When States Turn on Their People

Explaining Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar and Sudan

Chris Pence

Senior Thesis in Political Science
Advised by Professor Matthew Incantalupo
Haverford College

April 20, 2018

Table of Contents

Introduction

The current refugee crisis of Burmese Rohingya is a shockingly violent modern example of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Myanmar's military. It brings new attention to the question of why a government would violently expel an ethnic group from its territory. By comparing the case of Myanmar with the well-documented case of ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2003-4, this thesis presents a theory of conditions that lead governments to commit ethnic cleansing on their own populations.

The cases of ethnic cleansing in Sudan (2003-4) and Myanmar (2017) were orchestrated by their governments and led to massive violence against and displacement of specific ethnic groups. Both were responses to attacks against the government by rebel groups in peripheral regions with long histories of ethnic conflict (Beech 2017; Crilly 2010). In Darfur, as many as 400,000 were killed and 2.5 million displaced (Crilly 2010). The case of Myanmar is quite recent to make accurate estimates for the number killed, but MSF surveys suggest at least 6,700 were killed "in the most conservative estimations" (Médecins Sans Frontieres 2017). According to satellite images, 354 villages have been burned, and over 647,000 have fled to camps in Bangladesh since August 2017 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018; Human Rights Watch 2017). The Sudanese government used militias of Arab ethnic groups to carry out much of the violent campaign which targeted black Africans (Flint and De Waal 2008) while in Myanmar the army led the violence against the largely Muslim Rohingya ethnic group, with only limited support from militias of other ethnic groups, mainly Buddhists (Rowlatt 2017). In both cases, the perpetrators used torture and rape as weapons of war. Civilians, including women, children and the elderly, were not spared from the violence.

The next section summarizes relevant literature on ethnic cleansing. It first addresses theories of ethnic conflict, noting convergence among some scholars that such conflict is most often incited by political elites – "ethnic entrepreneurship" – rather than by "primordial" explanations that see conflict as inevitable due to the content or history of the differences between groups. This focuses our attention in the two cases here on how government and ethnic elites used their power to incite conflict and violence, ultimately leading to ethnic cleansing. The section then discusses studies and theories on the relationship between democratization and ethnic cleansing, particularly of interest to the case of Myanmar which is undergoing a (far from complete) democratic transition. I note convergence among some scholars that democratization often leads to greater incentives for ethnic entrepreneurship, which in turn leads to increased ethnic conflict.

The third and fourth sections give more detailed background on the cases of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and Sudan. These sections attempt to trace the growth and change in ethnic identity and conflict, and follow the elite action that influenced ethnic conflict and ultimately led the governments to commit ethnic cleansing.

The fifth section presents a novel theory of government-led ethnic cleansing that attempts to explain in more detail the circumstances that lead governments to ethnically cleanse their own people. The theory finds two necessary but insufficient conditions for ethnic cleansing: a socially-constructed definition of the nation that excludes an ethnic group, and a perception on the part of the government that the ethnic group poses a threat to its rule. The theory also presents three contributory variables that increase the likelihood of ethnic cleansing: authoritarian rule or unconsolidated democracy, a history of military rule, and a weak state. Finally, the theory suggests that colonialism leads to the contributory variables in the country

2

even long after it gains independence, putting countries with a history as a colonial holding at greater risk for ethnic cleansing.

The sixth section offers evidence from the two cases to support the various parts of the theory, finding substantial evidence for all aspects except for the impact democratization has on the cases. Neither case has strong enough democratic institutions to know whether the opinions of the populous had a significant impact on the decisions made by political elites, and neither has strong liberal norms of personal rights. Thus, any assertion for what might have occurred with stronger democratic institutions would be conjecture. The seventh section concludes with a review of the key findings, limitations of the study, implications of the findings, and areas for future research. I suggest that efforts to prevent ethnic cleansing should pay particular attention to ethnic conflict in states with weak democratic institutions, histories of military rule and/or weak states. I also propose that such efforts should work to reduce these three factors in countries at risk for ethnic violence.

The reader should note that I refer to these conflicts as examples of ethnic cleansing, not genocide. I choose to call them ethnic cleansing because while there is debate on whether they represent cases of genocide (see Straus (2005) for the case of Sudan, and Kristof (2017) and Rowlatt (2017) for the case of Myanmar), there is broad consensus that they are cases of ethnic cleansing. If pressed, I would argue that the ethnic cleansing in Sudan was indeed genocide, while Myanmar's was not, simply based on the number of civilians killed. Genocide or not, the violent expulsion of an ethnic group is morally reprehensible and the international community should do more to prevent it.

Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar

On August 25th, 2017, thousands of fighters from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, an anti-government rebel group, attacked Myanmar's security forces in the western state of Rakhine and killed 12 members of the security forces (Beech 2017). The military responded by embarking on a scorched-earth campaign of textbook ethnic cleansing. Interviews with refugees that have fled to neighboring Bangladesh document shocking accounts of "government soldiers stabbing babies, cutting off boys' heads, gang-raping girls, shooting 40-millimeter grenades into houses, burning entire families to death, and rounding up dozens of unarmed male villagers and summarily executing them." (Gettleman 2017)

While foreign aid workers and journalists cannot access the areas affected, satellite images reveal 354 villages burned, corroborating stories that suggest the purpose of the campaign is to wipe out entire Rohingya communities and make return nearly impossible (Human Rights Watch 2017). The UN estimates that 615,500 refugees have fled the country to Bangladesh (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018). According to surveys of refugees conducted by MSF in December, at least 6,700 were killed "in the most conservative estimations" (Médecins Sans Frontieres 2017). In mid-October, when 582,000 had already arrived, aid workers believed the flow of refugees was slowing down because the army was simply running out of villages to burn (*The Economist* 2017). Most of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh will not return for some time, if ever.

Despite the morally deplorable nature of the military campaign, some Burmese civilians have joined public demonstrations encouraging the government to draw an even harder line on Rohingya by not allowing them to return. Hundreds of hardline Buddhists protested in Sittwe, the state capital of Rakhine, urging the government not to follow through on its pledge to allow

the Rohingya to return after the ethnic cleansing (The Associated Press 2017). Clearly there is significant popular support for the expulsion of Rohingya. But this animosity did not develop "naturally." As I discuss in a later section on the background of Myanmar's ethnic cleansing, elites in the government and Buddhist clergy were integral to the formation of popular animosity against Rohingya.

Ethnic Cleansing in Sudan

In the Darfur region of Sudan, three ethnic groups united in 2003 to form a formidable rebellion. Three black African ethnic groups, the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa, formed the Darfur Liberation Front in response to economic marginalization by the central government, rising Arab supremacist forces, and the lack of representation in politics (Natsios 2012). They posed a serious threat to the weak Sudanese military, winning thirty-four of the thirty-eight battles with the military between February and October 2003 (ibid.).

In the context of the decades-long civil war with the rebellion in south Sudan (which would eventually lead to partition), this rebellion posed a greater threat than it may have otherwise. Elites worried the Darfur rebels may be working with those from the south (Flint and De Waal 2008), and the military could spare few forces that were already struggling to make military gains in the south. So, the government decided to respond with a military strategy based on arming ethnic-based militias of Arab fighters (ibid.).

These militias were 'Janjaweed' (literally 'Devils on Horseback'): Arab militias which had roots in the traditional role of defending the livestock of the largely nomadic Arab communities (Natsios 2012). The Sudanese government armed these fighters and supported their attacks with airstrikes, often bombing a village immediately before a Janjaweed raid (Straus 2005). The Janjaweed directed their violence along ethnic lines, targeting non-Arab (i.e. black African) villages. Their campaign was brutally violent and didn't spare civilians, with many black African Darfurians made victims of rape and torture. Indeed, the targeting of civilians was a calculated strategy: "Khartoum's strategy seems to be to punish the rebels' presumed base of support – civilians – so as to prevent future rebel recruitment" (Straus 2005, 127). The ethnic cleansing of 2003-4 left 400,000 dead and 2.5 million displaced (Crilly 2010).

There was much debate by international observers over whether the campaign constituted a genocide, with the US Congress voted to label it a genocide in July 2004 (Straus 2005). And yet, the international response to the ethnic cleansing in Darfur was to effectively turn a blind eye. The countries and organizations involved in the peace process between the North and South of Sudan decided to focus on the north-south conflict rather than pressure Khartoum on the conflict in Darfur at the same time, fearing doing so would harm the peace process. (Johnson 2011)

Literature Review

This section grounds the present study with a summary of relevant scholarly literature. The theories and empirical studies presented here help to inform the analysis of the two cases and influenced the development of my own theory. First, I review theories of ethnic conflict, and then I turn to scholarship on the relationship between democratization and ethnic conflict.

Theory of Ethnic Conflict

Scholars have long asked why some differences between groups are more politically-salient than others. Some theories emphasize the content of the differences (e.g. Caselli and Coleman 2013). Others emphasize the historical context of the groups (e.g. Laitin 1986 as cited by Posner 2004). But many theories also point to the importance of elite influence in ethnic conflict (Posner 2004; Wimmer 2008). Wimmer (2008) theorizes that elite political strategies are central to the making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries. He suggests that individual actors decide whether to adopt a strategy that either builds up or downplays ethnic division. Actors make these decisions based on the institutional order, distribution of power, and political networks of the national context. For Wimmer it is largely political actors and the campaign strategy or policies they implement that determine ethnic division.

In an illustrative case study, Posner (2004) shows how Wimmer's theory can look in practice. In this example, the relative size of the groups for democratic coalition-building in a natural experiment that controls for most aspects of content and historical context, suggesting that ethnic conflict can be designed by political actors. Posner examines two ethnic groups that are both divided by the Zambia-Malawi border, which was drawn rather arbitrarily by colonizers,

and finds the country context to have a large impact. In Zambia the differences between the two groups are not politically salient and there is little tension between them, while on the Malawi side there is both tension and political salience. He argues that the difference was caused by the different political landscapes of the two countries. In Malawi, coalition-building incentives led politicians to capitalize on the two ethnic identities for political gain. Posner argues it is this elite ethnic entrepreneurship that has inflamed ethnic tensions in Malawi relative to Zambia, tracing the cause to the relative sizes of the ethnic groups and their usefulness in democratic coalition-building. Posner's case suggests that ethnic conflict is not predetermined by group-level traits and histories, but can be created (or resolved) by elites for political reasons.

To understand ethnic cleansing, we must explore not just how ethnic division is formed and changed, but how ethnic division can sow violent conflict. Scholars have used statistical approaches to ask whether proxies related to ethnicity are correlated with higher levels of violence at the country level. Fearon and Laitin (2003) use a proxy for ethnic diversity and find no correlation with civil violence after controlling for per-capita income in the period of 1945-1999. They conclude poverty, political instability, rough terrain and large populations contribute to violence, not "ethnic or religious characteristics."

