



Navigating Challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar Border Management and Its Strategic Solutions

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Research Article

Abstract

Bangladesh faces multifaceted challenges in managing its border with Myanmar, ranging from informal trade to cross-border crime. The Rohingya influx and turmoil inside Myanmar further exacerbate the challenges. The present study aims to explore multidimensional cross-border issues in border management and their consequences for national security, focusing on relevant and strategic solutions for improving Bangladesh-Myanmar land border management. This study employed a qualitative research approach, descriptive in nature, to acquire insight into the complexities of border management. Thematic analysis of different sources has been conducted for this study to identify some crucial challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar border management, such as informal trade, drug trafficking, turmoil inside Myanmar, Rohingya influx, cross-border crime, infrastructural inadequacy, poverty, etc. Such challenges may create regional instability. Moreover, these pose a significant threat to Bangladesh's socioeconomic, political, and health security. Proactive diplomatic efforts for successful Rohingya repatriation, the development of border infrastructure, the socioeconomic development of the bordering community, and their engagement in the border management process are imperative for a strategic solution to the persistent challenges. Implementing these measures can benefit effective border management and help ensure peace, stability, and cooperation in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area.

Keywords: Bangladesh-Myanmar Border, Border Management, Cross-border Crime, Rohingya Influx, Security Challenges.

1. Introduction

Border management is an intricate aspect that requires a comprehensive examination of different stakeholders. Enhancing national security through mitigating transnational threats demands collective and inclusive efforts by all the concerns of a nation (Ehsan, 2023). Myanmar is one of the two countries bordering Bangladesh. While the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and Myanmar began long ago, the present condition of the relationship is neither overtly hostile nor exceptionally tranquil. Several issues have played a crucial role in creating such strained relations, such as the Rohingya refugee crisis, disputes over maritime boundary demarcation, instances of cross-border insurgency, and challenges in land border management (Chowdhury, 2017). The Bangladesh-Myanmar border has been recognized as volatile and challenging due to the ethnic tension, complex geopolitical dynamics, and porous character. Moreover, the recent escalation of conflict between Myanmar's government forces and other rebel groups in the states along Bangladesh's border creates a significant security threat to Bangladesh's border management operations (Rahman, 2024). Against this backdrop, the present study delves into investigating the intricacies

of Bangladesh-Myanmar border management, navigating the multifaceted challenges faced by Bangladesh, and understanding the socio-economic, political, and geographic dimensions' essentiality for materializing effective solutions to these challenges. The study tries to provide insights into the complexities of Bangladesh-Myanmar border management, proposing significant recommendations for promoting peace, stability, and cooperation in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border region.

To provide a comprehensive analysis, this article is organized as follows: The next section elaborates on the problem statement, establishing the context and importance of addressing the challenges in border management. Following this, the methodology section outlines the research approach employed to investigate the issues. The discussion then progresses to an overview of border management in Bangladesh, highlighting its current state. A detailed exploration of the geographical dynamics of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border is provided, emphasizing the unique challenges posed by its terrain and location. Subsequently, the article delves into the specific challenges faced in managing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border effectively. Potential ways forward are then proposed, offering practical recommendations to enhance border governance. The article concludes by summarizing the findings and suggesting directions for future research.

2. Problem Statement

Myanmar serves as a geographic junction at the intersection of the South, Southeast, and East Asia regions. It shares only a 271-kilometer border with Bangladesh on the western side (Ahmed, 2015; Alam, 2018; Khan, 2016; Sheikh, 1998). However, the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar has been recognized as porous and challenging since the British colonial period. The impacts of ethnic violence in the Rakhine state result in segregation and exacerbating tensions along the borders ((Shikha, 2014). Moreover, its geographical nature also creates many challenges for effective border management practices. Existing literature focuses mostly on the bilateral relations and Rohingya crisis issues between Bangladesh and Myanmar, as seen in the works of Rahman (2023), Khanam & Ali (2022), Nesa (2022), Ahamed et al. (2020), and Parnini (2013). While these studies address pertinent issues, a significant gap exists in understanding the border management dynamics between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Existing literature often overlooks the unique challenges faced by Bangladesh in managing its porous border with Myanmar. Therefore, this study intended to fill this void.

