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Protracted Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh: Exploring National and International Security Implications

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ABSTRACT

The Rohingyas of Rakhine state have been denied citizenship in their homeland. Myanmar's military attack has forced them out of the country. Escaping violence, about 1.6 million Rohingya took shelter in Bangladesh over the period where their protracted refuge has caused a spectrum of security concerns for host country and rest of the world. This article focuses on the national and international dimensions of the security threats created by the Rohingya crisis. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of the regional security complex and three levels of security, this article investigates national and international security implications induced by the Rohingya refugees. This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to analyze primary and secondary data, revealing that the protracted refugee crisis has created a range of security threats, including societal, political, environmental, and the emergent specter of terrorism within Bangladesh. In addition, regional and international networks of Rohingya's insurgent groups pose the risk of terrorism that has far-reaching implications for international security. The article concludes that Bangladesh should pursue a long-term solution to resolve the security issues associated with the Rohingya crisis, which is the repatriation of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Keywords: Rohingya Crisis, Refugee, Bangladesh, National Security, International Security, regional security, Myanmar.

INTRODUCTION

The Rohingyas, a Muslim ethnic minority have been persecuted for decades. They have been denied citizenship in Myanmar and forced out of the country mostly into Bangladesh. They were forced to flee their homeland in the 1980s, 1990s, and most recently in 2017. In its latest episode, Rohingyas were ousted from Rakhine State by the Tatmadaw as it undertook massive military campaign (BBC, 2017). In Burmese, the term Tatmadaw means armed forces that refers to Myanmar's military. It also evolves to symbolize the prevailing military control and influence over the country and worldwide notoriety (MacDonald, 2015). In the 2017 with the recent influx, roughly around 1.6 million Rohingyas have taken refuge in Bangladesh. The United Nations (UN) has determined that during the 2017 military crackdown, the Tatmadaw demonstrated a clear intention to engage in 'ethnic cleansing'. The attack has been described as a 'classic example' of ethnic cleansing. Analysis shows that there was a whole host of reasons of this ousting which

included but not limited to, realization of relative strength of Tatmadaw to undertake such an attack, perceived opportunities for such an operation and ability to counter possible threat against their such operation (Minar. 2019: 1-2).

The origin of the Rohingyas can be traced back centuries. Rohingya's ethnic identity developed through a historical complicated process with multiple invasions and counter invasions of the kingdom and political entities in and around present-day Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Indian sub-continent is located (Minar & Halim, 2020). Though they have been living in the Rakhine state for long period of time, the origin of the word 'Rohingyas' can be traced back to 1950s (Minar & Halim, 2019). This has become the trademark of their identity of the present time.

The ousting of Rohingyas and their protracted refuse in Bangladesh has created multi-faced national security challenges for Bangladesh. This prolonged refugee crisis poses threats to the environment, economy, society, law, and order as well as politics of host country (Alam M. ,

2018). In addition, the Rohingya crisis has created a range of challenges to global security such as, the risk of rising international jihadist links, deteriorating trans-border security, and so on. This article brings a fresh perspective on the security implications for Bangladesh and the international level caused by Rohingyas and their overstay in the country which contributes to developing a more comprehensive understanding of this. The paper is divided into seven major sections. Following the introduction, the second section briefly reviews the existing literature, and the third section offers the data and methodology. In the fourth part, the theoretical framework is explained. The fifth section addresses the national security implications of the Rohingya crisis, while the sixth section evaluates the global security threats posed by the Rohingya's prolonged presence in Bangladesh. Finally, the seventh section concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is plenty of literature on the refugee crisis and its impact on the world. A large body of scholarship illustrates how Rohingya refugees created a multidimensional threat at a national, regional, and global level. Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) argued that refugees can fuel subsequent conflicts in both their host country and place of origin. This happens due to the expansion of insurgent social networks, the global trafficking of arms, combatants, and ideology, alterations in the ethnic composition of the host nation, and intensified economic competition (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Loescher and Milner (2005) in "Security Implications of Protracted Refugee Situations" examines the security risks associated with a prolonged refugee crisis. They underlined that protracted refugee situations can have important repercussions for the security of both the refugees and the host countries, using examples from the Cold War and post-Cold War refugee crises in numerous countries. They also denoted that this situation could lead to state sovereignty erosion, regional instability, economic pressures on host nations, and refugee radicalization and violence (Loescher & Milner, 2005).

