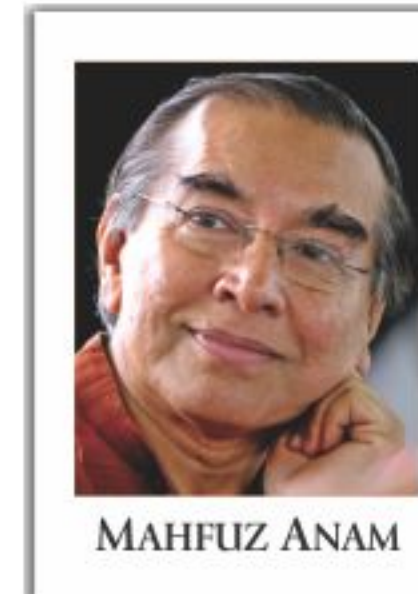


Rohingya crisis: A concern for the region



MAHFUUZ ANAM

REACTING to the insurgent attacks on some police outposts and an army camp on August 25, the Myanmar security forces have unleashed a "war" of sorts against the

the Rohingya crisis may elude us once more.

The Commission has correctly identified the central questions to be "citizenship verification, documentation, rights and equality before the law" and goes on to say that "... if they are left to fester, the future of the Rakhine state-and indeed of Myanmar as a whole-will be irretrievably jeopardised."

Security Council on recent resolutions on the Rohingya issue.

The block of Arab and Muslim countries will naturally be drawn into this fray as fellow Muslims are being slaughtered. Already there is sufficient reason for concern at the flow of Middle Eastern money in the region with distinct fundamentalist overtones. We all know about Rohingyas finding their way into various Arab and Muslim

Russia and the rising tiff in the South China Sea, not to speak of tension with North Korea and its unpredictable and dangerous consequences.

India has completely surprised Bangladesh by its all out endorsement of Myanmar's position. We, naively as it now appears, were hoping that Prime Minister Modi's visit to Myanmar would help, if not to solve issue but at least to stop the violence and ebb the flow of refugees. PM Modi's support to the Myanmar's position and the absence of any substantive reference to the refugee issue and the consequent humanitarian disaster has greatly disappointed Bangladesh.

The rising terrorism that both Prime Minister Modi and the Aung San Suu Kyi have pledged to fight is created and sustained by oppression and ignoring the rights of a minority group. That has been the experience everywhere. For the so-called "Jihadists", the oppression of the Rohingyas fits the bill completely as a cause they will espouse to gain credibility in the Muslim world whose natural support for this oppressed group of Muslims is only obvious.

In this regard the emergence of ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) is something that should concern all. In the early hours of August 25 this group, whose Arabic name is Harakah al-Yaqin, simultaneously attacked 30 police posts and an army base in the northern side of the Rakhine state. Twelve Myanmar troops and officials and 77 insurgents were killed. This is by far the most audacious and damaging attack by the insurgents who are mostly equipped with machetes, few small arms and hand held explosives. The emergence of such an armed group cannot be welcomed by any country wanting peace and stability in this region.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) termed this as the most serious escalation in the conflict. Obviously the biggest losers from the escalation and continuation of this conflict will be the two countries directly affected—Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has not yet taken any hard-line against its only other neighbour save India and has tried, over the years to reach an understanding with Myanmar. It has internationalised the issue only to the extent of seeking humanitarian aid and nothing more. It first received about 300,000 Rohingya refugees in 1978. Through negotiations about 210,000 were repatriated with the rest continuing to live in Bangladesh. However, the latest situation has



changed everything. Bangladesh will now be under severe pressure from the Arab and Muslim world to internationalise the issue and take a tougher stance than it has hitherto taken. The visits of the Indonesian and Turkish foreign ministers are indications of that. If there is no change in the situation on the ground Bangladesh will be left with little option but to take a more stringent approach that would further complicate the situation.

Myanmar, on its part must, realise that blaming all the current atrocities on the so-called terrorists and claiming that its security forces had nothing to do with the crimes committed, in spite of unvarying accounts of thousands of refugees to the contrary, is neither credible nor helpful in solving the situation.