3. Methodology

The present study employed a qualitative research approach to acquire insight into the multifaceted and complex dimensions of Bangladesh-Myanmar border management. A descriptive research design was embraced based on document analysis to investigate the specific challenges of border management between two countries and explore the potential implications of these challenges on regional stability and bilateral relations. Moreover, a thorough examination of relevant, important scholarly articles and research works was conducted to identify the phenomena and reach a conclusion. A search strategy was devised for locating and retrieving accessible documents such as government documents, international organizations' reports, academic documents, and recognized news sources using keyword combinations linked to the concept of border management, Bangladesh-Myanmar relations, transborder activities, refugee influx, etc. The collected data was analyzed thematically to identify the key patterns and trends regarding border management challenges. The study strongly adhered to ethical standards, ensuring data privacy and intellectual property rights. It also acknowledges the limitations of depending on secondary data that may lack real-time information and potential data biases.

4. Border Management in Bangladesh

Border management is a critical aspect of national security in Bangladesh that encompasses monitoring, controlling, and regulating the country's international border. Bangladesh shares land borders (4,246 km) with India (93.9%) to the west, north, and east, as well as Myanmar (6.1%) to the southeast. The maritime borders (580 km) lie to the south in the Bay of Bengal (Banglapedia, 2021). The border regions are densely populated, and the residents on both sides use almost every inch of land in the bordering area. Their language and culture are closely intertwined, so distinguishing them is difficult. Managing border areas is difficult and poses significant challenges due to the high levels of porosity, complexity, lack of awareness, hardship, and limited employment opportunities the local populace faces (Alam, 2023).

The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is the primary paramilitary force responsible for safeguarding the land and maritime borders. BGB carries out the duty of maintaining internal peace and order, including border protection, prevention of smuggling, prevention of women and children trafficking, drug trafficking, and all types of transborder crimes. In the long journey of 228 years since its establishment, the scope of the responsibilities and duties of the force has increased, and its efficiency has become multi-dimensional. The force started its journey with the name 'Ramgarh Local Battalion' in 1795, renaming its previous name 'Frontier Protection Force' formed by the East India Company in 1794. At the time of establishment, it started operations with two irregular cavalries with 448 soldiers and four cannons. In 1861, this force was reorganized as 'Frontier Guards' consisting of 1454 regular and irregular soldiers of the Eastern Police Force. In 1891, the force was renamed the 'Bengal Military Police'. After the partition of India in 1947, the force was named EPR (East Pakistan Rifles) and BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) on 3 March 1972, after independence (BGB, 2023).

The Border Guard Bangladesh Act (63 No. Act of 2010) was passed in 2010 to create, control, manage, discipline, and maintain a paramilitary force called Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) by reconstituting the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) to protect the border security of Bangladesh, prevent inter-state border crime, and perform related functions (Halim, 2021). The force is currently undergoing the implementation of its organizational restructuring program in accordance with the new law. Currently, this force is performing its responsibility effectively through five regions, 16 sectors, and a large number of BOPs (BGB, 2023).

Along with BGB, some other border management agencies are functioning in Bangladesh to ensure the security and control of its borders, such as the Bangladesh Coast Guard, which maintains the security of the coastal and internal waterways of Bangladesh; Bangladesh Customs works through 24 land customs ports under the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to ensure legal export and import paying due taxes, Department of Immigration and Passports under Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible to ensure people's legal entry and exit from the country, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) is working to protect money laundering across border. Bangladesh Police also plays a role in border security, especially at checkpoints and in coordination with other specialized border management agencies (Ahmed, n.d.).

5. Geographical Dynamics of Bangladesh-Myanmar Border

The Bangladesh-Myanmar border, on land and in the sea, has not historically been stable. The two nations established a border cooperation agreement in 1980. Subsequently, the International Tribunal on the Law of the Seas (ITLOS) made a verdict in March 2012 to settle the issue of maritime boundary determination between Bangladesh and Myanmar (D. Hossain, 2023). They have a shared boundary of 271 km (Alam, 2018) and a maritime boundary that includes 22.22 km (12 nautical miles) of territorial sea and 370.40 km (200 nautical miles) of Exclusive Economic Zone. The demarcation of both the land and river boundaries has been fully established through the various bilateral agreements between the two countries (MoFA, n.d.). Two districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts (Rangamati and Bandarban) and Cox's Bazar have shared a border with Myanmar. The geographical character of these districts is very complex and differs in almost every aspect from the rest of Bangladesh (M. Khan et al., 2007)). These areas are inhabited by 13-14 ethnic communities, some of which have robust historical and cultural connections with Myanmar. Marmas in the