However, this method has been criticized for the simplistic proxy it used for ethnicity. Wimmer et al. (2009) argue that ethnic diversity is too vague a variable. They instead identify three types of "ethnopolitical configurations of power" that they show effectively predict conflict. They find that armed rebellions are more likely when large portions of the population are excluded on an ethnic basis, that when power is shared among many elite groups in a segmented state violent infighting is more likely and that new and incohesive states are more likely to have secessionist movements.

Also important to ethnic conflict, and whether it results in mass violence, is the great political upheavals of revolution and war. Melson (1992) compares the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide and presents a theory connecting revolution, war and genocide. Revolution leads to a need to define the nation because they "place in question the political identity of the community itself" and "provide the structural opportunities for ideological vanguards to come to power and to impose their views on society" (18). The new definition of the nation will exclude some groups who either opposed the revolution or whose "identities cannot be made to fit" into the new political community, and who may later face repression or genocide (19). Revolution can also lead to war, and if war comes shortly afterward, it leads to feelings of vulnerability that cause the government to fear that excluded groups are colluding with enemies and must be expelled or massacred. War can also give governments the broad independence and authority that allow repression and violence against their own people. Yet Melson is quick to note that revolution doesn't always result in genocide, and genocide does not always require revolution.

In an important critique to the study of ethnicity in general, Brubaker (2004) points out that much scholarship assumes ethnicity to be a phenomenon of social groups, without carefully defining the concept of group. Brubaker cautions not to assume the ethnicities ascribed to portions of societies, often from above through census practices, are relevant to all members of that ethnic "group." Further, ethnic groups generally don't act like groups in any meaningful sense of the word. Membership of an ethnic group is generally more of a spectrum than a binary, and the boundaries of the group change over time. Moreover, ethnic groups rarely exhibit high levels of coordination, and mutual affinity for members of one's ethnic group is far from guaranteed. Membership in ethnic groups is, for many people, far from their most important identity. Considered this way, we can ask different and potentially more useful questions, such as

what makes "groupiness" increase or decrease. He suggests that often it is not mass uprisings or "ethnic awakenings" that increase the groupiness of ethnic groups, but ethnic entrepreneurship by elites and formal organizations. This view of ethnicity is helpful in the present research. Following Brubaker's critique, I emphasize in the cases of Sudan and Myanmar how the identities of ethnic groups in the country were created and how they change over time.

Ethnic Conflict in New Democracies

Of particular interest in the case of Myanmar is how democratization changes relationships among ethnic groups, and between new democratic governments and ethnic minorities. While the consolidation of democracy tends to reduce ethnic conflict in the long run, the rocky transition of the democratization process itself actually increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict (Snyder 2000). As Skalnik Leff (1999) argues, regime change, especially democratization, "opens a window of opportunity to renegotiate the constitutional framework for ethnonational relations" (206).

Two competing theories explain why democratization causes nationalist conflict (Snyder 2000). The first is that popular nationalist rivalries already exist in societies but are latent until democratization offers an arena for these rivalries to play out. For example, Roeder (1999) examines the new democracies born after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 to draw conclusions about ethnic conflict in new democracies. He argues that democracy and peace go hand-in-hand with national self-determination, and that when nations are forced together in new democracies (taking Yugoslavia as an example), it weakens the chances of survival of democracy. Taking a rather defeatist approach to peace between ethnic groups in a single nation,

he suggests that policy-makers should tend toward dividing sovereignty amongst different nations (or ethnic groups) rather than trying to unite them.

Snyder argues that a second mechanism is at play: that elites in democratizing countries seize upon nationalism for their own political ends, using it as a convenient excuse to "rule in the name of the nation [but] not be fully accountable to its people" (32). This conclusion is similar to Posner's finding that elites in Zambia and Malawi were integral to creating or dispelling ethnic conflict and did so to reach political goals, and Wimmer's (2008) theory of elite ethnic entrepreneurship.

In a survey conducted across 51 multiethnic countries, Elkins and Sides (2007) find that minority ethnic groups generally hold less attachment for states than majority groups. Federalism and proportional elections, two commonly-suggested responses to ethnic fractionalization and conflict, appear to have only mixed effects on minority attachment to the state. This lack of attachment may often be the result of biases in the ways states interact with ethnic minorities, or because their needs or desires are ignored by the state. In turn, such lack of attachment could lead the state to distrust the minority group and treat them as a threat, which I argue was the case in both Myanmar and Sudan.

The theories discussed in this section indicate that the ethnic cleansing in Myanmar may be closely related to its current process of democratization. Two different potential explanations arise. First, with the military giving up some of its political power, the path has been cleared for existing ethnic conflict to become political as groups in Myanmar vie for control of the state. Second, as democratization is increasing the importance of public support of the state, elites are exploiting and building up ethnic divisions in the name of nationalism, seeking to justify their

rule and gain popular support (from the ethnic groups that are included in the concept of the nation).

Taking a very different position than the previous theories mentioned, Mann (1999) argues that ethnic cleansing is intimately linked to democracy as a political system, not simply to the process of democratization. He critiques a theory by Rummel (1994, as cited by Mann 1999) suggesting that the more democratic a government is the less likely it is to commit genocide. Mann suggests that Rummel doesn't account for all the cases of democracies that commit genocide, nor does he account for the authoritarian regimes that don't commit genocide. Mann argues that democratic nation-states, by defining a "people" (which inherently defines an "other") and a territory, implicitly justifies that those outside the "people" can logically be excluded from the territory. He distinguishes between definitions of the nation that are "stratified" and "organic" (21). If a people is defined as "stratified" (not homogenous, but a more of happy coincidence) it is less likely to lead to ethnic cleansing than "organic" groups ("a perfect union, one and inseparable") than the "other" will be seen as threatening the "purity" of the people. He also breaks ethnic cleansing into types. The most extreme are coerced emigration, deportation, murderous cleansing, and genocide. The cases ethnic cleansing in Sudan and Myanmar would fit his definition of either murderous cleansing or genocide. The next two sections give historical and political contexts on the cases of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and Sudan.

Background on Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar

This section gives background on Myanmar to contextualize the ethnic cleansing campaign of 2017. It begins by showing how Rohingya have been long persecuted for both the (false) perception that they are immigrants and for their Muslim religion. Next it shows the history of the military regime that led the country for decades and the extreme violence it regularly employed on its citizens. Finally, this section discusses the partial transition to democracy that began in 2010, but argues that much political power still lies with the military that conducted the campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Ethnic Politics in Myanmar

In order to contextualize the current situation, it is important to understand how ethnicity fits into the politics of Myanmar. Myanmar's largest and most powerful ethnic group is the Burmese, who dominate the central Irrawaddy plains. In the geographic and political periphery, many areas are predominated by other ethnic groups, often the result of historic transfers of territory from neighboring countries (Smith 1997). But as Holliday (2008) argues, by the late 1940s, ethnic division in Myanmar was mainly due to the way British colonial rule treated different ethnic groups. Britain ruled central Myanmar directly, but ruled the other third of the country, including many ethnic minority groups, indirectly. Similarly, as Britain prepared the country for independence, political reforms were focused on central Myanmar, leading to different "tracks" of political evolution (Holliday 2008, 1044). In early independence, squabbling and maneuvering by ethnic leaders brought communal rivalries to the fore. As the central government deployed the colonial security apparatus to "hold together a disintegrating country," ethnic claims grew fiercer. The constitutional process of 1958 led to revolts in minority states.

14

The civilian government in the early 1960s was divided and incompetent, and talked of federation to quell ethnic tensions. In response, the military formally took power in 1962, and began its project of nation-building, further intensifying ethnic divisions that would become thoroughly-entrenched in society. (Holliday 2008)

Over time an institutionalized racial hierarchy developed where some ethnic groups are nationally recognized, while others are excluded from full citizenship. *Taingyintha*, or "national races" is a racial system that emerged during colonial times. It recognizes certain ethnic groups as *taingyintha* while others are denied this legitimacy. It has evolved into an institutional structure codified in law and judicial decisions that systematically denies citizens with certain ethnic classifications full membership in the political community. Even groups with long histories in the country are denied citizenship. The 1948 Union Citizenship Act said that any person whose family had lived in Myanmar for two generations was officially a citizen. But a 1982 citizenship law made *taingyintha* status a requirement for citizenship, though it stated that anyone who was a citizen before the law maintains their citizenship. Yet when the law was implemented years later in 1988, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya citizens were forced to give over their identification and, because they were not officially *taingyintha*, they were refused the new citizenship cards. This act effectively rendered them stateless, now officially designated as "Bengali" though they may have been citizens the year prior. This designation has had huge effects on popular perceptions of Rohingya, which are now understood to be foreigners, with many using language mirroring the "illegal alien" rhetoric of the United States. Many excluded groups seek to become *taingyintha* to become full members of society. This includes Rohingya advocates, who have insisted they are indeed *taingyintha*, which unfortunately legitimizes

national races as an institution. These legitimizing claims have brought anger from other non-*taingyintha* communities. (Cheesman 2017)

Indeed, the 1983 census included eight "national races" broken into 135 sub-categories, but a category for Rohingya was noticeably absent from the list. The 2014 census, although under a newly-democratic regime and over thirty years later, used the same ethnic categories as the 1983 census. The hundreds of thousands of Rohingya in the country had to write in their ethnicity, or accept to being classified as Bengali – an identifier that elevates their foreignness. One city elder was quoted warning that even allowing Rohingya as a write-in ethnicity would encourage "other Bengalis" to come to Myanmar. Enumerators in some areas forced Rohingya to claim Bengali ethnicity. This was met with anger and enumerators stopped conducting the census altogether. In response, the Burmese government announced it wouldn't accept the Rohingya identity on the census even as a write-in. (Ferguson 2015)

Walton (2013) compares the racial hierarchy in Myanmar to white privilege in the United States. He finds that ethnic Burmans feel equally oppressed by the government as other ethnic groups, and thus are largely unaware of their privileged position. Walton also finds that the changes in society from the partially-civilian government have benefitted the ethnic Burmese while bringing sustained or greater suffering for oppressed minorities, such as the Rohingya.

In addition to institutionalized racism, religion also plays a divisive role in Burmese politics. The country is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with Muslims consisting of only 4% of the population (van Klinken and Aung 2017). Muslim Burmese, such as the mainly Muslim Rohingya, are most concentrated in Rakhine. There is a long history of religion-based violence against the Muslim minority: "the anti-Muslim riot has been a well-known item in the repertoire

of politics since the 1930s" (6). The military seized power in 1988 and during the 1990s attempted to build ties with the Buddhist religious community with publicized donations to monasteries. These strategies worked perhaps too effectively, leading ultra-nationalist monks to attempt to counter the "Islamisation" of Myanmar. Starting in 2001, a new movement of anti-Muslim, ultra-nationalist Buddhist monks adopted an "internationalized" discourse of Muslims. Their rhetoric linked Burmese Muslims to the crimes of the Taliban and Al-Queda, creating a discourse based on identity, rather than specific "economic or political grievances" like past anti-Muslim movements in the country (6).

