



The Issue in Rakhine

A Critical Discourse Analysis on a Potential Genocide on the Rohingya Population

Master Thesis

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to examine the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas through the analysis of four chosen articles from China Daily and the Guardian. The crisis in Rakhine that got the international communities attention in 2017, where nearly 700.000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, makes for an interesting study as there seem to be different political opinions, and in this likewise different discourses on the crisis.

I use the method of Fairclough's three dimensional model in analyzing the articles. I use this critical discourse analysis as it is an in-depth analysis that examines both the linguistic aspect and the social practice in a given material.

The theoretical background that frames my empirical findings is studies on genocide, with the emphasis on the field of critical genocide studies. I likewise use the theory on transitional justice. As I frame my research question on the notion of a potential genocide on the Rohingya, it is important to understand how genocide can be defined in legal as well as academic aspects, and how transitional justice might fit into this discourse that come to light through the articles. All this is examined and answered through the research question: *What are the similarities and differences between the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian?*

This thesis is likewise organized around working questions that build up the research question as these questions examine the discourses on the Rohingya crisis in the international community, with the focus on UN, and the discourses in respectively the Guardian and Daily China.

From the study I conclude that the discourse on the Rohingya crisis in the articles from the Guardian portray a darker reality, than that of the articles in China Daily. The discourses on the crisis in the four articles then likewise correspond to their respective countries discourse on the crisis. The UK indicating that the atrocities committed by the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw is similar to the act of genocide, whereas China seems reluctant in admitting this. Though the discourses seem quite different, there is likewise a similarity. The similar discourse is seen in the social practice in the articles, that indicates a belief in transitional justice. This belief is seen in the articles discourse on the Rohingya as the victim, and as people that should have certain rights, such as being able to return home to Myanmar.

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1. Introduction

For several years now, the crisis in the northern part of Rakhine in Myanmar has been a hot topic in the international community. The conflict between Muslim Rohingyas and Buddhist Rakhine, with the interfering of the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw has escalated into one of the largest refugee crises in the world in present day, where in 2017 nearly 700.000 Rohingyas fled to neighboring Bangladesh as they feared for their lives (Doctors without Borders: 2018). The crisis not only affects Myanmar but neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, and it calls on international assistance to help around 1 million people that now reside in the world's largest refugee resettlement, Cox Bazar in Bangladesh (Doctors without borders: 2018).

The ongoing political debate on the crisis is covered by the media as they inform about the reflections and opinions from political agencies such as various UN agencies and councils, and from humanitarian/relief organizations that operate in Cox Bazar. Though these agencies in many ways share the same opinion on the importance of interfering in the situation, it is with different viewpoints on how the situation should be handled, and likewise how much one should interfere.

One of these disagreements is whether or not the persecution of the Rohingyas should be considered as genocide or not. As genocide is an international crime where the persecutor should be held accountable for his actions and condemned by the International Criminal Court, this term seems to be used only in the most terrible cases. The UN has for now accused the Tatmadaw of committing acts of genocide on the Rohingya minority (United nations Human Rights Council: 2018). There is internal disagreement, though. The term genocide is for example favored by United Kingdom whereas the fellow member China is reluctant in using this term (Nichlos: 2018).

In this thesis, my aim is to look at how two newspapers; China Daily and the Guardian write about the crisis in Rakhine and their countries standpoint on this. I examine this by asking the following research question:

What are the similarities and differences between the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian?

Related to this research questions I will study these following working questions: 1) How can one in legal and academic aspects define genocide? 2) What discourses are used by the international community on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas? 3) What discourses does China Daily use on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas? 4) What discourses does the Guardian use on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?

The two newspapers have been chosen on their countries relationship with Myanmar. The United Kingdom as the former ruler in Myanmar (Burma), and China as having political and financial interest in Myanmar nowadays. The countries that are both permanent members of the UN Security Council makes for an interesting comparison as they in many ways are expected to work together on the issue in Myanmar, but in other ways have political differences, such as whether or not genocide has been committed on the Rohingyas.

During my studies I have resided in Myanmar for half a year. From that stay I came to understand that the discourse surrounding the Rohingya crisis was much different from the discourse that I have been used to read about in western media. This sparked my interest in examining how this crisis might be viewed differently.

In order to understand the discourse on the crisis in Rakhine in Daily China and the Guardian I use Fairclough's three-dimensional model. As part of the field of Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough uses his model to understand the relationship between a given discourse and a social practice through an in depth linguistic analysis of a given material (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). To use Fairclough's three-dimensional model then allows one to understand the connection between words, or discourses, and the understanding of a situation. How discourses creates an understanding of a given situation, but likewise how this situation is shaped by other social practices that likewise will have an outcome on the discourse. In order to understand the social practice that is present in these articles, I rely on Paolo de Grieff's theory of Transitional Justice (Paolo de Grieff: 2012).

To understand the discourses on a potential genocide on a minority I examine how one can in a legal and academic aspect define genocide, along with the international communities

responds to the Rohingya crisis. Here I focus on the United Kingdom's and China's respond to the crisis and a potential genocide, as they are the focus of the chosen articles in respectively the Guardian and China Daily. In the end of the thesis I discuss and conclude on these differences and similarities in the discourse surrounding the Rohingya crisis in the articles, and aim at highlighting how a crisis can be viewed from different angles.

2. Methodology

In this chapter I present my methodological approach. First of all, I will explain the relevance of the study, and further on how I have gained knowledge on the subject by introducing my empirical and theoretical material. On the basis of this, I present my research questions and working questions, and an explanation of my research design. Lastly I will list some limitations and clarify certain terms that are frequently used throughout the thesis.

2.1 Relevance of the study

This study is relevant for several reasons. First of all, the Rohingya Crisis is relevant for the Master Study of Global Refugee Studies as it deals with the international community's response to the displacement of a group. The crisis likewise has political and ethical questions that are relevant for the international community, and nowadays politics. The crisis has been visible in the media during the past years, and though media coverage do not indicate the seriousness of a given situation, it seems that not only the media, but political agencies and humanitarian organizations likewise see the need to provide aid and recognition for the Rohingyas. The aid is most often provided for the Rohingya that has fled the state of Rakhine into Bangladesh, whereas those still residing in Myanmar are a different matter. In this thesis, though I recognize that a group of Rohingyas still reside in Myanmar, and that they are likewise entitled to the same humanitarian and legal aid, my focus is on those who have fled to Bangladesh. The reason for this is that they have been the focus of the international community and the media.

The reason for choosing to analyze articles from two newspapers stems from the wish to study how the same topic might be portrayed differently. From my stay in Myanmar from August 2018 – January 2019 I came to know that the Rohingya crisis is often viewed quite differently in Myanmar, compared to how it is predominantly viewed in Denmark. This, one can argue, is partly due to how the discourse surrounding the topic is narrated in the media in Myanmar, compared to how it is narrated in Denmark. As a discourse is a “*certain way to talk about and understand the world (or fractions of the world)*” (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999: p9), we then often understand the world in the words that are used to describe it. Given that neither most Myanmarers, nor other nationalities have been first hand sources to the

crisis, the media has a large responsibility in creating a picture of the situation, for example on the affected people's experiences, and the graveness of the matter.

2.2 Empirical and theoretical material

In the thesis the aim is to look at how two newspapers, one from Europe and one from Asia, cover the media on the Rohingya crisis. The chosen online newspapers are China Daily, from China, and the Guardian, from the UK. I have chosen to focus on articles published in 2017-2019. I do this as it seems that the event in 2017, where approximately 700.000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh has sparked a greater international political interest in the situation (Doctors without Borders: 2018).

The two countries, China and the UK have been chosen as they are both permanent members of the UN Security Council. They are likewise chosen on the ground of their respective historical and present relationship with Myanmar. The UK as the former colonial ruler of Burma (Myanmar), and China as having a financial and political interest in Myanmar today (Narayanan: 2010). The two countries makes for an interesting comparison as well, as they in some ways are expected to work together on the issue in Rakhine, but in many aspects have political differences. The reason for choosing to examine newspaper articles that cover the countries interfering in the crisis, rather than examining UN reports and other papers published by political agencies that seems to come more directly from the source is for this reason: I find it interesting to see how a discourse on a potential genocide is portrayed to the public, e.g. the reader, through the media. In collecting my empirical data from UN reports solely, will not give me an understanding of how a crisis and in this a potential genocide is produced for the broader public. I naturally understand that the readers of the Guardian and China Daily are very different people, though what they have in common is the wish to gain knowledge on a topic in a readable, fast and somehow entertaining way. This is what a newspaper article provides. To read UN reports on meetings held in the various councils is something that these readers would be able to do, though one must assume is more limited to for example a nerdy thesis student as myself.

I examine two articles from each newspaper which describe their countries political interfering in the debate on the crisis in Rakhine and on the situation with the Rohingyas. The

amount of articles, in total four, has been chosen as a Critical Discourse Analysis demands a thoroughly read, and time is limited. I have used the qualitative method to find the given articles that I believe represent the overall discourse in the given newspaper. In order to do a Critical Discourse Analysis of the chosen articles I use the method of Fairclough's three-dimensional model as it is presented by Marianna Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips in their book '*Diskursanalyse - som teori og metode*' (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). This will be further explained in the subchapter Research design.

I draw my knowledge on the subject on the crisis in Rakhine and the situation with the Rohingyas from various books, academic articles, media articles and reports published by relief agencies/humanitarian organizations (Doctors Without Border, Save the Children et al., amongst others) and the United Nations. As I have resided in Myanmar in the period of August 2018 – January 2019 and interacted with the Myanmar people, I have likewise gained a larger knowledge on Myanmar and the local population. From my internship contact back in Denmark I was advised not to talk on the matter of the Rohingyas too much, at least in job related matters. As I was curious on the subject, I could not help myself in sometimes talking about this with the locals outside work, and even at work a few times. Here I realised that most Myanmar people had different views on the crisis than I had. Many did not believe the crisis was that terrible, it was blown out of proportion by the western media, and some would even laugh at the fact that some would call this a potential genocide. I only encountered very few that like me recognized that a genocide could have had taken place, and I must admit that as I was an intern in an organization that did humanitarian work, I was surprised by these opinions. This sparked my interest in examining how an event can be viewed differently, and how what we have been told, and in this aspect what we have read has a big impact on our opinion on the given matter.

I draw my knowledge on genocide and critical genocide studies from various academic articles and scholars such as Alexander Hinton and Douglas Irvin-Erickson, both scholars in the field of critical genocide studies. I use critical genocide studies as I believe it offers a broader, sociological explanation to genocide, than merely a legal one. Genocide, though is a legal term, and in order to understand the legal aspect of this and compare this to the theoretical term, I likewise draw on conventions such as '*The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*' and '*The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*'.

In the theoretical chapter I explain the theoretical conception of transitional justice as it is presented by Paulo de Grieff. Transitional justice that is a measure to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses committed towards individuals or groups, has not merely been discussed in the political and legal arena, but likewise in the academic field. In this thesis I use the theory to explain the social practice that becomes visible in the four chosen articles (de Grieff: 2012). I use de Grieff as he offers a clear understanding of what transitional justice is and how one can theorize on these measures. As de Grieff worked as Research Director at the International Center for Transitional justice in the establishment of the center in 2001, he is one of the first, and likewise a prominent scholar in this field (ICTJ: nd).

2.3 Research question

With the above in mind I have composed a research questions. The research question is:

What are the similarities and differences between the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian?

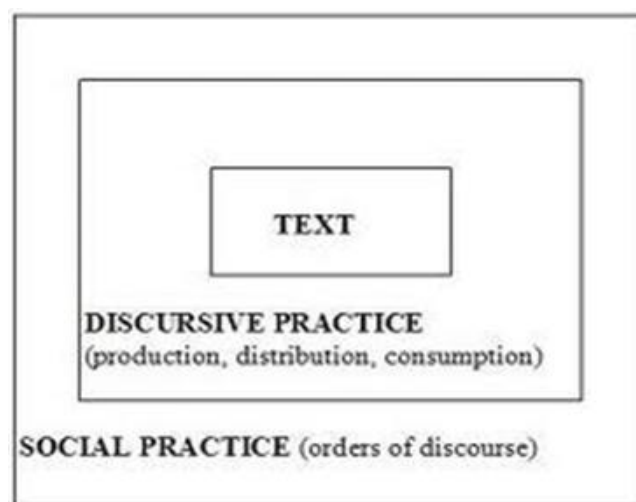
In examining and answering this question the aim is to get an understanding of how larger newspapers such as China Daily and The Guardian shape the understanding of the situation in Rakhine and the Rohingya crisis. What discourse do they use in describing, or choose not to describe, a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?

In order to answer the research question I am guided by the following working questions:

- 1) How can one in legal and academic aspects define genocide?
- 2) What discourses are used by the international community on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?
- 3) What discourses does China Daily use on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?
- 4) What discourses does the Guardian use on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?