Hills and Rakhines in the plain land are the two notable communities among them, and they also share a common religion and language spoken in Myanmar. The Naaf River separates Cox's Bazar from the North Rakhine State of Myanmar. Bangladesh's most attractive tourist destination is susceptible to various disasters such as droughts, floods, and cyclones. Moreover, the high population density in this area exerted extreme pressure on the prevailing socioeconomic status and scarce natural resources (Guhathakurta, 2017). The geographical complexity of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border region poses several challenges to effective border management in Bangladesh. The border region is marked by a rugged and difficult landscape encompassing hills, forests, and rivers that hinder establishing and maintaining the physical infrastructure necessary for border protection. It is true that, geographically, Bangladesh is not in an enviable position. Although it is impossible to alter the geographical location, the implementation of pragmatic and visionary policies can transform Bangladesh's locational reality into a valuable strategic advantage as a 'geographical gift' (Zaman, 2017).

6. Challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar Border Management

The management of borders between Bangladesh and Myanmar faces numerous challenges in terms of security and social, economic, and political issues. This section analyses some significant challenges of Bangladesh-Myanmar border management.

6.1 Informal Trade

Informal trade prevails internationally in the border areas primarily because of limited livelihood opportunities for the border residents and inadequate connectivity of these remote areas with their respective countries (Ahmed, 2020). Borders of the Indian sub-continent are often identified by smuggling or informal trade, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. The borders of Bangladesh with its neighboring countries are not immune to the phenomenon of smuggling (Alam, 2023). It creates multifaceted challenges for border management agencies in Bangladesh. Smuggling cannot be fully stopped even by taking strict measures at the border. Smuggling syndicates are bringing various contraband goods across the border every night, avoiding the prying eyes of the border guards. Especially, powerful syndicates in the Rohingya camps engaged in this business with the smugglers along the border (Daily Jugantor, 2019)

Table 01: Statistics of Seizure Value of Smuggling Goods (2019 – 2023)

Year	Seizure of value (Tk)		Total Seizure value (Tk) (1TK=\$.0083)
	Incoming	Outgoing	
2019	251,33,40,077	36,60,69,755	287,94,09,832
2020	338,57,96,665	3,44,86,673	342,02,83,338
2021	549,74,04,080	13,22,00,161	562,96,04,241
2022	187,37,90,050	22,75,29,842	210,13,19,892
2023	1221,50,92,722	54,38,967	1222,05,31,689
Total	2548,54,23,594	76,57,25,398	2625,11,48,992

Source: BGB HQ (2024)

The most trafficked item from Myanmar to Bangladesh is drugs. A report by the UN Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) in 2015 identified Myanmar as South Asia's leading narcotics producer. Methamphetamine (Yabaa), along with opium, dominantly prevails in the country's illicit drug market, and it may flourish due to the country's rugged terrain and porous borders (Dewan, 2017). Many people in the Ukhia and Teknaf Upazilas of Cox's Bazar are actively engaged in the Yaba trade, leading to the accumulation of substantial wealth, and turning them into millionaires (Ahamed et al., 2020). Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, a prominent security expert in Bangladesh, argued that the "Myanmar Army is directly involved in the production and trafficking of Yaaba and crystal meth to Bangladesh" He also recognized the engagement of Rohingyas in drug trafficking (The Business Standard, 2022).

Table 02: Recovery of Illegal Arms (2019-2023)

Year	Rifle (Nos)	Revolver (Nos)	Pistol (Nos)	Gun (All Type)	SSBL	Ammo (All type)	Magazine (Nos)
2019	-	-	01	30	-	56	01
2020	-	-	01	56	05	215	01
2021	-	01	01	14	-	03	
2022	05	-	05	38	-	16	
2023	-	-	03	03	-	45	
Total	05	01	11	141	05	335	02

Source: HQ BGB (2024)