The Kofi Annan Commission has painstakingly worked out what international experts say to be a realistic path towards peaceful resolution of a conflict that left to itself may become a dangerous crisis. Myanmar must pay heed to the recommendations of that report.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Myanmar needs to remember what she herself said in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech that "Whenever suffering is ignored, there will be seeds of conflict, for suffering degrades and embitters and enrages".

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Rohingya—an ethnic minority group living for centuries in the Rakhine state of Myanmar—burning down their villages, killing their men and raping their women, committing what can be termed as "crimes against humanity" that has resulted in nearly 500 dead and nearly 200,000 taking shelter in Bangladesh, which has hosted Rohingya refugees for more than three decades in varying numbers depending on the level of oppression across the border.

Myanmar, then called Burma, became independent in 1948 from the British, a year after the latter's withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Geographically Rakhine state, where the current conflict is taking place, is separated from the rest of Myanmar by barren mountain range. Ancient history gives the area its own separate past with a distinct Rakhine Kingdom being established in 1430 with its capital in Mrauk U located as a link between Buddhist and Muslim Asia with close ties with the Sultanate of Bengal. After 350 years of independent existence Rakhine State was conquered by the Burmese in 1784. This annexation was short lived as the territory was occupied by the British in 1824 and made a part of the British Indian Empire. Today the Rohingyas are about 1.1 million Muslim citizens of the Rakhine state but are not recognised legally as one of the 135 ethnic groups constituting a part of the citizenry of Myanmar.

It is perhaps not just a coincidence that the current attack on the Rohingyas follows on the heels of the report of the Rakhine Advisory Commission led by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. This Commission was set up with active participation of the Myanmar government, albeit under severe pressure from the international community, and whose findings it had earlier pledged to implement. Now with the latest spate of violence the prospect of implementation of the Rakhine Commission appears remote and the possibility of a peaceful resolution of

Fleeing Rohingya

Refugees fleeing Myanmar's Rakhine state to Bangladesh since late August

Data as announced by UN, IOM Accumulated



As we see it from Bangladesh, it is not only the future of Myanmar which will be jeopardised but that of this region itself as the Secretary General of the UN warned last Wednesday (September 6) China, given its historical links, will take more than a passing interest in this affair, an effort in which it will be supported by Russia the indications of which is discernible in their pattern of voting at the UN

countries with stories of atrocities invoking a natural reaction for seeking justice and fighting a future of fear and intimidation by building up some sort of resistance including armed. These are but natural outcomes of prolonged oppression to which the Annan Report clearly alludes to.

The US is likely to be more interested than usual given its deteriorating relationship with both China and

PROJECT SYNDICATE

A "China First" strategy for North Korea



BILL EMMOTT

MOST pundits agree that the least bad way to deal with North Korea's nuclear sabre rattling is a continued combination of tight containment and aggressive diplomacy. Fewer, however, have recognised that the least bad military option—the one implied by US President Donald Trump's insistence that China take responsibility for its dangerous neighbour—is a Chinese invasion, or regime change forced through China's threat to launch one.

This outcome, which would sharply shift East Asia's strategic balance in China's favour, is not as unlikely as most people think. In fact, its very plausibility is one reason why it needs to be taken seriously, including by Chinese military planners. In Trumpian terms, this is a "China First" option that could help "Make China Great Again."

Any military intervention, Chinese or otherwise, would carry huge risks. But before dwelling on them, consider what a successful Chinese intervention would achieve. For starters, it would put North Korea right where the country's post-Korean War history suggests it belongs: under a Chinese nuclear umbrella, benefiting from a credible security guarantee.

Mao Zedong used to say that his country and North Korea were "as close as lips and teeth"—a fitting description, given Chinese troops' role in averting an American victory in the Korean War. But while Japan and South Korea have remained close allies of the United States during the six decades since then, hosting US bases and sheltering under US nuclear protection, China and North Korea have drifted ever further apart.

As a result, China has little control over its neighbour and purported ally, and probably scant knowledge of what is going on there. It could, it is true, tighten the existing siege on North Korea by cutting trade further and blocking energy supplies. But this might achieve little beyond pushing Kim Jong-un's cloistered regime to look for support from its other neighbour, Russia.