Chaudet (2018) in *"The Rohingya Crisis: Impact and Consequences for South Asia"* argued that the Rohingya crisis has a significant impact on the South Asia region since India perceives that Pakistan influenced the Rohingya rebellions against the Myanmar government. In addition, this crisis has created diplomatic tension between Bangladesh and India (Chaudet, 2018). A recent

study by Sakib (2023) showed that Rohingya refugees are engaging in a range of criminal activities in Bangladesh. In addition to national territory, Rohingyas are posing a threat to regional stability since the Refugee camps are close to India and the Myanmar border area. According to Ahmed and Siddiqui (2023), the local population is gradually being marginalized within their own country since Rohingyas are counted double compared to the host population. Due to the protracted refugee situation, Rohingyas have become competitors of local people since both are fighting for access to the existing resources in the host area. This resulted in an uneasy relationship between the host community and the refugee community (Ahmed & Siddiqui, 2023).

Bertil Lintner (2001) in *"Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation"* illustrated how Rohingya's armed group, Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) emerged in the southeastern region of Bangladesh in the early 1990s. He also portrayed how Bangladesh's Islamic extremist group fueled RSO's mission and received training on guerrilla warfare. Utpala Rahman (2010) in *"The Rohingya Refugee: A Security Dilemma for Bangladesh"* claimed that RSO is responsible for raising Islamic militant groups (JMB) in Bangladesh. Rahman also argued Rohingya refugees pose threats to Bangladesh's national security. In addition, Andrew Selth (2003) in *"Burma's Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised"* extensively illustrated that Rohingya's insurgent groups are extremely connected with global Islamic terrorists. Selth demonstrated how Rohingya's radical group jeopardized Bangladesh-Myanmar border stability through arms smuggling. He also claimed that RSO activists trained under a Taliban commander in Afghanistan and found Rohingya's nexus to the 9/11 attack in 2001 in the United States. International Crisis Group (2016), in a report, titled, *"Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State"* transparently interpreted that Rohingya's insurgent leaders received training from Pakistan and Afghanistan-based terrorist group Laskar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Al-Qaeda.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study appropriates a qualitative research approach. Primary data was collected by conducting 30 unstructured and semi-structured interviews that included Rohingya community leaders, host community members, local political leaders, government officials, journalists, political scientists, civil society members, and

NGO workers. Only nine randomly selected Rohingya community leaders were interviewed because of the restrictions on visiting the camps. To get a better perspective, I interviewed a total of 10 NGO workers, civil society members, and journalists who directly work with Rohingya refugees in the camps. This group of interviewees has been selected based on their years of experience working with refugees. Interviews of five mid and high-ranked police officers and other government officials were conducted who deployed in the camp area. Political leaders who I interviewed were selected based on their proximity to the camp area. Two prominent political scientists who have expertise in Bangladesh's political landscape were interviewed for this study. On the other hand, secondary data has been collected by reviewing pertinent available literature that comprises books, book chapters, journal articles, government and non-government reports, newspapers, blogs, news portal stories, visual stories, documentaries, virtual conferences on a webinar, and so forth. Some highly confidential government documents about case files have been collected from the local police station. Analyzing those documents, this study developed a better understanding of the kind of criminal activities committed by Rohingya refugees inside and outside the camps. Maintaining authenticity and impartiality. Data analysis was done in light of the regional security complex and three-level security concepts. The argument is built on observation and document analysis.

THEORETICAL PREMISES

The national and international security concerns raised from the protracted refuge of Rohingyas in Bangladesh can be analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. Two different theoretical frameworks have been employed to analyze this issue.

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT)

Regional Security Complex Theory refers to the idea of security dynamics at the regional level. This theory seeks to explain how security is shaped and maintained within specific geographic regions. The RSCT defines a region as a group of countries that rely on one another and share common security concerns. This theory emphasizes how relationships and interactions between states within a specific region shape security, rather than just individual state acts (Buzan & Waever, 2003). The core concepts of RSCT revolve around the notion of a security complex and the act of securitization. Buzan and Waever (2003) define

a security complex as a group of nations whose security is interconnected to the point where a threat to one state is interpreted as a threat to the complex. In other words, states within a security complex are closely connected by common security issues and the possibility of confrontation. In addition, securitization refers to the process of framing an issue or problem as a security threat that necessitates immediate and extraordinary actions. The RSTC contends that security complexes are dynamic and subject to change. These dynamics within a region can be changed because of adjustments to the regional political order, and alterations to the power structure (Buzan & Waever, 2003).