Arms are another common smuggling item on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The illicit arms trade in Cox's Bazar has been documented since the middle of the 1990s and persists to date as the massive refugee displacement exacerbates regional instability. Bangladesh's borders with Myanmar serve as a strategic route for smuggling arms and reaching buyers in India and Nepal (Gutberlet, 2020). Utilizing the links between Thailand and Myanmar rebels through the Chittagong Hills Tracts, smugglers engage in trading weapons within secret markets (Rashid et al., 2020). Their other target group is criminals who would use arms in poll violence and camps of Rohingya refugees. Arms smuggling syndicates are often led by authorized arms dealers, and some people from ethnic minorities help them by working as drug carriers (Khan, 2021). Besides arms and drugs, other things like cows, buffaloes, food products, cigarettes, etc., are smuggled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. On the other hand, fuel, cooking oil, and different types of foods are smuggled from Bangladesh to Myanmar through coastal areas (Rashid, 2024).

Table 03: Statistics of Drugs/Narcotics Seized by BGB (2019 - 2023)

Year	Phensedyl (Bottle)	Wine (Bottle)	Heroin (kg)	Hashish (kg)	Yaba (Nos)	Crystal Meth (kg)	ICE (kg)	Beer (Bottle)
2019	290	765	-	14.400	8000147	-		1305
2020	234	634	-	10.530	10407935	-		3202
2021	166	1963	-	22.045	15409152	11.900		5578
2022	125	7974	-	30.060	10713365	77.615		17930
2023	171	16509	30.081	42.083	12276275	142.392		48377
Total	986	27,845	30.081	119.118	5,68,06,874	231.907		76,392

Source: BGB HQ (2024)

The flow of illicit drugs and other narcotic substances has an adverse impact on both Bangladesh and Myanmar. Particularly, Bangladesh prioritizes combating the smuggling of such illegal substances (Munir, 2020). The smuggling of drugs and arms significantly impacts the quality of life for the people living along the border and also all over the country. Those engaged in such illicit activities show a great absence of fundamental morals and ethics. It has a tremendous impact on economic security, social security, political security, health security, and, above all, national security (Alam, 2023). If Bangladesh and Myanmar do not come forward to cooperate to dismantle the unlawful trade of arms along the border regions, it could lead to a situation where offenders and extremist groups may pose a danger to Bangladesh's internal security ((Rashid et al., 2020).

6.2 Myanmar's Inside Political Turmoil

Myanmar is a country with an authoritarian military regime that demonstrates little concern for democratic freedom within its society, employing systematic repression to stifle liberties in the country (Manurung, 2021). Myanmar has been experiencing repressive military rule, pervasive poverty, and conflicts with ethnic minority groups for decades. The shift from full military control starting in 2011 ignited aspirations for democratic transformation. However, the government was significantly under the control of the military. In 2015, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), achieved significant victories in both chambers of parliament. Despite this victory, the military of Myanmar, also known as Tatmadaw, retained considerable domination over domestic affairs. Both military and civilian

leaders of the country were criticized globally for persistent human rights violations and brutality against Rohingya Muslims in the Rakhine state (Maizland, 2022).

In February 2021, the military staged a coup and officially retook control, destroying hopes for democratic progress. The opposition established a shadow government and armed resistance that led to the civil war and humanitarian crisis, which had the potential to escalate beyond Myanmar's borders (Maizland, 2022). The present resistance against the military power is unprecedented in Myanmar's history. The Arakan Army, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and the National Liberation Army formed the 'Three Brothers Alliance'; among them, the Arakan Army is the most influential in terms of manpower (M. S. Hossain, 2024a). The military is relentlessly suppressing the resistance fighters, shelling civilian areas, resulting in casualties to unarmed civilians. Meanwhile, the Three Brotherhood Alliance promptly advances, capturing strategic regions, including Chin State, northern Shan State, and Rakhine State, which is along Bangladesh's borderline.

Bangladesh is already experiencing the heat of increasing clashes in its bordering areas, as the sound of gunfights is disrupting the sleep of the bordering people. The clashes between the Arakan Army and the military Junta have reignited in recent days. Consequently, mortar shells are falling into the territory of Bangladesh, causing numerous deaths and injuries. Escaping the fighting beyond the border, lots of the members of Myanmar's Border Guard Police (BGP) entered Bangladesh illegally as the rebel forces are continuously gaining control of further territories. The impacts of this spillover conflict will be manifold, encompassing national security, socio-economic, and geopolitical dimensions. Bangladesh border areas with Myanmar are becoming more vulnerable with the surge of such conflict beyond the border (Tayeb, 2024).