2.4 Research design

I use the method of a Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse the given articles. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is chosen as it provides an in-depth analysis of a given text. It is likewise chosen on the fact that CDA combines text analysis with analysis of a social and societal analysis. As I expect that the articles symbolize a somewhat political standpoint, it is likewise important not only to look at the written language, but also in what context, or social practice the articles are written in. I use Fairclough's approach to CDA as it is a highly developed method in the field of communication, culture and society (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). One of the important aspects in CDA compared to other discourse analysis is that Fairclough believe that discourse respectively changes and reproduces knowledge, social relations and identity, amongst others, and at the same time it is shaped by other social practices and structures (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). Fairclough believes that language is power, and that language can bring change, though he likewise believes that we also need to look at in which social structures these are used in. In addition to this, In CDA we understand that a discourse reflects and actively contribute to a social and cultural change and that there is a connection between language and social practices (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999) Fairclough believes that every use of language is a communicative happening with three dimensions (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999).



Source: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Beauty-Product-Advertisements%3A-A-Critical-Discourse-Kaur-Arumugam/81eeb165262a5363fd0fe6d8ece4fb99fa896328/figure/0>

The text: The first dimension the text, is the given material that one analysis. This does not necessarily have to be a written text, but might as well be speech, visual material, or a combination of these. (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). Fairclough use various tools to analyse a given materials. Such indicators are metaphors, choice of words, grammar and so forth. In this thesis I will especially look at one of these tools; modality. The way one analysis modality is to look at the author's attitude towards a sentence. One should ask if the person signal a connection or a distanciation to the given topic (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). In analysing newspaper articles one is expected to find a certain type of modality.

As Jørgensen and Phillips writes the mass media often portray interpretations as if they were facts. They do this, as they use categorical modalities, and often choose to use objective and not subjective modalities. (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). In saying: "It's dangerous" compared to "we believe that it is dangerous", the sentence is portrayed as a fact, even though it does not have to be. In the sentence, and in the use of modalities the media promote and at the same time mirror its own authority (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999: p96).

The discursive practice: In the discursive practice one analyse how the text is produced and how it is consumed. One often takes a linguistic approach and identifies which discourse it draws on (interdiscursivity) and how the texts draws on other texts (intertextuality) (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). Interdiscursivity means articulating different discourses, and through this articulating there is a shift in the 'order of the discourse' as well as among them (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). Interdiscursivity is likewise a form of intertextuality. Intertextuality describes the factor that all communicative happenings draws on prior events, e.g. one can never avoid using words that are used before. Intertextuality likewise refers to that history has an influence on a given text, and that the text has an influence on history, as it draws on prior texts and in this sense contribute to historical development and change (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999).

The social practice: In the social practice one analyses how the text and the discursive practice is a part of a broader social practice. In conducting this analysis on the relationship between discursive practice and social practise one can find the questions to how this discourse might create change and ideological consequences, and likewise how discourse can be shaped by other social practices and structures (Jørgensen and Phillips:1999). It is likewise here that one examines how certain discourses create the understanding of power relations in

the society, meaning if the discourse reinforces unequal power relations or if it creates new relations (Jørgensen and Phillips).

In this thesis, I use Paulo de Grieff's theory of transitional justice as a way of analysing the social practice in the four chosen articles. I do so, as this article provides one with the understanding that these articles are highly political and ideological, and that transitional justice is recognizable in each four articles.

2.5 Limitations and strengths

First of all, even though I state that I have conducted a thoroughly research on the given articles in respectively China Daily and the Guardian, there are always the possibility that other articles could paint another picture of the given situation. As I only have had access to the online version of the newspapers, I do not know if other relevant articles, as they are printed in the hard copy newspapers could have been suitable for this study as well. In this I solely rely on the four articles, and will conclude on the basis of these. Secondly, one needs to understand the limitation of the chosen method CDA. As Jørgensen and Phillips mention, Fairclough does not offer a very clear way to understand how much social analysis one should apply, or what theories one should use. He does not offer a clear guidance into what theories are most suitable, or if there are some that are not (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). In addition to this, the question of subjective arrives. As there is no standardized approach to CDA, the analysis relies on the researcher. Different researchers would choose different theories, which then naturally lead to different findings.

Another limitation is the discourse position represented in this thesis. Even though one tries to be as impartial as one should as a researcher, there is always the fact that one has knowledge and certain political/personal opinions that might reflect subconsciously in the study. Moreover, the chosen materials from various relief/humanitarian agencies has a certain discourse, that reflects on my understanding of the situation in Rakhine. Had I gained my knowledge elsewhere the picture might have been another.

Even though I note that there are some limitations for the chosen method CDA, I likewise believe that there are strengths. One of these strengths is that CDA offers a linguistic analytical approach to an in-depth understanding of a material. It recognizes that we understand the world in the words, or discourses, that we use to describe it (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999).

Another strength is that CDA acknowledges that the researcher can never be politically neutral (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). This I believe is a valid point. I myself have been fully aware that my belief in a committed genocide on the Rohingyas must have affected my analysis in some way, though I have tried to be as neutral as possible.

2.6 Clarifying terms

There are terms or sentences that needs to be clarified. As the topic on the situation in Myanmar is not only scholarly, but to humanitarian concerns and highly politically discussed, it is important to clarify in what way the terms or sentences are used.

Crisis: In the thesis I often use the word crisis to explain the events that have happened in the state of Rakhine in recent years. I use the term crisis to explain a situation that has affected a society and groups of people negatively. In this regard, the event that I refer to as a crisis has fostered the lack of security in a society that has erupted in such a scale, that it has forced many hundreds of thousands to leave their country and flee into Bangladesh. One could also use the term conflict, which could also be an appropriate term to use in this context. The reason for using the word crisis and not conflict stems from the notion that for the Rohingyas that fled into Bangladesh, the conflict has turned into a crisis. The Rohingyas now find themselves in a situation as refugees. In addition to this the international community with political agencies and humanitarian/relief agencies likewise see this as a conflict turned into a crisis that not only affects the Roingyas and Myamar, but also affects countries such as Bangladesh that do not have the resources and capacity to house the refugees.

Myanmar vs. Burmese: In this thesis I use the official name for the country, Myanmar, rather than the former name Burma. Even though the name Myanmar was implemented by the military rule and it in this way may not seem appealing for many outsiders to use, the term Myanmar is in fact more including to the various ethnicities that belong to the country. This is in contrast to Burma which derives from ‘Barman’, indicating that Burma is a country for the majority Barman.

I use the word Burmese for those who belong to the majority Barman, and use other terms like Rakhine or Rohingyas for those who belong to these ethnicities. This do not indicate that these ethnicities do not belong to Myanmar in equal ways as the majority, though from my

stay in Myanmar I realised that the people in Myanmar are very aware of their own ethnicity, whether that is Burmese (Barman), Rakhine or any other ethnicities. Though one often uses the word Burmese in English when talking about the citizens of Myanmar, I will use the word Myanmarneese when talking about the citizens collectively.

The crisis in Rakhine: This sentence is used in order to take a more neutral approach to the situation in Myanmar. One will likewise notices how these sentences are used largely by Chinese representative in the UN and in the media, such as in the newspaper China Daily.

The Rohingya Crisis: This sentence is to some extent more biased as it indicates that the crisis has mostly affected the Rohingyas. This is likewise the discourse used surrounding the topic in larger parts of Western media. I use the given term, as it also indicates that the crisis surrounding the Rohingyas is not only to be found in Rakhine, but likewise in Bangladesh as the Rohingyas are now residing in the area of Cox Bazar. It then becomes a crisis that is not solely linked to Myanmar and the state of Rakhine, but likewise in the neighbouring country, as well as the international community.

3. Theoretical background

In this chapter I explain my selected theories. As the topic is on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas I examine theories on genocide, with the emphasis on the field of critical genocide studies that I believe provides one with a nuanced picture on the topic. In examining this, I use the working question: 1) How can one in legal and academic aspects define genocide? I likewise examine the theory of transitional justice which is used to explain the social practice in the analysis of the chosen articles. In order to understand the complexity of the crisis in Rakhine I present and discuss the situation, and more so I look at how the international community, with the emphasis on the UN Security Council has responded to this. In order to understand this I use the working question: 2) What discourses are used by the international community on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?

3.1 Genocide

The term genocide was invented by lawyer Raphael Lemkin who wrote about the concept in his paper 'Genocide' from 1944. Genocide is coined from the ancient Greek words of *genos* (clan or race) and *cide* (killing), meaning killing people on the basis of their belonging (Lemkin: 1946). In Lemkin's own words: "*Genocide is the crime of destroying national, racial or religious groups*" (Lemkin: 1946: p228). Lemkin wrote his article in the aftermath of World War II where millions of people were killed on the basis of their ethnicity, and he pledge for genocide to become an international crime, where the persecutors could be held accountable for their actions and condemned by the International Court. (Lemkin: 1946) Today, as since 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide has dealt with issues regarding genocide.

Genocide as a theoretical study emerged largely as the result of a sociological and legal debate about the adequacy of the Genocide Convention (Feierstein: 2014). Many scholars wondered if there were not more to the concept than what the convention describes. They wondered if groups that were persecuted and killed because of their political, sexual, gender, social or economic status, amongst others, should not just as well fall under the convention? According to Feierstein, to give a broader legal definition of genocide failed. Though a new term, that of crime against humanity was invented which applied to the Rome Statute of

International Crime Court (Feierstein: 2014) The concept seems much broader, as it describes an act deliberately committed as part of a systematic or widespread attack directed against any civilian or civilian groups (International Criminal Court: 2011). The attacks are such as enslavement, murder, deportation or forcible transfer of population, torture, rape, amongst others (International Criminal Court: 2011). In comparison to War Crimes which seem similar to this concept, crime against humanity can be carried out in peaceful times, where the prior concept is linked to war and conflict-affected areas. The three concepts of Genocide, War Crimes and Crime against Humanity are all written in the Rome Statute for International Criminal Court, they are international law where the perpetrators can and should be convicted for their crimes (International Criminal Court: 2011).

Another concept which seems comparable to these terms is that of Ethnic Cleansing. The term came into wide use in the 1990's with the conflict in former Yugoslavian, referring to the atrocities committed by Serbian Chetniks against Bosnians and Croats. Ethnic cleansing is the description of the systematic forced removal of an ethnic, racial or religious group, often with the intent to make the territory more homogeneous (Mann: 2004). Whereas the other three are legal terms, ethnic cleansing is not. In the sense that ethnic cleansing most often leads to either 1) murder or/and 2) the forcible transfer of a population, ethnic cleansing can be defined as an act under Crime against Humanity, which falls under the statute of both the international Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (Bassiouni: 2011)

In legal aspect, as well as the academic there is often the tendency to only talk about genocide where mass killings of a group have occurred. The most famous genocide in Europe, is that of the Jews in World War II, where around 6 million Jews lost their lives. The atrocities committed towards these has even got its own term; the Holocaust. For most there is no question about this being a case of genocide, 6 million people being killed because of ethnic/religious belonging by a powerful state make the evidence. What the world tend to forget though, is that during the same period, other groups such as the Romas, people with a handicap, homosexual, amongst others, likewise felt the rage of Hitler, in just as terrible manners (Moses: 2014). One can then wonder why it is that most Europeans know that Hitler target the Jews, but not everyone knows that he did the same to the Romas or the homosexuals? According to Irvin-Erikson et al. as they write about in their book 'Hidden Genocide – power, knowledge, memory', genocide is a political choice, the choice of bringing the case into light or not (Irvin-Erikson et al.: 2014). In this incident the case of

genocide in the 1940s Europe has certainly been brought into light, as it should, though it seems that there has been selected what should be brought into light, and what should not.

Another good example of a potential case of genocide, that has in many cases been hidden, forgotten and often denied as a genocide, is that of the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965-1966 (Melvin and Pohlman: 2018). According to Melvin and Pohlman these events, that some would claim killed up to 3 million people, has been highly neglected in academic research and writing. It simply does not seem as popular and important as those of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the genocide in Darfur, and so forth (Melvin and Pohlman: 2018). It seems that it has been neglected by international law and the western media as well. Here the case of one defining genocide as a political choice could apply. By killing Communists, Indonesia posted itself as a highly anti-communist nation, to the liking of the US and their allies that now saw the possibility in investment in the country. It is a hard accusation to claim that the Western world has chosen to look away from the events do to political interest, though in many ways it seems like this is the case.

3.2 Critical genocide studies

In this thesis I draw on Critical genocide studies. I do this, as this field offers a broader, sociological explanation to the topic, and not merely a legal one. It likewise dig deeper into the field, and take the approach on genocide in a new way. As mentioned we often think about genocide when mass killings are done by a stronger power, mostly a government has occurred, and not even always when that is the case. A reason why we do this is because the law on genocide is established around this understanding and because the media portray it like this. In academia there has likewise been the tendency to focus on the Holocaust as the prototype of genocide, putting other events in the periphery. When using the approach of critical genocide studies we then also break down our biased and traditional understanding of what Genocide is, and what events should be put into light.

