.S. and Japan want to contain China via Myanmar in the names of UNs and INGOs to disturb Chinese interests and projects in Rakhine State.
- Under proactive foreign and security policies of China, Japan and the U.S., Myanmar's Rakhine State seem to be a battle field of international politics especially between China and the U.S.
- Amid of Americanophobia and Sinophobia, viewing the U.S. extremely focuses on human rights, and China heavily emphasizes on its national security, Myanmar looks for more friends who

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understand Myanmar on this Rohingya issue, and Myanmar eyes Japan as old and good friend of Myanmar.

- However, compared to China, Japan has no long-term interests in Rakhine State, and his position as a liberal leader of Asia makes it difficult to effectively intervene in the Rohingya crisis by siding with Myanmar.
- Current trends show that any attempts to isolate Myanmar by international pressures would lead Myanmar to completely rely on China.

INTRODUCTION

In the world, especially in the West, the discourse on Myanmar rotates around the Myanmar's Rakhine State crisis (also known as the Rohingya crisis). The crisis has been recurring since 1978 with significant refugee flows to Bangladesh in 1978, 1991-1992, 2016² and it has now reached the highest point in 2017.³ Following the Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh after 25 August 2017, existing global pressure on Myanmar relating to the Rohingya crisis has been significantly mounted year after year. Before 2011 when Myanmar's democratization started, Myanmar was known to the world via the reputation of the 1991 Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, but it has now been changed. Since 2012, Myanmar has become known to the world with disapproval for Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingyas.⁴ In other words, the international community viewed Myanmar in the past with sympathy, as a society under a repressive regime, but it has now viewed Myanmar with resentment, as a society who suppresses the Rohingyas in Rakhine State.

Amid international proposals to establish a safe zone⁵ for Rohingyas in northern Rakhine State or a separate state,⁶ some Rohingya organizations and international human rights organizations are striving to bring Myanmar's leaders to international legal mechanisms inside the United Nations (UN), such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and outside the UN, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). China, Japan and the U.S. play important roles in the Rohingya crisis at the UN, in the international realm and in Myanmar, in the name of democracy, human rights, humanitarian assistance and voluntary repatriation. However, behind all these diplomatic exchanges, geo-politics and power struggles play a crucial role to have influence on Myanmar and

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Rohingya Refugee Crisis,' <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>.

³ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'Rohingya Emergency,' <https://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>

⁴ Under the status of stateless situation and other restrictions, Rohingya people are often described by the United Nations as the most persecuted minority in the world. However, in Myanmar, they are widely known as Bengali people (Bengali means they originally come from Bangladesh) whose citizenship status should be judged by the Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship law. One of the key demands of Rohingya people is to be recognized as one of Myanmar's official ethnic groups in the name of Rohingya, while Myanmar has allowed them as citizens of Myanmar in the name of Bengali, provided they are fully complied by the 1982 Citizenship law.

⁵ Anadolu Agency, 'Bangladesh seeks safe zone for Rohingya refugees,' 12 February 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-seeks-safe-zone-for-rohingya-refugees/1390522>

⁶ Anadolu Agency, 'Mahathir's Rohingya proposal spurs mixed reactions,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/mahathirs-rohingya-proposal-spurs-mixed-reactions/1545095>

Bangladesh, since both countries embrace the Bay of Bengal which lead to the access to the Indian Ocean Sea.

This paper is not mainly about the history of the Rohingya crisis. Nor is it examining who is right or who is wrong. It is not looking for root causes of the crisis, but about international politics of it, examining which country has more influential power in the crisis on Myanmar from realpolitik perspective. Regarding the Rohingya crisis, the majority in Myanmar skeptically views China and the U.S. as threats to Myanmar's sovereignty for the long run and instead, Myanmar wants Japan to heavily involve in Rakhine State as the balance especially to China. Regarding the Rohingya crisis, how much extent Japan could involve in Myanmar's Rohingya crisis? Will Japan work with the U.S.? Will Japan confront with China? Will Japan become the largest actor in Rakhine State to replace China?

I met with officials from several organizations based in Tokyo in person in December 2019, and exchanged emails with some Japanese organizations and a political party to write this research paper. I also met with political parties in Yangon including Rakhine political parties and self-proclaimed Rohingya political party in September in 2019 before I came to Japan. In addition, I made an opinion survey with 40 students of mine in Yangon in 2019 to have their views on China, Japan and the U.S. in the crisis. Based on these primary sources and my previous experiences with UNHCR as protection associate and Delegation of the European Union to Myanmar as political officer, I write this researcher paper.

The paper will mainly focus on the international politics of China, Japan and the United States (U.S.) relating to the Rohingya crisis since August 2017. The paper will first trace a brief history of international politics relating to Myanmar's Rakhine State as a way to understand one aspect of international context of the Rohingya crisis. It then will examine the rise of international pressures at the UN starting from August 2017 as a way to understand another aspect of international politics of the Rohingya crisis. The paper will also analyze the roles of China, Japan and the United States in the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and in the UN. Moreover, the paper will review international politics of the China, Japan and U.S. in Myanmar relating the crisis of how they view each other and how they strive to influence or persuade Myanmar. The paper will conclude the trend of China, Japan and the U.S. in the Rohingya crisis, based on their roles in the crisis.

Again, the paper focuses on the developments of the Rohingya crisis after August 2017 and international politics here refers to China, Japan and the U.S. Before we move to another section, two clarifications would like to be made regarding the term 'Rohingya' and the phrase 'the Rakhine State Crisis.' The term 'Rohingya' is not officially recognized in Myanmar and is a widely disputed term but in order to avoid confusion to non-Burmese readers, the term 'Rohingya' will be used instead of the term 'Bengali'. However, the use of this term is not a reflection of the recognition the term 'Rohingya.' The phrase 'the Rakhine State crisis' is also a confusing term to Burmese readers because currently there are now two different IDP & refugee crises in Rakhine State: the Rohingya Muslim (IDP & refugee) crisis & the Rakhine Buddhist (IDP & refugee) crisis. However, in this paper, the Rakhine State crisis refers to the protracted Rohingya Muslim (IDP & refugee) crisis that has largely drawn global attention for years.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS RELATING TO MYANMAR'S RAKHINE STATE

International politics relating to Rakhine State can be dated back to the first Anglo-Burma war (British-Myanmar) (1824-1826). It did not directly relate to the Rohingya crisis but it did happen in current Myanmar's northern Rakhine State and Bangladesh's Chittagong district, the center of current Rohingya crisis. Until 28 December 1784, Arakan (Rakhine) area was an independent nation ruled by Arakanese (Rakhine) Kings. Arakanese Kings also ruled parts of India's Bengal region⁷ including Chittagong district from 1576 to 1666,⁸ where the Naff river marks as the natural boundary between Rakhine and Chittagong areas. Then, Mughal (Mogul) dynasty of India ruled the Chittagong from 1666 to 1761 and British's East India Company took the control of the Chittagong from 1761 to 1858.⁹ The Konbaung dynasty of Burma seized Myauk-U, the capital of Arakanese (Rakhine) Kingdom, on 28 December 1784,¹⁰ meaning British's Chittagong and Burma's Arakan areas had become bordered. Some Arakanese people revolted against the rule of Burma and fled to British-controlled Chittagong to take refuge there. Burmese (Myanmar) troops chased Arakanese insurgents to the Chittagong and since then there were border disputes between Burma (Myanmar) and British and it finally led to the first Anglo-Burma war in 1824. Again, this history is not about Rohingya but it should not be forgotten that the root-cause of the war which finally led to the fall of sovereignty of Myanmar to British in 1885 started from Myanmar's Rakhine State.¹¹ After 135 years later on, today the Myanmar's sovereignty has now again been haunted from the same location not by British but by the Rohingya crisis.

Another historical perspective relating to the Rohingya crisis goes to the battles between British and Japan in the 2nd World War (WW2) in which Buddhists in Rakhine State were known as pro-Japanese and Muslims there were known as pro-British. According to the Japan Association for Recovery & Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC), around 4,000 Japanese soldiers were died around Sittwe of Rakhine State (formerly known as 'Akyab') during the 2nd World War in 1943 and 1944 but only 1,600 remains were sent back to Japan.¹² As one of the aspect of why Rohingyas are being targeted by Myanmar's military, Bangladeshi officials today often mentioned western diplomats about the Rohingyas' allegiance to the British in the WW2.

⁷ Begal was part of India and is located in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent but today, Bengal is divided between Bangladesh (which covers two-thirds of the region) and the Indian territories of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam's Barak Valley. When India gained independence in 1947, Bengal was partitioned along religious lines. The western part went to the Dominion of India and was named West Bengal. The eastern part went to the dominion of Pakistan as a province called East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan in 1956), becoming the independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971

⁸ Suniti Bhushan Qanungo, M.A. Ph.D., 'A history of Chittagong Vol. II (1761-1947)', published by Dipankar Qanungo, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2010, p. 12

⁹ Suniti Bhushan Qanungo, M.A. Ph.D., 'A history of Chittagong Vol. II (1761-1947)', published by Dipankar Qanungo, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2010, p. 8

¹⁰ Natmauk Phone Kyaw, 'War history of English-Myanmar (in Burmese)', 'Section 1: Ancient Myanmar's territory', Bagan Publishing House, 1966, p. 7

¹¹ Ex-General Khine Nyunt, 'The problem of Myanmar's western door,' PanMyoTaYar Publishing House, Yangon, July 2016, p. 164

¹² Email exchange with the JARRWC in Tokyo, 1 November 2019

International attentions to Myanmar regarding the Rohingya crisis have already existed long times ago. According to the book¹³ published in 2016 by ex-General Khine Nyunt, former Prime Minister of the military junta as well as former Chief of Myanmar's military intelligence, Myanmar launched an operation called, 'Sabe operation' in Rakhine State in 1974 and the rest of Myanmar to explore illegal migrants, and as results, around 2,900 Bengali (Rohingya) people fled to Bangladesh. Myanmar launched again a two-step- operation called 'Nga-gar-min operation' in February 1978 and in March-June 1978, in which more than 150,000 Bengali people from northern Rakhine State fled to Bangladesh. As results, there were military tensions at the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Later, refugee repatriation processes were carried out between Bangladesh and Myanmar through 'Hin-thar project', and UNHCR provided foods and provisions to returnees.

There were few records of what happened in 1991-1992 by Myanmar side. However, international media and human rights organizations widely reported the plight of Muslim refugees and human rights violations of Myanmar's military in the 1991-1992 crisis, citing more than 200,000 people from northern Rakhine State fled to Bangladesh.¹⁴ There were also rumors that Saudi Prince Khalid who served as a commander of the joint Arab forces in the Persian Gulf (1990-1991) under Operation Desert Storm, which liberated Kuwait from the control of neighboring Iraq, recommended a desert storm response to Myanmar 'just like what the UN did to liberate Kuwait.' However, according to the 'Saudi Arabia', the monthly newsletter of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C. in May 1992,¹⁵ there was a short news entitled, 'Prince Khalid visits refugees in Bangladesh,' saying Khalid, the commander of the multinational forces in Saudi Arabia during the Arabian Gulf crisis, was in Bangladesh last month to visit Burmese Muslim refugees who have fled persecution against Muslims in their country. No words of the term 'Rohingya' was found in that news.

Referring to the Rohingya crisis in 1991-1992, UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued a press release in March 1992, stating that the 'tragic situation' in Burma, if not urgently addressed, would 'threatened the stability of the region and increase human suffering.'¹⁶ In the purpose of helping voluntary Rohingya repatriation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed the MoU with the Myanmar's military junta in November 1993,¹⁷ officially setting up the UNHCR office in northern Rakhine State in 1994. Following the state of emergency in Rakhine State announced by Myanmar in June 2012 after the communal violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims broke out, Antonio Guterres, the High

¹³ Ex-General Khine Nyunt, 'The problem of Myanmar's western door,' PanMyoTaYar Publishing House, Yangon, July 2016, p. 16-18, p. 22-31

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, 'II. Historical Background,' <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm>

¹⁵ 'Saudi Arabia', the monthly newsletter of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C. in May 1992, Volume 9, Number 5, p. 7

¹⁶ Press Release, 'U.N Secretary-General Calls for International Support to UNHCR to Help Bangladesh Cope with Refugee Flow; Asks Myanmar to Rectify Causes of Tragic Situation' (Mar 6, 1992), in DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS IN BURMA, supra note 3, at 305/ Boston College Third World Law Journal, Volume 14, Issue 2, 6-1-1994, 'Burma's Rohingyas in Crisis: Protection of "Humanitarian" Refugees under International Law', Thomas K. Ragland

¹⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 'Myanmar: Muslims from Rakhine State: Exit and Return,' 1 December 1993, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a6bec.html>

Commissioner of the UNHCR that time, came to Myanmar and met with President U Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar, on 11 July 2012¹⁸ to discuss about the crisis. U Thein Sein told Guterres that the government will take responsibility for its own ethnic nationalities, but it is “not at all possible to recognize illegal border-crossing Rohingyas who are not our ethnicity.” The President said that Rohingyas had posed a threat to national security and that Rohingyas should be resettled in any third country that is “willing to take them.”¹⁹ This shocked the diplomatic community in Myanmar and was viewed as a challenge to the international community as well as an insult to the Commissioner. Again, U Wirathu, nationalist monk, called Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, ‘whore,’ at a public rally in Yangon in January 2015²⁰ and the UN strongly condemned the remark of U Wirathu utterly unacceptable.²¹ Guterres became the Secretary-General of the UN in 2017 and some Myanmar informed observers viewed that Guterres and other UN officials such as Yanghee Lee, have their enmities²² toward Myanmar and work hard to increase international pressure against Myanmar through their positions.

THE RISE OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction section, the Rohingya crisis has had a long history, but in Myanmar, few people knew about the depth of the crisis since before 2012 when the communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims in northern Rakhine State were erupted in June and October 2012,²³ leaving hundreds of thousands displaced from both sides especially Muslim community. Then, the communal violence erupted again in southern Rakhine State in September 2013²⁴ though the extent of the violence was not too large as that of 2012. In October 2016, the communal violence erupted again in northern Rakhine State. According to Myanmar’s President Office,²⁵ three border outposts were under attack by hundreds of Muslim terrorists on 09 October 2016, and as results, Myanmar’s military and police forces launched joint combat operations

¹⁸ The New Light of Myanmar, ‘President U Thein Sein receives United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and party,’ 12 July 2012, p. 01, <https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs13/NLM2012-07-12.pdf>

¹⁹ Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), ‘UN rejects Thein Sein’s potential Rohingya plan,’ 13 July 2012, <https://www.dvb.no/news/un-rejects-thein-sein%e2%80%99s-potential-rohingya-plan/22893>

²⁰ BBC News, ‘UN condemns Myanmar monk Wirathu’s ‘sexist’ comments,’ 22 January 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30928744>

²¹ The Guardian, ‘UN urges Burma to condemn monk who called envoy ‘bitch’ and ‘whore,’ 22 January 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/22/un-urges-burma-leader-condemn-monk-envoy-bitch-whore>

²² Thayninga Institute for Strategic Studies – TISS, ‘Discussion on National Security and the Future of the Union,’ 25 November 2017, Myawady Literature House, December 2018, p. 34

²³ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), ‘One year on: Displacement in Rakhine state, Myanmar,’ 7 June 2013, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2013/6/51b1af0b6/year-displacement-rakhine-state-myanmar.html>

²⁴ UN News, ‘Violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine state must end for sake of children – UNICEF,’ 8 October 2013, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/10/452602-violence-myanmars-rakhine-state-must-end-sake-children-unicef>

²⁵ President Office, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 17 December 2016, ‘Brief description of the violent attacks commenced on 9th October in Maungdaw district, Rakhine State,’ <https://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=briefing-room/news/2016/12/17/id-6979>

against terrorist, highlighting the casualties of security officials killed by terrorists and how the government was striving to manage the situation. However, international media widely reported the incident²⁶ of how Myanmar's military committed human rights violations against Muslim populations. On 25 August 2017, 30 police stations in northern Rakhine State were simultaneously attacked by Muslim extremists, and as results, Myanmar's military launched security operations in the region. According to the UNHCR,²⁷ 742,000 refugees have fled to Bangladesh as of 31 July 2019 since 25 August 2017.

Before the 25 August 2017 incident, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) had already established an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IIFFM) on Myanmar²⁸ on 24 March 2017 to investigate allegations of human rights abuses in Myanmar, especially in Rakhine State. Referring to the August 2017 incident, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the violence on 29 August 2017²⁹ and called for Myanmar not to use disproportionate force and to protect all civilians without discrimination. In accordance with the request of the United Kingdom (UK) as a penholder³⁰ of Myanmar, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča briefed the situation of Myanmar (the situation in Rakhine State) to members of the UNSC on 30 August 2017.³¹

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), sent a letter to Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, the President of the UNSC on 02 September 2017,³² calling on the international community and the UNSC to emphasize and put more pressures on Myanmar. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, strongly condemned Myanmar at the UNHRC on 11 September 2017,³³ saying the Rohingya crisis was a "textbook example" of ethnic cleansing. Amid of international outcry, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for creation of 'safe zones'³⁴ inside Myanmar's Rakhine State under UN supervision to protect Rohingya populations, at the UN General

²⁶ The Diplomat, 'Violence Erupts in Myanmar's Rakhine State,' 18 October 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/10/violence-erupts-in-myanmars-rakhine-state/>

²⁷ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'Rohingya emergency,' 31 July 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>

²⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,' <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarffm/pages/index.aspx>

²⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Alarming deterioration in northern Rakhine was preventable, Zeid says, urging restraint,' 29 August 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22004>

³⁰ Security Council Report, 'The Penholder System,' 21 December 2018, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/the-penholder-system.php>

³¹ WHAT'S IN BLUE, Insights on the work of the UN Security System, 'Consultation on Myanmar,' 30 August 2017, <https://www.whatsinblue.org/2017/08/consultations-on-myanmar.php>

³² United Nations, Security Council, 'Letter dated 2 September 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council,' 2 September 2017

³³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Darker and more dangerous: High Commissioner updates the Human Rights Council on human rights issues in 40 countries,' 11 September 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22041&LangID=E>

³⁴ UN News, 'Addressing Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh proposes UN-monitored 'safe zones' in Myanmar,' 22 September 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/566322-addressing-rohingya-crisis-bangladesh-proposes-un-monitored-safe-zones-myanmar>

Assembly (UNGA) on 22 September 2017. United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed the UNSC on 13 September 2017³⁵ and again on 26 September 2017 about the crisis. António Guterres briefed the UNSC on 28 September 2017,³⁶ highlighting human rights violations against Rohingyas in northern Rakhine State in detail and calling on Myanmar to follow three immediate steps: end the military operations, allow unfettered access for humanitarian support and ensure voluntary refugee returns with safety and dignity to their areas of origin. In the briefing, he also said the UN has no agenda other than to help Myanmar advance the well-being of all the country's people. Feltman visited Myanmar and northern Rakhine State in 13-17 October 2017³⁷ and briefed the UNSC on 12 December 2017 together with Pramila Patten, Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict,³⁸ who visited twice Myanmar in 14-17 December 2017³⁹ and 05-08 February 2019.⁴⁰ Feltman used a soft tone towards Myanmar, recognizing the sovereignty of Myanmar, the role of China and ASEAN in the crisis, while Patten used a harsh tone about how Myanmar's military tortured and raped Rohingya girls and women. The President of the UNSC released a statement on the situation in Rakhine State on 06 November 2017,⁴¹ urging Myanmar to address the root cause of the problem, to grant free access to domestic and international media organizations to Rakhine State and to fully cooperate with the UN especially with the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Guterres appointed Christine Schraner Burgener⁴² on 26 April 2018 as his new special envoy on Myanmar. The President of the UNSC sent a letter to Guterres on 26 April 2018,⁴³ saying it would send a mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar in May 2018. The UNSC's mission gave a briefing to

