

Assam issues AFSPA order for State

For the first time since 1990, the Assam government issued orders declaring the State a “disturbed area”, imposing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) for six months.

Such orders were earlier issued by the Union Home Ministry, which recently gave up its power and asked the State government to decide on continuing the enforcement of the AFSPA in the State.

Under Section 3 of the Act, it can be invoked in places “where the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary”.

Except in the case of Tripura and Manipur, the Centre had been issuing such notifications for Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

The decision comes a year after the BJP came to power in Assam in 2016.

Huge powers

The AFSPA gives powers to the Army and Central forces deployed in “disturbed areas” to kill anyone acting in contravention of the law, arrest and search any premises without a warrant, and provide cover to the Armed Forces from prosecution and legal suits without the Centre’s sanction.

An official explained that the Assam government’s notification will not affect the operation of Central forces or the Army deployed in the State.

On August 4, the Home Ministry extended the AFSPA in Assam for 27 days, which expired on August 31.

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A blind eye: on Rohingya issue

The continuing failure of the Myanmar government to act decisively and urgently to protect civilians from the raging crossfire between the security forces and insurgents is shocking. The recent clashes in the western State of Rakhine have claimed over 70 lives and forced thousands of Rohingya to flee across the border into Bangladesh, in a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis. Most of the victims are women and children, according to the UN's International Organisation for Migration, which has called for additional aid to cope with Dhaka's refugee situation. The latest flare-up began last Friday when militants suspected to be from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked military and police outposts. That should have served as a caution against an excessive counter-insurgency operation, a real possibility given the history of systematic persecution of the Muslim minorities in Rakhine. The military crackdown that followed has been widely condemned as disproportionate and the government accused of being an onlooker. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has even rebuked Aung San Suu Kyi's office for what he described as irresponsible statements that could disrupt aid and relief activity. Ms. Suu Kyi is not just the foreign minister; as a Nobel peace prize winner she has also failed to exert any moral pressure to secure humane treatment and humanitarian assistance for the systematically persecuted Rohingya. She has rightly come under criticism for her continued silence over the army brutalities.

No country for the Rohingyas

In fact, the UN agency's report in February, based on a study of the military crackdown, had described the slaughter of thousands and displacement of even larger numbers as crimes against humanity. But the reactions of the radical Buddhist nationalists, who have traditionally resisted recognition of the Rohingya as citizens of Myanmar, have been predictable. They have demanded even tougher action from the government in the wake of the terror unleashed over the past week, and rubbished the findings of the officially appointed Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, headed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The Myanmar government has an obligation to act on the recommendations of the Commission, on the guarantee of citizenship rights to the Rohingya, freedom of movement and enforcement of the rule of law. It is inconceivable that the country's yearning for peace and normal life could be fulfilled in the absence of these minimum prerequisites. The ruling National League for Democracy, which takes legitimate pride in its heroic defiance of the military junta, has a largely unfinished agenda on democratic transition. Enormous powers are vested in the military. The further consolidation of the hard-won freedoms from dictatorship will remain an arduous task so long as a large minority of the population is systematically excluded from the political process.

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Government issues alert on spread of 'Locky Ransomware'

The government, late on Saturday night, issued an alert on spread of new malware called 'Locky Ransomware' that can lock computers and demand ransom for unlocking them.

"Alert regarding spam spreading Locky Ransomware issued today by @IndianCERT..." Electronics and IT Additional Secretary Ajay Kumar tweeted.

Ransomware is a malicious software and the Locky Ransomware is learnt to be demanding ransom of half bitcoin, which at present rate is equivalent to over 1.5 lakh.

The alert, issued on Cyber Swachhta Kendra, said it has been reported that a new wave of spam mails is circulating with common subject lines to spread variants of Locky Ransomware.

"Reports indicate that over 23 million messages have been sent in this campaign. The messages contain common subjects like 'please print', 'documents', 'photo', 'Images', 'scans' and 'pictures' However, the subject texts may change in targeted spear phishing campaigns," the alert, which described severity of the ransomware as "high", said.

Systems infected by Locky Ransomware get locked or encrypted with random numbers with "extension [dot] lukitus or [dot] diablo6", the alert stated. The instructions contain installation of "a TOR browser and visiting (dot) onion sites and demanding ransom of .5 Bitcoins", it added.

To target users, spams showing links to fake dropbox websites is being used to spread Locky variants. "Users are advised to exercise caution while opening e-mails and organisations are advised to deploy anti-spam solutions and update spam block lists," the alert stated.

May saw a series of cyber attacks involving ransomware WannaCry. "Among more than 100 countries that were hit by WannaCry (an advanced ransomware attack), India was the third—worst affected," an Assocham PWC report said.

In an apparent attempt to crack down on revenge porn, Twitter has introduced a new policy that states that no one can post or share "intimate photos

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India expresses 'deep concern' over test

India criticised North Korea's decision to test a thermo-nuclear device on Sunday, saying it views with "deep concern" the test that was in violation of its international commitment, and constituted a threat to India's national security as well.

"India deplores the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK (North Korea) this morning," the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement, adding, "We call upon DPRK to refrain from such actions which adversely impact peace and stability in the region and beyond."

Veiled reference

In a veiled reference to the nuclear threat from North Korea and Pakistan, the MEA added in its statement on Sunday that "India also remains concerned about the proliferation of nuclear and missile technologies which has adversely impacted India's national security."

The MEA statement comes on the back of a number of statements made by India on the North Korean issue in recent months. In June, condemnation of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's actions was contained in the Indo-U.S. joint statement issued during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington.

The issue is also likely to be highlighted during the upcoming visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who will travel to India in mid-September.

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Beware of the wrong lessons from Doklam

The standoff between China and India in Doklam was resolved not a day too soon. The Union government did well both in agreeing to a sequenced withdrawal and in refusing to comment on what, if any, understanding had been reached with China on its plans to build a road in the area. By contrast, much of the commentary in our media has been rather bullish, presenting the outcome as a testimony to the government's ability to stare down the Chinese. It is further claimed that the Chinese backed down because their verbal threats failed to work, because they were in a weaker military position in the area and because of wider political considerations, especially the upcoming BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) summit in China. The confident conclusion is that a combination of resolve and tough-minded diplomacy can prevent military standoffs with China from escalating.

This chain of reasoning is not just questionable, but also potentially problematic. For these "lessons" might well end up making future crises more difficult to resolve. The Doklam standoff needs to be seen for what it was: an indication of the steady deterioration in the ability of India and China to deal with such situations.

Consider the reasons trotted out to explain China's willingness to seek a resolution. Was it because China's threats failed to work? This is true inasmuch as India did not unilaterally pull its forces out of the area. But it is also a misleading claim inasmuch as the Chinese threats did force India to take the situation seriously and mount a sustained attempt at diplomatic resolution.

Threats are seldom held out with a view to receiving unconditional compliance. Rather they are an attempt to shape the adversary's preferences and inject a sense of urgency in a crisis. This is an elementary point in the considerable body of research on crisis management.

Did India enjoy a local military advantage in this standoff? This may be true in a tactical sense. The Doka La post held by the Indian Army dominates the area below where the actual standoff took place. But to extrapolate from this and claim that India has stronger logistics in the area or even a military upper hand over the Chinese in the Chumbi Valley is to betray ignorance of the terrain and operational realities. Hopefully, the powers that be know better and the Indian Army isn't drinking the Kool-Aid.

The point about Chinese concerns over Indian participation in the BRICS summit is stronger. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi had declined to attend, it would have been a serious embarrassment for the Chinese—both as the host and as the leading player in the grouping. Just how important a consideration this was we may never know.

Strikingly absent in Indian commentary on the denouement is any recognition of the most fundamental consideration from the Chinese standpoint. After all, the Chinese would have weighed the option of escalation against the interests at stake for them in building a road in Doklam. And the fact is that this is not an area of serious strategic interest for them. Certainly not important enough to have a military showdown with India and a consequent break with Bhutan. If anything, the Doklam area is of greater strategic importance for India, which is why India was so keen to forestall the Chinese move. In other words, the most salient aspect of the standoff was the balance of interests between the two sides—and it was tilted towards India.

Innate interests apart, the Chinese had to consider the reputational consequences for them of allowing India to interpose itself in a dispute between China and Bhutan. Could Chinese acquiescence encourage other countries to behave similarly elsewhere, say in the South China Sea? Evidently, the Chinese concluded that reputational interests could be managed as long as

they got Indian troops to pull out of the area first.

Beyond these questions lies the larger one of what the Doklam standoff portends. Does it really suggest that a combination of resoluteness and diplomacy can prevent escalation in future military standoffs with China? On the contrary, it shows that the existing mechanisms to unwind such situations have weakened. Compared to the standoffs in Ladakh in 2013 and 2014, the latest one took considerably longer to resolve. The key “lesson” of this episode is the urgent need for both sides to work towards an understanding on mutual restraint.

The assumption that we can pull off such things in future confrontations with China is deeply problematic. For one thing, the Chinese calculus of interest could be rather different in other parts of the disputed boundary. For another, drawing and internalizing such a conclusion could lead to avoidable overconfidence in the future. It is worth recalling that in the long run-up to the 1962 war, India and Chinese troops were engaged in several standoffs in which the Chinese desisted from using force despite issuing lurid warnings. This led India to believe that it could get away with running greater risks—an assumption that was badly belied in October 1962. Finally, there is no reason to assume—as some commentators have—that the nuclear context places an additional lid on escalation. After all, the Sino-Soviet boundary clashes of 1969 took place against the backdrop of nuclear weapons.

The government hopefully has a more sober reading of the implications of Doklam. The prime minister’s forthcoming visit to China would be a good opportunity to start putting in more stabilizers in the bilateral relationship.

Srinath Raghavan is senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

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Doklam standoff: The takeaways for India

There are still many unknowns about the Doklam standoff, what led to it and its de-escalation—some of which will stay unknowns. There also remain questions, including its broader implications and longer-term impact. More immediately, its diplomatic resolution has been rightfully greeted with a sense of relief. Some have suggested that this outcome was inevitable since China and India have dialogue mechanisms, experience dealing with such incidents, and more to lose than gain by conflict. But the risk of escalation is always present in such standoffs. For example, the kind of miscalculation that led to the apparent Chinese belief that India wouldn't respond to its road construction could have also led to a belief that a limited operation was feasible and desirable.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said that he hoped India would learn some lessons. It will, though perhaps not the ones he has in mind. Some lessons won't become clear for a while, but here are a few:

Resolve: It was crucial for India to stand its ground. For one, demonstrating resolve is effective—even essential—in getting Beijing to back down. As my colleague Ryan Hass indicated (goo.gl/KY4g3H), there's a pattern to Chinese behaviour: "Push until (they) hit steel, escalate public rhetoric, quietly look for off-ramp." Second, it sends a message to Beijing that New Delhi will not accept unilateral attempts to change the status quo. Third, it signals the same to governments in the neighbourhood, region and world—and shows that New Delhi is willing to walk the talk.

Restraint: Even as resolve was crucial, so was restraint. It wasn't lost on officials or observers that in other cases, China has used construction to consolidate or extend its territorial claims, and has been cherry-picking which agreements and understandings it will respect. The broader stakes also aren't hidden—even in May 1962, a US state department assessment noted, "At issue is not merely a boundary line...but the relationship of the two most populous and potentially most powerful states in Asia to each other and to other Asian states." But New Delhi was careful to keep it local, and not allude publicly to Chinese regional behaviour. It also refrained from retaliatory rhetoric which would have escalated the situation, made the off-ramp harder for Beijing to take, and complicated the dynamics between India and Bhutan. Opposition leaders also showed restraint, demonstrating the importance of keeping politics out and them in the loop. Contrary to critics' claims, such restraint doesn't make India look weak; it made India look mature enough not to take Beijing's bait.

Capabilities: Resolve requires diplomatic, military and other capabilities. Chinese actions during this standoff showed that it was willing to use a number of instruments—diplomatic, military, economic, legal, infrastructure, communications—in its toolbox to pressure India. New Delhi, in turn, needs to ensure that it keeps its own toolbox well stocked. China won't pressure India at a time or place of New Delhi's choosing, so there's no room for complacency. India needs to enhance its capabilities comprehensively and with a greater sense of urgency. Moreover, India's China strategy will have to involve multiple stakeholders within and outside government, an assessment of India's vulnerability to Chinese leverage, and expansion of India's leverage with China.

Partnerships: Partners shaped the environment, India's options and, arguably, Chinese behaviour. One partner, Bhutan, was involved as a key actor. We might not know the extent to which Thimphu and New Delhi coordinated, but it's clear that they did. What is also evident is that Beijing has sought to put pressure on this relationship. India will have to continue to handle this partnership with care, acknowledging that preferences won't always match, assessing the changes that are taking place within Bhutan, understanding Bhutanese interests and constraints,

seeing where India can be flexible, and developing and nurturing constituencies beyond the government. In terms of other partners, including Japan and the US, the focus was on what they did or did not say publicly—few asked if the Indian government wanted them to say much lest it escalate the situation—but observers shouldn't assume lack of private communication. Having chosen to stay out of alliances, India has not asked for and cannot expect a security commitment from these partners. What India can do is work with these partners and others to develop its capabilities, to signal China, and to shape the regional environment in which Beijing is operating.

Learning: The standoff highlighted the importance of knowing more about China and its complexities, India's own history of engagement with it, and how others have dealt with China. For example, Indian policymakers would have known—because of their experience with China and an understanding of President Xi Jinping's domestic imperatives ahead of the 19th party congress—that the Chinese desire for a successful BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit provided a point of leverage and opportunity for resolution.

Finally, even as the standoff reflected the competitive and potentially conflictual dimensions of the China-India relationship, it also showed the importance of continued engagement. Not only does this keep the channels for resolving such situations open, it gives the Chinese some incentive to want to resolve them. The terms of engagement, of course, might need to be reassessed.

Tanvi Madan is a fellow and director of The India Project at the Brookings Institution.

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China, U.S. investing in Nepal

Krishna Bahadur Mahara

Indicating the growing importance of the Himalayan region in global politics, a new round of competition has begun in Nepal among the great powers. On Sunday, Nepal concluded one of the biggest infrastructure-related deals with China even as reports came of a big grant of funds by the U.S.

Sunday's agreement on a cement venture was between the Investment Board of Nepal and Hongshi-Shivam Cement, a Nepal-China venture. "The signing of the agreement is a signal to the private sector, both external and internal, that Nepal has good business climate," Finance Minister Gyanendra Bahadur Karki said. The deal is likely to boost the infrastructure sector in Nepal, which is drawing international investment.

The timing of the agreement is important as it came just four days before Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara will hold talks in Beijing on Nepal's place in China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) scheme.

\$500 million grant

In the backdrop of the landmark boost to Nepal-China infrastructure segment has come the U.S. announcement of a grant of \$500 million for Nepal to work on its development goals.

Reports said the grant would be made by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, an independent U.S. government organisation active in the field of poverty reduction and economic development. This fund too will be used to build an electricity transmission network and construct 300 km of roads.

The Chinese and American projects in Nepal are taking off even as India is conducting the fortnight-long annual Nepal-India joint military exercise to be concluded on September 16. Nepal's infrastructure sector has received attention from India in the recent past.

During the visit of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to Delhi, India pledged support to Nepal in the infrastructure field.

The joint statement of September 24 said, "The two Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction utilisation of the two Lines of Credit of \$100 million and \$250 million for development of roads and power infrastructure in Nepal."

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No assurance from Centre on Rohingya

Listing the case for hearing on September 11, a Bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra asked advocate Prashant Bhushan, who appears for Mohammad Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, the two Rohingyas, to first serve the copy of their petition to the Centre. The court then asked Mr. Mehta to take instructions from the Centre.

“The 40,000 Rohingyas are the world’s most wretched people. They have been persecuted everywhere. Protect them,” Mr. Bhushan, assisted by advocate Pranav Sachdeva, said in an emotional opening statement before the Bench.

But, the court refused to commit to anything.

The petition by the Rohingyas contended that any move to deport them would violate the constitutional guarantee of the Indian state to “protect the life and liberty of every human being, whether citizen or not.”

Their deportation, the petition said, would violate India’s commitment to international conventions which recognise the ‘Principle of Non-Refoulement.’ This principle of customary international law prohibits the deportation of refugees to a country where they face threat to their lives.

The UNHRC Report of 2016 has noted successive patterns of serious violations to the right to life, liberty and security of the Rohingyas by state security forces and other officials in Myanmar.

Violations, the report said, included summary executions, enforced disappearance, torture and ill-treatment, forced labour, arbitrary arrest and detention of hundreds, including women and children.

Recently, the NHRC had also issued notice to the government on the proposed deportation.

Panic struck the refugee community following media reports of a statement by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju in Parliament in early August that the Central government had directed States to identify and deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingyas.

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Focus on terrorism

The Xiamen Declaration issued by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) on Monday has an unambiguous message on terror. It condemns “terrorism in all its forms and manifestations wherever committed and by whomsoever” and stresses “that there can be no justification whatsoever for any act of terrorism”. For the first time, a BRICS declaration also mentions Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)—two India-focused, Pakistan-based terrorist groups. The Indian delegation and the foreign ministry should be congratulated on this success, even if small.

On previous occasions, China had not allowed these two terror groups to be mentioned in BRICS statements owing to its special relationship with Pakistan. It had previously agreed to these two groups being mentioned in a Heart of Asia conference statement but had consistently stalled India’s moves to have Masood Azhar of the JeM designated an international terrorist by the UN Security Council. But is the 2017 BRICS declaration indicative of a change in China’s approach to terrorism? Unlikely.

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There is much more to the India-China partnership than border disputes

When you think about Doklam, keep calm and carry on. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, seemed to have sensibly adopted the view that there is more to the larger Sino-Indian relationship than a border stand-off during their hour-long meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Xiamen. They both agreed to treat Doklam and similar border incidents as problems that should be managed rather than treated as a fatal flaw in bilateral relations between the two largest Asian countries.

Doklam, as seems to have been recognised by both sides, represents a new phase in the territorial disputes between New Delhi and Beijing. One, India was defending the claims of a third country, Bhutan, with which it has a defence understanding. Two, as a consequence, there was just enough misunderstanding for the crisis to escalate quickly to the point it had the potential to become something larger than either side wanted. There seems to be a case for India and China to begin negotiating yet another border management agreement, but one that incorporates protocols regarding military confrontations in third countries and even the maritime domain.

The BRICS summit was a symbol of how much larger the Sino-Indian relationship is than disputes over uninhabited bits of rock. The Xiamen summit continued the emerging economies tradition of laying out an international order which would give them a greater say in rules-making and institutional representation. It also incorporated a number of other emerging economies for the first time, signalling how the BRICS concept is attractive to other players as well.

The surprise was the Chinese acquiescence to a mention of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations like the Lashkar e Tayyeba and Jaish e Mohammad in the joint statement. The statement does not denounce these groups or call for action against them, it merely expresses concern at these and other terrorist groups. Nonetheless, it reflects an evolutionary step upward in Beijing's attitude to terrorism. Namely, that while Pakistan remains its "all-weather friend," the former's use of terrorism to further its political agenda is a flawed policy that undermines a growing Chinese interest in regional stability. The joint statement was noticeable for speaking about almost every major international conflict that has a bearing on world stability. It is hard to see India and China ever becoming close friends but they need not become violent rivals. By getting through the Doklam crisis without a shot being fired and even high-level summitry being sustained, they have shown that as they both rise, the potential for cooperating more and confronting less remains considerable.

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There is a Rohingya in all of us

The timing could not have been more immaculately disastrous. At a time when Rohingyas are [being forced to flee the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state](#), in the Supreme Court this week the Centre refused to revise its stand on deporting Rohingya immigrants in India. It was in effect [adhering to its position taken on August 9](#), when the Minister of State for Home Affairs informed Parliament that 40,000 Rohingyas were to be deported. With that, the idea of India, the India of democracy and hospitality disappeared in a single stroke. A dream of India disappeared in a single moment. The marginal life of the Rohingya became a greater nightmare. The Government of India has returned to an idea of hard state, dropping its dreams of compassion, care and civility. Behind the tragedy of the decision will be a nit-picking bureaucracy and the security think tanks, convinced that an aspirational India does not need a defeated people like the Rohingyas.

In many ways, the Rohingyas represent "the last man" of international society that Gandhi talked about. They are the world's most persecuted minority. They are Muslims, belonging to the Sunni sect, scattered mainly over the Rakhine state of Myanmar. Harassed by the Myanmar Army and forced to serve as slave labour, they have also been systematically persecuted by the Buddhist majority. The persecution of the Rohingyas also highlights the silence of Aung San Suu Kyi, destroying another myth of ethics and human rights. A woman whose campaign for human rights won her the Peace Nobel now stands embarrassingly silent in case her broader political strategies are affected. The dispensability of the Rohingyas is clear and so is the callousness of the nation state. India can no longer criticise the West for being hostile to Syrian and Sudanese refugees.

One thing is clear. No Nehruvian state, or even regime of Indira Gandhi, would have made such a decision. Both upheld the principle of hospitality, of the openness of borders. Jawaharlal Nehru was open to Tibet and courageously invited the Dalai Lama to make a home here, and Indira Gandhi played host to refugees from the then East Pakistan, ignoring the threats of tough people such as Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon.

The Rohingya situation has been bleak for years. The turning point was the attitude of the Burmese military junta which cracked down on them in 1982, contending that Rohingyas as late comers were not part of the original ancestors of Burmese society. Denied an autonomous cultural status, they lost all claims to the entitlements of citizenship. They were denied not only access to health, education but also any claim to the idea of citizenship.

Persecuted by the army and the Buddhist majority, they began a slow exodus over India, Bangladesh, spreading to States such as Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, moving as far as Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Their exodus has once again a cynical side to it as agents arranged for their travel. These touts of international suffering arranged for their travel at exorbitant rates. The Rohingyas became temporary boat people as Bangladesh shut its borders on them piously condemning them as drug peddlers. The Rohingyas then attempted to cross into Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia only to realise that fellow Islamic nations had little sympathy for them. The no-welcome sign was clear and categorical. Each state would react piously, claiming to have fulfilled its humanitarian quota. It was also realistically clear that unlike the Syrians, the Rohingyas, as a tiny speck of the refugee population would hardly be front page news for a sufficient length of time. At the most their memories would survive in a few PhD theses in international relations. The refugee has always been an enticing topic for PhDs.

