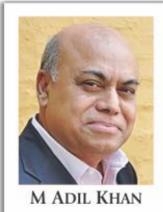


# Is there a solution to the Rohingya crisis?



**A**UTHORITIES in Myanmar say close to 100 people have been killed since August 25, 2017 when armed men, reportedly from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), launched a pre-dawn raid on

police outposts in the conflict-torn region; and this has been blamed as the main cause of the latest violence in Arakan. According to one report, "The army has declared a war against 'terrorism,' encircling the townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, home to around 800,000 people, and imposed a curfew from dusk to dawn" perhaps to further tighten its control on the most persecuted community in the world. Rights groups have reported that close to 800 men, women and children have been killed, and the latest violence has also triggered another refugee surge across the border towards Bangladesh. The recently published photo of a drowned and floating Rohingya baby reveals the state of desperation that has afflicted the fleeing Rohingyas.

Satellite data accessed by the Human Rights Watch confirms the current carnage. It shows "widespread fires burning in at least 10 areas in Myanmar's Rakhine state," following the military crackdown.

Rohingyas blame the Myanmar government and the army for the situation, saying soldiers are shooting indiscriminately at unarmed men, women and children and carrying out arson attacks. The Myanmar authorities, however, blame ARSA "extremist terrorists" for the killings and the fires.

However, given Myanmar's past record, it is not hard to assume the truth. The fact that Myanmar would not allow any neutral monitors on the ground confirms the claims made by the Rohingyas as well as the rights groups. Furthermore, Myanmar leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu



Rohingya children cross the Bangladesh-Myanmar border fence as they try to enter Bangladesh in Bandarban, Bangladesh, August 29, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS/MOHAMMAD PONIR HOSSAIN

Kyi's opposition to the claims and refusal to meet any journalist that asks questions about the Rohingya situation is an indication of her government's discomfort with the truth.

Until now, the government has been pretty consistent in its treatment of the Rohingyas—persistent persecution, insistent denial and systematic refusal to permit neutral probe. It appears as if Myanmar's ultimate aim is to kill and frighten the Rohingyas so that they depopulate themselves from the region on their own accord. With the inaction and apathy of the international community, this looks more

and more like a looming possibility, although the UN has agreed that it believes Myanmar army's response amounts to "ethnic cleansing".

The emergence of ARSA has added a new dimension to this situation.

We don't know much about it. Is this something that has emerged out of desperation from within or is this something that has been engineered by the authorities? ARSA's spokesman, however, claims that it is a force from within created to "defend, salvage and protect Rohingya community in Arakan with our best capacities as we have the legitimate right under international law to defend

ourselves in line with the principle of self-defence."

While ARSA may have a motivation to fight for the cause of Rohingya salvation, they have to be careful about how they pursue their goals. On the other hand, as is conceivable, Myanmar government's response to their actions would be harsh and intensify miseries of the very people that they are trying to "defend." Furthermore, and this is something that ARSA needs to consider carefully, that their actions may now provide perfect *raison d'être* to Myanmar government to justify, indeed morally, its violence. As Rohingyas are

Muslims, in the current international political climate of Islamophobia, it would be only too easy to paint ARSA and, by extension, the wider Rohingya population as "Islamic terrorists," and thus turn the victims into villains and the real villains into the virtuous. Rohingyas will be like the Palestinians, demonised and persecuted with impunity and with twisted morality.

In the recent melee, the real loser—morally, that is—seems to be Bangladesh. Unlike Thailand, which has opened its border to Rohingya refugees, Bangladesh has proposed joint military operations with Myanmar army against the Rohingya fighters. Sadly, instead of trying to find a permanent solution for the Rohingyas, Bangladesh is opting to do the most despicable thing, joining the persecutors in their killing mission.