In 2012 this new violent rhetoric was translated into riots in Rakhine between Buddhists and mainly Muslim Rohingya. Beginning as sectarian clashes in June, the violence resumed in October and became a coordinated campaign of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya and Kaman Muslim communities (Human Rights Watch 2013). These attacks were "organized, incited, and committed by local Arakanese political party operatives, the Buddhist monkhood, and ordinary Arakanese, at times directly supported by state security forces." The Burmese government in the months after the attacks made little effort to hold the perpetrators accountable. And the criminal punishments for the violence fell overwhelmingly on Muslims, who received more of the charges, and whose charges were more serious than those of the non-Muslim detainees (van Klinken and Aung 2017).

The Burmese Military Regime

Myanmar's political system is dominated by its military, the very institution that has recently pushed hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from their country. Since independence

17

shortly after the second world war, the military has been suppressing succession movements, with elites relying on it for the preservation of the political regime and a contiguous nation (Slater 2010). The moment that perhaps cemented the military's role as a primary political actor was in suppressing the 1948-49 Karen revolt, when the fighting came uncomfortably close to the capital for the elite. In response, the elite handed General Ne Win "total control over the state's beleaguered coercive institutions" (269). From that point on, the military apparatus flourished, enjoying a high level of cohesion and effectiveness that it gained through putting down a series of regional rebellions. The military took complete and formal control of the government in 1962, perceiving an unacceptable threat to Myanmar's national integrity due to multiple regional revolts (Jones 2014), ineffective civilian governance, and the potential federalization of the country (Holliday 2008).

However, the civilian state has remained quite weak, and while the military has enjoyed great political power, it has relatively little support from either the civilian elite or the public (Pedersen, Rudland, and May 2000; Slater 2010). To maintain power with only coercive forms of state power, the military has used force as a one-size-fits-all solution to most political problems, confronting "economic elites, communal elites, and middle classes with extreme repression," including firing on protesters and even detonating explosives on a university building during student protests with hundreds of students inside (Slater 2010, 271). Yet despite the weak state apparatus of the country, and the unpopularity of the military regime, Pedersen, Rudland and May (2000) find that "for the effective purpose of maintaining political power, the military regime today is in a strong position." The military ruled almost continuously from 1962, except for an uprising in 1988 after which they quickly regained control.

Throughout its existence, territorial and national unity have been core goals of the military. Its stated "Three Main National Tasks" are "Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of the National Unity, and the Preservation of National Sovereignty". This mission is embodied in repeated and often ruthless pacification campaigns in the country's border regions, where many minority ethnic groups reside and local rebellions are common. Forced relocation is a central method in these campaigns. As of 1998, 30 percent of the rural Karen population of Eastern Myanmar of 480,000 was displaced. In 1991-2, 260,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Rakhine, an example of displacement mirroring today's experience (Grundy-Warr and Yin 2002, 99). The 1991-2 flight of Rohingya was in response to the military's re-registration process discussed in the previous section that left hundreds of thousands of Rohingya stateless because they were not considered *taingyintha* (Cheesman 2017). A previous Rohingya exodus occurred in 1978, during a period of "widespread allegations of rape, murder and robbery" from the military's "heavy-handed" census operation, when 200,000 fled to Bangladesh (Carey 1997, 112). The purpose of the 1978 operation was to "identify, persecute and expel illegal migrants and non-citizens" of which the government claimed there were many (Cheesman 2017, 472).

The New (Democratic?) Regime

In 2010 Myanmar began a landmark regime change by holding national elections. Jones (2014) argues that popular explanations of the transition, mainly accounts of regime collapse, are inaccurate. Rather, he argues the military regime chose it as a tactical move to meet its long-term goals. The regime embarked on the democratic transition from a place of strength rather than weakness, believing it could shape the future of the country. The military largely wrote the 2008

constitution and generally controlled the democratization process (Holliday 2008). The

constitution-writing process had as an explicit objective the "participation of the *tatmadaw*

[military] in the leading role of national politics in the state." Indeed, the new constitution

requires that the president have military experience, and allows the military to nominate 25% of

the seats in the national parliament and 33% in regional parliaments. Holliday argued in 2008

that the result of the new constitution would be to "entrench *tatmadaw* power behind a façade of

democracy" (1047).

When elections were held in 2010, the military-backed Union Solidarity and

Development Party won an overwhelming majority, partly because the major opposition party,

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, boycotted the polls (Jones 2014).

Nevertheless, the new regime implemented real change including economic reforms, increased

political freedoms, releasing political prisoners and reduced media restrictions. Important to the

present topic, the new government also resumed peacemaking talks with all armed ethnic groups,

signing many ceasefire agreements and continuing discussions to resolve political issues

important to the groups (Hlaing 2012).

Yet the new regime is instable, and still heavily influenced by the military. The threat of a

military coup is very real, particularly if liberalization and political change happen too fast for

the military's comfort (Hlaing 2012). Beyond the looming threat of coup, the military also enjoys

significant institutional powers under the 2008 constitution. They are guaranteed seats in the

regional and national parliaments, and representation in the government. The commander-in-

chief of the armed forces has "full control over military and border affairs" and can exercise

executive power in national emergencies (206).

The new regime seems uninterested in defending the rights or lives of the Rohingya. At first the military suppressed the ultra-nationalist Buddhist violence against Muslims, jailing a leader for inciting violence against Muslims in 2003 (van Klinken and Aung 2017). But after the riots in Rakhine in 2012, resulting in local party operatives, Buddhist monks and civilians targeting Muslims for ethnic cleansing, the vast majority of charges fell to Rohingya. And the national government did little to hold the perpetrators accountable (Human Rights Watch 2013).

The current government, led by Nobel Peace Prize recipient Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was elected in 2015. Regrettably, Suu Kyi's government has responded similarly to the current crisis of persecution of Rohingya. Suu Kyi has followed the military's lead by making excuses and telling lies about the events, always publicly supporting the military (Paddock and Beech 2017). She gave a speech at the height of the ethnic cleansing that used very similar language to that used by the generals organizing the atrocities: "The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians" (ibid.). She claims that journalism on the ethnic cleansing is a "huge iceberg of misinformation" and even accused victims of the rape perpetrated by the military of fabricating their stories (Kristof 2017).

Background on Ethnic Cleansing in Sudan

This section turns to the case of Sudan. It follows the growth and change of ethnic identities leading up to the ethnic cleansing in 2003. It then gives some background on the current military regime, which came to power in a 1989 coup.

Pre-Colonial

Ethnic identity in Darfur today has its roots in hundreds of years of history. The Fur sultanate where modern Darfur gets its name was established in 1650 and dominated much of what is now Darfur (Collins 2006). By 1800 it was the most powerful state in the region of modern Sudan. This state subjugated other ethnic groups in the region, including enslaving and trading people from some groups (de Waal 2005). The sultanate was made of non-Arab cultivators that used military force to contain Arab nomads (Collins 2006). The sultanate had a religious identity tied to Islam and claimed to be descended from Mohammad, but also had an clan identity of being of Fur (de Waal 2005).

Darfur has a long history of Islam. Oral history suggests the religion came to the area with a Moor who fled Spain in 1492 and found his way to modern day Darfur. By converting a sultan and marrying his daughter, he is said to have spurred the adoption of Sufist Islam and the Arabic language (which was spoken in the Darfur Sultanate's court for three centuries alongside Fur). While this particular story may be false, Islam is certainly deep-rooted in Darfur, with a history five-hundred years long. This is important to note, as Islam unites rather than divides Darfur with the ruling class of Sudan, although the latter generally follow Salafist rather than Sufist Islam. (Natsios 2012)

The Fur identity was also important, offering a shared language (Fur) and a political affiliation with the Fur Sultanate. While today the Fur are considered an ethnic group, during the Fur Sultanate the identity appears to have been more fluid and inclusive, having more to do with living in the region, speaking the language, and an alignment with the dominant political class. (Vaughan 2015)

In 1821 Egypt, which was at that point a part of the Ottoman Empire, conquered Sudan. Two ethnic groups became loyal with the new colonial power, which would have enduring impacts on ethnic politics in the country. The Shaiqiyya first fought back but were soon defeated and agreed to help the invading force conquer the rest of Sudan. They became closely allied with the new regime, and many formally joined the state as tax collectors. The Ja'aliyyin never resisted the Egyptians, and swore allegiance to the new regime. The decision to ally with the state would lead to lasting political power. These ethnic groups are two of the three groups that dominate the Sudanese elite to this day. (Natsios 2012)

The Egyptian rule began the regional power disparities that continue to the present. They ruled from the Nile Valley and developed that area, while the rest of that country was treated as a resource to exploit. Political and economic power became concentrated to the center and the ethnic groups that resided there, to the exclusion of all other areas and groups. (Natsios 2012)

In 1874, an Arab military leader and slave trader associated with the Egyptian regime named al-Zubayr Rahma Masur (or Zubayr Pasha) conquered the Fur sultanate (Collins 2006; Vaughan 2015). Until that time, the Egyptian regime had little influence over the territory ruled by the Fur Sultanate, but they now began setting up administrative structures and consolidating their rule (Vaughan 2015). With the Fur defeated, the land was opened to Arab nomads. However, in 1898 the sultanate was reestablished by Ali Dinar, a Fur with royal blood. Dinar

then went about driving the Arab nomads back off of the surrounding territory (Collins 2006). This Arab against non-Arab conflict for land, particularly the fertile land surrounding Jabal Marra, a mountain with great cultural significance, will echo forward to conflict in the late 1900s and in the ethnic cleansing beginning in 2003.

Egyptian rule of Sudan came to a dramatic end at the hand of a massive revolt led by Muhammad Ahmad bin Abdallah. He built an anti-foreign political movement that allied disparate groups against the Turks, Egyptians and British that dominated Sudan. His support came from rural, poor, Sufi Muslims; slave traders; and Arab Baqqara cattle herders. They quickly overwhelmed the Egyptian and British forces in most of the country, and eventually took Khartoum in 1885. Abdallah died soon after his regime took power, and he was succeeded by Khalifa Abdallahi, a Darfuri Baqqara. The Baqqara were the traditional enemy of the Fur, who allied with the Masalit to revolt, much as they would unite against Khartoum in 2003. The new regime only lasted 13 years; in 1898 a larger and better-equipped British force brought Sudan back under colonial rule. But the political dynasty created by this brief rule would have lasting effects, and lead to the formation of the Umma Party in independent Sudan. (Natsios 2012)

Colonial

The Darfur Sultanate lasted until 1916 when it was conquered by the British and annexed to the Ango-Egyptian Condominium (Collins 2006). The colonial authority then imposed a standardized legal and political order of "tribal authorities" to organize their new subjects into units that could be more easily ruled (de Waal 2005). This often involved creating ethno-political units from disparate groups and finding chiefs for new groups or ones that didn't have one. Chiefs were given judicial powers to police their subjects. British administrators sought to build

"a racial hierarchy in which Arabs were superior to non-Arabs" (Flint and De Waal 2008, 11). The Fur suffered greatly under the British, losing their traditional political authority and even being marginalized in new official histories despite their historic dominance of the region.