Critical genocide studies claims that genocide should be viewed in a broader sense. The term critical genocide studies was first used by A. Dirk Moses in this essay “Towards a Theory of Critical Genocide Studies” from 2006 (Irvin-Erikson et al: 2014). It is a way to look critical into the field of genocide, as Alexander Hinton says: *“The goal is not to be critical in a*

negative sense but to consider, even as a canon becomes ensconced, what is said and unsaid, who has voice and who is silenced, and how such questions may be linked to issues of power and knowledge.”(Hinton: 2012: p4). A good example is that of the Native Americans and the potential genocide on these. Scholars in Critical genocide studies do not only ask in this case whether or not this should be categorized as a genocide, they ask why the US celebrated and acknowledge the attempt to exterminate Native Americans earlier on, only to deny it nowadays (Hinton: 2012). The reason for this could likewise lie in the light of politics.

According to critical genocide studies, one needs to look at how different actors talk about genocide. In this, a discourse analysis of the used words is in place. We need to dig deep and look at how it is said, not only the message behind it. Irvin-Erikson gives the example of a Colorado state senator's statement on the Native American Genocide. As the senator states that calling the U.S. treatment of American Indians “genocide” would diminish those in other countries who actually died at the hand of governments, he indicates that the death of Native Americans were unfortunate happenstance (Irvin-Erikson: 2014). It likewise seems that he compares this incident to other historical events that, according to the senator, was much worse. We then see the canonization of genocide, what genocides have been important to remember and to deal with, and what genocides have not. How can one even categorize genocide, and are there other terms that are more appropriate to use?

I draw on critical genocide studies as they challenge the traditional thinking of what genocide is, and how we should approach this. In the case of the persecution of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas in Rakhine, some would most likely claim that the events are more suitable to refer to as ethnic cleansing or crime against humanity. I claim that to use one term does not exclude the other. As stated in the Rome Statute for International Criminal Court: *“For the purpose of this Statute, “genocide” means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”* (International Criminal Court: 2011: p3). The destruction, in whole or in part, can be viewed as not only the killing of a group, but likewise the destruction of their identity and their livelihood in the given area (Feierstein: 2014). The Convention on Genocide and the Rome Statute then do not close the door, as Daniel Feierstein notes, on interpretations on genocide (Feierstein: 2014).

3.3 Transitional justice

The question of transitional justice is often addressed when atrocities are committed towards individuals/groups that are considered to be of human rights violations. Transitional justice refers to: “ (...) *the set of measures that can be implemented to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses, where “redressing the legacies” means, primarily, giving force to human rights norms that were systematically violated. A non-exhaustive list of these measures include criminal prosecutions, truth- telling, reparations, and institutional reform. Far from being elements of a random list, these measures are a part of transitional justice in virtue of sharing two mediate goals (providing recognition to victims and fostering civic trust) and two final goals contributing to reconciliation and to democratization*” (de Grief: 2012: p40).

According to Paulo De Grief as he is quoted above, when building up the theoretical concept of transitional justice, one needs to look at the goals for transitional justice which is; recognition, civic trust, reconciliation and democracy (de Grief: 2012).

Recognition should be seen as agreeing on who the victims are in a given context, and likewise to recognise these victims as right-bearers and ultimately citizens on the same level as their fellow countrymen. Promoting civic trust means to provide trust not only among citizens but more so on the citizens trust in the institutions that is a part of their political community. These goals then leads to the final goals; reconciliation of the population into a norm-based kind of trust, where fellow citizens trust each other, and likewise trust the institutions, and where the country aims at promoting democracy, that through a law based system will bring the vision of transitional justice into action (de Grief: 2012).

In Myanmar, one sees how democratization processes has taken its form in the latest years. This is seen, among others, with the election of Aung San Suu Kyi, and likewise on the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw's willingness to create nonviolent interaction with various ethnic militias across the country (Holliday: 2014). These are considered to be a part of transitional justice processes that aim at creating civic trust among the Myanmar people, recognise the various ethnic groups and reconcile these with the majority (the Barman), and in a broader picture create and strengthen democracy in the country.

Though transitional justice processes have occurred in Myanmar, it seemed that little has happened in the state of Rakhine. At least in regards on the subject of the Rohingya.

According to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ: 2017), the Rohingya militia group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has not been invited to negotiation meetings held between the tatmadaw and various militias across the country, as it has been seen with other ethnic militias across Myanmar (ICTJ: 2017). One reason for this might be that Rohingya is not recognized as being an ethnicity that is entitled to live in Myanmar. This is in contrast to the other 135 recognized ethnicities, that might not belong to the majority, but is considered by most to be just as rightful citizens in Myanmar as the ethnic majority, the Barman (Kigpen: 2013). On the contrary, the Rohingya is considered to be a migrant, one that has been denied citizenship, which likewise has deprived them from obtaining certain rights in Myanmar society (Kigpen: 2013). When speaking on the subject of transitional justice aiming at reconciliation and civic trust (de Grieff: 2012) it then might be a hard task, as the Rakhine people in Rakhine and many other citizens in Myanmar do not regard the Rohingyas as equal legal citizens. To implement transitional justice measures in Myanmar, it seems, is then a task for the international political community like the UN. As transitional justice is likewise seen in the belief that when severe harm has happened to a group there should be a conviction of the persecutors, one can assume that the Tatmadaw will never convict themselves, but that it has to be forced upon them by the outside political world. It then becomes important in this thesis to present and discuss the crisis in Rakhine and likewise to focus on how the international community respond to this crisis, as they in many ways holds the responsibility in persecuting, or chose not to persecute the Burmese military for their actions against a minority

3.4 The crisis in Rakhine

The state of Rakhine is situated in the western part of Myanmar, bordering Bangladesh. It is Myanmar's poorest state, where around 46 percent live under the poverty line (Bhatia et al: 2018). The largest ethnic group is the Rakhine, though before the crisis in 2012 and 2017 the Rohingya constituted one third of the population, making them the largest minority group in the state (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). Even though Rakhine is rich on natural resources little is done to take advantage of this, and the population remains in many cases poor, uneducated and landless (Advisory Commission on Rakhine State: 2017). In addition to this, parts of Rakhine has for many years been a conflicted area, receiving international attention.

According to Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as their former chairman, there are mainly three reasons why Rakhine is such a conflict-affected area. This is due to undevelopment, inter-conflict and lingering grievance forward the Myanmar central government (Advisory Commission on Rakhine State: 2017).

Rakhine is one of the Myanmar states that has and still fight for independence from the nation-state. This is done in violent battle, where organizations such as the Arakan Army (AA) and the Arakan Liberation Army (ALA) attacks military outpost or target central figures in Myanmar politics (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). In addition to this a more peaceful demonstration from parties like Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and Arakan National Party (ANP) indicates that there is a strong focus on Rakhine as a state aiming to detach itself from Myanmar. Furthermore the Rohingyas has established their own militant group, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) that fights for the rights of the Rohingyas in Rakhine (Ware and Laoutides: 2018).

The inter-conflict between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya is not new. According to Ware and Laoutides there have been several bigger crises between the two parties, which has resulted in mass exodus from Myanmar throughout the years (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). One to mention is the crises in 1978 where 200.000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, but other crises dates further back as well. When one looks at the crisis today it is then necessary to keep in mind, that these two groups have deeply historical grievances that time has not erased, one can on the contrary argue that these grievances have grown bigger as the years have gone by.

Though the conflict has many aspects, it is a conflict that is highly based on the question of ethnicity and the sense of belonging. According to Ware and Laoutides, as they write in their book *'Myanmar's 'Rohingya' Crisis'*, the crisis can be seen in the frame of the concept 'Ethnic security dilemma' (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). Ethnic security dilemma is an offspring from the classical concept of 'security dilemma' which is found in International Relations. In this, instead of states maximizing their military capability to increase their security towards other states as it is seen in the classical term, Ethnic Security Dilemma should be seen as the intra-state conflict between two different parties. Meaning different ethnicities maximizing their security, as they do not fully understand 'the other' or maybe fear them (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). In this crisis we see how a third party; the central

military of Myanmar that hold a great power in the country interfere in the atrocities, maybe likewise on the basis of 'the fear of the other', here the Muslim Rohingya. Though the Myanmar government claims that their citizens live peaceful together, whether they are Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or Christian, it is quite clear that some religious figures such as highly respected monks do misuse their power and use their public voice on hate speeches against especially Muslims (Callahan: 2018).

The Rohingyas, which people call them outside Myanmar, is in fact called by a different term in Myanmar. These are referred to as 'Bengalis', meaning those who have the Bengal ethnicity and in this sense belong to the area of Bengal. In using the word Bengali, one indicates that these are immigrants from the Bengal (area in Bangladesh/India) and in this disclaiming that they are Myanmar. Most of whom I talk to during my time in Myanmar did in fact have the narrative that the Rohingyas were migrants, and not Myanmar. One of the reasons to this narrative was that the Rohingyas for most parts had not mixed with other ethnicities living in Rakhine. There have been very few interethnic marriages and for many years the different ethnicities has for most parts lived in separate communities (UNHCR: 2018).

This division and lack of recognition of the Rohingyas as Myanmar is also seen in a legal aspect, where the Rohingya ethnicity is not recognized, even though the country has 135 recognized ethnicities (Kigpen: 2013). Myanmar is in fact a very multiethnic society, and even though the majority is Barma, the fact that one has another ethnicity, do not make them less Myanmar. This is my experience from talking to the locals in Yangon that in some cases would have another ethnicity than Barma, but did not regard themselves as any less belonging to Myanmar. On the same note, those who had the Barma ethnicity would not look at the others as belonging to the country or being less of a citizen. This it seems is a different matter when it comes to the Rohingyas.

As the Rohingyas ethnicity is not recognized legally, they do not have citizenship. In fact, since the Rohingyas do not have citizenship in other countries as well they contain, according to Ware and Laotides, the world's largest stateless community (Ware and Laotides: 2018). The Rohingyas it seems are stripped from basic human rights such as freedom of movement, the right to education and access to proper livelihood (Ware and Laotides: 2018). Being neglected the right to commute outside ones villages has likewise obtained these in endless

poverty, as they do not have the opportunity to get a higher education or a better job. In this manner it seems that the community has been highly marginalized, which often unfolds itself in the group fighting back, as it is seen in the various attacks from the militant group ARSA. As mentioned earlier the crisis in Rakhine is not new, though the recent events in 2012 and 2017 stand strong as the most horrific ones. This one can consider is due to the way the atrocities were carried out, and how many lives it has affected, or has been taken away.

The starting point to the crises in 2012 was the rape and murder of a Rakhine woman, and later the killing of ten Muslim men, that in fact turned out not to be Rohingyas but visitors from another part of Myanmar. It was clear though, that the intention had been to target Rohingyas, and answer back to the dreadful murder committed by three members of the Rohingya community (Kigpen: 2013). These incidents were the beginning of the crises that we see today. In the aftermath of the killings, homes, shops, mosques and monasteries were burned down. Further lives were lost on both sides, though data shows that the Rohingyas were the most affected community (Kigpen: 2013). Though one should not neglect what happened in 2012, it was in 2017 that the tension really culminated.

ARSA that was formed in 2013 on the basis of fighting for the rights of the Rohingyas attacked on 25 august 2017 police posts and army garrisons, killing around twelve security forces. The Myanmar central military, alongside Rakhine Police and armed civilians then launched a campaign of violence against villages with Rohingya residents. This they claimed was in the name of fighting terrorism. According to Doctors without Borders in the period of one month approximately 9,400 people lost their lives, women were raped and homes systematically burned down (Doctors without Borders: 2018). This led to the flight of around 700,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh and to one of the fastest refugee exoduses in modern history (Doctors without Borders: 2018).

3.5 The international community's response

The fact that it is one of the largest refugee exoduses in modern time has made the crisis a discussed topic in the international community, and a problem that various agencies see the need to solve. From various reports published by Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, UNHCR amongst others, one get a picture of how affected the Rohingya

community is, how many atrocities they have faced and how the conditions in the refugee camps in the area of Cox Bazar in Bangladesh often seems without hope for a brighter future (Doctors without borders: 2018, Save the Children 2018, UNHCR 2018). From a report by Doctors without borders 'No one was left – Death and Violence Against the Rohingya in Rakhine state, Myanmar', one gets an explicit picture into the crisis, seen from the perspectives of the Rohingyas, as they tell their horrific stories. It is the narrative of being raped, brutally beaten and watching their family members being killed, all in the most terrible matter thinkable (Doctors without Borders: 2018).

