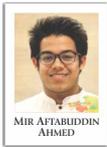


Rohingya crisis and the norm of R2P



MIR AFZALUDDIN AHMED

SOVEREIGNTY is sometimes an overused yet largely exploited concept in the world of international relations. In its truest sense, sovereignty is a fundamental term designating supreme authority over a certain polity. Sovereignty has been used by some as a tool to

continue the activities of authoritarian regimes, whilst others have sought to celebrate it through the practice of democracy. Realising the practical implications of missing sovereignty as an international norm, the global powers initiated a 21st-century political commitment called the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). With the Rohingya crisis spiralling into a disaster of magnanimous proportions, this maybe an appropriate time to invoke R2P against Myanmar.

In 2005, member-states of the United Nations endorsed R2P to prevent four types of humanitarian crisis: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The Rohingya crisis has been recognised by the Bangladesh government and many global institutions as being under the category of ethnic cleansing. So, what does R2P entail? As a norm, it demands that national governments essentially do not take sovereignty for granted. R2P is based on the principle that sovereignty requires a responsibility to protect all populations from mass atrocities and human rights violations.

Myanmar crises and Rohingya protests. A large proportion of the Rohingya-based Rohingyas makes a strong case for an intervention by the international community, either through taking measures stated in the R2P framework or by involving regional powers such as China or India to achieve a solution to an ever-growing problem.

consider the case of Libya in which R2P was invoked to make a military intervention. However, one may be prompted to think that R2P automatically means direct military intervention on the part of the global powers. That is not the case. The basic tenets of R2P also involve measures such as mediation, diplomatic cooperation and economic sanctions as part of a mechanism to ensure that sovereignty is respected within a certain nation. According to the R2P doctrine,



With the Rohingya crisis spiralling into a disaster of magnanimous proportions, this maybe an appropriate time to invoke R2P against Myanmar.

PHOTO: STAR

"The primary purpose of the intervention states may have, must be to halt or avert human suffering. Right intention is better assisted with multifaceted operations, clearly supported by regional opinion and the victims concerned."

But "there must be a reasonable chance of success in halting or averting the suffering which has justified the intervention," it states, "with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction."

government with regard to Rohingya and the outflow of migrants towards Bangladesh. R2P also covers an interesting point that makes it even more applicable for the Rohingya crisis. Its coverage is extensive in the sense that R2P recognises the fundamental rights of all people, whether one is a citizen or not—all of states. The fact that the Rohingyas are now stateless and being subjected to mass atrocity crimes means the R2P-bound international community has no option but to intervene to address Myanmar government's lack of accountability and action. It also means that the international community has a moral and legal obligation, as per international law, to pressure Myanmar into taking action to prevent ethnic cleansing and simultaneously support Bangladesh in its effort to ensure the survival of the refugees.

Interestingly, it was a Bangladeshi—Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury—who helped shape many

tenets of the R2P. Chowdhury, who served as the Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Caretaker Government of 2007-08, had worked as a diplomat to negotiate several paragraphs of the R2P norm. It is now up to Bangladesh to persuade the global community to act immediately based on those tenets.

Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali has suggested that Bangladesh is pushing for placing the Rohingya agenda at the UN Security Council, although it is unlikely that it will result in quick action thanks to the council's history of bureaucratic red tape and veto politics. However, the European powers with R2P-backed organisations staking the norm, with UN-based organisations asking nations to provide concrete support to the Hasina government. While it is disappointing to observe India's lack of condemnation towards Aung San Suu Kyi, one hopes that both India and China will eventually overcome the practical impediments holding back a formal condemnation, and intervene to pressure the Myanmar government into ending what surely qualifies as ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar is a proud, sovereign nation with a rich history. The same nation is now ignoring the plight of its people, and pushing the country to the brink of unrest by facilitating the massacre of one of its own ethnic groups. Identity politics and the politics of power cannot, and should not, be used as a basis for perpetrating its sovereignty. Myanmar cannot hide behind their sovereignty status to cover up state-supported crimes. The international community should seriously consider going for soft R2P interventions such as mediations and sanctions, and this seems to be the only way to convince a Nobel Peace icon that the path she and her government have taken is morally, legally, and constitutionally wrong.