In fact, Pope Francis's statement that the "campaign of terror" against the Rohingyas must cease fell on deaf ears. Sadly, India missed the leadership and compassion of a Mother Teresa. She would have stepped out and offered some care and relief to them, stirring the Indian middle class into some acts of caring.

The odd thing is that the genocide, the vulnerability of such a people is often lost in bureaucratic issues of legal and political status. It is not clear whether Rohingya are refugees or illegal migrants. As refugees they are entitled to some care; as illegal migrants they become subject to harassment and exploitation. Refugees become a target for an informal economy of bonded labour.

Union Home Minister Kiren Rijiju already sounded the warning signals in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha. He was clear that the Rohingya were illegal migrants. He was cited as claiming in an interview that the Rohingya “have no basis to live here. Anybody who is an illegal migrant will be deported.” Yet one wonders whether in terms of humanitarian law and the conventions of the UN, Mr. Rijiju is right. This is a group that is threatened with continuous persecution, whose homes are unsafe, whose livelihoods have been destroyed. To be forced to return to Myanmar would only subject them to harassment, ethnic persecution and a genocidal future.

One is grateful that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which often plays the Rip Van Winkle of human rights, responded quickly. On August 18, it issued a notice to the government over its plan to deport Rohingya staying illegally in India, asking the government to report in four weeks.

The Commission added hopefully that the Supreme Court had declared that fundamental rights are applicable to all regardless of whether they are citizens of India. Yet such appeals to rights and humanitarianism cut little ice in today’s bureaucracy which is obsessed with security issues and content to raise the bogey of terrorism and law and order when it comes to such a helpless people. The NHRC came up with a memorable line that Rohingya refugees “are no doubt foreign nationals but they are human beings.”

It is clear that the everydayness of Rohingya life must be miserable. They face the challenge of survival and the prospect of persecution if they return to Myanmar. One need not hide under legal excuses. What India confronts is a case of ethics, a challenge to its understanding of citizenship and freedom. If we abandon the Rohingya, we abandon the idea of India as a home of refugees and hospitality. A country which offered a home to the Parsis, the Tibetans, the Afghans and the Jews cannot turn a little minority of helpless people back. One hopes civil society protests, challenging the indifference of the state. It is not just a question of saving a beleaguered people, it is question of saving the soul of India. The idea of India is being threatened today. Should civil society remain mute and indifferent? There is a Rohingya in all of us.

Shiv Visvanathan is Professor, Jindal Global Law School and Director, Centre for Study of Knowledge Systems, O.P. Jindal Global University

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Why North Korea's nuclear bombs matter

North Korea's nuclear weapons programme is no longer the joke it once was thought to be. The estimates so far of Sunday's sixth nuclear test by North Korea suggest an explosive yield that could run into hundreds of kilotonnes. This is sufficient to decimate a major US city. Earlier, on 4 July—US independence day, no less—North Korea first tested an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that is capable of reaching American territory.

Why is North Korea doing this? It has three main objectives. One, the nuclear capability is primarily meant to ensure the survival of the regime. Two, it wants to break the US' alliance with South Korea and Japan. Three—and this is a more distant goal—North Korea, like the South, desires the reunification of the Korean peninsula but on its own terms. Its most recent demonstrations of nuclear capabilities are more in line with its first two goals. With the impressive detonation on Sunday, Kim Jong-un has more or less ensured that he will not meet the same fate as Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. The ICBM capability is a credible tool to “decouple” the US from its allies. South Korea and Japan have every reason to doubt whether the US would risk its major cities in order to come to their rescue against North Korea.

With its enhanced capabilities, North Korea is bound to become more assertive. This is already evident in its demand that the US cease flying bombers over the Korean peninsula. Should the dialogue process resume, North Korea will have greater leverage this time around and can demand further concessions with the aim of unravelling America's security alliances in East Asia. If US President Donald Trump does not engage North Korea in a dialogue process and continues to sound military threats, as he has been doing, there are three distinct possibilities: a) Trump will execute his threat and potentially trigger a nuclear war; b) Trump will execute the threat and fail—or attempt to intercept a North Korean missile test and fail—thus ending up with a huge embarrassment for America's security guarantees; or c) Trump will not execute his threat and weaken the security alliances as Japan and South Korea may assume that North Korea's ICBMs held the US back.

The more honourable option for the US then is to accept mutual vulnerability, resume dialogue with North Korea and examine which of the latter's demands can be conceded without significantly affecting the US presence in South Korea and Japan. But the logic of decoupling will nevertheless continue to worry Seoul and Tokyo. The only other option then is for the US to allow Japan and South Korea to develop their own nuclear weapons. While this option may yield the maximum strategic stability with North Korea, it may set off another set of unintended consequences. China will not like the prospect of so many nuclear powers around it, and, specifically, a nuclear-capable Japan, leading it to alter its own nuclear strategy, posture and doctrine. It may also accelerate the build-up of its nuclear arsenal. All this will have profound implications for India in particular and the Asian security architecture in general. And one is not even counting the desire for nuclear weapons—and the legitimization of such desires—that this will fuel in countries ranging from Taiwan to Iran.

Even though China has upped its rhetoric against North Korea in recent days, it should shoulder some of the blame for North Korea's nuclearization in the first place. Even at this moment, its political objective of reducing the US role in Asia resonates with North Korea's aim of decoupling America's alliances. It is, therefore, not surprising that China, along with Russia, has been putting forward a “freeze for freeze” proposal which will entail North Korea freezing its nuclear programme in exchange for the US and South Korea suspending their joint military exercises. China is also banking on the assumption—not an unreasonable one—that a proliferation-obsessed Washington will not allow South Korea and Japan to have their own nukes. Beijing, therefore, hopes to come out on top after the crisis is over even though it too does not like a North Korea whose missiles

can reach all corners of China.

One hopes that the defence and foreign affairs establishment in New Delhi is carefully examining all the scenarios and thinking deeply about the changes in Asia's security architecture that North Korea's nuclear capabilities may bring. For India, the most immediate concern will be any possible diminution of the US role in Asia, which is crucial to meeting the China challenge. Both the eventuality of a North Korean-induced decoupling and the more distant prospect of South Korea and Japan developing their own nuclear weapons have the potential to significantly alter the security role that the US plays in the region. Given the history of proliferation networks, some Indian analysts are also concerned about advanced nuclear technology finding its way from North Korea to Pakistan.

All things considered, the joke will now be on those who are not seriously thinking about the consequences of North Korea's nuclear capabilities.

Will North Korea's strategy of unravelling America's East Asian alliances succeed? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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India, China rebooting ties post-Doklam

Fresh perspectives: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Xiamen, China. PTI

Jolted by the military face-off in the Doklam plateau, India and China are rebooting their ties, by opening new channels of official communication to address points of friction before they develop into full-blown crises.

“The Chinese appear to have taken a strategic decision to reboot ties with India with a new and positive mindset following the Doklam crisis,” an official source, who did not wish to be named, told *The Hindu*.

“After talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping on Tuesday, there is much anticipation that the quality of core communication between the two countries will greatly improve.”

Yet, New Delhi has concerns that despite the fresh start in Xiamen on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, the leadership changes in China at the 19th party congress in October will impact the trajectory of New Delhi and Beijing ties. It is widely anticipated that Yang Jiechi, state counsellor and China’s special representative at the boundary talks with India, will retire.

China’s apparent policy shift on international terrorism, as reflected in the BRICS statement, will be tested when the United Nations 1267 committee meets in October to discuss designation of Masood Azhar, the head of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist. China has so far resisted putting Azhar on the list of global terrorists, but there is some optimism now that Beijing may be ready to shift its stance on this issue, notwithstanding its special relationship with Pakistan.

The new hands-on mechanism will supplement the already-existing periodically held “strategic dialogue”. It is expected to address concerns of an aspirational India and rising China in the region, including the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific.

Analysts say the thinking driving India’s Act-East policy and China’s Belt and Road Initiative is far from aligned. India’s Indo-Pacific doctrine is raising apprehensions in China that instead of pursuit of an independent policy, India is allowing itself to drift into a China-containment mode, with Tokyo and Washington as partners.

India has its own concerns about Chinese intentions in the South China Sea and the South Asian neighbourhood, including Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives.

Positive view

During a media briefing on Tuesday after the meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi, Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar highlighted that the two leaders had “laid out a very positive view of our relationship.” They had held “a detailed discussion about the mechanisms which could help both countries really go forward in that direction”.

On Tuesday afternoon, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang also underscored that India and China should “reinforce communication and coordination in international affairs and make the international order more just and equitable”.

Notwithstanding the intent to break common ground, India continued to differ with China and Russia on accommodating the Taliban to restore calm in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a major issue of discussion during Prime Minister Modi's lengthy conversation with President Vladimir Putin on the margins of the summit.

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What data do you share, court asks WhatsApp, FB

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed instant messaging platform WhatsApp and social media giant Facebook to file affidavits stating what user data they shared with “third parties.”

The Bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra is hearing a petition filed by two law students alleging that a contract entered into between Facebook and WhatsApp in 2016 on data sharing was a violation of a citizen’s right to privacy. The data, according to them, included photographs, messages, pictures and other personal documents shared by users on WhatsApp.

Initially, senior advocate Kapil Sibal representing WhatsApp, submitted that the instant messaging platform does not share any personal data of its users with third parties. He said only four details, ‘telephone number, type of device, last access of the user and registration date,’ are shared.

The petitioners, represented by advocate Madhavi Divan, countered that the court should injunct WhatsApp from sharing user data with third parties. Ms. Divan submitted that European privacy watchdogs have warned WhatsApp against sharing user information with parent company, Facebook. WhatsApp was acquired by Facebook in 2014. The petitioners argued that the same restriction should be imposed in India.

The Centre, represented by Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, submitted that a committee had been set up under former Supreme Court judge B.N. Srikrishna, on July 31, 2017 to identify “key data protection issues” and suggest a draft Data Protection Bill.

‘No instance of breach’

Mr. Sibal said the material shared by users on WhatsApp was encrypted and Facebook was no “third party.” He said billions used WhatsApp and there had never been a single instance of breach.

“Petitioners are concerned with certain information you will come to know, which will reveal the pattern or behaviour of the user, like his communication of health details and reports with his doctors,” Justice A.K. Sikri, on the Bench, observed. But Mr. Sibal dismissed such fears as merely speculative.

The next hearing has been fixed for November 28.

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Rohingya Muslims have nowhere to go

Once again, the Myanmar military has gone on a rampage in Rakhine, burning homes, razing villages, intimidating, threatening and expelling the stateless Rohingya Muslims. Many have been killed and women have alleged rape. Credible reports suggest some bodies have been burnt to destroy evidence. Many are desperately trying to escape to Bangladesh, which appears to have, at least for now, shed its hostility towards the influx and is letting them in.

Rohingya Muslims' rights are severely curtailed in Myanmar—they can't practise their religion (Islam) freely, cannot meet in large gatherings, face discrimination when they look for work, and there are restrictions on the number of children they can have. They are not included in the census, and they do not have voting rights. In June, Myanmar didn't let UN investigators visit Rakhine.

Senior army general Min Aung Hlaing has called the recent crackdown "unfinished business" dating back to World War II. Over the weekend, the world's youngest Nobel laureate, Malala Yousafzai, appealed to Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's state counsellor (and de facto president) and a fellow laureate, to save Rohingyas. She is silent.

Aung San Suu Kyi was once among the world's most well-known prisoners of conscience. She led a non-violent struggle for democracy against military might, earning global respect and many honours, including the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1993 when she was under house arrest. But since her release in late 2010, the world has discovered a different Suu Kyi. Her reluctance to criticize the military was earlier seen as strategic, until she had won elections. Those hopes have been misplaced.

She appears to hold the majoritarian view that Rohingya Muslims are not citizens of Myanmar. In private conversations, she has blamed Myanmar's poor immigration controls for the crisis, reinforcing the idea that Rohingyas are illegal immigrants, even though they have lived in western Myanmar for centuries. Even in her acclaimed collection of essays, *Letters From Burma* (1997), the word "Rohingya" does not appear. Myanmar's 135 ethnic groups do not include Rohingyas. Since her party came to power, Myanmar has complained to the US state department, saying it should not use the term Rohingya, and instead call them Bengalis.

Explaining her reticence, in 2012 Suu Kyi had said that she wanted to work towards reconciliation between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, which would be difficult were she to take sides. Since then, the violence has worsened, with the overwhelming blame falling on the army. While Suu Kyi has been the army's prisoner, she feels kinship with the army. In 2012, on BBC's radio programme *Desert Island Discs*, she had said that all Burmese soldiers were like her family, since her father, General Aung San, was the father of the Burmese army.

The army's antagonism towards Rohingyas dates back at least to World War II, when the Burmese army under General Aung San had initially sided with the Japanese (before switching to the British towards the end of the war), while many Muslims supported the British. The Japanese had expelled Rohingyas to northern Arakan (as Rakhine was known then), which was under British control. At Burma's independence from the British in 1948, Arakanese Muslims wanted to join East Pakistan, but Mohammed Ali Jinnah refused. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, Burma asked Bangladesh to take the Rohingya Muslims, but Bangladesh declined. Since the late 1970s, Myanmar's army has frequently attacked Rohingyas, forcing many to make a hazardous journey through the narrow Naf river and reach south-eastern Bangladesh, where they settle in ramshackle tents in sprawling camps like Kutupalong. Many others are trafficked to South-East Asia.

Rakhine forms the frontier between Muslim and Buddhist Asia, so violence there has wider implications. As the South-East Asia expert Michael Vatikiotis notes in the *Nikkei Asian Review*, there have been protests near the Myanmar embassy in Kuala Lumpur, and Indonesia's second largest Muslim group, Muhammadiyah, has called for Myanmar's expulsion from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Other Asean countries—including southern Thailand and parts of the Philippines—have long-running insurgencies involving Muslim groups, and continued oppression of Rohingya Muslims can ignite the region.

It is in this context that the Indian home ministry's advisory to states to detect and deport Rohingya Muslims is so perplexing and inhumane. The National Human Rights Commission has cautioned the government, saying that even if the refugees are not citizens, the government should consider that they might face persecution if they are pushed back. Next week, the Supreme Court will hear a challenge to the home ministry note.

India has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, but it has abided by its spirit, and generously hosted refugees from Tibet, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan over the years. In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled that refugees have certain rights, including the right to life and liberty, and in 2015, asked the Centre to extend citizenship to Chakma and Hajong refugees from Bangladesh.

Indian law, India's practice of abiding by international expectations, long tradition of compassion, and humanitarian impulse, all suggest that India should let the Rohingyas remain, and join the collective global outrage which seeks to remind Aung San Suu Kyi of who she used to be, or was believed to be, so that she lives up to the image she once had.

Salil Tripathi is a writer based in London.

Comments are welcome at salil@livemint.com. Read Salil's previous Mint columns at www.livemint.com/saliltripathi

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Curtain Raiser : Exercise Yudh Abhyas – 2017**Curtain Raiser : Exercise Yudh Abhyas – 2017**

As part of the ongoing Indo-US defence cooperation, a joint military training, Exercise Yudh Abhyas - 2017 is being conducted at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington, USA from 14 to 27 September 17. Exercise Yudh Abhyas is one of the largest joint running military training and defence corporation endeavors between India and USA. This will be the 13th edition of the joint exercise hosted alternately between the two countries.

Exercise Yudh Abhyas will provide an opportunity to the armed forces of both countries to train in an integrated manner at Battalion level with joint planning at Brigade level. Multiple scenarios will be rehearsed during the joint exercise with a view to understand each-other's organisational structure and battle procedures which would result in a higher degree of jointmanship that would further facilitate interoperability between the armed forces of both countries to meet any unforeseen contingency across the globe. The exercise is also an ideal platform to learn from each-other's experiences of planning and execution of operations.

Both armies will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed operations for neutralisation of threats of varied nature. In the end a joint exercise will be undertaken by both countries in an operational setting under a UN mandate. Experts from both sides will also hold expert academic and military discussions to share each other's experiences on varied topics for mutual benefit.

Col Aman Anand

PRO (Army)

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'Rs. 4,900 cr. black money disclosed'

Black money worth Rs. 4,900 crore was disclosed by 21,000 people under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGKY), the stash money declaration window announced by the government post demonetisation, an official said on Thursday.

The Income Tax Department, a top government official told PTI, has collected a tax of Rs. 2,451 crore till now from these declarations.

"These are now the final figures," the official said, adding that the I-T department is following up legal processes.

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For a robust data protection regime

On July 31, the government set up a five-member committee chaired by former Supreme Court judge, Justice (retd.) B.N. Srikrishna, to draw up a draft Data Protection Bill. The Bill, if made law, will be India's first exclusive statute providing protection to online users' personal data from breach by state and non-state players.

The office memorandum of the Srikrishna Committee notes that the "government is cognisant of the growing importance of data protection in India. The need to ensure growth of the digital economy while keeping personal data of citizens secure and protected is of utmost importance."

The recent privacy judgment highlights the committee's role in evolving a "robust data protection regime". The court recognised the government's efforts to initiate the process of reviewing the entire area of data protection. It observes that "it would be appropriate to leave the matter for expert determination..."

The government has undertaken in the court that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology would work with the panel and hand over all necessary information to it within the next eight weeks, after which the latter will start its deliberations. The committee is expected to submit its report soon.

One of the primary guiding factors for the committee would be the exhaustive report submitted in October 2012 by a group of experts on privacy led by former Delhi High Court Chief Justice A.P. Shah, which was constituted by the erstwhile Planning Commission. Both the government and the court have agreed that this would be the "conceptual foundation for legislation protecting privacy" in the form of the new Data Protection Bill.

The new Bill would be based on five salient features: technological neutrality and interoperability with international standards; multi-dimensional privacy; horizontal applicability to state and non-state entities; conformity with privacy principles; and a co-regulatory enforcement regime.

The Justice Shah group had emphasised on taking the informed and individual consent of users before the collection of their personal data. It had proposed giving users prior notice of information practices, providing them with choices, and collection of only limited data necessary for the purpose for which it is collected. If there is a change of purpose, it must be notified to the individual.

Most importantly, the report proposed access for users to their personal information held by a data controller. Users should be able to seek correction, amendments, or deletion of inaccurate information.

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Eastern Fleet Ships on Overseas Deployment to East and South-East Asia

Eastern Fleet Ships on Overseas Deployment to East and South-East Asia

In pursuant of the India's 'Act East Policy', two Indian Naval Ships proceeded on deployment to East and South-East Asia this year. INS Satpura and INS Kadmatt departed Visakhapatnam today to visit 12 ports in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Brunei and Russia. The two ships will be deployed for more than 3 months away from home port.

During this deployment, the ships will participate in the International Fleet Review hosted by the Association of South East Asian Countries (ASEAN) at Thailand. They will visit Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia and Brunei to commemorate the 25th anniversary of India-ASEAN dialogue. The ships will also participate in the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise at Malaysia. At Russia, the ships will participate in the annual India-Russia bilateral exercise INDRA. This year, for the first time, Ex-INDRA will witness the joint participation of Army, Navy and Air Force of both countries, thus, a major milestone in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The Indian Navy routinely undertakes deployment of ships to friendly nations. The visit of Indian Naval Ships to East and South-East Asia underscores India's peaceful presence and harmonious relations with the countries in the region. The deployment aims to strengthen existing bonds between India and the regional countries. Besides making port calls, the visit of ships will help in people-to-people interactions, meetings between Indian Naval delegations with local dignitaries, and naval exercises to share best practices at sea and enhance interoperability.

India had made great strides in field of warship design and construction. INS Satpura and INS Kadmatt are both indigenously built warships. INS Satpura, synonymous with the formidable mountain range in Central India, is a multi-role stealth frigate and is commanded by Captain Rahul Shankar. INS Kadmatt, named after an island in the beautiful Lakshadweep chain, is an Anti-Submarine Corvette and is commanded by Commander Nithin Cariappa.

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No shift in policy on Pakistan: China

Strategic partner: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi with his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif in Beijing on Friday. AFP/LINTAO ZHANG

After agreeing to list Pakistan-based outfits Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) as international terror groups during this week's Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) summit, China on Friday reassured Pakistan that there was no shift in its policy of recognising Islamabad's role in countering global extremism.

During a press conference with his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed that Beijing saw Islamabad as a close ally that is a key part of the battle against international terrorism.

Post-BRICS balancing

Mr. Wang embarked on a post-BRICS balancing act when he praised Pakistan as Beijing's "good brother and iron friend". "For years Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism. More importantly Pakistan is an important participant in the international cooperation against terrorism." He added: "When it comes to the issue of counterterrorism, Pakistan has done its best with a clear conscience. In comparison, some countries need to give Pakistan the full credit that it deserves."

Ahead of his visit, and following the statement at the BRICS summit, Mr. Asif had told Geo News, in reference to China's decision to endorse a ban on the JeM and LeT during the BRICS summit, that "friends should not be tested [every time], particularly in the changed scenario". "Instead, we should impose some restrictions on the activities of elements like LeT and JeM, so that we can show the global community that we have put our house in order," he had observed.

Much of the press conference was devoted to the joint role of Beijing, Islamabad and Kabul to ensure durable peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Asif said that China had played a crucial role in bringing Pakistan and Afghanistan together. "To support that initiative Pakistan has already undertaken many steps and will pursue those steps for improving relationship with Kabul."

He also underscored that Islamabad is working on "a substantive and robust engagement with the Kabul... (at the) political level, security level, military level, intelligence level". Mr. Asif said that he would be meeting his Afghan counterpart on the sidelines of the upcoming UN General Assembly session in New York.

Engagement with Kabul

The Chinese have escalated their engagement with Kabul, especially after the collapse of the four-party talks involving the United States, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In June, Mr. Wang had visited Kabul and Islamabad to reinforce a Beijing-driven initiative in Afghanistan.

At the Friday press conference, Mr. Wang said that Beijing was "exploring" hosting a China-Pakistan-Afghanistan conference later this year. He said that "strategic communication, security dialogue and practical cooperation" would be the pillars of the new platform for regional cooperation.

From China, Mr. Asif will travel to Iran on the second leg of his visit.

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Nepal, China discuss railway connectivity project

Nepal on Thursday began talks about a railway connectivity project with China. Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal Krishna Bahadur Mahara, who visited Beijing, held talks with top Chinese decision-makers and said that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) opens up the railway connectivity project as a national priority of Nepal.