The discourse around the crisis in Rakhine is painting a picture of one of the most horrific crimes committed against an ethnic group. Organizations and agencies that work in the area of Cox Bazar and the media coverage of this are using strong words in explaining what has happened to the Rohingyas and in what terrible manners. The fact that most refer to the crisis as the 'Rohingya Crisis' indicates that these are the ones in focus, not the Rakhines or other groups residing in the conflict-affected area in Myanmar. Relief/humanitarian organizations have a great task in maintaining the refugee camp and providing the Rohingya a decent livelihood, though when it comes to putting pressure on the Myanmar government, and the Bangladeshi government for that matter, a stronger agency is needed.

Such agency is the UN Security Council, which see their responsibility in maintaining peace and security worldwide. The situation in Myanmar is no exception. The council held a meeting on the 28th of February 2019 regarding the situation in Myanmar, where the various member states listed their opinion on how it should be solved. From the report it seems that there was a broader consensus among most members that the crisis has most highly affected the Rohingya community, and that the focus should be on how to repatriate these, and create a sustainable, peaceful solution in Rakhine (United Nations Security Council: 2019). Since the members sitting in the UN Security Council comes from different countries (five permanent members from; the United Kingdom, China, Russia, France and the United Nation of America, and ten non-permanent members selected for two-year terms) do often have different political opinions on a given matter. As I make my analysis on two newspapers from respectively the United Kingdom and China, it is suitable to highlight the opinions raised by these. The statements from Ms. Pierce (UK) and Mr. Wu Haitao (China), as it is stated in the report, indicates that the two countries to some extent have different opinions on the crisis (United Nations Security Council: 2019). Though Pierce acknowledges that life has been lost

on both sides, and that a peaceful solution should be given to all residing in Rakhine, she focuses on the Rohingyas as the main concern. She states: *“We are very disappointed that more has not been possible and that there has not been more progress on getting the refugees back. That obviously includes creating the conditions in which the refugees feel able to go back, (...)*”(United Nations Security Council: 2012: p4). Throughout her speech it is clear that refugee should have the main focus, and that their well-being that should get the priority. The fact that Pierce uses the term Rohingya, indicate that she acknowledge them as a recognized ethnic group.

Mr. Wu Haitao brings towards his argument in a different way. For once he does not mention the Rohingyas by name, but use the phrase ‘the issue in Rakhine’ when talking on the subject: *“In addition, China has provided Bangladesh with ¥20 million in food aid. We will continue to do our part to contribute to the settlement of the issue of Rakhine state”* (United Nations Security Council: 2019: p6). It is interesting whereas the most representative use the term Rohingya, Wu Haitao choose not to. Another difference between the statements of the two parties is likewise that Pierce presents the issue as being of international concern, whereas Wu Haitao, even though he states that China do provide financial aid, does enhance that the main responsibility should be on Myanmar and Bangladesh, not the international community (United Nations Security Council: 2019). The reason for Wu Haitao’s speech and the tabled arguments could lie in the relationship between Myanmar and China. China that has financial and political interest in Myanmar do then pursue the problem in Myanmar in a different manner, as they wish to keep the good relationship that has been built between the two countries (Narayanan: 2010). According to Michelle Nichlos, China, backed up by Russia, likewise failed to stop a briefing in the UN Security Council that accused the Tatmadaw of Genocide on the Rohingyas (Nichlos: 2018). This may likewise indicate that China aims at keeping a good relation to Myanmar.

The UN’s response to the crisis in Rakhine seems somehow half-hearted. Due to different political interest; it seems that the process of naming it as genocide has been long going. The UN Human Rights Council published a report ‘Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar’, where they claim that the atrocities committed in Myanmar against the Rohingyas where the acts of genocide, alongside Crime against Humanity and War Crimes (United Nations Human Rights Council: 2018). According to the report *“The crimes in Rakhine State, and the manner in which they were perpetrated, are similar in*

nature, gravity and scope to those that have allowed genocidal intent to be established in other contexts” (United Nations Human Rights Council: 2018: p16). The report recommended likewise that various high positioned generals within the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw, should be investigated for genocide at the International Criminal Court (United Nations Human Rights Council: 2018). The UN has for now named the atrocities committed towards the Rohingya as a genocide, but it has likewise become clear that not all member states believe in this.

4. Analysis

In the analysis I examine the four chosen articles through Fairclough's three-dimensional model. In doing so the aim is to understand the discourse surrounding a potential genocide on the Rohingyas, and how this certain discourses can bring societal change and ideological consequences. At the same time to understand that a discourse is likewise build upon already existing social practices (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). First of all I will analyse the articles linguistically where I work with tools such as: modalities, transitivity and interactional control, as it is relevant in Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Furthermore, I will look at how the discursive practice is related to this, and in the end I will seek an understanding of the relationship between these practices and the social practice. When analysing the social practice one examines how the text and the discursive practice is a part of a broader social practice (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999) In order to analyse the social practice one need to incorporate other relevant theories, that is not necessarily related to text- or discursive practice (reference). I use the transitional justice theory explained by Paulo De Grieff, as it is described in the theoretical background section of this thesis. As one in the CDA likewise look at how power relations are displayed through discourses, the aim is likewise to look at how the power relation is portrayed in the four articles: if the articles reinforce the unequal power relations or if they create new social change (Jørgesen and Phillips: 1999).

As mentioned in the methodological chapter the text analysis is a tool to understand how different discourses are carried out. Tools such as metaphors, choice of words, grammar and so forth all contribute to understand how texts construct certain versions of reality, social identities and social relations (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). As likewise mentioned in the methodology chapter I will focus on finding modalities, as they are common in the media discourse. When doing a critical discourse analysis it is important to locate what kind of 'genre' and 'order of discourse' one is working with. A genre is the language use which is connected and constitutes a part of a certain social practice. In this case of the four articles it is the news genre. An 'order of discourse' is types of discourses which is used in a certain social domain (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). In doing a CDA of four articles, I analyse a media discourse.

When analysing the chosen articles, it is important to keep in mind, that the two newspapers are international, and in this sense aim at appealing to, not only their fellow citizens, but a

broader worldly audience. In this regard, what these newspapers write might be adapted to the international community, and they might likewise write about a given situation in a different manner than a national or local newspaper would.

In the following pages I will analyse the four articles. I will likewise compare the two articles from respectively China Daily and the Guardian as to understand the similarities and differences that lies in articles from the same newspaper. After this, a comparison of the articles from China Daily and the Guardian is given. This is done with the two working questions in mind, respectively: 3) What discourses does China Daily use on a potential genocide on the Rohingya, and 4) What discourses does the Guardian use on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas?

4.1 China Daily - Analysis of the two articles

China Daily: China Daily is a English-language newspaper in China. As it is written in English the target group is people from the international community. That can be Chinese residing in or outside China, along with foreigners residing in or outside China. In the newspapers own words it is: *“Committed to helping the world know more about China and the country's integration with the international community, China Daily is regarded as one of the country's most authoritative English media outlets and an important source of information on Chinese politics, economy, society and culture. It is often called the "Voice of China" or "Window to China." China Daily also serves as an important source for high-end Chinese readers who want to know more about the world”* (China Daily: nd: p1). The quote indicates the mission to inform the world about China and vice versa. According to the newspaper the target group is that of policymakers, diplomats, members of parliaments, staff-members of international organizations, students at university and so forth. China Daily is owned by the ruling Communist Party of China (China Daily: nd)

Analytical example 1: China Calls for further efforts towards early repatriation in Rakhine Issue (China Daily) 29-09-2018:

The article surrounds the issue in Rakhine and a possible repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar. It is a news article, where the purpose is to discuss and inform about a recent

event. The article describes a meeting held between the Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, Myanmar's Minister of the State Counselor's office, U Kyaw Tint Swe, and Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali (Xinhua: 2018).

The choice of words in this article that especially spring to mind when reading the article is that of 'The Rakhine Issue'. By using this term the author indicates that the issue is in Rakhine and that different parties (The Rakhine, the Burmese and the Rohingyas) is a part of this, e.g. one single group is not targeted. In fact it become visible that Wang Yi do not use the term Rohingya to describe the minority from Rakhine, as he says: "*The priority is to achieve the first repatriation of the people who fled from Rakhine state in Myanmar to Bangladesh*" (Xinhua: 2018: p2). The discourse in using 'the people', and not 'the Rohingyas' one can argue, indicates that it might not be common to use the term surrounding these people in China. At least that is what one can conclude when reading reports with Chinese ministers or articles from Daily China.

Another reason might be, that Wang Yi is talking to a Myanmar minister, who as mentioned before, do not recognize the Rohingyas as an ethnicity, in a legal or cultural sense (Kigpen: 2013). In this the minister might not wish to offend his Myanmar colleague.

One fact, that can contradict the statement of the Chinese not recognizing the refugees as having a certain Rohingya-ethnicity, is the caption underneath the photo in the article. One need to keep in mind when analysing an article, that a text analysis in the three-dimensional model might as well be of visual kind, or a mix between written and visual (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). We then need to analyse the text, the photo and the caption underneath the photo in the articles. The photo in this article displays an aerial overview of Hla Phoe Kaung, a transit camp for Rohingyas who at one point will repatriate to Myanmar (see appendix A). The aerial overview pictures a row of houses/tents in a green field surrounded by trees, mountains and rivers. In some way the picture seem somehow idyllic, and do not indicate that the houses/tents constitute a refugee camp. The photo makes for a neutral discourse surrounding the topic of the Rohingya crisis. It does not show any footage of the Rohingya that might spike the readers remorse nor the opposite towards the situation. The interesting aspect is the caption, that state that this is a repatriate camp for the Rohingya, though the term Rohingya is not mentioned in the rest of the article.

Secondly, as it is in a media discourse, we will often find some modalities. When Wang Yi states that “*The Rakhine issue involves a complicated history, and it’s proper resolution will be in the common interest of Myanmar and Bangladesh and benefit regional peace and stability*” (Xinhua: 2018: p1), he uses an objective modality, that indicates that what these parties will decide for the future of Rakhine will benefit the country and the region. By using will, instead of might, could, etc. he uses a modality. It is represented as the fact, not an assumption (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). Another categorical modality used by the journalist is that of the phrase “*The meeting was friendly, frank and constructive(..)*” (Xinhua: 2018: p2). This is a personal opinion, where the journalist use objective modalities in order to describe the meeting, that in the persons viewpoint was friendly, frank and constructive, but in other’s viewpoints might not have been.

It is likewise easy to see who sets the agenda in the article. To understand this, the tool of interactional control provides one with the notion of who sets the agenda in a given text (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). As the headline partly indicates, the article surrounds what was said by the Chinese minister at the meeting, and very little on the opinions of the ministers from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

When examining the discursive practice in the given article, one looks at how the writer understands, interprets and constructs reality (Jørgensen and Phillips). In this article one sees how the writer draws on interdiscursivity, as she/he mention ‘the Rakhine Issue’, but do not feel the need to mention what this in fact is (Xinhua: 2018). He/she then draws on existing intertextual chains, that indirectly informs the reader to draw on their own knowledge on ‘the Rakhine issue’. ‘The Rakhine issue’ though, one must assume generates different feelings and opinions, depending on who the reader is, and on their knowledge and opinion on the matter. The article is produced for those who are interested in China’s interfering in the situation, as well as the international political processes that often comes with such a crisis.

The social practice in the article is seen with the focus on repatriation of the Rohingya to Myanmar. One of the aims for transitional justice is the reconciliation between fellow countrymen, and the reconciliation of citizens and the state (de Grief: 2019). Repatriation of refugees is then a measure of this. When using the term citizens in this regard, I do not mean citizens in its legal terms, as Rohingyas are not considered as legal citizens in Myanmar, though for the Rohingyas that assumable have been living in Myanmar for many, many

decades, the feeling of belonging to the state of Rakhine and Myanmar must to some extent exist. In this regard I refer to these as citizens in the given country (Kigpen: 2013: p300).

The focus on repatriation in this article indicates a political, ideological standpoint and likewise a social practice. The standpoint is that it is preferable that refugees are sent back to their home country. In this context, though many in Myanmar do not regard the Rohingya as belonging to Myanmar, the standpoint is that the Rohingya should be able to go back to Myanmar and more specifically Rakhine. This is a measure of transitional justice as de Grief explains it, as it provides some justice for the refugees to be able to return back.

In the article one likewise see a certain power relations between two groups. On the one hand the Rohingya refugees, and on the other hand the governmental bodies that is represented in ministers from China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The discourse in the article then creates the understanding of the refugee as the inferior part, and the ministers as the superior. This is based on the ministers power in deciding what is best for the Rohingyas' future, without consulting the refugees.