Inaug San Suu Kyi's chapter in history began with her bold, courageous and symbolic effort to institute democracy in her country. That she was able to do so to some extent. But the world is getting increasingly disillusioned to see one of its greatest champions of democracy tread a dangerous and morally unacceptable path. She cannot hide behind the curtains of sovereignty and democracy any more, as the R2P demands that she take action to resolve the crisis that her government and the military have undoubtedly aggravated.

© Afzaluddin Ahmed is a student of economics and international relations at the University of Toronto.

Myanmar is a proud, sovereign nation with a rich history. The same nation is now ignoring the plight of its people, and pushing the country to the brink of unrest.

Merkel's chances in the upcoming election

FROM A BYSTANDER



MAHMOOD HASAN

EUROPE'S economic giant Germany is set to hold its federal election on September 24, 2017. All eyes are now focused on Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is seeking a fourth term. If elected, Merkel, the first woman ever to lead Germany, may match the records set by Konrad Adenauer (14 years) or Helmut Kohl (16 years).

There are seven parties in reckoning—Christian Democratic Union (centre-right conservative), Christian Social Union (centre-right), Social Democratic Party (centre-left), the Left (far left), The Greens (centre-left), Free Democratic Party (centre-right), and Alternative Für Deutschland (centre-right).

Coalition governments have led Germany since 1949, primarily because neither of the two main parties—CDU and SPD—had the numbers in the Bundestag (parliament) to form a government on its own. But forming a coalition has not always been easy. Angela Merkel's first government was formed on November 22, 2005, though the election was held on September 18, 2005. It took 64 days to thrash out the coalition deal. Since the last election of 2013, Angela Merkel has been leading the grand coalition of centre-right parties—CDU/SPD/CSU with 309 seats in the Bundestag out of 598.

German politics was greatly shaken by the surge of populist ultra-right nationalism in America and Europe at large. It started with the Brexit referendum of June 2016 in Britain, followed by strong anti-immigrant sentiments across Europe particularly in the Netherlands, France and other countries. Then came the American election of November 2016, which gave the White House to Donald Trump. The rise of populist movements threatened to disintegrate the European Union. During this



German Chancellor Angela Merkel addressing the Bundestag.

PHOTO: JOHN MCDUGALL/APF

period Angela Merkel stood firmly for the unity of Europe. Her hands were strengthened when Emmanuel Macron won the French Elections in April 2017, defeating Marine Le Pen. The conservative Merkel suddenly emerged as the "leader of the free world."

Among the issues that have come up for vigorous debates are immigration, economy and unity of EU, Russia and security, transatlantic relations with US, NATO, Turkey's EU membership etc. Broadly seen, the position of the major parties on security and foreign policy are not much different from one another. With transatlantic relations (NATO) facing challenges because of Donald Trump, most leaders have spoken about improving relations with Russia, in spite of the annexation of Crimea. Brexit remains a pain in the EU's neck. The TV debate on September 3 between Merkel and SPD leader Martin Schulz was

indeed exciting. Though SPD is in the current coalition, Schulz has thrown his hat in the ring for chancellor. Analysts say that the positions and policies of the two leaders on major issues were so convergent that Merkel demolished Schulz. Migration was the central issue of the debate with Merkel remaining firm on her decision to admit 1 million migrants in 2015. Though it was a humanitarian gesture it had strong economic compulsions. With the indigenous population aging, Germany needs to infuse young blood into the economy to keep the wheels churning. The debate left Merkel with 55 percent approval against Schulz's 35 percent, according to one poll. Analysts say it would be difficult for Schulz to claw back the popularity that he had enjoyed earlier.

One wonders whether the rise of AfD in 2013 is embarrassing or refreshing for German

politics. Its anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic agenda gained popularity as Merkel opened Germany's door to immigrants. Though AfD leader Frauke Petry is on the back-foot after the defeat of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Le Pen in France, it would be naive to underestimate its appeal to voters. Gnawing at the centrist vote bank it has made inroads in 10 out of 16 regional parliaments. Though it did not cross the 5 percent threshold in the 2013 election to enter the Bundestag—it will get seats for the first time in 2017, AfD's main thrust is to remove Merkel and turn Germany into an illiberal nationalist state.