Britain, like the previous Egyptian regime, offered Darfur little economic or political opportunities. According to Flint and de Waal, "Britain's only interest in Darfur was keeping order" (2008, 11). Education was intentionally restricted to the sons of chiefs so their power would not be challenged. Darfur had the fewest hospital beds per capita of any providence of Sudan as of 1956 independence. Roads and railways between cities and towns were very poor or nonexistent, and there was no outside investment in business or agriculture at all. Indeed, Darfur had no exploitable resources, and to this day there is no all-weather road or railroad to the historic capital of El Fashar, far to the west of the central economic and political power of Sudan (Collins 2006).

Beginning in 1917 and lasting three generations, Darfur experienced a cultural process of Sudanization, in which many in Darfur adopted cultural practices associated with the cultural elite in the capital of Khartoum. Such people "spoke Arabic, wore the *jellabiya* or *thoub*, prayed publicly, used paper money, and abandoned traditional dancing and drinking millet beer" (de Waal 2005, 196). Gender norms also changed, with more restriction on the public role of women and adopting the practice of female genital mutilation. This Sudanization happened to the people of Darfur largely peacefully and voluntarily, as they were influenced by traders, schoolteachers, administrators and travelling fundamentalist preachers (Flint and De Waal 2008). Adopting such customs was a way to build social capital with the dominant class of traders and officials.

It is important to note that Darfur is not majority Arab. The largest group is the Fur, who are non-Arab and largely settled agriculturalists. Pastoralist groups are often Arab, such as the Baqqara, but many are not, including the large Zaghawa. (Johnson 2011)

Independence

The Sudan Defense Force that the British left behind at independence in 1956 became the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and was a very competent army. It has overthrown civilian, democratically-elected governments three times – in 1958, 1969 and 1989. As of 2006, Sudan had been ruled by the military for a total of thirty-seven of its forty-eight years of independence. (Collins 2006)

But beginning in the 70s the military's war-making and political power began waning. Its leadership changed to a new generation of less professional and more corrupt officers, who were fighting an unwinnable war with southern insurgents (Collins 2006). The 70s also brought the end of the Native Administration system set up by the British, which had supported peaceful conflict resolution among groups in Darfur with competing interests (largely between black African farmers and Arab pastoralists) (Johnson 2011). At the same time, a severe drought led the pastoralists in Northern Darfur to migrate to the territory settled by farmers. This resulted in conflict between the established and newly-arrived groups falling along ethnic lines and no system to resolve the conflict peacefully.

The animosity between Arab and African groups was intensifying. Along with material interests pitting the groups against each other in a time of drought, the civil war in Chad also contributed to this tension. The US was sending arms through Darfur to arm non-Arab groups in

Chad, and Libya responded by arming Arab pastoralists on the border of Chad and Darfur. International pan-Arabist ideology supported Arab-African conflict by equating being an Arab with being a Muslim (with non-Arabs therefore not sufficiently Muslim), particularly because the ideology came with financial and military support from Khartoum and abroad. (Johnson 2011)

In response to repeated defeats of his army, Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi in 1986 began arming loyal Baqqara supporters in south Sudan with automatic weapons, and "allowing them to pillage, rape, enslave, and kill the Dinka across the Bahr al-Arab River, who supported the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its Dinka leader, John Garang" (Collins 2006, 8). The government also armed Arab pastoralists in northern Darfur (Johnson 2011).

By 1988, the long-standing conflict between the central government in Khartoum and the southern rebellion appeared close to a diplomatic and political solution. Between May 1987 and November 1988, the DUP ruling party held a number of talks with the SPLM, culminating in a signed agreement for a political solution. The SPLM dropped their demand for the dissolution of the government in Khartoum, agreeing to a suspension of Sharia law and the convening of a constitutional conference to determine the political path forward. The National Islamic Front (NIF) refused to accept any agreement that would threaten the Islamic character of the nation, and supported the military to preemptively seize power. (Johnson 2011)

The coup of 1989 brought to power Omar al-Bashir and his National Islamic Front (which later became the National Congress Party) (Massoud 2011). Bashir and the National Congress Party have ruled continuously ever since. The coup was Islamism in ideology, and the officers that led the coup remade the military to match their ideology, creating the People's Defense Force (PDF). Believing the previous military leaders were too secular, and desiring a

large popular defense force that could "Islamize" Sudan, they began a large and unpopular draft. By 1991, over 150,000 had been drafted, and their training included religious indoctrination. Despite the new recruits, the new military was ill-equipped to suppress the southern rebellion of the SPLA led by defected colonel John Garang, or other insurgencies in the peripheral regions of the country. (Collins 2006)

Because the of PDF incompetence, the new leadership continued to arm Baqqara militias. The regime also sought to impose its form of religion and culture on the lands under rebellion, namely Arabic culture and language and Islam as state religion, thus inflaming ethnic division along the Arab-African division. A division, it should be noted, that is very blurry due to comingling of culture and intermarriage, and would not be as salient without government intervention bringing it to the forefront. (Collins 2006)

In Darfur, the new government shifted regional political power from the black African Masalit ethnic group to Darfuri Arabs. The Masalit had allied themselves with the Umma Party and Sadiq al-Mahdi, and supported the party in the 1985 elections (Natsios 2012). In return, they were given every regional seat for western Darfur in the National Assembly. The Masalit had significant conflict with the Arab people of the region, who they saw as "newcomers and interlopers" having migrated from Chad decades earlier (130). They even blocked humanitarian aid to Arab groups during the mid-80s famine.

Because the Masalit were allies of the Umma Party, after the coup they were a target of the new regime. The government began giving political positions to Arabs and undermining Masalit power in western Darfur (Natsios 2012). In 1994 the government in Khartoum established a Native Administration Council system (de Waal 2005). Khartoum appointed chiefs in a partisan fashion, rewarding followers and punishing followers of the competing Umma

Party. The chiefs' powers didn't include distributing social services, but rather land and weapons. By 1995 violence erupted between Masalit and Arab groups, and Khartoum began arming the Arabs. "Prominent Masalit intellectuals and civil society members were arrested and tortured by NISS" (Natsios 2012, 131).

Resistance to the Government

In May 2000, a group critical of the NIF government, calling themselves 'The Seekers of Truth and Justice" published *The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan*. They distributed 1,600 copies in Sudan and abroad that showed how three ethnic groups, the Ja'aliyiin, the Shaygiyya and the Danagla, had dominated economic and political power at the expense of the rest of Sudan's people (Flint and De Waal 2008). The book backed up its claims with detailed statistics showing that these groups, which make up 5.4 percent of the population of Sudan, controlled 70 percent of its senior positions (Natsios 2012). The government attempted to confiscate all of the copies and denied its findings but could not stop the great impact it had on politics. The *Black Book* heightened ethnic tensions and solidified opposition to the government and led to the rebellion and ethnic cleansing discussed in the previous section.

The ethnic cleansing of black Africans in the western region of Darfur between 2003-4 was the government's response to an ethnic-based rebellion. The rebellion was an alliance between the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa, all non-Arab ethnic groups. These groups defended themselves against Arab raiders in the 90s and had militias for self-defense that were integrated into the rebellion (Crilly 2010). These ethnic groups were united by political and economic marginalization by Khartoum, abuse by Arab supremacist groups and "the absence of democratic institutions through which to seek redress from their grievances" (Natsios 2012, 135). The Fur

and Zaghawa allied together first, conducting joint trainings and, in February 2002, looted and destroyed a garrison of government troops. Soon the Masalit joined them to form the Darfur Liberation Front, later the Sudan Liberation Army. They formally announced their rebellion and made their presence known by attacking the town of Golo in February 2003 (Crilly 2010). In April they attacked El Fashar Airport and the military's air force base there, capturing Major General Ibrahim Bushra and a great amount of weapons. They were a formidable enemy of the state military: of thirty-eight battles between Febrary and October 2003, the rebels won all but four (Natsios 2012).

Khartoum's elite security officers feared this may not be an isolated rebellion, but part of the strategy of the long and frustrating rebellion in the South. The SPLA was currently in peace negotiations with the government, but the elite feared the Darfur rebellion was an SPLA conspiracy to continue military pressure during peace talks (Flint and De Waal 2008). But the military could spare few forces, and the use of tribal militias appeared an appealing option.

General Suleiman warned that the tactic would cause great damage. He was "convinced that a racially based mobilization would have 'terrible' repercussions on inter-tribal relations for the next several decades" (Flint and De Waal 2008, 123). He begged to be given two brigades of well-trained soldiers instead. He also called for development and social services as a lasting solution to unrest, urging the government to build schools, settle the nomads and give them water, improve public health and train a well-organized police force. Khartoum chose not to heed his advice, deciding to go with its "tried and tested militia strategy" (123).

The government strategy relied on Janjaweed, meaning 'Devils on Horseback,' Arab militias who traditionally defended their communities and livestock (Crilly 2010). They first recruited and armed civilians regardless of ethnic group, but after thousands of Fur and Tunjur

"recruits" immediately defected with their weapons to the rebels, the government began arming

only Arabs and turning away non-Arabs (Flint and De Waal 2008). The war became neatly

divided along the ethnic line of Arab/non-Arab, with exclusively Arab militia armed by the

government attacking the villages of black African ethnic groups (including the Fur, the

Zaghawa and the Masalit). The murder and rape of civilians, intended to starve rebels of any

support, led to 2.5 million displaced and as many as 400,000 killed (Crilly 2010).