Analytical example 2: Chinese aid helps Myanmar refugees (China Daily). 14-10-2017

The article surrounds the topic of Chinese aid towards the Rohingyas residing in the area of Cox Bazar in Bangladesh. The article is partly a personal story told by Rohingya refugees. In the article a refugee called Habiba tells about the environmental issues and how tents provided by China help her and her children in gaining a better life while residing in the refugee camp. According to the journalist Habiba has stated: *"We're doing so much better since we received the relief tent from China. Thankfully, we'll no longer get soaked by the rain and are far happier"* (Xinhua: 2017: p2). Another Rohingya women named Rama Khatun likewise states that; *"Now we have got a tent. The Chinese tents are very big and we can all live comfortably, my children included, which feels great"* (Xinhua: 2017: p2). From these two sentences it is emphasized that the tents have been provided by China, and that the women are aware of this. The writer has chosen to enhance a vocabulary that focus on how the tents are provided by the Chinese, and in this sense the interactional control falls on the aid from China, and China as the sender. The writer has likewise chosen to enhance how happy the refugees are about the new tents with sentences such as *"(..) are far happier"* (Xinhua: 2017: p2), and *"(..)which feels great"* (Xinhua: 2017:p2).

There are other words that likewise spring to mind when reading the article, words such as vital and exhausted all indicate strong feelings toward a given subject (Xinhua: 2017: p2). The refugees are exhausted, hence the tents becomes vital for their well-being. The journalist it seems, tries to play on the readers emotions, which a personal story from the Rohingyas themselves encapsulate quite well. There are likewise certain modalities in the article. As mentioned above the journalist uses the word vital in several sentences. The reader then get the impression that it is in fact very vital that the refugees receive these tents.

The photo in the article likewise tells a personal story (See appendix B). It is a photo of a young girl standing in piles of mud, with what seems to be women in the background. The caption underneath the photo says: '*A Rohingya refugee girl queues to receive food at a camp near Teknaf, Bangladesh, on Thursday*' (Xinhua: 2017: p1) The girl's facial expression is quite hard to read. She is not smiling, though she does not look sad. One does not get a lot of emotions out of the photo, it is a photo that people most likely would analyse differently, and likewise get different emotions from. That people would analyse this photo differently stems from how they understand the discourse surrounding refugees. As we know from the caption that this girl is considered to be a refugee, we automatically think about what atrocities she and her family might have faced, and how difficult life in the refugee camp might be. Was this photo taken in a village in Myanmar or Bangladesh where the women and children were queueing in front of the mosque, we would most likely understand this photo differently.

When examining the discursive practice one see how the writer has deliberately chosen to investigate how Chinese aid has helped the Rohingya. The topic of this article then partly becomes an informative piece about the Rohingya situation, but more so about Chinese aid. It paints a positive picture of do-gooder China, and the receiver then becomes less important. As China Daily is an international media, and the online article is distributed worldwide, one must assume that the article is consumed differently whether the reader is Chinese or not, and whether they believe in the benefit of international aid. The writer uses what Fairclough calls force, which indicates how the writer implement a certain attitude towards a given topic (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). This attitude is seen in the above quotes from the refugee women Habiba and Rama.

The social practice is seen in the recognition of what the Rohingyas have gone through and the recognition of them as the victims. This is likewise a measure of transitional justice,

where one of the aims is to recognize what has happened in a given situation, and who has suffered. (De Griefff: 2019: p42-48). The personal story of Habiba and Rama in this article creates a picture of wrongdoings committed towards them, wrongdoings that they are not to be blamed for. In this they become the ultimate victims. (Xinhua: 2017: p1-2). In transitional justice the recognition of the victims is not only on the matter of who has suffered the most, though. It is likewise the recognition that these victims are equal right-bearers and ultimately citizens, and that they deserve the same rights as their fellow citizens (de Griefff: 2012: p42-43). In the case of the Rohingyas who is residing in Cox Bazar and do not live among their fellow citizens in Rakhine, the recognition can be seen in the material from China. Providing aid for individuals indicates the belief that one is entitled to certain rights, such as the right to shelter. In aiding tents for the refugees at Cox Bazar, it then seems that the Chinese government does recognize the Rohingyas as right-bearers, at least when it comes to basic rights such as shelter from the rain.

The donation of tents from the Chinese state can likewise be viewed as a power statement, in that the superior Chinese state provide the aid that they believe is needed. In the relation between refugees and an agency, governmental or nongovernmental, the agency is the superior part that has the power to provide the refugees with material, or choose not to provide this. The refugee on the other hand, do not have the power to provide needed material for themselves, nor do they really have the power to dismiss this. They are in a vulnerable position where decisions related to their well-being are made by others.

Similarities and differences in the two articles from Daily China

By analysing the two articles, we see certain similarities. First of all, the articles concerns China's participation on the matter of the crisis in Rakhine. In both articles there is a positive picture of the country's interfering. When it comes to the collaboration with ministers from Myanmar and Bangladesh, and when it comes to the country aiding the Rohingya refugees residing in Cox Bazar.

As stated China Daily is owned by the governing Communist Party of China, and one can then assume that whatever goes in the press, or is published on the internet, is approved by the political party. China is, as most western countries will claim in most ways an undemocratic country. One of the reasons for this is that China does not seem to have a free press (Lorentzen: 2013). To have a free press is one of the crucial elements in a democracy,

as it according to Peter Lorentzen is: “*valued for its own sake but also instrumentally for its ability to increase the public accountability of political actors*” (Lorentzen: 2013: p402). One can then assume that what China Daily writes is the agenda of the Communist Party of China as well, and that the readers of China Daily do put their trust in the news that are published in this paper.

Another similarity is the discourse surrounding the situation in Rakhine, and how this is being portrayed. In the articles there is no use of the word genocide. In fact, little is said about what atrocities have been committed and in what scale these atrocities have been carried out. At the end of the article ‘*Chinese aid helps Myanmar refugees*’, one gets the impression that it was ARSA that made approximately 700.000 people flee to Bangladesh, and not the Tatmadaw, as it is stated: “*Extremists launched fresh attacks on police outposts in Myanmar’s Rakhine state on Aug 25, displacing residents from a number of areas in the Maungdaw district, to border areas with Bangladesh* (Xinhua: 2017: p3). In fact, the two articles in China Daily do not mention the Tatmadaw. They only mention the Rohingyas as the victims, though they do not touch upon who has put them in this situation.

This is a different approach than one hear from western humanitarian organization, UN or read in scholarly work, that all claim that the Tatmadaw have the largest responsibility in the exodus of the Rohingyas (Kigpen: 2013, Ware and Laoutides: 2018, Doctors without Borders: 2018, UNHCR 2018).

The similarity is likewise seen in the social practice. It becomes visible that the discourse in the articles has been affected by the political and ideological understanding that Rohingya should be recognized as being right-bearers, in that they should be able to return home to Rakhine. This is a measure of transitional justice.

The discourse has likewise been affected by the understanding that the Rohingyas are the ultimate victims, as the articles create the notion that the Rohingyas need aid from China. The discourse on the basis of this, then likewise create a power relation, where the international community, among those China, have the power in providing the aid that they feel most needed for the Rohingyas, and likewise discussing the possible repatriation of those.

The difference in the two articles lies in which emotions they try to generate. The article *China Calls for further efforts towards early repatriation in Rakhine issue* is a more informative news article, a type of report on the unofficial meeting between three ministers.

In this article there are few emotions, if any. (Xinhua: 2017). The article *Chinese aid helps Myanmar Refugees* plays more on emotions as it uses sentences such as vital relief tents and the Rohingya women being exhausted (Xinhua: 2017: p2) There is likewise a background story of how the refugees left their villages in the violence-ridden district of Rakhine, that most likely do generate emotions in most readers (Xinhua: 2017).

4.2 The Guardian - An analysis of the two articles

The Guardian (UK) The Guardian is an English-language newspaper from the United Kingdom. The Guardian covers international news for a global audience, meaning that the target group is people interested in global issues. It is then a newspaper for the British, and for those in the global community who have advanced English skills. According to the newspaper, it is “*one of the world’s leading news media organisations, creating honest, fearless journalism free from commercial or political interference since our foundation in 1821*”). (the Guardian: nd: p1)). The Guardian is owned by The Scott Trust (The Guardian: nd: p1).

Analytical example 3: UK says ‘unacceptable tragedy’ of the Rohingya crisis risks Myanmar progress (the Guardian). 28-09-2017

The article surrounds the topic of the crisis in Rakhine with the focus on the Rohingya, and how the Myanmar politicians, mentioning Aung San Suu Kyi has dealt poorly with the situation. The article not only offers an insight to how Myanmar and Bangladesh deals with the Rohingya crisis, but likewise Thailand, where trafficking of Rohingyas has occurred for years (Holmes and Wintour: 2017).

The article is a part of a media discourse and we see several categorical modalities. Such sentences as “*What we have seen in Rakhine in the past few weeks is an absolute and unacceptable tragedy, Mark Field, Britain's minister for Asia, said on Thursday after a visit to the country, (...)*”, indicates a personal opinion that is then displayed as a fact (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p1). The quote: “*Thailand urgently needs to set a regional example by adopting humane refugee policies*”(..) is comparable in its ability to portray a statement as fact (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p3).

In the article there are certain transitivity. When working with transitivity in a text, one look at how events and processes is connected, or lack a connection, with subjects and objects (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999). In this article we find both subjective and objective transitivity in the same sentences: *“Close to half a million Rohingya, a Muslim minority in majority-Buddhist Myanmar, have fled the army into Bangladesh. While the government says it is fighting an emergent “terrorist” group, the UN rights chief, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, has described it as a “textbook example” of ethnic cleansing”* (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p1-2). The subject, the Rohingya, and the object the military, is both mentioned in this sentences, as it is not only important who has been persecuted, but likewise who the prosecutor is.

In this article the interactional control is set by actors such as Britain’s minister for Asia and Amnesty International. The two actors produce a certain discourse surrounding the topic of the Rohingya crisis, the Rohingya minority as the great victims, and the military as the villain. In addition to this, Aung San Suu Kyi is likewise being discriminated for her lack of protection of the Rohingya, where according to the journalist *“Aung San Suu Kyi has disappointed human rights groups who looked to her as an icon in the fight against oppressive rule”* (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p3)

The photos in the article likewise plays on the Rohingya as the victims. One of the photos portray a group of Rohingya women, children and men, carrying goods across the water (see appendix C). From our knowledge on the Rohingya refugees we know that crossing the river has been fatal for some (Doctors Without Borders: 2018). Combined with one’s knowledge on this and the refugee’s facial expression the photo most likely has a powerful impact on the reader.

When examining the discursive practice one see how Holmes and Wintour use ‘force’ in order to implement a certain opinion. The opinion being that the situation in Rakhine is an unacceptable tragedy committed against the Rohingya. This ‘force’ is especially seen in the quotes from Mark Field above (Holmes and Wintour: 2017). As he is Britain’s minister for Asia, he will for some readers, automatically hold a position as a professional expert. In this, what he says will become more reliable for the consumer.

The social practice in this article is seen in the recognition of the Rohingya as the victim. It is likewise seen in the belief that the Rohingya should be able to return to Myanmar. Recognition of the victims and reconciliation in their home country is the belief that

individuals and groups are entitled to justice (de Grief: 2012: P42-48). The massive human-rights abuse committed towards the Rohingyas that Holmes and Wintour are portraying in their article, then creates the discourse of the need for transitional justice in Myanmar (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p1-4).

In the article Holmes and Wintour keep this hope for justice alive as they portray Britain's minister for Asia, Mark Field's opinion on state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and the given situation. He says: *"Aung San Suu Kyi did not share the views of some ministers who have claimed burned land becomes government land and remained the best hope for "ongoing democracy" in the country, despite failing to stop the violence against the Rohingya minority* (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p2). The hope for a more democratic processes in a given country and the civic trust in one another that a democracy should foster, is likewise two measures for transitional justice (de Grief: 2012: p42-48). The opinions on the need for transitional justice in Myanmar is then strong in this article, as it is seen from the viewpoint of the British minister Mark Field.

The power relation in this article can be seen in the British political interference in the crisis in Rakhine. The political interfering should be seen in Mark Field's criticism of the Myanmar government and their approach on the situation. As the writers state that Myanmar is a former British colony, they indicate that the UK once held the power in Myanmar (Holmes and Wintour: 2017). This power, though this is not present in today's Myanmar, to some extent might be present in the viewpoint of British ministers, that believes that they have the right to interfere in the situation in Myanmar. They assumable believe this, as they are a prominent member of the UN Security Council, though when the writers highlights that Myanmar is a ex-British colony they create a discourse on the UK having a special interest in Myanmar, as they once held the power in Myanmar from 1825-1948 (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). They put themselves in a power relation where they are entitled to dictate what is best for the future of the Rohingyas and for the future of Myanmar in general.

Analytical example 4: UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world power listening? (The guardian) 27-08-2018:

The article surrounds the topic of a potential genocide on the Rohingyas and the UK's lack of interfering on the subject. The writer, Simon Tisdall states, that even though the UK is a member of the UN Security Council and a founding member of the International Criminal

Court, little has been done to interfere in the situation in Myanmar (Tisdall: 2018). This he argues might be in the fear of upsetting China, which has political and financial interest in Myanmar (Tisdall: 2018).

