

The Multidimensionality of Rohingya Crisis

Why in news?

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The UN Human Rights Commissioner issued a statement recently that was critical of India's stand in the conflict.

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What is the Geo-political dimension?

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- Rohingya crisis is multidimensional and complex.

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- It involves not just Myanmar's internal politics but also the relationship between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

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- Myanmar is sandwiched between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh on one side and the ASEAN neighbours - Malaysia & Indonesia on the other, all of which have a large Muslim population.

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- There is also the global dimension with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) having taken a very strident role in this whole issue.

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What is the historical dimension?

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- The Rohingyas currently under scanner are Muslims belonging to the Rakhine whose origins are believed to be from Bangladesh.

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- **Geography** - Rakhine is province located in the north-western coast of Myanmar and is considerably isolated from the rest of the country because of a mountain range in between.

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- This region has historically had close interactions with present day Bangladesh.

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- Because of all this, people to people interaction was brisk.

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- **British Influence** - After the region came under British rule and there was an increased movement of people.

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- As the region was fertile, there was rice cultivation on a large scale.

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- The British got workers from Chittagong to cultivate the land similar to how the poorest of Indian Tamils were made to work in plantations worldwide.

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- Hence, eventually a lot of people settled down there.

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- Mosques and pagodas existed side by side and there was a cordial relationship for centuries.

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- The 2nd World War saw the first fissures emerge as the Muslims supported the British and the Buddhists supported the Japanese for their respective political aspirations.

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- **Citizenship** - Most bonded labourers who were forced to sail overseas in colonial times managed to gain the citizenship of their acquired homes on independence.

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- But sadly this is not the case with the Rohingyas even now.

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- The Rohingyas even petitioned Jinnah in the early 50s to let them join with East Pakistan but that were refused.

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What is the security dimension?

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- There has been a problem of growing Islamic radicalisation among the

Rohingyas since the Afghan War of the late 90s.

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- It has been established that extremist organisations like Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh have strong networks among Rohingyas.

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- The Indian intelligence has also discovered Pakistani Army & ISI connections with the ranks of “Arakan Rohingya Army” which is currently involved in an insurgency against Myanmar.

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- Also, a lot of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have been found to be using Rakhine as a springboard to get refugee status in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and even Europe.

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Is it right to blame India?

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- At least 40,000 Rohingyas have been estimated to have entered India and only 16,000 of them are documented.

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- This has been flagged as a serious security threat that pressured the government to announce the deportation of Rohingya refugees.

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- Although Indian has a reputation of welcoming refugees, it is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees and the Protocol of 1967.

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- While magnanimity is India’s character, it shouldn’t be at the cost of its own security.

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- On that note, the UN Human Rights commissioner’s statement that is critical of India’s position isn’t correct.

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Source: Business Standard

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