³⁵ ³⁵ WHAT'S IN BLUE, Insights on the work of the UN Security Council, 'Myanmar: Briefing under "any other business"' 12 September 2017, <https://www.whatsinblue.org/2017/09/myanmar-briefing-under-any-other-business.php>

³⁶ Security Council Report, 'UN Documents for Myanmar: Security Council Meeting Records,' 28 September 2017, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-meeting-records/?ctype=Myanmar&cbtype=myanmar

³⁷ United Nations Security-General, 'Note to Correspondents: Visit of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to Myanmar,' 17 October 2017, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2017-10-17/note-correspondents-visit-united-nations-under-secretary>

³⁸ Security Council Report, 'UN Documents for Myanmar: Security Council Meeting Records,' 12 December 2017, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un_documents_type/security-council-meeting-records/?ctype=Myanmar&cbtype=myanmar

³⁹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 'Press Statement,' 21 December 2017, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/un-special-representative-on-sexual-violence-in-conflict-pramila-patten-concludes-first-official-visit-to-myanmar-looks-forward-to-agreement-of-joint-communique-on-addressing-conflict-related-sexual/>

⁴⁰ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 'Press Statement,' 11 February 2019, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/un-special-representative-ms-pramila-patten-concludes-her-visit-in-myanmar-and-calls-for-concrete-implementation-of-governments-commitments-to-prevent-and-address-conflict-related-sexual-vio/>

⁴¹ United Nations, Security Council, 'Statement by the President of the Security Council,' 6 November 2017, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/statements-made-president-security-council-2017>

⁴² United Nations Secretary-General, 'Christine Schraner Burgener,' <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/profiles/christine-burgener>

⁴³ United Nations, Security Council, 'Letter dated 26 April 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General,' 26 April 2018

the UNSC on its experience in Bangladesh and Myanmar⁴⁴ from 28 April to 01 May 2018, in which China positively viewed Myanmar's efforts on the Rohingya crisis but the U.S. did not. Guterres visited Bangladesh on a joint visit with the President of the World Bank Group on 01 July 2018⁴⁵ and praised Bangladesh for its acceptance of Rohingya refugees and expressed the UN's solidarity with the Rohingya community and the people of Bangladesh. Yanghee Lee strongly recommended the UNHRC on 27 June 2018⁴⁶ to bring and prosecute Myanmar's perpetrators relating to the crisis, the ICC or a credible international mechanism. Guterres gave a briefing at the UNSC on 28 August 2018 on the situation in Myanmar and Rohingya refugee crisis in which he explained his recent visit to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh Cox's Bazar and his past two visits to Myanmar and northern Rakhine State in March 2009⁴⁷ and in July 2012.⁴⁸ The IIFFM submitted its final report which was released on 27 August 2018⁴⁹ to the UNHRC on 12 September 2018⁵⁰ in which the accusation of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes by Myanmar were highlighted in detail. The IIFFM again released a report on 16 September 2019,⁵¹ calling the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the ICC or to establish an ad hoc tribunal, like the ones for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The pre-trial chamber I of the International Criminal Court (ICC) decided on 06 September 2018⁵² that the Court may exercise jurisdiction over human rights violations relating to the Rohingya crisis but Myanmar promptly rejected it on 07 September 2018.⁵³ The UNHRC set up an Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) on 27 September 2018⁵⁴ to continue the works of the mandate-ended IIFFM. Guterres appointed Nicholas Koumjian of the U.S. as Head of the IIMM on 02 April

⁴⁴ United Nations, Security Council, 'In Briefing on Mission to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Members Describe Mass Rapes, Displacement of Rohingya,' 14 May 2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13337.doc.htm>

⁴⁵ United Nations Secretary-General, 'Secretary-General's remarks at joint Press Conference with President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim,' 2 July 2018, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2018-07-02/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-joint-press-conference-president>

⁴⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Oral update by Ms. Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar at the 38th session of the Human Rights Council,' 27 June 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23268&LangID=E>

⁴⁷ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'UNHCR to upgrade its mission in Myanmar,' 12 March 2009, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2009/3/49b923992/unhcr-upgrade-its-mission-myanmar.html>

⁴⁸ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 'High Commissioner Guterres in Thailand/Myanmar mission,' 13 July 2012, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2012/7/4ffff70d9/high-commissioner-guterres-thailandmyanmar-mission.html>

⁴⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Report of Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,' 27 August 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx>

⁵⁰ UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Thirty-ninth session, 10-28 September 2018, 'Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar,' 12 September 2018

⁵¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner 'Myanmar's Rohingya Persecuted, Living under Threat of Genocide, UN Experts Say,' 16 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/>

⁵² International Criminal Court (ICC), 'ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rules that the Court may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh,' 6 September 2018, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1403>

⁵³ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Myanmar Swiftly Rejects ICC Ruling on Jurisdiction Over Abuses of Rohingya,' 7 September 2018, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-swiftly-rejects-icc-ruling-09072018164016.html>

⁵⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar,' <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIMM/Pages/Index.aspx>

2019 and informed the UNHRC on 27 August 2019 that the IIMM would officially operate in 30 August 2019.⁵⁵ Nine UNSC members including the U.S. sent a letter to the President of the UNSC on 16 October 2018,⁵⁶ requesting a briefing by the Chairperson of the IIFFM on Myanmar. Four UNSC members including China sent a letter to the President of the UNSC on 18 October 2018,⁵⁷ objecting to a briefing by the Chairperson of the IIFFM on Myanmar. China sent a letter to the President of the UNSC on 01 October 2018,⁵⁸ saying an important three-point consensus among China, Myanmar and Bangladesh have been obtained on 28 September 2018.⁵⁹ Marzuki Darusman, the chairperson of the IIFFM briefed its report to the UNSC on 24 October 2018,⁶⁰ saying in his conclusion that ‘the Rohingya and all of Myanmar’s people - in fact the entire world - is looking to the UNSC to take action against Myanmar.’

The third committee (human rights committee) of the UN General Assembly also overwhelmingly approved the resolutions on the crisis on 16 November 2017⁶¹ and 16 November 2018⁶² and 14 November 2019⁶³ co-sponsored by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the European Union (EU). Christine Burgener who visited Myanmar five times in nine months since

⁵⁵ The Secretary-General, United Nations, ‘Letter to Mr. Coly Seck, President of the Human Rights Council by Antonio Guterres,’ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIMM/Pages/Index.aspx>

⁵⁶ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 16 October 2018 from the representatives of Côte d’Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, 17 October 2018, <https://undocs.org/s/2018/926>

⁵⁷ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Letter dated 18 October 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Equatorial Guinea and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council,’ 22 October 2018, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2018/938>

⁵⁸ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Letter dated 1 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council,’ 1 October 2018, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/myanmar/>

⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, ‘An Important Three-point Consensus Reached at an Informal Meeting Among China, Myanmar and Bangladesh,’ 28 September 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1601107.shtml. First, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to properly solve the Rakhine issue through friendly consultations. Second, the Bangladeshi side said it is prepared to repatriate the first group of displaced persons fled from Myanmar’s Rakhine State to Bangladesh, while the Myanmar side said it is prepared to receive them. Third, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to hold a joint working group meeting as soon as possible so as to work out a roadmap and timetable for the repatriation and achieve the first repatriation as early as possible.

⁶⁰ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Briefing the Council by the FM mission on its report,’ 24 October 2018, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/myanmar/>

⁶¹ United Nations, ‘Third Committee Approves 16 Drafts with Friction Exposed in Contentious Votes on Glorification of Nazism, Cultural Diversity, Right to Development,’ 16 November 2017, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gashc4221.doc.htm>

⁶² United Nations, ‘Third Committee Approves 13 Drafts on Persons with Disabilities, Ageing, Human Trafficking amid Protracted Votes on Human Rights in Syria, Myanmar,’ 16 November 2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4254.doc.htm>

⁶³ United Nations, ‘Third Committee Approves 5 Draft Resolutions on Situations in Iran, Myanmar, Syria, amid Outcry over Targeting of Certain Countries,’ 14 November 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gashc4282.doc.htm>

her appointment gave a briefing to the UNSC on 28 February 2019,⁶⁴ in which she highlighted the importance of trust building and regular communications with all leaders in Myanmar. The OIC adopted a resolution on 4 March 2019⁶⁵ to set up a committee to refer Myanmar to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the highest UN court. Gambia on behalf of the OIC, filed Myanmar's genocide lawsuit at the ICJ on 11 November 2019.⁶⁶ Fatou Bensouda, the ICC prosecutor, requested judicial authorization to commence an investigation into the situation in Bangladesh/Myanmar on 4 July 2019⁶⁷ and the ICC judges authorized opening of an investigation into the situation on 14 November 2019.⁶⁸ Under the principle of 'universal jurisdiction,' Rohingya and Latin American human rights groups submitted the lawsuit at the Federal Court of Argentina in Argentina on 13 November 2019⁶⁹ against the State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and top military officials. The ICJ's hearing of Gambia and Myanmar began in the Hague on 10 December 2019 and State Counselor ASSK defended Myanmar from accusation of genocide on 11 December 2019. On 27 December 2019, the UNGA approved a resolution condemning human rights abuses against Muslim Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar, urging the IIMM to advance its work swiftly. On 23 January 2020, the ICJ imposed "provisional measures" against Myanmar, ordering the country to take steps to protect Rohingya population.⁷⁰

ROLES OF CHINA, JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

The U.S. involvement in the Rohingya crisis

The Magnitsky Act was passed by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President Obama in 2012 to punish Russian officials responsible for the death of Russian tax auditor Sergei Magnitsky in prison in 2009 who revealed the corruptions of Russian officials. Later, since 2016, the law was named as the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act of 2016 to punish human rights

⁶⁴ United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 'Security Council Briefing on Myanmar, Special Envoy Christine Schraner-Burgener', 28 February 2019, <https://dppa.un.org/en/security-council-briefing-myanmar-special-envoy-christine-schraner-burgener>

⁶⁵ Dhaka Tribune, 'OIC endorses legal action against Myanmar at ICJ,' 4 March 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/world/2019/03/04/oic-endorses-legal-action-against-myanmar-at-icj>

⁶⁶ The International Court of Justice (ICJ), 'The Republic of The Gambia institutes proceedings against the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and asks the Court to indicate provisional measures,' 11 November 2019, <https://www.icj-cij.org>

⁶⁷ International Criminal Court (ICC), 'ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, requests judicial authorisation to commence an investigation into the situation in Bangladesh/Myanmar,' 4 July 2019, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1465>

⁶⁸ The International Criminal Court (ICC), 'ICC judges authorise opening of an investigation into the situation in Bangladesh/Myanmar,' 14 November 2019, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?>

⁶⁹ The Guardian, 'Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi faces first legal action over Rohingya crisis,' 14 November 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/14/myanmars-aung-san-suu-kyi-faces-first-legal-action-over-rohingya-crisis>

⁷⁰ International Criminal Court (ICC), 'APPLICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE, (THE GAMBIA v. MYANMAR): ORDER', 23 January 2020, <https://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/178/178-20200123-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

offenders and corruption makers around the world who threatens the stability of international political and economic systems. On December 20, 2017, President Trump signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13818 “Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption” to implement the Act, which is also known as ‘treasury sanctions.’ Citing that human rights abuses in Myanmar’s Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States especially in Rakhine State undermine the U.S.’s values of human rights, national security and the vision of free and open Indo-Pacific, under E.O. 13818 of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act of 2016, U.S. Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on a senior official from Myanmar’s military on 21 December 2017,⁷¹ four senior officials from Myanmar’s military and Border Guard Police (BGP) and two Myanmar’s military units on 17 August 2018⁷² and four senior officials from Myanmar’s military including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Deputy Senior General Soe Win, on 10 December 2019.⁷³

However, unlike the UN, the U.S. has abstained from using the term ‘genocide’ in referring to the Rohingya crisis and instead, the United States determined in November 2017 that this situation constituted ethnic cleansing of Rohingya.⁷⁴ U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley strongly condemned Myanmar at the UNSC meetings in 2017 and 2018 and also blamed China and Russia for their protection of Myanmar. Vice President Mike Pence called for the UN to take more action against Myanmar at the UNSC on 20 September 2017, citing the Rohingya crisis as a global security threat.⁷⁵ He also met with Myanmar’s State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) in Singapore on 14 November 2018 and condemned Myanmar’s military treatment of Rohingya Muslims.⁷⁶ Former U.S. diplomat Bill Richardson who is a close friend of ASSK, resigned from the Advisory Board for the “Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State”⁷⁷ on 24 January 2018, criticizing ASSK’s stance on human rights and the Advisory Board’s

⁷¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, ‘United States Sanctions Human Rights Abusers and Corrupt Actors Across the Globe,’ 21 December 2017, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0243>

⁷² U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release: ‘Treasury Sanctions Commanders and Units of the Burmese Security Forces for Serious Human Rights Abuses,’ 17 August 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm460>

⁷³ U.S. Department of the Treasury, ‘Treasury Sanctions Individuals for Roles in Atrocities and Other Abuses,’ 10 December 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm852>

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of States, ‘U.S. Relations with Burma,’ 17 July 2018, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-burma/>

⁷⁵ The White House, ‘Remarks by the Vice President to the UN Security Council,’ 20 September 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-un-security-council/>

⁷⁶ The White House, ‘Remarks by Vice President Pence and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma Before Bilateral Meeting,’ 14 November 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-union-minister-foreign-affairs-state-counselor-aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-bilateral-meeting/>

⁷⁷ The Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, ‘The Establishment of the Advisory Board for the “Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State,” 14 December 2017, <https://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=briefing-room/announcements/2017/12/15/id-8146>

capacity.⁷⁸ U.S.-based organizations such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum also decided on 6 March 2018 to rescind its Elie Wiesel Award (2012) to ASSK.⁷⁹

President Trump sent a letter to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in May 2018,⁸⁰ promising to continue pressure on Myanmar to accept voluntary Rohingya repatriation. Congressman Bradley Sherman, Chairman of Sub-committee on Asia Pacific of the Congress, called upon the U.S. Department of State on 1 July 2019 to consider a proposal to bring Myanmar's Rakhine State under Bangladesh.⁸¹ American senior officials such as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asia Patrick Murphy in September 2017,⁸² Secretary Rex Tillerson of United States Department in November 2017,⁸³ USAID administrator Mark Green's in May 2018,⁸⁴ Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Richard Albright in November 2018,⁸⁵ Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale in May 2019⁸⁶ and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs David Stilwell in October 2019⁸⁷ visited Nay Pyi Taw and Myanmar's Rakhine State.

⁷⁸ The Richardson Centre, 'Statement by Governor Bill Richardson – A Reluctant Resignation from the Advisory Board on Rakhine State,' 24 January 2018, <https://www.richardsondiplomacy.org/news/statement-by-governor-bill-richardson-a-reluctant-resignation-from-the-advisory-board-on-rakhine-state/>

⁷⁹ U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 'Museum Rescinds Award to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,' 6 March 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-rescinds-award-to-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi>

⁸⁰ Dhaka Tribune, 'Trump to Hasina: US will keep up pressure on Myanmar over Rohingya crisis,' 3 May 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2018/05/03/trump-hasina-us-will-continue-pressure-myanmar-rohingya-crisis>

⁸¹ The Economic Times, 'US Congressman proposal for Rakhine state under Bangladesh baseless: Myanmar,' 1 July 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/us-congressman-proposal-for-rakhine-state-under-bangladesh-baseless-myanmar/>

⁸² U.S. Department of State, 'Briefing by Deputy Assistant Secretary for Southeast Asia W. Patrick Murphy on Burma,' 24 October 2017, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/download/murphy-testimony-102417>

⁸³ U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Russia, 'Secretary Tillerson on Efforts to Address Burma's Rakhine State Crisis,' 22 November 2017, <https://ru.usembassy.gov/secretary-tillerson-efforts-address-burmas-rakhine-state-crisis/>

⁸⁴ U.S. embassy in Burma, 'USAID ADMINISTRATOR MARK GREEN'S VISIT TO RAKHINE STATE IN BURMA,' 21 May

2018, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/readout-on-usaid-administrator-mark-greens-visit-to-rakhine-state/>

⁸⁵ U.S. embassy in Burma, 'U.S. Embassy Statement: Visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Albright to Myanmar November 3-10,' 9 November 2018, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-statement-visit-of-deputy-assistant-secretary-richard-albright-to-myanmar-november-3-10/>

⁸⁶ U.S. embassy in Burma, 'Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale's visit to Myanmar,' 25 April 2019, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/slide/under-secretary-of-state-for-political-affairs-david-hales-visit-to-myanmar-may-1-3/>

⁸⁷ U.S. embassy in Burma, 'U.S. Embassy Statement on the Visit of Assistant Secretary Stilwell October 27-30, 2019,' 30 October 2019, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/press-release-u-s-embassy-statement-on-the-visit-of-assistant-secretary-stilwell/>

U.S. interest in the Rohingya crisis

There are three main interests of the U.S. in the current Rohingya crisis: promoting human rights and democracy, promoting public relations with domestic constituents and Muslim people around the world and promoting international relations especially with Islamic countries around the world.