As it is common in the media discourse (Jørgensen and Philips: 1999), Tisdall uses quite a few categorical modalities in order to portray the seriousness of the situation. “*The facts of the case are not in much doubt*” (Tisdall: 2018: p1) and in quoting Mark Farmaner “*It doesn't get worse than genocide*” (Tisdall: 2018: p4). He likewise uses more passive modalities in sentences like “*Perhaps the UN report will change minds in Whitehall*” (Tisdall: 2018: p3).

In the article we find the interactional control in the voice given to the director of Burma Campaign UK, Mark Farmaner and the UN report. The two parties agree on genocide committed towards the Rohingyas, and the article does not offer any counterpart to this. In this case Tisdall has set the agenda for the interactional control belonging to those who believe in genocide being committed, leaving out the voice of those who do not (Tisdall: 2018).

The photos in the article likewise portray the miserable state that the Rohingya are in (see appendix D). The first photo plays on the readers emotions, as an old woman with a sad facial expression, and the caption “*Rohingya refugee Dildar Begum, 70, has not heard from her son since she fled Myanmar a year ago and fears he has been killed*” proves the graveness of her circumstances (Tisdall: 2018:p1). Another photo shows the squalid conditions that the refugees lives in, in Bangladesh, a year after they fled Myanmar (see appendix 4) (Tisdall: 2018). Apart from a more sober photo of Aung San Suu Kyi and the head of Myanmar's military, General Min Aung Hlaing, it seems that the photos have been carefully chosen, as to give the impression of people in suffering. While examining transitivity in the article, we see how the Rohingya, in the choice of pictures are being stressed out as the most important actors, those one should be concern of and keep in mind (Tisdall: 2018). In examining transitivity throughout the article, one can see how the text is centered around the Rohingya situation, but is wrapped around a focus on how the UK is handling the situation.

When examining the discursive practice one finds force. The force is seen in the opinion on the Rohingya situation. Such sentences as “*that undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law*”, indicates a strong opinion from the writer that the consumer most likely will be affected by (Tisdall: 2018:p1). As the article is published in the Guardian, one sees how the focus is on British interfering in the situation in Rakhine. As this is an online

article, the reader has the opportunity to select different articles on the subject of the Rohingya via links put up in the article. This then becomes interdiscursivity as the article draws on other texts surrounding the same discourse (Jørgensen and Phillips: 1999).

The social practice in this article is seen in Tisdalls recognition of the Rohingya as the ultimate victim. As de Griefff states, recognition of the victim is the recognition that individuals are not only subjects of their own action, but likewise the objects of the action of others (de Griefff: 2010: p42). With the statement that the action committed towards the Rohingyas “..undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law” (Tisdall: 2018: p1), Tisdall indicates that the Rohingyas are not only subjects of their own actions, but the actions committed towards them is decided by other actors, in this case the Burmese Tatmadaw. As he states that the Tatdamaw has gang raped women, assaulted children and burned entire villages down, he indicates that these serious actions has been in the hands of the Burmese military, not the Rohingyas (Tisdall: 2018: p2).

The power relation, as it is likewise portrayed in the above article by Holmes and Wintour is seen in the UN and the respective countries’ willingness to address the situation in Myanmar. The author yet again indicates that the Rohingyas has been put in a position where they do not have the power to impact their own situation, but were the UN and countries such as the UK, China and the US on the contrary have. Especially the latter mentioned country the US, with president Donald Trump at the wheel is highlighted in this article as a country that does not interfere in the situation, maybe to an extent that the author believes that one should. By highlighting Trump, the author indicates that Trump, as the president of the US could have a great deal of power in this situation, which he chooses not to use (Tisdall: 2018).

Similarities and differences in the two articles from the Guardian:

By analysing the two articles we see certain similarities. One sees in both articles how the Rohingyas are portrayed as the ultimate victims who has suffered from atrocities at the hands of the Tatmadaw. The articles play on the readers emotions as they tell about how the Rohingyas has been tortured, murdered, been kept as sex slaves, among other things (Tisdall: 2018). They likewise show how the Rohingyas that have fled to Bangladesh still suffer, as many do not have access to clean water and food (Holmes and Wintour: 2017). There are no

facts that indicates that the Rohingyas has caused the crisis themselves, or that they are content with their current situation in Bangladesh.

The two articles paint a dark picture on the situation, putting the blame on the Tatmadaw. They represent the picture of the crisis that we know it in the Western world, through the media and through relief/humanitarian agencies in the field. To portray the Rohingya as the victims that needs justice, and that is as a group that has been victims of genocide, indicates the belief in transitional justice. As Tisdall writes in the article *UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world power listening?*, justice for groups such as the Rohingyas is not something that all countries automatically lobby for. In the article it becomes visible that the president of the US, Donald Trump do not care for transnational justice nor the system of the UN. That is at least the opinion of the author (Tisdall: 2018). As the US is a superpower, they do have a great saying in political matters that can bring transitional justice to countries in conflict, as well as to these countries citizens. The power relation in this matter do provide the UN and the respective countries that are permanent members of the UN Security Council a great deal of power, and the possibility to provide some kind of justice for the Rohingyas. In this the justice can be seen in whether these countries agree on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas, or whether they do not.

The difference in the two articles lies in their portrayal of UK's opinion and activeness on the situation. In the article '*UK says 'unacceptable tragedy' of the Rohingya crisis risks Myanmar progress*', one gets the impression that the UK have strong feelings towards the crisis and that they demand that "*Aung San Suu Kyi must end the violence and lift a blockade on Humanitarian aid*" (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p1). In the article '*UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world power listening?*' one on the other hand, gets the impression that even though the UK believe that it is an unacceptable tragedy, they have according to Tisdall "*refused to support calls for referring Myanmar to the court, arguing there is a lack of international consensus and backing the generals' bogus internal inquiry into Rakhine*" (Tisdall: 2018: p3).

Another difference in the two articles is the term being used to describe the atrocities committed towards the Rohingyas. In the article written by Holmes and Wintour one sees how the event is referred to as ethnic cleansing, as they cite UN rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, in describing the event as a "*Textbook example of ethnic cleansing*" (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p2). In the article written by Tisdall, which is a more recently published, he

use the terms such as genocide and crimes against humanity, as a UN report claims that these terms are relevant for this situation (Tisdall: 2018: p1-4) For some readers, using the term ethnic cleansing or genocide may not differ very much, though in many aspects choosing to highlight genocide, do indicate a situation that is utmost serious, and that call for legal assistance and persecution of the involved, more so than ethnic cleansing.

5. Discussion

As mentioned in the theoretical background genocide is a legal term that has implications for those involved. When agencies such as the UN Security Council accuses the Tatmadaw of committing genocide on the minority, one can then assume that it is not something that is said easily and without consequences. One of such consequences is that when being accused of committing genocide the prosecutor should stand trial and be convicted for their crimes under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime of Genocide: 1948). The accusation of genocide is then a serious matter that is not taken lightly on the political arena. As it is not taken lightly by political stakeholders, it likewise seems that the media coverage of this is sparse in naming an event an act of genocide. In the following I will discuss the similarities and differences in the discourse surrounding a potential genocide on the Rohingyas as it is stated in the research question: What are the similarities and differences between the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian?

5.1 Similarities between the discourses in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian:

By analysing the four articles, respectively two from China Daily and two from the Guardian, one does not find many similarities. One similarity though, between the two articles from the Guardian and one of the articles from China Daily, that of the article '*Chinese aid helps Myanmar refugees*' is that the writers uses the term Rohingya when referring to the ethnicity (Xinhua: 2017:, Tisdall: 2018:, Holmes and Wintour: 2017). From a western standpoint this might not seem surprising. The Rohingya as an ethnicity do not seem to be questioned in western political arena, in the media, or from various relief/humanitarian organizations, though this is not the common way to represent this minority group in Myanmar, nor it seems, is it common way to represent these within the political arena in China (UN Security Council: 2019, Xinhua: 2018).

From the literature used in this thesis one notice how most writers use the term Rohingya when referring to the minority, which is said to derive from the area of Bengal. That is scholarly work such as the book '*Myanmar's 'Rohingya' conflict*' by Anthony Ware and

Costas Laoutides, Reports from organizations such as Doctors without Borders, Save the Children (Doctors without Borders: 2018), Save the Children et al: 2018) and from agencies like the UN Security Council (UN Security Council: 2019). It is noticeable that far most of the literature used in this thesis is in fact literature from European countries and the US that often use the same discourse on the topic. The fact that I myself refer to the minority as Rohingya, I assume, derives from this discourse on the topic that I was used to prior to my stay in Myanmar. To my knowledge, most people in Myanmar refer to the minority group as the Bengali and not Rohinya, as they are not a recognized ethnicity. As mentioned in the theoretical background, the Rohingya is not one of the 135 recognized ethnicities in Myanmar, and as they do not have citizenship they are still by many viewed as illegal migrants from Bangladesh and India (Kigpen: 2013). To call them Bengali then indicates that they are immigrants from the Bengal, they do not belong to Myanmar in the same way that other, recognized ethnicities do. To use the term Rohingya in many ways then indicates if the minority group should be considered a part of Myanmar or not.

In this aspect it is interesting that a Chinese government owned newspaper chooses to use the term Rohingya, where so many other countrymen, such as their politicians in the UN do not (UN Security Council: 2019). From the security meeting held on the 28th of February 2019 regarding the situation in Myanmar, the representative, Mr. Wu Haitao speaks on the 'issue in Rakhine' and do not mention the term Rohingya, though he talks about them implicitly (UN Security Council: 2019: p6). Likewise does Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi when meeting with Myanmar's Minister of the State Counselor's office U Kyaw Tint Swe, and Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, for the purpose of discussing the situation in Rakine (Xinhua: 2018) In this regard it is hereby interesting that China Daily, that is owned by the ruling Communist Party of China (China Daily: nd: p1) allows the writer to refer to the group as Rohingya. One can consider if this is due to China Daily's international profile, where one can consider that the term Rohingya is better known. It would in this aspect have been interesting to see whether or not a Chinese language newspaper would use the same term, though due to lack of knowledge in the Chinese language this has naturally not been possible.

Another similarity that we find from the analysis is the belief in transitional justice. Transitional justice for the country of Myanmar, and the diverse ethnicities residing in the country. From the knowledge that one has on China's view on the events in Rakhine, and the

fact that they tried to stop a UN Security Council meeting on the briefing on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas, it is surprising that one find the Chinese government aiming at transitional justice (Niclos: 2018). This is surprising as one does not regard China as a country aiming for justice, when it comes to their own citizens (this is e.g. seen in human rights violations), or for others in nearby or distant countries (Human Rights Watch: nd). It is likewise surprising that taking their well-established relationship with Myanmar into consideration, that they do provide aid for the Rohingyas and recognize these as individuals entitled to rights, such as the right to shelter, whereas their ally Myanmar do not.

That the UK aim at transitional justice processes for the Rohingya seems less surprising. From the meeting held by the UN security Council on the 28th of February 2019, as it is explained in the section the international community's response in this thesis, it becomes clear that the UK aim at repatriating the refugees into Myanmar, and that they feel disappointed that this has not been possible. They likewise feel disappointed that little has been done to create the conditions where the refugees feel that they are able to go back to Rakhine, which has not been the case so far (United Nations Security Council: 2012: p4). All this indicate the wish to create transitional justice that will especially benefit the Rohingyas. One can only speculate why the UK takes the side of the Rohingyas. Maybe it is a matter of colonial guilt. That the British in the time of British Burma did not treat the population very well, among them the various different ethnicities, that they most likely stirred a lot of tension between. Or maybe they feel a certain connection to the Rohingyas, as they back in colonial times did rely heavily on Muslim Indians (one must assume that some have been Rohingyas) in agricultural expansionism and civil services in Myanmar (Burma) (Ware and Laoutides: 2018). No matter the reason the British government seem to keep in mind the goals for transitional justice.

As indicated in the analysis the most common goals of transitional justice which is seen in these four articles is the goal for recognition and reconciliation (de Gieff: 2012). The recognition lies in the belief that atrocities have happened to the Rohingyas that finds themselves in a victim position, a position where human rights assaults have forced them to flee their country, and where they need the recognition from others to live a free life. The reconciliation is seen in the repatriation of Rohingya refugees into Myanmar, and the hope and belief that that the two ethnicities, the Rakhine and the Rohingya, will be able to be reconciled as citizens. This might seem like a hard, almost impossible task when having the long and troubled history between the two groups in mind (Ware and Laoutides: 2018),

though one can only work actively for this to happen, as the transitional justice measures provides an example of (de Grief: 2012).

