

THE ROHINGYA INFLUX INTO BANGLADESH'S COX'S BAZAR: MAPPING INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS

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Abstract

Following the recent 2017 Rohingya influx, Bangladesh now hosts nearly one million Rohingyas. Being persecuted by the Myanmar state machinery and some local vigilantes, they fled for safe refuge in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh sheltered them in 34 overcrowded camps located in the Teknaf and Ukhiya sub-districts of Cox's Bazar. At present, Rohingyas are counted more than double compared to the local host population in these two areas. This study makes efforts to explicate why and how these stranded Rohingyas can be a security threat to Bangladesh. Theoretically, the study relies on security discourse; ecological and resource scarcity model; and relative deprivation theory. Under the qualitative research approach, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews mainly with key informants and subject experts to gather field data. The study brings out that this overpopulation has perplexed the security milieu of the country and forecasts multifaceted internal security threats. Thus, the study offers salient policy recommendations to ameliorate the crisis response by neutralizing the identified and forecasted conflictual issues.

Keywords: Rohingya, Host Community, Security, Conflict and Humanitarian Response, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Introduction

In August 2017, a devastating crisis unfolded as the Rohingya, a persecuted ethnic minority in Myanmar, were forcibly displaced through coercive measures by the Myanmar state. Fleeing for their lives, they sought refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh, specifically in the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf region. Their harrowing

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journey, often barefoot, wet from monsoon rains, and covered in mud, led them to the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway, where they hoped to find safety and solace. The magnitude of the displacement was immense, as approximately one million Rohingya individuals sought shelter, resulting in the establishment of the largest refugee camp worldwide (World Food Program, 2020). Most of them were barefoot, exhausted, and starving. The brutality of the Myanmar state machinery knows no bounds. Many women and young girls had been raped, youths were slaughtered, and houses were left burning. To escape such brutalities, survivors rushed towards the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. A multitude of Rohingyas made their way into Bangladesh via various border points, including Ukhiya, Teknaf, and Naikhyangchhari, while an additional influx of hundreds sought refuge on the no man's land when unsuccessful in their attempts to cross the Bangladesh border. This is one of the greatest state-sponsored catastrophes in recent global history. The Government of Bangladesh (henceforth GOB) sheltered these hugely persecuted Rohingyas and saved their lives. This gesture has been considered humane' and highly commended by many national and international humanistic quarters. The people of Bangladesh, especially the local hosts who live nearby the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts, have shown their magnanimity by looking after these homeless, scared, hungry, and vulnerable Rohingyas with the available means they have had. These humane supports have turned the Bangladeshi support givers into real hosts. Currently, the Rohingya population resides exclusively within 34 densely populated and unsanitary camps, enduring conditions of deprivation that expose them to substantial protection risks. The risks here include a variety of challenges like widespread and targeted violence, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and various socio-cultural consequences. These risks have made the more than one million vulnerable people a burden on the host country. Moreover, it is thought that when people perceive a lack of resources as a group, it can lead to hostility towards outsiders, as opposed to when individuals feel personally deprived. (Grant & Brown, 1995).

This paper explores the reasons behind and the implications of the large influx of Rohingya refugees, focusing on the potential security threat it poses to Cox's Bazar, as well as the wider Southeast region of Bangladesh. By examining the factors that contribute to this security concern, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex challenges faced by the host communities and devise effective strategies to mitigate these threats. It is crucial to address this issue comprehensively to ensure the safety and well-being of both the Rohingya refugees and the host population in Cox's Bazar and Bangladesh as a whole.

Background and Problem Statement

Looking back into recorded history, this study finds that only between 1978 and 2017, the Rohingyas (mostly Muslims) experienced a series of persecutions by Myanmar state apparatuses. Since then, the Myanmar government has started identifying this minority population as illegal migrants allegedly descended from Bangladesh (formerly known as East Bengal and East Pakistan).