The U.S. believes that the respect for human rights and democracy is a key pillar to establish a democratic country and that the current Rohingya crisis is a threat to Myanmar's democratization as well as can harm regional and global security. From the U.S. point of view, supporting the rights of Rohingyas means supporting Myanmar's democratization, and both human rights and democracy will have to improve in parallel. The fall of Myanmar's democratization will invite more military control of Myanmar and will push it closer to China. Addressing human rights violations in the Rohingya crisis could only strengthen Myanmar's democratization, could improve regional and global security and could prevent the expansion of China in Myanmar. The U.S. Vice President told State Counsellor ASSK in Singapore in November 2018 that 'the democratic reforms that the United States has supported in Burma, the humanitarian efforts that the United States has supported with regard to the Rohingya will ultimately result to a peaceful, successful civil society, and to really a new beginning for the people of Burma.'⁸⁸

The U.S. is the home of 3.45 million Muslims⁸⁹ as of 2017, according to the Pew Research Center, and the Muslim population in the U.S. steadily increase. It is expected to become the second-largest religious group in the U.S. after Christians in 2040.⁹⁰ Currently, there are two Muslim Congresswomen⁹¹ in the U.S. Congress. Western politicians in the U.S. and Europe are often under pressures from large local Muslim populations and their lobbyists in their own countries who have influence to lobby politicians about the Rohingya crisis.⁹² The plight of Rohingyas in Bangladesh and Myanmar moves people around the world. U.S. Vice President Pence once said the Rohingya crisis is a tragedy that has touched the hearts of millions of Americans.⁹³ Like the Palestinian crisis,

⁸⁸ The White House, 'Remarks by Vice President Pence and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma Before Bilateral Meeting,' 14 November 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-union-minister-foreign-affairs-state-counselor-aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-bilateral-meeting/>

⁸⁹ Pew Research Center, 'New estimates show U.S. Muslim population continues to grow,' 3 January 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/>

⁹⁰ NBC News, 'Muslims projected to be second-largest U.S. religious group by 2040,' 10 January 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/muslims-projected-be-second-largest-u-s-religious-group-2040-n836191>

⁹¹ The Washington Post, 'The nation's first two Muslim congresswomen are sworn in, surrounded by the women they inspired,' 4 January 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/01/03/americas-first-two-muslim-congresswomen-are-sworn-surrounded-by-women-they-inspired/>

⁹² Email exchange with a podcaster based in London, United Kingdom, 12 October 2019

⁹³ The White House, 'Remarks by Vice President Pence and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma Before Bilateral Meeting,' 14 November 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-union-minister-foreign-affairs-state-counselor-aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-bilateral-meeting/>

the Rohingya crisis has also touched the hearts of millions of Muslims around the world too.⁹⁴ The U.S. strongly supported Myanmar's democracy movement in the past under the military junta, but it has now strongly criticized Myanmar on account of the Rohingya crisis. The U.S. ambassador to Myanmar repeatedly told local Myanmar media that the U.S.'s policy has been consistent in supporting human rights and democracy⁹⁵ and that human rights violations against Rohingyas were not acceptable. However, Myanmar people simply believe that the U.S. left Myanmar because supporting Myanmar can only win the hearts of over 50 million Myanmar people and supporting the Rohingyas can win the hearts of over 1.8 billion Muslim people. Supporting Rohingyas would promote U.S.'s public relations with domestic constituents and Muslim people around the world.

Currently, observers view that the U.S. has lost its ground in Southeast Asia⁹⁶ and its relations with Muslim countries are not good. Skipping the 7th ASEAN-US Summit by most Southeast Asian leaders on 04 November 2019⁹⁷ in Singapore and opposing of Muslim countries to a proposal led by the West and the U.S. against China at the UN in July 2019⁹⁸ regarding China's treatment to Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang regions are proves of how the U.S. should reconsider its relations with the ASEAN and the Muslim World. The Rohingya crisis has now drawn huge attention from the world and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which is composed of 57 Muslim countries. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad once suggested at an interview with a Turkish news outlet on 26 July 2019 that Rohingya should be given the chance to form their own state.⁹⁹ Indonesian national Marzuki Darusman who served as the Head of the chairperson of the IIFFM also called for the UN to take strong action against Myanmar. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdul Momen met with his U.S. counterpart in Washington, D.C. on 8 April 2019¹⁰⁰ and called for creation of credible international pressure (which is referred to a 'creation of a safe zone' in Rakhine State by the Anadolu Agency¹⁰¹ and the Dhaka Courier¹⁰²) in Myanmar. The U.S. has

⁹⁴ The Straits Times, 'ISIS, Al-Qaeda drawn to crisis in Rakhine state,' 20 September 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/isis-al-qaeda-drawn-to-crisis-in-rakhine-state>

⁹⁵ The Irrawaddy, 'A Conversation with US Ambassador Scot Marciel,' 26 March 2019, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/conversation-us-ambassador-scot-marciel.html>

⁹⁶ South China Morning Post, 'Southeast Asia has major doubts about US reliability in the region, but still wary of China: survey,' 7 January 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2180924/southeast-asia-has-major-doubts-about-us-reliability-region>

⁹⁷ The Straits Times, 'Regional leaders skip Asean-US summit, Trump calls for 'special summit' in US next year,' 4 November 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/regional-leaders-skip-asean-us-summit-trumps-representative-invites-leaders-to-special-summit>

⁹⁸ The Independent, 'More than 35 countries defend China over mass detention of Uighur Muslims in UN letter,' 13 July 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-mass-detentions-uighur-muslims-un-letter-human-rights-a9003281.html>

⁹⁹ Anadolu Agency, 'Mahathir's Rohingya proposal spurs mixed reactions,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/mahathirs-rohingya-proposal-spurs-mixed-reactions/1545095>

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, 'Meeting held between Bangladesh Foreign Minister and US Secretary of State: Rohingya repatriation stressed,' 9 April 2019, https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/5c9430d6-aed7-43b1-8b62-8cc07709c512

¹⁰¹ Anadolu Agency, 'Bangladesh seeks US support for Rohingya repatriation,' 9 April 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-seeks-us-support-for-rohingya-repatriation/1446988>

¹⁰² Dhaka Courier, 'Bangladesh seeks US support to create safe zone in Rakhine for Rohingyas,' 12 April 2019, http://www.dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Nation_this_week/bangladesh-seeks-us-support-to-create-safe-zone-in-rakhine-for-rohingyas/1247

viewed that Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia are its strategic allies against Chinese expansion in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, the U.S. can repair tense relations with its former ally Turkey,¹⁰³ a major Muslim country as well as member of the NATO, by supporting the OIC and Rohingyas. Turkish President Erdogan once called for world's leaders to support Rohingyas, labelling the crisis as genocide.¹⁰⁴ Following the request by Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque to diplomatic corps in Dhaka in October 2017,¹⁰⁵ the EU decided to join with the OIC to co-sponsor a resolution against Myanmar at the third committee of the UNGA in November 2017 in order to please the Muslim world especially with Turkey which plays a key country to refugee route to the Europe.

Some observers point out that unlike previous U.S. President Obama who visited Myanmar twice, current President Trump is known as little interested to Myanmar and the Southeast Asia region and his response to the Rohingya crisis "And where is that exactly?" at the meeting with a Rohingya refugee representative at the White House on 17 July 2019 was widely quoted by media outlets.¹⁰⁶ The U.S. also does not recognize the role of the ICC and even it once threatened¹⁰⁷ the ICC judges with arrest if they proceed against any Americans. The ICC is examining Myanmar to consider if the Rohingya crisis should be labeled as 'Genocide' but it is not easy for the U.S. to support the ICC action while its citizens were considered by the ICC to charge with war crimes. In addition, President Trump signed an Executive Grant of Clemency (Full Pardon) on 15 November 2019¹⁰⁸ to three military personnel who are accused of war crimes while the international community called for Myanmar to stop impunity to perpetrators of the Rohingya crisis. However, current U.S. foreign policies may change if democrats who wanted to cooperate more with international organizations win the 2020 U.S Presidential elections.

U.S. concerns about the Rohingya crisis

There are two main concerns of the U.S. to current Rohingya crisis: the global security threat and the failure of Myanmar's democratization.

¹⁰³ ABC News, 'Trump to welcome Erdogan as friend despite high tensions in US-Turkish relations, bipartisan condemnation of Turkey,' 13 November 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-erdogan-friend-high-tensions-us-turkish-relations/story?id=66917017>

¹⁰⁴ Reuters, 'Turkey's Erdogan presses world leaders to help Myanmar's Rohingya,' 4 September 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-turkey/turkeys-erdogan-presses-world-leaders-to-help-myanmars-rohingya-idUSKCN1BF1PE>

¹⁰⁵ EU in Dhaka, 'BANGLADESH: "We are very frustrated and worried" Foreign Secretary calls on DipCorps to garner political support in addressing the Rohingya Crisis,' 25 October 2017

¹⁰⁶ Business Insider, 'Trump asked 'where is that?' when a Rohingya refugee asked him if he was doing anything to stop the genocide in Myanmar,' 19 July 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-asked-rohingya-refugee-where-myanmar-is-2019-7>

¹⁰⁷ 'U.S. threatens to arrest ICC judges who probe Americans for alleged war crimes in Afghanistan,' 11 September 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/09/11/world/politics-diplomacy-world/u-s-threatens-arrest-icc-judges-probe-americans-alleged-war-crimes-afghanistan/#.XdkyqtWRXIU>

¹⁰⁸ The White House, 'Statement from the Press Secretary,' 15 November 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-97/>

The Rohingya crisis can threaten the global security in three ways: international intervention, the spread of refugees and terrorism.

Firstly, the U.S. and the West is worried¹⁰⁹ that the crisis will be out of control and finally it will lead to international interventions. The crisis is referred to some international media as the Rwandan genocide in 1994¹¹⁰ and the Srebrenica massacre in 1995¹¹¹ and is referred to some social media users in Myanmar as the case of Kosovo.¹¹² The term ‘Genocide’ regarding the Rohingya crisis is often referred to UN reports, international organizations and international media. The term ‘Genocide’ was illustrated 43 times at the report of the IIFFMM in September 2018¹¹³ which has called for international community to effectively intervene in. Vice President Mike Pence told State Counsellor ASSK in Singapore in November 2018¹¹⁴ that the Rohingya crisis is a tragedy that has touched the hearts of millions of Americans. This also goes to Muslims around the world too. There are reports of tensions between Bangladesh and Myanmar at the border and Malaysian leaders¹¹⁵ also strongly criticized Myanmar, using the term ‘Genocide.’ Some Myanmar workers in Malaysia¹¹⁶ and its embassies in Indonesia¹¹⁷ and Egypt¹¹⁸ were reportedly attacked, indicating the rise of anti-Myanmar sentiment around the Muslim world.

Second, the crisis could disturb regional and global stability by spreading Rohingya refugees around the world. According to the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Rohingya refugees are scattered in 16 nations¹¹⁹ around the world including Myanmar. There are also reports of

¹⁰⁹ Reuters, ‘China fails to stop U.N. Security Council Myanmar briefing,’ 25 October 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un/china-fails-to-stop-un-security-council-myanmar-briefing-idUSKCN1MY2QU>

¹¹⁰ BBC News, ‘Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter,’ 4 April 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506>

¹¹¹ BBC News, ‘Srebrenica massacre: Dutch state ‘10% liable’ for 350 deaths,’ 19 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49042372>

¹¹² Reuters, ‘Kosovo declares independence from Serbia,’ 17 February 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-serbia/kosovo-declares-independence-from-serbia-idUSHAM53437920080217>

¹¹³ United Nations Human Right Council, ‘Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,’ 17 September 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx>

¹¹⁴ The White House, ‘Remarks by Vice President Pence and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma Before Bilateral Meeting,’ 14 November 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-union-minister-foreign-affairs-state-counselor-aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-bilateral-meeting/>

¹¹⁵ Channel News Asia (CAN), ‘Genocide’: Malaysian PM Mahathir urges international community to act on Rohingya a issue,’ 25 September 2019, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/malaysia-mahathir-rohingya-urges-world-to-act-united-nations-11940210>

¹¹⁶ Radio Free Asia (RFA), ‘Four Myanmar Workers Killed in Machete Attack in Malaysia,’ 6 January 2017, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/four-myanmar-workers-killed-in-machete-attack-in-malaysia-01062017155602.html>

¹¹⁷ The Straits Times, ‘Molotov cocktail thrown at Myanmar embassy in Indonesia,’ 3 September 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/molotov-cocktail-thrown-at-myanmar-embassy-in-indonesia>

¹¹⁸ Reuters, ‘Egypt’s Hasm militants claim attack targeting Myanmar embassy,’ 2 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-security/egypts-hasm-militants-claim-attack-targeting-myanmar-embassy-idUSKCN1C705D>

¹¹⁹ Anadolu Agency, ‘INFOGRAPHIC - Top Rohingya-hosting,’ 24 August 2019, countries, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/infographic-top-rohingya-hosting-countries/1563674>

Rohingya refugees sailing from Bangladesh and Myanmar to reach a third country¹²⁰ and according to the UNHCR report, nearly 1,600 refugees and asylum seekers sailed the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea between January 2018 and June 2019.¹²¹ Some Rohingya refugees try to emigrate in Europe passing from Afghanistan through the Balcanic Road (by using the boats between Turkey and Greece).¹²² Since President Donald Trump came into power, there are more signs of anti-refugee sentiments in the U.S.¹²³ and the U.S. has now drastically reduced the acceptance of refugees in 2020.¹²⁴ However, the U.S keeps receiving Rohingya refugees and there were also reports of tensions between the Rohingya refugee community and Burmese refugee community in the U.S.¹²⁵

Third, it could promote international terrorism. Bangladesh is known for some terrorist attacks and the U.S. government¹²⁶ has warned their citizens who travel to Bangladesh about possible terrorist attacks. According to the foreign travel advice to Bangladesh by the United Kingdom in 2019,¹²⁷ it highlighted the links between terrorists in Bangladesh and in the regions and has warned that conflicts in Iraq and Syria can motivate Islamic militants in the region of South Asia and Southeast Asia where Bangladesh and Myanmar belong. In 2016, five militants from the New JMB, a splinter faction of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), stormed the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka on 01 July 2016, leaving 20 people including one U.S. citizen and nine Europeans and two Bangladeshi police officers.¹²⁸ Like the Bali bombing attacks¹²⁹ in October 2002 launched by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a Southeast Asian militant extremist Islamist rebel group, the Holey Artisan Bakery attack haunted the U.S. and the West about the threats of terrorism in the region. Al Qaeda who was behind the September 11 attacks¹³⁰ on the U.S. released a statement in September 2017, calling Muslims around the world to support Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims.¹³¹ Malaysia and Indonesia worried that this call could energize global terror networks

¹²⁰ Reuters, 'Dozens of Rohingya flee camps by boat, reviving memories of 2015 tragedy,' 8 November 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/dozens-of-rohingya-flee-camps-by-boat-reviving-memories-of-2015-tragedy-idUSKCN1ND1MS>

¹²¹ UNHCR, 'The Refugee Brief – 15 November 2019,' 15 October 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugeebrief/the-refugee-brief-15-november-2019/>

¹²² Email exchange with a podcaster based in London, United Kingdom, 20 August 2019

¹²³ Voice of America (VOA), 'Anti-Refugee Sentiment from Election Spills Over to States,' 26 December 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/anti-refugee-sentiment-election-spills-over-states>

¹²⁴ Pew Research Center, 'Key facts about refugees to the U.S.,' 7 October 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>

¹²⁵ Voice of America (VOA), 'Tensions Follow Rohingya Refugees to United States,' 6 October 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/tensions-follow-rohingya-refugees-united-states>

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of State, 'Bangladesh Travel Advisory,' 9 April 2019, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/bangladesh-travel-advisory.html>

¹²⁷ The Government of United Kingdom, 'Foreign Travel Advice,' 'Bangladesh,' 22 November 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bangladesh>

¹²⁸ Dhaka Tribune, '3rd anniversary of Holey Artisan attack,' 1 July 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2019/07/01/three-years-of-hole-artisan-attack-2>

¹²⁹ National Museum Australia, 'Bali Bombings,' <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/bali-bombings>

¹³⁰ 9/11 Memorial & Museum, '9/11 FAQs,' <https://www.911memorial.org/911-faqs>

¹³¹ Reuters, 'Al Qaeda warns Myanmar of 'punishment' over Rohingya,' 13 September 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-alqaeda-idUSKCN1BOONI>

and revive the dormant JI¹³² and Bangladesh also worried about the news of recruitment by the dormant JMB¹³³ to some Rohingyas refugees from Cox's Bazar. In addition, there are some reports of recruitments to Rohingya refugees by other regional Islamic militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan, Jaish-e-Mohammed in Jammu & Kashmir of India,¹³⁴ and Islamic militant cells in Southeast Asia linked to Al Qaeda and ISIS in the Middle East.¹³⁵ The ASEAN region is already under threat by Islamic militants such as southern Thailand,¹³⁶ the Philippines' Mindanao,¹³⁷ Indonesia¹³⁸ and Malaysia.¹³⁹ Malaysia where the IS had launched its first successful attack¹⁴⁰ on its soil in July 2016 warned in November 2019 that the Islamic State militant group may shift its base of operations to Southeast Asia after the death of its leader by the U.S.¹⁴¹ So, the U.S. who killed the IS leader worries that hopeless Rohingya Muslims will have become human resources of extremist networks in the region and beyond.

Another concern of the U.S. is about the failure of Myanmar's democratization. Failure of Myanmar's democratization could finally lead Myanmar to be more isolated under the control of military or at least make closer to China and Russia as their strategic partners. The U.S. has already lost its ground in the Southeast Asia region and since Cambodia and Laos are often referred by some international media as satellite states of China, the U.S. wanted Myanmar not to be another proxy of China. The U.S. is worried about Chinese projects in Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State which may become another Hambantota (of Sri Lanka)¹⁴² which is leased to China for 99 years or will

¹³² 'Al Qaeda's Rohingya call to arms could revive Jemaah Islamiyah: Security officials,' 14 September 2017, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/al-qaeda-s-rohingya-call-to-arms-could-revive-jemaah-islamiyah-9215004>

¹³³ Dhaka Tribune, 'At least 40 Rohingyas recruited by JMB,' 14 December 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2018/12/14/at-least-40-rohingyas-recruited-by-jmb>

¹³⁴ The Economic Times, 'Rohingya terrorists linked to pro-Pak terror groups in Jammu & Kashmir,' 12 July 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/rohingya-terrorists-linked-to-pro-pak-terror-groups-in-jammu-kashmir/articleshow/55046910.cms?from=mdr>

¹³⁵ Channel News Asia (CNA), 'Al Qaeda's Rohingya call to arms could revive Jemaah Islamiyah: Security officials,' 14 September 2017, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/al-qaeda-s-rohingya-call-to-arms-could-revive-jemaah-islamiyah-9215004>

¹³⁶ The Guardian, 'Thailand: at least 15 killed in biggest attack in restive south in years,' 6 November 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/06/dead-killed-in-biggest-attack-in-thailands-restive-south-in-years>

¹³⁷ Voice of America (VOA), 'Philippine Officials Consider Extending Martial Law in Mindanao,' 9 October 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/philippine-officials-consider-extending-martial-law-mindanao>

¹³⁸ South China Morning Post, 'Aceh independence call triggers fears of renewed conflict in Indonesia's restive province,' 1 June 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3012729/aceh-independence-call-triggers-fears-renewed-conflict>

¹³⁹ The Straits Times, 'Malaysia arrests 16 suspected ISIS militants, some planning attacks on politicians, non-Muslims,' 26 September 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-arrests-16-suspected-isis-militants-some-planning-attacks-on-politicians-non>

¹⁴⁰ The Straits Times, 'Malaysian police confirm nightclub blast first successful attack by ISIS on Malaysian soil,' 4 July 2016, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysian-police-confirm-isis-elements-behind-nightclub-blast>

¹⁴¹ The New York Times, 'Malaysia Says Islamic State May Shift Operations to Southeast Asia,' 27 November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2019/11/27/world/asia/27reuters-malaysia-security.html>

¹⁴² Financial Times, 'China signs 99-year lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port,' 11 December 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/e150ef0c-de37-11e7-a8a4-0a1e63a52f9c>

become another Ream naval base (of Cambodia)¹⁴³ which is widely viewed as a partial Chinese naval base as well.