“(Krishna Bahadur) Mahara said that he had come up with a common consensus among major political leaders in the government and in the Opposition to carry forward railway connectivity as a national priority project. Both sides agreed to take necessary measures to carry out technical study of the project,” said a press release from Nepal’s embassy in Beijing.

“Government of Nepal has accorded high importance to the implementation of MoU on BRI signed between the two countries... Mahara expressed Nepal’s strong support to China’s Belt and Road Initiative.”

Apart from the talk on railways, both sides also sealed an agreement on energy cooperation. A third agreement signed on Thursday opened up Nepal’s tourism sector for greater Chinese investment.

The agreements came two days after China held the BRICS summit and indicate Nepal’s desire to reach out to Chinese and Eastern markets as an alternative to India.

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Nowhere people: the Rohingya crisis

India took extraordinary care to stay on Myanmar's right side this week by resisting any show of sympathy to the Rohingya people. On his first bilateral visit to the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he [shared the Myanmar government's concerns](#) about "extremist violence" in Rakhine state, which has seen unprecedented violence over the past fortnight. Meanwhile, at the World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan [abstained from the Bali Declaration](#) because of a reference to "violence in Rakhine state". New Delhi has traditionally been wary of internationalising the internal affairs of its neighbours; on Myanmar, it has concerns about keeping the country from spinning back into the Chinese orbit. But India must adopt a humane position when dealing with a refugee population that is stateless and has no place to call home. This week, when the matter of Rohingya refugees now in India came up for hearing in the Supreme Court, government counsel refused to guarantee they would not be deported. This was in line with the [government's indication to Parliament](#) last month that all illegal immigrants, including the Rohingya, who number around 40,000, will be deported. The insensitivity of this plan is exposed by the unfolding crisis in Rakhine, where the Rohingya people had been living for generations.

There is a Rohingya in all of us

The Rohingya have been fleeing, mostly on rickety boats, for years now. But this [exodus has picked up pace since August 25](#), when an attack on police posts by an extremist Rohingya group invited sustained reprisal from the army and local Buddhist mobs. [The UN estimates that about 270,000 people](#), more than a quarter of the entire Muslim Rohingya population in Rakhine, have fled since then, mostly to Bangladesh. The Rohingya have been the ultimate nowhere people since 1982, when a Burmese law rendered them stateless, with the government arguing that they are Bengali. Violence has targeted them in phases, most notably beginning in 2012 when inter-religious conflict forced them out in the thousands. In 2014, the Burmese census refused to enumerate the Rohingya, giving them only the option to identify themselves as Bengali. It is an irony that the period of Myanmar's transition to democracy, that too on Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's watch, has coincided with the most heartless alienation of the Rohingya. A UN report has called them victims of "crimes against humanity", while Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu has referred to the violence as "ethnic cleansing". This backdrop should worry Delhi, not just because its official stance is casting it on the wrong side of the humane position, but also because its deportation plans are perceived as being drawn by the sectarian pulls of domestic politics. And as a regional power, India must answer the question: if it is driving out a stateless people, where does it hope to send them?

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Dhaka seeks solution to Rohingya crisis

Rohingya refugees in Whaikhyang, Bangladesh. Getty images Dan Kitwood

Bangladesh, which has seen an influx of Rohingya refugees from the neighbouring Myanmar in recent days, is facing a policy predicament over how to deal with the crisis.

About 2,70,000 Rohingya Muslims are estimated to have entered Bangladesh in recent weeks as Myanmar security troops carry out an “anti-insurgency” operation in the Rakhine State. Many more are waiting on the borders. Prior to this, some 5,00,000 Rohingya people have already come to Bangladesh and settled in refugee camps.

Bangladesh’s society appears to be sharply divided over the refugee crisis. Pro-Islamist groups argue that the Rohingya Muslims are facing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar.

The Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its Islamist allies addressed a human chain in Dhaka on Friday against the persecution of Rohingya. Another section, including the secular parties, sees it as a humanitarian problem, not a religious one. They are also alarmed by the Rohingya militancy, and believe it is supported by global Islamists, with help from Pakistan.

Both sides, however, urge the government to do more to address the crisis. Rohingya, who are not even granted citizenship in Myanmar, are seen as illegal immigrants.

Diplomatic efforts

Diplomatic sources told *The Hindu* that Bangladesh has begun diplomatic efforts aimed at addressing the crisis, including holding talks with India and China. Both countries maintain “very close” relations with Myanmar, and have not condemned the violence against Rohingya, said one diplomat.

Referring to the August 25 attacks on Myanmar security camps by insurgents, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently said: “Bangladesh never supported such kind of acts. But the way the Myanmar government is reacting is creating problems for Bangladesh.”

Dhaka’s main request to Myanmar to take back the refugees has so far fallen on deaf ears. As part of its diplomatic efforts, Dhaka has circulated “evidence” of atrocities by Myanmar troops among UN bodies and other organisations, asking them to put pressure on Myanmar, said the sources.

Dhaka has also offered support to the recommendations made by a commission headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which included the formation of an “international safe zone” for Rohingya under UN supervision.

Diplomats say Bangladesh is looking for a peaceful solution despite Myanmar’s non-reciprocity. They hope that the UN General Assembly, which will convene on September 12, may adopt a motion condemning Myanmar’s actions on the Rohingya, and put pressure on the country to take back the refugees.

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The disaster next door: on the Rohingya issue

In a span of two weeks, almost 300,000 Rohingya have crossed over to Bangladesh from the northern Rakhine state in Myanmar, putting Bangladesh under immense strain and compelling the refugees to find shelter in squalid, unsanitary camps scattered along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. Excluded from the 135 officially recognised ethnic groups, the Rohingya have been harassed and hounded by the Myanmar authorities for decades. The latest surge follows attacks on police posts by an extremist Rohingya group in late August and military action. While the Myanmar authorities claim that 400 lives have been lost, advocates cite double this number.

The flight of the Rohingya has quickened in the past two weeks, but Rohingya refugees have been trying to find a home outside their native Rakhine for years now, braving human traffickers and fraught conditions on rickety, overcrowded boats. The Rohingya have also sought refuge in India where they have been shunned, denied basic public services and deemed by authorities as 'the undesirables'.

For Rohingya, there is no place called home

While the government has called them to be illegal immigrants and trespassers, the fact is that India, throughout its history, has been generously accommodative towards refugees in the neighbourhood fleeing persecution, which includes Parsis, Tibetans, Afghans, Sri Lankan Tamils, and Bangladeshis during the war of liberation in 1971. India has prided itself in its tradition of *Atithi Devo Bhava* (the guest is equivalent to god).

The [stance on the Rohingya issue by Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#), during his recent visit to Myanmar, has been disappointing and is contradictory to the values of hospitality and inclusiveness that India stands for. South Asia, particularly Bangladesh, which has been most affected by the crisis, was hopeful that Mr. Modi would express concern about the humanitarian crisis with Myanmar's State Councillor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Instead, he was seen empathising with Myanmar, and the joint statement at the end of the visit said: "India stands with Myanmar over the issue of violence in the Rakhine state which has led to loss of innocent lives." In doing so, he overlooked the atrocious crimes committed in the neighbourhood and almost turned a blind eye to both the untold sufferings caused to the refugees fleeing persecution and the resulting difficulties that a resource-constrained country such as Bangladesh has been put to — a country which Indian politicians and officials frequently refer to as a role model of friendship in India's neighbourhood.

International relief agencies in Bangladesh such as the office of the UNHCR and the World Food Programme are struggling to attend to the [large number of refugees arriving each day](#) on foot or by boat (*picture shows refugees at the border, at Teknaf, Bangladesh*). Bangladesh, itself one of the world's most densely populated nations, has hosted more than 600,000 Rohingya compared to 40,000 by India. Initially, hesitant to open borders along the Naf river, Bangladesh has now started allowing in refugees.

No country for the Rohingyas

Through the International Committee of the Red Cross, Dhaka has proposed that Myanmar secure areas in Rakhine under international relief agency supervision, but there has been no response so far from Myanmar. Bangladesh has plans of making another 607 hectares of land available near the Myanmar border for camps to accommodate refugees. It has also urged the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to take back the refugees and stop the violence against them. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently said: "It affects a country's dignity when

tens of thousands of its own nationals are fleeing home to take refuge outside.”

Last Friday, India’s move to [dissociate itself from the Bali Declaration](#) adopted at the World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development in Indonesia, and which called “on all parties to contribute to the restoration of stability and security ... respect human rights of all people in Rakhine State regardless of their faith and ethnicity, as well as facilitate safe access for humanitarian assistance”, puts into question its respect for human rights and the treatment of minorities. It weakens India’s moral authority to speak for minorities in other parts of its neighbourhood. Interestingly Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka joined the declaration.

There is a Rohingya in all of us

In his 2015 visit to Bangladesh, Mr. Modi used eloquent phrases to describe the India-Bangladesh friendship. Since 2009, Bangladesh has emerged as one of India’s most trusted neighbours, with Dhaka addressing almost all of New Delhi’s security concerns. This includes cracking down on cross-border terrorism and insurgency conducted against India from Bangladeshi soil. The India-Bangladesh border today is one of the safest for India, enabling massive redeployment of its vital border resources for other purposes. Despite this, Bangladesh has neither received water from the Teesta or support in times of humanitarian crisis from its biggest neighbour.

Ironically, when Bangladesh procured two submarines from China, indicating the growing economic and defence ties between the two countries, New Delhi rushed its then Union Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, to Dhaka to elevate military cooperation. Such promptness is missing when it comes to supporting Bangladesh when it is overcome by helpless refugees persecuted at home and accepted by none. The world does not expect Myanmar’s other big neighbour, China, to be vocal about the atrocities being committed, but as the upholder of democratic values, India has a unique opportunity to demonstrate statesmanship and regional leadership by mediating a solution to the Rohingya crisis on the basis of a report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State headed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and set up by none other than Ms. Suu Kyi.

While Myanmar is an important factor in India’s ocean diplomacy and a valuable stakeholder in its ‘Look East’ Policy, India’s nonchalant attitude towards the humanitarian plight of the Rohingya reflects inadequate moral leadership and an inability to rise to the occasion as expected from a regional power vying to enhance its influence in the neighbourhood. One of the reasons why India, despite its enviable soft power and formidable hard power, fails to generate confidence in the region, including with friends such as Bangladesh, is its complex geopolitics based more on political opportunism and economic interests as opposed to principles and values, practised consistently. This must be food for thought for India.

Prof. Syed Munir Khasru is Chairman of the international think tank, The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG). E-mail: munir.khasru@ipag.org

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India to further aid Afghan troops

Stronger ties:Sushma Swaraj, right, with Afghan Minister Salahuddin Rabbani in New Delhi.Shanker Chakravarty

India agreed to enhance existing assistance to Afghan security forces, including in capacity building and training of Afghan soldiers in India, during a Partnership Council meeting on Monday, even as Afghanistan's Foreign Minister suggested a larger role for India in regional diplomacy.

"We are glad India will continue to support our security forces in terms of equipment and training Afghan cadets in India," Afghanistan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani told *The Hindu* in an exclusive interview.

"We hope also that India, as a good friend of other countries in the region like Russia and Iran, can convince those countries to work with the Afghan government to support the peace process in Afghanistan."

Addressing journalists along with Mr. Rabbani at the conclusion of the Partnership Council meeting, the second such meeting since the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) was signed in 2011, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the strategic relationship is an "article of faith".

The meeting was the first high-level engagement between India and Afghanistan since the announcement of a new 'South Asia policy for Afghanistan' by U.S. President Donald Trump, where he vowed to take tough action against Pakistan if it fails to crackdown on terror groups, a policy that was welcomed in both Kabul and New Delhi.

New scholarships

"We remain united in overcoming the challenges posed by cross-border terrorism and safe havens and sanctuaries to both our countries," Ms. Swaraj said in a veiled reference to Pakistan, and announced 500 new scholarships for children and kin of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) to honour their sacrifices "for the cause of entire humanity" and ensuring the safety of Indians working in Afghanistan.

Mr. Rabbani made a more pointed reference to Pakistan-based terror groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which he said had "been launching attacks against India and killing innocent civilians there", while also also launching "similar attacks along with D'aesh (ISIS), Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan and destroying infrastructure."

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Chinese troops fire on Indian forces

Chinese troops fired across the Indian border near Nathu La in Sikkim throughout to-day [September 11]. Some Indian personnel were killed in the initial Chinese firing and a number of others were also wounded as a result of shelling. The Chinese started rifle and machine-gun fire early this morning [September 11]. Later they brought in mortar and heavy artillery. An official statement said that the Chinese used mortars and 76 mm. guns. In addition to firing across the border, the Chinese also fired "in depth." Indian troops returned the fire. There was some indication of reduced intensity of firing from the Chinese side at some points. The Government of India in a note to China suggested an immediate cease-fire in the Nathu La area and a meeting of the sector commanders of the two sides to prevent the situation assuming a very serious aspect. India told China that by launching an armed attack, the Chinese Government was seeking to build up tension at a point on the border which had never been in dispute. Soon after the receipt of news of the Chinese firing the Secretaries Committee of the Government met to take stock of the border situation. The Chinese attack across the Sikkim border to-day [September 11] and the intrusion by Chinese soldiers last week have made the Government of India sit up and analyse the motives behind the Chinese action. For some time it has been felt that the Chinese may create some trouble in order to divert the attention of the Chinese people from the cultural chaos sweeping their country. The season in the Himalayas from Ladakh to NEPA is now good for military operations. If there is one country on China's border, excluding the Soviet Union, towards which China entertains intense hostility, it is India. But with a very long border, where every inch cannot be guarded, the initial advantage would always rest with the aggressor. The populated Indian cities scattered all along the border provide any number of military targets for China. But there is very little by way of military targets in Tibet for India to concentrate on. The political objective of any sudden attack is also of vital importance.

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Sh. Ravi Shankar Prasad launches the Nation-Wide Hackathon #OpenGovDataHack**Sh. Ravi Shankar Prasad launches the Nation-Wide Hackathon #OpenGovDataHack**

- *The Hackathon would be conducted by NIC and IAMAI as a part of the Startup Eco-system Development Programme*
- *A 24hours Hackathon themed on Drinking Water & Sanitation, Transport, Education, Crime & Health will take place in seven cities*

Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad** today launched a nation-wide hackathon #OpenGovDataHack. As part of the Startup Eco-system Development program, NIC and IAMAI have collaborated to conduct Nation Wide Hackathon #OpenGovDataHack across seven states of India. It aims to Support & Showcase potentially great Ideas/Talent from Inner India by reaching out in their own State/City (**7 Cities**). It is to enable them making their ideas developed into Apps/Infographics primarily by use of Open Government Data around the themes of **Drinking Water& Sanitation, Transport, Education, Crime and Health** to a stage, after which it can be evaluated by jury and be selected for Prizes and future support/funding.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad, Hon'ble Minister of Electronics and Information Technology said, "The government is committed to make best use of big data in establishing rule of precision governance. While doing so every care would be taken to ensure that strict privacy rights of individuals are protected. However, unauthorised use of data would be dealt with iron-hand to ensure that nothing comes in the way of making data-analytics a national movement."

"The big data analytics should focus on poor & under privileged and facilitate inclusive growth. While aiming at taking lead in data analytics it must be ensured that technology is inclusive, affordable, transformative & developmental. #OpenGovDataHack being taken up in seven states would catalyse further start up movement. I would like assure you all that the Government is determined to hand-hold successful start-ups and make it a big success." added **Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad.**

Shri Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, said, "The open data platform is a huge opportunity for the country and a brilliant foundation in place to have so much of data already being made available. However, there is big gap between data being available and data being utilized. I believe there are not only gaps, but we have serious opportunities available. A lot of intellectual effort needs to go into creating that value. On one side, we have this wonderful platform in reach our country, on the other side there is this huge opportunity for new services that can be made available, and thirdly there is massive resource available to us in terms of creative young minds in institutions, industry, start-ups across the country. I think Hackathon is a great opportunity, it fits in to our start-up movement as well, and I hope that our youngsters will be able to not only come out with new ideas, they will be able to

provide valuable services to departments, to citizens, to communities across the country.”

The workshops will be organized for Stakeholders Sensitization, identifying Problem Statements and Data Gathering at respective cities. Students, Community, Startups, Academia, and Industry etc. can participate.

The #OpenGovDataHack will be going with the onsite City Challenge, a 24 hours Hackathon event will be held at 7 centres/ institutes/ organizations across Hackathon cities on different weekends. The participating teams will be required to submit Apps prototypes and Info-graphics. Selected Apps prototypes from all seven onsite city Centre and online submissions will be taken forward for App development. Each team will be given 2 months of mentorship/incubation to develop the App, post which the teams will submit the final Apps for evaluation.

The apps will be evaluated by a panel of jury comprised of the members from the Community, Government, Academia and Industry etc., and the shortlisted teams will be invited for a presentation on the App. The Hackathon process will conclude with an International conference on Open Data, wherein the winners of the Apps Challenge will be awarded.

About Open Government Data Platform:

The Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India has been set up by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in compliance with National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) 2012. The objective of the policy is to provide proactive access to government owned sharable data along with its usage information.

OGD Main Features Include:

- Single point access to open datasets
- Workflow based web access to the departments to publish their datasets through a predefined metadata
- Enhanced visualization tool
- Better user experience and efficient discoverability of resources
- Cataloging of similar resources
- Consumable Open APIs
- Catalogue embedding
- Catalogue sharing widgets, catalogue subscription
- Mobile and Web Apps

- Community participation through blogs, infographics, visualizations and much more...

A number of Hackathons, Data Meets and Open App Challenges have been conducted to bring out innovative applications, info-graphics and visualizations using the government data.

OGD Analytics

- 111 Chief data Officer have been nominated
- datasets:
 - o 1,18,450 datasets
 - o Under 4220 catalogs
 - o By 106 Departments
 - o 12.57 Million times viewed &
 - o 4.94 Million Times Download
- 1200 + visulizations have been created
- 2200 + APIs
- 1,44,307 Registered Users

Top 10 Sector data

- Health and Family Welfare - 48525
- Home Affairs -031598
- Agriculture -21033
- Rajya Sabha - 4363
- Statistics & Programme -2199
- Niti Aayog - 1599
- Transport- 1303
- Water -1060
- Environment & Forests -917
- Human Resource Development - 747

Community Engagement:

The Platform also acts as a knowledge - sharing platform through online communities. Citizens with specific interests are encouraged to contribute blogs and joins online forums around various

datasets or their domain of interest. Platform demonstrated its potential to the App Developers Community through various contest such as :

- 12th Plan Hackathon
- In pursuit of an Idea
- CMA Hackathon
- #OpendataApps Challenge with Nasscom
- Code for Honor 2014 with Microsoft

A separate Community Portal (<http://community.data.gov.in>) has been launched to provide a common platform for knowledge sharing through contribution of blogs, info-graphics, Visualization, etc. using data available on the platforms. Similarly a dedicated event portal (<https://event.data.gov.in>) also helps in management of workshops, hackathons, challenges, etc. OGD has organised 24 major events/apps-challenges/hackathons, workshops/training/awareness sessions, roundtable, etc.so far.

OGD SaaS (Software as a Service)

OGD Platform is available as Software as a Service (SaaS) model. Following Open Data Portals have been created using OGD SaaS: Sikkim Open Data Portal (<http://sikkim.data.gov.in>)Tamil Nadu Open Data Portal (<http://tn.data.gov.in>) and Surat Municipal Corporation (<http://surat.data.gov.in>).

NNK/MD

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Chakmas to be made citizens

Pema Khandu

As the Union government remains undecided on the procedure to deport the Rohingya, it is all set to give citizenship to over one lakh Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindus who fled to India in the 1960s to escape religious persecution in the Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh (undivided Pakistan then).

Home Minister Rajnath Singh will chair a meeting on Wednesday where a final decision to grant citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs will be taken.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu will be present at the meeting.

A senior Home Ministry official said they would be granted citizenship but will not have any land ownership rights in Arunachal Pradesh, a predominantly tribal State. The Arunachalis have opposed giving any rights to Chakma-Hajongs.

“They would be free to buy land anywhere else in India but not in Arunachal Pradesh. They could continue to live in the transit camps where they have been housed since 1964-65,” the official said.

Rajnath's view

On Tuesday, while responding to a question regarding deportation of Rohingya, Mr. Singh told a press conference in Jammu, “We have plans for illegal immigrants and some action will be taken soon.” “They are illegal immigrants and we are not ruling out the possibility of a security threat. Wait and watch,” he added.

The Home Ministry official said they were yet to formalise a procedure for deportation.

“Any procedure on deportation of Rohingya will be an extrapolation of the existing policy on Bangladesh. First step is to identify them as most of them claim they are Indians. The number of Rohingya living in India is an estimate by the intelligence agencies,” said the official.

The official said identifying an undocumented citizen was a long process.

“The police will have to enquire if the person is not an Indian citizen. Then he or she will be declared a foreigner. A foreigner not having a document is an illegal immigrant. A communication will be sent to Myanmar to verify their address. Deporting them will be the last step and the process has not been finalised yet,” he said.

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The Rohingya challenge to India's diplomacy

An estimated 300,000-plus Rohingya refugees from Rakhine State in Myanmar have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh in just about a fortnight. This latest wave of refugees is a direct result of the crackdown by security forces in Myanmar after attacks by a terror group, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), on 25 August killed a dozen security personnel. Until last week—when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a visit to Myanmar—New Delhi merely condemned the terror attack and avoided talking about the security crackdown and the refugee situation. India's position was much to the relief of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's government, which is facing widespread criticism for its handling of the Rohingyas issue.

While India has now slightly shifted its stance, it is important to remember why it did not criticize the conduct of Myanmar in the first place. One, Myanmar helps India tackle insurgency threats in the latter's northeastern states. Two, Myanmar is key to the success of India's Act East policy. Three, a public condemnation of Myanmar will only push it closer to China. Myanmar is anyway dependent on Beijing's veto in the UN Security Council should the Rohingyas issue reach there. Four, India is also aware of the possible role of Pakistan-based terror groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba in the 25 August terrorist attacks by ARSA. There have been some reports suggesting that both India and Bangladesh had apprised Myanmar of possible terror strikes coinciding with the release of the Kofi Annan-led Rakhine Advisory Commission report on fostering a reconciliation between Rohingyas and other ethnic groups in the western state of Myanmar.