Table 1: Historical Overview of Rohingya influx in Bangladesh (1978-2017)

| No | Time - line | Rohingya Influx (approximate) | Events that caused the influx | Solution |
|-----|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 01. | 1978 | 2,00,000 | Operation Nagamin, also called Dragon King, was launched by a military junta to perform a thorough population screening for detecting foreign individuals. | The problem was resolved through diplomatic initiatives in sixteen months. |
| 02. | Mid-1991 to Mid-1992 | 2,50,000 | Rohingya, claim they have suffered forced labour, sexual violence, and religious persecution by the Myanmar army. The army argues that their actions were meant to restore stability in Rakhine state. | By a memorandum of understanding was signed on May 12, 1993, between Bangladesh and Myanmar, all the Rohingyas except a few thousands were repatriated through the bilateral deal. |
| 03. | 2012 | 10,000 | The outbreak of violence between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists resulted in the loss of over 100 lives, primarily affecting the Rohingya community. | Unresolved |
| 04. | 2016 | 25,000 | After an attack by the Rohingya militant group Harakah al-Yaqin on border guard posts that resulted in the death of nine soldiers, including sexual violence, and arson. | Unresolved |

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------|--|---|
| 05. | 2017-on-wards | 871,924 | After a new military crack-down, a wave of Rohingya sought safety in Bangladesh. With heightened conflicts involving Myanmar troops, pro-government militias, and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), over 100 people lost their lives in a week. | Unresolved (as of April 2023, no repatriation). |
|-----|---------------|---------|--|---|

Source: Adapted from different reliable sources like Dhaka Tribune (2018); UNHCR (2021)

Following the influx of Rohingya individuals in August 2017, a significant concern arose regarding the depopulation of the host community residing in Cox's Bazar. While the humanitarian concerns associated with the Rohingya camps are substantial, additional restrictions imposed on civilian movement in the vicinity of the camps have had adverse effects on the local population's access to vital services for survival and well-being. Conversely, the economic and environmental repercussions of the crisis have also had severe consequences for Bangladesh, particularly in the Cox's Bazar region in the southeast. Multiple reliable sources confirm that since mid-2020, there have been instances of fraternal clashes and conflicts between the Rohingya and local communities, resulting in at least eight deaths and the displacement of hundreds of families from their shelters.

As time elapsed, the Rohingya population increased, and now it stands at around one million, which is almost double the population of the Teknaf and Ukhiya sub-districts, where the Rohingyas got shelter in camps (Ahmed et al., 2021). At present, 8,60,365 Rohingyas live in 34 camps located in Teknaf and Ukhiya sub-districts, 2.30 lakh live outside the camp with the host communities, 80% of whom are women and children (Alam, Molla, Islam, Rahman, & Barua, 2023). This overpopulation has been producing many problems, those problems are mostly the bioproduct of such overpopulation in the region of Cox's Bazar in general and Teknaf and Ukhiya in particular. The Rohingyas have now become a burning concern from a security point of view. There exists a conflicting situation between the Rohingya and the host community. As a result, antagonism has aroused violent and non-violent conflict both within the Rohingya people and between the Rohingya and host communities. Data shows that only in 2019 and 2020, a total of 163 violent and 210 non-violent incidents took place, and only in 2020, there were 26 cases of assault; seven of these assaults were targeted at Bangladeshi locals,

NGO workers, and law enforcement agencies; ten incidents were targeted and carried out by Rohingyas both inside and outside the camps (Reliefweb, 2023).

Moreover, there are impacts on the local environment, the livelihood of local people, the local market, and economy, and many more. In this context, the present study evaluates the underlying root causes that might trigger security threats for Bangladesh and this region as well. The study also isolates some viable recommendations from the point of view of policy discourse to ameliorate the crisis response by neutralizing the incompatibilities.

Theoretical Premise

Internal security threats refer to challenges or risks that arise within a country's borders and can undermine the stability, well-being, and safety of its population. These threats can take various forms, including social, political, economic, and environmental factors (Mitchell, 1981; Doty, 1998; Mogire, 2011). Comprehending the internal security challenges serves as a fundamental framework for evaluating the ramifications of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh. Factors contributing to internal security threats are social, political, and economic.