China's involvement in the Rohingya crisis

Since August 2017, China opposed the UNGA's third committee solutions on 16 November 2017,¹⁴⁴ 16 November 2018¹⁴⁵ and 14 November 2019¹⁴⁶ relating to Myanmar's Rohingya crisis and the UNHRC solutions on 27 September 2018¹⁴⁷ and 26 September 2019¹⁴⁸ and objected the IFFM's Chairperson's briefing at the UNSC on 24 October 2018¹⁴⁹ and resisted British effort backed by the U.S. to stress on Myanmar¹⁵⁰ at the UNSC press statement¹⁵¹ on the UNSC joint-visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar from 28 April to 1 May 2018. Special Envoy of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sun Guoxiang visited Myanmar in May 2018,¹⁵² November

¹⁴³ Voice of America (VOA), 'US Military Official Confirms China Deal to Use Cambodian Naval Base,' 25 August 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/us-military-official-confirms-china-deal-use-cambodian-naval-base>

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 16 Drafts with Friction Exposed in Contentious Votes on Glorification of Nazism, Cultural Diversity, Right to Development,' 16 November 2017, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gashc4221.doc.htm>

¹⁴⁵ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 13 Drafts on Persons with Disabilities, Ageing, Human Trafficking amid Protracted Votes on Human Rights in Syria, Myanmar,' 16 November 2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4254.doc.htm>

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 5 Draft Resolutions on Situations in Iran, Myanmar, Syria, amid Outcry over Targeting of Certain Countries,' 14 November 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gashc4282.doc.htm>

¹⁴⁷ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar,' 27 September 2018, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/res/39/2>

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar,' 26 September 2019, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/42/3>

¹⁴⁹ United Nations, Security Council, 'Briefing the Council by the FM mission on its report,' 24 October 2018

¹⁵⁰ Reuters, 'China does not want U.N. to push Myanmar on accountability,' 9 May 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un/china-does-not-want-u-n-to-push-myanmar-on-accountability-idUSKBN1I930X>

¹⁵¹ United Nations, 'Security Council Press Statement on Security Council Visit to Bangladesh, Myanmar,' 9 May 2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13331.doc.htm>

¹⁵² Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services, 'Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives H.E. Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special Envoy of Asian Affairs of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China,' 23 May 2018, http://www.seniorgeneralminaugnhlaing.com/2018/05/senior-general-min-aung-hlaing-receives_22.html

2018,¹⁵³ January 2019,¹⁵⁴ February 2019,¹⁵⁵ in June 2019,¹⁵⁶ August 2019,¹⁵⁷ and in September 2019¹⁵⁸ to discuss about peace process and the Rohingya crisis. Sun Guoxiang also visited Myanmar's northern Rakhine State on 26 February 2019¹⁵⁹ and Bangladesh Cox's Bazar on 03 March 2019,¹⁶⁰ urging Myanmar and Bangladesh to work together on repatriation process.

As a mediator, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi went to Bangladesh¹⁶¹ on 18 November 2017 and Myanmar¹⁶² on 19 November 2017, proposing a three-phased solution¹⁶³ of addressing the Rohingya crisis. He also met with Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe of Myanmar in Beijing 28 June 2018¹⁶⁴ and Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali of Bangladesh on 29 June 2018,¹⁶⁵ reaching a so-called four-point principled common understanding (consensus) on 29 June 2018 in solving the Rohingya issue among Bangladesh, China and

¹⁵³ Eleven Media Group, 'State Counsellor receives Chinese Special Envoy,' 10 November 2018, <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/state-counsellor-receives-chinese-special-envoy>

¹⁵⁴ Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services, 'Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs Mr. Sun Guoxiang,' 22 January 2019, <https://www.seniorgeneralminaunghlaing.com.mm/en/11394/commander-chief-defence-service-s-senior-general-min-aung-hlaing-receives-chinese-special-envoy-asian-affairs-mr-sun-guoxiang/>

¹⁵⁵ The Global New Light of Myanmar, 'State Counsellor receives Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs,' 28 February 2019, <https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/state-counsellor-receives-chinese-special-envoy-for-asian-affairs/>

¹⁵⁶ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Counsellor Office, 'State Counsellor receives Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the People's Republic of China,' 26 June 2019, <https://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/2473>

¹⁵⁷ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Counsellor Office, 'State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives Chinese Special Envoy for Asian Affairs,' 15 August 2019, <https://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/2515>

¹⁵⁸ The Global New Light of Myanmar, 'State Counsellor receives PRC Special Envoy,' 14 September 2019, <https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/state-counsellor-receives-prc-special-envoy/>

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Special Envoy of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Visits Myanmar and Bangladesh to Work on the Rakhine State Issue,' 6 March 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1643589.shtml

¹⁶⁰ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Chinese Envoy Offered Rohingya Money to Return to Myanmar: Sources,' 5 March 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/china-rohingya-03052019163757.html>

¹⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Introduces China's Position on Issue of the Rohingya People,' 19 November 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1512593.shtml

¹⁶² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Holds Talks with State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar,' 20 November 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1512574.shtml

¹⁶³ *The first phase is to secure a ceasefire and restore order. In the second phase, the two sides work out feasible ways to solve the issue through friendly consultation, and sign and implement the repatriation agreement as soon as possible. In the third phase, the international community should increase support and inputs to the poverty alleviation in Rakhine State, so as to drive the development by poverty reduction and achieve stability through development.* https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1512574.shtml

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Meets with Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe of Myanmar,' 28 June 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1573156.shtml

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi and Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali of Bangladesh Meet the Press,' 29 June 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zjg_663340/yzs_663350/xwlb_663352/t1573459.shtml

Myanmar.¹⁶⁶ Wang Yi held a trilateral informal meeting with his Bangladeshi and Myanmar counterparts at the UN H.Q in New York on 27 September 2018 and announced at the UN on 28 September 2018 that an important three-point consensus¹⁶⁷ had been reached between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Wang Yi again met with his Bangladeshi counterpart 05 July 2019¹⁶⁸ and Myanmar counterpart in 27 August 2019¹⁶⁹ in Beijing to mainly discuss about the Rohingya crisis and Chinese cooperation. Through an informal trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA on 23 September 2019, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China reached a three point consensus,¹⁷⁰ agreeing to set up a China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Joint Working Group mechanism (tripartite working group mechanism) to expedite the repatriation of Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar's Rakhine State and its first meeting was held in Dhaka in October 2019.¹⁷¹ The establishment of the tripartite mechanism indicates the first direct Chinese involvement in solving the Rohingya crisis.

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang's Regular Press Conference on June 29, 2018,' *'Firstly, the three-phased proposal of "cessation of violence, repatriation and development" should continue to be implemented to improve the situation in the Rakhine State as soon as possible. Myanmar and Bangladesh should conduct negotiation on this basis to seek a proper solution. This serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and is conducive to upholding regional peace and stability. Secondly, addressing the issue of the repatriation of people who fled to Bangladesh remains a pressing task at this point. To this end, concrete measures should be adopted and substantive steps should be taken to repatriate the first batch of people. Thirdly, China is willing to provide further assistance to improve the living and sheltering conditions of the people fleeing the conflicts, including offering emergency supplies and building relevant facilities in accordance with the will of Myanmar and Bangladesh. Fourthly, comparative strengths should be brought into full play to enhance development and cooperation in the border areas between Myanmar and Bangladesh so as to earnestly improve the livelihood there.'* <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t1572946.htm>

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'An Important Three-point Consensus Reached at an Informal Meeting Among China, Myanmar and Bangladesh,' 28 September 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1601107.shtml, *First, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to properly solve the Rakhine issue through friendly consultations. Second, the Bangladeshi side said it is prepared to repatriate the first group of displaced persons fled from Myanmar's Rakhine State to Bangladesh, while the Myanmar side said it is prepared to receive them. Third, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to hold a joint working group meeting as soon as possible so as to work out a roadmap and timetable for the repatriation and achieve the first repatriation as early as possible.*

¹⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Meets with Foreign Minister A. K. Abdul Momen of Bangladesh,' 5 July 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/t1679634.shtml

¹⁶⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, 'Wang Yi Holds Talks with U Kyaw Tin t Swe, Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar,' 27 August 2019, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zgyw/t1692816.htm>

¹⁷⁰ Xinhua Net, 'China to enhance cooperation with Myanmar, Bangladesh to resolve Rakhine issue,' 24 September 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/24/c_138418938.htm

¹⁷¹ Dhaka Tribune, 'Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh, Myanmar, China joint mechanism begins work, 28 October 2019,' <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/10/28/rohingya-repatriation-bangladesh-myanmar-china-joint-mechanism-begins-work>

Chinese interests in the Rohingya crisis

There are three main interests of China in the current Rohingya crisis: preemption and protection of Chinese interests, serving as a mediator between Bangladesh and Myanmar, and promoting Sino-Myanmar relations.

First of all, this is about preemption and protection of Chinese interests. There are strategic Chinese projects such as the deep-sea port in Kyaukphyu in the southern part of the Rakhine State on Bay of Bengal, an entrance to the Indian Ocean Sea which can also be an alternative route for energy imports from the Middle East that avoids the Malacca Straits, a risky and insecure area, as well as part of the Chinese regional network of ports called the “string of pearls strategy” that includes Chittagong in Bangladesh, Gwadar in Pakistan and Colombo in Sri Lanka. However, China did not officially admit its strategy and instead it said it has only two purposes in the Indian Ocean Sea: economic gains and the security of Sea lines of Communication (SLOC)¹⁷² and both purposes can be achieved through international cooperation. The Rohingya crisis is very complicated and is very emotional. It is hard to find a solution and it will take time. Since the UN backed by the West often hints at the need for international interventions in Rakhine State such as creation of a safe zone, China viewed that chaotic situation in northern Rakhine State can spread to the whole Rakhine State and it can harm to Chinese interests in southern Rakhine State.¹⁷³ There are four major countries, namely U.S., Australia, Japan and India in the Indo-Pacific region working collectively to advance a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and they are known as an anti-China force, the so-called ‘Quad.’¹⁷⁴ All these four are involved in Rakhine State with their own investments, development and humanitarian projects. China viewed that the persistence of the crisis will allow the U.S. to boost its presence in Rakhine State in the name of human rights and humanitarian support via the UN and international organizations. As a preemptive act, in order to protect Chinese interests and control the situation, China has now proposed a three-phased solution to the Rohingya crisis in which the economic development of Rakhine State plays an important role to address the root cause of the crisis.

Second, this is about serving as a mediator between Bangladesh and Myanmar. China has perceived well the depth of the Rohingya crisis because it has also often been under critic in the UN regarding its treatment to Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang region, such as condemnation of over 30 countries led by the U.S. at an event on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in September 2019¹⁷⁵ and a joint-statement against China by 23 countries led by the UK¹⁷⁶ at the UNGA’s Third Committee in October 2019. China opposes the U.S. and does not want to see the

¹⁷² China Internet Information Center (China.org.cn), ‘The string of pearls and the Maritime Silk Road,’ 12 February 2014, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2014-02/12/content_31445571.htm

¹⁷³ Email exchange with Chinese scholars in Kunming, Yunnan Province, November 2019

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Department of States, ‘U.S.-Australia-India-Japan Consultations (“The Quad”),’ 31 May 2019, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-australia-india-japan-consultations-the-quad/>

¹⁷⁵ Reuters, ‘U.S. leads condemnation of China for ‘horrific’ repression of Muslims,’ 25 September 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-un-xinjiang/u-s-leads-condemnation-of-china-for-horrific-repression-of-muslims-idUSKBN1W92PX>

¹⁷⁶ The Independent, ‘UK joins 22 other UN nations in condemning China’s detention of Uighur Muslims,’ 30 October 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/uighur-muslim-china-xinjiang-united-nations-human-rights-uk-religious-freedom-a9177191.html>

U.S.'s influence in Rakhine State increase. China is wary of the UN in the Rohingya crisis but China does not reject the role of the UN. Instead of opposing the UN, China strives to increase its role in the UN. According to UN statistics in 2019, China is now becoming the second-largest contributor¹⁷⁷ to the United Nations' general budget as well as the second largest financial contributor¹⁷⁸ to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). China has often expressed that both Bangladesh and Myanmar are good neighbors of China and has repeatedly called for the UN to participate in a constructive role in promoting a bilateral settlement of the issue by Myanmar and Bangladesh and to address the root causes of the crisis via development and investments in Rakhine State. Taking a proactive role to mediate, the Chinese role as a mediator between Bangladesh and Myanmar will prevent possible interference of the U.S. and outside powers in Rakhine State and will also promote the Chinese diplomatic role in the UN and the Muslim world as a responsible major country.¹⁷⁹

Third, this is about the promoting of Sino-Myanmar relations. Generally, Myanmar's public opinion towards China is not good, because the majority in Myanmar feel that China unilaterally supported the previous military junta and exploited Myanmar's resources during Myanmar's hard times. Since 2011, there were a series of anti-Chinese protests in front of Chinese embassy in Yangon and Chinese projects throughout Myanmar including Rakhine State.¹⁸⁰ However, the Rohingya crisis is like a reward to China to promote its image in Myanmar among Myanmar people. China knows well the sensitivity of the Rakhine crisis and how the majority Myanmar's Buddhists feels on the crisis. Myanmar is not united and has been fighting each other in ethnic areas across the country and there is no good relations between the civilian government and Myanmar's military, but regarding the Rohingya crisis, the majority are on the same boat. China could win the whole Myanmar especially Buddhists and non-Muslim populations by siding Myanmar at the UN solutions.

Chinese concerns about the Rohingya crisis

There are two main concerns of China about the current Rohingya crisis: national security & terrorism.

China views that the U.S. could take advantage of the chaotic situation in Rakhine State and could disturb Chinese interests in southern Rakhine State which are considered important for access to the Indian Ocean. Current international pressures indicate that possibility of military intervention by outside powers in the name of humanitarian support is worth considering. China has a bad memory of the U.S. in Myanmar. The U.S. once interfered in Myanmar's Shan State which borders China by supporting some Chinese nationalist troops (known as Kuomintang) who fled to Shan

¹⁷⁷ General Assembly of the United Nations, 'Contributions received for 2019 for the United Nations Regular Budget,' https://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/honourroll_2019.shtml

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Peace Keeping, 'China,' <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/china>

¹⁷⁹ Embassy of People's Republic of China, 'Chinese Ambassador Chen Hai gives an Interview on the Rakhine Issue,' 10 November 2019, <http://mm.china-embassy.org/eng/sxw/t1715254.htm>

¹⁸⁰ The Economic Times, 'Farmers in Myanmar protest against China,' 9 July 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/farmers-in-myanmar-protest-against-china/articleshow/64911540.cms>

State crossing the border in the 1950s. China does not reject the role of the UN in the Rohingya crisis and refugee repatriation process but its bad memory also goes to the UN. According to the website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China once was bullied not to become a member of the UN around 1950s and 1960s by the U.S. with the support of Japan until China officially became a member of the UN in 1971.¹⁸¹ Currently, Rakhine State is known as the home of international organizations and the UN and most of these organizations are widely known to Myanmar as proxies of the West. China also shared this view with Myanmar. Some also called for the deployment of the UN troops in Myanmar's Rakhine State or international civilian monitoring groups to create a safe zone to protect Rohingya populations there which is viewed by Myanmar as separatism and for China who has created a similar situation in its Xinjiang region, it is not acceptable. According to international media, based on leaked internal Chinese documents, President Xi Jinping ordered officials to act with "absolutely no mercy" against separatism and extremism,¹⁸² referring China's Uyghur Muslim crisis in Xinjiang region.

China is also worried that the Rohingya crisis may one day relate to China especially its Uyghur crisis. Both crises drew international attentions and both Rohingya and Uyghur embrace Islam. There are also thousands of Muslims from Myanmar living in the Chinese border town of Ruili, Yunnan province which is bordered by Myanmar's Shan State and these Muslims are widely known as 'Rohingyas' to the China side.¹⁸³ China was under attack by Uyghur extremists on 01 March 2014 in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, which left 29 people dead.¹⁸⁴ Again, China was jolted by a terrorist attack by Uyghur extremists at Beijing's Tiananmen Square, which left five people dead.¹⁸⁵ There were some reports of the connection between Rohingya and Uyghur refugees¹⁸⁶ in Thailand and Malaysia and Rohingya Muslim networks such as Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO)¹⁸⁷ and Free Rohingya Coalition (FRC)¹⁸⁸ and Uyghur Muslim network such as World Uyghur Congress¹⁸⁹ (WUC) are widely known to the world. The U.S. President met with victims of religious persecution from countries at the White House in

¹⁸¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples' Republic of China, 'Struggle to restore China's lawful seat in the United Nations,' https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18013.shtml

¹⁸² The Japan Times, 'Leaked China documents reveal 'no mercy' in Xinjiang: report,' 17 November 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/17/asia-pacific/chinese-government-documents-xinjiang-clampdown/#.XdEzbNWRXIU>

¹⁸³ My visit to Ruili, Yunnan Province twice in 2016 & 2018, and email exchange with Chinese scholars in Kunming in Yunnan province in November 2019

¹⁸⁴ The Guardian, 'Kunming knife attack: Xinjiang separatists blamed for 'Chinese 9/11,' 2 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/02/kunming-knife-attack-muslim-separatists-xinjiang-china>

¹⁸⁵ Reuters, 'China security chief blames Uighur Islamists for Tiananmen attack,' 1 November 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tiananmen/china-security-chief-blames-uighur-islamists-for-tiananmen-attack>

¹⁸⁶ The Bangkok Post, 'Malaysia right over Uighurs,' 15 October 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1558062/malaysia-right-over-uighurs/> South China Morning Post, South China morning Post, 'Fleeing Uyghurs caught using Rohingya trafficking networks are stuck in limbo,' 19 July 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/article/1555568/state-limbo-uyghurs-thailand>

¹⁸⁷ Arakan Rohingya National Organization, <https://www.rohingya.org/>

¹⁸⁸ Free Rohingya Coalition, <https://freerohingyacoalition.org/en/>

¹⁸⁹ World Uyghur Congress, <https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/>

Washington, D.C. on 17 July 2019 including Chinese Uyghur and Myanmar's Rohingya.¹⁹⁰ This is not a comparison but there are some similarities between China and Myanmar in terms of crises. In 1988, Myanmar faced the 88 Uprising¹⁹¹ led by students and then China saw its uprising in 1989¹⁹² led by students. Myanmar encountered the 2007 Saffron Revolution¹⁹³ led by Buddhist monks and China saw the 2008 Tibetan Unrest¹⁹⁴ led by Buddhist monks too. Like Myanmar's Rakhine State, China has encountered a protracted crisis in its Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The histories and root-causes of the Myanmar's Rakhine crisis and China's Xinjiang crisis are not exactly similar but both countries have shared concerns to the U.S. and western interference in their internal affairs.