A Theory of State-Led Ethnic Cleansing

In an attempt to better understand ethnic cleansing, what follows is a theory seeks to answer the question "what circumstances lead a government to commit ethnic cleansing?" for independent nation-states (territories owned by colonial powers have a different relationship with their (colonial) government, and are therefore outside of my scope conditions). I first identify two necessary conditions for ethnic cleansing to occur: a socially-constructed definition of the nation that excludes the ethnic group in question, and a perception by the government that the ethnic group poses a significant threat to their rule. Next, I identify three conditions that increase the likelihood of ethnic cleansing (but are not necessary for it to occur): unconsolidated democracy, a history of military rule, and a weak state. Finally, I discuss how a history colonialism often results in an independent country in which many of these conditions exist, thereby indirectly increasing the chances for ethnic cleansing. Fig. 1 shows a stylized diagram of the theory presented here.
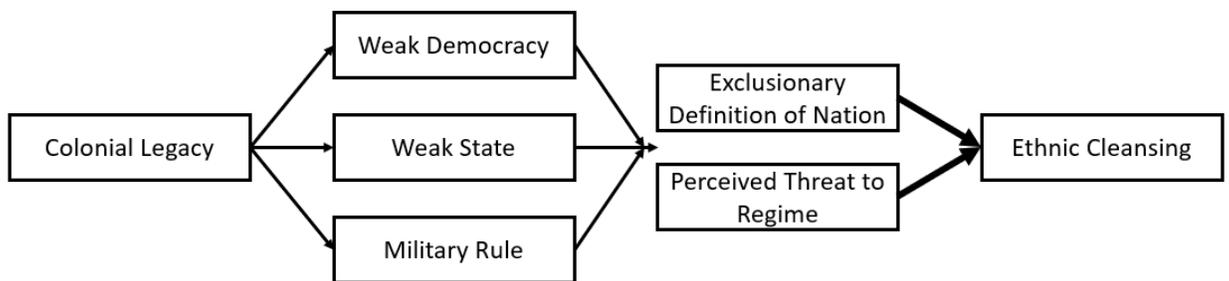

Fig. 1: A stylized diagram of the theory presented of state-led ethnic cleansing. Note that each cause does not always lead to the outcome it is connected to. The bolded arrows indicating the most immediate causes of ethnic cleansing represent necessary but not sufficient factors of ethnic cleansing. The other arrows represent simply an increase in likelihood. (For example, not

all ex-colonies will have weak democracy, and not all weak democracies are ex-colonies, but a

colonial legacy makes weak democracy more likely.)

Exclusionary Definition of the Nation

A state will never ethnically cleanse an ethnic group that is considered a legitimate part

of the nation. First, the leaders of government, a significant portion of the bureaucrats and

military personnel involved in the proposed ethnic cleansing, and a significant portion of the

public must view the ethnic group as outside the nation. This "othering" creates the moral and

cognitive justification necessary to violently expel a part of the country's population from its

territory. Without sufficient "othering" of an ethnic group, the leaders of government would not

propose ethnic cleansing, and the required support of state actors and the public would not exist.

This "othering" process does not happen naturally, but, as Wimmer (2008) argues, is

orchestrated by elites. As he claims, elites in government, or ethnic elites opposed to the

government, choose a strategy of ethnic entrepreneurship for political gain.

Perceived Threat to the Government

A government will not choose to cleanse the country of an ethnic group unless it

perceives the group as a serious threat political or physical threat. Ethnic cleansing is costly. It

requires the political capital to devote significant state resources to the military campaign, and

risks huge backlash and opposition to the government. It also risks delegitimizing the

government in the eyes of the people and the international community, which could lead to

sanctions or even war crimes trials. Thus, the government must believe the group to pose a threat

large enough to warrant the significant resources and political risk associated with ethnic cleansing. This threat can take the form of a violent rebellion that risks loss of state control of a part of its territory, a political movement that is critical of the regime and threatens to undermine the government's power, or a potential coup attempt.

Unconsolidated Democracy

Democracy has a complicated relationship with ethnic cleansing. As Mann (1999) points out, democracy brings into focus a defined "people" which often simultaneously defines an "other" within the borders of the nation. The defining of a people as rulers of a national territory can lead to the expulsion from the territory of any who don't fit the new definition of the nation. On the other hand, democracy often comes with norms and institutions supporting liberal ideas of individual rights against government action that make ethnic cleansing unthinkable by state actors and public opinion. I thus tend to agree with Snyder (Snyder 2000) that democratization increases the likelihood of ethnic cleansing in the short term, but that in the long term established democracies are less likely than authoritarian regimes to commit ethnic cleansing. However, cases such as the Trail of Tears show that democracy does not eliminate the threat of ethnic cleansing.

History of Military Rule

In countries with military regimes, and countries with history of military rule, governments will be more likely to seek military solutions to social problems. Leaders of government in such countries will be more closely associated with the military. They may have

been (or still are) officers, may have increased their political power through military operations such as coups, and thus will have more experience dealing with social problems through violence than good governance. Additionally, in countries with history of military rule the military is often far more developed than other parts of the state and will have fewer options to respond to social problems with non-military strategies. When your only tool is a hammer everything looks like a nail. Such governments will be more likely to choose ethnic cleansing as a strategy rather than other strategies, such as nation-building through education or socialization, or placating minority groups with development programs.

Weak State

Peripheral regions of countries with low state-capacity can be largely out of state control. In such contexts, governments may believe military solutions to be the only response to perceived threats, as they lack other potent forms of social control. This will make ethnic cleansing more likely. While a strong state may also choose ethnic cleansing, it has many policy alternatives that would in most cases would be less costly and less politically-risky. State-led development of health, education and wellbeing in peripheral regions could undermine the resentment that leads to ethnic conflict, stopping revolts and uprisings before they start. A strong police presence can deter and undermine efforts of rebel groups that do form. Even a better-equipped military with a strong bureaucracy would be able to use the more precise tactics of counterterrorism that focus violence on members of rebellions, rather than the much more destructive but easier to organize tactics of ethnic cleansing.

History of Colonialism

Independent countries with a history of colonialism may be more likely to experience ethnic cleansing. Colonial regimes often intentionally create ethnic division as a divide-and-rule tactic, choosing some ethnic groups to help rule and others to subjugate (often assigning and creating ethnic identities somewhat arbitrarily). Such practices can institutionalize ethnicity, imbuing it with different access to resources and power, making ethnicity more politically salient. Similarly, colonial regimes create regional divisions. By establishing a colonial capital with a broad territory, the center is often developed with infrastructure, state capacity and economic benefits for the bureaucrat class of the indigenous people, while the periphery is underdeveloped and exploited for labor or natural resource extraction. Ethnic groups and regions that receive the brunt of colonial cruelty and few of the economic or developmental benefits will hold deep resentment of the regime. A new independent regime that does not quickly reverse the preferential treatment will inherit the animosity of the subjugated groups and regions, and may soon face regional and ethnic rebellions. Colonial regimes often leave behind a weak state, an unconsolidated democracy and a strong military apparatus. Thus, by leading to the conditions identified above, and by creating deep social divisions, colonialism can indirectly lead to ethnic cleansing even decades after independence.

Evidence from the Cases

This section uses the cases of Sudan and Myanmar to offer evidence for the theory presented above. I argue here that the causes outlined in the theory can be found at play in both countries, with the notable exception of the role of democracy – both countries lack strong democratic institutions and do not lend themselves to proving (or disproving) this aspect of the theory.

Exclusionary Definition of the Nation

In both countries, the ethnic group that was cleansed was first defined as outside the boundary of the nation. In Myanmar the Rohingya were labeled as foreign "Bengalis," and were othered because they were largely Muslim in a Buddhist-dominated country. They have a long history as victims of violence from the state and from civilians. In Sudan, ethnic Africans were defined as outside the nation by the Islamist government that gained power in 1989. While these groups were largely Muslim, the new regime sought to impose its form of religion and culture on the lands under rebellion, namely Arabic culture and language and Islam as state religion (Collins 2006). This inflamed ethnic division along the Arab-African line by redefining the nation to exclude non-Arab Africans, and prepared the country for ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar

In Myanmar, Rohingya have long been excluded from the nation. The government has played a large role in making the exclusion worse. This exclusion is based on two salient ethnic identities. The first is religion, with Rohingya predominantly Muslim in while Myanmar as a whole is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with few Muslim groups outside the Rohingya population. Anti-Muslim riots have occurred in Myanmar since the 1930s (van

Klinken and Aung 2017). In the 90s the military made public overtures with the Buddhist clergy, explicitly linking the state the Buddhist religion, and leading to a growing community of radical Buddhists who seek to drive Muslims from the country.

The second identity is national origin, with Rohingya seen as originating from Bangladesh. Despite generations-old ties to the country, Rohingya are referred to by the government as Bengalis. This rhetoric has been paired with census and citizenship policies that revoked citizenship from many Rohingya (Carey 1997; Ferguson 2015). Even the word Rohingya is frowned upon by the government because it legitimizes their presence in the country.

By linking the state with Buddhism and by using rhetoric and policies that label Rohingya as foreign, the government redefined the nation to exclude them. This symbolic exclusion in turn justifies physical exclusion, preparing the nation for ethnic cleansing. It leads policymakers to consider and choose more extreme policies such as ethnic cleansing, prepares lower-level state actors to help implement the policies, and garners support from the public for the policies. Indeed, this process was very effective in shaping public opinion – after the ethnic cleansing occurred, the government's promise to repatriate the refugees resulted in a protest urging the government to keep them out (The Associated Press 2017).

While Myanmar has a stronger army than Sudan, it too worked with militias to execute the ethnic cleansing, showing the effectiveness of the exclusion process. The army armed and trained Buddhists in the region, who later helped the army expel and kill their neighbors: "They were just like the army, they had the same kind of weapons", said one refugee. "They were local boys, we knew them. When the army was burning our houses, torturing us, they were there"

(Rowlatt 2017). That civilians were willing to help commit such terrible atrocities to people they knew shows the psychological effectiveness of the exclusion. The same psychological process allows the soldiers to follow orders and the generals to give orders.

Sudan

During the 1980s the nation was increasingly being defined with Arab ethnicity. And with the Islamic military coup of 1989, the nation was more explicitly recast as Arab, excluding the non-Arab groups in Darfur. A simply Muslim definition of the nation would not have excluded these groups, as Darfur is predominantly Muslim. But Omar al-Bashir's new government equated Muslim and Arab identities, calling for all Sudanese to adopt Arab practices.

Beginning in the 80s even before the coup, black African Sudanese were encouraged to speak Arabic, to use cash instead of bartering, to curtail the independence of women, reject alcohol, abandon traditional dances, and wear Arab clothing (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2008). This policy of cultural imperialism is inherently anti-black African, aligning the state with one ethnic identity (Arab) against another, dramatically increasing the salience of the Arab/non-Arab division in the country. By bringing a specific ethnic cleavage to the surface, and aligning the state with one side of the cleavage, the Sudanese state redefined the nation to exclude non-Arabs, and implicitly called for their exclusion from the territory.

As Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2008) argue, this top-down racialization and dehumanization process was an integral part of the process that led to ethnic cleansing. This exclusion from the nation gave the militias the moral-psychological justification they needed to

help the state carry out brutal attacks on civilians. Based on interview and survey data of refugees from Darfur in Chad, the authors find that many victims of ethnic cleansing heard racial epithets from the perpetrators. Phrases heard included "you are slaves, kill the slaves," "this is the last day for blacks," (878) and "all the people in the village are slaves; you make this area dirty; we are here to clean the area" (882). Such phrases show the effectiveness of the exclusion from the nation of black African ethnic groups. The last quote is explicit in the connection between ethnic exclusion and the need to cleanse the nation's territory of excluded groups, underlining the importance of such exclusion for perpetrators to justify their actions.