Three Levels of Security Concept: Individual, National, and International

The concept of three-level security introduced a holistic approach to security based on levels and sectors. Three levels of security include individuals, states, and international. The five sectoral security includes Political, Military, Economic, Societal, and Environmental. According to Buzan (1991), people, states, and international levels are interconnected. This nexus can be drawn from lower levels up to higher levels and higher levels down to the lower. The concept of "three-level security" states that any threat to a person will affect both the state and the international system. In this security concept, threats can also impact from above to below. However, considering the structure and characteristics of the states and international systems, sometimes this concept of security may not work in the same way for all levels. National Security Problems and other similar issues can be better understood by using this micro/macro approach. Buzan (1991) argued that certain complicated and irreplaceable factors—such as life, health, and freedom—are associated with individual security. Threats to individuals are easier to understand than threats to states because the state security complex involves the question of the nature of states. He uses the triangle to symbolize the state, its physical foundation, and its institutional representation. Although each of these elements can be considered as an individual security concern, their interactions offer important perspectives on the national security issue (Buzan, 1991: 36, 57).

Both of these theoretical frameworks have provided a structure for formulating and testing hypotheses for this study. I hypothesized that the Rohingya crisis has created

multifaceted challenges both for the host country and rest of the world. Regional security complex theory can be employed to analyze security threats created by the Rohingya refugee crisis. According to RSCT, security challenges in any country of a region will be perceived as threats to other states. It can be argued that the Rohingya crisis has created uneasy relationships and tension between Bangladesh and its neighboring countries such as Myanmar and India. During the Rohingya influx in 2017, India as a prospective regional superpower responded immediately to the crisis perceiving it as a regional threat. From the humanitarian ground, India did not play the role of a responsible regional stakeholder, but Prime Minister Modi chose to show his support for the Burmese Government instead. India's stand behind Myanmar makes feel Bangladesh betrayed by a trusted neighbor (Chaudet, 2018). Other security issues like environmental degradation caused by Rohingya settlement in Bangladesh can be framed under the three-level security concept. Building Rohingya refugee camps in the hilly area of Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh destroyed huge land and forest (Ahmed & Siddiqui, 2023). This phenomenon has affected individual's lives in the host community by increasing the risk of natural calamities and endangering individual safety. Bangladesh as a state is also encountering numerous issues pertaining to environmental changes. In the long term, as we include neighboring countries within the international system, they too will experience the negative effects of environmental deterioration.

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

Threat to Environment

Geographically, Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable to climate change, which threatens the country with landslides, increasing sea levels, and other natural disasters. The sudden population inflow into Cox's Bazar has resulted in serious environmental repercussions such as deforestation, water scarcity, pollution, wildlife habitat loss, and air and surface water contamination. This humanitarian crisis eventually turned a lush green animal sanctuary into an almost desert (Bashar, 2012). The Cox's Bazar hilly forest harbors almost 50 percent of the country's biodiversity, with 56 reptile species, 13 amphibian species, 286 bird species, as well as Asian elephants and other endangered species. The construction of refugee camps has resulted in the loss of natural habitats for wildlife (UNDP; UN WOMEN, 2018).

In the Teknaf area, a reserve forest covering six thousand five hundred acres was destroyed to shelter the Rohingya refugees, build roads and dwellings, and gather fuelwood (Bashar, 2012). An interview from a forest officer of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) reveals that it would take hundreds of years to cover up the degradation of reserve forest in Cox's Bazar caused by the settlement of Rohingyas. He further claimed that *"hill cutting and deforestation have increased the risk of land and hill slides during monsoon rain, which could destroy Rohingya shanties and causalities"* (Hossen, 2018). In the context of security threats, scholars argue that environmental deterioration has affected local agriculture and farming, which has economic implications for a nation. According to Barnett, environmental disruptions can undermine a nation's economic foundation by impacting crucial revenue streams such as forestry, fishing, and agriculture which can deteriorate a country's military capacity (Barnett, 2007: 192).

Threat to the Economy

The Rohingya crisis has significant security implications for the national economy of Bangladesh, as it currently hosts 4.7% of the world's refugees with just 0.3% of the global GDP (Momem, 2021). The primary effects on the economy of Bangladesh resulting from refugee flow are a higher cost of living in Cox's Bazar, a local job crisis, a sharp drop in daily wage rates, and a sharp decline in revenue from the tourism sector (Ahmad & Naeem, 2020). Furthermore, Bangladesh remains committed to allocating funds and resources to the management of refugee camps and relocating refugees. Initially, the GoB established a \$100 million fund from private donations to assist Rohingyas. Later, the host government allocated approximately \$20 million to address a range of issues related to refugee camps (Kamruzzaman & Khatun, 2018: 13). In addition, the GOB granted \$280 million for the rehabilitation of Rohingya in Bhashan Char where 440 houses including 120 cyclone center shelters have been built for Rohingyas. To enhance their skills, Bangladesh has taken the initiative to offer adult Rohingya people vocational training (Kamruzzaman & Khatun, 2018: 13-14). Furthermore, to maintain law and order in the camp area, the GoB deployed an increased number of police and military troops in Cox's Bazar. This necessitated additional funding, which had an unintended impact on all administrative budgets. Alam (2018) argues that the overall cost of managing Rohingya refugees is a huge

burden for the national economy of Bangladesh (Alam M., 2018: 23). This refugee crisis also resulted in a decline in revenue from the tourism industry. Many tourist attractions in Cox's Bazar have become overcrowded with the Rohingya population, causing this sector to lose tourists (Ahmad & Naeem, 2020). Scholar argues that the Rohingya influx into Bangladesh is an obstacle to the country's economic development (Myat, 2018: 40).

