

Rohingya Crisis: An Analysis Through a Theoretical Perspective

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The large scale exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand as a consequence of relentless persecution by the Myanmar state has gained worldwide attention. UN Secretary General, Guterres called it “ethnic cleansing” and the “humanitarian situation as catastrophic”. This catastrophic situation can be traced back to the systemic and structural violence perpetrated by the state and the society wherein the Burmans and Buddhism are taken as the central rallying force of the narrative of the nation-state. This paper tries to analyze the Rohingya discourse situating it in the theoretical precepts of securitization, structural violence, and ethnic identity. The historical antecedents and particular circumstances and happenings were construed selectively and systematically to highlight the ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic identity of Rohingyas to exclude them from the “national imagination” of the state. This culture of pervasive prejudice prevailing in Myanmar finds manifestation in the legal provisions whereby certain peripheral minorities including Rohingyas have been denied basic civil and political rights. This legal-juridical disjunction to seal the historical ethnic divide has institutionalized and structuralized the inherent prejudice leveraging the religious-cultural hegemony. The newly instated democratic form of government, by its very virtue of the call of the majority, has also been contributed to reinforce this schism. The armed attacks by ARSA has provided the tangible spur to the already nuanced systemic violence in Myanmar and the Rohingyas are caught in a vicious cycle of politicization of ethnic identity, structural violence, and securitization.

Keywords: Rohingya issue, ethnic identity, minorities, religious-cultural hegemony, violence

The world of this 21st century is confronting several problems like civil wars, economic crisis, cross border intervention, and migration. Migration is like an epidemic globally. The term “Migrants” depicts those who move from one place to another in search of work or shelter. People migrate for many reasons, including economic, political, environmental factors, or to join a family member.

Humans have always changed their place of residence for various reasons. Therefore, several types of migrations can be distinguished on the basis of economic requirements of people like looking for jobs in richer countries: political reasons like ongoing hostilities between the countries, religious reason like pilgrimages to places of religious cult, social factor like studying abroad or marrying a citizen from another country, environmental issues like sudden or long-term changes to their local environment, natural disasters which adversely affects their well-being or livelihood, and family reunion migrants who join one of their relatives who is resident in another country. This commonly includes fiances (proposed) civil partners, spouses, or unmarried or same-sex partners, dependent children, and elderly relatives.

Historical Interpretation of Migration

Migration has been a feature of human existence for centuries. Humans have been known to migrate in groups and as individuals to seek freedom from war and conflict, to escape hunger and poverty, to find new economic opportunities and employment, to flee from religious intolerance or political repression, or even to trade and to travel to new places. There have been some distinct migration periods or events as identified by Robin Cohen (1995).¹

Migration Within Asia, Africa, and Europe 16th Century Onwards

Migration within Europe took place during the modern period as religious groups like the Jews sought to escape from oppression and for economic reasons as farmers and migrated to find work in newly emerging industries during 17th and 18th centuries.

Arab and Chinese traders travelled across well-established sea routes to the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos. New trade routes were developed between India, the Arabian Peninsula, and West Africa. Following the European colonization of North and South America (as well as Australia and New Zealand), there was large scale migration of people from Europe. It facilitated Europe to establish the dominion over large parts of the world. Along with other demerits of migration, the migrants often brought new diseases to indigenous communities in the colonized regions, which annihilated indigenous populations. Military campaigns and the growth in settler communities resulted in local communities losing ownership and access to their own properties.

Africans were forcibly taken from mainly Western Africa to the Americas and other colonies of Europe as slaves from 16th to 17th centuries to meet the need for intensive field labor in the sugar and tobacco plantations owned by White settlers like Europeans and Americans as slaves. Later on plantations in British colonies were performed by indentured laborers primarily from India and China and they were forced to punitive conditions on the journey to the colonies and the meagre working conditions on the plantations. The oppression and exploitation of Indian indentured laborers in South Africa was eventually ended by the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi.

The acceleration of oil prices and the resulting economic boom in the Gulf region led to a gigantic immigration to these countries to meet the demand for labour. India's significant population has also migrated to the Gulf region since several decades. Industrialization in Asiaviz, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore witnessed sizable labor migration from poorer countries in Asia such as Burma and Bangladesh.