6.3 Rohingya Influx

The Rohingya people, who have been residing in Arakan for centuries, are primarily a Muslim Indo-Aryan group. They were described by the United Nations in 2013 as the most persecuted minorities in the world. The unbearable and inhuman atrocities Rohingya people are confronting are not only from the current or immediate past military juntas but also have a historical legacy. The history of their persecution is not new; it is a century old (Chowdhury, 2023). Military operations have been carried out by the successive governments of Myanmar against the Rohingya people since 1948. The security forces of Myanmar have displaced the Rohingyas forcibly from their land, destroyed their Mosques, and committed extensive robbing and sexual violence against women throughout these operations. This relentless persecution has forced the Rohingyas to seek refugees outside of Myanmar's border (Kader & Choudhury, 2019).

Historical analysis refers to six (or seven if we count the events of 2016 and 2017 separately) major periods of Rohingya influx into the region presently known as Bangladesh. These major periods are the 1780s (1784), the 1940s, 1978, 1991-1992, 2012, and more recently in 2016 and 2017. The widespread exodus in August 2017 is not the result of a sudden incident or crackdown by the Rohingya militants. In fact, it was a meticulous implementation of long-term planning in which the ARSA attack of 25 August 2017 created a grand opportunity for setting such a plan in motion (Mollick, 2023). About 971,904 Rohingyas have arrived since the mass influx started in August 2017, and presently, about 939,334 Rohingyas are residing in the camps of Cox's Bazar. Several attempts have been made to repatriate the Rohingyas in 2018, 2019, and most recently in 2023. However, all three attempts proved unsuccessful as the Rohingyas asserted that they lacked assurance of safety and citizenship upon their return to their homeland (Palma & Molla, 2024).

The Rohingya issue has emerged as a pressing concern for Bangladesh, which is already grappling with a dense population. The continuous influx of refugees from Myanmar leaves Bangladesh with numerous socioeconomic, political, and financial challenges as the country has to accommodate and support them with the necessities of life (Babu, 2020). Besides the numerous challenges of the Rohingya influx, another

major challenge is border management. The Rohingya crisis has had a significant implication in managing borders for Bangladesh. The instability, violence, and terrorist activities in Bangladesh's bordering Rakhine state of Myanmar pose a serious threat to the border security of Bangladesh. The corrupt security forces of Myanmar and their unprofessionalism create challenges for Bangladesh's smooth border management (Chowdhury, 2023).

The massive influx of Rohingya refugees due to inhumane atrocities and persecution in Myanmar creates gigantic pressure on the border management practice in Bangladesh. The country is facing difficulties in controlling the flow of refugees and preventing illegal crossings through a long, porous border. Having a large number of refugees in the Bangladesh-Myanmar bordering areas has strained the required resources for effective border management, and it is true that border management agencies in Bangladesh need additional personnel, equipment, and infrastructure to confront the refugee exodus effectively.

6.4 Cross-Border Crime

Cross-border crimes along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have been a persistent issue, having diverse socio-economic and security consequences for Bangladesh. Cross-border crimes in this region include trafficking (Human, animal, and drug), smuggling, terrorism/extremism, and environmental crimes. However, most of the crimes on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border are linked to the refugee people. The Rohingya people are involved in diverse trans-border criminal activities encompassing drug trafficking, theft, homicide, fraudulent nationality assertions, as well as contributing to political and social turbulence, among other issues (Khan, 2022).

Table 04: Crime Creating by Rohingya Refugees

Types of Crime	Respondent (%)
Theft	53
Snatch	17
Robbery	4
Drug supply	77
Smuggling	77

Sources: Hoque et al. (2021)

A study by Hoque et al. (2021) revealed the involvement of Rohingya refugees in activities such as drug smuggling, theft, and robbery. Several local newspapers also published various cases of crime and corruption linked to the Rohingya people. They are engaging in smuggling and drug trafficking with the help of local people despite the presence of BGB and police checkpoints. To bypass the impediments, they navigate through off-road routes in the hilly forest areas. Moreover, different tribal groups are frequently involved in ethnic disputes (Yasmin, 2017).