Social Factors include identity-based conflicts, social polarization, and the potential for intergroup tensions. In the case of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh, social factors can be observed through the strain on local resources, competition for jobs, and cultural differences between the host communities and the Rohingya refugees. Political Factors involve governance challenges, political instability, and weak institutions. The Rohingya influx may create political challenges, including strain on government resources, potential security risks, and the need for effective policies to manage the crisis. Economic Factors encompass issues related to resource scarcity, economic disparities, and livelihood opportunities. The presence of many Rohingya refugees has impacted the local economy, including competition for jobs, strain on infrastructure and services, and potential economic inequalities. Environmental Factors involve natural degradation and ecological vulnerabilities. The location of the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar exposes both the host communities and refugees to environmental risks, such as flooding, and landslides, which can exacerbate security challenges.

Drawing upon the works of Mitchell (1981), Doty (1998), and Mogire (2011), the security discourse on the refugee crisis underscores the relevance of the following six issues:

- i. Intensified competition between refugees and the local community over fundamental necessities and limited local resources.
- ii. Environmental degradation, manifested through deforestation and pollution resulting from the presence of refugees, which may engender conflicts between refugees and host communities.
- iii. Heightened competition within the labour market, serving as a significant source of conflict.
- iv. Refugees becoming involved in local politics or national issues of the host country, potentially contributing to tensions.
- v. Host communities perceive unequal treatment in terms of the assistance extended to refugees by development partners or international organizations.
- vi. Lack of mutual understanding between the host community and displaced individuals regarding their cultural differences.

These issues are deemed essential for shaping the discourse on security pertaining to the refugee crisis. The relevance of these six issues has been analysed in the context of the Rohingya crisis. The findings section of this study shows that all these six issues are found present in the Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts and Cox's Bazar. How and why the Rohingya's presence has the potential to create a security threat for Bangladesh has been examined by Thomas Homer-Dixon's triangular model of violent conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999) and Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory (Gurr, 1970). According to Homer-Dixon's model, the growth of population and ecological marginalization together trigger skewed/unequal access to existing resources, which often induces the likelihood of violent conflict between communities. The author coined the term environmental scarcity, which we prefer to rename as resource scarcity for a better and easier understanding of the Rohingya-driven complexities.

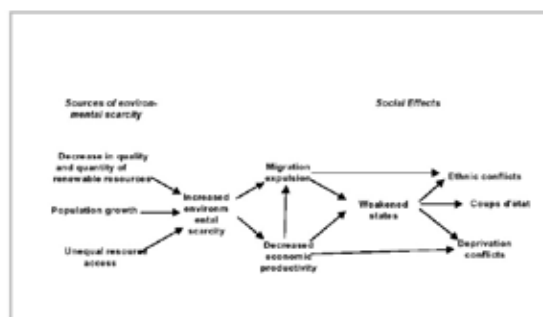


Figure 1: Migration, Resource Scarcity, and Violent Conflict

Source: Homer-Dixon (1999)

Dixon specifies (see above Figure 1) three social effects, e.g., ethnic conflict, *coups d'état*, and deprivation conflicts due to environmental scarcity. In this case, the first and third effects mostly matched, while the middle one is less likely to apply, at least in the present situation, to explore the potential causes of a security threat. The sources of environmental scarcity encompass a decline in both the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and disparities in resource access. In this study, the focus is not solely on renewable resources but rather on the strain placed on resources for practical reasons. To support the argument, the present research adopts Ted Robert Gurr's theory of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970), building upon Homer-Dixon's work (1999). For instance, Crosby (1979) re-examined the theory and discovered that one only feels resentment about failing to obtain something (X) when they see that similar others have X, want X, feel entitled to X, believe that obtaining X is possible, and do not place blame on others.

The central premise of RD theory is that deprivation is not solely determined by objective circumstances, but also encompasses an individual's subjective sense of being deprived. Based on this perceived deprivation, individuals may resort to criminal activities and engage in conflicts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether hostilities and tensions exist between host and Rohingya communities due to resource scarcity and unequal distribution, thereby giving rise to feelings of deprivation among the host communities. Additionally, the study seeks to explore how such circumstances contribute to an increased likelihood of potentially violent conflicts between these communities.