Socio-Political Threat

Population migration, and horizontal and vertical competition between local people, and refugees have adversely impacted the host society. Along with horizontal competition, Rohingyas are also influencing host society vertically, since ethnic integration and disintegration are rapidly pushing local people to narrower identities (Ahmed & Siddiqui, 2023). The protracted refuge of Rohingyas has shifted the population composition in Teknaf and Ukhiya areas. Scholar argues that this can change cultural practices in local society (Roe, 2007: 170). A significant number of the Rohingya refugees are residing outside of the camps in a few small towns in Cox's Bazar, intending to assimilate with the local community, which has created a security challenge for societal identity. According to one of the interlocutors, local political leader Safiullah Ansary, "not less than 5,000 Rohingyas live in Cox's Bazar town which is about 40 km away from camps." Their assimilation into local communities has weakened host socio-cultural norms, as most of them lack institutional education (Shaon, 2018). Additionally, mixed marriage between Rohingya and the local population is a major factor in creating societal security concerns. It should be noted that both Rohingya and local people share the same religious beliefs as practicing Muslims. Based on this shared kinship, Rohingya refugees often try to make marital relationships with local people (Hossain, Zhang, Hosain, & Yun, 2020). Bangladesh is suffering from a political crisis. Under the current government, which is commonly referred to as a hybrid regime, the country is experiencing democratic fragility (Halim, 2023). The Rohingya crisis has become a threat to fragile political institutions. Political parties try to use refugees for their agendas. Specifically, political groups with extreme Islamic beliefs exploit the religious beliefs of the Rohingya people. Local political parties aim to capture the support of refugees (Momem, 2021). Scholar argues that Islamist parties i.e., Jamat and the extremist Islamic movement group - Hefazat-e Islam -

have been more beneficial for Rohingya as Hefazatis are eager to wage jihad against Myanmar (Alam M, 2018: 23). One of my respondents claimed that due to their prolonged presence, Rohingyas have become an influential factor in local politics. They have even become integrated into host communities using political platforms.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was praised for the decision to shelter Rohingya refugees. She was hailed by international media and Awami League supporters as "the mother of humanity." In addition, Islamists, pro-Islamist parties, and civil societies also applauded her initiative. In 2017, international news media stated that the Rohingya crisis had shaken the foundation of Bangladesh's body politics and that this may have accelerated the country's growing authoritarianism (Joehnk, 2017). And eventually, Awami League - the ruling party - does not hesitate to showcase this as an achievement to the international community. Initially, the major opposition - Bangladesh Nationalist Party - praised Sheikh Hasina's decision to shelter Rohingyas, but after a year they castigated the government's steps to mitigate the crisis (Alam M., 2018: 22). In this situation, BNP is trying to use the issue as a political agenda and criticizing government failure to draw the attention of the international community to settle refugee crisis (Momem, 2021). During the 2018 national election, Awami League and BNP both accused each other of manipulating the Rohingya for political benefit. Therefore, on election Day, the election commission issued a high alert in the camp area (The Daily Star, 2018). The politicization of the Rohingya crisis must have serious security implications for domestic politics in Bangladesh.

Risk of Emerging Terrorism

In Cox's Bazar refugee camps, violence has eventually become a routine aspect of daily life. Since August 25, 2017, there has been hardly a single day without recorded criminal occurrences in the camps. The extent of criminal acts committed by Rohingyas was shown in police case file documentations. As per police records, Rohingyas are committing a range of crimes, including rape, torture, conflict, kidnapping, and murder inside and outside the camps.

There are numerous indications of Rohingya's engagement in criminal activities. In Teknaf Upazila, a local political leader Omar Faruk was fatally murdered in August 2019. According to reports, Omar was fatally shot

dead close to a nearby hill by a group of armed individuals, led by two Rohingya who abducted Omar from his house adjacent to a camp (The Daily Star, 2019). The murder escalated tension among Rohingya and host communities resulting in mass demonstrations, clashes, and vandalization. After two days, accused two Rohingya men were killed in a reported gunfight with law enforcers (The Daily Star, 2019). Osman Gani, my respondent, and the brother of Faruk who was killed claimed, "not just my family but also everyone in the host community surrounding the camps in Teknaf is extremely vulnerable to Rohingya terrorist attacks because there is a constant sound of gunfire coming from the neighboring hills" (Gani, 2020).