Amongst migrants refugees are broadly categorized as those who due to fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, generally flee outside their nation. This has been as defined by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a crucial treaty in international refugee law. The treaty entered into force approximately half a century ago on 4 October 1967 and 146 countries are parties to the protocol (Jha, 2018).

The refugees across the world have been ascribed various appellations, one of which has been "Boat people" who came into existence in the 1970s with the mass exodus of Vietnamese refugees following the Vietnam War. It is a widely used form of migration for people migrating from Cuba, Haiti, Morocco, Vietnam, or Albania. They often risk their lives on dangerously crude and overcrowded boats to escape oppression or

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.striking-women.org/module/migration/history-migration>

poverty in their home nations. The recent migrations in the aftermath of Syrian crisis, Palestinian crisis, Mexican crisis, Bangladeshi crisis, Myanmar crisis, etc., have raised global concerns and augmented a plethora of initiatives for the redressed of the “humanitarian” crisis.

Refugees: Global Dimensions

The number of people fleeing war, persecution, and conflict exceeded 70 million in 2018. This is the highest level that UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has seen in its almost 70 years. Data from UNHCR’s annual Global Trends report depicts that almost 70.8 million people are now forcibly displaced. To put this in perspective, this is double the level of 20 years ago, 2.3 million more than a year ago, and corresponds to a population between that of Thailand and Turkey. Amongst the 70.8 million people in the Global Trends report are three main groups. The first is refugees those who were forced to flee their country because of conflict, war, or persecution. In 2018, the number of refugees reached 25.9 million worldwide, 500,000 more than in 2017. Included in this total are 5.5 million Palestine refugees who are under the care of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. The second group is asylum seekers—people outside their country of origin and receiving international protection, but awaiting the outcome of their claim to refugee status. At the end of 2018 there were 3.5 million asylum seekers globally. The third and biggest group, at 41.3 million, is people displaced to other areas within their own country, a category commonly referred to as Internally Displaced People or IDPs (UNHCR, 2019).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable development. 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility. The Agenda’s core principle is to “leave no one behind”, including migrants.

The SDGs’ central reference to migration is made in target 10.7: to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. Other targets directly reference migration mention trafficking, remittances, international student mobility, and more. In addition to this, migration is indirectly relevant to many more targets across topics (UNO, 2019).

Internally Displaced People

As a consequence of armed conflict, generalized violence, and human rights violations, by the end of 2018 some 41.3 million people were displaced within their own countries. This is an increase of 1.3 million compared with 2017 and the largest ever reported by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

Colombia reported the highest number of internally displaced people with 7.8 million at the end of 2018 according to Government statistics, up 118,200 on the previous year (UNHCR, 2018).

India and Its Fair Share of Refugee Problem

India has a long history of migration both outflow as well as inflow. More than a century ago, large numbers of Indian migrants—many of them involuntary ones—moved to Africa, the Caribbean, and within the Indian subcontinent itself. Some of the preferred destinations of Indian migrants in more recent decades include Persian Gulf countries, North America and Europe. India has been well known for being the haven for various categories of migrants, most of them escaping persecution in their homeland. And of course, it started with Partition itself. India is one of the world’s top destinations for international migrants few out of those are as

follows:

The Refugee of Partition

Though people who crossed over the newly formed boundaries between India and Pakistan—by choice or forcibly—did not lose their nationalities, they were still forced to live the lives of a refugee. Refugee camps across North India served as homes for those who had borne the brunt of Partition. Since these refugees were automatically the citizens of newly independent India, the question of a threat to national security due to their presence was out of the question. But at this juncture, when the fledgling state was just trying to stand on its feet and struggling to provide these refugees with basic amenities like food, clothing, and shelter, the 1948 war with Pakistan broke out. The national capital of Delhi in particular saw a huge influx of refugees. The numbers were such that an entire city—Faridabad—had to be built to rehabilitate refugees who were living in appalling conditions in various camps. The scale of the problem was an unprecedented challenge for the young government.