Burdened by the swarm of refugees at a time when the country is also battling floods and disappointed with Modi's stand during the Myanmar visit, Bangladesh finally decided to let its displeasure be known. Therefore, India has now decided to modify its stand and acknowledge the concerns related to the outflow of refugees. The 9 September statement issued by the ministry of external affairs still stops short of censuring the Suu Kyi government for the reasons enumerated earlier.

But the modification is due to another set of reasons. One, like Myanmar, Bangladesh too is important to India's counter-insurgency efforts and Act East policy. Two, the massive rush of refugees has triggered a domestic backlash by the opposition against the Sheikh Hasina government, which is perceived to lean towards India. An unhelpful Indian attitude would only deplete Hasina's position in Bangladesh and strengthen her rival Khaleda Zia, who is known for taking anti-India stands. Three, there has been a history of Hasina's rivals—Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami—working with Pakistan's rogue and anti-India intelligence agency, the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Again, there are reports to suggest that one of the aims of the 25 August terrorist attacks was to boost Zia's position in Bangladesh at the expense of Hasina. It is useful to remember that Bangladesh goes to the polls next year.

India is caught in a difficult spot. It is not just trying to balance the contradictory interests of Myanmar and Bangladesh, it has its own reasons to worry about the onslaught of refugees. India realizes that a number of Rohingyas will also land up in its own territory. It fears radicalization of this group and there have already been some statements by Indian ministers calling for deportation of some 40,000 illegal Rohingya immigrants.

The response by Myanmar to the 25 August terrorist attacks seems, by all accounts, excessive. This is not the first time that India is facing a difficult choice between letting an "errant" regime create problems in the neighbourhood and inviting greater Chinese involvement in the region by adopting coercive tactics. That dilemma has only increased as China's pockets have grown deeper. In the past, India continued to engage neighbouring regimes and tried to influence their behaviour through quiet diplomacy rather than following the West's knee-jerk approach of public

lecturing on alleged human rights violations. India's methods, while certainly more effective, require more patience, which Bangladesh doesn't have as refugees continue to inundate its territory.

The solution to the problem lies in Myanmar itself. While India cannot let its guard down when it comes to counter-terrorism cooperation with Myanmar, this has to be done by simultaneously staunching the outflow of refugees. The report by the Annan-led commission, which argues for a citizenship verification process—the Rohingyas have been stripped of citizenship under Myanmar's 1982 citizenship law—to increase the social and economic participation of the Rohingyas, may offer some useful suggestions. Bangladesh and India can indeed give shelter to some refugees, but there are clear constraints that both the countries face in the form of the resulting burden on their economies, alteration in the demography and potential impact on national security.

India has to do a tightrope walk. On the one hand, it has to keep Myanmar engaged in counter-terrorism while simultaneously working to contain the flow of refugees and then creating the ground conditions for repatriation of refugees already in Bangladesh and India. On the other, it has to keep Bangladesh reassured through the process and do so by making public statements. A perception of India's unhelpful attitude should not become a reason for Zia upstaging Hasina in the 2018 elections.

Should India condemn Myanmar's excessive use of force in the Rakhine state? Tell us at views@livemint.com

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Chakma-Hajong issue still open

Kiren Rijiju

Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said here on Wednesday that as per the Supreme Court's order, the government would grant citizenship to over one lakh Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindu refugees who came to India from the Chittagong Hill Area in undivided Pakistan in the 1960s.

However, Home Ministry spokesperson Ashok Prasad said the "matter is still under consideration".

Mr. Rijiju told *The Hindu* that as per the constitutional provisions and various regulations, the Chakma-Hajongs "cannot be equated with the indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh". He blamed the Congress for committing a historical mistake.

The Chakma-Hajong refugee issue was discussed threadbare at a high-level meeting convened by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Mr. Rijiju.

Addressing presspersons after the hour-long meeting, Mr. Rijiju said a "middle ground" would be chosen so the 2015 Supreme Court order to grant citizenship could be honoured and the rights of the local population would not be diluted.

"The Supreme Court order has to be honoured. Chakmas are settled in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964. But ST status and indigenous people's rights won't be diluted," he said.

Several organisations and the civil society in Arunachal Pradesh have been opposing citizenship to the Chakma and Hajong refugees saying it would change the demography of the State.

Workable solution

The Central government is trying to find a workable solution by proposing that the refugees will not be given rights, including land ownership, enjoyed by the Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, an official said.

However, they may be given Inner Line permits required for non-local people in Arunachal Pradesh to travel and work. "We are trying to find a middle ground so that the Supreme Court order is honoured, the local people's rights are not infringed and the human rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs are protected," he said.

The Minister said they have to file a reply on the issue in Supreme Court soon.

Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in erstwhile East Pakistan who left their homeland when it was submerged by the Kaptai dam project in the 1960s. The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram).

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Subnationalism not a threat

Along with the rhetoric of nationalism, India is also witnessing the re-emergence of subnationalism as a political idea. Interestingly, this is emerging most strongly from Karnataka, which is neither ruled by a regional party nor has shown any significant separatist or secessionist tendencies in the past. The key issue of contention is regarding a [separate State flag for Karnataka](#). While Karnataka has had an unofficial yellow-and-red flag for almost 50 years, the government is now considering adopting an official State flag. The other issue is the protest against the imposition of Hindi, most notably on the signboards of Namma Metro stations in Bengaluru. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has strongly come out in support of the State flag and [against the use of Hindi signboards in the Metro](#).

Even if the narrative around Kannadiga pride is impelled by the government with an eye on the upcoming Assembly polls, the larger questions around identity it raises cannot be ignored. Given the multiple identity markers, the key challenge is to foster a shared political community that also accommodates the multiple aspirations of a diverse population. This is important as an aggressive nationalism seeks to engulf any alternative ideas of self-identification. The counter-narrative hence brings into question the place of linguistic and cultural rights in a plural society with a federal Constitution.

Historically, the nationalist movement had furthered a pluralistic idea of India. While the Indian National Congress had demanded language-based provinces during the freedom movement, the experience of religion-based Partition made the Nehru government wary of adopting linguistic States in the early years after Independence. But with the enactment of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, linguistic States became a reality. Further, the Official Languages Act of 1963 prevented the planned transition of India's official language from English to Hindi. These key legislative moves ensured that Indian national identity is not homogeneous.

The Kannada flag, et cetera

India also does not follow a classical majoritarian form of democracy. While the first-past-the-post electoral system tends to favour ethnocultural majorities, there are also certain group-based fundamental rights provided in the Constitution, such as in Articles 29 and 30. Part XXI of the Constitution has a set of special provisions for certain States and sub-State regions, while the Fifth and Sixth Schedules give special institutional measures for the administration of areas with high Scheduled Tribe populations.

While India does not neatly fit within political scientist Arend Lijphart's framework of a consociational system (providing for formal power-sharing arrangements between different social groups), it possesses a flexible constitutional order that enables creative solutions to subnational aspirations. The creation of new States based on varied grounds has not been too arduous in independent India. Hence, Alfred Stepan, Juan Linz and Yogendra Yadav argue that India may be classified as a "state-nation" which respects "multiple but complementary" sociocultural identities and provides constitutional mechanisms to accommodate political claims arising out of these identities. Such a constitutional order has been central to our endurance as a nation state for 70 years.

The accommodation of linguistic and cultural diversities does not merely help maintain the integrity of India's national boundaries, but also promotes positive social outcomes. In *How Solidarity Works for Welfare*, Prerna Singh has argued that subnationalism is positively linked to social development. Using multiple research methods, she demonstrates that greater the level of subnational solidarity, higher will be the State's commitment to social welfare. Kerala's success is

the most striking example. She contrasts Kerala and Tamil Nadu with Uttar Pradesh, a development laggard with little subnational solidarity, to argue her point.

With hyper-nationalism on the rise, it is important to reassert the pluralistic character of the Indian nation state. While nationalism conventionally privileges one sociocultural identity over others, India's pluralistic nationalism celebrates the coexistence of multiple identities. The assertion of subnational pride in States like Karnataka counters attempts at advancing the homogenising narrative of Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan. As long as subnationalism is not secessionist, or aimed at othering sections of the population, it should not be viewed as a threat, but rather as a constitutive element of India's plural democracy.

Mathew Idiculla is a research consultant at the Centre for Law and Policy Research, Bengaluru

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Can skirmishes in Manipur halt peace talks?

This is about how a small skirmish could impact bigger events. An indication of it came earlier this week in Manipur, where the very act of resolving one conflict can escalate others. The skirmish involves National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), which is conducting rocky negotiations with the government of India to convert a long ceasefire to permanent peace.

NSCN (I-M), which claims to speak for all Nagas—in Nagaland, and Naga homelands in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam—has for long been seen by most Nagas as a group with the keenest interest in Manipur. Most of its key leaders and large proportions of its cadres are from there, in particular the northern district of Ukhrul, home of the Tangkhul tribe.

On the morning of 12 September, NSCN (I-M) killed five members of a coalition of Manipuri rebels allied to its arch rivals, NSCN's Khaplang faction. The coalition is loosely called CorCom, or Coordination Committee, and includes a half dozen groups of Meitei rebels—Meitei have their homeland in Manipur's Imphal Valley. They have for long accused NSCN (I-M) of driving a violent wedge between the plains and hills, engineering a de facto break-up of Manipur through areas of ethnic influence.

Three of those killed in the skirmish are reportedly of the People's Liberation Army, an influential Meitei rebel arm. But significantly, two others are believed to be Tangkhul tribesmen of a group widely regarded as being birthed by Meitei groups, the Manipur Naga People's Front.

As significantly, the incident took place in Kamjong district, which was in December last year carved out of Ukhrul district in a blatant bid by the state government to rein in NSCN (I-M). Seven such new districts were added to the existing nine. Of these, four were earlier part of the Naga-majority districts of Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel. Taken together, this hived off non-Naga areas, and leveraged disquiet that some Naga tribes and even some Tangkhul clans, such as in the 'southern' Tangkhul region of Kamjong—have towards domineering NSCN (I-M), and by extension the 'northern' Tangkhul.

If this seems confounding, that's because it is, but buried in this event is a series of implications that will impact peace talks with NSCN (I-M).

One is of course the mission creep that has led NSCN (I-M)'s enemies among Manipur's rebel groups to mount an attack on an area the former considers its turf. In any case, Kamjong is too close to Ukhrul for it to take such an incursion without immediate and violent reprisal. Besides loss of face, not doing so would encourage more such incursions—blessed by the Khaplang faction and also by the members of CorCom which have for decades smarted against NSCN (I-M)'s stranglehold on much of Manipur.

The second factor is that NSCN (I-M) cannot be seen to be weak, not when it could affect its negotiating position with the Indian government.

India's security establishment could sit back and let a bunch of rival rebel groups kill each other off, but the downside—and there are several—could be a surge in bloodletting that in a worst case could jump from rebel warfare to killing of non-combatants purely on the basis of ethnicity. This could set off a firestorm in ethnically fragile Manipur (which now has a Bharatiya Janata Party-led government).

Indeed, more such skirmishing could even lead, in another worst-case, to hardliners of NSCN (I-M) pulling out of peace talks to maintain status quo that permits them weapons, recruitment and,

for all practical purpose, a parallel administration across much of the Naga homelands. Assume the peace deal goes through. What security will former NSCN (I-M) leaders and cadres enjoy in Manipur—or Tangkhul homelands, for that matter—without the clout of weapons they now have, with which they purvey both fear and favour to fund the group? Their enemies will descend on them, attempt to exact revenge.

There is a push to hammer out the peace deal by December this year, well in time to make a big impact on elections to Nagaland's assembly due by March 2018. The biggest gainer in that case will likely be the Bharatiya Janata Party, which expects to substantially increase its seat count from the current four in the 60-member assembly. It will place the party in a better position to influence government formation in what is generally accepted will be a hung assembly.

I shall share more on that political flux in future columns, but meanwhile, there's this matter of war before peace.

Sudeep Chakravarti's books include Clear.Hold.Build: Hard Lessons of Business and Human Rights in India, Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country and Highway 39: Journeys through a Fractured Land. This column, which focuses on conflict situations and the convergence of businesses and human rights, runs on Thursdays.

Respond to this column at rootcause@livemint.com

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Japan calls for 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy'

Japan's diplomacy with India during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's latest visit, highlighted the country's intensifying focus on the Indo-Pacific region and Tokyo's evolving foreign policy.

Speaking to the media, Japan government's spokesperson laid out the overarching nature of the new concept, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" that aims to prepare Japan to deal with the fast changing global and regional order and threats from China and North Korea.

Spokesperson Norio Maruyama's presentation before the media introduced the new Japanese strategy that will build peace pro-actively, based on "diplomacy that takes a panoramic view of the world map".

He stated that the strategy aims to create a "free and open" Asia-Pacific region which connects parts of eastern Africa, south Asia and southeast Asia with the western Pacific Ocean region and Japan.

"Japan will expand infrastructure, development, trade and investment, and enhance business environment and human development from East Asia as a starting point, to the Middle East and Africa," it stated.

The 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' rests on "two oceans" — Indian and Pacific — and "two continents" — Africa and Asia. It is understood that Japan is quietly challenging China's aggressive plans in the South China Sea that pose a threat to the energy lane that sustains Japanese economy.

The government of Shinzo Abe believes that connectivity between Asia and Africa through a free and open Indo-Pacific, is expected to support stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. Interestingly, a joint statement issued at the end of the visit did not mention 'South China Sea'.

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At home and in the world: on the Rohingya issue

Over the past month, from Cox's Bazar, in the south-east of Bangladesh, smoke can be seen billowing into the grey sky across the country's border. Villages, home to the Rohingya community, in the fractious state of Rakhine in western Myanmar, are being mercilessly, horrifically burnt down. Nurul Islam, a 30-year-old farmer, who had fled to Bangladesh by boat, told *The Economist* that he left his home in Myanmar after the military blasted bullets on villagers and set their houses on fire. They separated the women and men, the magazine reported, and raped Islam's 13-year-old sister Khadiza, proceeding to then mutilate her body.

Despite living for centuries in Myanmar, the Rohingya, who are mostly Muslim, have been denied citizenship and have been rendered stateless. In February, a United Nations report had documented numerous instances of gang rape and killings, including of babies and young children, by Myanmar's security forces. Now, the army's viciousness, already unimaginably ghastly, has escalated even further.

By any account, the Rohingya are at the centre of a humanitarian catastrophe of terrifying proportions. On Monday, the U.N. human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, called on Myanmar to put an end to this "[brutal security operation](#)". He termed the state's actions against the Rohingya as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing". Some would go further. In October, 2015, a Yale Law School study warned that efforts were being made not merely to forcibly displace the Rohingya but towards committing the crime of genocide through the complete annihilation of the ethnic group.

In Bangladesh, a hungry and traumatised Rohingya everywhere

Repercussions of the violence in Myanmar are now being felt around the globe, particularly in nearby countries; in India, where scores of Rohingya are lodged — reportedly totalling 40,000 — it must come to us as a matter of shame that the state is so much as considering returning the refugees back to the jaws of not merely political persecution but of mind-boggling terror and savagery. Going by the [statements made by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijju](#), quite regrettably, it appears India might find itself committing a grave error of substantial moral purport. Although he's since backtracked from some of his assertions, Mr. Rijju's message, delivered over the course of the last week, remains deeply troubling. "They are doing it, we can't stop them from registering, but we are not signatory to the accord on refugees," he said, in one interview, when asked about the registration of Rohingya as refugees by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "As far as we are concerned they are all illegal immigrants. They have no basis to live here. Anybody who is [an] illegal migrant will be deported."

These threats are not only chilling on a humanitarian level, if translated into action, they would also constitute a contravention of India's obligations under both domestic and international law.

Indeed, it is precisely such an argument that a pair of Rohingya refugees, Mohammad Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, have made in a [petition filed in the Supreme Court](#). Their submissions rest on two broad planks: one, that any deportation would violate their fundamental rights to equality and to life, under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, and, two, that any action by India in returning them to Myanmar would infringe international law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement.

When the case comes up for hearing next, on September 18, in response, the government may expand on Mr. Rijju's statements. It could point out, first, that India is not bound to follow the principle of non-refoulement, since it is not a signatory to the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the

Status of Refugees, and, second, that, in any event, any deportation would be saved by the exceptions to the principle, in that the Rohingya are guilty of committing crimes against peace and are a threat to India's national security. On any close examination, however, these arguments ought to fail.

Can India ignore the Rohingya crisis?

The principle of non-refoulement is articulated in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention. It mandates that no state shall expel or return a refugee to "the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion". However, it allows for an exception in cases where there are "reasonable grounds" for regarding a refugee as a "danger to the security of the country." What's more, the Convention also excludes generally from refugee status individuals guilty of, among other things, committing war crimes or crimes against peace and humanity.

Now, India is not a party to the 1951 Convention. But we need to heed the existence of sources of law that stretch beyond treaty obligations. These include norms of customary international law, where binding rules have been crystallised as a result of the practice of states. The principle of non-refoulement is widely regarded as one such rule. In fact, some scholars argue that the principle is so well enshrined that it constitutes a peremptory norm from which no derogation whatsoever is permitted. But even if one were to discount such arguments, there is no denying that non-refoulement is now nearly universally accepted as constituting a fundamental rule of international law.

At least two high courts in India have expressly held that the country is bound to follow the principle. In their judgments respectively in *Ktaer Abbas Habib Al Qutaifi v. Union of India* (1998) and *Dongh Lian Kham v. Union of India* (2015) the Gujarat and Delhi High Courts have virtually incorporated non-refoulement into the guarantees of Article 21 of the Constitution. "[The principle's] application," wrote the Gujarat High Court, "protects life and liberty of a human being irrespective of his nationality. It is encompassed in Article 21 of the Constitution, so long as the presence of a refugee is not prejudicial to the law and order and security of India."

Now, the Supreme Court in different cases has incorporated other principles of customary international law into municipal law, where there's no local statute embodying rules to the contrary. There's no reason why non-refoulement should be treated any differently. The Supreme Court can have little option but to recognise, as the Gujarat and the Delhi High Courts have done, that non-refoulement is a foundational principle that creates obligations under both domestic and international law alike.

On arguments concerning national security, it might well be true that the state must be accorded an element of latitude in shaping its policies. But, in the absence of any material, the government cannot plausibly be arguing that each of the 40,000 Rohingya constitutes a threat to India's safety, or that each of them is guilty of committing crimes against peace.

Ultimately, the petitions filed by the Rohingya refugees are an important test of both the Supreme Court and the Indian state's moral calibre. In an interview on Wednesday, Mr. Rijiju urged an end to the "chorus" branding India as a "villain," for its apparent stand seeking to return the Rohingyas, a "calibrated design," in his view, to "tarnish India's image."

However, the present crisis goes beyond matters of mere perception. It goes to the root of what it means to be a civilised state, of treating every person, irrespective of constructs of citizenship, with equal care, compassion and respect.

Suhrith Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

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Can India ignore the Rohingya crisis?

Rohingya refugees stretch their hands to receive food distributed in Kutupalong, Bangladesh . | Photo Credit: [DANISH SIDDIQUI](#)

LEFT | Nehginpao Kipgen

Nehginpao Kipgen

Over 379,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh. India should come forward to help the refugees. The reasons are threefold: maintaining a tradition of generosity, and economic and strategic factors.

A welcoming nation

First, not only as a major power in the region but also as the largest democracy in the world, there are expectations that India should extend help to the fleeing Rohingya, at least on humanitarian grounds, and contribute to help resolve the conundrum. India has been historically known to be benevolent to refugees. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, it welcomed thousands of refugees from Myanmar. New Delhi not only provided basic necessities such as food and shelter but also provided refugees the necessary logistics to continue their pro-democratic movement from India.

Another extant example of India's magnanimity in welcoming refugees is the presence of approximately 120,000 Tibetan refugees, residing in different parts of India. From the first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the incumbent Narendra Modi, India has been providing all necessary assistance to the Tibetans, including the government-in-exile in McLeodganj, a suburb of Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. India is also a home for hundreds of thousands of refugees from countries such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, internal refugees from Kashmir, and even some 40,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar.

It is understandable about the concerns in some quarters in India that the Islamist terrorist groups may expand their networks through some hard-line Rohingyas. However, since the refugees have no home to return to, at least at the moment, New Delhi should reconsider the idea of deporting them. The question one should seriously ponder is of where the refugees would go if they are deported at a time when both the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments are refusing to accept them as citizens.

Projects at stake

Second, peace and stability in the Rakhine state is important for India's economic investment. During his September 5-7 visit to Myanmar, PM Modi said India shares Myanmar's concerns over "extremist violence" in Rakhine. He also emphasized the need to bring about overall socio-economic development in the state by undertaking both infrastructure and socio-economic projects. The continued violence in Rakhine state is affecting India's Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport project, aimed at developing transport infrastructure in south-west Myanmar and India's Northeast. The project includes the construction of a deepwater port at the mouth of the Kaladan river in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state on the Bay of Bengal. Reconciliation between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists is necessary for peace to prevail. It is therefore in the economic interest of India to show its generosity and reach out to all peoples of the state.

Third, it is understandable that India does not want a strained relationship with Myanmar at this juncture when New Delhi is exploring ways to enhance its presence and influence in Myanmar and the Southeast Asia region through its Act East policy. But this does not have to be at the expense of alienating or marginalizing the Rohingya population.

When there are growing calls from the international community to the Myanmar government to end violence in Rakhine state and address the Rohingya conundrum, it would not be a wise strategic move for India to ignore them. While the government may take a conscious decision to publicly support Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, at the same time it should gently prod her government to adopt a positive attitude toward resolving the Rohingya problem with the help of the international community.

Nehginpao Kipgen is Assistant Professor and Executive Director of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, O.P. Jindal Global University

RIGHT | Chandan Mitra

Chandan Mitra

Had the subject not been so tragic, the lecture to India by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, would have been amusing. He conveniently directed his diatribe at New Delhi and Yangon while skipping reference to Dhaka where the bulk of Rohingya Muslim refugees have sought refuge.

Selective outrage

The UN apparatchik has described the Myanmar government's action against the Rohingya as "ethnic cleansing". He may well be right in that description. But when India faced a similar situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1990s, and Kashmiri Pandits were "cleansed" out of the Valley by forces aided and abetted by Pakistan, the UN authorities stayed stupefyingly silent. Similarly, the systematic eviction of Hindus from Pakistan that continues 70 years after Partition has never caused outrage among the self-appointed guardians of human rights.