The police have filed hundreds of cases documenting the criminal acts conducted by Rohingyas. I examined some case files as part of this research and a few of them were interpreted as follows: Case file 1: "On August 31, 2018, a Rohingya man named Abu Yaser was shot and died in the F-Block of the Leda Rohingya camp. Evidence from the case file suggested that Syed Alam, Afsar, Sura Khatum, Ridowan, and other Rohingya people were engaged in killing. Indeed, all those accused of the murder are recorded as illicit narcotics traffickers in police databases". Case file 2: "On July 9, 2018, Teknaf police discovered a dead body by the Naaf River's bank. Following the kidnapping from the Nayapara Refugee camp, Rashid Ullah, a Rohingya man, was found dead. Police recorded this murder as Rashid was kidnapped and slain by Sona Miya, Abdur Razzak, and others; all accused murderers were Rohingya men." In the camps, women and girls are subjected to sexual harassment and abuse. Many cases related to these incidents have been filed at the Ukhiya and Teknaf police stations. Case file 3: "A Rohingya housewife was tortured and brutally beheaded to murder by her husband. It is reported that the perpetrator often tortures the victim and her baby girl." In addition, it is also evident that Rohingyas are involved in cross-border drug smuggling and the arms trade. On September 16, 2018, police recorded a case as follows "Two Rohingya men, Asadullah and Abdur Rahim, were detained from Leda Bazar in Teknaf for carrying drug (16,000 Yaba tablets). During interrogation, they

confessed to trading drugs." Furthermore, Rohingyas are involved in small firearms smuggling and trading which is used in acts of terrorism. Police detained several Rohingyas with light and medium-range weapons (Aziz, 2020). The arms loot from the police arsenal provides compelling evidence of Rohingya's criminal activity. In 2016, a terrorist gang attacked on Ansar camp adjacent to the Nayapara camp in Teknaf.¹ They looted firearms and ammunition from the camp's arsenal after shooting Ansar troops. Notably, eight out of the nine perpetrators involved in this incident were Rohingya and all resided in the Nayapara and Kutupalang refugee camps (Amin, 2017).

The Rohingya insurgent group - Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) - is presumed to be involved in criminal activities in Cox's Bazar camps. A Rohingya Majhi, Arif Ullah was murdered in 2018 for criticizing ARSA (Dhaka Tribune, 2018).² A responder claimed that ARSA often kidnaps Rohingya leaders who speak out against them.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Risk of Rising Militancy and Trans-border Security Threat

Since terrorism is a multifaceted phenomenon, it is impossible to pinpoint a single factor that causes it to occur. Scholars argue that motivations can sometimes be the cause of terrorism induced by various organizations and used to categorize groups based on their objectives (Lutz & Lutz, 2007). There are several types of terrorism, including religious, ethnic, nationalist, and ideological terrorism. However, considering Rohingya, religious and ethnic terrorism is evident as vulnerable Rohingyas are extremely sensitive to religion and ethnicity. The makeshift refugee camps are considered as a fertile ground for Islamic extremist groups to recruit new followers. Respondent S M Suza Uddin, a local journalist works for international media, claimed that "If law and order in camps region deteriorates, Islamic militant groups of Bangladesh may recruit Rohingya activists."

The historical evidence bolsters the premises that the Rohingyas armed group, Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) operated their mission from the

called Majhi. In each block of the refugee camp, a majhi usually leads a group of around 100 Rohingya families.

¹ Bangladesh Ansar is a paramilitary auxiliary force that is responsible for the preservation of internal security and law enforcement in Bangladesh.

² A Rohingya community leader in a Refugee camp is

southeastern region of Bangladesh during the founding period (Lintner, 2009). Later they extended camps alongside the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Furthermore (Lintner, 2009) denoted that RSO was funded by the Bangladesh rightwing party Jamaat-i-Islam even members of its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir underwent training with Rohingya. In addition, a banned Militant organization Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) had closed linked with RSO as their detained top explosive expert Sumon revealed the information of receiving training from RSO (Rahman U. , 2010: 235). It is reported that the law enforcement agency arrested JMB regional chief Abdul Hakim, Noman, and Shafi in December 2018. During interrogation, they confessed to recruiting not less than 40 Rohingya activists from camps while providing relief and humanitarian aid (Rabbi, 2018). Rohingya crisis is to some extent responsible to rise in Islamic terrorism or religious fundamentalism in Bangladesh (Halim, 2022).