Methodological Notes

The study relies on a post-positivist as well as a qualitative methodological approach. The researchers purposively interviewed 30 key informants (KIs) selected from both host and Rohingya communities and conducted two focus group discussions (FGDs) only in the Rohingya community in Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas (subdistricts). The notable key informants are those who have/had a close working engagement with many issues facing the Rohingya, like religious leaders, NGO officials, people from law enforcement agencies at local levels, local government representatives and officials, local journalists, local human rights activists, top RRRC officials, and the Camp in Charge (CIC). Secondary sources include referred journal articles, selected newspapers, and reports of different local and international NGOs working on the ground. Finally, we found some policy recommendations developed from 11 expert interviews (EIs) and field visits by the researchers. Note that the collected primary interview data were transcribed and

translated into English to be analysed following a thematic analysis protocol (e.g., Braun and Clarke, 2006). Codes were used to assign the selected themes.

Some limitations were acknowledged while the researchers collected field data from the Rohingya people. First, getting access to the camps and talking to the Rohingyas was challenging because of multiple restrictions. Especially, talking with the Rohingya women is highly sensitive to their cultural traits. They do not feel comfortable talking to strangers also created barrier by their partners. Second, language has been found as a barrier to communication. Moreover, staying in camps areas after dusk is not allowed for security reasons. However, the researchers managed and overcame the reported limitations.

Findings and Discussion

As discussed earlier, the study findings are guided by the two theoretical propositions hired by Homer-Dixon and Robert Ted Gurr. Homer-Dixon argues that sudden population growth and ecological marginalization together trigger unequal access to existing resources, which often induces the likelihood of violent conflict between the Rohingyas and the local community, which has been claimed as a major cause of a security threat. Dixon specifies three social effects such as ethnic conflict, coups d'état, and deprivation conflicts due to environmental scarcity. In this case, the existence of the first and third effects has been found in the ground reality in greater Cox's Bazar in general and in Teknaf and Ukhiya sub-districts. The field data evidenced huge resource strain because of the overpopulation created by the immense presence of Rohingyas. This resource strain entails both tangible and non-tangible aspects like sharing of land, loss of land, non-access to humanitarian aid, fishing opportunities, the labour market, non-formal small businesses, control over the illicit drug market, and power practices.

The phenomenon of overpopulation has led to the emergence of imbalances in resource access, a decline in wages, and the unsustainable utilization of limited resources. To support this viewpoint, the present study adopts Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory as an underpinning framework, building upon the insights of Homer-Dixon. The central premise of this theory posits that deprivation is not solely defined by objective measures of scarcity, but rather encompasses an individual's subjective perception of being deprived. The hypothesis put forth in this study posits that this sense of deprivation is not absolute, but rather arises from the disparity between an individual's expectations of achievement and their actual level of attainment. These expectations can stem from social comparisons made

with other social groups, individuals, or one's own past experiences. So, the study summarizes threefold causes of security threats caused by the lingering presence of Rohingya in Bangladesh as argued by Doty (1998) and Mogire (2011):

1. The impact on ecological and resource scarcity is mainly caused by population exceedance and demographic marginalization, as explained in Homer-Dixon's Model.
2. Feelings of deprivation by the local Bangladeshis (the host community), which is likely to lead to tension/conflict between the communities.
3. Threats to local culture and the deterioration of the law-and-order situation.

The underlying factor contributing to the causes is the demographic imbalance between the Rohingya population and the host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf following the influx in 2017. In August 2017, a staggering number of approximately 860,000 Rohingya individuals were compelled to flee their residences in Myanmar's Rakhine province and seek refuge in the Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar. Presently, it is estimated that approximately one million Rohingyas reside in these two sub-districts (refer to Table 2).