Indeed, Sudan likely could not have engaged in ethnic cleansing without first redefining the nation to exclude black Africans. Without the racialization and dehumanization, recruiting non-state militias to execute such horrible acts would have been difficult. And Sudan's rather weak army would have had difficulty conducting such an operation without them. Further, while armies and militias differ in significant ways, Sudan's soldiers have consciences too, and also may not have followed orders of ethnic cleansing without the nation-exclusion process and the associated psychological justification.

Non-Arab ethnic groups were also labeled terrorists, separatists and rebels – attacking the nation and therefore by definition outside it (showing one potential relationship between a perceived threat to nation goes and exclusion from nation).

Perceived Threat to the Nation

While necessary for ethnic cleansing to occur, exclusion from the nation alone cannot lead to ethnic cleansing. A second precondition is the perception by the government that the group in question is a threat to the nation or to their rule. Once exclusion from the nation is completed, an

in-group/out-group dynamic is created. But to justify ethnic cleansing, an us-versus-them narrative is necessary. This requires that many or most government leaders, bureaucrats and (at least in a democracy) citizens believe the group in question poses a physical or moral threat to the nation.

This perceived threat to the nation is found in both Myanmar and Sudan. In Myanmar, international discourse of Muslims inherently violent was adopted by many Buddhists. Extremist Buddhist religious leaders have encouraged this narrative with harsh rhetoric. The effect has been powerful, with many believing that religious war is a serious risk and that the Buddhist community is under attack. The attack on Myanmar's military by a Rohingya rebel group further cemented this perception, and likely convinced the government in particular that Rohingya were a threat to the nation and state.

In Sudan, the perceived threat to the nation is strikingly similar. Arab supremacist groups inflamed ethnic tensions, as did the publication of the Black Book denouncing the marginalization of many ethnic groups. The perceived threat appears to be both a moral and physical danger, with rhetoric of black Africans being "slaves," and making the physical places in the country "dirty." And similar to Myanmar, the formation of rebel militias of black Africans was a crucial component, posing a threat to state control and leading the regime to see all black Africans as a threat.

Myanmar

As mentioned previously, Myanmar has seen a radicalization of parts of the Buddhist clergy and community following the military regime's public alignment with Buddhism (van Klinken and Aung 2017). These radical Buddhists adopted the international animosity against Muslims, calling them violent and prone to terrorism. It is this discourse that was used to justify

41

ethnic cleansing, particularly as the rise of Rohingya rebel groups could readily be labeled terrorists and used as proof of a credible threat to the nation.

Nicholas Kristof, an American journalist, interviewed Buddhist monks, and Buddhist and Rohingya civilians in Myanmar in 2014 (Ellick and Kristof 2014). In his interview with Ashin Wirathu, a popular Buddhist monk with large following, Wirathu evoked a moral and physical threat from Rohingya: "Muslims are like African catfish. They breed rapidly. They have violent behavior. And they eat their own kind, and other fish."

Another Buddhist abbot said "When there are lots of Muslims, they start waging jihad. It happens everywhere." He goes on, "Buddhism is not a violent religion. But if someone attacks us we can't just lie down and take it." In this quote, we see the cognitive justification of ethnic cleansing as self-defense against the perceived threat Rohingya supposedly pose against all Buddhists in the country.

Social media has also played a role in spreading fear of Rohingya in Myanmar. Messages depicting Rohingya as "murderous terrorists who commit atrocities against Buddhists" have been shared on smartphones and Facebook, escalating the hatred against them (Kristof 2018). Some believe the military is supporting this propaganda. The following image (fig. 2) is an example of the kind of anti-Rohingya propaganda shared online in Myanmar. It shows a family of Rohingya climbing across the border into Myanmar. The depiction of a baby aggressively wielding a blade conveys that all Rohingya should be feared, and not even infants allowed to remain in Myanmar. (The drawing was posted on Nov. 8, 2017 by a Twitter user (@RedSky234) claiming to be in Myanmar. I was unable to find its origin.)

Fig. 2. Source: Twitter (https://twitter.com/RedSky234/status/928493716892819457)

This discourse perpetuated by radical Buddhist clergy and the military has had strong effects on public opinion among Buddhists, which make up the majority of the population. An average Buddhist interviewed said "We fear Buddhism may disappear from here. We want to preserve our Buddhism until the world ends. We don't want Muslims to swallow us." A small Buddhist boy interviewed, when asked what he would do if he saw a Muslim (Rohingya) boy his age, said "I'd kill him." (Ellick and Kristof 2014)

It is not only Buddhist civilians that believe the Rohingya to be a threat. The military also sees them as undermining both national unity and state control in the western region, particularly with the rise of rebel groups. The perceived threat came to a peak in August of 2017 when thousands of rebels attacked military positions and killed 12 members of the security forces (Beech 2017). With the Rohingya excluded from the nation, and many civilians believing them to be a security threat, the path to ethnic cleansing was open. The rebel attack, by convincing the

military that the Rohingya were a credible threat to security and state control, finally triggered the military's response of ethnic cleansing.

Sudan

In May 2000, a Darfur rebel group published the Black Book, which was the result of their research on the ethnic origin of the Sudanese elite. It showed that three tribes from the river valley, accounting for only 5.4 percent of the population of Sudan, controlled 70 percent of its senior positions. It denounced the marginalization of the geographic periphery and the concentration of wealth that excluded most ethnic groups in the country. The book inflamed ethnic tensions, particularly as the government attempted to confiscate all its copies and denied its findings. (Natsios 2012)

Soon after publication of the Black Book, as mentioned earlier, black African ethnic groups in Darfur, the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa, began organizing a rebellion. The rebels were a serious security threat, repeatedly defeating government forces (Natsios 2012). They threatened the state's very ability to control Darfur. The rebellion also posed a threat to the state's legitimacy, bringing into question its monopoly on the legitimate use of force and its ability to rule its territory and people. And the government of Sudan was already dealing with another intractable rebellion in the South – it couldn't afford another. It was the threat posed by the Darfur rebels that led to a state response of violence.

But while most states would respond to a rebellion with violence, few would respond with ethnic cleansing. Darfur, like Myanmar, responded with ethnic cleansing because the threat originated in a group that had been excluded from the nation. Thus, the conflict was seen in strictly ethnic terms. All black Africans posed a threat, not simply those taking up arms against the government.

44

The Role of Democracy

The role of democracy is difficult to analyze in either of the two cases. At the time of ethnic cleansing, neither country had strong democratic institutions, although Myanmar was in the process of democratization. Sudan in 2003 had been ruled by an authoritarian government since the 1989 coup and had a Polity-IV score of -6 (Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research 2016). Myanmar in 2017 had a newly-elected government, earning it a Polity-IV score of 8 in 2016 (the last year for which data is available). But as discussed earlier, Myanmar's government is still highly controlled by the military, both institutionally and with the threat of a coup (Hlaing 2012). It's therefore difficult to say whether the outcomes of ethnic cleansing in either country are influenced by the presence or lack of democracy, or if they would have been avoided by stronger democratic institutions.

Myanmar

As discussed earlier, the new democratic government was complicit in ethnic cleansing. While they may have had little control over the military's operations, Aung San Suu Kyi and her civilian government has defended the military and denied that ethnic cleansing took place (Paddock and Beech 2017; Kristof 2017). This response may be due to pressure from the military leadership, suggesting that a consolidation of democracy that would give civilian leaders more complete power may have prevented ethnic cleansing. Or the democratic regime could have been complicit because they believed it was supported by the public, suggesting stronger democratic norms would not have changed the outcome. If the public strongly supported ethnic cleansing of Rohingya, this may offer evidence that democracy would not have stopped ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, I have found insufficient evidence regarding public opinion of the campaign.

Evidence of support does exist, including an anti-Rohingya protest by Buddhists in Rakhine (The Associated Press 2017), and interviews by a western journalist with Buddhists that show great animosity for Rohingya (Kristof 2018). But without better evidence, such as a nation-wide survey, it is hard to accurately gauge public opinion, let alone the know how that public opinion might affect a more-democratic government's decision to cleanse the Rohingya.

Sudan

The case of Sudan is similarly difficult to parse. Sudan's government is fully authoritarian and is even less accountable to the people than that of Myanmar. Al-Bashir's military regime has been in power since the coup of 1989. Sudan has a long history of flawed and corrupt elections, and no election in the country's history "has produced a government which has been both widely accepted and stable" (Willis and el Battahani 2010). The elections during al-Bashir's rule have been widely criticized, with rumors of ballot-stuffing and destruction of millions of spoiled ballots (ibid.). And like Myanmar, there appears to be scant evidence of how the public viewed the campaign of ethnic cleansing. Thus, it is difficult to say what role the lack of democratic institutions played in the outcome of ethnic cleansing.

History of Military Rule

Myanmar has a long history of military rule, with a powerful military but otherwise weak state apparatus. Along with a military culture that applies military strategy to political problems, Myanmar's military history led to the implementation of ethnic cleansing rather than other solutions. Sudan's regime is better characterized as personalist rather than a military regime, and its history of military rule thus appears to have less impact on the outcome of ethnic cleansing.

<u>Myanmar</u>

As discussed earlier, at the time of independence Myanmar had a strong military but an otherwise weak state, leading to the military's domination of political power (suggesting colonialism's influence, to be discussed in the section on history of colonialism). In turn, military rule led to a continuation of the imbalance between the strength of the military and other state apparatuses. As Callan (Callahan 2003, 5) explains, "the military took the helm of a barely functioning state apparatus and gradually found itself responsible for law enforcement, economic regulation, tax collection, census taking, political party registration, food distribution, magazine publishing, and so forth." Having a strong military institution but otherwise limited state capacity leaves the government with very effective means for responding to social problems with violence, and much less effective means to respond with non-violent coercion. Thus, Myanmar is constrained by its form of state capacity, making the use of violence a more attractive choice for many social problems. By changing the tools at the disposal of government, Myanmar's military history has made ethnic cleansing a more likely outcome. This is closely tied to the influence of state capacity, to be discussed in the following section.

Similarly, military culture's influence in the government made ethnic cleansing more likely in Myanmar. With military-trained leaders controlling the levers of public policy, the military culture affects policy decisions, leading to more violent and forceful government action. Callahan (2003) argues that the only way to make sense of the Burmese government's "methodical, brutal campaigns of repression against their own citizens" is through their military identity: "Given the costs involved, true politicians would not undertake this kind of combat against their country. War fighters, however, might do just that" (2). The socialization that comes

with military training and culture leads the generals guiding Myanmar's government to be more likely to use extreme violence against civilians, including ethnic cleansing.