The Rohingya Crisis caused disputes between Bangladesh-Myanmar and threats to cross-border security as the two countries share about 168km of border. Sometimes political and security issues disrupted Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. Scholars argue that the migration of Rohingyas across the border beginning in the late 1970s has led to an increase in trans-border crimes since the increasing transnational flow of people, products, and money may be a factor in the rise of terrorism and crime (Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007: 353). Earlier, when the Rohingya armed group RSO was founded in the 1980s, Myanmar authorities began to claim RSO's existence in the Bangladesh border area however Bangladesh government did not accept the allegation. Consequently, the unrest spread out in border areas when the Myanmar military run operation there. In December 1991, violating border norms, the Myanmar Military crossed the borderline and attacked the Bangladesh army outpost resulting in a major crisis between Bangladesh and Myanmar (Lintner, 2009). It should be noted that often the Myanmar forces escalate tension on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. During the last influx, many Rohingya found refuge in 'no man's land' at Tombru checkpoint about 45 km away from Cox's Bazar. A few days later, the Myanmar military took position alongside that border checkpoint and began firing to intimidate and force Rohingyas to leave the area (The Daily Star, 2018). Even a Rohingya was shot by Myanmar forces moreover, several Rohingyas, including

at least one Bangladeshi, were killed in a landmine explosion on that border line (Das, 2017). Furthermore, the weapons and drug trafficking along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border is one of the major sources of income for Rohingya insurgents escalating concerns about border security (Selth, 2003: 18).

Deteriorating Global Image of Bangladesh

The reputation of Bangladesh is to some extent under threat due to Rohingyas who travel overseas using Bangladeshi passports and participate in illegal activities associated with international terrorism. Bangladeshi immigrants, especially those residing in the Middle East, are facing difficulties because of the existence of Rohingyas. It is reported that about 250,000 Rohingyas illegally obtained Bangladeshi passports and traveled abroad (Mahmud, 2018). Many Rohingyas have come to Bangladesh aspiring to hold a Bangladesh Passport and to enter the world labor market using it (Halim, 2022).

It should be noted that since the 1970s, more than 6.7 million workers from Bangladesh went to over 140 countries, mostly to the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Particularly, Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest worker importers from Bangladesh and foreign remittance has a significant contribution to Bangladesh's GDP as the country is the 8th highest remittance-receiving state in the world (Hasan, 2019: 82). In the last few years, the Saudi government deported several Rohingyas to Bangladesh moreover the deportation operation will be continued (Rabbi, 2019). Rohingyas' hypocrisy might impact Bangladesh-Saudi diplomatic relations badly which could affect the country's remittance earnings.

Rohingya crisis and its resolution initiatives have resulted uneasy diplomatic relations for Bangladesh with China and the Russia because they stood behind Myanmar towards Rohingya issue. Including China and Russia Federation, 10 Countries voted against UN Committees' draft on the human rights situation in Myanmar moreover 26 countries along with India and Japan were abstain from voting however on behalf of OIC, Bangladesh placed the resolution (UN, 2018). Despite prolong close cordial relationships, India's stance on the issue made Bangladesh depressed however later India softened its approach and stood by Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2017). In January 2019, Indian border guard BSF tried to push forcibly 31 Rohingya to Bangladesh through the Brahmanbaria-Tripura border escalating further diplomatic tension between Dhaka and Delhi (Haider &

Singh, 2019). Furthermore, as intended—Rohingyas are Bangladeshi people—the Indian Prime Minister told the media that Rohingyas who entered India would be sent back to Bangladesh. This unintentionally led to embarrassing diplomatic debates (Basu, 2018).

Risk of Escalating Religious Terrorism

The undefined assumption of nexus between Rohingya insurgent groups and international jihadist groups such as ISIS or Al-Qaeda has not come to an end. However, if there are no links to transnational terrorist organizations, who is providing weapons and funding to the Rohingya extremists? There are some indications of their nexus with transnational terrorist groups and sometimes the announcement of ISIS and other jihadist groups brings the issue into discourse. During a recent exodus in 2017, Jihadist groups including ISIS released statements on Rohingyas' plight and intended to mobilize support (ICG, 2018, 12). In a statement Al-Qaeda also urged the Muslim world to come forward to help Rohingya Muslims with aid and weapons moreover they warned Myanmar of its crimes against Rohingya (Barker, 2017). Such statements of international terrorist groups provide little evidence of Rohingyas' nexus with ISIS and AL-Qaeda.