Japan's involvement in the Rohingya crisis

Since August 2017, Japan abstained from all resolutions at the UN relating to the Rohingya crisis¹⁹⁵ such as the UNGA's third committee resolutions on 16 November 2017,¹⁹⁶ 16 November 2018,¹⁹⁷ 14 November 2019¹⁹⁸ and the HRC solution on 28 September 2018¹⁹⁹ and on 26 September 2019.²⁰⁰ According to Sasakawa's blog page, he had visited 99 times²⁰¹ to Myanmar as of October 2019 since his appointment in February 2013 as a special envoy to Myanmar for Myanmar's

¹⁹⁰ The White House, 'Remarks by President Trump in Meeting with Survivors of Religious Persecution,' 17 July 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-meeting-survivors-religious-persecution/>

¹⁹¹ BBC News, 'Was Burma's 1988 uprising worth it?', 6 August 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7543347.stm>

¹⁹² CNN World, 'Tiananmen Square Fast Facts,' 4 June 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/15/world/asia/tiananmen-square-fast-facts/index.html>

¹⁹³ BBC, 'The Saffron Revolution,' 24 September 2007, https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/ni/2007/09/the_saffron_revolution.html

¹⁹⁴ The New York Times, 'Violence in Tibet as Monks Clash with the Police,' 15 March 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/15/world/asia/15tibet.html>

¹⁹⁵ UN Human Rights Council, 'Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 26 September 2019,' <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session42/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>

¹⁹⁶ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 16 Drafts with Friction Exposed in Contentious Votes on Glorification of Nazism, Cultural Diversity, Right to Development,' 16 November 2017, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/gashc4221.doc.htm>

¹⁹⁷ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 13 Drafts on Persons with Disabilities, Ageing, Human Trafficking amid Protracted Votes on Human Rights in Syria, Myanmar,' 16 November 2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gashc4254.doc.htm>

¹⁹⁸ United Nations, 'Third Committee Approves 5 Draft Resolutions on Situations in Iran, Myanmar, Syria, amid Outcry over Targeting of Certain Countries,' 14 November 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gashc4282.doc.htm>

¹⁹⁹ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Human Rights Council adopts 10 resolutions and one Presidential statement,' 28 September 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?>

²⁰⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council, 'Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 26 September 2019,' <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session42/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>

²⁰¹ Yohei Sasakawa Blog, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, 'Japan Tells Myanmar's Military Chief It Supports Peace Process,' 16 October 2019, <http://blog.canpan.info/yoheisasakawa/>

national reconciliation. He also visited Bangladesh Cox's Bazar on 12 February 2019²⁰² and Myanmar's northern Rakhine State on 23 March 2019,²⁰³ to explore more knowledge on the Rakhine State issue from both sides of the border.

In order to discuss about the Rohingya crisis, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono visited Nay Pyi Taw on 12 January 2018²⁰⁴ as his first visit to Myanmar and went to Myanmar's northern Rakhine State on 13 January 2018.²⁰⁵ Before he came to Myanmar, Kono also went to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar on 19 November 2017 as a combined visit with his counterparts from Germany, Sweden and the EU.²⁰⁶ Kono again visited Myanmar on 06 August 2018²⁰⁷ and Bangladesh on 07 August 2018 and shared five specific proposals²⁰⁸ to address the Rohingya crisis from both sides. The Rakhine State Investment Fair 2019 was held in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State jointly organized by Japan in February 2019 and ²⁰⁹ the Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar told the Myanmar Times ahead of the Fair that while the Rakhine crisis is not settled, economic development of Rakhine State is important to address root-causes of the crisis.²¹⁰ Kono again visited Cox's Bazar on 30 July 2019²¹¹ and met his Bangladeshi counterpart in Dhaka on the same day.²¹² According to the Dhaka Tribune²¹³ during the meeting, Japan proposed to play a role as mediator in Tokyo taking Bangladesh and Myanmar onboard to find a peaceful solution to

²⁰² Yohei Sasakawa Blog, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, '(Photo Diary)' Visit to the Cox's Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh,' 12 February 2019, <http://blog.canpan.info/yoheisasakawa/archive/212>

²⁰³ Yohei Sasakawa Blog, Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, '(Photo Diary) Visit to Myanmar's Rakhine State,' 23 March 2019,' <http://blog.canpan.info/yoheisasakawa/archive/211>

²⁰⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Foreign Minister Kono Visits Myanmar,' 12 January 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page3e_000810.html

²⁰⁵ Nikkei Asian Review, 'Japan's foreign minister visits Myanmar Rohingya villages,' 14 January 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-s-foreign-minister-visits-Myanmar-Rohingya-villages>

²⁰⁶ Dhaka Tribune, 'EU, Japan to visit Cox's Bazar to support the Rohingya,' 16 November 2017, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2017/11/16/eu-and-japan-will-visit-coxs-bazar-to-reaf-firm-support-on-rohingya-crisis>

²⁰⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Foreign Minister Kono Visits Myanmar,' 6 August 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_000890.html

²⁰⁸ Dhaka Courier, '*The five proposals are: Urging Myanmar to fully cooperate with independent enquiry committee, to fully cooperate with the UN agencies based on recently signed MoU, close camps for internally displaced persons in Myanmar, to expedite the process of building modern villages and conduct regular briefings in Rohingya camps by Myanmar side about steps taken on safe return of Rohingyas.*' 10 August 2018, <https://www.dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Reportage/Bangladesh-Japan-share-5-proposals-to-resolve-Rohingya-crisis/469>

²⁰⁹ Rakhine State Investment Fair 2019 (February 21-23, 2019), <https://www.investrakhine.com/>

²¹⁰ The Myanmar Times, 'Japan envoy says development is solution for Rakhine,' 10 February 2019, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japan-envoy-says-development-solution-rakhine.html>

²¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Extraordinary Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono,' 30 July 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken4e_000670.html

²¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Dinner,' 30 July 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/bd/page3e_001056.html

²¹³ Dhaka Tribune, 'Japan offers to mediate Rohingya crisis,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/07/30/japan-offers-to-mediate-rohingya-crisis>

Rohingya crisis. Then, Kono went to Myanmar 31 July 2019²¹⁴ and met with State Counsellor ASSK in Nay Pyi Taw.

Japanese Prime Minister paid an official visit to Myanmar in May 2013²¹⁵ - the first time a Japanese Prime Minister visited in 36 years, and again in November 2014 to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in Myanmar. During his visit, he met with the President of Myanmar and introduced Japanese foreign policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace,"²¹⁶ committing Japan to continue to support Myanmar's democratization. Myanmar's State Counsellor ASSK went to Japan three times on 02 November 2016,²¹⁷ on 09 October 2018,²¹⁸ and on 21 October 2019.²¹⁹ Unlike the Chinese President, the Japanese Prime Minister deeply expressed to Myanmar leaders about Japanese concerns over the crisis with alleged human rights violations of Rohingya and the importance of Myanmar's cooperation in the UN. Since August 2017, most political topics discussed between Japan and Myanmar have been about the Rohingya crisis, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.²²⁰

An emergency parliament event: "The Rohingya Human Rights Crisis and Japanese Diplomacy"²²¹ was held in December 2017 in Tokyo, attended by members of parliament from different political parties of Japan including the ruling party. According to a phone conversation with a Rohingya source in Tokyo on 19 November 2019,²²² meetings between Rohingya activists, INGOs such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Human Rights Now (HRN), Japanese MPs and officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan are occasionally held at the National Diet of Japan to share and update Rohingya-related information. In Rakhine State, Japan is supporting Rakhine local social organizations through UN projects and through the government of Myanmar related to women, governance, rule of law and IDPs according to a local social organization based

²¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Foreign Minister Kono Visits Myanmar,' 31 July 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/vn/page3e_001052.html

²¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Visit to Myanmar by Prime Minister Abe,' 27 May 2013, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page3e_000061.html

²¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Myanmar Summit Meeting,' 12 November 2014, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page3e_000269.html

²¹⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Meeting Between Prime Minister Abe and Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi,' 2 November 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_000547.html

²¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Prime Minister Abe Meets with the State Counsellor of Myanmar,' 9 October 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_000933.html

²¹⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Prime Minister Abe Meets with the State Counsellor of Myanmar,' 21 October 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_001109.html

²²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Myanmar Relations,' 21 October 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/myanmar/index.html>

²²¹ Human Rights Now, "12/4 Emergency Parliament Event: The Rohingya Human Rights Crisis and Japanese Diplomacy" 7 December 2017, <http://hrn.or.jp/eng/news/2017/12/07/124-emergency-parliament-event-the-rohingya-human-rights-crisis-and-japanese-diplomacy/>

²²² Phone conversation with a Rohingya activist in Tokyo on 19 November 2019

in Sittwe.²²³ In other words, Japan is reaching Rakhine Buddhist communities via Rakhine civil society organizations through the UN projects.²²⁴

Japanese interest in the Rohingya crisis

There are two main interests of Japan in the current Rohingya crisis: promoting and protection of Japanese investments in Bangladesh & Myanmar, and serving as a responsible leader in the international community.

Japan wanted to protect and promote its investments in Bangladesh and Myanmar to counter China since Chinese investment flows into Bangladesh²²⁵ and Myanmar²²⁶ through the Chinese Belt & Road initiative (BRI).²²⁷ In addition to their strategic locations in the region, both markets are important for Japan and other economic powers such as China and India because Bangladesh has the fastest-growing economy²²⁸ in the Asia-Pacific region and Myanmar is also known as the last frontier economy²²⁹ in Asia. The Japan-backed Thilawa Special Economic Zone is often offered as an example of the success of Myanmar-Japan relations and Japan is also investing in more special economic zones in Bangladesh²³⁰ as well as the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) initiative²³¹ in Bangladesh. However, the Rohingya crisis serves as a major source of investment risk: both the crisis itself (by instability) and the international reaction to it. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said at a media briefing after he met with his Japanese counterpart in Dhaka in July 2019 that Japanese are interested to solve the Rohingya crisis because Japan's investments in both states will fall in risk if the crisis could damage peace and stability of the region.²³² The Japanese ambassador to Myanmar often expressed in Myanmar's local media that more Japanese companies wanted to come and invest in Myanmar but since 2018, because of the Rohingya crisis, Japanese businesses in Myanmar are under more international pressure such as the accusation that Japanese brewer Kirin Holdings made a donation to

²²³ Messenger contact with a Legal Aid Group in Sittwe, Rakhine State 2019

²²⁴ UNDP Myanmar, 'Ongoing UN and Japan Cooperation on Rakhine extended in 2019 to also support communities in Kachin and Shan,' 25 February 2019, <https://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2019/ongoing-un-and-japan-cooperation-on-rakhine-extended-in-2019.html>

²²⁵ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'China No. 1 Foreign Investor in Bangladesh, New Official Figures Show,' 16 May 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/bangladesh-investor-05162019192122.html>

²²⁶ Nikken Asian Review, 'Myanmar investment inflows double from China as deals surge,' 18 July 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Myanmar-investment-inflows-double-from-China-as-deals-surge>

²²⁷ The Government of China, 'Belt and Road Portal,' <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/>

²²⁸ The Diplomat, 'Bangladesh Booms in a Sluggish World Economy,' 2 November 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/bangladesh-booms-in-a-sluggish-world-economy/>

²²⁹ BBC News, 'Burma: Asia's last frontier is opening up,' 2 June 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-22721804>

²³⁰ Sumitomo Corporation, 'Special Economic Zone to be Developed Near Dhaka,' 27 May 2019, <https://www.sumi-tomocorp.com/en/jp/news/release/2019/group/11970>

²³¹ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 'The Initiative of BIG-B (The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt),' 5 November 2014, <https://www.jica.go.jp/bangladesh/english/office/topics/141105.html>

²³² The Anadolu Agency, 'Japan offers mediation on Rohingya repatriation,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/japan-offers-mediation-on-rohingya-repatriation/1545403>

Myanmar's military in June 2018.²³³ The UNHRC released a report in August 2019, urging the international community to impose sanctions on companies linked to Myanmar's military, including Japanese companies.²³⁴

Japan is often seen as a liberal leader of Asia as well as the only country working in Myanmar that can effectively balance China. Japan is also the only member country from Asia of the Group of Seven (G-7), an informal bloc of industrialized democracies as well as one of the main financial contributors²³⁵ to the UN after the U.S. and China. Since Japan traditionally views Southeast Asia region as its stronghold, it has a strong history of supporting peace process in the region especially Cambodia and Philippines. Japan was significantly involved in peace process of Cambodia in 1970s and in 1980s, proposing several proposals to solve 'Cambodian problem.'²³⁶ Observers widely viewed that one of the reasons of Japanese pro-active action in Cambodia was to prevent the influence of Soviet Union and China in the region. Currently, Japan is providing assistance in the area of electoral reforms and the Khmer Rouge tribunal to strengthen Cambodia's democracy and human rights.²³⁷ Japan also participated in peace process of Southern Philippines between 'Christians' and 'Muslims' in 2000s, providing socio-economic development projects in Muslim-armed groups-controlled areas as the first foreign assistance.²³⁸ In Indonesia, Japan played an important role to support peace process in 2000s between Indonesian government and Muslim militants in Aceh province.²³⁹ Japanese supports also go to southern Thailand too where Buddhists and Muslims are in conflicts.²⁴⁰ All these Japanese supports to peace processes aim to promote the strength of democracies.

In order to counter global tensions and terrorism, Japan has adopted the concept of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" as the basic principle of Japan's national security and foreign policy.²⁴¹

²³³ Amnesty International UK, 'Japan: Investigate Kirin over payment to Myanmar military amid ethnic cleansing,' 14 June 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/japan-investigate-kirin-over-payment-myanmar-military-amid-ethnic-cleansing>

²³⁴ Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, 'The report on economic interests of the Myanmar military,' 5 August 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>

²³⁵ The Japan Times, 'Japan to sink to third-largest contributor to U.N. as China rises,' 23 December 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/12/23/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-sink-third-largest-contributor-u-n-china-rises/>

²³⁶ The Japan Times, 'Reinvigorating Japan's twin-track diplomacy in Cambodia,' 8 April 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2019/04/08/commentary/japan-commentary/reinvigorating-japans-twin-track-diplomacy-cambodia/>

²³⁷ Mission of Japan to ASEAN, 'Japan's cooperative efforts towards ASEAN in the field of peacebuilding,' February 2016, <https://www.asean.emb-japan.go.jp/asean2025/jpasean-ps02.html>

²³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Supporting Reconstruction and Peace through Socio-economic Development – Working to Sustain Peace in Mindanao, the Philippines,' <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/white/2017/html/column/column04.html>

²³⁹ Embassy of Japan in Indonesia, 'Japan Supports Peace, Ready to Assist Aceh Reconstruction if Peace Arrives,' 5 August 2003, https://www.id.emb-japan.go.jp/news02_129.html

²⁴⁰ Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 'Asia Peace Initiatives Department: Japan's Roles in Peacebuilding, FY 2019,' <https://www.spf.org/en/asia-peace/programs/V20180092.html>

²⁴¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan's Security / Peace & Stability of the International Community,' 12 June 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/security/index.html>

From that sense, Japan as an Asian power cannot stay away from the Rohingya crisis and it needs to go to the crisis that directly impacts on regional security and stability. Japan joined international calls for Myanmar to allow free access of the UN to northern Rakhine State and to allow international investigators and media to Rakhine State but it also supported Myanmar's decision to set up the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE)²⁴² on 30 July 2018, calling on Myanmar to have credibility and transparency of the investigation of the ICOE and to take appropriate actions on the findings of the Commission. Japan has viewed that taking a proactive role in the Rohingya crisis would conducive to its Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy²⁴³ as well as would promote its leadership role in the international community.

Japanese concerns about the Rohingya crisis

There are three main concerns of Japan about the current Rohingya crisis: the failure of Myanmar's democratization, the safety of Japanese citizens in the region and the increase in international demands to accept more refugees.

Japan is worried that Myanmar's democratization would be derailed by the Rohingya crisis. The fall of democracy in Myanmar would be the fall of Japanese initiatives in Myanmar as well as the fall of Japanese foreign policy to promote democracy and human rights in the Asia Pacific region too. Since China is a one-party ruled country, China may not want to see another democratic country that borders it. Japan viewed that the current NLD government needs to be successful and if not, the democratization of Myanmar would fail. Former Japanese Foreign Minister Kono wrote an article for the Washington Post²⁴⁴ in September 2018 about his visits to Rohingya communities in Cox's Bazar and northern Rakhine State, saying Myanmar's democratization could be in danger if pressure is used instead of supporting it. The Japanese ambassador to Myanmar also said in an interview in November 2018 that the success of the NLD government is vital to Myanmar's future.²⁴⁵ Japan believes that a democratic Myanmar can contribute to regional peace and security and also wants to see Myanmar not rely too much on China. Like the U.S, Japan has viewed that Chinese expansion to the Indian Ocean via Chinese investments in Rakhine State is a threat to regional security. Failure of Myanmar's democratization would Myanmar make more closer to China.

Another Japanese concern with the crisis is about the safety of Japanese citizens in the region, especially in Bangladesh. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas are stranded in refugee camps in Bangladesh with no foreseeable future, so it may lead to attendant risks of radicalization and

²⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Establishment of an Independent Commission of Enquiry by the Myanmar Government and the Agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Myanmar Government and the UN Agencies concerning their Activities in Northern Rakhine State,' 1 June 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000070.html

²⁴³ The Government of Japan, 'Toward Free and Open Indo-Pacific,' November 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp>

²⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Foreign Minister Taro Kono's Article contributed to The Washington Post,' 25 September 2018, (U.S.) https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea2/page4e_000905.html

²⁴⁵ The Irrawaddy, 'Success of Current Gov't 'Pivotal' to Myanmar's Future: Japanese Ambassador,' 1 November 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/success-of-current-govt-pivotal-to-myanmars-future-japanese-ambassador.html>

exploitation. Japan is worried that the Rohingya crisis would threaten to peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region via terrorism and the spread of refugees across the region. There are also histories of the deaths and injuries of Japanese citizens in the regions by terrorist attacks such as Indonesia's Bali bombing²⁴⁶ in October 2002 and the Sri Lanka bombing in April 2019.²⁴⁷ On 01 July 2016, Islamic militants raided the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, leaving 22 people dead including seven Japanese citizens.²⁴⁸ The Holey Artisan Bakery attack had haunted Japan²⁴⁹ and the security situation of Bangladesh and the safety of Japanese citizens in Bangladesh are often raised by Japan in discussions with Bangladeshi officials. There are some reports of militants who are in control of Rohingya refugee camps²⁵⁰ in Bangladesh and Bangladesh authorities are not ruling out that Rohingya militants may have close links with some militant groups inside and outside Bangladesh.²⁵¹

Japan is under pressure by the UN to accept more foreign refugees because Japan has been a signatory²⁵² of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol since 1981 and is also the fifth-biggest donor to the UNHCR as of September 2018.²⁵³ U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi publicly called for Japan twice in November 2017²⁵⁴ and August 2019²⁵⁵ to accept more refugees. In addition, as a liberal leader of Asia, Japan is difficult position to flatly resist the UNHCR since Japan has strong ties to the UNHCR since its citizen Sadako Ogata²⁵⁶ served as the first female Head of the UNHCR from 1991 to 2000. The Rakhine State crisis can be out of control at any time and more Rohingya refugees can spread in the region. If the crisis takes so long to resolve, the international community

²⁴⁶ The Bangkok Post, 'Tears, grief mark 17th anniversary of Indonesia's Bali bombings,' 13 October 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1770699/tears-grief-mark-17th-anniversary-of-indonesias-bali-bombings>

²⁴⁷ The Asahi Shimbun, 'Japanese woman killed, 4 injured in bombings in Sri Lanka,' 22 April 2019, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201904220036.html>

²⁴⁸ Dhaka Tribune, '3rd anniversary of Holey Artisan attack,' 1 July 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2019/07/01/three-years-of-hole-artisan-attack-2>

²⁴⁹ The Mainichi, 'JICA feared worsening Bangladesh security situation, sent youth volunteers home,' 6 July 2016, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160706/p2a/00m/0na/004000c>