The Tibetan Refugee

Almost a decade after Partition, in 1959, the Dalai Lama, along with more than 100,000 followers, fled Tibet and came to India seeking political asylum. Granting asylum to them on humanitarian grounds proved costly to India, earning the ire of the Chinese government. As a result, Sino-Indian relations took a major hit. Border issues between the two countries, and Chinese encroachment on Indian Territory, began to crop up with greater frequency in the wake of New Delhi's decision to provide a harbor to those fleeing Tibetans. The Tibetan refugees settled across Northern and North-Eastern Indian states. The Tibetan refugees continue to live harmoniously, largely, with other local Indian groups and as a community they are perceived as “peaceful”.

The Parsis

Parsis, an ethno religious Zoroastrian community, emigrated from Iran to India in the 19th and 20th centuries due to fear of religious persecution.

The Bangladeshi Refugee

During Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971, millions of refugees migrated from the country to India, fleeing the conflict between the Pakistani army and Bangladeshi forces. This led to a sudden spike in population in states bordering Bangladesh, and it became increasingly difficult for the government of India to ensure food security. According to some estimates, more than 10 million Bangladeshi refugees escaped in 1971 and took shelter in India. The conflict is fiercest in a number of north-eastern states, such as Assam, Tripura, and Manipur. This was one of the primary reasons behind the Kokrajhar riots in Assam in 2012, which saw the deaths of more than 80 people.

The Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees

Sizeable group of refugees in India comprises Sri Lankan Tamils who abandoned the island nation in the wake of active discriminatory policies by successive Sri Lankan governments. More than 1.34 lakh Sri Lankan Tamils crossed the Palk Strait to India between 1983 and 1987 during the first in flow. In three more phases, many more refugees entered India. The war-torn Sri Lankans sought refuge in southern India with more than 60,000 refugees currently staying in 109 camps in Tamil Nadu alone (Nath, 2016).

The Chakma and Hejong Refugees

Chakma and Hajong communities from Chittagong hill tracts, most of which are located in Bangladesh, have been living as refugees in India for more than five decades, mostly in the North-East and West Bengal. According to the 2011 census, 47,471 Chakmas live in Arunachal Pradesh alone.

In 2015, the Supreme Court of India had directed the central government to give citizenship to both Chakma and Hajong refugees. In September last year, the government of India decided to provide citizenship to these groups, despite opposition from many groups in Arunachal Pradesh, where these refugees are concentrated.

The Rohingya Refugees

A most vibrant issue gained national attention when 40,000 Rohingya Muslims escaped Myanmar to take shelter in India. India has categorized the Rohingya as illegal immigrants and a security threat, siding with the Burmese government. The Indian government has stated that the principle of non-refoulement, or of not forcing refugees to return to their country of origin, does not apply to India principally as it is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugees Convention. The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority group residing in the western state of Rakhine, Myanmar, formerly known as Arakan (“Who Are the Rohingya Boat People?”, 22 May 2015). The religion of this ethnic group is a variation of the Sunni religion. The Rohingya people are considered “stateless entities”, as the Myanmar government does not recognize them as an ethnic group. Thus, they lack legal protection from the government of Myanmar, are regarded as refugees from Bangladesh, and face strong hostility in the country. The Rohingya people have been described as one of the most persecuted people on earth (“Rohingya Boat People: Myanmar’s Shame”, 23 May 2015).

The 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis refers to the mass migration of people from Myanmar in 2015, collectively dubbed “boat people” by international media (“Reflections on the Rohingya Crisis”, 2 October 2017).

It is interesting that even though India is neither a signatory to the 1951 Refugees’ Convention nor the 1967 protocol, which has 140 signatories, the country has still served as a home to the largest refugee population in South Asia.

The Rohingyas are essentially people of Indo-Aryan descent who are denied recognition under the Myanmar Nationality Law. Mostly concentrated in the North Western Province of Rakhine, the Rohingya population has always faced systematic discrimination at the hands of the government and the Burmese people at large, over the decades.

Arakan (Rakhine): Geo-political Dimensions

Arakan (Rakhine) State is a coastal region of Western Myanmar covering a total land area of about 20,000 square miles (52,000 square kilometres) and a state in Myanmar. It stretches from the Naff River in the North that marks its borders with Bangladesh (193 km) and India (30 km) to Cape Nagris in the South, which touches the Andaman Sea. The Buddhist kingdom of Arakan had its own independent history centered on Mrauk U. Early 21st century accentuates a complex ethnoreligious setting viz. more than a million Buddhists in Bangladesh’s Chittagong Division and more than a million Muslims in North Rakhine State.