One notable piece of evidence is the attack on a Myanmar border police check-post near the Bangladesh border in October 2016, resulting in the death of nine policemen. At that time, Myanmar intelligence claimed that an insurgent group, Aqa Mul Mujahideen, (AAM) headed by Hafiz Tohar had coordinated the attack (Bdnews24, 2016). The attacker, Hafiz Tohar also known as Abu Amar Jununi or Ata Ullah has a close connection with Laskar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Al-Qaeda and he was trained by Laskar-e-Tayyaba in Pakistan moreover he also thought to have experience of guerrilla operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan (ICG, 2016: 12). Ata Ullah grew up in Mecca, Saudi Arabia; however, born in Pakistan when his father moved there from Rakhine. After getting an education in Madrasa, a few days after the Rakhine imbroglio in 2012, he disappeared from Saudi Arabia. In 2014, his AAM came to merge with Harakat-ul-Jihad Islam-Arakan (HUJI-A), founded by Abdus Qadoos Burmi a Pakistani national of Rohingya origin who is now very intimate to Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the chief of Laskar-e-Tayyaba (LeT). Later in 2016, that group became incorporated into Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) also known as Harakah Al-Yaqin, and led the attack in October 2016 (Mizzima, 2017). ARSA was established by 20 Rohingya leaders in Mecca. It is overseen from there and has

established connections in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India (ICG, 2016: 12).

The attack on approximately thirty Myanmar police checkpoints in northern Rakhine on August 25, 2017, left 71 dead, including 12 security personnel at that time Myanmar Authority claimed that along with Rohingya people the attack was coordinated by insurgent group ARSA (BBC, 2017). Few days later Bangladesh and Indian intelligence revealed that ISIS and Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan (ISI) were behind the attack (Mizzima, 2017). They found three long-duration phone calls of Ata Ullah before two days of deadly attack and the calls were made from Pakistan and Iraq. At 11:32 a.m. (BST), on the 23rd of August, Ata Ullah received a call from Brigadier Ashfaq's number who was an ISI official and the call lasted 37 minutes. The second one was on the 24th of August at 2:13 p.m. (BST) which lasted 28 minutes when Ashfaq solicited to launch the attack soon after dark. Moreover, at 6:02 p.m. (BST) on the same day, Ata Ullah received another call from an Iraq number when the caller introduced himself as Al-Amin of Daesh (Mizzima, 2017). In addition, India revealed some secret evidence of Rohingya's nexus with ISIS and other extremist groups (Aljazeera, 2017).

Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) expanded by the late 1980s and drew the attention of the media in the early 1990s when the Myanmar government launched a clearance operation along the border (Lintner, 2009: 12). Scholar argues that RSO received financial assistance from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan based Islamic groups (Lintner, 2009: 11). They eventually became weaponized with Chinese-AK-47, Auto-rifles, light Machine gun, RPG-2 grenade launchers and some explosives. In early 1990s, RSO had close ties with Harakat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islam, a banned terrorist group in Bangladesh, founded by a survivor of Afghan War.

It is claimed that there were roughly 350,000 Rohingyas in Pakistan in 1990, and some of them joined the Taliban and in the mid-1990s, about 5,000 RSO members were trained in Afghanistan. Muammar Ghaddafi, the former leader of Libya, was regarded as a donor and trainer of RSO (Selth, 2003: 19). Since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in 2001, it has been widely assumed that Usama bin Laden recruited Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar to join Al-Qaeda. This presumption was strengthened when Laden mentioned the suffering of the Rohingya people in Myanmar during

an address captured on a video clip (Selth, 2003: 20). The evidence shows that in 2002, one Malaysian and two Myanmar Muslim Taliban activists were captured in Afghanistan (Lintner, 2009: 14). Furthermore, the Southeast Asia-based Al-Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which was accused of carrying out the attacks on Bali in 2002, is believed to have connections to the Rohingya. According to the US intelligence report, JI established a unit in Myanmar (Selth, 2003: 21).

Jeopardizing Bangladesh-Myanmar Bilateral Relations

Bangladesh is a peaceful country and maintains a peaceful relationship with its neighbors. (Minar S. J., 2018). Many consider Bangladesh as a light in South Asia. However, Bangladesh's diplomatic relations with Myanmar have remained tense since 2017 due to the Rohingya crisis. Myanmar military's recurrent violation of human rights on the Rohingya ethnicity generated a humanitarian catastrophe as more than a million Rohingya sought refuge in Bangladesh. This is an unforeseen event. Scholars consider that the Rohingya issue is one of the major crises in concurrent human history in the world. This humanitarian catastrophe puts Bangladesh in a very difficult situation to continue its foreign policy goals. The Rohingya crisis that has been created by the Tatmadaw is likely to be a test for Bangladesh-Myanmar relations. Due to the prolonged crisis, the two neighboring states' diplomatic relations have been jeopardized. Because of the recent influx in 2017, Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations have exacerbated the previous records.