As far as the Rohingya are concerned, all advice needs to be directed at the Myanmar government led by Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her valiant struggle to re-establish democracy. There is no doubt that the Myanmar government has, for decades, discriminated viciously against the Rohingya, denying them citizenship and other basic rights.

In recent months violent attacks on them by Myanmar security forces have increased manifold, forcing many to flee to neighbouring but hostile Bangladesh.

Some have managed to sneak into India too, although they are particularly unwelcome in the Northeast already reeling under a steady deluge of illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh, including Buddhist Chakmas turfed out from their homes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

It is argued by India's bleeding hearts that this country has a tradition of sheltering those seeking to escape persecution in the neighbourhood, be they Tibetans, Afghans or many hill tribes of the Northeast. But there is a limit to which our overpopulated country can accommodate without triggering socio-economic tensions. The presence of a large number of immigrants from

Bangladesh flooding into India for better jobs, incidentally, has little to do with the persecution of minorities in that country.

Onus on others

Initially, our government did try to accommodate some Rohingya, resettling a few thousand in Jammu. But this immediately led to protests in that region. There are genuine fears that destitute Rohingya youth would be easy prey to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and international jihadist outfits such as al-Qaeda among others.

Arguably, we have a natural compassion for those persecuted by their own governments in South Asia. But whereas India cannot deny shelter to persecuted Hindus from Pakistan or Bangladesh for they have no other country to turn to, that is not the case with Rohingya Muslims.

It is a measure of the abject failure of the Myanmar regime that after 70 years of Independence it has still not integrated many of the tribes living in that country, particularly the Rohingya. Why should India pay the price for this failure? Further, Pakistan (including Bangladesh or erstwhile East Pakistan) was carved out of India with the avowed purpose of creating a Muslim homeland. Considering Myanmar was part of British India and ruled from Delhi till 1948, it can be argued that Myanmar Muslim refugees too should be accommodated in that "homeland" if necessary.

Home is home

But the home of the Rohingya is Myanmar and they have a right to live there. Myanmar's unwanted children cannot become India's moral burden no matter how tragic their fate has become under a ruthless military which has run amok.

Chandan Mitra is managing director and editor of The Pioneer and a former Member of Parliament

CENTRE | Rajiv Bhatia

Rajiv Bhatia

On the reported presence of 40,000 Rohingya in India, my view is that this is a complex problem. It is difficult to envisage, given the present circumstances, use of force to send the unfortunate and suffering people back as neither Myanmar nor Bangladesh will accept them. At the same time, we obviously cannot send a message that India is willing to receive a huge number of displaced people from Myanmar.

There are thousands of people in Jammu and other places in India. The authorities are repeatedly saying that they are engaged in the process of careful scrutiny in order to look at the specific situation, identity, background, etc. of these people. This should be done through a blend of vigilance, prudence, and compassion.

As for the larger question of what is happening in Myanmar and its impact on Bangladesh now and on other Southeast Asian countries earlier, we have to recognise this is an extremely sensitive issue within Myanmar. The problem is not unidimensional. First, there is undoubtedly the dimension of terrorism. As a result of whatever has been happening in the Rakhine state in the past, terrorism has raised its ugly head there and this has clear links to our western neighbour.

Hence, it makes sense for New Delhi to develop convergence with the Myanmar authorities. Second, there is the angle of development deficit. I have been to this region, although many years ago. The socio-economic development of this region has not improved — this has been a root cause. Besides, there is the underlying angle of perceived discrimination and the way in which Rakhine Muslims have been treated virtually as second-class citizens.

A very heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of Myanmar's political elite that runs the government, the military and Aung San Suu Kyi. Putting the blame only on her betrays ignorance of the complex political reality within Myanmar. We need to understand the intricacies of Myanmar's polity and the vulnerability of democratic elements.

The government of Myanmar took the right step to appoint the Kofi Annan-led Advisory Commission on Rakhine state some time back, with notable Myanmar experts included in it. It has come out with a comprehensive report, which needs to be considered seriously by the authorities in Myanmar. We, as neighbours, should also study it carefully as it points a way out of the very complex and tragic problem.

High stakes for India

The stakes for India are very high. The issue does impact us in multiple ways. We also have to take into consideration that it impacts negatively on Bangladesh which is our close friend, neighbour and valued partner in South Asia. We also have good relations with Myanmar, which stand further strengthened with the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India is in the process of rejuvenating BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), of which both countries are members. So, India may have to play a quiet role to urge and nurture a long-term solution to the problem.

Even in the past, India was able to undertake a creative tightrope walk in Myanmar. We could nurture good relations with the military government while maintaining a cordial relationship with the pro-democracy movement. The world expects us to contribute to a lasting solution to this problem. This is our region. Our Act East policy demands it. We should take an apolitical, pragmatic position that is free from ideological inclinations.

Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow at Gateway House and a former Ambassador to Myanmar

(As told to Anuradha Raman)

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Operation Insaaniyat**Operation Insaaniyat****Humanitarian Assistance to Bangladesh on Account of Influx of Refugees**

A humanitarian crisis arose in Bangladesh due to heavy influx of refugees from neighbouring Myanmar. The government of India has decided to assist Bangladesh in this crisis by sending relief material. The Indian Air Force was tasked to airlift the relief material from India to Bangladesh. One C-17 Globemaster strategic heavy lift cargo aircraft was positioned at short notice at Delhi on 13 Sep 17 to airlift 55 Tons of relief material to Chittagong, Bangladesh. This aircraft was loaded overnight with relief material consisting of critical daily necessities viz., rice, pulses, sugar, salt, cooking oil, ready to eat meals, mosquito nets etc.

The C-17 carrying relief material departed early morning on 14 Sep 17 and routed via Kolkata to pick up additional load. The material was delivered at Chittagong, Bangladesh at 1245 hours on 14 Sep 17. One more C-17 is scheduled to airlift additional relief material to Bangladesh. The Indian Air Force rose to the challenge and played a pivotal role to further strengthen the close ties of friendship between India and Bangladesh.

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Bangladesh's burden to bear: on the Rohingya issue

It took three days for the heavily pregnant Nafisa Begum, 26, to scramble to safety. On September 9, after walking over 20 kilometres of treacherous mountainous terrain and being occasionally carried by her husband and her brother in a makeshift palanquin, the family fleeing from Rakhine's Maungdaw reached Teknaf's Lambabil border point in Bangladesh. They were forced out after the Myanmar military initiated a violent crackdown since August 25, an onslaught that shows no sign of ending. "We desperately wanted to protect our unborn child," says her husband, Zahirul. A day later Nafisa went into labour and gave birth to a boy under the open sky.

Hungry and weary, the family is relieved to be alive. But the relief is short-lived as an uncertain future awaits them, stemming from a realisation that they are unwanted here as they were back home. Nafisa holds her baby close to her chest. "The army killed our people, raped our women, murdered our children. I have lost count of the number of people stabbed to death. We just fled with the clothes we are wearing. We have nothing with us."

In Bangladesh, a hungry and traumatised Rohingya everywhere

Hasina Begum, 32, a resident of Rakhine's Kuanchibon locality, also gave birth under a starry sky — mother and baby are lucky to have escaped violent death; there's no knowing if the father has safely made it. At last count, there have been at least 100 deliveries in the past two weeks in Bandarban district of Chittagong Hill Tracts and in Teknaf and Ukhia sub-districts of Cox's Bazar along the banks of the Naf river on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Three Rakhine townships — Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung — have been torched by the Myanmar security forces, who, in the name of flushing out terrorists, have destroyed 2,000 houses in these areas. The forces have now targeted Sittwe, the Rakhine capital, forcing an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya across the 271-km boundary with Bangladesh. Their numbers are estimated by the UNICEF, UNHCR and other aid agencies as 400,000 since August 25, with thousands more arriving every day. Around 60% of the refugees are children, according to preliminary estimates announced by UNICEF on September 14. The UN Migration Agency, International Organisation for Migration, has appealed for an immediate fund of \$18 million for humanitarian assistance.

The refugees bring with them bloody accounts of what appears to be state-sponsored genocide. Kalimulah, who crossed the border from Rathedaung along with his mother, wife, three children and two young brothers, says, "We saw bodies scattered across our region when we rushed to the border." Says Abdur Rob, who fled from Buthidaung, "The military first ordered the male members to enter their houses, singled out young women, took them away, and then set the village on fire." Rob doesn't know the whereabouts of his two brothers, who he claims were picked up by the army.

At home and in the world: on the Rohingya issue

Bangladesh faces an acute problem of space. For a country which has given refuge to some 500,000 Rohingya in the last three decades, the current crisis presents a tough challenge. "Despite our limited resources and space shortage, we are taking in refugees," Bangladesh's Disaster Management Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury said while visiting refugees in the border areas.

The two biggest registered camps in Kutupalang and Nayapara in Ukhia and Teknaf sub-districts are overpopulated, forcing others to take up temporary shelter on the Ukhia-Teknaf road, and in

schools, madrasas, mosques and nearby hills. The 81-km Marine Drive that connects Cox's Bazar and Teknaf is a never-ending line of desperate people who braved a dangerous boat ride through the Bay of Bengal to reach Bangladesh shores.

The Myanmar authorities have belatedly acknowledged that 176 of 471 ethnic Rohingya villages in three townships are now "completely empty", and that at least 34 villages are "partially abandoned". The country's presidential office spokesperson Zaw Htay admitted to at least 86 clashes till September 5, but none since. "What that means is, when the security forces are trying to stabilise the region, they have succeeded to a point," he said.

The Myanmar army's actions are being projected as reprisals for the August 25 attack by insurgent group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on over 30 of its camps and those of the border police. But many Myanmar experts in Bangladesh are of the view that these are not mere acts of retaliation, coming as they did close on the heels of the report of the Rakhine Advisory Commission led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, which was aimed at finding a lasting solution for the decades-old crisis.

Under pressure from the world community, the Myanmar government had constituted the commission to identify the central issues of "citizenship verification, documentation, rights and equality before law". Its recommendations went 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 jeopardized". "No state would tolerate attacks on its security personnel, but to punish an entire community is never an acceptable response to aggression by a few," says Major General (retd.) Abdur Rashid, a Bangladeshi security analyst.

It is perhaps an irony of history that Bangladesh, 10 million of whose population had to take refuge in India during the 1971 liberation war, finds itself in a situation where it has to provide shelter to a people as desperate as once they were 46 years ago. Initially, the government refused to accept the Rohingya, but found it difficult to push hundreds of thousands of desperate people back, especially after the police recovered over a hundred bodies from the sea and the Naf river — of Rohingya who drowned during their bid to escape.

Can India ignore the Rohingya crisis?

On September 12, Prime Minister [Sheikh Hasina visited the Bangladesh-Myanmar border](#) and talked to refugees at the Kutupalang camp in Ukhia, before proceeding to denounce the atrocities in Rakhine state as "acts against humanity". The Prime Minister was categorical in her condemnation: "Myanmar has to take back its nationals and give them a safe place to live in their homeland. The international community should put pressure on Myanmar. This must stop... We will make arrangements for them [the Rohingya] until the Myanmar government is ready to take them back."

Dhaka's predicament stems from several concerns. On the one hand, there is public anger that the government was not doing enough; on the other are serious security concerns. The ARSA, previously known as the Harakah al-Yaqin, is believed to be a radical Islamist group which local security experts claim receives assistance from jihadists, including from Pakistan. Dhaka has repeatedly condemned attacks on Myanmarese military posts by insurgents and also proposed joint inspection along the border to flush them out. It has also called for creating a "safe zone", if necessary, inside Myanmar under UN supervision to protect the innocent, and full implementation of the Annan Commission's recommendations. But all this has elicited no response from Naypyidaw.

The name Rohingya originates from 'Rohang' or 'Rohan', the names given to those who lived in

the Arakan region during the ninth and tenth centuries. Another group, the Rakhine people, are the ethnic majority, with a Hindu and Mongol background.

In Buddhist-dominated Myanmar (88% of the population, with Muslims comprising a mere 4.3%), the Rohingya, who speak a dialect close to Chittagong version of Bengali, have suffered a history of abuse, and since World War II have been fighting for recognition as a distinct ethnic group. They were not included in the citizenship law in 1982, and thus become stateless, and continue to suffer persecution, including forced labour, confiscation of property, rape and other forms of violence. Violence has visited upon the Rohingya in phases, most notably beginning in 2012, when inter-religious conflict forced them to flee their homeland. In 2014, they were refused enumeration during the Myanmar census, the government identifying them as Bengali which they refused.

For Rohingya, there is no place called home

In the successive rounds of violence following 2012, thousands of Rohingya fled their homes and sought refuge in Bangladesh, with others moving to Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. Before the latest exodus, an estimated 87,000 Rohingya had fled Rakhine to Bangladesh since October 2016 when the Myanmar military stepped in to quell insurgents. This time too, the Myanmar army says it targeted “only the terrorists”, while refugees say the offensive aims to push the Rohingya out of Myanmar.

Although the overwhelming majority of the Rohingya are Muslims, in the wake of continued violence, some 550 Rakhine Hindus (Hindus constitute 0.5% of the Rakhine population) have also taken shelter in Bangladesh. “It’s genocide, no matter who are conducting it,” said Rana Dasgupta, the leader of the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council, after a visit to the Hindu refugee camp in Ukhia.

The latest Rohingya persecution has been condemned worldwide, with the exception of China which has defended Myanmar’s action against the insurgents. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi avoided addressing the humanitarian catastrophe during his recent visit to Myanmar, but the External Affairs Ministry said New Delhi remained “deeply concerned” about the situation in Rakhine and the outflow of refugees from that region: “We would urge that the situation in Rakhine State be handled with restraint and maturity, focusing on the welfare of the civilian population alongside those of the security forces. It is imperative that violence is ended and normalcy in the State restored expeditiously.” After a nudge from the Hasina government, New Delhi has rushed consignments of humanitarian aid for the refugees in Bangladesh.

The disaster next door: on the Rohingya issue

Ignored for decades, the violence in Rakhine has for the first time prompted the United Nations to give serious thought to the issue. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, at a press conference at UN headquarters in New York on September 13 ahead of the 72nd United Nations General Assembly, said the situation in Rakhine was best described as “**ethnic cleansing**”. He said: “When one-third of the Rohingya population had to flee the country, could you find a better word to describe it?”

The 15-member Security Council met behind closed doors on September 13 at the request of Sweden and Britain to discuss the crisis for the second time since it began and agreed to publicly condemn the situation. The council “expressed concern about reports of excessive violence during the security operations and called for immediate steps to end the violence in Rakhine... re-establish law and order, ensure the protection of civilians... and resolve the refugee problem”.

A number of Muslim-majority countries, especially Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia, not only expressed serious concern but also tried to rally support. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan rallied Organisation of Islamic Conference countries into denouncing Myanmar's actions, but given Ankara's dubious record on human rights, the initiative is more a political posture than a humanitarian gesture.

The Myanmar army has allegedly planted landmines along the border with Bangladesh. The landmines, banned worldwide, have killed at least nine refugees and a Bangladeshi relief worker in Bandarban, and seriously injured dozens of others. "This is another low in what is already a horrific situation in Rakhine State. The Myanmar military's callous use of inherently indiscriminate and deadly weapons at highly trafficked paths around the border is putting the lives of ordinary people at enormous risk," said Tirana Hassan, Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director, after a visit to the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Earlier last week, the spokesperson for Myanmar's State Counsellor and Foreign Minister, Aung San Suu Kyi, dismissed reports of an army hand behind the planting of landmines along the border, but Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque subsequently confirmed that Dhaka had launched a formal complaint with Myanmar.

Geography apart, Bangladesh has historic ties with Myanmar and also has a colonial legacy. Myanmar counts among the first countries to have accorded recognition to independent Bangladesh. The two have bilateral trade and are involved in infrastructure projects. They resolved a long-standing maritime boundary dispute in 2012. But unless the situation arising out of the exodus is swiftly addressed by Naypyidaw, 400,000-odd Rohingya might cast a long shadow on friendly ties.

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Rohingya refugee crisis will test India's influence in the region

The decision to airlift 50 tonnes of relief supplies to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, coupled with the earlier announcement of a large aid project for the Rohingya's home province in Myanmar, is the latest example of India's use of humanitarian assistance as an instrument of foreign policy.

The Rohingya crisis, however, also points to the obvious limitations of the application of such a "soft power". This may ameliorate the conditions of some Rohingyas and help reduce the extreme poverty of the Rakhine province. However, it cannot address the fundamental cause of the crisis: Myanmar's deep-seated hatred for the Rohingyas, a hatred driven by a poisonous combination of racism and religious intolerance.

The Indian government can take pride in the increased range and capacity it has shown in handling an ever-increasing list of humanitarian crises. In recent years, New Delhi has orchestrated the evacuation of Indian and foreign nationals from various failed states in the Arab world — Syria, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. It took the lead in responding to Nepal's massive earthquake, the Maldivian drinking water crisis and landslides in Sri Lanka. There have also been smaller efforts further afield, including providing assistance to a typhoon-hit Philippines. All of this reflects in part a greater capacity thanks to India's augmented military airlift ability. But it also reflects New Delhi's recognition that it has to grow India's influence and project a positive image in the larger region. The subtext of this is the declining US military presence in the Indian Ocean region but also concerns at China's growing footprint in the same area. In addition is New Delhi's greater commitment to helping out overseas Indians in distress.

Myanmar and the plight of the Rohingyas is a reminder the severe limitations India continues to have in terms of influencing the policies of even middle-sized countries. It is an important lesson as New Delhi must be wary of imperial overstretch even before it has developed the reach of a great power.

However its attempts to balance between Bangladesh and Myanmar, use its aid to address immediate humanitarian problems, and influence Naypyidaw's genocidal way in private have been badly muddled by the government's abrupt decision to tighten the screws on Rohingya refugees coming into India. One can be sympathetic to the problem of handling a Myanmar given the realpolitik constraints that arise from China's presence, but not to a poorly-timed decision to review the status of Rohingyas inside India.

The benefits accruing from India's generosity across borders are being negated by its parsimoniousness within its own.

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Like Cold War

US President Donald Trump's challenge to a "double-dealing" Pakistan has provoked commentators in the country to invoke the threat of a Cold War-like confrontation between America and China - with Pakistan safely operating on the Chinese side while India draws closer to the US. But Pakistan needs to be realistic. The 2008 Mumbai attack issue is still not resolved and Pakistan continues to prevent the UN from subjecting its main accused, Hafiz Saeed, to trial. China, which supports the UN call to apprehend Saeed, has repeated its charge in a veiled manner at the recent meeting of BRICS countries - a group that includes India - in Xiamen. Beijing has since tried to defend Pakistan against the charge of "safe havens" of terror on its soil.

The media in Pakistan has gone berserk and is cursing the country's PML(N) government for not responding "in kind" to Trump's threats while thanking China for standing up for Pakistan. After Trump encouraged India to raise its stakes in Afghanistan and up the ante against Pakistan, TV anchors in Pakistan invoked the familiar "two-nation" nationalism and asked people in the country to rise and confront the "cowardly" enemy. Used to Cold War bipolarity, it was easy for them to embrace the presumed US-versus-China square-off in South Asia, with India on the American side.

In some ways, Pakistan is preparing to sever its old association with the US and join the camp led by China in the new Cold War. The underlying reasons for the calls being made to bid goodbye to a "dying superpower" is the new equation America has found with India - the neighbour that shapes Pakistan's outlook on world politics. The madrasas and the religious parties are very clear about how Pakistan should disassociate with the US: Send the American ambassador packing and break diplomatic relations. The religious parties know that under Pakistan's new Afghan policy, they will play a central role while the political parties become marginal, once again. The politicians are going along with extremist anti-American slogans so as not to look irrelevant in the media.

Pakistan, like India, was once a British colony absorbing many humanist values that were alien to it from Britain. The English language is the civilisational vector that has set Pakistan apart from its neighbouring Muslim states like Iran and Afghanistan.

During the Cold War, the "ideological" Sparta of Pakistan incongruously sided with America while the Athens of India incongruously embraced the "ideological" Soviet Union. As Pakistan chafed under the value-laden "conditionalities" of the relationship, India kept its intellectual links with America intact while siding with the Soviet Union as a "Non-Aligned Nation".

As 70-year old Pakistan toughens ideologically, it feels like breaking-off the intellectual link with America where its gifted youth go for higher education and where resident Pakistanis are the seventh fastest-growing community. Pakistan has no intellectual connection with China, and language is a barrier, not a vector. India didn't suffer from the strategic disconnect of the Cold War. By aggressively disconnecting itself from America, Pakistan will not find a similar counterweight in China.

The Opposition in Pakistan pretends to be greatly worked up by "Trump's insult" and the country's leaders are heaping counter-insults on America, perhaps hoping that the PMLN government will be lured into issuing a stupid, warlike message to Washington. It was not the finest hour for Pakistan's semi-literate TV anchors, either, who actually encouraged the politicians to run-off at the mouth.

Will India take Trump's bait and step into Afghanistan? C. Raja Mohan has talked of the red line that India is likely to follow while engaging with Afghanistan: "India must ramp up its economic

diplomacy in Afghanistan to bring immediate benefits to Kabul amidst the deteriorating conditions in the country. Second, Delhi must step up security cooperation with Afghanistan, especially in the training of its police and armed forces and intelligence sharing. Third, on the diplomatic front, India must counter the emerging argument that Trump's new approach will intensify the Indo-Pak rivalry in Afghanistan and the old one that Kashmir holds the key to peace in Afghanistan" ('The Trump discontinuity', IE, August 24)

Pakistan can't get rid of its strategic depth doctrine when it comes to India. In the coming years, Indian projects in Afghanistan are likely to be targeted by Taliban while Pakistan will continue to issue tiresome denials about giving sanctuary to the outfit. India will likely go on unwisely squeezing Pakistan with mortar-fire on the country's eastern border and endangering China's projects in Pakistan through the Pakistani Taliban, hooked on bribes just like Afghan Taliban.

The new Cold War will shabbily proceed through non-state actors while nuclear weapons nestle dangerously in South Asian arsenals. It is almost certain that India will decide against deploying troops in Afghanistan to protect its projects being targeted by the Taliban and non-state actors. On the other hand, once Indian presence in Afghanistan becomes substantial, Pakistan will take recourse to reflex that its conditioned to: It will produce terrorists even in institutions of higher education.