The Rohingya population is mainly positioned in the historical region of Arakan, an old coastal country of Southeast Asia. Arakan/Rakhine State traces its historical presence right from 7th century when its coastline on

the Bay of Bengal, Arakan became the epicenter of maritime trade and cultural exchange between Burma and the outside world. The Arab traders converted the local Buddhist population to Islam and married local women and later settled in Arakan. As a result of intermarriage and conversion, the Muslim population in Arakan cultivated by about 788 CE (Syed, 2009).

The Rakhines were one of the tribes of the Burmese Pyu city-states. The Rakhines began migrating to Arakan through the Arakan Mountains in the 9th century. In 1406, Burmese forces invaded the Rakhine cities and forced them to seek help and refuge from neighbouring Bengal in the north (Tophich & Leitich, 2013). After a few years of exile in Bengal, the kingdom of Min Saw Mon (1430-1434) regained control of the Arakanese throne in 1430 with military assistance from the Bengal Sultanate in Mrauk U. The Bengalis who came with him formed their own settlements in the region (Chan, 2005).

In 15th century, the use of Muslim titles by Arakanese kings and inscribed coins suggests that the Bengal sultanate had a cultural impact on the court of Mrauk U. The cult of Sufi saints, venerated as the protectors of sailors and a resident community of Muslim traders, is also attested. Arakan's territorial expansion in the 16th century led to the conquest of Chittagong, Bengal's prosperous port ruled by Muslim lords since the 14th century. Until 1666, Chittagong's Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist populations were part of the Arakanese realm and a pillar of its economic power (Leider, 2002).

The population augmented in the 17th century, as slaves were brought in by Arakanese raiders and Portuguese settlers following raids into Bengal and were employed in a variety of workforces, including in the king's army, commerce, and agriculture (Orsini & Schofield, 2015). When the Burmese conquered Arakan in late 1784, they deported leading Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu families from Mrauk U and resettled them in the capital, Amarapura. And thereafter forced labor and deportations pushed tens of thousands of people, including local Muslims, into Bengal, crossing the Naf River. In 1795 Francis Buchanan, a British physician, noted the peculiar language of the Arakanese Muslims, who was the first to refer to their place of origin and their own language as "Roonga", or *natives of Arakan*, the existence of an indigenous Muslim ethnic community, to be referred to retrospectively as "Rohingya" (Buchanan, 1799).

After 1799, the East India Company resettled many of the displaced in Cox's Bazar (presently in Bangladesh). According to British census reports the population was classified on the basis of linguistic, religious, and ethnic identities. The majority of the population was divided into a predominantly Arakanese-speaking Buddhist group and a Bengali-speaking Muslim group welded the old (pre-1785) Arakan Muslim community with the post-1826 relatively new migrants labors from Chittagong Division. Members of old Muslim community were referred to as "Arakan Mahomedans", and a newly created racial category of "Indo-Burman" Muslim community was called "Chittagonians" racially classified as "Indians". Chittagonians were referred to as "Rwangyas" to differentiate them from illegal migrants from East Pakistan (Yegar, 2002).

Rise of Muslim Sub-nationalism

Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942 triggered an exodus of more than 400,000 people fleeing from Burma to India and Bengal. Troops of the anticolonial Burma Independence Army (BIA) and Arakanese Buddhists attacked Muslim villages whose inhabitants were driven away or killed. In the predominantly Muslim townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung Arakanese Buddhists were attacked and fled south. Thereafter, Burma's Arakan Division was apportioned, as the Japanese controlled Buddhist areas and the British army controlled local Muslim recruits in North (Leider, 2017).

