

Genocide against Rohingyas goes on!

Will world powers act on UN report?

UNITED Nations (UN) investigators submitted a 444-page report to the UN Security Council on October 24 about the ongoing genocide in Myanmar against the Rohingyas. The report titled "Rohingya crisis: The other face of today's humanity" lays bare Myanmar government's repeated denials, in the face of overwhelming evidence, that there have been systematic violence and atrocities committed against a largely peaceful people. The crisis precipitated a mass exodus of more than a million people over the border to Bangladesh and now that evidence has been unearthed of some 390 villages being razed to the ground and with some 10,000 Rohingyas killed, will the world act? We have been repeatedly calling for the UN to do so but to our utter dismay some permanent members of the Security Council have blocked every move to hold the Myanmar government accountable.

The investigative team has suggested that the issue be referred to an international tribunal. The fact that atrocities are still ongoing in the State of Rakhine shows there is complicity at the highest levels of government, without which, there could not be such mass killings in the first place. Fingers have been pointed at Myanmar's top military officers and the calls for treating the Rohingya issue as genocide is now stronger than ever. While some foreign powers are still trying to halt the move, global conscience must awaken to the plight of the Rohingyas as they have done so in the past. Geopolitics must take a backstage and the world's citizenry must pressurise their respective governments to rein in an overenthusiastic military because no country is an island in today's connected world and Myanmar is no exception. Those at policy level in Myanmar cannot feign ignorance and wash their hands off responsibility for one of the great ethnic cleansings of recent times.

Bangladesh's ranking in tourism appreciable

But still a lot needs to improve

IT is heartening to note that Bangladesh has been ranked seventh in the Lonely Planet's—the world's largest travel guidebook publisher—top 10 "Best value" travel destinations for 2019. According to them, Bangladesh has a lot to offer given that it has many exciting and diverse tourist destinations that are also very affordable. Cox's Bazaar, the world's longest sea beach; the Sundarbans—the world's largest mangrove forest; Saint Martin's Island—a small island in the Bay of Bengal and Unesco World Heritage Sites such as the historic city of Bagerhat, the Buddhist ruins in Paharpur are some of our best tourist destinations. But have we been able to develop and manage this sector as much as we should have?

Although tourism can help increase economic growth with proper development and marketing strategies, sadly, we could not yet come up with a well-coordinated plan to strengthen the sector. According to the Bangladesh Economic Review (2010), the contribution of tourism to Gross Domestic Product was 9.44 percent in 2009-10, which decreased to 4.7 percent in 2015.

Although we have made a lot of improvements in terms of providing accommodation facilities and earned worldwide recognition for being hospitable to foreign tourists, there are many areas such as the communication services, transport and airport facilities where we need to improve. We need to ensure that the services we provide to international tourists are at par with the world's other tourist destinations. And that our best tourist destinations such as Cox's Bazaar or the Sundarbans are kept clean and pollution free and are not harmed due to excessive tourism, meaning that we need to promote responsible tourism. In this respect, we can take lessons from other countries such as Thailand, Malaysia or even Indonesia. Our tourism sector has great potentials, we just need to value this sector and have proper planning to develop it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Globalisation isn't enough for business growth

Walmart, the global supermarket brand, bought Seiyu to operate their business in Japan. After just one year, Walmart lost a number of its outlets. If it shuts down its business completely in Japan, it wouldn't be the first company to do so. Before Walmart, the UK's largest retail brand also faced a similar situation.

Starbucks is literally the coffee giant of its time. In China, the company opens a new outlet every 15 hours. Yet, when it met one of the world's biggest coffee markets in Australia, it failed. With 36,000 and 16,000 locations across the world, McDonald's and Burger King are giants in the fast food market. But they are failing terribly in Vietnam.

Make things fast and cheap was for a while the one size fits all mantra of globalisation, but not anymore.

In Japan, people buy a lot of stuff from vending machines and local shops which share their value. Walmart, on the other hand, is just another superstore. In Australia, they have many different custom preferences of coffee and have a personal connection with coffee shops, but Starbucks was just a coffee shop selling commodity not personal connection. In Vietnam, people are accustomed to buying food that are cheaper than McDonald's.

Mass production is now an outdated idea. This is an era of customisation. If a business wants to grow, it will have to adjust itself accordingly. **Emon Bhuiyan, East West University**

WAR IN YEMEN

The tragedies behind the statistics

THE OVERTON WINDOW



ERESH OMAR JAMAL

THE death of one man is a tragedy. The death of millions is a statistic.

—Joseph Stalin
Much has been made of the death of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi. And rightfully so. The

story of his alleged gruesome murder at the hands of a Saudi hit-team inside the country's consulate in Istanbul is not something the average person has to hear and replay in their heads every day—with the help of some imagination.