Table 2: Existing population comparison between host and Rohingya communities in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar

| Location | Host Community (HC) population (Population census 2011) | Rohingya refugee population (As of March 2019) |
|----------------|--|---|
| Ukhiya Upazila | 207,379 | 736,410 |
| Teknaf Upazila | 264,389 | 141,300 |
| Total | 471,786 | 877,710 |

Source: Ahmed et al. (2021)

Following the influx, population density per square kilometre in Ukhiya and Teknaf has risen from 792 and 680 to 3,468 and 2,085 respectively (Worldometer, 2021). The population growth rate within the Rohingya community is to be considered a serious concern to many, including the host community because it has had a harmful impact on ecology, culture, and the law-and-order situation. As Homer-Dixon (1999) identifies, population growth is one of the three sources of environmental scarcity, which in turn leads to unequal resource access for the local inhabitants, as has been discussed in the following section.

i. Ecological and resource scarcity: consequential security threats

It is evident from field data that the Rohingya influx has had a serious impact on the environment of Cox's Bazar district, which is primarily due to the government's initiative to install camps for the persecuted Rohingyas. For instance, the UNDP cited the GOB's Department of Agriculture Extension and assured that only between August 2017 and March 2018, around 100 ha of agricultural land in Teknaf and Ukhiya had been damaged by Rohingya activities; for instance, 76 ha of arable land was occupied by refugee settlements and humanitarian agencies. Most of the hosts and interviewees claim that the government itself has deforested many hilly areas and allowed Rohingyas to be sheltered. Field interview data assures that most of the forest land within these two Upazilas has already been ruined following the influx. The local interviewees also allege that the Rohingyas have been cutting trees for domestic use since their arrival in this locale. The severe extent of deforestation and the preoccupations of the Rohingyas have directly affected the ecological diversity of the area. A 70-year-old local inhabitant interviewee said that "We used to see free movements of many elephants along many certain routes in this area, which are now very unlikely in the post-influx environment". The interviewee supplemented by saying that the availability of varieties of fish from the local rivers and canals, which helped them meet their nutritional demands, has now been reduced significantly.

ii. Perceived Deprivation for the Local Hosts Losing lands and unemployment

A reasonable extent of deprivation perceived by the host community is evidenced for multiple reasons that often trigger grievance amongst those who are deprived and their community members. As the Rohingya are the majority in that area, the host community fails to take back those properties. Especially, the woodcutter community must face grave danger from massive deforestation. Moreover, the broader scale of hill cutting and grabbing arable land resulted in workless classes within the local farmer community. As a result, the host community was deprived not only of their own property but also of the financial benefits they could gain from the property. Though they are not entitled to work legally in Bangladesh, the reluctance of the law enforcement agencies created some opportunities for the Rohingyas to get access to the local labour market informally. In fact, the livelihoods of the low-income generation are threatened, which has in turn resulted in uncertainty and grievance within this host community. The Rohingya people are provided with their daily necessities, including food and toiletries, by different

national and international charitable organizations. Data provided by the UNDP show that the agricultural wage laborers in Cox's Bazar used to earn an average of BDT. Since adequate humanitarian assistance is provided to the Rohingya people, which mostly meets their demands, the cheaper hourly rate does not matter to them. Rather a tiny daily financial gain helps them earn additional money for what they are happy to accept as any kind of labour incentive work. For instance, a twenty-year-old Rohingya Muslim named Yosuf works as a fisherman, earning only BDT 200–300 for each five-day trip in the Bay of Bengal. Many studies, for example, reported that following the influx, Teknaf and Ukhiya witnessed wage falls that led to a rise in the poverty gap of 1.93 and 0.93 percentage points, respectively, and nearly 12.1% of surveyed households became poor.

Price hike and affected daily lives and livelihoods

This overpopulation induced a price hike, especially in the cases of food, house rent, and local transportation. The following Table 3 shows the accumulated and compared prices of many commodities and compares them between pre-influx and post-influx situations.