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Afghanistan may train, arm civilians to fight militants

Afghan Army soldiers in Kabul. AFP/SHAH MARAI

Afghanistan is considering training and arming 20,000 civilians to defend territories where Islamist militants have been driven out, officials say, sparking fears the local forces could become another thuggish militia.

The proposal for a government-backed armed group that would protect its own communities from the Taliban and the Islamic State (IS) group comes as Afghanistan's security forces, demoralised by killings and desertions, struggle to beat back a rampant insurgency.

Human rights concerns

But the proposal has raised concerns that the local forces could become unruly and turn into another abusive militia terrorising the people it is supposed to defend. "The Afghan government's expansion of irregular forces could have enormously dangerous consequences for civilians," said Patricia Gossman, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch.

American and Afghan officials said the fighters would come under the command of the Afghan Army and be better trained than the Afghan Local Police — a village-level force set up by the U.S. in 2010 and accused of human rights violations.

"Right now we rely on commandos and air strikes to retake the lost territories but after the commandos leave we don't have enough forces to hold onto the territories," said a senior Defence Ministry official.

"The force will operate under an Army corps and will be used to fill the gaps. They will be recruited from the locals and will be numbered around 20,000."

Defence ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri confirmed to AFP that a plan for "local forces" was being discussed. A spokesman for NATO's Resolute Support train and assist mission also confirmed a proposal for an Afghan territorial army was on the table.

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Rethinking police reform

State police forces in India are among the least trusted public institutions. Can anything be done?

First, the background. Schedule Seven to the Indian Constitution lays out 61 items that are the subject of state authority. Public order, police and prisons top this list. Each of the 29 states and seven Union territories has a police force of its own. The unit of state policing is the police station. According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), there are 15,268 police stations in the country today. These stations are organized under various administrative units like circles, subdivisions, districts, ranges and zones. Major cities also have a commissionerate to coordinate and direct operations.

Police ranks range from the director general of police (DGP, who typically leads a state), the assistant superintendent of police (ASP), to the constable in a police station. The ASP to DGP ranks are officers of the central cadre of Indian Police Service (IPS). The median ratio of police officers to constabulary—what the police call the teeth-to-tail ratio—is 5%. There are a total of about 1.8 million police personnel employed by Indian state police organizations today—and there are also 300,000 vacancies. This results in a median 200 policemen for every 100,000 people, though it ranges widely from 76 in Bihar to 700 in Delhi. On a combined basis, the police force operates 180,000 vehicles today, ranging from light to heavy. In short, the combined state police force in India is a massive people, process and logistics organization.

In addition to these state police forces, the Centre manages seven police organizations—Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the Railway Protection Force (RPF), the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), the Border Security Force (BSF), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Assam Rifles (AR). The latter four guard India's border with Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China and Myanmar, respectively—functions allocated to the Centre under the Constitution. CISF is used to guard critical infrastructure, including airports; the CRPF is used to maintain internal law and order, especially during communal rioting.

Despite being headed by an IPS officer, the National Security Guard (NSG), charged with counter-terrorism, is not considered a “police force” because its core operational capability is provided by the Indian Army. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that was born as an internal affairs department to police corruption among central government employees has additionally evolved to take on cases of special crime “referred” from the states that are more complex or more controversial than usual.

According to a Takshashila Institution survey of public trust, state police organizations rank dead last among government organizations and agencies. Numerous committees and commissions have opined on the issue of police reform. Most of them have approached the problem from a quantity, capacity, capability, training, compensation and benefits point of view. The solutions may generally be grouped into the idea of “if you make the policeman's conditions better, then everything will improve.” While all of these factors are material, very few expert groups have spoken about the criminalization of the police force as a direct consequence of the criminalization of politics and the capture of the police as an instrument of implementation. Dealing with 21st century challenges with the (currently applicable) Police Act of 1861 is also bound to create a host of issues.

The politicization of the police is a tough problem to solve in an environment in which money, votes, and instruments of intimidation (misuse of the police) mix in one unholy melting pot. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), in its fifth report on public order, tackles the issue of police reform in the most constructive way of any recent discussion on the matter. Alas, its

recommendations remain unheeded.

The ARC recommended that the investigative functions of police be separated from the day-to-day law and order functions and that the superintendence of the government over police be restricted in such a manner that the force retains operational autonomy. The ARC suggested a State Accountability Commission made up of five members of government, including the home minister and chief secretary and five non-partisan eminent citizens. The ARC recommendation resolved the politicization dilemma by delegating operational control to the force and democratizing governance to a commission (the public are the ultimate masters, according to the ARC). Others have argued for even less political control.

In a democratic system, there is no getting away from ultimate accountability to the political system. Codifying checks and balances in respective police Acts will bring assurance against illegal orders by the political establishment to the police. Currently, politicians use the power of the police for their purposes, but sidestep any responsibility for their failures. Only by giving full accountability to the politicians can society hold the politicians responsible for their actions. Only when we marry full political accountability with the betterment in capacity, capability and equipment can we begin true police reform. And begin it must.

PS: “*Doveryai, no proveryai*”, is a Russian proverb that means “Trust, but verify”.

Narayan Ramachandran is chairman, InKlude Labs. Read Narayan’s Mint columns at www.livemint.com/avisiblehand

Comments are welcome at narayan@livemint.com

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How violence radicalised a generation of Rohingya

From its start four years ago as a small-scale effort to organise a Rohingya resistance, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has managed to stage two deadly attacks on Myanmar's security forces: one in October and the other last month.

But in lashing out against the government, the militants have also made their own people a target. And they have handed Myanmar's military an attempt at public justification by saying that it is fighting terrorism, even as it has burned down dozens of villages and killed fleeing women and children.

This radicalisation of a new generation of Rohingya, a Muslim minority in a Buddhist-majority country, adds fuel to an already combustible situation in Rakhine, Myanmar's poorest State.

Localised struggle

Increasingly, there is also concern that both the relatively few Rohingya who have taken up arms and the broader population — hundreds of thousands of whom are crowded in camps in neighbouring Bangladesh — will be exploited by international terrorism networks, bringing a localised struggle into the slipstream of global politics.

ARSA's attempt at insurgency politics has been disastrous — a ceasefire they declared this month was rejected by the military, and they are reported to have suffered lopsided casualties compared with the government's. But the men caught up in the cause insist that resistance is worth the steep cost, even to their families.

"This fight is not just about my fate or my family's fate," said Noor Alam, a 25-year-old insurgent whose family was sheltering in a forest in Myanmar after their village in Maungdaw Township was burned. "It's a matter of the existence of all Rohingya. If we have to sacrifice ourselves for our children to live peacefully, then it is worth it."

Myanmar's military, which ruled the country for nearly half a century, has systematically persecuted the Rohingya, subjecting them to apartheid-like existences and stripping most of their citizenship.

The nation's civilian government has justified the recent violent crackdown in Rakhine as a counterstrike against "extremist Bengali terrorists."

Although the Rohingya claim long-held roots in Rakhine, the official narrative in Myanmar holds that they are recent illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

ARSA does not yet have the kind of firepower that can pose a serious threat to one of Asia's biggest armies.

By contrast, other ethnic rebel forces, which have battled the state for decades, have clashed far more violently with the Myanmar Army.

The Arakan Army, an insurgency fighting for ethnic Rakhine rights, killed at least 300 soldiers in the first half of last year, according to a military document.

Unlike ARSA, neither the Arakan Army nor other ethnic militant groups have been designated terrorists by Myanmar's government. NYT

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Rohingya have terror links: Centre

In its affidavit, the government accused the Rohingya of taking advantage of the porous borders in the east with organised smuggling of people, human trafficking and hawala operations.

Many of them have acquired fake Indian identity such as PAN cards and voter ID cards, it claimed.

The Centre said an organised illegal influx of Rohingya into India was happening through Benapole-Haridaspur (West Bengal), Hilli (West Bengal) and Sonamora (Tripura), Kolkata and Guwahati.

Appearing for Maitur Rahman, a native of Assam, advocate Somiran Sharma intervened to argue that allowing the Rohingya to stay might kindle ethnic tensions in the northeastern State.

“Many of the Rohingya figure in the suspected sinister designs of ISI/ISIS and other extremist groups who want to achieve their ulterior motives in India, including that of flaring up communal and sectarian violence in sensitive areas,” the affidavit said.

The Rohingya, with militant background, were found to be very active in Jammu, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mewat, it said. “Radicalised” Rohingya may cause violence on Indian Buddhists, the government warned.

But mostly, the government feared that the “illegal immigrants” would exhaust the national resources.

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At the prison gates

Women now have a voice in the police. They are carrying out all types of duties - regulating traffic, managing control rooms, PCR vans, conducting night rounds, checking at nakabandi points and, above all, investigating serious crimes and supervising large bandobasts. They have come to symbolise a changing India that believes in empowered girls and women. Their uniform has inspired many more to join the police department leading to a powerful community within the service.

Women managing prisons and correctional administration are unsung heroes. Their number is gradually increasing. From being wardens to jailers and deputies, women handle sensitive duties from managing prison gates, barracks, peripheral and internal security to sending inmates to courts and attending to judicial duties regarding prisoners.

Many states like Maharashtra now have 33 per cent reservation for women in prison administration: Their increased number means that they are assigned duties in male prisons too. Most of the 1,400 prisons in the country have a separate women's section with around 18,000 prisoners, according to the NCRB. There are 18 jails exclusively for women. Most prison superintendents are apprehensive of having women staff. The assimilation of women officers in the male prison administration is a challenge that is yet to be surmounted.

The nature of prison duties, hours of their shifts, are such that most of the staff stays near the prison. They form a community of their own. Many are second generation prison staff and steeped in a culture that has developed over time. It is definitely a male-dominated culture that broadly believes that prisons are places for the punishment for criminals and that the latter pose a risk to society. The security of prisons and counting of prisoners is their main occupation.

The presence of women in prison administration requires that officers and staff of prisons are in sync with the culture of gender equality, respect and cooperation. Women come with their own strengths - teamwork, participative management, communication skills etc. They also herald a shift in favour of a correctional administration instead of the traditional punitive mindset. The re-orientation of prison administration has thus become imperative.

The Supreme Court has flagged this issue and that of training prison staff. It has tasked the Bureau of Police Research and Development to revise the existing syllabi for the training of prison officers/staff - a highly ignored area. After basic training during induction, there is hardly any in-service training. Training at regular intervals, linking it with promotions and updating technical knowledge deserve the attention of all state governments, since police and prisons are state subjects.

Last year, the Bureau established a micro-mission to deal with issues of prisons and correctional administration. Besides updating syllabi of basic training for prison administrators, there is a strong need for their reorientation towards correctional administration. Prison officers and staff need to veer towards an attitude of reformation and rehabilitation. The focus should shift from punitive to correctional.

Prisons in most metros and district headquarters are over crowded. Mumbai's Arthur road Central prison is a classic example. The adverse effects on the hygiene and health of prisoners and the staff on duty can be imagined. Tuberculosis and skin diseases are rampant. The security risks are enormous. In this situation, relieving even one staff member for in-service training appears to be a luxury. Thus, besides regular training, filling around 34 per cent vacancies in prisons needs immediate attention. Women officers and around 4,400 staff working in these conditions have the

extra burden of traditional family responsibilities. Their problems have not been studied or attended to.

What kind of challenges are uniformed women facing in prisons? What is their work satisfaction? What kind of duties can be allotted to them in the male prisons? Is their uniform gender-friendly? Are their working hours reasonable and conducive to a healthy family life? Discussions about possible solutions and engaging with them on continuous basis can help women in prison administration reach their potential. They can be equipped with professional expertise to ensure that incidents like the custodial death of Manjula Shete in Mumbai's Byculla prison do not occur. While prison administration as a whole needs attention, the issues of uniformed women in prison administration require a thorough review and follow-up action.

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India seeks probe into North Korea nuclear ties

Raveesh Kumar

India on Tuesday sought a probe into North Korea's nuclear proliferation linkages, and demanded that those responsible for it should be held accountable, in a veiled reference to Pakistan.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's remarks came after North Korea had fired another mid-range ballistic missile over Japan on Friday. It follows North Korea's sixth and most powerful nuclear test on September 3 which was in direct defiance of the United Nations sanctions and other international pressure.

"External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj deplored North Korea's recent actions, and stated that its proliferation linkages must be explored and those involved must be held accountable," the Ministry's spokesperson, Raveesh Kumar, told presspersons at a news conference here.

Ms. Swaraj's remarks came as she met U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and her Japanese counterpart, Taro Kono, on the sidelines of the ongoing United Nations General Assembly session here.

Clandestine help

Though there was no direct reference to Pakistan in her remarks, it came amid reports that Pyongyang had clandestinely received nuclear enrichment technology from Pakistan when AQ Khan was at the helm of Islamabad's nuclear programme.

To questions, Mr. Kumar did not specify the country but said the hints were enough to determine that.

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Targeting refugees — Centre's position on Rohingya

The Union government's position that it considers [Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Rakhine state as a potential security threat](#) is a disturbing attempt to paint the persecuted community in a poor light so that it could justify their deportation in future. While some degree of caution is necessary in dealing with any unusual flow of refugees from a conflict-hit region, the imputation of collective motivation to the Rohingya refugees in the country, estimated to number about 40,000, is heartless. The Centre's affidavit in the Supreme Court contains self-serving arguments: that providing for refugees from out of the country's limited resources would have an adverse impact on its citizens, as they would be deprived of their legitimate share in employment, housing, educational and medical facilities; that there is growing stridency in [Rohingya militancy](#); and that Buddhist citizens face threat of violence from the refugees. Whether or not these assertions are based on facts, they disregard the wider context. Myanmar refuses to accept most Rohingya as its citizens, rendering them stateless, and hundreds of thousands have fled to Bangladesh in just the past few weeks. The intention to deport them by itself constitutes an unusual abandonment of humanitarian principles, as India has an exemplary record in taking care of refugees from many countries since Independence. India is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, 1951, but it has so far adhered to its normative standards. It has played host to refugees of all hues, and stood by the principle of non-refoulement, under which refugees cannot be forced to return to conditions of danger.

Non-refoulement has now evolved into a peremptory norm that every country is expected to follow. The existing law on the subject as well as some judicial decisions do support the norm that deportation of illegal immigrants is a matter of executive policy. It is also true that the fundamental rights relating to movement and settlement within the country are available only to citizens, but it cannot be forgotten that the right to life and liberty under Article 21 is not confined to citizens, but anyone who has to face the rigours of law on Indian soil. As the Centre asserts, it does have a procedure to pass deportation orders, one that it believes is fair and reasonable. But when an entire class of people is identified for deportation and accused of plotting against the host country, it is unlikely that fairness can be assured in every case. India may have strategic and diplomatic reasons for backing the Myanmar position with regard to terrorism in the Rakhine region. However, that does not necessarily mean that it should cite vague fears about militants infiltrating the country under the guise of refugees, who happen to be Muslim, to deny safe haven to a largely stateless community.

Rajasthan's ordinance shields the corrupt, threatens the media and whistle-blowers

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Breaking a silence

Myanmar State Counsellor [Aung San Suu Kyi](#)'s speech on Tuesday was meant to fend off global criticism over her long silence on the Rohingya issue. The words she spoke certainly broke the silence, but they provided little hope that Myanmar can end the problem soon. Speaking in English, Suu Kyi made what was essentially a plea to the world for more patience and understanding of Myanmar's difficult transition to democracy, and the multiple challenges facing the government that has been in power less than 18 months.

As for the Rohingya, the Nobel Peace Laureate said Myanmar was prepared to take back the "refugees" after a "verification process". That is not as easy as it sounds. The process is to be based on a 1993 agreement reached with Bangladesh, under which repatriation was given to "those carrying Myanmar identity cards", "those able to present other documents issued by relevant Myanmar authorities" and "all those able to furnish evidence of their residence in Myanmar".

It is doubtful that many among the 4,00,000 who fled carried their documentation with them, or had any to begin with. Only in 2015, the Myanmar government cancelled Temporary Residence Cards given to the Rohingya from 1995. At the centre of the present crisis is Myanmar's refusal to accept the Rohingya people as citizens of the country, and unless this is resolved, the problem is certain to continue. The Rohingya are not in the list of 135 Myanmar ethnic groups, and the 1982 Citizenship Act makes it next to impossible for them to acquire citizenship.

It is telling that Suu Kyi did not once mention the Rohingya by name, except in a mention of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, whose attacks on August 25, and the security crackdown that followed, triggered the exodus.

The Kofi Annan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, appointed at Suu Kyi's behest, submitted its report on August 25, which said Myanmar should establish a clear strategy and timeline for the citizenship verification process. It has recommended a review of the existing Citizenship Act. Suu Kyi referenced this in her speech to say the doable recommendations would be implemented in the "shortest" time. Doubtless, that will not include the Citizenship Act overhaul.

The Centre's affidavit in the Supreme Court that the presence of 40,000 Rohingya in the country is a threat to national security borders on racial profiling. There is no evidence yet to link any of the Rohingya in the country to ARSA, or its affiliates. The Centre's submission to the court that the "illegal immigrants" figure "in the designs of the IS and ISI", and that they obtain PAN and [Aadhaar](#) cards by "fraudulent" means, are at best general statements and at worst admissions that Indian security agencies are helpless in the face of such machinations by enemies of the country, and that India's bureaucracy is so gullible as to hand out documents to anyone who asks for them.

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Indian Naval units of Western Naval Command on Long Range Deployment**Indian Naval units of Western Naval Command on Long Range Deployment**

Two Indian Naval Ships, a submarine and two Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance Aircraft of the Western Naval Command are presently on deployment to the Western Arabian Sea and southern Indian Ocean.

Indian Naval Ship Mumbai and submarine Shishumar entered Duqm, Oman today as part of this deployment to the Western Arabian Sea, after conducting a series of exercises enroute. An Indian naval submarine is visiting a foreign port after a long gap. The Naval units are on a month long deployment with the aim of enhancing surveillance and cooperation with the Arabian Sea rim nations. Another ship, INS Kochi which is also a part of this deployment, is proceeding to the Southern Indian Ocean with a similar aim.

The Western Naval Command, which exercises operational control of the naval units in this theatre, has been actively involved in enhancing three-dimensional surveillance efforts by Indian Naval units for strengthening regional Maritime security cooperation with littoral states.

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Hasina proposes 'safe zones' for Rohingya

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon members states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to take a united stand to resolve the Rohingya issue "before it is too late" and placed a set of proposals.

The proposals, placed at the OIC Contact Group at the United Nations headquarters on Tuesday, included a call for an immediate end to atrocities against Rohingya Muslims, the creation of 'safe zones' in Myanmar for the protection of civilians and an immediate and unconditional implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Kofi Annan Commission.

Stating that that the crisis has its roots in Myanmar and hence its solution also has to be found in Myanmar, she said, "We want to see an end to the 'ethnic cleansing'."

"It's an unbearable human catastrophe. I myself have visited them and listened to the stories of their grave sufferings, particularly of women and children... We have continued our diplomatic efforts to return all the Rohingya to their homeland, but Myanmar is not responding," she said.

She also criticised Myanmar for labelling Rohingya as "illegal migrants" and "Bengalis from Bangladesh". She said historical records clearly suggest that the Rohingya have been living in Rakhine for centuries.

"Myanmar is forcibly driving out the Rohingya Muslims through a planned and organised process. First, they were excluded from the list of recognised ethnic groups of Myanmar. Then in 1982, they were denied their right to citizenship. Later, they were sent to IDP camps in their own country," she said.

Referring to her recent visit to the Cox's Bazar refugee camps, she said it was reminiscent of 1971. "When the Pakistani forces burned down our houses and killed our people, around 10 million people crossed the border into India. Now they (Rohingya) are in danger and we definitely need to give them shelter."

Also, Bangladesh's ruling 14-party alliance rejected the speech of Myanmar leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi. The alliance's spokesperson Mohammad Nasim said on Wednesday that it was unfortunate that Ms. Suu Kyi did not even mention the word 'Rohingya' in her speech.

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A double-edged sword

There has lately been a revival of the classic debate on how subnationalism is good for social welfare, triggered by the controversy surrounding the long-standing demand for an official State flag for Karnataka. None of India's 29 States except Jammu and Kashmir have a flag of their own. The matter is complicated by the fact that the Constitution maintains a conspicuous silence on the issue. The clamour for a separate flag among a section of the Kannadigas thus assumes wider political salience, insofar as the assertion of underlying subnational identities is concerned.

A multi-ethnic polity sharply polarised along linguistic, religious and caste lines, India is no stranger to subnationalist impulses. Initially wary of accommodating regional demands, primarily owing to the bitter experience of Partition, India's central leadership embarked on an audacious project to reconfigure the country's political map based on linguistic criteria: Telugu-speaking areas coalesced into Andhra Pradesh, Malayali-speaking areas into Kerala, Kannada-speaking areas into Karnataka, etc. in the 1950s. More and more states were added to this kitty — Maharashtra and Gujarat joined in 1960, followed by Punjab and Haryana in the mid-1960s. This project has continued up till today, with Telangana being the most recent addition. Most of these states are creations of hard-fought political struggles waged around the idea of a shared ethnic identity. The tenacity of civic bonds among the members of a political community, some scholars maintain, explains why some states have fared well on social development indicators while others still struggle to break out of their vicious trap of backwardness. However, new research in political science shows that not all civic associations are benign; some help foster the democratic ethos while others endanger democracy by reinforcing its majoritarian impulses. This is true as much at the level of the region as it is at the level of the nation.

High levels of subnationalism may have driven higher levels of social welfare in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, but they have also spawned violent ethnic conflict in many others: Gujarat and Maharashtra have witnessed some of the worst ethnic riots unleashed against their religious minorities and immigrants, respectively, in post-Independence India; Assam has periodic bouts of xenophobic violence targeting alleged Bangladeshi settlers.

One only needs to flip the pages of history to realise how nationalism, by its very nature, has the idea of exclusion built into it. How nations or subnations deal with these exclusionary aspects is a question that the subnationalist argument shies away from addressing. It is important to ask whether Gujarat's Muslims are part of the Gujarati *asmita* (pride), or whether migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar feel a close affinity to the Marathi *manoos*. The 'othering' of those who do not form an integral part of the subnation warns us of the dangers of subnationalism, and how it can engender serious democratic deficits in an otherwise vibrant and plural democracy.