If, as is commonly assumed, North Korea wants some sort of credible security guarantee in exchange for curtailing its nuclear programme, the only country capable of providing it is

China. No American promise would remain credible beyond the term of the president who gave it, if even that long.

So if China were to combine threats of invasion with a promise of security and nuclear protection, in exchange for cooperation and possible regime change, its chances of winning over large parts of the Korean People's Army would be

successful military intervention would include not only control of what happens on the Korean Peninsula, where it presumably would be able to establish military bases, but also regional gratitude for having prevented a catastrophic war.

No other action holds as much potential to make Chinese leadership

Harvard's Joseph S Nye, huge reserves of soft power

But now to the 64 billion renminbi question: Could it work? We can't know the answer for sure, and any military intervention carries great risks. The Chinese armed forces are now well equipped, but lack comparable battlefield experience. Their inferior

one, would stand a better chance of avoiding Kim's likely response: an artillery attack on the South Korean capital, Seoul, which lies just a few dozen miles south of the demilitarised zone. Why would North Korea slaughter its southern brothers and sisters in retaliation for a Chinese invasion that came with a promise of continued security, if not autonomy?

Moreover, while the Kim regime's nuclear restraint could hardly be taken for granted, China would be a less likely target than the US for North Korean missiles. Were a Chinese military option to be contemplated seriously, some intelligence and missile-defence collaboration with the US might be worth exploring. Given the risks, it would be hard for the US to refuse.

This scenario may well never happen. But it is so logical that the possibility of it should be taken seriously. It is, after all, China's best opportunity to achieve greater strategic parity with the US in the region, while removing a source of instability that threatens them both.

Bill Emmott, is a former editor-in-chief of The Economist, is the author of The Fate of the West.

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the US would mean devastation, submission to China would promise survival, and presumably a degree of continued autonomy. For all except those closest to Kim, the choice would not be a difficult one.

China's strategic gains from a

desirable, especially if the alternative is a reckless, poorly planned US-led war. What China needs, above all, is legitimacy, and intervention in North Korea would provide it. Successful use of hard power would bring China, to borrow the distinction coined by

prepared to use nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, if they did not simply accept Chinese terms and surrender.

What we can say with near certainty is that a Chinese land and sea invasion, rather than an American

QUOTABLE Quote



CHINUA ACHEBE

ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH
NIGERIAN NOVELIST, POET, PROFESSOR, AND CRITIC

While we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Prepares for a blow
- 7 Taj Mahal city
- 11 Broad street
- 12 Cornfield pest
- 13 Word of caution
- 14 Toothpaste buy
- 15 American marsupial
- 17 Falls back
- 20 Telegram
- 23 "— Town"
- 24 Obsess over
- 26 Lyricist Gershwin
- 27 Campaigned
- 28 Motel freebie
- 29 Protective wall
- 31 "Platoon" setting
- 32 Radius end
- 33 Like an eyesore

DOWN

- 1 Bar bill
- 2 Garden evictee
- 3 Fresh
- 4 Ginger cookies
- 5 Franc's replacement
- 6 Spots
- 7 Real
- 8 Grouch's habit
- 9 Hold up
- 10 Stunned wonder
- 16 Bloodhound's clue

17 France's longest river

18 Sound-based

19 Louisiana university

21 In the area

22 Opposition

24 Sketched

25 Kid's card game

30 Sharp

33 Bring together for mould

36 Smooth

37 Clumsy guy

38 Young one

40 One — time

41 Danson of "The Good Place"

42 Mag. workers

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

SARGE, WHAT'S THAT ON TOP OF YOUR HEAD? IT'S A BIRTH-MARK OH, I THOUGHT IT WAS A BLOWHOLE

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

PLEASE DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE BUMMED OUT JUST BECAUSE THERE ARE GIRLS ON YOUR BASEBALL TEAM! IT'S BASEBALL! GIRLS CAN'T THROW! I CAN THROW! YOU'RE NOT A GIRL... YOU'RE A MOM. "MOM" IS STILL A FORM OF GIRL.