Table No. 3: Price scenario of essential commodities (US Dollars/kg)

| Food Item | <i>Findings 1</i> | | <i>Findings 2</i> | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | Pre-influx | Post-Influx | Pre-influx | Post-Influx |
| Rice | 0.38 | 0.45 | 0.41 | 0.45 |
| Flour | 0.33 | 0.41 | 0.27 | 0.31 |
| Edible Oil | 1.18 | 1.10 | 1.0 | 1.13 |
| Fish (fresh water) | 1.53 | 1.76 | N/A | N/A |

Source: Findings 1: (UNDP household survey 2018), Findings 2: Action Contre la Faim Market Assessment 2017 in Ahmad & Naeem (2020).

Exhausted health care supports and sense of insecurity

Rohingyas are restricted to receiving health care within the limited opportunities provided within the camps. But, in emergency cases, many of them move outside the camps to avail themselves of medical care, following the protocols. Though they are living in camps, access to proper medical and health support is one of their inalienable rights. But the health care providers—staff, doctors, and nurses are overburdened. The interviewees selected from the health sector assured me that nowadays they need to work for 16 to 20 hours per day. This kind of occupancy, especially in the school building, readily affects the mental growth of

local children. Cultural festivals and sports-related activities are mostly abandoned within the local community following the influx and post-influx multifaceted crises. All these together affected the daily lives of the host community, simultaneously causing an increase in dissatisfaction and grievance against the government and the Rohingya people as well. Feelings of deprivation by the local Bangladeshis (the host community), lead to tension or conflict between these two communities.

NGO prevalence

The local petty traders are significantly affected by the induction of NGOs as well as development partners to extend humanitarian support to the Rohingya people. Presently, a total of 144 local, national, and international NGOs are actively working in the Ukhiya and Teknaf subdistricts. The NGOs responded to the influx and came forward with humanitarian aid for the vulnerable Rohingyas. However, the field study discovered the Rohingyas often sell some of their shares of humanitarian aid in the local market. Many interviewees argued that this practice has significantly harmed micro traders and the general public at the local level. Moreover, the hosts, who are relatively poorer, claimed that they are not given proper attention in providing such aid, whereas their neighbouring Rohingyas are receiving more aid than they really need. However, few consumers came to know who appreciated and posed positive gestures in response to this practice.

Affected local culture and law-and-order praxis

Myanmar's Arakan, where the persecuted Rohingya Muslims used to live, is on the border with Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district. Many commonalities like close geographical proximity, fellow Muslim feelings, and mostly identical languages from both ends helped the local people welcome the Rohingyas during the influx. Because access to Rohingya women and girls is comparatively easy, this created tensions within the local host community and made people vulnerable, especially the women and girls within both communities. However, frequent formal and informal interactions with both community members during fieldwork time and the semi-structured interview data ensured that such incidents were not exacerbated, which is mainly due to the social pressure that arises from the host community. In fact, the traditionality of the host community has been threatened by the extensive movement of different national and international NGO activists and development workers in this area.

The Rohingyas are strictly restricted from having any other employment opportunities legally in Bangladesh. The camps lack socio-cultural and collective

amusement activities. Many Rohingya miscreants have already allied with local smugglers and engaged in human and drug trafficking. In doing so, the local petty criminals allied with Rohingya drug traffickers to control this underground illegal business. To ensure control over the drug market, the Rohingya criminals are provided manifold support, including domestic and foreign arms, by the Bangladeshi criminal networks. These Rohingya criminals, who used to be identified as misdemeanours but are now considered felons and often drug mafia. They are often accused of kidnapping other Rohingyas, collaborating with local miscreants, and demanding ransom. Two interviewees selected from law-and-order enforcement agencies argued that some 25% to 30% of illicit drug mobility increased in the post-influx tenure.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 July 2020, a total of 103 Rohingyas were killed in so-called 'gunfights' with Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies, which were mainly related to drug and human trafficking, and robbery within and adjacent to the camps (The New Age, 2020). The local inhabitants live in a scary environment due to their violent activities and movements. There are some other robber groups consisting of members from Rohingya communities, like the Master Zubair and Salman Shah groups, who often fight against each other to create and sustain dominance over the Rohingya community within the camps. This has become horrifying to other Rohingya people and camps neighbouring the host community. The old Rohingyas, more specifically those who fled Bangladesh for Myanmar before 2017, mainly led these terrorist groups.