Myanmar has tried violence as remedy for the Rohingya issue for the last several decades with no effect, and more violence is unlikely to give them anything better. However, Myanmar's addiction to violence drives home an important message: solution will not come in this way. It has to come from outside. The international community has to play a much stronger role otherwise, as someone has argued recently, "like other stateless and unrepresented Muslims, [the Rohingyas] are at risk of producing a persistent terrorist threat" that in the end would not only destabilise Myanmar but also its neighbours.

Myanmar government's consistent refusal to do something more conciliatory and dignified about the issue and the fact that it even denies any wrongdoing, suggest that conventional diplomacy will not work. Something out of the ordinary is called for, and given the trust deficits on both sides, it may be worthwhile for the UN to step in and devise a solution based on its experiences of similar situations in other parts of the world.

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## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# Trump's doomed Afghan strategy



SHAHID JAVED BURKI

**I**N a rare presidential address on August 21 at Fort Myer, Virginia, Donald Trump outlined his administration's strategy for the United States' future engagement in Afghanistan. Trump avoided admitting outright that he was authorising an increase in the number of US troops in that

Obama did, arguing that the country will face significantly increased US pressure to crack down on the terrorist sanctuaries along its border, from which insurgents launch attacks on Afghan and NATO forces. If Pakistan fails to do so, Trump declared, it will "have much to lose." Already, Trump has determined that Pakistan should no longer be paid for providing valuable services to American, NATO, and Afghan forces, and has even blocked a large payment to the country that was already due.

security zone. In any case, it seems that the potential for US-India security cooperation in the region, while only hinted at in Trump's speech, has already been discussed by the two governments.

The implications of Trump's speech extend beyond America's policy in Afghanistan. The address also sharpened the contours—already limned during his May visit to Saudi Arabia and his July visit to Poland—of what might be called the "Trump doctrine."

His speech on Afghanistan also pointed to his efforts to contain China. While Trump seemed briefly to be more interested in securing the Chinese government's help in reining in North Korea, Trump seems eager, now that the North Korean nuclear crisis has apparently been returned to the back burner, to resume his administration's focus on constraining the Asian giant.

But the Trump doctrine seems no more capable of limiting China than it does of eliminating the terrorist threat to the West. In fact, in the long term, the strategy Trump laid out at Fort Myer will probably have the opposite impact.

If military force has not succeeded in stabilising Afghanistan in the last 16 years, it is difficult to imagine how Trump thinks it will work now. What is needed is precisely what Trump rejects: a serious and sustained effort to build the Afghan state and economy, in order to give hope to Afghanistan's young population (the median age is only 18.6). Young men will lay down their weapons only if they have confidence in the future.

Moreover, cornering Pakistan will serve only to force its government to align itself more openly with actors like the Haqqani network, a guerrilla group that has been fighting NATO and Afghan forces. This would strengthen insurgent groups' control over border areas, effectively creating a buffer state between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As funding from the US declines, Pakistan probably will also deepen its ties with China. It has already sent its foreign secretary to Beijing to meet with her Chinese counterpart. In the statement issued after the meeting, China pledged total and unconditional support to Pakistan.

If the goal of the Trump doctrine is to create a stable global backdrop against which America can pursue its own interests, it is doomed to fail. In fact, it is likely to have the opposite effect, unleashing a destabilising genie that will be almost impossible to put back in its bottle.

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*If the goal of the Trump doctrine is to create a stable global backdrop against which America can pursue its own interests, it is doomed to fail. In fact, it is likely to have the opposite effect.*

troubled country, saying instead that military leaders would make such decisions. Yet the reality is that Trump's plan will deepen American involvement in a military mission that has already lasted for 16 years.

Trump, who campaigned on the promise to extricate the US from foreign conflicts, reiterated in his speech that he shared the "American people's frustration" about a foreign policy that has already cost too much time, energy, and money, and too many lives. His new strategy, he said, is the result of deep reflection by him and his national-security team, about how to ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes the source of a terrorist attack on the US like that of September 11, 2001.

Presidents Barack Obama and George W Bush sought the same goal. In fact, though Trump attempted to portray his strategy as a stark break from those of his immediate predecessors, many of the steps he announced have been tried already. Still, there are key differences in Trump's approach, which will have serious long-term consequences for Afghanistan.