As a resultant of political awakening of the Muslims of North Arakan during the war, a council of religious teachers (Jam'iyyat ul-Ulama) was created in Maungdaw in 1936 that became politically active in the aftermath of World War II. After Burma's independence in 1948, North Arakan Muslim leaders from Maungdaw claimed to British (whom they had supported against the Japanese) and Burmese authorities that the Muslims of Arakan were an indigenous population and natives of the country to gain political autonomy. In 1949 Jam'iyyat ul-Ulama demanded North Arakan as autonomous Muslim zone and introduction of Sharia law and Urdu as language of education. The unfair treatment of Muslims by Arakanese administrators in North Arakan led to the outburst of the Mujahid insurrection (1948-1961) with violent exactions of local militias, the dissatisfaction of local landlords struggled for an autonomous Muslim area, and they surrendered in 1961 (Ware, 2015).

Political Dynamics of Myanmar

Conservative Arakan Muslim political leaders chose parliamentary politics to further their own ambitions and Muslim interests and participated in the elections of 1947, 1951, 1956, and 1960. They represented in Constituent Assembly of 1947 elected as members of the Jam'iyyat ul-Ulama. In the 1951 Charter of the Constitutional Demands of the Arakani Muslims, Muslim leaders unsuccessfully reiterated their requests. Sultan Mahmud, head of the Arakan Muslim Association, was appointed as minister of health in 1956. To combat the vociferous demands of the Arakan National Union Organization (ANUO) for the creation of an ethnic Arakan state, Prime Minister U Nu allied himself with Sultan Mahmud against the Arakanese nationalists (Taylor, 2009).

At the same time, a younger generation of unsatisfied Arakan Muslims adopted a common name, Rohingya for a more affirmative identity and Muslim autonomy. Chittagonians were referred to as "Rwangyas" to differentiate them from illegal migrants from East Pakistan. Mohammed A. Tahir Ba Tha, the father of Rohingya Muslim history, preferred Roewengyas, using the now-orthodox Rohingyas only since 1963 (Tahir, 1959).

Eventually, Rohingya term became popular amongst all political organisations by 1960 viz. United Rohingya Organization, Rohingya Youth Organization, Rohingya Students Organization, Rohingya Labour Organization, and Rohingya Rangoon University Students Organization and Jam'iyyat ul-Ulama, based in Maungdaw. After victory of U Nu in 1960 elections, Sultan Mahmud's Arakan Muslim Organisation and Jam'iyyat ul-Ulama were ready to compromise and accept the creation of an Arakan state if the Muslims were given religious, cultural, economic, political, and educational guarantees. But Rohingya leaders took it as a bad political option and implied the risk of Buddhist controlled unsympathetic administration over North Arakan Muslims. In 1962, military coup stopped making of Arakan State under control of Buddhist authorities. In 1961 after long consultations, U Nu's government created the special Mayu Frontier Administration (MFA) to satisfy Muslim demands together with the areas dominated by Muslims (i.e., Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and a part of Rathedaung Township). North Arakan's Muslim leaders assumed obtain a separate status for Muslim majority area as the best way to escape a Buddhist-dominated administration (Cheeseman, 2017).

Policies of Exclusion and Persecution

The Union Citizenship Act of 1948 defined national races as those groups that lived permanently in the country before the First Anglo-Burmese War (i.e., before 1824). In the 1950s, National Registration Cards

(NRCs) were widely used as de facto proof of citizenship or nationality, but in the 1970s, North Arakan Muslims were no longer issued NRCs, and many NRCs were allegedly seized by the authorities. In 1980s, people had to surrender their identity papers to obtain color-coded Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs), but after 1995, most Rohingyas were simply given Temporary Registration Cards (TRCs), the so-called white cards, certifying that they were not full citizens. These TRCs were cancelled in February 2015.

In June 2015, new *green cards* were distributed to those people who were ready to be scrutinized for citizenship under conditions that denied them self-identification as Rohingyas. All above mentioned issuance of identities attributed both the arbitrary nature of the state's treatment of Rohingyas and their bureaucratic exclusion from citizenship. In early 1978, after the successful operations against Arakanese rebel groups by Burmese army, the government arrested illegal migrants backed by security forces that led to an exodus of nearly 200,000 people to Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Land confiscations for military camps, compulsory relocations, and the settlement of Burmese colonizers among the majority-Muslim population raised tensions that led to a massive exodus of 250,000 Rohingyas in 1991-1992. The repatriation efforts were done under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from 1997 to 2005 (Wade, 2017).