5.2 Differences between the discourses in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian:

The difference in the four articles from respectively China Daily and the Guardian is seen in the discourse surrounding the Rohingya crisis. As from the in-depth analysis that Fairclough's three dimensional model provides, it is clear that the articles use different choice of words to describe the events. As where the Guardian uses sentences such as '*unacceptable tragedy*', '*the centre of the bloodshed*' (Holmes and Wintour:2017: p1) and '*gross human rights violations and abuses*' (Tisdall: 2017: p1), China Daily does not use phrases that generates the same kind of emotions in the reader as the writer uses words such as '*complicated*' (Xinhua: 2018: p2) and '*suffering*' (Xinhua: 2017). The fact that the articles in the Guardian use the term Rohingya crisis, whereas the articles in China Daily use the term the issue in Rakhine, likewise indicate that the Guardian creates a discourse with the emphasis on that the Rohingya is the most affected party, whereas China Daily regards this as an issue in Rakhine, that then provides the understanding of an area of conflict, where other groups are affected as well. It is quite interesting as well how China Daily in the article '*Chinese aid helps Myanmar Refugee*', uses sentences such as "*(..) are far happier*" (Xinhua: 2017: p2) and "*(..) which feels great*" (Xinhua: 2017:p2), sentences that generates the understanding that it might not be such a bad thing to reside in a refugee camp, as long as one has the essential necessities. These necessities as the tents, according to writer, have made the refugees feel great. This one can mention is a sharp contradiction to the picture of the refugee's state of mind, that the articles in the Guardian paint.

The biggest difference in the articles is how they do or do not speak of a potential genocide. In the two articles from Daily China one does not stumble upon the word genocide, or even implication of this. It hereby seems from the two China Daily articles that the question of genocide on a minority is not something that the Chinese government finds to be an appropriate formulation (Xinhua: 2017, Xinhua 2018). This is backed up by the fact that when discussing a potential genocide on the Rohingyas was up for debate in the UN Security Council, the Chinese government tried to stop such a meeting, though failed to do so (Nichlos: 2018). Though the article '*Chinese aid helps Myanmar refugees*' do generate some

emotions as it narrates personal stories from female Rohingya refugees and use words such as ‘suffering’ and ‘tough’ (Xinhua: 2017: p2), they do so in a more subtle way and do not bring the Tatmadaw’s actions towards the Rohingyas into questioning. Articles in the Guardian speak of a different manner.

In the Guardian article: ‘*UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world powers listening?*’ (Tisdall: 2018) the evidence is in the title. The UN is of the understanding that what has happened to the Rohingya in Rakhine in 2017 is in fact genocide, and the writer, Simon Tisdall seems to agree on this (Tisdall: 2018). When putting it up against the other article from the Guardian entitled ‘*UK says ‘unacceptable tragedy’ of Rohingya crisis risks Myanmar progress*’ (Holmes and Wintour: 2017), one sees how there in the latter article is no mention of genocide, though they do quote UN rights chief Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein in saying that this is a “*Textbook example of ethnic cleansing*” (Holmes and Wintour: 2017: p2). The two articles might seem similar in their view on the Rohingya as the great victim, and their disappointment in state-counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi’, though when it comes to the belief in a potential genocide they differ.

5.3 Genocide or “just” a crisis?

From the four articles, and from extended research on the media coverage of the crisis in Rakhine, one finds that the term genocide has been sparsely used in both contexts. Even when the UN claimed the attack against the Rohingyas should be considered genocide, the all-around discourse on the crisis does not indicate genocide as much as one should expect. When I chose to shape my research question around the notion of a potential genocide, I did so as I believe that this *is* genocide. As the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states that genocide is the: “*intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group*” (United Nation: 1948: p1) I believe that the evidence is quite clear; Killing innocent people because of their belonging, causing hundreds of thousands of people to flee as they feared for their lives indicate a genocide (Doctors without Borders: 2018).

But the purpose of this thesis is naturally not to my personal opinion on the matter. It is the purpose of showing how an event or a series of events is often viewed differently, and how the words used constitute an understanding of these events. This is also why it is relevant to

discuss whether calling this crisis genocide or not even changes the understanding of the crisis in Rakhine and the seriousness of this.

Historically genocide is something that has been greatly brought into light with e.g. the Holocaust on the Jews in World War II (Moses: 2014) and likewise greatly hidden with, to mention one, the genocide in Indonesia in 1965-1966 (Melvin and Pohlman: 2018). To claim something to be genocide gives justice to the victims as those who have committed the crime against them must be persecuted for their wrongdoings. It likewise recognizes the victims as right-bearers and equal citizens in their respective countries, and to some extent their rights exceed the rights of those who have committed the crime against them, as the international political community dictates who in a legal aspect is the victim, and who is the perpetrator.

To address an event as genocide can then be considered to be the ultimate justice for the victim and it likewise give them more legal power than they most likely have had before. In this aspect, the political community like the intergovernmental organization that UN is has an enormous power in giving the justice that these victims need, or the power not to.

In the case of the Rohingya crisis one sees how the UN half-hearted makes the attempt to accuse the Tatmadaw of genocide, though they have not yet acted on these accusations. The potential genocide on the Rohingya is not hidden in this sense, as the atrocities committed towards these have been greatly portrayed in the media. Though I state that the events are not hidden, it becomes quite visible from analysing the articles that the Guardian puts most events out in the open, whereas China Daily somehow cover up the atrocities and more so focus on China's goodwill towards people in need.

It is also quite visible from my search on articles, that there has been written and published a great deal more articles on the Rohingya crisis in the Guardian than in China Daily. In this one can argue that in some way the government owned newspaper China Daily hides the potential genocide as they, in the words that they use, do not indicate that genocide has happened, whereas the Guardian, that is owned by the company Scott Trust Limited does. This draw ones attention to a question asked by Scholar Alexander Hinton in his academic article 'Critical Genocide Studies' from 2012. The question is this: "*What does "genocide" mean in different societies where genocide is taking or has taken place?*" (Hinton: 2012: p9). In this context the question is not what genocide mean in Myanmar, but rather what genocide means in China and in the UK in regards to what has taken place in Myanmar.

As mentioned earlier, China is accused of various human rights violations. One example, that might seem similar to the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar, is China's mistreatment of the Muslim ethnic minority Uighurs (Withnall: 2019). Members of the UN have accused the Chinese government of forcing the Uighurs into 'political camps for indoctrination' and the UN believes that children have been forcibly separated from their parents (Nebehay: 2018). In this it seems that the Chinese government perform a, what one can call a cultural genocide on the Uighurs. Though one can likewise discuss if this act should be considered to be merely cultural. According to the genocide convention, in article 2 (e): "*Forcible transferring children from the group to another group*", is in fact a measure of genocide (United Nations: 1948: p1). In this way, forcible removing children from their parents, and putting them into camps, might then be considered to constitute a genocide. When we look at the field of critical genocide studies we likewise understand that this could be a case of genocide. In the retrospect of this, the Chinese government may not view the crisis in Rakhine as genocide, and they may believe that the Myanmar government is entitled to treat the Rohingya residing in their country as they please. Another reason could be that the Chinese government does not wish to attract attention to certain aspects of their own treatment of ethnic minorities residing in China.

In contrast to this, even though the UK has a spotted past in the colonial times in Myanmar (Burma), it seems that there are no atrocities committed towards minorities in the UK on the same scale as in China. This is not to say that the British government have not done any harm in newer times (one example is the British interfering in conflicts such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iran, where innocent people have lost their lives as well). Though having the fear of sounding Eurocentric one must admit that the mistreatment of their own population do not seem as brutal as in China. For the UK to talk of a genocide on the Rohingyas one must assume is then something that is much easier, as they most likely feel that they have nothing to hide. At least when it comes to the treatment, or mistreatment of their own citizens or people residing in the country. In addition to this, the European countries have a history of housing one of the largest genocides, the Holocaust on the Jews. In this matter genocide, whether it has been inside or outside Europe is something that has been widely discussed in the European political arena since the 1940s.

To conclude, when atrocities committed towards a group are considered by the UN to be genocide and the discourse is based on this in the media, it has the potential to change the

readers understanding of a certain event. As the scenario of genocide provides the public with the idea of who the victims are, and who the persecutors are, and likewise provides one with the knowledge that this is of an out most serious matter, that needs to be addressed by the world's most powerful political agency.

5.4 Further research

The importance of this research is to be found in the understanding that there are often two sides to the same coin and how this understanding is shaped by a certain discourse. The research has then been on outsiders view on the crisis in Rakhine, rather than those involved. For further research one can take an ethnographic research method approach, and investigate through conversations and interviews, how the Rohingya themselves view the crisis and their new position in the world, and in the area of Cox's Bazar. One could likewise take another approach and do ethnographic research on the view on the crisis from those still residing in Rakhine that would be Rakhines and Rohingyas equally, as to understand how a society changes in the aftermath of a large-scaled crisis. This is naturally a research that might be difficult to carry out, as one can expect Cox Bazar to have regulations on visitors in the area, and as Rakhine likewise has restrictions on foreigners travelling within the state, and especially in the conflict-affected areas. In addition to this, one could likewise research on Myanmar citizens' understanding of the crisis, as it might be easier to get access to such data, though this again only allows one to examine the conflict from the outside.

6. Conclusion

The aim with this thesis has been to examine the discourses on the crisis in Rakhine in 2017, seen through newspaper articles in the Guardian and China Daily. In this, the objective has been to examine how the British and the Chinese newspaper articles with their chosen discourses shape the understanding of the given situation, how they are similar and how they differ.

The aim of this thesis has then been to answer the research question: **What are the similarities and differences between the discourses on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas in the articles from China Daily and the Guardian?**

The research question is answered by using the method of Fairclough's three dimensional model. Relevant theories, such as the theory on Transitional Justice and the field of critical genocide studies has been implemented and discussed, along with information on the Rohingya crisis. This has been done to understand the context of a potential genocide on the Rohingya.

Genocide is a term that seems to be used sparsely in the international political community. The field of critical genocide studies reminds one that through history, atrocities committed towards groups that could and should be regarded as genocide has in some cases been hidden or forgotten, and dismissed as an international political concern. One can only wonder if this will be the case of the Rohingya.

For now the Rohingya crisis is still in clear memory. By the UN, humanitarian/relief agencies that work in Cox Bazar and by the media that from time to time write on the matter. The UN has accused responsible figure at the Tatmadaw of committing an act of genocide, though little has been done yet to persecute these (UN: 2018). The disagreement between the member countries in the correctness in naming this genocide, and how one should interfere in the crisis might be the reason for this. In this thesis I have looked at the UK's and China's position in this and how such opinions comes to light in the chosen newspaper articles.

From analysing the four chosen articles it becomes clear that only one article, that of '*UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world power listening*' name the atrocities an act of genocide. The article '*UK says 'unacceptable tragedy' of the Rohingya crisis risks Myanmar*

progress' touch upon the term ethnic cleansing, and the two articles from China Daily do not mention any of these, nor any related terms.

It becomes visible by using the method of Fairclough's analytical model, that the articles in the Guardian paint a dark picture on the Rohingya crisis, whereas the articles in China Daily paint a more neutral one.

The articles differ greatly in their discourse. To mention a clear example they differ in if, and how much the Tatmadaw is accountable for these atrocities. The Guardian mentions the Tatmadaw greatly, whereas China Daily does not mention the Burmese military at all. In the case of genocide one should believe that it is equally important to name the victim and the persecutor to get the correct picture of the situation. The assumption that one gets from reading the articles in China Daily is that the discourse surrounding the Rohingya crisis in China is much different than that of the UK's. The discourses likewise correspond to their respective country's political standpoint on this, where the UK indicates a committed genocide, and China seems reluctant in admitting this.

Though the articles seem different in their discourse on a potential genocide on the Rohingyas and their political standpoint on this, there are similarities. One of the great similarities is how the articles create a discourse that indicates the belief in the practice of transitional justice. The four articles create the understanding that the Rohingyas should be recognized as victims in a hopeless situation, and that they are entitled to certain rights, and the prospect of repatriating into Myanmar. Though there is no mentioning of genocide in the China Daily articles, the newspaper articles still create the discourse of an ethnic minority that finds themselves in a crisis that needs to be solved, and with China as a component. The articles in the Guardian as they write about genocide, and the related term ethnic cleansing, do even more so.

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Appendix A:

China calls for further efforts towards early repatriation in Rakhine issue

Xinhua | Updated: 2018-09-29 09:29



An aerial view of Hla Phoe Khaung transit camp for Rohingya who decide to return back from Bangladesh, is seen in Maungdaw, Rakhine state, Myanmar, Sept 20, 2018.[Photo/Agencies]

UNITED NATIONS - An unofficial meeting involving government ministers from China, Myanmar and Bangladesh here at the UN headquarters on Thursday produced three points of consensus on the Rakhine issue.

The meeting involved Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Myanmar's Minister of the State Counselor's Office U Kyaw Tint Swe, and Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was invited to the meeting.

Wang said that an earlier unofficial meeting involving the three ministers in June in Beijing had produced a four-point principled consensus on properly resolving the Rakhine issue.

The Rakhine issue involves a complicated history, and its proper resolution will be in the common interests of Myanmar and Bangladesh and benefit regional peace and stability, Wang said.