His story has gained so much traction that it has forced thousands of people around the world, numerous international organisations and even the western mainstream media to call on their leaders to take action against the kingdom, including to halt arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The calls have been so loud that they have already forced Germany to stop selling armaments to the kingdom, with Amnesty International calling on the governments of Theresa May, Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump to follow suit given the devastation that has been caused in Yemen, using weapons manufactured in their respective nations.

This is where one should take a second to pause and think.

Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen has been raging now for three and a half years. That's three and a half years of one of the richest country in the region bombing one of the poorest in the world.

During this time, among the many changing narratives, the main justification used by Saudi Arabia to begin the war, which was pushed into the mainstream by none other than the western media (among others), had been that the kingdom intervened in Yemen on behalf of its president—Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi—who had been forcefully overthrown. Just like the said justification has been long forgotten, so was it forgotten at the time and unquestionably now that Hadi's term as president of Yemen had ended in February 2014, according to the Gulf Cooperation Council agreement initiative pushed through by Saudi Arabia, before the war had even begun. Making the Saudi claim of intervening in Yemen upon the request of its president untrue from the get-go.

However, as the infamous Nazi General Hermann Goering had said, "Naturally,

the common people don't want war, but after all, it is the leaders of a country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag people along whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship."

So the truth is that the war in Yemen had always been about geostrategic interests. According to the father of modern geopolitics, US Navy officer and geostrategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who had influenced the likes of Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Whoever attains maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean would be a prominent player on the international scene."

Unfortunately for the Yemenis, the

Indonesia and Malaysia). These 'chokepoints' are critical to world oil trade as huge amounts of oil pass through them." Which means that whoever controls Socotra could potentially oversee the movement of vessels in and out of the Gulf of Aden, and gain authority over one of these chokepoints.

These facts, despite being well-known to western politicians, experts and media, are never mentioned. Even the war in Yemen itself rarely is. Perhaps because "tragedies" sell, "statistics" don't.

In spite of that, here are some. Since 2016, one of the worst famines in modern times has been going on in Yemen.

higher than the estimates of 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 put forward by various international organisations and media outlets.

And although the majority of those killed from the outset have been civilians, a September 2018 report by *The Guardian* states that, "Civilian deaths in Yemen have surged dramatically since June after the Saudi-led coalition began an offensive to take the key port city of Hodeidah."

Quoting figures collected by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project, it goes on to say that, "civilian deaths in the Yemeni conflict have increased by 164% in the four months since the Hodeidah offensive started."



Pro-government fighters give food to Yemeni children on the road leading to the southwestern port city of Mokha on January 26, 2017.

PHOTO: SALEH AL-OBEIDI/AFP

Yemeni archipelago of Socotra in the Indian Ocean is located some 80 kilometres off the Horn of Africa and is at the crossroads of the strategic naval waterways of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. This strategic waterway links the Mediterranean to South Asia and the Far East, through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

As Amjed Jaaved wrote for the *Pakistan Observer* in July 2009, "The [Indian] Ocean is a major sea lane connecting the Middle East, East Asia and Africa with Europe and the Americas. It has four crucial access waterways facilitating international maritime trade, that is the Suez Canal in Egypt, Bab-el-Mandeb (bordering Djibouti and Yemen), Straits of Hormuz (bordering Iran and Oman), and Straits of Malacca (bordering

According to rights groups, this has put over 17 million Yemeni lives at risk—Yemen's total population when the war began was estimated at 26 million. According to a November 2017 report by the Norwegian Refugee Council, the famine in Yemen will soon reach "biblical proportions". Since then the famine has only worsened according to the Red Cross and others, as the continuing sea, air and land blockade of Yemen has been tightened.

Violence against women has increased 63 percent since the conflict escalated, according to UNFPA. Forced marriage rates, including child marriage, have increased.

As is the case in any war, the number of deaths in Yemen is impossible to estimate. One thing is for sure: that it is much

Generally speaking, what the Yemenis have been suffering for the past three and a half years is a nightmare that the average person rarely, if ever, has to hear or replay in their heads. Part of that is because it has failed to get as much media attention during the entirety of the conflict as the alleged grisly murder story of Jamal Khashoggi has, in only a matter of weeks.

If it had, perhaps the calls to stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia would have come earlier and more voraciously—sparing the lives of who knows how many people. Because as I mentioned earlier, the statistics of how many individual tragedies have been caused in Yemen are still missing today.

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Uncertainty and volatility in the coming years

A "quick and dirty" forecast

AN OPEN DIALOGUE



ABDULLAH SHIBLI

AS the year 2018 gradually inches towards the finish line, there are many concerns about the next year. Is economic growth going to be as good as the last? How will the major players active in the geopolitical scene try to push their agenda to gain the upper hand? Are we going to witness major upheavals in the oil market or extreme volatility in stock prices in the emerging markets as

well as in Europe and the US? It is clear that, right now, there is uncertainty lurking around the corner in every global theatre.