Due to the deteriorating law and order situation in Ukhiya and Teknaf, the Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies restricted the free movement of the Rohingya in the affected areas, including for local people living nearby the camps after the afternoon time. As a result, during night-time, the local inhabitants cannot move or keep their tea stalls and grocery shops open, which constrained the scope of public gatherings for the local hosts. In the name of security check-ups on the Rohingya people, Bangladesh has increased the number of security checkpoints in Teknaf and Ukhiya and strengthened vigilance over the people. The local people must carry their national identification cards to cross those checkpoints. However, the local community considered it a source of harassment for locals, especially women. The locals often face random checks at the security checkpoints, which they consider humiliating. The humiliation for the local females is more acute because female checkers are not available at those checkpoints.

Recommended Scopes and Prospects

It now the burning question – ‘Will this security threat be let to continue?’ The answer is ‘obviously not.’ So, the second question is ‘how to stop or restrain the security threat?’ Based on the data/ information and the understanding of the researchers some recommendations have been posed to restrain as well as combat the security threat because of the Rohingyas. The study’s findings simply imply deep concern about the future impact of the present insecurity in the region of Cox’s Bazar and Bangladesh in general. The continued stay of these huge numbers of Rohingyas for an uncertain period would jeopardise the peace climate of Bangladesh. The Rohingyas have shown their eagerness to be repatriated to Myanmar with all the required security precautions. They have raised a question about the transparency of the formal negotiation process between the GOB and the Myanmar government. They expressed their interest in being a party to this negotiation process so that they can bargain on their basic issues like an assurance of their security and citizenship in the post-repatriation period in Myanmar. Pointing towards the recent military coup that took place in Myanmar on February 15, 2021, the Rohingya people uttered that it could not usher in anything good for them, as per the FGD, KIIs, and EIs.

Along with the negotiation process to repatriate the Rohingya, the GOB has taken the initiative to relocate some Rohingya to Bhasan Char¹ to give them better-living conditions and amenities. Many respondents, mostly Bangladeshi interviewees, appreciated the government’s plan for the relocation of some 100,000 Rohingyas to a Bashan Char-remote Island located in Hatiya under the Noakhali district. No official version is available about the selection process that is sent to Bashan Char. This obscure tactic has spread rumours that only the members of Rohingya miscreants and criminals’ groups are selectively relocated to this island. The experts, in this context, have opined that it might be effective to control the law-and-order situation of the district and deescalate the ongoing tensions between Rohingyas and host communities in Cox’s Bazar. But the Rohingyas have little access to health care in Bashan Char, and having no formal school for the children, and employment opportunities for the adults, might be jeopardizing the *good* intentions of the government of Bangladesh.



N.B. The isolated island of Bhasan Char is indicated by the arrow in the satellite landscape map above

The extent of humanitarian assistance, i.e., food, medical care, shelter, and water, has increased in response to the proliferation of feelings of deprivation among the local people (especially, the people living in adjacent to the Rohingya camps). The camp administration (headed by a Camp in Charge) tries to provide judicious assessment of necessity of humanitarian assistance and its proper implementation in the camps. Moreover, the Camp in Charge have mediation mechanism which deserves capacity building to handle the arisen dispute/ geography of many ethnic minorities between the Rohingyas and the local Bangladeshis. Based on the internal security threats associated with the Rohingya influx the followings are the policy implications that can lead to mitigating the existing crises:

Short-term Policy Implications

Humanitarian Assistance: Consistent humanitarian aid will meet the basic needs of Rohingya refugees, including food, shelter, healthcare, and sanitation facilities which requires collaboration with international organizations and NGOs to ensure effective and efficient delivery of aid. **Security and Protection:** To enhance security in the refugee camps and safeguard the Rohingya population from various potential threats like violence, exploitation, and human trafficking, it is crucial to deploy enough law enforcement personnel who can effectively address safety concerns. **Coordination and Information Sharing:** To strengthen coordination among government agencies, international organizations, and NGOs it requires to streamline efforts and share information regarding the Rohingya crisis. This

will help in better resource allocation, avoiding duplication, and ensuring timely assistance.