Despite the disenfranchisement of Muslims in North Rakhine State, political authorities still resorted to the Muslim voting bloc at the constitutional referendum of May 2008 and in the general elections of November 2010, when Rohingya white-card holders were promised full citizenship. Three Rohingya members of Parliament (MPs) were affiliated with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the government party, from 2010 to 2015 (Cowley & Zarni, 2014).

The court's final decision coincided with a widespread anti-Rohingya repercussion following the 2012 communal violence and Buddhist nationalism across Myanmar from 2013 to 2015. The outbreak of violence in 2012 drove the humanitarian crises in Rakhine State, with elicited incidents of the rape and killing of a Buddhist woman, killing of a group of Muslims. More violence erupted in the Muslim-majority area—Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung—in the north followed by attacks in the capital, Sittway. A state of emergency was declared, but security forces were later accused not only of failing to stop the violence, but of being complicit in it. More than 100,000 people were reportedly displaced and resettled in IDP camps. The migrants as estimated in Saudi Arabia, Gulf States (300,000), Pakistan (250,000), Thailand, Malaysia (100,000), Australia, New Zealand (10,000) along with substantial communities existing in India (reportedly Jammu and Kashmir) and Indonesia. As per UNHCR's statistics in October 2018, there are 18,000 Rohingya refugees in India, 22 about two-thirds of them are in the cities of Hyderabad and Jammu, where there are large Muslim communities. Others are living in different cities throughout India, including the capital New Delhi (Kakvi, 2017).

They live in destitute conditions in terms of their quality of life. They have low incomes and are usually working as manual labourers. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army's attacks on government targets in October 2016 and August 2017 were the economic and political drivers of migration and it indicates political realism suggesting that social and political acceptance of Muslims identifying as Rohingyas remains at a far distance.

Implications

The Rohingyas have faced decades of discrimination and repression under successive Burmese governments. Rohingya sought refuge into safe lands of Bangladesh and India out of them Bangladesh already has brimmed with Rohingya population, struggling to balance its economy and handicapped by humanitarian

concerns that extend upto human rights abuses. A significant chunk of refugees is being pushed out of Bangladesh that would only result in the refugees trying to enter India. It is a known fact that at several points, due to geographical and contour inaccessibility, the borders remain open and porous.

- At present count, India is already hosting 40,000 Rohingya refugees. The Central Government has taken a stand to figuratively deny each of the registered Rohingya refugees dwelling in India any further leniency. In an affidavit submitted before the apex court, the government said that it had sufficient inputs from Intelligence Agencies to ascertain that there were security threats among the Rohingya population in India. Many of such threats were spread across metropolitans.

- Poor living standards—Critical situations of Rohingyas i.e. poor standards of living deprived of basic necessities raise a question of humanitarian grounds for them in their own land as well as other places of their refuge where access to clean water, food security and healthcare are limited and all desperately needed.

- Inhumane conditions of refugee camps—The conditions in the Bangladeshi camps are particularly hard for adolescent girls, who are facing sexual violence, forced prostitution, forced marriages, and human trafficking. Furthermore, as per the deal signed by Bangladesh and Myanmar for expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, though the planned deportations have been repeatedly delayed since.

- Cross border migration—Most Rohingyas do not have identification documents and thus could not use official means of transportation to come to India. To minimise the risks of irregular cross-border migration, they generally travel to India in groups—of up to 10 people or larger clusters of up to 25 individuals—that include known and trusted people.

- Insurgencies and communal tensions—The Rohingya crisis is not one that is limited to the moral or humanitarian paradigm alone. The entire region that consists of Western Myanmar, Northeastern India, and Bangladesh's eastern borders is an unstable mix of ethnic insurgencies and communal tension. All the states are raging with mass attacks on civilians, and armed forces have expanded beyond the border with a purported Indian special forces raid inside Myanmar territory.

- International tensions—This area is highly important as it is a border area for two members of the BRICS nations predicted to constitute the coming multi-polar world order. The recent bout of ethnic cleansing taking place in Rakhine will only worsen the situation, and could lead to even more destabilization of the region, as Myanmar's internal conflicts become regionalized. Indeed, China had to intervene to pressurize ethnic Chinese Kokang rebels to call a truce with Naypyidaw since fighting restarted in February along the Chinese border.