Sudan

Sudan also has a history of military rule. It has experienced a number of military coups, including the last one of 1989. However, the 1989 coup led to a government that may be described as more personalist than military regime (to use the distinction made by Geddes (1999)). One man, Omar al-Bashir, has led the country ever since, and upon seizing power his government remade the military to fit their Islamist vision for Sudan (Collins 2006). Thus, military culture might have less influence over Bashir's government, and indeed the military was weakened in the transition as discussed earlier. Therefore, the history of military rule may have less impact on ethnic cleansing in Sudan than Myanmar. Nevertheless, al-Bashir went to a military academy and spent much of his career in the army (Natsios 2012), and his experience there likely influenced the policy decisions made by his government.

State Capacity

Both Sudan and Myanmar have weak states. According to two indexes measuring state capacity, Myanmar's state is somewhat stronger, although both are in the bottom quintile of both indices (Rice and Patrick 2008; Fund for Peace 2017). With few tools other than violent coercion at their disposal, state capacity played a role in both government's decision to adopt an ethnic cleansing strategy to respond to regional rebellions. Additionally, with a stronger state that could better provide for citizens in border regions, the seeds of rebellions may not have found such fertile ground in the first place. Myanmar's stronger military allowed it to use trained soldiers to conduct ethnic cleansing rather than Sudan's reliance on militias. This strategy was likely the

reason Myanmar's ethnic cleansing campaign resulted in far fewer deaths as a ratio of those displaced: at least 6,700 were killed in Myanmar's ethnic cleansing (Médecins Sans Frontieres 2017) with an estimated 615,500 refugees having fled to Bangladesh (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018), while in Sudan a shocking 400,000 were killed and 2.5 million displaced (Crilly 2010). An even better-organized and better-equipped military may have been able to use counterterrorism strategies and avoid ethnic cleansing altogether, suggesting a (counterintuitive) negative relationship between military strength and the violence used to quell ethnic revolts.

Sudan

"At no time in the past two hundred years has the central government of the Sudan – neither the nineteenth century Turks nor twentieth century British and certainly not the independent Sudanese – actually governed Darfur, the southern Sudan, or even the Red Sea Hills." (Collins 2006, 6)

According to the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index, Sudan in 2006 (when the index began) was the most fragile state in the world. The index includes relevant scores such as the quality of public services offered, and the quality of the security apparatus. Sudan had a score of 9.5 for public services and 9.8 for security apparatus (where 10 is the worst score). (Fund for Peace 2006)

The Brookings Institute published a Weak States index in 2008 that also shows Sudan's state to be particularly weak. Sudan was the 6th weakest state measured in their index. Notable scores include a government effectiveness score of 3.07, a rule of law score of 3.27, a control of

corruption score of 2.09, and a primary school completion score of 3.5 (the scores range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the worst possible score). (Rice and Patrick 2008)

During colonial time, state capacity was very weak in Darfur, especially in terms of services and infrastructure. British policy was to only allow Western education for chief's sons, and in terms of health, Darfur had the fewest hospital beds per capita of any providence of Sudan as of 1956 independence. Roads and railways between cities and towns were very poor or nonexistent, and there was no outside investment in business or agriculture at all. (Flint and De Waal 2008)

Sudan's decision to respond to the Darfur rebellion with ethnic cleansing was highly influenced by the lack of state resources at its disposal. As discussed earlier, at the time of the rebellion, Khartoum was struggling with the long-lasting rebellion in the south and it had few military resources to spare. A larger, better-equipped and better-trained military would have been able to suppress both rebellions fairly easily. But as it stood, Khartoum decided to use the much cheaper and organizationally-simple tactic of enlisting and arming tribal militias to quell the rebellion (Flint and De Waal 2008, 123).

This was against the advice of General Suleiman, who warned of the consequences for ethnic relations and social cohesion of such a strategy. He called for a military strategy using well-trained soldiers, and for it to be matched with a long-term development project to calm unrest, including building schools, settling nomadic groups with water resources, improving public health and training a well-organized police force (Flint and De Waal 2008). A government with a powerful state at its disposal may well have heeded his advice, but for Khartoum, the costs were too great on its already-taxed state, and arming militias to conduct ruthless ethnic cleansing was a cheaper and less organizationally-taxing option.

<u>Myanmar</u>

In 2017, Myanmar's state was stronger than that of 2003 Sudan. Particularly in military capacity, Myanmar had a significant advantage. As discussed earlier, Myanmar's military has a long history of successfully defeating rebellion attempts in the border regions. Unlike Sudan, then, Myanmar did not have to rely on militias to conduct the campaign of ethnic cleansing. And yet, ethnic cleansing occurred all the same, albeit with relatively fewer deaths of non-combatants.

While Myanmar has a stronger military, its state capacity is still weak in many ways. It received a ranking of 35th most fragile state by the Fragile States Index in 2017 (Fund for Peace 2017). It received a security apparatus score of 8.9 and a public services score of 8.5 (where 10 is the worst). The Brookings Institute's Weak States Index ranked it the 17th weakest state, with a government effectiveness score of 1.78, a control of corruption score of 0.27, and a rather good primary school completion score of 7.28 (Rice and Patrick 2008).

Slater (2010) assesses that state-building was centered on the military, with civilian bureaucracies left stagnant. As discussed earlier, he draws a direct connection between this problem of state capacity and the use of extreme violence to solve political problems. With relatively weak forms of non-coercive state power, the government's strategy adapts to the reality of the tools at its disposal, deploying the military when other governments wouldn't need to, confronting "economic elites, communal elites, and middle classes with extreme repression" (271).

Slater's argument can readily be adapted to the ethnic cleansing of 2017. Myanmar had little means to enforce the will of the state in the border region of Rakhine other than through military force. Its bloody campaign was a strategic calculation based on the limited options the government had at its disposal. However, as noted above, by using trained soldiers rather than militias, Myanmar's stronger military allowed it to expel the persecuted ethnic group with far fewer deaths than in the case of Sudan.

History of Colonialism

Colonialism had a large legacy in both countries and is crucial to understanding the causes of both cases of ethnic cleansing. As I will show in this section, the colonial governments of both countries showed preference to some ethnic and regional groups over others, leading to deep social divisions that precipitated ethnic cleansing. The colonial governments also left behind states better equipped for violent coercion than good governance.

Myanmar

British colonizers used direct rule in parts of Myanmar and indirect rule in others, particularly the parts dominated by ethnic groups other than the Burmese. This hierarchy led to a legacy of regionally-concentrated political power and revolts in peripheral regions with less political and economic power (Holliday 2008). While Rakhine (where the Rohingya overwhelmingly live) was part of the directly-ruled territory, the regional divisions along ethnic lines established in the colonial period led to the ever-repeating pattern in Myanmar of regional rebellions along ethnic lines. The rebellion in Rakhine was a part of this pattern.

The army, too, has a colonial legacy. Soon after independence Myanmar resurrected the colonial military. In the 1950s, when the United States began training Chinese counterinsurgency forces in Myanmar for a counter-attack against China, "military and civilian leaders had few choices but to reinvigorate and redeploy the colonial security apparatus to hold together a disintegrating country" (Callahan 2003, 5). Thus, colonialism helped lead the country down the path of decades-long military rule, and left Myanmar with a strong military and otherwise weak state. The British also built the very security apparatus which would evolve into the modern army that conducted the ethnic cleansing.

Sudan

The Egyptian and British rule in Sudan also caused a great deal of ethnic division. The British created "tribal authorities" – ethno-political units to facilitate indirect rule that were often made of disparate groups (de Waal 2005), institutionalizing and building up ethnic identity and division. British administrators also brought their own prejudices into their rule, to have deleterious effects for black Africans. British administrators sought to build "a racial hierarchy in which Arabs were superior to non-Arabs" and greatly undermined the political power of the Fur who had historically dominated the region (Flint and De Waal 2008, 11). They thus ignited ethnic conflict on the exact divide that ethnic cleansing followed decades later in 2003-4.

Colonialism also left lasting political power in a small, ethnically-specific group of people. Three Arab ethnic groups residing in the northern Nile River Valley have "dominated the economic, political, intellectual and military power in Sudan since independence in 1956, and in some respects even earlier" (Natsios 2012, xvii). These three ethnic groups gained their prominence, despite making up only 5.4 percent of the population, by allying with the colonial regimes (ibid.). For example, as mentioned earlier, one of the Shaiqiyya allied with the Egyptian

invaders after they were defeated, and eventually were incorporated into the state apparatus as tax collectors (ibid.). By empowering certain ethnic groups, colonialism left a huge power imbalance in the country that would manifest in anger among excluded ethnic groups. This is the subject of the *Black Book*, discussed earlier, that helped spark the Darfur revolt, showing an indirect but powerful link between colonialism and the ethnic cleansing of 2003-4.

Finally, the colonial state of Sudan modeled coercive ruling strategies that were adopted by future independent governments. State roles and tactics are socially-constructed and path-dependent; future governments learn from the actions of past governments and often repeat them. As Vaughan argues, the very tactic used in the 2003-4 ethnic cleansing was learned from the colonial regime: "…arming militias and letting them run free against those defined as enemies of the state. The logic of this strategy is one inherited from colonial government…" (Vaughan 2015, 57).

Conclusion

I have presented two recent cases of ethnic cleansing, Myanmar in 2017 and Sudan in 2003-4, along with a theory of the circumstances that lead to ethnic cleansing. This theory suggests two factors that are necessary for ethnic cleansing to occur: the exclusion of an ethnic group from the socially-constructed definition of the nation, and that the government believe the ethnic group poses a threat to its rule. The theory also contends that three contributing variables make ethnic cleansing more likely: a lack of democratic institutions, a history of military rule and a weak state. Finally, it proposes that colonialism can indirectly contribute to ethnic cleansing in successor states by creating ethnic divisions and leaving the state with some or all of the three previous variables that increase its likelihood.

I have used the cases at hand to give evidence for each of the parts of the theory, to give examples of how the parts can look in practice, and to show the utility of the theory for framing discussion on the root causes of cases of ethnic cleansing. I find strong evidence for most parts of the theory. However, one significant shortcoming is the lack of evidence for the role democracy plays in preventing ethnic cleansing. Because neither Sudan nor Myanmar has strong democratic institutions, it is difficult to say whether such institutions could have prevented ethnic cleansing. Future research could resolve this by studying cases of ethnic conflict in democracies, with a focus on how the democratic institutions relate to the use violence or lack thereof (Snyder (2000) and Mann (1999) are two valuable contributions in this vein).