Nobody captured the current mood in the international arena better than Laurence Boone, chief economist for Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in a piece entitled, "High uncertainty is weighing on the global economy", Boone said. He then lamented that, "Less than 6 months ago, the global economy enjoyed healthy synchronised growth. Now, the landscape has changed."

chambers of the US Congress, there will be a major shift in policy and the mood of the country. At the top of the Democratic agenda are items such as control over the runaway capitalism unleashed by President Trump, a return to a balanced policy regime of the past three decades, and economic pluralism. It needs to be seen how the stock market and the economy will react to the political change but it is a sure bet that the Trump Administration will be compelled to tone down anti-globalisation rhetoric and the trade war.

As for Brexit, there is still hope that an exit deal can be worked out between UK and the EU. However, time is running out because EU leaders decided last month that any deal must be approved by a special summit on the weekend of November 17-18. The chances are slim that a deal on immigration and Irish borders can be reached before that. However, there is one last option available to Theresa May.

There is a transition period effective March 29, when UK quits EU, during which EU rules and regulations would apply while the British government formulates and implements new policies to replace existing ones. This transition period runs until December 31, 2020. In case there is no deal, the two parties could decide to

There are already some fallouts from the rising trade restrictions imposed by many countries, and manufacturers are reported to be in a limbo. Economic growth forecasts have been lowered, and emerging markets are feeling the effect of rising interest rates and US dollar appreciation.

We can predict with certainty that the coming year will be marked by the uncertainties of future trade relationships and tension among the major trading partners. On these accounts, OECD's latest economic outlook expects GDP for the world to be .1 and .2 percentage points lower for 2018 and 2019, respectively, than its earlier forecasts. For the G20 countries, the GDP growth forecast for 2019 was lowered from 4.1 to 3.8 percent.

OECD outlook on economic growth is measurably gloomy. "Global GDP growth remained solid in the first half of 2018, at around 3 3/4 per cent, but there are signs that the expansion may have now peaked. Growing differences across countries and sectors have begun to emerge, in contrast to the broad-based expansion seen in the latter part of 2017. Confidence has also eased and investment and trade growth have proved softer than anticipated. Business survey data point to slower growth in both advanced and emerging-market economies, and incoming new orders have eased, especially manufacturing export orders."

Whatever the outcome of the trade war, the US elections, and the Brexit negotiations, the lasting impact of these events in the coming years is a slowdown in GDP growth, a reassessment of the role of globalism, and increased volatility in financial markets. Some analysts are comparing the impact of the tariffs to an oil price shock. Deloitte, the world's largest consulting firm, is predicting that the chances of a global recession has increased. Even in the best-case scenario, with the Democrats winning the House race, and easing of trade tensions, there are forces that have been unleashed with long-term ramifications.

China is fighting back not only with tariffs on US goods, it is now on the offensive portraying US military presence in South East Asia as a destabilising influence, and offering countries in this region an alternative to the US naval forces. It plans to hold joint naval exercises with the ten nations of ASEAN. "China aims to exclude the United States," said Carlyle Thayer, a professor at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. "The military exercises in process are designed to bind ASEAN members to China." US countered by warning developing nations of the consequences of taking loans from China and leveraging its influence with IMF to deny any bailout requests from Beijing's debtor nations, such as Pakistan. President Trump recently accused China of cyber-attacks to influence the upcoming elections. It needs to be seen if these US actions will add fuel to the fire or are just a prelude to trade talks between US and China!

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New York Stock Exchange.

PHOTO: BR SMITH/AFP

There are several uncertain events, both in the economic as well as the political realm, which loom large and are destined to affect the world economy in the coming months. First of all, the US mid-term elections on November 6 might result in a victory for the Democrats. Secondly, the Brexit negotiations could possibly stall or crash, resulting in UK leaving EU without a deal. Thirdly, the US-China trade war may heat up further dragging down the rest of the world. As the two combatants go after each other, world trade and economic growth will slow down. Let me expand on these three themes.

If the Democrats gain control of even one of the

extend the transition period, or agree to give their seal of approval on any deal reached after March 29! That outcome would be less catastrophic than a no deal exit.

Finally, there is no end in sight for the escalating tariff war between USA and China. After almost a year of tit-for-tat, it is expected that they will start negotiations seriously with both sides claiming victory and work out a face-saving retreat plan. The effect of the trade war has already had some ripple effects beyond trade and commerce in Southeast Asia. If the trade war continues with another round of tariffs, the impact on USA, China, and a few other countries would be deeper, like "death by a thousand cuts".