The terrible living conditions endured by Rohingyas in the camps organized in Bangladesh and the lack of opportunity for education and employment have contributed to a surge in criminal behavior. Their isolation and increasing despair from unsuccessful repatriation initiatives are exacerbating the human trafficking of Rohingyas (Banerjee, 2020). Moreover, fear, anxiety, and public killings are seen to increase in the southern region of Bangladesh, attributed to escalating crime rates. Growing anger towards the Rohingya population is intense among local people in Cox's Bazar concerning their safety and security as they perceive themselves as a minority because of the substantial Rohingya presence in the bordering areas. Additionally, the use of drugs and the presence of drug traffickers have surged alarmingly within the Rohingya community (M. S. Hossain, 2024b). Cross-border crimes stimulate social instability, promoting a climate of dread and insecurity among local residents. It also hampers economic development, thus prolonging the poverty of bordering people.

6.5 Diplomatic Relations

Bangladesh and Myanmar have a historical connection as both countries have inherited a common colonial legacy. As a gateway to Southeast Asia and China, Myanmar holds great importance for Bangladesh (Shamsuddin, 2019). The diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Bangladesh (formerly Burma and East Pakistan) were based on cordiality and mutual respect from 1948 to 1971. Official diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Burma (later renamed Myanmar in 1989) began on 13 January 1972 when Burma recognized Bangladesh as an independent nation. State-to-state relations began to improve in 1973, gaining notable momentum in 1974. However, the relationship between the two countries aggravated in 1978 when 3,00,000 Rohingya refugees sought shelter in Bangladesh due to the brutal NagaMin operation by the Burmese Army. In 1991, the relations further worsened when 2,56,193 Rohingya refugees came to Bangladesh and fled from Myanmar. Later, in an effort to strengthen bilateral relations and mutual trade between Bangladesh and Myanmar, the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh visited Myanmar in December 2011 (Chowdhury, 2023).

However, Diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar experienced many dimensions influenced by several incidents, such as the verdict of ITLOS in 2012 regarding the longstanding maritime dispute, the mass Rohingya influx in 2017, ICJ's verdict in 2020 concerning the deployment of Myanmar troops near Bangladesh border, and Myanmar's military coup in April 2021. The complex diplomatic relations impact border management strategies and cooperation efforts between Bangladesh and Myanmar. It also significantly influences border management initiatives encompassing security cooperation, resolving border disputes, managing refugee crises, and promoting economic ties. Moreover, the recurring conflict between the Bangladesh-Myanmar border poses significant impediments to the development of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Members of Myanmar's border guard agency frequently violate the terms of the 1979 Bangladesh-Myanmar border agreement, whereas Bangladesh encourages a peaceful border to sustain friendly relations (Sultana, 2019).

6.6 Infrastructure Deficiencies of Border Management Agencies

Monitoring the border effectively is quite difficult for Border management agencies in Bangladesh due to the deficiencies in infrastructural arrangements, such as a lack of surveillance cameras, proper broader fencing, and other monitoring equipment. This can lead to gaps in surveillance, which facilitate illegal crossings, smuggling, and other illicit activities. It is also challenging to control the movement of people and goods across the border without adequate infrastructure and personnel in border management agencies. This can result in increased illegal migration, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and other security threats at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. It also creates potential risks to the safety of border management personnel. Without adequate infrastructural arrangements and proper facilities like border outposts (BOPs) or shelters, personnel of border guard agencies may be exposed to security threats or harsh weather conditions in border management operations.

6.7 Extreme Poverty in the Border Areas

Extreme poverty in the border regions is a great challenge for border management in Bangladesh. Smugglers take the opportunity of vulnerable conditions of poor people to encourage them to cross the border even with their life risk, which is regarded as the crucial reason behind border killings (A. Ahmed, 2015). Poverty and weak socio-economic conditions of border inhabitants can push them towards involving in illegal activities like smuggling, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. Desperate economic conditions provoke the pursuit of illicit means of earning, which creates obstacles for border management agencies to control illegal border crossings and activities. Moreover, the vulnerable socio-economic circumstances of the people of the border area often create humanitarian crises encompassing inadequate access to healthcare,

education, and basic services. Border management agencies may have to address these humanitarian emergencies utilizing resources and efforts diverting from their primary focus on border security management. This may reduce their performance in effective border management practices.