²⁵⁰ DW News, 'Rohingya militants active in Bangladeshi refugee camps,' 24 September 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/rohingya-militants-active-in-bangladeshi-refugee-camps/a-50490888>

²⁵¹ The Economic Times, 'Rohingya terrorists linked to pro-Pak terror groups in Jammu & Kashmir,' 12 July 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/rohingya-terrorists-linked-to-pro-pak-terror-groups-in-jammu-kashmir/articleshow/55046910.cms?from=mdr>

²⁵² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,' 17 April 2015, <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b73b0d63/states-parties-1951-convention-its-1967-protocol.html>

²⁵³ The Japan Times, 'UNHCR credits Japan for 'small steps' but calls on nation to accept more refugees,' 26 October 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/10/26/national/unhcr-credits-japan-small-steps-calls-nation-accept-refugees/>

²⁵⁴ Reuters, 'U.N. urges Japan to resettle more refugees after taking just three in first half,' 20 November 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-refugees/u-n-urges-japan-to-resettle-more-refugees-after-taking-just-three-in-first-half-idUSKBN1DK0WW>

²⁵⁵ Kyodo News, 'UNHCR calls on Japan to do more as refugee approval rate "quite low,' 31 August 2019, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/08/d54a832210a8-unhcr-calls-on-japan-to-do-more-as-refugee-approval-rate-quite-low.html>

²⁵⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Sadako Ogata (Japan): 1991-2000,' <https://www.unhcr.org/sadako-ogata-japan-1991-2000.html>

will have to find some solutions to tackle Rohingya refugee problems since Rohingyas are not wanted by Myanmar, the country of origin, and Bangladesh, the country of asylum. One of the durable solutions of the UNHCR to solve the refugee crisis is to accept refugees through the third-country resettlement program. Currently, Japan has accepted a total of 174 refugees from Myanmar since 2010 but the UNHCR wants Japan to accept more Rohingya refugees.²⁵⁷ According to the Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan, there are around 300 Rohingya living in Japan.²⁵⁸ However, Japanese opinions to refugees or migrants may not be positive. Pope Francis called on Japan to accept more refugees during his visit in November 2019 but his call was negatively responded to in social media by Japanese social media users.²⁵⁹

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF CHINA, JAPAN AND THE U.S. IN MYANMAR

This section will examine the position of China, Japan and the U.S. in Myanmar of how they see each other and what their influences in Myanmar are with a brief comparison of the power struggle in the Indo-Pacific region.²⁶⁰

Serving as the transport corridor for energy, imports and exports for many of the world's leading trading nations, the Indo-Pacific region matters for global politics. Different countries of the region have their own visions, concepts and strategies to create a better region focusing on peace, security and prosperity. The U.S. and Japan shared their visions and concepts of a free, open and inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific focusing on rule law, good governance, fairness, free trade and freedom of the seas, while China emphasizes regional cooperation with openness and inclusiveness, without forming factions or seeking cliques.²⁶¹ In the name of creation of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, instead of cooperation and mutual understanding, more competition and hostilities are found in these days on the ground especially between China and the U.S. from the trade to the South China Sea and from Taiwan to Hong Kong. The U.S.'s National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy clearly defined China as a global security threat, and as an ally of the U.S., Japan has shared that view. U.S. President Trump often bluntly criticized China as a threat to the world²⁶² while some western scholars and media called for the U.S. to stop China as soon as possible.

²⁵⁷ The Japan Times, 'UNHCR credits Japan for 'small steps' but calls on nation to accept more refugees,' 26 October 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/10/26/national/unhcr-credits-japan-small-steps-calls-nation-accept-refugees/>

²⁵⁸ Kyodo News, 'Rohingya youths form football team in Japan, appeal for peace,' 5 October 2019, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/10/2d3dd512ad0a-rohingya-youths-form-soccer-team-in-japan-appeal-for-peace.html>

²⁵⁹ The Washington Post, 'Pope's message of openness to refugees prompts social media backlash in Japan,' 27 November 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/popes-message-of-openness-to-refugees-prompts-social-media-backlash-in-japan/2019/11/27>

²⁶⁰ Department of State, United States of America, 'A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision,' 4 November 2019, <https://www.state.gov>

²⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Wang Yi Talks about Indo-Pacific Concept,' 31 July 2019, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1685652.shtml

²⁶² 'Trump calls China 'threat to the world' ahead of trade talks,' 22 September 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/trump-calls-china-threat-to-the-world-ahead-of-trade-talks>

While China is calling not to form factions or seek cliques, the U.S. closely works together with other major powers of the region such as Australia, India and Japan, since the U.S. vision and approach in the Indo-Pacific region aligns closely with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept,²⁶³ India's Act East Policy²⁶⁴ and Australia's Indo-Pacific concept.²⁶⁵ A ministerial-level meeting of Australia, India, Japan and the United States was held in September 2019 and since 1992, the latter three conducted a trilateral naval exercise in the Pacific Ocean.²⁶⁶ Amid human rights violations against Muslims in India's Kashmir, Indian Prime Minister Modi was warmly greeted by U.S. President Trump in the U.S. in September 2019.²⁶⁷ On 28 June 2019, the second Trilateral Summit Meeting between the India, Japan U.S. was held in Osaka in Japan.²⁶⁸ Some Chinese scholars view that the U.S. wants to contain China via Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang region as a strategy of Balkanization by the West. Japan is also increasing its military and economic ties with Australia²⁶⁹ and India.²⁷⁰ Japan and India conducted their first "two-plus-two" security talks in New Delhi in November 2019,²⁷¹ agreeing to conduct their first joint fighter aircraft exercise in Japan. Japan also signed an infrastructure deal with the European Union aiming to link Europe and Asia²⁷² through transport, energy and digital projects in September 2019. Japanese cooperation with the West and India is seen by observers to counter Chinese expansions in the region. China also builds up its ties to Pakistan to counter India, and North Korea to contain Japan, and Russia to threaten the U.S. Amid all these international hostilities, the Rohingya crisis has emerged in the heart of the Indo-Pacific region between Bangladesh and Myanmar whose coastal areas are bordered by the Bay of Bengal (with the entrance to the Indian Ocean).

Currently, China, Japan and the U.S. are involved in the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: at the national (central) level and the (Rakhine) state level. The central level here refers to the government of Myanmar and Myanmar's military and the state level means Rakhine Buddhist community and Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine State. The U.S. strives to engage the Rohingya crisis at the central level and the state level of Myanmar but compared to China and

²⁶³ The Government of Japan, 'Towards Free and Open Indo-Pacific,' November 2019, <https://www.asean.emb-japan.go.jp>

²⁶⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 'Act East: India's ASEAN Journey,' 10 November 2014, <https://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?24216/Act+East+Indias+ASEAN+Journey>

²⁶⁵ Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'The Indo-Pacific: Australia's Perspective,' 29 April 2019, <https://dfat.gov.au/news/speeches/Pages/the-indo-pacific-australias-perspective.aspx>

²⁶⁶ Malabar 2019 Strengthens U.S.-Japan-India Naval Cooperation <https://jp.usembassy.gov/malabar-2019-strengthens-japan-india-u-s-naval-cooperation/>

²⁶⁷ BBC News, 'Howdy, Modi!': Trump hails Indian PM at 'historic' Texas rally,' 23 September 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49788492>

²⁶⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-U.S.-India Summit Meeting,' https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/page3e_001038.html

²⁶⁹ 'Australia and Japan expand defense ties with eye on China,' 11 October 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Australia-and-Japan-expand-defense-ties-with-eye-on-China>

²⁷⁰ The Diplomat, 'With Latest Abe-Modi Meet, India and Japan Make Security and Defense Cooperation Strides,' 31 October 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/with-latest-abe-modi-meet-india-and-japan-make-security-and-defense-cooperation-strides/>

²⁷¹ The Japan Times, 'Japan and India to conduct fighter jet drill in bid to deepen security ties,' 1 December 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/12/01/national/japan-india-security-talks-china/#.XeORMtWRXIU>

²⁷² Bangkok Post, 'EU, Japan sign deal to link Asia,' 27 September 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1759904/eu-japan-sign-deal-to-link-asia>

Japan, the U.S. has been losing ground since the U.S. is widely viewed by the whole of Myanmar as a pro-Rohingya country. So far, State Counsellor ASSK visited Japan and China in 2018 and 2019 but no visit was made to the U.S. and the West since August 2017 except Hungary and the Czech Republic in June 2019.²⁷³ This demonstrates the relations between Myanmar's civilian government and the U.S. are not good. However, State Counselor ASSK received senior foreign diplomats from China, Japan and the U.S. and their ambassadors on a regular basis. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (MAH) accepted Chen Hai, newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar twice on 20 June 2019²⁷⁴ and on 22 August 2019 and Ichiro Maruyama, Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar on 20 April 2019²⁷⁵ and 26 September 2019.²⁷⁶ However, there is no record of having received the U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar Scot Marciel by Senior General MAH since after 11 October 2017.²⁷⁷ Instead, Vice Senior General Soe Win accepted the U.S. ambassador to Myanmar.²⁷⁸ According to my experience with the Delegation of the EU to Myanmar as political officer, the Ministry of Defense of Myanmar had often declined courtesy calls by the EU ambassador to Myanmar since 2017. Instead, the Vice Senior General accepted the EU's Ambassador to Myanmar.²⁷⁹ This demonstrates how Myanmar's military is not happy with the U.S. and some Western diplomats to Myanmar.

Diplomats from China, Japan, the U.S. also travelled to Rakhine State to meet with state officials, the UN, INGOs, local NGOs, Rakhine political parties, Rakhine communities and Muslim communities. According to Rakhine civil society organizations, the Chinese ambassador to Myanmar seldom meet with Rakhine and Muslim communities and instead selected government-related organizations to meet, meaning that the Chinese mostly focus on projects in Kyaukphyu rather than the Rohingya crisis. As the first visit to outside Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, new Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Chen Hai visited Rakhine State's Kyaukphyu²⁸⁰ in July 2019 to inspect

²⁷³ The Guardian, 'Aung San Suu Kyi finds common ground with Orbán over Islam,' 6 June 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/06/aung-san-suu-kyi-finds-common-ground-with-viktor-orban-over-islam>

²⁷⁴ Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, 'Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar H.E. Mr. Chen Hai,' 21 June 2019, <https://www.seniorgeneralminaunghlaing.com.mm/en/13999/senior-general-min-aung-hlaing-receives-chinese-ambassador-myanmar-h-e-mr-chen-hai/>

²⁷⁵ Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, 'Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar H.E. Mr. Ichiro MARUYAMA,' 20 April 2019, <https://www.seniorgeneralminaunghlaing.com.mm/en/13075/senior-general-min-aung-hlaing-receives-japanese-ambassador-to-myanmar-h-e-mr-ichiro-maruyama/>

²⁷⁶ The Global News Light of Myanmar, 'Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief receives Japanese Ambassador,' 27 September 2019, <https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/tatmadaw-commander-in-chief-receives-japanes-e-ambassador/>

²⁷⁷ The Irrawaddy, 'Myanmar Army Chief Denies Military Abuses in Rakhine,' 12 October 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-army-chief-denies-military-abuses-rakhine.html>

²⁷⁸ The Global New Light of Myanmar, 'Vice Senior General Soe Win receives United States Ambassador,' 21 February 2019, <https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/vice-senior-general-soe-win-receives-united-states-ambassador/>

²⁷⁹ Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defense Service, 'Vice-Senior General Soe Win receives EU Ambassador to Myanmar,' 26 September 2018, <http://cincds.gov.mm/node/512>

²⁸⁰ Chinese embassy in Myanmar, 'Chinese Ambassador Chen Hai visited Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State,' 29 July 2019, <http://mm.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxw/t1692006.htm>

Chinese projects there. This indicates how China has paid attention to its interests in Rakhine State. The Chinese Ambassador again visited Rakhine State with other Asian diplomats (Heads of Missions) in September 2019.²⁸¹

Regarding the Rohingya crisis, Rakhine locals widely view the U.S. and western countries as pro-Rohingya. They feel that Rakhine people are also poor and are under suppression by the majority ‘Bamar’ and by the central government but throughout the Rohingya crisis since 2012, the U.S. and the UN completely ignored their perceptions and unilaterally supported the Muslim community in Rakhine State. From the locals’ point of view, the U.S. and the West were also committing Genocide to Rakhine people²⁸² because more birth are given by Muslim Rohingya through the WFP, the UNICEF and the UNHCR assistances largely funded by the U.S. and the West, making Muslim populations larger than local ethnic Buddhist Rakhine populations and encouraging Rohingyas’ dream of setting up an Islamic State.²⁸³ Their anger was peaked when the UN and INGOs offices in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, were under attack by Buddhist mobs in March 2014.²⁸⁴ Since one of the key demands of Rohingyas in Rakhine State to the international community is to deploy an international peace keeping force, the U.S. and the West are widely viewed by Rohingya as their saviors. Since Rakhine locals negatively view the UN and INGOs as pro-Rohingya organizations, the UN’s space in the Rakhine State has become narrow in assisting the Rohingya populations. In order to promote the UN role in Rakhine State for the long-term, the U.S. and the West look for a third party to intervene, and this is Japan.

While Myanmar is wary about U.S. assistance and Chinese assistance to Rakhine State, Japan has enjoyed more public support in Rakhine State and in Myanmar as a whole. The Japanese embassy to Myanmar also strives to reach both communities in Rakhine State. According to the Japanese embassy in Yangon, the Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar, visited Rakhine State in January 2018, accompanying the Japanese foreign minister,²⁸⁵ in May 2018²⁸⁶ and in January 2019,²⁸⁷ accompanying the Japanese state minister and in August 2019.²⁸⁸ The Ambassador met with

²⁸¹ Office of Ministry of State Counselor, Republic of Union of Myanmar, ‘Ambassadors Visit Returnees in Rakhine,’ 12 September 2019, <http://www.msco.gov.mm/en/latest-news-news/ambassadors-visit-returnees-rakhine>

²⁸² Personal experience in Myanmar’s Rakhine State from 2014 to 2019 as political officer of the Delegation of the European Union in Myanmar

²⁸³ Ex-General Khine Nyunt, ‘The problem of Myanmar’s western door’, PanMyoTaYar Publishing House, Yangon, July 2016, p. 177

²⁸⁴ Radio Free Asia (RFA), ‘Mobs Attack Offices of UN, Aid Groups in Myanmar’s Rakhine State,’ 27 March 2014, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/flag-03272014173432.html>

²⁸⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ‘Foreign Minister Kono Visits Maungdaw Township, Rakhine State, Myanmar,’ 13 January 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page3e_000812.html

²⁸⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, The President Office, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, ‘Deputy Ministers, Japanese Ambassador visit Maungdaw,’ 28 May 2018, <https://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=issues/rakhine-state-affairs/id-8814>

²⁸⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ‘State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. Toshiko Abe Visits Myanmar,’ 16 January 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002296.html

²⁸⁸ Ministry of Information, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, ‘Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, Japanese Ambassador inspect repatriation readiness in Maungdaw,’ August 2019, <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/>

Muslim IDPs in Sittwe²⁸⁹ and the Arakan National Party (ANP),²⁹⁰ in his visit to Rakhine State in May 2018, urging the Rakhine party to quickly solve the Rohingya crisis, and met with 12 Hindu returnees²⁹¹ from Bangladeshi camps in his visit in August 2019. Japan also closely worked with the U.S. on a strategic partnership in Myanmar such as the Myanmar-Japan-U.S. Forum on Fostering Responsible Investment on 20 August 2019 to promote responsible, quality, and ethical investment²⁹² and the Japan-United States Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP) to maintain and promote a more sustainable energy sector and quality energy infrastructure development of the region.²⁹³ These are not related to the Rohingya crisis but demonstrate how the U.S. can work together with Japan in Rakhine State.

According to local media, the ambassadors of the U.S. and Japan to Myanmar were very diplomatic when they responded to questions raised by the media related to China in Myanmar and Rakhine State but China seemed to have chosen a more direct way. The U.S. ambassador told the Irrawaddy (News) in March 2019 that the U.S. is now in Myanmar but this is not because of China and that it is natural for the Government of Myanmar to spend more time working with China since China is Myanmar's neighbor.²⁹⁴ The Japanese Ambassador also told the Irrawaddy (News) in November 2018 that Japan did recognize the importance of China-Myanmar relations and Japan is not worrying about the Chinese presence in Myanmar.²⁹⁵ According to the United States Institute of Peace, the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar urged the U.S. ambassador to Myanmar in 2016 not to travel to Myanmar's Kachin State and Shan State²⁹⁶ which is bordered by China's Yunnan province. Again, it happened in 2019. According to local media, Chinese Ambassador visited Myanmar's Kachin State in January 2019 and told local Kachin leaders not to make close friendships with the U.S. and western diplomats.²⁹⁷

²⁸⁹ The Myanmar Times, 'Japanese ambassador visits Rakhine,' 29 May 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japanese-ambassador-visits-rakhine.html>

²⁹⁰ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Japanese Ambassador Urges Rakhine Party to Quickly Resolve Rohingya Crisis,' 29 May 2018, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/japanese-ambassador-urges-rakhine-party-to-quickly-resolve-rohingya-crisis-05292018165436.html>

²⁹¹ Office of Ministry of State Counselor, Republic of Union of Myanmar, 'Ambassadors Visit Returnees in Rakhine,' 12 September 2019, <http://www.msco.gov.mm/en/latest-news-news/ambassadors-visit-returnees-rakhine>

²⁹² U.S. embassy in Burma, 'JOINT PRESS RELEASE FROM THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN,' 20 August 2019, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/joint-press-release-from-the-embassy-of-the-united-states-and-the-embassy-of-japan/>

²⁹³ U.S. embassy in Burma, 'Joint Statement on the Japan-United States Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP),' 2 August 2019, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-on-the-japan-united-states-mekong-power-partnership-jump/>

²⁹⁴ The Irrawaddy, 'A Conversation with US Ambassador Scot Marciel,' 26 March 2019, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/conversation-us-ambassador-scot-marciel.html>

²⁹⁵ The Irrawaddy, 'Success of Current Gov't 'Pivotal' to Myanmar's Future: Japanese Ambassador,' 1 November 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/success-of-current-govt-pivotal-to-myanmars-future-japanese-ambassador.html>

²⁹⁶ United States Institute of Peace, USIP Senior Study Group Final Report, 'China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts,' September 2018, p. 21, <https://www.usip.org/>

²⁹⁷ The Irrawaddy, 'Analysis: Behind the Threats and Warnings of Chinese Ambassador's Kachin Visit,' 9 January 2019, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/analysis-behind-threats-warnings-chinese-ambassadors-kachin-visit.html>

TREND OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS ON THE ROHINGYA CRISIS: CHINA, JAPAN AND THE U.S.

Based on the international politics of China, Japan and the U.S. in the Rohingya crisis and previous sections, this section will examine how China, Japan and the U.S. will engage in Myanmar in the future regarding the Rohingya crisis.