Merkel's strong faith in globalisation has made the German economy the strongest in Europe. Germany has the lowest unemployment rate in Europe—labour strikes are rare because of excellent labour relation. It is the fourth largest economy in the world with a strong GDP growth of 2 percent (2016). Tax revenue is flowing unhindered and no new debts have been added in 2016. Observers say economic growth and political stability will boost Merkel's bid for a fourth term.

Germany's multiparty democracy and five percent threshold to win seats in the Bundestag discourages wild swings to the left or the right. This is the reason why no single party can garner enough seats to form government and has compelled parties to form coalitions. This election will most likely produce another coalition government, but under whom?

From opinion polls it appears that CDU

will lead in seat count but fall short of clear majority. Will the coalition be a repeat of the past or will new alliances shape up? For instance, the CDU partnering with FDP and Greens under Merkel's leadership. The Green, hitherto excluded from coalitions, is a likely partner after Merkel, accepting their main demand, has phased out nuclear energy. What will be the role that the SPD, the other major party, play? There are several possibilities. The Left and AfD, however, are excluded.

According to polls, though almost 50 percent of voters are still undecided, Merkel is leading by a significant margin against Schulz and other party leaders. Angela Merkel (63) originally from the then East Germany was inducted in Helmut Kohl's cabinet after the reunification of Germany in 1990. Merkel is seen as a pragmatist not an ideologue. She has earned the respect and trust of Germans and world leaders for her pragmatic policies. This election is indeed a referendum on Angela Merkel's policies over the past three terms.

Europe will have to wait with bated breath until the results are announced after the September 24 voting. The 19th Bundestag convenes on October 24, 2017. The tricky coalition negotiations will come later, followed by secret ballot to elect the next Chancellor. Will it be Angela Merkel? She certainly looks to be, for now, the favourite.

© Afzaluddin Ahmed is former Ambassador and Secretary.

A WORD A DAY



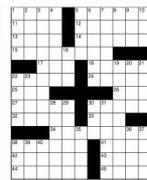
ENFILADE

NOUN

A long spatial axis made up of a series of openings between rooms that all align.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| ACROSS | 33 Lyric poem | 8 Penguin's friend |
| 1 Empire's foes | 34 Heed | 9 Pennin's cousin |
| 5 Hooded snakes | 38 Second largest nation | 10 Messy room |
| 11 Related | 41 Organ part | 16 Operated |
| 12 Ventilate | 42 Makes amends | 19 Didn't go along |
| 13 Suit piece | 43 Theater unit | 20 Massage target |
| 14 Form fitting | 44 Broad-way's Bernadette | 21 Clarinet pig |
| 15 Like chocolate in a sampler | 45 Says further | 22 Movie pig |
| 17 Seventh Greek letter | | 23 Myrm closer |
| 18 Speed checker | | 28 Louisiana university |
| 22 Burger topper | DOWN | 29 Web spinner |
| 24 Pie piece | 1 Morning brew | 30 Poker prize |
| 25 Pert talk | 2 - out (barely makes) | 31 Black Sea port |
| 26 That woman | 3 Studied in detail | 36 Swamp croaker |
| 27 Sugar source | 4 Completely | 37 Makes a choice |
| 30 Did some modeling | 5 Play group | 38 Upper limit |
| 32 Finish | 6 NHL team | 39 Had dinner |
| | 7 Like some showers | 40 Negotiating work |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

SHED WISDOM
TAXI ARCADE
ALL EAGLE
GOOD BEST
RAISE EIRA
GET IT SIXER
IN IT AT
LINED FLOPS
LEG ONLY
UNSAFE WINO
GEARUP INTO
HONEST AGED



HEARTIEST FELICITATIONS ON THE 8TH NATIONAL DAY OF THE ROYAL KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA



Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)
130, New Eastern Road, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Phone : 9345887, 9331244, 9348096 ; Fax: 9344497.
E-mail : baira1984@gmail.com, Web : www.baira.org.bd