From the beginning of the crisis, Bangladesh along with international humanitarian agencies has been searching for possible ways of resolution. Through the diplomatic channel, Bangladesh took a bilateral initiative to repatriate the forcibly displaced Rohingya population to Myanmar (Kamruzzaman & Khatun, 2018). The prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina also presented a five-point proposal at UN General Assembly to resolute and ensure the sustainable repatriation of all Rohingya. International organizations such as the UN, EU, and OIC also raised their voice against Myanmar atrocities and pleaded for resolution of the crisis (Kamruzzaman & Khatun, 2018).

Through bilateral initiatives, Bangladesh's Home Minister visited Myanmar several times and discussed the possible ways of repatriating Rohingyas and Myanmar also agreed to take back their people (Kamruzzaman & Khatun,

2018). On November 23, 2017, Bangladesh-Myanmar in Naypyidaw signed an initial deal for the possible repatriation of Rohingya (The Guardian, 2017). Later both countries also formed a joint working group with 30 members; however, no significant progress has been observed yet. Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, said that Myanmar has failed to create a viable atmosphere to take back Rohingya (The Daily Star, 2019). Previously in 2005 Myanmar also showed the willingness to take back early incomer Rohingya culminating in only 90 Rohingya's repatriation. In addition, during her visit to Myanmar in 2011, Sheikh Hasina received a commitment from the Myanmar president to address the problem; however, Bangladesh saw another wave of exodus in June 2012. At that time, sealing the border, Bangladesh tightened security and sent back the Rohingyas who tried to enter from Myanmar (Parnini, Othman, & Ghazali, 2013).

During the recent exodus Myanmar has shown rude diplomatic behavior as it was likely to provoke war against Bangladesh, said PM Hasina (Dhaka Tribune, 2017). Myanmar military's movement in the border zone has strengthened that presume. In addition, the structure of the government in a state is more considerable to assess the possibility of threatening military security to others. As Eric Herring argued that the more a state belongs liberal democracy the less it involved in military security threat (Herring, 2007: 136). This observation is apposite to Myanmar as this country barely ruled by democratic government through its history. Furthermore, the Rohingya crisis also impacted Bangladesh and Myanmar bilateral business (Kallol, 2017).

It is interesting to note that an international court resolved the maritime border issue between Bangladesh and Myanmar in March 2012. Despite this, in the wake of Rohingya crisis, the official website of Myanmar showed Saint Martin's Island as part of their jurisdiction. In response, GoB deployed border guard forces at Saint Martin's Island. Scholars argue that Bangladesh has consistently raised Rohingya issue to interrelation forums and urging global leaders to exert pressure on Myanmar for repatriation of Rohingya. Myanmar, in an attempt to shift global focus, sought to raise unrelated bilateral issues with Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2019). Furthermore, the Tatmadaw misconstrued a photo from Bangladesh's 1971 independence war to support a fake claim regarding the Rohingyas' atrocities against local

Buddhists in Myanmar. These fabrications created an effort to disrupt neighboring two countries bilateral relations; however, Myanmar military issued an apology for photo mistake (Slodkowski & Naing, 2018).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the massive Rohingya inflow and their overstay in Bangladesh have various national, regional, and international security implications. Bangladesh, as the host country, is witnessing significant challenges to maintaining law and order in the Cox's Bazar district. Environmental losses are one of the major pieces of evidence of security concerns posed by the protracted Rohingya crisis. Rohingyas are putting extra pressure on the local economy in Cox's Bazar and on the country. The availability of drugs within and outside the camps have had adverse impacts on the host community, and on its young members. Host society is in a way of integrating into Rohingya culture as the refugees have already counted almost double of local population. In addition, the international multifaceted security concerns seem more significant and the implication of this in the near and distant future remains high. The aspect of Rohingyas going back remains uncertain. On the one hand, the government of Myanmar has yet to take concrete initiative and from the Rohingya's side the incentive remains poor. The general analysis is that various social and economic factors also affect the actors' migration decisions. The motivation of Rohingyas also matters. The solution is also difficult because China and India are playing [Roulette] based on their interest in Myanmar rather than solving the Rohingya crisis.

The long-term solution is the repatriation of the Rohingyas. Three key strategies for Bangladesh may include denial, engagement, and reform [grand] strategies. First, the Bangladesh government can take the strategy of denial which is taking a hawkish stand to deter the Myanmar government from worsening the scenario any further and take the Rohingyas back. Second, the strategy of engagement, is working with internal parties which are socially, culturally, and politically active enough to exert pressure on the Myanmar government to change policy and policy priority. Third, the strategy of reform, which is to take steps to reshape Myanmar's social norms and rules, national identity perception, induce shaping its social change, public and government's perception towards the Rohingyas, the interest perception of Myanmar towards the Rakhine State as well

as the Rohingyas' national identity perception. Whereas Bangladesh has some role to play in solving the crisis, the regional powers and international community should also come forward to solve the crisis once and for all.

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