United States

The current trend relating to the Rohingya crisis indicates that the U.S. will continue to support Myanmar's democratization as well as to address human rights violations of Rohingyas. The U.S. does not want to harm Myanmar's nascent democratization and has avoided direct criticism to Myanmar's civilian government and ASSK and instead its sanctions on the Rohingya crisis have primarily aimed at the leaders of Myanmar's military. However, it will also maintain its relations with Myanmar's military to counter Chinese influence in Myanmar. Current trends show that the Trump administration will continue to ignore the calls from activists to use the term 'Genocide' in referring the crisis but it will continue to find faults of Myanmar's military with heavy charges such as the use of chemical weapons in ethnic conflict areas or the possession of them. The U.S. and the West are also not happy with ASSK regarding her attitude to Rohingyas, so in the long term, in order to encourage Myanmar's democratization and to address the Rohingya crisis in accordance with international standards, the U.S. and the West will find and promote young influential liberal-minded leaders who accept the name and rights of Rohingya and of ethnic minorities such as Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, Joshua Wong from Hong Kong and Juan Guaidó from Venezuela.

The U.S. strongly believes that the Rohingya crisis cannot be separated from Myanmar's democratization and respect for human rights must go to all citizens in Myanmar including Rohingyas, meaning if Myanmar wants to join the rule-based international community, the Rohingya problem will have to be solved in accordance with international standards. Vice President Pence met with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in November 2018²⁹⁸ in Singapore and expressed both support for Myanmar's democratization and support for Rohingya which will have to go in parallel in order to emerge Myanmar as a peaceful democratic country. The U.S. foreign policy on Myanmar illustrates that it is necessary to contain Myanmar's military role in politics²⁹⁹ so that Myanmar will finally become a peaceful democratic country with respect for human rights. The U.S. imposed sanctions against Myanmar's military leaders from 2017 to 2019 three times but it also welcomed Myanmar's military to join in the first ASEAN-U.S. Maritime

²⁹⁸ The White House, 'Remarks by Vice President Pence and Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma Before Bilateral Meeting,' 14 November 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-vice-president-pence-union-minister-foreign-affairs-state-counselor-aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-bilateral-meeting/>

²⁹⁹ U.S. Department of States, 'U.S. Relations with Burma,' 17 July 2018, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-burma/>

Exercise (AUMX)³⁰⁰ in September 2019 led by the U.S. 7th fleet which operates in the Indo-Pacific Region as a signal to China about the unity of the U.S. and ASEAN.

Current trends show that hardline views of Rohingya advocates are gaining ground, such as bringing Myanmar's military leaders to the ICC and setting up a safe zone in northern Rakhine State so the U.S. will receive more pressures from international human rights organizations and Rohingya advocates³⁰¹ to declare the Rohingya crisis as 'Genocide.' Since the U.S. is the single biggest military power in the world with a history of leading military actions against Yugoslavia to protect the Muslim minority there and with histories of declaring 'Genocide' on the Darfur crisis of Sudan in September 2004³⁰² and regarding ISIS' action against the Yazidis in March 2016,³⁰³ activists believe that the U.S. announcement of 'Genocide' on the Rohingya crisis would promote international pressure against Myanmar to realize their dreams to bring Myanmar leaders to the ICC or to establish a safe zone in Rakhine State. The U.S. House of Representatives already passed a resolution³⁰⁴ on 13 December 2018, urging the U.S. government to declare the crisis as 'Genocide.'

Amid international pressures on the Rohingya crisis, the U.S. expressed its concerns about Myanmar in November 2019 in The Hague in particular about Myanmar's possible possession of chemical weapons facilities³⁰⁵ which may be defined as violations of The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) which is signed by Myanmar. Such kinds of serious accusations by the U.S. that could lead to military interventions can be seen in Iraq³⁰⁶ in 2003 and Libya³⁰⁷ in 2011. Currently the U.S. has also accused Iran of developing chemical weapons in violation of the

³⁰⁰ Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, 'First ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise Successfully Concludes,' 6 September 2019, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/1954403/first-asean-us-maritime-exercise-successfully-concludes/>

³⁰¹ Politico, 'House calls Rohingya crisis a 'genocide,' urges Pompeo to take a stand', 13 December 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/13/rohingya-house-resolution-pompeo-1063111>

³⁰² CNN, 'Powell calls Sudan killings genocide,' 9 September 2004, <https://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/africa/09/09/sudan.powell/>

³⁰³ CNN, 'John Kerry: ISIS responsible for genocide,' 18 March 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/17/politics/us-iraq-syria-genocide/index.html>

³⁰⁴ United States House of Representatives, 'H.Res.1091 - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that atrocities committed against the Rohingya by the Burmese military and security forces since August 2017 constitute crimes against humanity and genocide and calling on the Government of Burma to release Burmese journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo sentenced to seven years imprisonment after investigating attacks against civilians by the Burmese military and security forces, and for other purposes,' 13 December 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/1091/text>

³⁰⁵ The Japan Times, 'Myanmar may have chemical weapons stockpile: U.S.,' 26 November 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/26/asia-pacific/crime-legal-asia-pacific/myanmar-may-chemical-weapons-stockpile-u-s/>

³⁰⁶ The Guardian, 'There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq,' 7 October 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/07/usa.iraq1>

³⁰⁷ The New York Times, 'U.S. Intelligence Aides Say Libya Is Again Making Chemical Arms,' 7 March 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/07/world/us-intelligence-aides-say-libya-is-again-making-chemical-arms.html>

CWC³⁰⁸ and Syria, for the use of chemical weapons in its recent civil wars.³⁰⁹ Some ethnic armed organizations have accused Myanmar's military of using chemical weapons³¹⁰ in battles, and recently, the AA, one of the allies of such ethnic armed organizations, and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) which are fighting against Myanmar's government in Rakhine State. So, the U.S. accusation of chemical weapons in Myanmar is expected to be linked to Rakhine State sooner or later as an additional pressure on Myanmar especially the military.

China

Current trends relating to the Rohingya crisis indicate that China has been proactively moving step by step through its proposal of a three-step road map (three phased-solution) in solving the Rohingya crisis. China will continue to protect Myanmar at the UN and in the international realm while it strives to maintain its relations with Bangladesh and Muslim countries as an impartial mediator. China has well perceived the political influence of ASSK to Myanmar's people (soft power) and the strength of Myanmar's military that influences conflicts (hard power), so China will continue to constructively engage both sides in Myanmar. However, China has also discerned the sensitivity of Myanmar's domestic politics and the entrenchment of anti-Chinese sentiment in the society of Myanmar. In order to protect its strategic projects in Rakhine State which serves as the entrance to the Indian Ocean and to prevent the risk of foreign intervention in to the Rohingya crisis, China will take a more proactive role to mediate the Rohingya crisis as a preemptive act, such as striving to influence all steps (short, middle & long term) to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis through a tripartite mechanism for Rohingya Repatriation and indirectly supporting the AA in Rakhine State to contain Myanmar if necessary.

Knowing that the protracted Rohingya crisis will harm the relationship between China and Muslim countries and will allow foreign intervention under the umbrella of the UN or any form of international monitoring mechanism, China has wanted the Rohingya crisis to be solved as much as possible under its control. It is also important for China to show the result to the international community and the Muslim world, that Chinese initiative works, so China will speed up first steps of a smooth voluntary return to Rakhine State. Following the August 2017 crisis, instead of Chinese special envoy Sun Guoxiang, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Bangladesh and Myanmar in November 2017 with a proposal of a three phase-solution, which was followed by a four-point principled common understanding in June 2018, a three-point consensus in September 2018 and another three-point consensus in September 2019, resulting in the establishment of the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Joint Working Group mechanism (tripartite mechanism) on 23 September 2019. After the announcement of the three-point consensus in September 2018, there was the first attempt of Rohingya repatriation back to Rakhine State between Bangladesh and

³⁰⁸ Voice of America (VOA), 'US: Iran Developing Chemical Weapons in Violation of Global Treaty,' 22 November 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/voa-news-iran/us-iran-developing-chemical-weapons-violation-global-treaty>

³⁰⁹ The Guardian, 'Assad regime used chlorine as a chemical weapon, says US,' 26 September 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/26/syria-assad-chlorine-chemical-weapon>

³¹⁰ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Myanmar Rejects Claim its Troops Used Chemical Weapons in Border Conflict,' 29 October 2015, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-kokang-10292015101207.html>

Myanmar on 15 November 2018³¹¹ but it failed. There was a second attempt of repatriation on 22 August 2019 but it failed again. Wang Yi met with his Bangladeshi counterpart in Beijing on 05 July 2019 before the second attempt began and he met with his Myanmar counterpart on 27 August 2019 after the second attempt failed. Following the failure of the second attempt, Myanmar's ministry of foreign affairs blamed Bangladesh on 22 August 2019³¹² and Bangladesh's ministry of foreign affairs blamed Myanmar on 29 August 2019.³¹³ Chinese representatives to the UN and Chinese spokesperson in Beijing repeatedly expressed that the problem has to be solved between Bangladesh and Myanmar and both are good friends of China. However, after the failure of two repatriation attempts, China decided to directly join in the crisis through the tripartite mechanism starting in September 2019.

Current trends indicate that China wants to promote its relations with Muslim countries and is worried that it will be misunderstood as a supporter of Myanmar.³¹⁴ China wants to find a win-win solution as soon as possible between Bangladesh and Myanmar as an impartial partner. While Chinese involvement in international affairs increases and the Chinese role at the UN expands, China needs more Muslim countries support to counter the U.S. and the West. Currently, Chinese relations with major Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are significantly improving. China supported Pakistan on the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan in September 2019,³¹⁵ strived to boost relations with Saudi Arabia amid tension with missing Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018³¹⁶ and backed Iran during the tension with the U.S. in May 2019.³¹⁷ Located at the Bay of Bengal with access to the India Ocean Sea, Bangladesh is also an important country to China since China militarily and economically plays an important role in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is not happy with China since China unilaterally supports Myanmar at the UN, but knowing the importance of China, it has sought more Chinese support³¹⁸ on the Rohingya issue.

³¹¹ The Guardian, 'Bangladesh admits no Rohingya willing to take repatriation offer,' 15 November 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/15/rohingya-refugee-repatriations-bangladesh-myanmar>

³¹² The Global New Light of Myanmar, 'Repatriation of Displaced Persons from Bangladesh did not occur as scheduled,' 23 August 2019, <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/?q=announcement/23/08/2019/id-18845>

³¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Inputs for Media on Diplomatic Briefing by HFM on Rohingya Repatriation State Guest House Padma, 29 August 2019,' 29 August 2019, https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/558b1cfe-aa6c-4a6e-af08-b0415d7e0e8f

³¹⁴ Dhaka Tribune, 'Envoy: China plays unique role in resolving Rohingya crisis,' 24 November 2019, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/11/24/chinese-envoy-china-will-remain-neutral-over-rohingya-issue>

³¹⁵ South China Morning Post, 'Beijing gives Pakistan its backing amid rising Kashmir tensions,' 9 September 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3026308/beijing-gives-pakistan-its-backing-amid-rising-kashmir>

³¹⁶ South China Morning Post 'China may seek to boost ties with Saudi Arabia but it 'can't fill US arms sales gap' 17 October 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2168849/china-may-seek-boost-ties-saudi-arabia-it-cant-fill-us-arms>

³¹⁷ Reuters, 'China backs Iran during U.S. tensions,' 17 May 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-iran/china-backs-iran-during-u-s-tensions-idUSKCN1SN1Q2>

³¹⁸ Anadolu Agency, 'Bangladesh seeks more Chinese support to Rohingya issue,' 28 June 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-seeks-more-chinese-support-to-rohingya-issue/1518399>

The current situation shows that China will act more aggressively in the Rohingya crisis through preemptive act. China has doubted that Myanmar can lean the U.S. and Japan at any time since the current Myanmar political system is vulnerable to be interfered with by the U.S. and the West in the name of democratization. The Myanmar government decided to scale down costs related to the Chinese-backed Kyaukphyu project in July 2018.³¹⁹ This decision followed when Sean Turnell, economic adviser to State Counsellor ASSK, raised his debt concerns about Chinese projects in Rakhine State at a seminar in Singapore in June 2018.³²⁰ Myanmar's opposition and Myanmar's military viewed that the current NLD government is heavily relying on western advisors and questioned the government about the transparency and accountability of foreign advisors³²¹ at the Parliament. China noted it well and seemed to have accepted this view. China shall also never forget the postponement of its dam project in Myanmar's Kachin State in September 2011³²² by the previous Myanmar government who wanted to garner domestic and the West's support. China feels that it has sacrificed a lot of its diplomatic assets to protect Myanmar against the UN and against the Muslim world but Myanmar has not recognized China's good-will and instead, it tends to move to Japan and India who are believed by China to be the allies of the U.S. used to contain China. Chinese concern to this is not groundless. India and Japan signed an agreement with Sri Lanka to jointly develop a project at the Colombo Port³²³ in May 2019 while China took control of Sri Lanka's port of Hambantota in July 2017.³²⁴ Senior General MAH met with Indian Prime Minister Modi on 29 July 2019³²⁵ and according to the media, Myanmar is going to receive its first submarine from India.³²⁶ India bordered by Myanmar is also planning to implement its Kalandan project³²⁷ in Rakhine State, to connect its northeastern states with the coast. China anticipates that

³¹⁹ The Myanmar Times, 'Myanmar to trim Kyaukphyu cost but drops Annan's strategic review suggestion,' 12 July 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/myanmar-trim-kyaukphyu-cost-drops-annans-strategic-review-suggestion.html>

³²⁰ The Myanmar Times, 'Myanmar mindful of Sri Lanka's debt crisis when mulling Kyaukphyu SEZ,' 13 June 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/myanmar-mindful-sri-lankas-debt-crisis-when-mulling-kyaukphyu-sez.html>

³²¹ Eleven Media Group, 'Military representative inquires the accountability and transparency of foreign advisors in Burmese,' 4 May 2019, <https://news-eleven.com/article/104832>

³²² The New York Times, 'Myanmar Backs Down, Suspending Dam Project,' 30 September 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/01/world/asia/myanmar-suspends-construction-of-controversial-dam.html>

³²³ The Hindu, 'Sri Lanka, Japan, India sign deal to develop East Container Terminal at Colombo Port,' 29 May 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-japan-india-sign-deal-to-develop-east-container-terminal-at-colombo-port/article27273794.ece>

³²⁴ Financial Times, 'China signs 99-year lease on Sri Lanka's Hambantota port,' 11 December 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/e150ef0c-de37-11e7-a8a4-0a1e63a52f9c>

³²⁵ Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, 'Senior General Min Aung Hlaing calls on Prime Minister of Republic of India H.E. Mr. Narendra Damodardas Modi, holds talks with National Security Advisor to the Republic of India, Deputy Minister of Defence, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff of Indian Armed Forces,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.seniorgeneralminaugnhlaing.com.mm/en/14480/senior-general-min-aung-hlaing-calls-prime-minister-republic-india-h-e-mr-narendra-damodardas-modi-holds-talks-national-security-advisor-republic-india-deputy-minister-d/>

³²⁶ Navy Recognition, 'Myanmar to receive its first Kilo class submarine from India,' 30 July 2019, <https://www.navyrecognition.com/index.php/news/defence-news/2019/july/7327-myanmar-to-receive-its-first-kilo-class-submarine-from-india.html>

³²⁷ The Myanmar Times, 'Kaladan project's port and river terminal completed,' 12 July 2019, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/kaladan-projects-port-and-river-terminal-completed.html>

for the long-term, its key rival in Myanmar would not be the U.S. but India so Myanmar's military connection to India heightened China's concerns with Myanmar according to informed observers.

Many in Myanmar believe that China is indirectly supporting the AA as a buffer to protect Chinese interests in Rakhine State as well as a containment policy of China on Myanmar that will never be revealed. The AA announced in Burmese and Chinese in July 2019 that it welcomed foreign investments, including Chinese projects³²⁸ under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) but it attacked people who worked for the India-led Kalandan project in Rakhine State in November 2019, leaving one Indian national dead.³²⁹ China had a history of supporting the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) in the past and many domestic observers believe that China is directly or indirectly behind Myanmar's ethnic armed organizations based along the Sino-Myanmar border, to serve as buffers between China and Myanmar.³³⁰ Senior General MAH told the Yomiuri Shimbun on 13 November 2019 that China may indirectly behind these ethnic armed groups.^{331 & 332}

Japan

Current trends relating to the Rohingya crisis indicate that Japan wants Myanmar to settle the Rohingya crisis as quickly and smoothly as possible since the protracted crisis will harm Myanmar's democratization, and can halt set-back Japanese businesses in Bangladesh and Myanmar. No pressures will easily move Japanese policy towards Myanmar but as long as the crisis persists, Japan will be in a difficult position to maintain the status quo between Myanmar and the international community and is worried that an isolated Myanmar will finally be absorbed by China. Unlike China, it is not easy for Japan for long-run to resist international pressure or advice not to invest in or work with Myanmar until the Rohingya crisis is democratically solved. From these points of view, while Japan maintains good relations with both the Myanmar government and Myanmar's military, it will encourage Myanmar to closely work with the UN, to implement the recommendations of the final report of the ICOE, not to against international legal mechanism such as the ICJ or the ICC and to work for faster repatriation, or at least not to repeat the refugee exodus again. Japan will continue to abstain from UN resolutions against Myanmar

³²⁸ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Arakan Army Voices Support for Big Chinese Projects in Myanmar's Rakhine State,' 23 July 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/arakan-army-voices-support-07232019152712.html>

³²⁹ India Today, 'Indian worker part of Kaladan Project dies in custody of Myanmar insurgent group,' 5 November 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/indian-worker-part-of-kaladan-project-dies-in-custody-of-myanmar-insurgent-group-1615819-2019-11-05>

³³⁰ 7-Day Daily, 'လေယာဉ်ပစ်ခတ်မှုနှင့် အာရ်ပီဂျီများအပါအဝင် TNLA ဝှက်ထားသည့် လက်နက်ခဲယမ်းအများအပြား တပ်မတော်သိမ်းဆည်းရမိ,' 23 November 2019, <https://7daydaily.com/detail?>

³³¹ 7-Day Daily, 'တိုင်းရင်းသားလက်နက်ကိုင်အဖွဲ့အချို့-လက်နက်ရရှိရေး-တရုတ်ဘက်က-သွယ်ဝိုက်သည့် အကူအညီ ရနေဟု-တပ်ချုပ်ပြော,' 17 November 2019, <https://7daydaily.com/တိုင်းရင်းသားလက်နက်ကိုင်အဖွဲ့အချို့-လက်နက်ရရှိရေး-တရုတ်ဘက်က-သွယ်ဝိုက်သည့်အကူအညီရနေဟု-တပ်ချုပ်ပြော>

³³² Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defense Service, 'တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူးကြီး မင်းအောင်လှိုင် ဂျပန်နိုင်ငံ၊ The Yomiuri Shimbun သတင်းဌာနအား လက်ခံတွေ့ဆုံပြီး မေးမြန်းမှုများ ဖြေကြား,' 14 November 2019, cincds.gov.mm/node/5333

while it will sharply call for Myanmar to address the issue in accordance with international standards through its foreign ministry's statements.

Myanmar wants Japan to be more involved in Rakhine State as an alternative choice to the U.S. and to balance China, but unlike China which borders Myanmar with deeper entrenchment in Rakhine State economically and politically, Japan has no long-term interests in the crisis. Japan will cooperate with the U.S. and the West in Rakhine State with care and will avoid direct confrontation with China and will be more involved in Rakhine State through its projects as part of the support to Myanmar's democratization to please Myanmar and to please the international community.