Wang said that the Rakhine issue is essentially an issue involving Myanmar and Bangladesh, and China is not in support of approaches that tend to complicate and escalate the issue or make it more international.

China hopes that Myanmar and Bangladesh finds solutions to the problems through friendly consultations and by making efforts to bring their stance closer to each other. The priority is to achieve the first repatriation of the people who fled from Rakhine state in Myanmar to Bangladesh, Wang said.

China, as a friendly neighbor, is willing to continue helping facilitate the communication and consultations between Myanmar and Bangladesh, Wang said.

The senior Chinese diplomat said he sees a constructive role for the international community, including the United Nations, in resolving the Rakhine issue. China thinks highly of the efforts made by the UN institutions and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, he said.

The meeting was friendly, frank and constructive and produced three points of consensus.

Myanmar and Bangladesh share the consensus that the Rakhine issue should be resolved through friendly consultations.

Bangladesh said it is prepared to repatriate the first group of displaced persons from Myanmar's western Rakhine state who fled to Bangladesh, while Myanmar said it is prepared to receive them.

Myanmar and Bangladesh agree on holding 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.

Appendix B:

Chinese aid helps Myanmar refugees

Xinhua | Updated: 2017-10-14 07:29 [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [+](#)

Half a million Rohingyas flee country due to fresh violence



A Rohingya refugee girl queues to receive food at a camp near Teknaf, Bangladesh, on Thursday. JORGE SILVA/REUTERS

DHAKA — Habiba narrowly escaped violence in Myanmar and managed to flee to Bangladesh, leaving all of her belongings behind in her motherland. She left her home in a village in the violence-ridden district of Rakhine, in western Myanmar, which borders Bangladesh, on Sept 30, after her husband was killed along with scores of others.

Habiba, who uses a single name, is one of more than half a million Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh after fresh violence erupted in August.

After coming to Bangladesh, Habiba said she and her children have been surviving under the open skies.

She said that even in torrential rain, she could not find a place to keep her children from getting drenched.

Habiba and her children's suffering, however, has been eased as she is one of the thousands of refugees to receive the vital relief tents sent by China for the Rohingya last week.

With support from Bangladesh Army personnel, Habiba's tent has already been set up in a camp in Cox's Bazar district near the border.

An exhausted Habiba, while resting in her tent in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp recently, said how relieved she was.

"We're doing so much better since we received the relief tent from China. Thankfully, we'll no longer get soaked by the rain and are far happier," she said.

"The tent from China has become a wonderful new home for us."

Rama Khatun is another lucky woman who was allocated a Chinese relief tent.

Khatun, who came to Bangladesh from the violence-plagued Rakhine state, said life had been tough for the past couple of days, but things had changed for the better.

"Now we have got a tent. The Chinese tents are very big and we can all live comfortably, my children included, which feels great," she said.

Officials said hundreds of tents have already been built at a new refugee camp in the Cox's Bazar district.

The Chinese relief tents will be able to accommodate tens of thousands of people, the officials said.

Military personnel have been busy putting up the Chinese tents and extending relief efforts to the Rohingyas.

China last week also sent vital relief materials for the Rohingya. A second Chinese cargo plane carrying relief supplies for the Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh's southeastern Chittagong region on Thursday. This followed the first shipment which arrived from China on Oct 4.

The relief supplies included about 2,000 tents and 3,000 blankets.

Extremists launched fresh attacks on police outposts in Myanmar's Rakhine state on Aug 25, displacing residents from a number of areas in the Maungtaw district, to border areas with Bangladesh.

Appendix C:

UK says 'unacceptable tragedy' of Rohingya crisis risks Myanmar progress

This article is more than 1 year old

United Nations security council will meet on Thursday to discuss escalating tensions in Rakhine and fate of hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees

Oliver Holmes, *South-east Asia correspondent*, and Patrick Wintour

Thu 28 Sep 2017 06.40 BST Last modified on Thu 28 Sep 2017 10.35 BST



Rohingya refugees wait to receive aid in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photograph: Cathal Mcnaughton/Reuters

The UK has warned Myanmar that the Rohingya crisis is an “unacceptable tragedy” and Aung San Suu Kyi’s government must end the violence and lift a blockade on humanitarian aid.

“What we have seen in Rakhine in the past few weeks is an absolute and unacceptable tragedy,” Mark Field, Britain’s minister for Asia, said on Thursday after a visit to the country, where he met with Aung San Suu Kyi and visited western Rakhine state, the centre of the bloodshed.

“We need the violence to stop and all those who have fled to be able to return to their homes quickly and safely,” he said. “Burma has taken great strides forward in recent years. But the ongoing violence and humanitarian crisis in Rakhine risks derailing that progress,” he added of the ex-British colony.

Close to half a million Rohingya, a Muslim minority in majority-Buddhist Myanmar, have fled the army into Bangladesh. While the government says it is fighting an emergent “terrorist” group, the UN rights chief, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, has described it as a “textbook example” of ethnic cleansing.

Q&A

Who are the Rohingya?

Show

Field said Aung San Suu Kyi had given him assurances those who had fled their homes would be able to return across the border. “The proof will be in the pudding, and whether she will allow those who wish to return to do so,” he later told the BBC. “There are now hundreds of thousands of Rohingya on the Bangladeshi side of the border and there is a big question mark just how many will feel confident enough with the security implications on what is happening in the country to return.”

He said Aung San Suu Kyi did not share the views of some ministers who have claimed burned land becomes government land and remained the best hope for “ongoing democracy” in the country, despite failing to stop the violence against the Rohingya minority.

“She finds herself treading fine line between the international criticism that we have seen in the past six weeks, but also public opinion in Burma that remains very strongly anti-Rohingya,” he said. “What would be calamitous essentially is for it to fall back into a military dictatorship. She is a 71 year old lady. She is perhaps not entirely comfortable emoting. She is not someone prone to the political and public relations that we are all used to ... but she is increasingly aware that much needs to be done.”

[United Nations](#) secretary-general António Guterres will brief the UN security council on the crisis later on Thursday in New York. Guterres has sent a letter to the council to express concern about the “humanitarian catastrophe” unfolding in Myanmar.

The latest campaign, the deadliest so far, ramped up after the army launched a huge counter-offensive in retribution for [guerrilla-style ambushes on 25 August by a Rohingya militant group](#). Satellite imagery shows more than 200 Rohingya villages have since been burned.



Myanmar: satellite imagery confirms Rohingya village of Tula Toli razed

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As Myanmar does not allow unfettered access to the conflict zone, it is impossible to corroborate how many people have died. The army has rebuffed accusations of war crimes and points to attacks by “extremist terrorists” against Buddhists and Hindus.

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On Wednesday, the government brought some reporters to an area in northern Rakhine where a [mass graves of Hindus](#), including many women and children, were exhumed this week. Villagers [said](#) black-clad attackers had killed more than 100 people. Requests for access to hundreds of Muslim villages have mostly been denied.

The roughly 1.1 million Rohingya have suffered decades of discrimination in Myanmar, where they not granted citizenship.

Desperate Rohingya have for years paid people smugglers to get them out of the country, often resulting in deaths at sea or [exploitation when they are locked up for ransom](#) by the criminals they trusted to deliver them to Thailand and Malaysia.

Thailand is facing mounting calls to stop its policy to push the migrant boats back out to sea. A 2015 Thai crackdown led to ships full of people being [stranded at sea](#), and there are concerns that the recent crisis will lead to a resurgence.

“Thailand urgently needs to set a regional example by adopting humane refugee policies,” said Audrey Gaughran from Amnesty International. “Instead of callously repelling people fleeing unimaginable horrors, the Thai government should ensure safe passage for those seeking international protection in Thailand.”



Who are the Rohingya and what is happening in Myanmar?

[Read more](#)

Aung San Suu Kyi has disappointed human rights groups who looked to her as an icon in the fight against oppressive rule. The Nobel peace prize winner spent 15 years under house arrest and won a landslide election in 2015, seen as a huge victory for democratic reform in the country.

The recent violence has shocked governments that ardently supported her, including the UK, and there are concerns for the civilians who have arrived – many with bullet wounds – in Bangladesh.

Oxfam has warned that close to 70% of the nearly 480,000 Rohingya refugees are without adequate shelter and half have no safe drinking water. The international agency launched an urgent appeal for more than £5m after heavy rains and floods in camps have left people facing extreme hardship.

“Oxfam is witnessing an unprecedented number of refugees arriving into Bangladesh in a very short period of time,” it said. “Tens of thousands don’t have food or clean water. If they are very lucky they have some plastic sheeting to take shelter under – but most of the time families are huddled under sarongs.”

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report.

Appendix D:

UN tells of Myanmar genocide but are world powers listening?

This article is more than 8 months old

Failure to act would not just let the generals off the hook - it could spell the end of the ICC

Simon Tisdall

Mon 27 Aug 2018 13.27 BST Last modified on Mon 28 Jan 2019 17.29 GMT



Rohingya refugee Dildar Begum, 70, has not heard from her son since she fled Myanmar a year ago and fears he has been killed. Photograph: Altaf Qadri/AP

The [UN report on violence inflicted on Rohingya Muslims](#) and other minorities by Myanmar's security forces is damning, but whether the guilty will ever face justice is open to serious question. Much now depends on the willingness of the UK and other veto-wielding UN security council members to forcefully pursue the [allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity](#).

The facts of the case are not in much doubt. Investigators found patterns of gross human rights violations and abuses committed in Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states that "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law", Monday's report said. They include murder, torture, sexual slavery, extermination and forced deportation – meaning ethnic cleansing.

Enough talk. Let's have action on Rohingya massacres

Jan Figel and Benedict Rogers

[Read more](#)

The army's claim to be fighting a large terrorist insurgency was effectively dismissed. "Military necessity would never justify killing indiscriminately, gang raping women, assaulting children, and burning entire villages. The Tatmadaw's [army's] tactics are consistently and grossly disproportionate to actual security threats, especially in Rakhine state, but also in northern [Myanmar](#)," the report said.

While horrifying, much of what the report records of events in Rakhine last year, when 700,000 Rohingya fled across the border to Bangladesh, is not new. Nor is its strong criticism of Myanmar's nominal leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. What is new is the official conclusion that sufficient grounds exist "to warrant the investigation of senior officials ... so that a competent court can determine their liability for genocide".



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Aung San Suu Kyi and the head of Myanmar's military, General Min Aung Hlaing.
Photograph: Hein Htet/EPA

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The international criminal court, founded in 1998, is the obvious choice to prosecute the army generals named by the report. Alternatively, a special UN tribunal could be created, as happened in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. But both courses of action rely on the security council's political willingness to act, and that appears lacking.

One reason is China's resistance to punishing the Myanmar regime, with which it has extensive investment, trade and energy links. Beijing has long opposed outside – meaning western – intervention in countries it considers part of its back yard. Diplomats suspect a concerted move to refer Myanmar to the ICC, which must be agreed by the security council, would draw a Chinese veto.

The US this month imposed unilateral economic sanctions on Myanmar's security forces, but despite the large-scale human suffering, Myanmar – like Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan – does not appear to register on Donald Trump's political radar. Unlike Barack Obama, Trump has shown no interest in advancing democratic reform there.

Play Video

5:56

'They slaughtered our people': Rohingya refugees on Myanmar's brutal crackdown - video

Trump is also struggling to induce China to back his North Korea sanctions while simultaneously waging a trade war on Beijing. He is unlikely to risk further problems. In any case, Trump is no fan of the UN system or of transnational justice in general.

Like China and Russia, which also advocates non-interference when it suits, the US is not a state party to the ICC. The UK, in contrast, is a founding member. It is also the former colonial power, and the lead country on Myanmar at the security council. To date, however,

Britain has refused to support calls for referring Myanmar to the court, arguing there is a lack of international consensus and backing the generals' bogus internal inquiry into Rakhine.

I am a Rohingya refugee: we will become like animals if we stay in these camps

Noor Ilyas in Jamtoli refugee camp, southern Bangladesh

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Perhaps the UN report will change minds in Whitehall. Or it may be that worries about upsetting China, or appearing weak on the world stage, or sheer inertia will discourage firm British action. Campaigners called on Monday for the prime minister, Theresa May, to take the lead.



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Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees still live in squalid conditions in Bangladesh after fleeing Myanmar a year ago. Photograph: Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters

“It is simply not credible for the British government to claim it supports justice and accountability and then refuse to support referring Burma to the ICC, which was specifically set up for cases like this,” said Mark Farmaner of [Burma Campaign UK](#). “It doesn’t get worse than genocide.”

Given the gravity of the allegations, the international response may prove a key test for global law enforcement. The ICC already has a credibility problem. Sudan’s president, Omar al-Bashir, continues to behave with impunity, defying genocide and other ICC charges brought against him in 2009-10.

A failure by leading UN states to act collectively and decisively in Myanmar not only potentially lets the generals off the hook. It could spell the end for the whole idea of extra-territorial, transnational justice.