Shashwat Dhar is associated with the Lokniti Programme for Comparative Democracy at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Stay the course

In its September 2015 order, the Supreme Court had told the Centre and the Arunachal Pradesh government that citizenship be conferred on the Chakmas and Hajongs at the "earliest, preferably within three months". The authorities did little to enforce the court's directive in two years. A week ago, the Centre gave a commitment that the court order will be enforced. However, on Tuesday, Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said the apex court order was "unimplementable". He called for the order to be modified so that the rights of the indigenous population of Arunachal Pradesh are not diluted. This flip-flop may appeal to nativist outfits like the All Arunachal Pradesh Student's Union (AAPSU), which forced a bandh in the state on Tuesday to protest the Centre's decision, but it exposes the government as weak and incapable of a firm and ethical stand. The government must take necessary action for the enforcement of the court order and tell outfits such as the AAPSU in clear terms that it will not allow law and order to be disrupted.

Migration and citizenship issues are sensitive matters across the Northeast. State authorities should not let anyone communalise these or exaggerate their implications for the local society. Unlike the Rohingyas, the Chakmas and Hajongs came as refugees to India from Bangladesh in the 1960s and were settled in the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). As per a treaty India signed with Bangladesh in 1972, it was agreed these refugees would be granted citizenship rights. Though only 5,000 of the original 14,888 persons settled in NEFA, which later became Arunachal Pradesh, are alive, the refugee population has swelled to nearly a lakh, many of them born in India. For all practical reasons, these stateless people are Indians having lived all their lives in refugee settlements in Arunachal Pradesh. The government must assuage the local populace of their fears that the Chakmas and Hajongs are a threat to their cultural identity and social fabric. Much of the social tensions between the indigenous people and the refugees are triggered by competition for meagre economic resources, especially land, and lack of employment opportunities. Leaders like Rijiju, who command influence at the Centre, ought to devise ways to expand the economic pie instead of flowing with the populist current.

The BJP has big plans for the Northeast and sees itself as a party of governance in the region. The refugee issue is a test for the party to negotiate faultlines in the region without taking recourse to identity politics.

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DGMO Level talks between India And Pak**DGMO Level talks between India And Pak**

DGMO level talks on behest of Pak DGMO was held on 22 Sep 17. During the talks the Pak DGMO raised the issues of targeting of Pak Civilians opposite the Jammu Sector by own troops.

Indian DGMO in response highlighted that all Cease Fire Violations in the Jammu Sector were initiated by Pak Rangers and the BSF troops deployed only responded appropriately to them. It was also emphasised that no targeted firing on civilians was carried out by own troops. Apart from these, firing by BSF troops were initiated onto Armed intruders attempting to infiltrate from close proximity of Pak posts along Amritsar Border.

DGMO also put across emphatically that the trend of infiltration along the LC continued with active support of Pak forward posts impacting peace and tranquility along the LC and also the internal security situation. This was evident from continued attempts of sniping and targeting of our troops undertaken through cross-border actions duly supported by Pak Army troops.

DGMO reiterated that the Indian Army is a professional Army and reserves the right to retaliate appropriately to any incident leading to loss of life of our troop. He reaffirmed the sincerity in the efforts of Indian Army to maintain peace and tranquility along the LC provided there was a reciprocal effort from Pakistan.

Col Aman Anand PRO (Army)

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Hasina floats five-point peace plan

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has floated a five-point proposal at the United Nations to find a permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Emphasising swift action to resolve the crisis in her speech at the 72nd UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on Thursday, she called for immediate steps to end the 'cleansing' of the ethnic Rohingya minority. She was at the centrestage at the UNGA this year, with the Rohingya crisis deepening along Bangladesh's border with Myanmar, a crossing made by over 430,000 refugees fleeing violence in Rakhine State in past over three weeks.

Hasina's five-point proposal says: Myanmar must stop the violence and the practice of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State unconditionally, immediately and forever; the UN Secretary General should immediately send a fact-finding mission to Myanmar; all civilians, irrespective of religion and ethnicity, must be protected in Myanmar; for this, 'safe zones' could be created inside Myanmar under UN supervision; sustainable return of all forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh to their homes in Myanmar must be ensured; and the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission Report must be implemented immediately, unconditionally and entirely.

She said it was the 14th time she was addressing the UN General Assembly, but this time she came with a heavy heart just after seeing the "hungry, distressed and hopeless Rohingya".

"Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from the Rakhine State are entering Bangladesh to flee violence. As estimated by IOM (International Organisation for Migration), in last three weeks, over 430,000 Rohingya entered Bangladesh. They are fleeing 'ethnic cleansing' in their own country where they have been living for centuries," Hasina said, adding that Bangladesh is currently sheltering over 800,000 Rohingya in all.

She proposed that the UN Secretary-General send a fact-finding mission to Myanmar where 'safe zones' can be built under the UN's supervision for the protection of all civilians, irrespective of religion and ethnicity.

'Take them back'

Before her speech at the UNGA general debate, she cleared Bangladesh's stance over the protracted Rohingya crisis at several meetings at the UN Headquarters in New York. At the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) Contact Group meeting on Tuesday, she demanded Myanmar take back the refugees and end 'state propaganda' that labelled the ethnic group as 'Bengalis'.

Hasina thanked UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council for their attempts to stop atrocities, and bring peace and stability in Rakhine. She added, "We are horrified to see that the Myanmar authorities are laying land mines along their stretch of the border to prevent the Rohingya from returning to Myanmar."

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Pakistan seeks UN envoy on Kashmir

He said India was trying to “divert the world’s attention from its brutalities,” by ceasefire violations on the LoC.

“The Kashmir dispute should be resolved justly, peacefully and expeditiously,” he said.

Terming the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir as the “most intense foreign military occupation in recent history,” Mr. Abbasi sought an international investigation into “India’s crimes in Kashmir.”

The Pakistan PM said India has responded to Kashmiris’ demand for self-determination “with massive and indiscriminate force ... shooting indiscriminately at children, women and youth,” adding that this “constitute war crimes.”

Ms. Gambhir said Pakistan has been trying to dupe the rest of the world on the question of fighting terrorism.

Islamabad has diverted international military and development aid towards creating “a dangerous infrastructure of terror on its own territory,” she said. “Pakistan is now speaking of the high cost of its terror industry. The polluter, in this case, is paying the price,” she said, adding that Pakistan’s “globalisation of terror is unparalleled.”

“Pakistan can only be counselled to abandon a destructive worldview that has caused grief to the entire world. If it could be persuaded to demonstrate any commitment to civilisation, order, and to peace, it may still find some acceptance in the comity of nations,” the Indian diplomat said.

Mr. Abbasi had said in his speech that Pakistan’s counter-terrorism credentials cannot be questioned. “After 9/11 it was Pakistani efforts that enabled the decimation of Al-Qaeda,” he said. Mr. Abbasi said 27,000 Pakistanis have died in its fight against terrorism. “We took the war to the terrorists. We have paid a heavy price,” he said.

He blamed Afghanistan for the security situation in the country, denying any role for Pakistan in supporting the Taliban. On the contrary, terrorists based in Afghanistan were launching attacks on Pakistan, the PM claimed. Urging Pakistan to adopt a “constructive approach” in tackling terrorism in the region, Afghanistan said facts disprove Pakistan’s claim that it was not sheltering terrorists. It cited the killing of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden near Islamabad and the death of the Taliban fugitive Mullah Omar in Karachi.

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Defiant Iran test-fires missile

Pushing ahead: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani speaking at the annual military parade in Tehran on Friday. AFP

Iran said on Saturday that it had successfully tested a new medium-range missile in defiance of warnings from Washington that such activities were grounds for abandoning their landmark nuclear deal.

State television carried footage of the launch of the Khoramshahr missile, which was first displayed at a high-profile military parade in Tehran on Friday.

It also carried in-flight video from the nose cone of the missile, which has a range of 2,000 km and can carry multiple warheads. "As long as some speak in the language of threats, the strengthening of the country's defence capabilities will continue and Iran will not seek permission from any country for producing various kinds of missile," Defence Minister Amir Hatami said in a statement.

The test comes at the end of a heated week of diplomacy at the UN General Assembly in New York, where U.S. President Donald Trump again accused Iran of destabilising the Middle East, calling it a "rogue state whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed and chaos".

Previous Iranian missile launches have triggered U.S. sanctions and accusations that they violate the spirit of the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers. Iran, which fought a brutal war with neighbouring Iraq in the 1980s, sees missiles as a legitimate and vital part of its defence — particularly as regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Israel import huge amounts of military hardware from the West.

Mr. Trump has threatened to bin the nuclear agreement, saying Iran is developing missiles that may be used to deliver a nuclear warhead when the deal's restrictions are lifted in 2025.

He is due to report to the Congress on October 15 on whether Iran is still complying with the deal and whether it remains in U.S. interests to stick by it. If he decides that it is not, that could open the way for U.S. lawmakers to reimpose sanctions, leading to the potential collapse of the pact.

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday he had made his decision but was not yet ready to reveal it. The other signatories to the deal — Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and the EU — have all pushed for it to continue.

European support

They point out that abandoning the agreement will remove restrictions on Iran immediately — rather than in eight years' time — and that the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly confirmed Tehran is meeting its commitments.

Iran says all of its missiles are designed to carry conventional warheads only and has limited their range to a maximum of 2,000 km, although commanders say they have the technology to go further.

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India third in nuclear power installations: study

India is third in the world in the number of nuclear reactors being installed, at six, while China is leading at 20, the World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2017, released this month, shows. The number of nuclear reactor units under construction is, however, declining globally for the fourth year in a row, from 68 reactors at the end of 2013 to 53 by mid-2017, the report says.

The latest report further reveals that most nuclear reactor constructions are behind schedule, with delays resulting in increase in project costs and delay in power generation. There are 37 reactor constructions behind schedule, of which 19 reported further delays over the past year. In India itself, five out of the six reactors under construction are behind schedule. Eight nuclear power projects have been under construction globally for a decade or more, of which three have been so for over 30 years.

In the foreword, S. David Freeman, an American energy policy expert who led the Tennessee Valley Authority under U.S. President Jimmy Carter, writes that the debate regarding the value of nuclear energy "is over". "The most decisive part of this report is the final section — Nuclear Power vs Renewable Energy Development. It reveals that since 1997, worldwide, renewable energy has produced four times as many new kilowatt-hours of electricity than nuclear power," he writes, concluding, "The world no longer needs to build nuclear power plants to avoid climate change and certainly not to save money."

Data gathered by the authors shows that global nuclear power generation increased by 1.4% in 2016 due to a 23% increase in China, though the share of nuclear energy in electricity generation stagnated at 10.5%. By comparison, globally, wind power output grew by 16% and solar power by 30%. Wind power increased generation by 132 TWh (terawatt hours) or 3.8 times, and solar power by 77 TWh or 2.2 times more than nuclear power's 35 TWh respectively. Renewables represented 62% of global power generating capacity additions.

Russia and the U.S. shut down reactors in 2016, while Sweden and South Korea both closed their oldest units in the first half of 2017, the report notes.

Financial crisis

The report also documents the financial crisis plaguing the industry. After the discovery of massive losses over its nuclear construction projects, Toshiba filed for bankruptcy of its U.S. subsidiary Westinghouse, the largest nuclear power builder in history. AREVA has accumulated \$12.3 billion in losses over the past six years.

French bailout

The French government has provided a \$5.3 billion bailout and continues its break-up strategy, the report notes.

In the chapter on the status of the Fukushima nuclear power project in Japan, six years after the disaster began, the report notes how the total official cost estimate for the catastrophe doubled to \$200 billion.

The lead authors of the report are Paris-based energy consultant Mycle Schneider, who advised the European Parliament on energy matters for over 20 years, and Antony Froggart, energy policy consultant and senior researcher at Chatham House, a London-based non-profit organisation working on international affairs.

The world no longer needs to build nuclear plants to avoid climate change

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is it difficult to grant citizenship to Chakmas?

Why has the issue been raked up?

On September 13, Home Ministry officials held a meeting with Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju, who represents the State in Parliament, on various administrative issues. The subject of granting citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs was also discussed. After the meeting, Mr. Rijiju said a “middle ground” would be chosen so that the Supreme Court’s 2015 order to grant citizenship to Chakma-Hajong refugees could be honoured and the rights of the local population not diluted. “The Supreme Court order has to be honoured. Chakmas are settled in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964. But the Scheduled Tribe status and indigenous people’s rights won’t be diluted,” he said in a tweet later. This led to widespread outrage in the State and several incidents of violence were reported.

What was the Supreme Court order?

In September 2015, the court, after hearing a petition filed by the Committee for Citizenship Rights of the Chakmas, directed the State government to grant citizenship to Chakmas and Hajongs within three months. The State government had opposed the move in court. After giving a statement that the order had to be honoured, Mr. Rijiju changed his stand and said it was not implementable. He clarified that since the Home Ministry was the implementing authority for granting citizenship, it would approach the Supreme Court to modify its order.

What is the controversy now?

After violent protests in the State following Mr. Rijiju’s comments, Mr. Khandu wrote to Home Minister Rajnath Singh on September 18 that the State was not ready to accept any infringement on the constitutional protection bestowed on the tribals of the State. Mr. Khandu said the State’s unique history was governed by a special Act and the Constitution gives special protection rights to the predominantly tribal State. “These provisions were legislated with the singular objective to protect the tribes of the State from the onslaught of alien culture and overwhelming influx of non-Arunachalese in the State,” his letter said.

Mr. Rijiju blamed the Congress for settling outsiders in a tribal State in the first place. “Originally 2,700 families were settled in Arunachal Pradesh by the then Congress government from 1964 to 1969. The settlement itself was not as per regulations. The settlement violates the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, or the Inner Line Permit system,” he said. Since Arunachal Pradesh is a protected State, any outsider visiting the State needs a permit to do so. Mr. Rijiju had earlier said that Chakma-Hajongs would not get any rights to buy property or land in Arunachal Pradesh.

When did Chakmas flee to India?

In the 1960s, over one lakh Chakmas and Hajong refugees, Buddhists and Hindus, fled to India from the Chittagong Hill Tract area in the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), facing religious persecution. The areas where the Chakma-Hajongs lived was submerged following the construction of the Kaptai Dam. They were made to settle in the Tirap division of Arunachal Pradesh, then known as the North East Frontier Agency, administered by the Ministry of External Affairs through the Governor of Assam. Arunachal Pradesh became a Union Territory in 1972, which coincided with the formation of Bangladesh, and soon local political parties began protesting against the settlement of outsiders in the State. The agitation gained momentum in 1987 when Arunachal Pradesh became a State.

What's the road ahead?

The logjam persists even as the government looks for damage control. Mr. Rijju said Chakma-Hajongs were entitled to live anywhere in India but their stay in Arunachal Pradesh would violate the constitutional rights of indigenous tribes protected by Article 37 IH.

VIJAITA SINGH

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Out of my mind: A dangerous decision

You expect governments to say one thing and do another. That is politics. But you don't expect a government to change its mind within a week on a fundamental principle.

Take the case of the Chakma and Hajong. One lakh of them have lived in Arunachal Pradesh since 1964. They have limited rights but are not citizens. The Supreme Court ordered the government in 2015 to regularise their status. The Home Ministry decided to comply with the order. But then there were local protests by tribal communities. They complained that the communities in question would upset the 'demography' of the state if they were granted citizenship. It would seem that the citizens of Arunachal Pradesh think they have a right to veto who else becomes citizen of India despite the decision of the Supreme Court. The Minister of State in the Home Ministry has defended the decision therefore to renege on the promise to the Chakma and Hajong. The reason given is that the rights of the indigenous citizens of Arunachal Pradesh would be 'diluted' if citizenship was granted to the Chakma and Hajong. There is 'constitutional protection bestowed' on the citizens of Arunachal Pradesh which will be infringed if more people are admitted as citizens.

This, if true, is an astonishing doctrine. After all, there is only citizenship of India, not of a state within India. If Arunachal Pradesh enjoys special status, is it akin to Article 35A under which Jammu and Kashmir citizens have special privileges? There are restrictions on out-of-state Indian citizens owning land in J&K. Is that also the case in Arunachal Pradesh? The Chakma and Hajong are, however, not from out of the state. They have lived there for 53 years. Are they not to be allowed to enjoy rights that other residents have?

If so, did the Supreme Court not know about this vital protection to the rights of local tribal people of Arunachal? Did the Home Ministry also not know of this valuable constitutional protection last week? There is a BJP-led government in Arunachal. The Chief Minister is reported to have been present when the Home Ministry first made the positive decision to give citizenship rights to the Chakma and Hajong. Subsequently, he seems to have changed his mind.

Now the granting of citizenship to the 'newcomers' will 'disturb the demography of this tribal state and violate the constitutional rights of the tribals'.

What, we may ask, is going on here? Does every state have an inviolable 'demography' which has to be left undisturbed? Is this not really the cynical politics of reservations which the 'local' tribals fear will be diluted by admitting these other tribals to citizenship? Is it not really a question of guarding a vote bank which may be alienated if more were given the same rights?

The consequences of this reversal of a promise to the Supreme Court are more serious than the Home Ministry seems to realise. If the majority community in each state - Marathi speakers in Maharashtra or Tamil speakers in Tamil Nadu - insisted that 'others' disturb the demography of their state, soon we will not have one India but 29.

If each state had individual citizenship denied to 'outsiders', there will be many more partitions of India. Think again please.

END

Next Door Nepal: A storm in the making

It took more than five months and three phases - the last one was on September 18 - for the local bodies elections to be concluded. Major parties have hailed it as a big step towards implementation of the constitution promulgated two years ago. Provincial and parliament elections are due in mid-December and key political parties have started making claims about securing majorities and forming governments. They seem least mindful of the challenges the whole process is likely to face in the coming weeks.

As per the constitution, the current parliament will cease to exist on October 22, a day before the nomination process is set to begin. Any obstruction or derailment of the process will force a serious constitutional breakdown. The constitution has no remedies for such a breakdown. The government routinely defies constitutional bodies. In the absence of a parliament, the fear is that transgression by the government will increase.

The ruling coalition, comprising the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), are already at loggerheads with the Election Commission over the cabinet expansion when the local bodies elections were on. The EC has described it a violation of the code of conduct; the government has refused to respond. Moreover, the size of the council of ministers is now 56, while the constitution prescribes a ceiling of 25.

The government had proposed providing life-long pension to parliamentarians, but dropped the idea due to public pressure. However, it decided to grant every MP a constituency development fund of Rs 35 million. The code of conduct prohibits development works with state funds when the election process is on. However, the three major parties - Nepali Congress, CPN (Maoist Centre) and the main opposition party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist - that control parliament are frequently accused of appropriating state funds.

All three are perceived as corrupt and blamed for the current mess in the country. The political spectrum's disregard of the code of conduct and the EC has attracted huge criticism. "The government has been interfering in the functioning of the Commission," says former chief election commissioner, Surya Prasad Shrestha.

The EC, though filled with nominees of the three big parties, has now mustered courage to warn the government and political parties about code violations and other improprieties. Clearly, the public sentiment against what has come to be known as "syndicate politics" has emboldened the EC.

K.P. Oli, a claimant for the chief executive's post if CPN-UML gets the majority in parliament, is reputed to be the smartest politician among the present lot with a knack to sense public sentiment. As public anger began to rise against corruption, he was the first to speak out. "Let Goddess Durga give enough strength to the Supreme Court to remain fair and impartial," he said, alluding to the allegation that partisan politics and money are corrupting the justice system.

The truth is Oli and CPN-UML - and the CPN-Maoist Centre and Nepali Congress - are responsible for introducing partisan politics in the appointment of judges. He and CPN-UML supported the idea of having a sitting chief justice (Khilraj Regmi) as the prime minister and representatives of four key parties as ministers under him in 2012. Public fury against the judiciary is also an indicator that people want the anti-corruption constitutional body and the election commission to act tough. Last week, the cabinet was forced to dismiss the executive director of the state-owned Nepal Oil Corporation, Gopal Khadka, for corruption.

Without a parliament in place, the members of constitutional bodies can take action against corrupt politicians without the fear of impeachment. However, they may still hold back since most of them have been appointed to these bodies under quotas ascribed to political parties. Inaction by the EC, judiciary and the anti-graft commission against political corruption may further erode the peoples' trust in the capacity of state bodies to be fair in their conduct.

The rising tide of public anger against corruption may upset the political applecart. Someone like K.C. [Govinda](#), a public-spirited doctor who will sit on an indefinite fast against corruption, his 12th in the last six years, could become a catalyst in turning the public against the present political establishment. A retired brigadier general ominously said at a seminar recently that thousands of retired soldiers have an obligation towards the nation and are ready to march to restore order. The unresponsive political establishment could find the constitutional process derailed by the masses if they refuse to recognise the growing public sentiment.

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Dialling The Wrong Number

Shortly after the Supreme Court declared privacy to be a fundamental right, most cellphone users received a message from their telecom operators which seemed to negate it. The message threatened disconnection of cellphone connections if a user failed to link their [Aadhaar](#). These messages and calls have only increased in frequency. This re-verification requires a user to visit a telecom service centre, undergo biometric authentication by putting their fingerprints on an authentication device, and hope that the details in the Aadhaar database match with their cellular connection.

This exercise has led to anxiety, irritation and even anger for a large number of people. These include those who still may not have enrolled for Aadhaar, some willing to link it due to privacy concerns, another set whose biometrics are rejected or details do not match and much more who are tired of standing in lines to link their Aadhaar to another essential service. To their chagrin, the government has stated that the *raison d'etre* is a direction by the Supreme Court. Such justification is at best suspect and at worst damages the institutional credibility of the Court.

The Centre is the custodian of the airwaves and having the power to issue licences has permitted private companies to provide mobile voice and data services. Telecom operators are governed by regulations including those for subscriber verification by the Department of Telecommunications (DOT). Pre-existing norms required cellular users to not only be required to furnish a valid government identification for availing mobile services but also required some form of additional verification. However, by a series of circulars issued by the DOT from March 2017, telecom operators were directed to re-verify existing users by Aadhaar authentication by February 28, 2018. The circulars cited stray sentences from a dismissal order in February of a public interest petition in the Supreme Court titled as *Lokniti Foundation v. the Union of India*.