Current trends show that noting the awareness of the increase of Chinese investments in Bangladesh³³³ and Myanmar³³⁴ through its Belt & Road Initiative, Japan wants to increase its investments in Bangladesh and Myanmar to counter China and wants to see a safe economic environment for Japanese interests and its nationals, especially in Bangladesh, but Japan perceives the Rohingya crisis as a threat to the stability of the region. According to the World Bank, Japan was ranked as Myanmar's third largest trading partner³³⁵ in 2017 (exports from Myanmar: \$ 956/ imports to Myanmar: \$ 967)³³⁶ and as Bangladesh's fifth largest trading partner³³⁷ in 2015 (exports from Bangladesh: \$1,081/ imports to Bangladesh: \$1,373).³³⁸ Neither country is among Japan's top major trading partners³³⁹ but sources indicate that amid the Rohingya crisis, Japanese businesses have now significantly been increasing investment in Bangladesh³⁴⁰ and Myanmar.³⁴¹ Recalling the memories of the previous terrorist attack in Dhaka in July 2016 in which seven Japanese were killed³⁴² and of the recent terrorist attack in Kabul in December 2019 in which a well-known Japanese physician and aid worker was killed,³⁴³ Japan has often highlighted the creation of safe environment for Japanese companies and its nationals, especially in Bangladesh, and the promotion of Japanese investments in Bangladesh and Myanmar at bilateral Summits with

³³³ Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'China No. 1 Foreign Investor in Bangladesh, New Official Figures Show,' 16 May 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/bangladesh-investor-05162019192122.html>

³³⁴ Nikken Asian Review, 'Myanmar investment inflows double from China as deals surge,' 18 July 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Myanmar-investment-inflows-double-from-China-as-deals-surge>

³³⁵ The World Bank, 'Trade Summary for Myanmar 2017: Myanmar top 5 Export and Import partners,' <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/MMR>

³³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Myanmar Relations (Basic Data),' 6 September 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/myanmar/data.html>

³³⁷ The World Bank, 'Trade Summary for Bangladesh 2015,' <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/BGD>

³³⁸ 'Japan-Bangladesh Relations (Basic Data),' 19 January 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/bangladesh/data.html>

³³⁹ The World Bank, 'Japan exports, imports and trade balance By Country 2017,' <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/JPN/Year/2017/TradeFlow/EXPIMP/Partner/by-country>

³⁴⁰ Dhaka Courier, 'Japan's business presence in Bangladesh growing fast,' 9 August 2019, <http://dhakacourier.com.bd/news/Reportage/Japan%E2%80%99s-business-presence-in-Bangladesh-growing-fast/1599>

³⁴¹ The Japan Times, 'Japan exports, imports and trade balance By Country 2017,' 29 May 2018, <https://www.japan-times.co.jp/news/2018/05/29/business/japanese-investment-myanmar-soars-time-high/#.XecKmdWRXIU>

³⁴² NHK World – Japan, '7 men sentenced to death for 2016 Dhaka attack,' 27 November 2019, https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20191127_42/

³⁴³ The Mainichi, 'Japanese doctor Tetsu Nakamura dies after attack in Afghanistan,' 4 December 2019, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20191204/p2g/00m/0na/071000c>

Bangladesh in May 2019,³⁴⁴ with Myanmar in October 2018³⁴⁵ and during Kono's visit to Bangladesh in July 2019.³⁴⁶

Current trends indicate that regarding the Rohingya crisis, Japan will continue to stay in the middle between Myanmar which wants to defend the international community and the international community which wants to punish Myanmar. In doing so, Japan will mindfully carry out its diplomatic channels via the Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar and senior Japanese officials in Tokyo. Japan has noted the increase of its popularity³⁴⁷ among Myanmar's people and the increase of Japanese businesses in Myanmar since Myanmar's democratization started in 2011, and will not act any to ruin these developments. Since other ASEAN countries such as Laos and Cambodia are known to be influenced by China, this is a good opportunity for Japan to support Myanmar where the majority are not happy with China due to Chinese unilateral support to the previous military junta. Japanese Prime Minister Abe expressed how his wife and his father were attracted by Myanmar at his meeting with former Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw in Tokyo in December 2017.³⁴⁸ State Counsellor ASSK also stayed in Japan as a visiting fellow from October 1985 to June 1986³⁴⁹ and her father, General Aung San, received military training from Japan during WW2 and became the founder of Myanmar's military. Due to historical and cultural ties between the two countries and its experience with the previous military junta, Japan could gauge the mentality of Myanmar especially the nature of Myanmar's military that Myanmar will never surrender to international pressure relating to the Rohingya crisis.

Knowing this, Japanese will persuade Myanmar through soft power, from a development approach, rather than hard power from a human rights approach. Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Ichiro Maruyama is quite well known to Myanmar people through his interviews in Myanmar's local media in which he talked about nice things of Myanmar and Myanmar's people such as how Myanmar supported Japanese soldiers during WW2 and after WW2 during Japan's hard-times.³⁵⁰ According to the Eleven Media Group on 29 November 2019 Maruyama also praised the decision of the State Counsellor ASSK to go the ICJ and Myanmar's military for

³⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Bangladesh Summit Meeting,' 29 May 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/bd/page1e_000274.html

³⁴⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Prime Minister Abe Meets with the State Counsellor of Myanmar,' 9 October 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_000933.html

³⁴⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Dinner,' 30 July 2019,, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sw/bd/page3e_001056.html

³⁴⁷ Nippon.Com, 'A Wave of Enthusiasm for Japan in Myanmar,' 23 July 2019, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/c06201/a-wave-of-enthusiasm-for-japan-in-myanmar.html>

³⁴⁸ Prime Minister of Japan and his cabinet, 'The Prime Minister in Action,' 14 December 2017, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/actions/201712/14article5.html

³⁴⁹ Kyoto University, 'Aung San Suu Kyi receives KU honorary doctorate, engages in dialogue with students (3 November 2016), 16 November 2016, http://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/ko/about/events_news/office/kikaku-joho/kokusai-kikaku/news/2016/161103_1.html

³⁵⁰ Mizzima News, 'Interview with Japanese ambassador to Myanmar in Burmese,' 8 November 2019, <http://www.mizzimaburmese.com/article/62557>

issuing a statement about investigating an incident relating to Rohingyas.³⁵¹ Maruyama also told the media on 26 December 2019 that Japan did not believe Myanmar committed state-sponsored genocide against Rohingya Muslims in 2017, praying for Myanmar that the ICJ will not issue a ruling for provisional measures.³⁵²

While the Japanese embassy in Myanmar persuasively works with Myanmar, in order to respond to international and domestic criticisms, the Japanese Prime Minister and Foreign Minister keep calling Myanmar's leaders to address Bangladesh and the international community's concerns on the Rohingya crisis such as the credibility and transparency of the ICOE, more cooperation with the UN and security conditions, freedom of movement, a clear pathway to citizenship verification to the Rohingya refugees in order to achieve repatriation. The languages of the press statements released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan relating to the Rohingya crisis are quite strong and direct.³⁵³ After the August 2017 incident, Prime Minister Abe met Myanmar's civilian head ASSK twice in Tokyo in October 2018 and October 2019 and Myanmar's military head MAH in October 2019 and most of their discussions were overwhelmed by the Rohingya crisis, according to press releases of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in which Abe mainly stressed the credibility and transparency of the investigation of the ICOE and to take actions on the recommendation of the ICOE. The Rohingya issue was included in a short time period of 15 minutes while Abe met with ASSK in October 2019, who came to Japan to attend the imperial enthronement ceremony.³⁵⁴ It should be noted that before Kono came to Myanmar the first time in January 2018 and amid of repeated Chinese calls for the Rohingya crisis not to be internationalized, he made a combined visit to refugee camps in Bangladesh Cox's Bazar with his counterpart from Germany, Sweden and the EU in November 2017.

Current trends show that serving as a bridge between the UN in Rakhine State and local Buddhists who lost their trust in the international community, Japan will extend its cooperation with the UN in Rakhine State and promote the role of the UN there through its contributions.³⁵⁵ Japan has consistently called for Myanmar to increase its cooperation with UN and to allow free access to UN, INGOs and international media to Rakhine State especially since August 2017 when the crisis broke out. According to UN sources in Myanmar, Japan had donated US\$ 37 million to Shan,

³⁵¹ Eleven Media Group, 'Japanese ambassador to Myanmar praises State Counselor for going to argue Gambia's charge at ICJ and Tatmadaw for investigating Gutarpyin case,' 29 November 2019, <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/japanese-ambassador-to-myanmar-praises-state-counselor-for-going-to-argue-gambias-charge-at-icj>

³⁵² Radio Free Asia (RFA), 'Japanese Ambassador Voices Support For Myanmar on Genocide Charges,' 26 December 2019, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/japanese-ambassador-voices-support-12262019163626.html>

³⁵³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Foreign Minister Kono Meets with the Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar Kyaw Tint Swe,' 31 May 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002462.html

³⁵⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 'Prime Minister Abe Meets with the State Counsellor of Myanmar,' 21 October 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/s_sa/sea1/mm/page4e_001109.html

³⁵⁵ The Myanmar Times, 'UN, Japan extend Rakhine cooperation to Kachin, Shan,' 27 February 2019, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/un-japan-extend-rakhine-cooperation-kachin-shan.html>

Kachin and Rakhine States in February 2019³⁵⁶ through eight UN agencies, including US\$ 20 million that Japan supported to Rakhine State via the UN in 2018.³⁵⁷ For the U.S. and the EU, who strongly advocate for a rule-based international order, the UN is the key organization to promote fundamental human rights and address human rights violations in Rakhine State. However, the UN and INGOs in Rakhine State are heavily misunderstood by Rakhine Buddhist locals and the majority in Myanmar as pro-Rohingya funded by the West and the OIC, and so far locals' views of the UN relating to the Rohingya crisis are still doubtful, and it once led to the mob attack to the UN offices in Sittwe in March 2014.³⁵⁸ However, this situation seemed to be slightly changing on the ground. According to local Rakhine social organizations based in Sittwe in 2019, locals have now more positively viewed the UN in Rakhine State since the UN has now paid more attention to Rakhine Buddhist communities via Japan-funded projects.³⁵⁹

Current trends show that Japan will carefully construct its own model to intervene in the Rohingya crisis between the U.S. which focuses on human rights, and China which focuses on its security. This means that Japan will carefully work with the U.S. not to be so close and will carefully work with China not to directly confront it. Knowing the U.S. and western sanctions will more push Myanmar to China, Japan will stand as a good friend of Myanmar not to be completely influenced by China. Myanmar views that the U.S. and China will dominate international politics of Rakhine State for the short-term and for the long term through refugee repatriation to economic development. Hence, Myanmar has viewed Japan as an alternative to the U.S. and China and wants Japan to actively participate in Rakhine State as a replacement for the biased international community and the UN, and as a powerful country which will help prevent excessive Chinese expansion in Rakhine State. However, current developments indicate that Japan has been lagging behind China in terms of international politics in the Rohingya crisis as a mediator. Japanese foreign minister Kono visited Myanmar three times within two years from January 2018 to July 2019, urging Bangladesh and Myanmar to accept a five-point proposal in August 2018 (The Chinese had reached to the four-point principled common understanding in June 2018 in Beijing, with Bangladesh and Myanmar) to permit safe return of Rohingyas and Japan offered a mediator role between the two countries in July 2019 (China had reached an agreement to set up a tripartite working group mechanism with Bangladesh and Myanmar in September 2019). However, no further development to the Japanese proposal and offer were seen so far. Significantly, Japan has shared a similar view with China that economic development is the key to solve the root-causes of the Rohingya crisis³⁶⁰ while it strongly opposes western sanctions against Myanmar over the

³⁵⁶ UNICEF, Myanmar, 'Ongoing UN and Japan Cooperation on Rakhine extended in 2019 to also support communities in Kachin and Shan,' 26 February 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/ongoing-un-and-japan-cooperation-rakhine-extended-2019-also-support-communities>

³⁵⁷ UNICEF, Japan, 'Japan donates US\$20 million to implement a number of humanitarian and development projects in Rakhine State, Myanmar, through UNICEF and other UN agencies,' 22 February 2018, https://www.unicef.org/tokyo/jp/15406_27445.html

³⁵⁸ The Irrawaddy, 'Aid Workers Flee, Girl Killed as Attacks Continue in Sittwe,' 28 March 2014, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/aid-workers-flee-girl-killed-attacks-continue-sittwe.html>

³⁵⁹ Phone contact with Rakhine social organizations in Sittwe in September 2019, and email contact in November 2019

³⁶⁰ The Myanmar Times, 'Japan envoy says development is solution for Rakhine,' 10 February 2019, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japan-envoy-says-development-solution-rakhine.html>

Rohingya crisis.³⁶¹ There is no doubt that the Japanese embassy in Yangon did cooperate with the U.S. and western embassies³⁶² but regarding the Rohingya crisis, it has stayed a distance from western diplomats.

Current world politics also indicate that Japan's relations with the U.S. are strained³⁶³ but its relations with China are getting warm.³⁶⁴ Japan Prime Minister Abe and U.S. President Trump met in June 2018³⁶⁵ in Washington, D.C. and May 2019 in Tokyo but both meeting reached no joint statements. Trump called Japan a free-rider on security³⁶⁶ during his presidential campaign in 2016 and according to the U.S.'s Foreign Policy Magazine in November 2019,³⁶⁷ Trump asked Japan to significantly increase its annual payment for the U.S. troops in Japan up to \$ 8 billion. Japanese Prime Minister Abe and Chinese President Xi met in Beijing in October 2018³⁶⁸ and in June 2019³⁶⁹ and vowed to improve bilateral relations from competition to cooperation.

CONCLUSION

My research through primary and secondary sources clearly indicates that compared to China and the U.S, the majority in Myanmar wants Japan to act more in Myanmar's Rakhine State not only the Rohingya crisis but also economic development of Rakhine State. However, as mentioned in the paper, Japan as a democratic country has a difficult position to firmly stand with Myanmar in the crisis because of unprecedented global pressures against Myanmar. The press statement dated on 6 February 2020 by the Kirin Holdings Company³⁷⁰ to reconsider its investments in Myanmar regarding the Rohingya crisis indicate that compared to its global interests, Japanese investments under western pressures can leave Myanmar any time. Unlike Japan, China is very clear in this

³⁶¹ The Irrawaddy, 'West's Call for Sanctions Is 'Utter Nonsense': Japanese Ambassador, 19 October 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/wests-call-sanctions-utter-nonsense-japanese-ambassador.html>

³⁶² U.S. embassy in Burma, 'JOINT PRESS RELEASE FROM THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN,' 20 August 2019, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/joint-press-release-from-the-embassy-of-the-united-states-and-the-embassy-of-japan/>

³⁶³ Nikkei Asian Review, 'Specter of TPP haunts Japan-US trade relations,' 31 May 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Specter-of-TPP-haunts-Japan-US-trade-relationshttps://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/Specter-of-TPP-haunts-Japan-US-trade-relations>

³⁶⁴ The Japan Times, 'In a sign of warmer Japan-China ties, Abe and Xi expected to sign panda research pact at G20,' 6 June 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/06/06/national/sign-warmer-japan-china-ties-abe-xi-expected-sign-panda-research-pact-g20/#.Xekca9WRXIU>

³⁶⁵ The Diplomat, 'US-Japan Relations in the Coming Year: Alliance Management and Risk Management,' 27 July 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/us-japan-relations-in-the-coming-year-alliance-management-and-risk-management/>

³⁶⁶ Reuters, 'Trump candidacy stirs alliance angst in Japan,' 20 March 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-japan/trump-candidacy-stirs-alliance-angst-in-japan-idUSKCN0WM017>

³⁶⁷ The Asahi Shimbun, 'Trump asked Tokyo for \$8 bln to keep U.S. troops in Japan--Foreign Policy,' 16 November 2019, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201911160030.html>

³⁶⁸ The Mainichi, 'Abe, Xi agree to move from competition to cooperation toward new era in bilateral ties,' 26 October 2018, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181026/p2a/00m/0na/041000c>

³⁶⁹ Xinhua Net, 'Xi, Abe agree to build China-Japan relations in accordance with needs of new era,' 28 June 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-06/28/c_138179475.htm

³⁷⁰ Kirin Holdings Company Limited, 'Progress Report Regarding Kirin's Operations in Myanmar', 6 February 2020, https://www.kirinholdings.co.jp/english/news/2020/0206_01.html

regard. Chinese President visited Myanmar in January 2020³⁷¹ as the first time in nearly 20 years a week before the ICJ delivered its ruling to Myanmar on 23 January 2020. Chinese foreign ministry also released a statement on 19 January 2020,³⁷² saying China will firmly stand with Myanmar wherever Myanmar goes. Myanmar may have no choice.

International politics of the Myanmar's Rakhine State crisis between China, Japan and the U.S. are beyond repatriation process for short-term and addressing the root causes of the crisis for long-term. It is also about the competition of geo-politics and about the grab of further access to the Indian Ocean too. The protracted Rohingya crisis itself serves as the source of refugee flights to the region and of regional terrorism. These all directly relate to the peace and security of Indo-Pacific Region and serve as a challenge to free and open Indo-Pacific strategies of China, Japan and the U.S. Based on their interests and concerns to the crisis, China, Japan and the U.S. have their own calculations and simulations to influence on Myanmar and to counter each other. Moreover, Myanmar's domestic politics and global politics will shape their response to the crisis.

International legal mechanism such as the ICC and the ICJ already operate in, and the structure of western political system and of the UN will also be moving step by step to push more sanctions and resolutions to Myanmar. It cannot be stoppable. For the U.S. and the West, the addressing the Rohingya crisis is not only for human rights violations but also for the dignity of the West whose collective efforts for years to stop human rights violations to Rohingyas has failed. Western diplomats who are assigned to Myanmar are very emotional about the Rohingya crisis and for short term, the West will encourage on the Rohingya repatriation process to happen but for long term, it will never forgive Myanmar's military leaders and the State Counsellor ASSK. China will protect Myanmar from all the U.S. pressure and will act more aggressively to protect its interests in Rakhine State and will be using all its diplomatic and economic resources to influence Myanmar. Japan and the U.S. want Myanmar's democratizations succeed but their ways of approach to this especially in the Rohingya crisis is totally different. Japan will continue use its own strategy to persuade Myanmar especially Myanmar's military through its proactive foreign policy to counter Chinese influence in Myanmar.

Since no one can completely influence Myanmar especially Myanmar's military, Myanmar will not easily bow to any external pressures relating to the Rohingya crisis, this means that international politics of the Myanmar's Rakhine State crisis will remain complex and unpredictable. Any isolation attempt to Myanmar relating to the Rohingya crisis will unite Myanmar and will make Myanmar closer to China and (Russia), and real victims of international politics of the Myanmar's Rakhine State crisis would be ordinary people of Myanmar under international sanctions and Rohingya people who are not wanted by Bangladesh and Myanmar.

³⁷¹ The Japan Times, 'Xi courts an isolated Myanmar in first state visit of the year,' 17 January 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/01/17/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/xi-courts-isolated-myanmar-first-state-visit-year/>

³⁷² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'Do Not Say You Start Too Early; and You Have Close Friends Wherever You Go,' 19 January 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1734436.shtml

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