More broadly, the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by the selection of cases. I have focused this thesis on only two cases, and the two share many similarities. Both countries have limited democratic institutions, histories of military rule, fairly weak states (although Myanmar enjoys a stronger military), and legacies of colonialism (both by

the British, although Sudan was also colonized by the Ottoman Empire). Thus, it is rather easy to propose that the factors they share contributed to ethnic cleansing, but quite difficult to prove without examining cases that lacked some or all of these variables. Large-N statistical analysis could add to our understanding by overcoming some of these challenges. But operationalizing the many and highly subjective potential independent variables and finding enough examples of the rather rare phenomenon of ethnic cleansing both pose significant challenges to such statistical studies. Indeed, despite its limitations, the small-N nature of this thesis allows for the depth of study necessary to grapple with the many variables and long histories involved in ethnic conflict. This level of detail, I believe, is necessary if scholars hope to truly understand the causes of ethnic cleansing and how it might be prevented.

The theory presented here has fairly broad scope conditions. It can apply to any independent government, but not to colonial governments or governments that are otherwise controlled to a high degree by a foreign power. Such governments do not rule in the name of the people and have very different incentives from independent governments.

If my theory is correct, it has significant implications for efforts to prevent ethnic conflict from escalating to the point of ethnic cleansing. It suggests that ethnic tension should be considered more dangerous in countries with weak democracies, histories of military rule and/or weak states, risk factors that are not necessarily considered at present. The two conditions the theory suggests are necessary (exclusion from the national identity and a perception that the ethnic group poses threat to the nation) would likely be warning signs to any international observer. But the particular emphasis I place on the threat perceived by the government of its capacity to rule is less obvious, yet it appears critical to both cases of ethnic cleansing presented here. Thus, the international community should see the formation of rebel groups based on ethnic

grievances as serious warning – a large enough threat to the government in such a situation could lead the government to commit ethnic cleansing.

The theory also points to potentially novel ways to prevent ethnic cleansing. The international community has long encouraged strong democratic institutions and civilian rule (at least rhetorically, although perhaps less so in the current Trump presidency). Such efforts gain new urgency in contexts of ethnic conflict as means to prevent greater violence. The building of state capacity may also prevent ethnic cleansing, even if the intuitive response to a government feared to be a danger to its own people would be to reduce, not increase, the tools at its disposal. The theory here suggests that if the state has strong non-military apparatuses, it will use them rather than military force to respond to ethnic conflict. Particularly by increasing the ability of the state to provide services such as health, education and infrastructure, and pressuring the government to extend these services without regard for ethnicity, ethnic conflict may dissipate. By easing the (often socioeconomic) grievances of ethnic groups, such efforts would ultimately reduce the threat felt by the government. However, if the increased state resources flow disproportionately to some ethnic groups or regions, state-building efforts may actually increase ethnic conflict, although the state would still be better equipped to resolve such conflict without the brutally simple tool of ethnic cleansing. And as the comparison here shows, the stronger the military at the government's disposal, the less brutal we would expect any military response to be. Ethnic cleansing is an evil strategy, but it is also costly – even a government that cares little for the wellbeing of a particular ethnic group will only choose it if it believes it has no better options.

References

Beech, Hannah. 2017. "Rohingya Militants Vow to Fight Myanmar Despite Disastrous Cost,"
    September 17, 2017, sec. Asia Pacific.
    https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/17/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-militants.html.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press.

Callahan, Mary P. (Mary Patricia). 2003. *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*.
    Cornell University Press,.

Carey, Peter. 1997. *Burma: The Challenge of Change in a Divided Society*. New York: St.
    Martin's Press.

Caselli, Francesco, and Wilbur John Coleman. 2013. "On the Theory of Ethnic Conflict."
    Journal of the European Economic Association 11 (suppl_1): 161–192.

Cheesman, Nick. 2017. "How in Myanmar 'National Races' Came to Surpass Citizenship and
    Exclude Rohingya." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47 (3): 461–83.
    https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2017.1297476.

Collins, Robert O. 2006. "Disaster in Darfur: Historical Overview." In *Genocide in Darfur:
    Investigating the Atrocities in the Sudan*, edited by Samuel Totten and Eric Markusen, 3–
    24. New York: Routledge.

Crilly, Rob. 2010. *Saving Darfur: Everyone's Favourite African War*. London: Reportage Press.

Elkins, Zachary, and John Sides. 2007. "Can Institutions Build Unity in Multiethnic States?"
    American Political Science Review 101 (4): 693–708.

Ellick, Adam B., and Nicholas Kristof. 2014. *21st-Century Concentration Camps*. NY Times.
    https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000002939059/21st-century-concentration-
    camps.html.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American
    Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534.

Ferguson, Jane M. 2015. "Who's Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in
    Burma/Myanmar." *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 171 (1): 1–28.

Flint, Julie, and Alex De Waal. 2008. *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*. Zed Books Ltd.

Fund for Peace. 2006. "Country Dashboard | Fragile States Index." 2006.
    http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/country-data/.

———. 2017. "Country Dashboard | Fragile States Index." 2017.
    http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/country-data/.

Geddes, Barbara. 1999. "What Do We Know about Democratization after Twenty Years?"
    Annual Review of Political Science 2 (1): 115–144.

Gettleman, Jeffrey. 2017. "Rohingya Recount Atrocities: 'They Threw My Baby Into a Fire.'"
    The New York Times, October 11, 2017, sec. Asia Pacific.
    https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/world/asia/rohingya-myanmar-atrocities.html.

Grundy-Warr, C., and E. W. S. Yin. 2002. "Geographies of Displacement: The Karenni and the
    Shan across the Myanmar-Thailand Border." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*
    23 (1): 93–122. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9493.00120.

Hagan, John, and Wenona Rymond-Richmond. 2008. "The Collective Dynamics of Racial
    Dehumanization and Genocidal Victimization in Darfur." *American Sociological Review*
    73 (6): 875–902.

Hlaing, Kyaw Yin. 2012. "Understanding Recent Political Changes in Myanmar." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 34 (2): 197–216. https://doi.org/10.1355/cs34-2c.

Holliday, Ian. 2008. "Voting and Violence in Myanmar: Nation Building for a Transition to Democracy." *Asian Survey* 48 (6): 1038–58. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2008.48.6.1038.

Human Rights Watch. 2013. "'All You Can Do Is Pray': Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State." April 22, 2013. https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims.

———. 2017. "Burma: 40 Rohingya Villages Burned Since October." Human Rights Watch. December 17, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/17/burma-40-rohingya-villages-burned-october.

Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research. 2016. "Polity IV Project, Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2016." 2016. http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html.

Johnson, Douglas Hamilton. 2011. *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*. Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

Jones, Lee. 2014. "Explaining Myanmar's Regime Transition: The Periphery Is Central." *Democratization* 21 (5): 780–802. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.863878.

Klinken, Gerry van, and Su Mon Thazin Aung. 2017. "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47 (3): 353–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2017.1293133.

Kristof, Nicholas. 2017. "Is This Genocide?," December 15, 2017, sec. Op-Ed. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/opinion/sunday/genocide-myanmar-rohingya-bangladesh.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region&region=opinion-c-col-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region.

———. 2018. "Opinion | I Saw a Genocide in Slow Motion." *The New York Times*, March 2, 2018, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/02/opinion/i-saw-a-genocide-in-slow-motion.html.

Laitin, David D. 1986. *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Change among the Yoruba*. University of Chicago Press.

Mann, Michael. 1999. "The Dark Side of Democracy: The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing." *New Left Review*, I, , no. 235: 18–45.

Massoud, Mark Fathi. 2011. "Do Victims of War Need International Law? Human Rights Education Programs in Authoritarian Sudan." *Law & Society Review* 45 (1): 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2011.00426.x.

Médecins Sans Frontieres. 2017. "Myanmar/Bangladesh: MSF Surveys Estimate That at Least 6,700 Rohingya Were Killed during the Attacks in Myanmar." Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International. December 12, 2017. http://www.msf.org/en/article/myanmarbangladesh-msf-surveys-estimate-least-6700-rohingya-were-killed-during-attacks.

Melson, Robert. 1992. *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Natsios, Andrew S. 2012. *Sudan, South Sudan, and Darfur: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Paddock, Richard C., and Hannah Beech. 2017. "Aung San Suu Kyi, a Much-Changed Icon, Evades Rohingya Accusations," September 18, 2017, sec. Asia Pacific. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/world/asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-speech-rohingya.html.

Pedersen, Morten B., Emily Rudland, and Ronald James May. 2000. *Burma Myanmar: Strong Regime, Weak State?* C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd.

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529–45.

Rice, Susan E., and Stewart Patrick. 2008. "Index of State Weakness in the Developing World." Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute.

Roeder, Philip G. 1999. "Peoples and States after 1989: The Political Costs of Incomplete National Revolutions." *Slavic Review* 58 (4): 854–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/2697202.

Rowlatt, Justin. 2017. "Could Aung San Suu Kyi Face Rohingya Genocide Charges?" *BBC News*, December 18, 2017, sec. Asia. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42335018.

Rummel, R. J. (Rudolph J.). 1994. *Death by Government*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transactions Publishers,.

Skalnik Leff, Carol Skalnik. 1999. "Democratization and Disintegration in Multinational States: The Breakup of the Communist Federations." *World Politics* 51 (2): 205–35.

Slater, Dan. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Martin. 1997. "Burma's Ethnic Minorities: A Central or Peripheral Problem in the Regional Context." In *Burma: The Challenge of Change in a Divided Society*, edited by Peter Carey. St. Antony's Series. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Snyder, Jack L. 2000. *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*. New York: Norton.

Straus, Scott. 2005. "Darfur and the Genocide Debate." *Foreign Affairs* 84 (1): 123–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/20034212.

The Associated Press. 2017. "Buddhists Protest to Urge Myanmar Not to Repatriate Rohingya," October 22, 2017, sec. Asia Pacific. https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/10/22/world/asia/ap-as-myanmar-attacks.html.

The Economist. 2017. "Not Nearly Enough Is Being Done for the Rohingyas Fleeing Myanmar," October 21, 2017. https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21730414-aid-agencies-cannot-keep-up-ever-swelling-numbers-not-nearly-enough-being-done.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2018. "Rohingya Emergency." UNHCR. January 7, 2018. http://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html.

Vaughan, Chris. 2015. *Darfur: Colonial Violence, Sultanic Legacies and Local Politics*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

Waal, Alex de. 2005. "Who Are the Darfurians? Arab and African Identities, Violence and External Engagement." *African Affairs* 104 (415): 181–205.

Walton, Matthew J. 2013. "The 'Wages of Burman-Ness:' Ethnicity and Burman Privilege in Contemporary Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43 (1): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2012.730892.

Willis, Justin, and Atta el Battahani. 2010. "'We Changed the Laws': Electoral Practice and Malpractice in Sudan since 1953." *African Affairs* 109 (435): 191–212. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq003.

Wimmer, Andreas. 2008. "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 113 (4): 970–1022. https://doi.org/10.1086/522803.

Wimmer, Andreas, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min. 2009. "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set." *American Sociological Review* 74 (2): 316–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400208.