Mid-term Policy Implications

Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities: Programs and initiatives that encompass vocational training, skill development, and entrepreneurship endeavours will empower Rohingya refugees to become self-reliant and create economic prospects, ultimately boosting their ability to generate income. **Social Integration and Community Cohesion:** Social integration between the host communities and Rohingya refugees through community engagement programs, cultural exchanges, and awareness campaigns will reduce tensions and promote harmony. **Education and Skill Building:** Investing in education infrastructure and providing access to quality education for Rohingya children and youth which will offer skill-building programs that aligned with producing essential goods those are consumable in local and regional markets will enhance their livelihood.

Long-term Policy Implications

Addressing the Root Causes: According to Cosgrove (1994), most nation-states were founded on geographic territoriality and majoritarian ethno-religio-linguistic nationalism, which vehemently neglected the cultural/human geography of many ethnic minorities. Due to this, the nation-state of today is mostly associated with “violence” (Giddens, 1986), and the majority-minority split has changed to oppressor-oppressed or dominant-dominated relations, respectively (Avineri & Avinri, 1968). So, diplomatic efforts are crucial to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis, including advocating for the rights and citizenship of the Rohingya population in Myanmar. This negotiation process should be inclusive so that the Rohingya representatives can have their voices that can ensure a comprehensive political solution to ensure their safe and dignified return. Support their reintegration by addressing social, economic, and legal challenges. **Regional Cooperation:** To strengthen regional cooperation and engagement with neighbouring countries necessitates addressing the Rohingya crisis collectively. Collaboration on sharing responsibilities, burden-sharing, and implementing comprehensive solutions requires to involvement of regional actors. It is crucial to note that the policy implications provided are adapted and tailored to the specific context and dynamics of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and flexibility in policy implementation are necessary to ensure their effectiveness and relevance.

Conclusion

The study argues that the primary root cause of the existing disharmony in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas is mainly because of the exponential growth of the Rohingyas—and finally because of the 2007 influx. More importantly, this root cause has created tensions resulting from the way in which the Rohingya humanitarian response has been managed, e.g., the management of access to work, resource constraints, an imbalance between supply and demand of daily commodities by the humanitarian agencies, the implications of the types of aid provided, the impacts of fencing the camps, etc. The causal connection between the number of refugees and the cause of tension relates to the ecological degradation of this study area. The local job markets became unregulated, and the law-and-order situation deteriorated. The humanitarian supports made by the many INGOs, and NGOs to the Rohingya people have been creating a sense of deprivation among the host communities. Most of the locals, who had shown their love and utmost magnanimity as soon as the Rohingya influx began in 2017, now hate the Rohingya people, mostly out of fear of being marginalized. The host community has also started to distrust the GOB officials, INGOs, and local NGOs that have been working for Rohingya people since the inception of the crisis. Citing some incidents of physical violence between the host community and the Rohingyas, the locals shared their experience that the law-enforcement agencies merely respond to their emergencies and crisis times. Regarding land disputes, the civil administrations of the government are often alleged to be biased towards the Rohingyas. The host community also saw that the national and international NGO officials were benefiting in many ways from the influx. While insignificant remainders are spent for the livelihoods of the Rohingyas. Because of the lack of information and communication, the host community also thinks that these NGOs will benefit if the Rohingya crisis continues.

Notes

- ¹ *Bhasan Char*, formerly known as *Thengar Char*, is an island located in Hatiya Upazila of Noakhali District, Bangladesh. Situated in the Bay of Bengal, it lies approximately 6 kilometres away from Sandwip island, 59.57 kilometres from the mainland, and 123 kilometres from Cox's Bazar. This island emerged as a result of the deposition of Himalayan silt in 2006 and currently spans an area of 40 square kilometres.

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