For a variety of reasons, this does not amount to a "direction" to the government as claimed in the DOT circular. First, the basis of the order and the references to Aadhaar emerges from a counter-affidavit filed by the government in the Lokniti case. Rather than volunteering information on the pre-existing court orders that limit the Aadhaar programme to a voluntary service restricted to specific services, the government instead advocates its use for re-verification. Second, the SC nowhere uses the phrase, "direction" which is a term of art contained in court orders to impart a binding force. While the lexicology of Aadhaar may now define "voluntarily" to mean as "mandatory", the lex still recognises a distinction between an "observation" and a "direction".

The meaning of the order becomes clear in the penultimate paragraph when the Court states that, "we dispose of the same with the hope and expectation, that the undertaking given by this Court, will be taken seriously, and will be given effect to, as soon as possible.". Hence, the purported court order requiring re-verification by Aadhaar, on closer examination, contains no such direction but expressions of good faith in the measures suggested by the government. Again, this is done without reference to any of the Aadhaar cases as the government fails to inform the Court on the pre-existing orders which limit the scope and use of Aadhaar.

Viewed independently of this non-existent court direction, the DOT circulars contain no legal force or grounding in law. They do not cite or reason any statutory or regulatory support. They are crouched behind a non-existent SC directive. This becomes apparent as the circular, states, "all licensees shall intimate their existing subscribers through advertisement in print/electronic media as well as SMS about the orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court for re-verification." It is peculiar that the linking deadline of February 28, 2018 is not mentioned in any of these communications. Irrespective of legality or constitutional propriety, an aggressive push continues to instil fear in people that their mobile phone connections will be disconnected due to the Supreme Court. This

becomes especially problematic given that the Supreme Court has indicated that the pending litigation on Aadhaar will be finally heard in November.

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PAK-RUSSIA-LD DRILL

Pakistan and Russia are holding a two-week long military exercise focussing on counterterrorism operations to enhance defence ties, ahead of Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's visit to Moscow next month. The joint exercise DRUZBA 2017 between special forces of Pakistan and Russia Armies started in Minralnye Vody, Russia, on Monday. PTI

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INDIA-MYANMAR-BORDER

India is examining the impact of an existing bilateral agreement with Myanmar, which allows free movement of Indian and Myanmar citizens within 16 km of the border, as the pact is being exploited by militants for smuggling arms, drugs and fake Indian currency. The move comes amid the mass exodus of the Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar. PTI

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Diary of a very long year

“The surgical strike was a point we wanted to drive home, that the Line of Control is not a line that cannot be breached. When we want to, we will be able to breach it, go across and strike when we need. This was the message we wanted to convey and we did,” Lt. Gen. Devraj Anbu, the Northern Army Commander, stated in a recent press conference at his headquarters in Udhampur.

It has been one year since the special forces of the Indian Army carried out [surgical strikes](#) to destroy terror launchpads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on September 29, 2016. It is important to take stock at this point on how India-Pakistan bilateral relations and the regional security situation have evolved over the past year since the strikes. Showing no appetite for a bilateral rapprochement, the two acrimonious neighbours have limited their interactions to firing across the borders in Jammu and Kashmir and calling each other names in global forums. At the United Nations General Assembly a few days ago, for instance, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj termed Pakistan a “pre-eminent exporter of terror” — to which Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Maleeha Lodhi, responded: “India is the mother of terrorism” in South Asia.

Crossing the Line of Control

The future direction of the foremost regional forum, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), remains unclear after India dropped out of the 2016 Islamabad summit in the wake of the Uri terror attack. (The summit was eventually postponed.) The regional security situation remains embattled, thanks to confused American policies in South Asia, continuing turmoil in Afghanistan, heightening India-China rivalry, and the India-Pakistan hostility.

From a regional stability point of view, the surgical strikes do not seem to have had much of an adverse impact. The fact that Pakistan neither acknowledged the attacks nor responded in kind shows that the general deterrence between the South Asian nuclear rivals remains intact. It is easy to talk about nuclear use and threaten nuclear retaliation, as Pakistan has been doing for long. It is, however, not easy to translate such talk into action. In that sense, the surgical strikes have called Pakistan’s nuclear bluff. And that certainly is good news for regional stability.

But such higher-level stability seems to have come with heightened lower-level instability — and that is the bad news. There are two sets of challenges that are more apparent today, one year after the surgical strikes. One, the India-Pakistan escalation ladder has become far more precarious today it has ever been in the past one and a half decades, i.e. since the ceasefire was agreed to in 2003. The recurrent, and almost daily, occurrence of border battles between the two militaries in Jammu and Kashmir today have a worrying potential for escalation to higher levels. The border stand-offs often lead to, as is evident from the data from the past 15 years, military, political and diplomatic escalation as well as contribute to escalating an ongoing crisis.

While this was common even prior to the surgical strikes, the September 2016 operation has made ceasefire violations more worrisome in at least two ways: first, Pakistan has been retaliating ever since the surgical strikes by increasing the pressure on the frontlines; and second, surgical strikes have reduced the critical distance between ceasefire violations and conventional escalation. While stealthy surgical strikes may not, strictly speaking, qualify as conventional escalation, they certainly reduce the psychological distance between sub-conventional violence and conventional escalation in the classical sense. That sure is bad news for regional stability.

The second challenge is more practical than theoretical. Conventional escalation as discussed in the academic/policy literature tends to put too much emphasis on pre-conceived and war-gamed

escalation scenarios. However, surgical strikes could easily offset the logic behind such familiar and analytically elegant scenarios. The perils of preventive strikes, in other words, are unpredictable. Preventive strikes are pregnant with immense potential to lead up to a 'competition in risk-taking', a tendency already prevalent on the frontlines of the India-Pakistan border in J&K. Put differently, preventive strikes in hyper-nationalist bilateral settings could defy our expectations and go out of control, with disastrous implications.

Have the surgical strikes helped the country's overall national security environment? The Central government argues that surgical strikes have been a spectacular success. Notwithstanding the more conceptual challenges I have explained above, let's try and break down this claim to see if indeed surgical strikes have improved our national security in plain practical terms. The first obvious question to ask is whether the strategy of punishment has worked *vis-à-vis* Pakistan.

There are two reasons why the strategy of punishment may not have worked. For one, a strategy of punishment requires consistency and commitment. The momentum achieved by the surgical strikes was not followed up (despite several attacks thereafter), nor was the government committed to its declared determination to respond firmly to terror strikes, thereby lacking in both consistency and commitment. Second, and more importantly, Pakistan's responses thereafter of supporting insurgency in Kashmir, aiding infiltration across the border, and allegedly supporting attacks on the Indian army convoys and bases continued without much reaction from New Delhi. This has led to a visible lack of credibility on New Delhi's part which makes one wonder whether, bereft of domestic political uses, there was any strategic planning behind the September operation.

By all accounts, India's national security environment is fraught today. Terror attacks in Kashmir continue to break the calm. Consider Gen. Anbu remarks: "Large number of terrorist camps and launch pads exist across south and north of Pir Panjal, they have not decreased... Launch pads and terrorist camps have increased since last year."

Let's also look at some figures from J&K. Credible media reports show that 110 militants, and 38 army personnel were killed between January and September 2016 (i.e. prior to the surgical strikes). However, since the surgical strikes, at least 178 militants and 69 Army personnel have been killed. Forty-four army personnel were killed between January and September this year, compared to 38 last year between January and September (including those killed in the Uri Army base attack). One might argue that the terrorist casualties have also gone up. While that is true, more militants killed can be a barometer of the level of militancy too.

Surgical strikes, then, may have been a tactical victory for New Delhi, but its strategic value is far from settled.

With two hostile neighbours on either side, terror attacks against India on the rise, and the South Asian neighbourhood unsure of India's leadership any more, New Delhi has a lot to be concerned about the continuation of its pivotal position in the region and the nature of its future engagement with it. The events since September last year have further contributed to South Asia's regional 'insecurity complex'. For a country that has traditionally been the regional stabiliser, New Delhi seems to be quickly embracing the virtues of geopolitical revisionism. The costs of aggression, self-imposed regional exclusion and an absence of strategic altruism are bound to become starker sooner or later.

Happymon Jacob is Associate Professor of Disarmament Studies, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

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Cabinet approves umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces

Cabinet approves umbrella scheme of Modernisation of Police Forces

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for implementation of umbrella scheme of "Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF)" for years 2017-18 to 2019-20. The financial outlay for the scheme over the three year's period is Rs.25,060 crore, out of which the Central Government share will be Rs.18,636 crore and the States' share will be Rs.6,424 crore.

Salient Features:

- o Special provision has been made under the Scheme for internal security, law and order, women security, availability of modern weapons, mobility of police forces, logistics support, hiring of helicopters, upgradation of police wireless, National Satellite Network, CCTNS project, E-prison project etc.
- o Under the umbrella scheme, central budget outlay of Rs.10,132 crore has been earmarked for internal security related expenditure for Jammu & Kashmir, North Eastern States and left wing extremism affected States.
- o Scheme of Special Central Assistance (SCA) for 35 worst LWE affected districts has been introduced with an outlay of Rs.3,000 crore to tackle the issue of underdevelopment in these district.
- o An outlay of Rs.100 crore has been earmarked in the North Eastern States for police infrastructure upgradation, training institutes, investigation facilities etc.
- o Implementation of this scheme would bolster the Government's ability to address challenges faced in different theatres such as areas affected by LWE, Jammu and Kashmir and North East effectively and undertake development interventions which will catalyze in improving the quality of life in these areas and help combat these challenges effectively at the same time.
- o New initiatives are being introduced to provide assistance to States for upgradation of police infrastructure, forensic science laboratories, institutions and the equipment available with them to plug critical gaps in the criminal justice system. Police Stations will be integrated to set up a national data base of crime and criminals' records. It will be linked with other pillars of criminal justice system such as 'prisons, forensic science laboratories and prosecution offices.
- o The umbrella scheme also provides for setting up of a State-of Art forensic science laboratory in Amravati, Andhra Pradesh and upgradation of Sardar Patel Global Centre for Security, Counter Terrorism and Anti Insurgency in Jaipur and Gujarat Forensic Science University in Gandhi Nagar.

It is expected that the umbrella scheme, "Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF)" will go a long way to boost the capability and efficiency of Central and State Police Forces by modernizing them.

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Cabinet approves bilateral MoU between India and Afghanistan on Technical Cooperation on Police Training and Development

Cabinet approves bilateral MoU between India and Afghanistan on Technical Cooperation on Police Training and Development

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for signing an MoU between India and Afghanistan on Technical Cooperation on Police Training and Development.

The MoU will help in capacity building of Afghanistan National Police and improving the security apparatus in the region.

It has been approved for a period of 5 years from the date of signing the MoU and shall be extended for a further period of 5 years on the condition that are not further changes and or revision.

Background:

India and Afghanistan have friendly relations and the police personnel of Afghanistan National Police come regularly for training purposes in different training institutes of India.

India and Afghanistan have already signed an "Agreement on strategic partnership" between the two countries in October, 2011. A meeting was held between delegates of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Afghanistan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Afghanistan and officials of the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), MHA at New Delhi in October 2016 and Afghanistan delegates expressed their desire for assistance from India in the field of Police training, police development, law enforcement, strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan and building sustainable long term cooperation. In order to take this cooperation forward this MoU has been jointly agreed through diplomatic channels.

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CCS clears internal security scheme

Security measures: A policeman engaged in action during a protest at Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir. File photo NISSAR AHMAD; NISSAR AHMAD -

The Union Cabinet has approved a Rs. 25,000-crore internal security scheme to strengthen the country's law and order mechanism and modernise the police forces, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave its approval for the implementation of the umbrella scheme, Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF), for 2017-18 to 2019-20.

"This is the country's biggest ever internal security scheme. The financial outlay over the three-year period is Rs. 25,060 crore, out of which the Central government's share will be Rs. 18,636 crore and the States' Rs. 6,424 crore," Mr. Singh said at a press conference here. Special provisions had been made under the scheme for internal security, law and order, women's security, availability of modern weapons, mobility of police forces, logistical support, hiring of helicopters and e-prison among others.

Leg-up to infrastructure

The Home Minister said a Central budget outlay of Rs. 10,132 crore had been earmarked for internal security-related expenditure for Jammu and Kashmir, northeastern States and those affected by left wing extremism (LWE). A scheme for special Central assistance (SCA) for 35 districts worst hit by LWE had been introduced with an outlay of Rs. 3,000 crore to tackle the issue of underdevelopment. An outlay of Rs. 100 crore had been earmarked for police infrastructure upgradation, training institutes, investigation facilities, etc. in the northeastern States.

The new initiatives were being introduced to provide assistance to States for upgradation of police infrastructure, forensic science laboratories, institutions and the equipment available with them to plug critical gaps in the criminal justice system.

Police stations would be integrated to set up a national database of crime and criminal records. It would be linked with other criminal justice system such as prisons, forensic laboratories and prosecution offices. It also provides for setting up a state-of-the-art forensic laboratory in Amravati and upgradation of the Sardar Patel Global Centre for Security, Counter Terrorism and Anti-Insurgency in Jaipur and the Gujarat Forensic Science University in Gandhinagar.

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India to back Syria in fight against IS

The Grand Mufti of the Syrian Republic, Ahmad Badr Eddine Mohammad Abid Hassoun, with Rajnath Singh.PTIPTI

India on Wednesday assured its support to Syria in the fight against terrorism in the war-ravaged country, a major theatre of dreaded terror group Islamic State (IS).

This was conveyed when visiting grand mufti of Syrian Republic Ahmad Badr Eddine Mohammad Abid Hassoun met Home Minister Rajnath Singh here.

Long-standing ties

Mr. Singh assured the grand mufti of India's support in eliminating terrorism on all fronts and recollected the long-standing friendship between India and Syria, an official statement said.

Official sources said the issue of several Indians joining the IS and fighting for the terror group in Syria and Iraq was understood to have figured in the discussion.

The Home Minister welcomed the grand mufti and discussion was held on wide-ranging issues including terrorism and security, the statement said.

The Home Minister was confident that bilateral relations would improve further by such visits and wished that peace and stability were restored in Syria soon. The grand mufti thanked the Home Minister and appreciated the secular credentials of India. The grand mufti was pleased to note the significance of unity in diversity in India, the statement said.

Talks on terrorism

During the meeting, the grand mufti highlighted the evils of terrorism by citing the example of the killing of his son by terrorists and how he forgave the assassin.

He expressed confidence that India would extend support in the fight against terrorism.

The Home Minister thanked the delegation for its visit to India.

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Expanding the common ground

Hours after U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis landed in Kabul, he was [welcomed with six rockets](#) landing near Kabul's international airport, as if to remind Washington what's at stake in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. This visit came weeks after the Trump administration unveiled its South Asia strategy which in many ways marks a radical departure from the past by putting Pakistan on notice and bringing India to the centre stage of Washington's Afghanistan policy.

This was reinforced by Gen. Mattis during his visit to India this week when he suggested India and the U.S. would work together to fight terrorism. "There can be no tolerance of terrorist safe havens," he said. "As global leaders, India and the United States resolve to work together to eradicate this scourge." While announcing his new Afghanistan policy, U.S. President Donald Trump had mentioned, "We appreciate India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the U.S., and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development."

In line with this, Defence Minister [Nirmala Sitharaman made it clear](#) that while "there shall not be boots from India on the ground in Afghanistan," New Delhi will be stepping up its development and capacity-building engagement with Afghanistan.

India has decided to take up 116 "high-impact community developmental projects" in 31 provinces of Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan have also agreed to "strengthen security cooperation", with New Delhi agreeing "to extend further assistance for the Afghan national defence and security forces in fighting the scourge of terrorism, organised crime, trafficking of narcotics and money laundering". India will be training Afghan police officers along with Afghan soldiers. This is aimed at sending out a message to Pakistan, which continues to assert that India has "zero political and military role" in Afghanistan.

After handing over four attack helicopters to Kabul as part of its assistance package, India is keen to expand the scope of its security cooperation with Afghanistan which had remained limited in the past not only due to geographical constraints, but also due to Washington's desire to limit India's security engagement in the country.

The U.S. is sending about 3,000 more troops to Afghanistan, most of which are preparing to arrive in the coming weeks. "A lot is riding on this of course as we look toward how do we put an end to this fighting and the threat of terrorism to the Afghan people," Gen. Mattis said in Kabul. "We are here to set the military and security conditions for that but recognise ultimately the responsibility for the Afghan leadership to step up and fully own the war."

The convergence between India and the U.S. on Pakistan has evolved at an extraordinary pace. The Trump administration's hard-line approach on Pakistan's support for terrorism comes at a time when New Delhi has led an active global campaign to marginalise Islamabad and bring its role as a state sponsor of terror to the forefront of the global community. During Gen. Mattis's visit, Ms. Sitharaman reminded the U.S. that "the very same forces which did find safe haven in Pakistan were the forces that hit New York as well as Mumbai". Mr. Trump had made it clear that Washington "can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organisations, the Taliban and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond". The Xiamen BRICS declaration earlier this month also listed Pakistan-based terror organisations for the first time. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pakistan's Foreign Minister has had to admit that terrorist Hafiz Saeed and terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) are a "liability" for his country and for the South Asian region.

The visit of Gen. Mattis also underscored the growing salience of defence ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-U.S. relations. Washington is no longer coy about selling sensitive military technologies to India. China's growing assertiveness in the wider Indo-Pacific is a shared concern and this was reflected in the reiteration by the two countries of the critical importance of freedom of navigation, overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce in the global commons. Bilateral defence ties have been growing in recent years, "underpinned by a strategic convergence". As Gen. Mattis suggested, the U.S. is looking forward to "sharing some of our most advanced defence technologies" with India "to further deepen the robust defence trade and technology collaboration between our defence industries."

The sale of 22 Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Systems, which was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S. earlier this year, is high on the agenda. With this deal, the Indian Navy will not only acquire the world's most advanced maritime reconnaissance drone, it will also lead to greater defence technology sharing.

As India and the U.S. expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging which have the potential to reshape the regional security architecture. In the past, India had been reluctant to play an active role in East and Southeast Asia. Now as part of its 'Act East' policy, India's engagement with the region has become more robust and Washington has been encouraging India to shape the regional strategic realities more potently. At a time when regional security in the wider Indo-Pacific has taken a turn for the worse, the U.S. is looking at India to shore up its presence in the region. And India, driven by China's growing profile around its periphery, is keen to take up that challenge.

Gen. Mattis's visit has highlighted the growing convergence between the U.S. and India on key regional and global security issues. As the two nations move ahead with their ambitious plans, the challenge will be to sustain the present momentum given the myriad distractions that Washington and New Delhi have to contend with.

Harsh V. Pant is a distinguished fellow at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi and professor of international relations at King's College London

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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For truce to hold

The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) has done well to call off the agitation it spearheaded in the Darjeeling hills for over a hundred days. The Union home ministry will organise a meeting to discuss the issues raised by the protestors. The protest had begun to lose its sting as the extended bandh crippled normal life in the region. Tourism, the backbone of the local economy, suffered because of the extended shutdown and the violence and educational institutions and businesses were closed. The West Bengal government has described Singh's offer for talks as a face-saver for the GJM. Even if that is true, the state government must now reflect seriously on the reasons that had forced people in the hills to take to the streets again.

There is persuasive evidence to suggest that the Nepali-speaking majority of the Darjeeling hills continues to feel alienated from the state government, which is perceived to exclusively represent the Bengalis of the plains. Communities in the hills believe that Kolkata is unwilling to recognise their unique cultural character and that it wants to subsume their distinct linguistic and ethnic features in a Bengali identity. The idea of a separate Gorkhaland state is born out of a struggle in the hills to maintain a unique sub-regional identity. Of course, issues of governance have also been flagged. The West Bengal government, at various times, has sought to contain the statehood demand with the promise of administrative autonomy. The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council of the 1980s to the present Gorkhaland Territorial Administration were created in response to popular movements for a separate state. Though projected as autonomous entities, however, the state governments were reluctant to sufficiently empower them with funds or administrative powers. These bodies, predictably, failed to meet the expectations of the people. The state government has also invited accusations of insensitivity to the cultural claims and sentiments in the hills. The present phase of the protests, for instance, was provoked by an announcement by Chief Minister [Mamata Banerjee](#) that Bengali would be made compulsory in all schools.

Successive state governments have preferred to enforce peace in the hills by exploiting divisions within the Gorkhaland movement. This time, the state government weaned away a section of the GJM earlier this month. A week ago, the government constituted a nine-member board of administrators and bestowed on them the powers vested with GTA. It helped to end the bandh, but in the absence of institutional remedies to genuine concerns about the cultural identity of the hills and administrative autonomy, the protests could return.

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A modern police

Following three years of dithering, the NDA government has finally put numbers to its election promise of speeding up the modernisation of India's creaking police infrastructure. The cash on the table is substantial: Rs 25,000 crore over three years, of which over Rs 18,000 crore will come from the Union government. Police in Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast and states fighting Maoists will receive the largest share of the money, Rs 10,132 crore, to meet their needs for everything from modern weapons to hiring helicopters. For police forces across the country, hard-hit by funding cuts, this is good news.

In the wake of the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai, the Union government had significantly enhanced support for police modernisation. In 2015, though, the National Democratic Alliance government terminated financial support for creating physical infrastructure, like police stations, housing, forensic labs, and training institutions. The idea was that state governments would pick up the slack. In practice, police budgets in most states have been under severe stress, with police left unable in some cases to even meet routine expenditure, like purchasing new vehicles or meeting fuel bills.

Hard questions need to be asked, though, about how this cash will be spent - and whether it alone will be enough to give Indian citizens better policing. For one, the post-26/11 police modernisation effort suffered from poor conception and execution. Police stations on the coast have rotted away; expensive boats no longer work; guns purchased for commando units turned out to be impracticable. While physical infrastructure improved, its use didn't. New forensic labs were built, for example, but police on ground remained unskilled in modern investigation techniques. The bigger elephant in the room, though, is police reform itself.

For years, experts - backed by the Supreme Court - have been calling for new legislation to insulate the police from political interference. Though many states have passed new police legislation, few have respected the Supreme Court's injunction to ensure these laws give functional autonomy to the top police leadership. In the absence of autonomy, there can be no accountability - and the consequences of a lack of accountability have been demonstrated across the country, in everything from the collapse of police during Haryana's Jat agitation, to botched prosecutions. Police modernisation, clearly, isn't just about guns or buildings. The successes of the new police modernisation scheme, therefore, will have to be judged not by the cash it delivers, but how far the Central government is able to use this financial leverage to actually deliver better policing to citizens.

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