For starters, Trump has dropped the "nation-building" element of America's Afghan strategy. Criticising previous efforts to "rebuild countries" in America's "own image," rather than putting US security interests first, Trump asserted that the US will no longer engage in explicit state-building, aimed at helping Afghanistan to become a relatively modern political and economic entity. It will, however, demand that the Afghan government deal effectively with corruption, improve governance, and make better use of the resources it receives from the international community.

Second, Trump brought Pakistan much more explicitly into his Afghan policy than Bush or



PHOTO: NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP

Finally, Trump has invited India to play a larger role in Afghanistan, despite the risks India faces in a country that Pakistan views as a second front in its historic struggle with its southern neighbour. Trump appreciates what India has already done, but is urging it to do even more, using its vast earnings from exports to the US to help rebuild Afghanistan's economy. He also suggested that the US will work with India to create an Indo-Pacific

Trump, it seems, sees a world split between the West and the "rest," with conflict all but inevitable. In Saudi Arabia, Trump invited Muslim-majority countries to join the West in eliminating adherents of Islamic radicalism. In Poland, he challenged the West to demonstrate its will to resist the impact—physical and philosophical—of its adversaries.

Trump is not targeting only the Muslim world.

## QUOTABLE Quote



NGŪGĨ WA THIONG'O, WIZARD OF THE CROW

Kenyan writer, whose work includes novels, plays, short stories, and essays

*The condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Debussy work
  - 6 Mail, as payment
  - 11 Green hue
  - 12 Draw out
  - 13 Patron saint of young girls
  - 14 Out of bed
  - 15 Forest female
  - 16 When a round starts
  - 18 Screw up
  - 19 Hotel feature
  - 20 Jazz lover
  - 21 Agreement
  - 23 Peripheral device
  - 25 Young fellow
  - 27 Poivre's partner
  - 28 Yard machine
  - 30 Tacit OKs
  - 33 Implore
  - 34 Place for a pint
  - 36 Acquire
  - 37 Bring to life
  - 39 Hostile
  - 40 Bank robber's advance man
  - 41 Car of the '50s
  - 43 42-Down quadruple
  - 44 Adorable one
  - 45 High homes
  - 46 Party VIPs
  - DOWN**
  - 1 Like some dice
  - 2 Candidate of 2000
  - 3 Some rock experts
  - 4 Abel's mother
  - 5 Kicks back
  - 6 Enjoys a favorite book
  - 7 Fix text
  - 8 Some rock experts
  - 9 Old deliverer
  - 10 Doctrine
  - 17 MPG-rating org.
  - 22 Bar study
  - 24 Comfy place
  - 26 Leaves
  - 28 Threaten
  - 29 Deep groove
  - 31 Lying
  - 32 Fashion page topics
  - 33 Burger topper
  - 35 Hardwood tree
  - 38 Convene
  - 42 See 43-Across

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

S N A P      G L A R E  
T O U R      F R I D A Y  
A N T E      R E A D M E  
R O O T      B E E R

Z O O T S U I T

A S T E R N      R T E  
H O Y L E      H O G A N  
A L P      L A B E L S  
B O O T H I L L

H O O T O W L S  
S H A K I N G      N E I L  
A C T I O N      G A M E  
S I N K S      S K E W

## BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

YOU KNOW HOW I'VE SAID MISS BUXLEY WOULD EVEN LOOK GOOD IN A PAPER BAG?

YES

5-13

## BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

SHE TOOK THAT AS A CHALLENGE

I MADE IT MYSELF!

GREEN+MORT WALKER

WELL, ISN'T THIS NICE!

YEP, IT'S ALL HERE...

NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS

THE FOOD, THE GAMES...

...THE UNNECESSARILY COMPLICATED TICKET SYSTEM...

FAMILY PACK IS \$18.75, AND SINGLES ARE \$1.21, BUT FOR \$23.62 YOU GET...