- The crisis could also adversely impact the Asia Pacific, which is projected to be the economic powerhouse of the near future. This crisis has the potential to weaken the ASEAN organization, which until now was considered the most successful regional organization after the EU.

- The primary route taken by the Rohingya refugees recently fleeing persecution is the maritime route. This prompted countries, who did not desire to accommodate the Rohingya, to deploy their naval forces to block and return refugee boats back into the open seas. This process could lead to a militarization effect on the South East Asian Sea in a similar fashion as to what is unfolding in the South China Sea.

- Transnational militancy—The Rohingya crisis could also rejuvenate various transnational militant actors. The Rohingya conflict and Buddhist-Muslim strife have the potential to radicalize the youth and fill the ranks of organizations like Jemaah Islamiya, Al Qaeda, and TTP. It could even provide an opening for Daesh into the Asia Pacific. The plight of the Rohingya is forcing them to ally themselves with more radical forces such as the TTP.

- Piracy is also another phenomenon that has the potential to be aggravated by the Rohingya humanitarian crisis.
- The Rohingya conflict also has uncovered a new phenomenon—the rise of the Buddhist variant of Saffron terror.

Suggestions

- The Rohingya crisis is a perfect example of an ethnic cleansing, a humanitarian crisis that has spiralled beyond all presumptions and has evolved into a mess that cannot be downplayed at any platform. Keeping terse South Asian geopolitics in mind is essential in order to carve out a possible solution, but then again this cannot be implemented without wholehearted acceptance of the masses.
- Protecting and promoting freedom of religion: State restrictions on practising religion can turn to violent extremism after a point. An initiative to promote freedom of religion and free practice of it, therefore, can lead to an equitable situation which has the potential to restore normalcy. This should be a policy priority as the status quo otherwise threatens global security. All the more, enhanced religious freedom would also help to contain or minimize the spread of violent extremism, and in some cases, radical ideology. The President, including high dignitaries like the State Councillor, should take the lead in promoting the concept of religious tolerance and non-discrimination of the Rohingya sect.
- Granting citizenship status to the Rohingyas: A permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis would be to grant citizenship rights to Rohingyas. Decades of injustice can hence be reversed with a single master move. While promotion of free practice of religion would be a most welcome initiative, it is temporal in nature. The Rohingyas should be integrated into the society with full and equal access to basic, fundamental rights that include education, safety, property, and employment, among others.
- The first and foremost imperative of the crisis is the alleviation of the suffering of the Rohingya people. ASEAN has to play the leading role here; it needs to formulate a mechanism to deal with the crisis by equitable distribution of the refugees among member nations, military escort of Rohingya boats, a timeline for return of the refugees, and pressure on Myanmar to resolve the conflict. The international community can also play a role by lending financial aid to the countries who will house the refugees.
- The Muslim nations can play a critical role here by offering aid and volunteers to look after the refugees. The OIC has a potential to be rejuvenated by the crisis as it can be utilized to launch a diplomatic campaign to highlight Rohingya oppression. Pakistan can play a pivotal role in leading the charge for solidarity with the Rohingya. It can also house a limited number of Rohingya refugees particularly in Karachi, which already has a substantial Rohingya population.
- The United Nations should be utilized for negotiating free and unhindered international humanitarian access in Rakhine State. Individual governments should encourage the UN Secretary General to take up this issue and give high-level support to his efforts.
- Governments need to assert that future positive diplomatic relations are contingent on unhindered humanitarian access, and abolishment of discriminatory policies and practices against the Rohingya. Diplomats and UN officials should use the word “Rohingya” both in public and private. This will delegitimize the Myanmar government’s ongoing discrimination and campaign to portray the Rohingya as illegal immigrants.
- The humanitarian crisis for the Rohingya in Burma is part of a systematic policy of impoverishment of the Rohingya. These policies may constitute crimes against humanity, and have helped lead to ethnic cleansing.

The international community should support the establishment of an independent international investigation into possible violations of international law against the Rohingya in Burma.

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