7. Potential Ways Forward

A state's sovereignty is directly linked to its ability to manage borders effectively. The capability of a state to overcome challenges regarding its border is crucial, as its inability in this sector may compel it to compromise internal and external legitimacy (Alam, 2023). Prevailing challenges in the management of the Bangladesh-Myanmar border need strategic solutions to overcome. This section presents some potential ways forward significant to address the challenges in Bangladesh-Myanmar border management.

Challenges regarding Bangladesh-Myanmar border management are mostly associated with the Rohingya refugee crisis. The huge number of refugees is now a great burden for Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh should strongly continue to engage in diplomatic endeavors for the successful repatriation of Rohingya refugees in a safe, dignified, and voluntary manner. The diplomatic dialogue should be both bilateral and international, applying politico-diplomatic means. Bangladesh should reinforce its efforts in creating international pressure on Myanmar to take the Rohingyas back and ensure security in their homeland. In this regard, obtaining support from significant international actors like the EU, OIC, and ASEAN can play a crucial role in creating collective pressure on Myanmar to enhance the repatriation process.

Coordination and cooperation between Bangladesh and Myanmar regarding border security are essential to strengthen bilateral relations. Border guarding forces of both countries should organize regular high-level meetings to develop a mutual understanding of the border management issues. BGB and BGP may conduct joint patrolling along the zero-line, including intelligent sharing to deter the persons involved in trafficking and smuggling. There should be collaborative efforts to address common challenges like smuggling and cross-border crimes. The cross-border dialogue, even at the tactical level, is important to create a communication channel between the border agencies of two countries aiming to prevent escalating border-related incidents and to ensure effective border management.

Production and use of drugs are prohibited in Bangladesh but not in Myanmar. Drug peddlers in Myanmar engage in drug trafficking with the help of Bangladeshi smugglers. So, both countries should take strict actions against drug trafficking nexus. Myanmar should close or convert its drug factories, if any, along the Bangladesh border to produce other necessary items rather than producing harmful drugs.

People from local communities, who are living along the border should be engaged in gaining their support and cooperation in border management. Local government representatives, especially the union parishad Chairmen, and Members, may play a pivotal role in border management.

Governments of both Bangladesh and Myanmar should implement development programs aiming to create employment opportunities for the border communities. They should be empowered through education, skill development, and economic opportunities. Education and healthcare facilities in border areas should be improved to ensure long-term socio-economic development and living standards, which would help reduce poverty and prevent illegal activities along the border.

8. Conclusion

Bangladesh-Myanmar Border management has multifaceted challenges encompassing socio-economic, political, security, and diplomatic aspects. The challenges are very complex and linked with several issues like informal trade, drug smuggling, Rohingya refugee influx, cross-border crimes, diplomatic relations, infrastructural deficiencies of border management agencies, and extreme poverty in the border areas. These issues are further compounded by Myanmar's internal political turmoil, which exacerbates instability in the region and affects the security dynamics of Bangladesh. Dealing with these challenges, it is necessary to resolve issues regarding Rohingya repatriation. Strategic and coordinated efforts of the Bangladesh

government, along with international cooperation, are significant in this regard. Bangladesh needs to continue its diplomatic efforts, applying innovative diplomatic approaches and asking for support from regional and global stakeholders. Moreover, border management capabilities need to be enhanced through the introduction of better technologies, improved infrastructure, and efficient personnel recruitment. A collaborative initiative between Bangladesh and Myanmar is also crucial for ensuring long-term stability in the border regions and reducing cross-border crimes by developing the living standards of bordering people through proper education and employment generation activities. As this study is based solely on secondary information, future research could incorporate empirical evidence and primary data to provide a more nuanced understanding of Bangladesh-Myanmar border governance. Field studies focusing on specific aspects such as cross-border crime, Rohingya repatriation, and the socio-economic conditions of border communities could offer valuable insights and actionable recommendations.

Authors' Contributions: Md. Mahbub-ul Alam led the research, focusing on the conceptual framework of border management. He conducted an extensive review of literature from diverse secondary sources and synthesized key insights, shaping the study's main arguments and recommendations. Helal Uddin supported the study by organizing and interpreting secondary data, as well as contributing to the overall analysis of how inclusive approaches impact community cohesion and resilience. Together, they refined the findings and recommendations to enhance the study's contribution to the field.

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