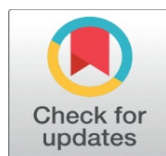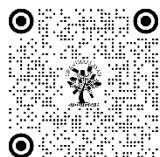# MYANMAR'S CRISIS: TERRORISM AND MIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

"Unjust terror leaves scars on the soul that only justice can heal."
Two major issues which Myanmar has been facing is terrorism and migration, that are not only the matter of concern of any particular place but whole country. The country is diverse where different ethnic groups and tension among them have caused violence and outrage for many years. Groups of terrorist have formed, and taking advantage of these divisions, and both the government and armed forces have played role in the violence. This thing has created fear of instability and insecurity for many lives in Myanmar.
Simultaneously, the tension forced many people to leave their homes. The Rohingya crisis in particular, has gained a lot of International attention as thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes due to persecution. The huge number of refugees has created problems for neighboring countries and the International Community.
This research paper looks at the root causes and solution of terrorism and migration in Myanmar, and focuses on the co-relation of these two issues. It examines how ethnic and religious tensions fuel violence, which in return forces individuals to leave their motherland. The paper will also focuses on the impact these issue lead to in the society at large.
Finally, the paper discusses achievable solutions and it calls for cooperation between countries, fair policies, and a focus on both security and human rights. Myanmar's road to peace and stability depends on addressing this issue with justice, international support, and long-term planning within the country.

Keywords: Terrorism, Peace, Crisis, International Community

1. INTRODUCTION

The country 'Myanmar' is located in southeast Asia, and bordered by India, China, Thailand, Laos, and Bangladesh. Just like India it has also the history of ethnic diversity, with over 100 different ethnic groups living within its borders. The country got its independence in 1948 from Britisher's colonial rule. After independence it has faced many challenges since now which includes- Military rule, Ethnic conflicts, and Political hardships.

The geopolitical area of Myanmar is crucial as it connects South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. This location makes it diplomatically of importance for both territorial and worldwide powers, especially n terms of import-export, security, and natural resources. But despite that, the country's internal tension and its troubled political past have often hindered its full potential.

Major two issues are faced by them is terrorism and migration. Terrorism is a continuous challenge to Myanmar, largely driven by ethnic and religious divisions. Armed groups, have set back against the government, be on the lookout for autonomy or independence. These quarrel have led to violence, displacement, and fear among civilians.

Concurrently, Myanmar is facing a migration crisis. Thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes due to the violence, especially the Rohingya Muslims who have faced acute ill-treatment. This has led to a large number of refugees run away to neighboring countries, creating a regional humanitarian concern.

Terrorism and Migration is interconnected. Terrorism forces people to run away from their homes, and on the other hand growing refugee crisis can fuel more violence and instability. In conjunction, these issues present major obstacles to Myanmar's peace development road.

1.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- **Cultural Diversity:** It is a home to overly 100 ethnic groups, and majority of them are "Burman" (Bamar) people. Other groups which are include- Rohingya, Shan, Karen, Kachin, and Chin. Each group has its own language, culture, and religion.[1]
- **Cultural Tensions:** Regardless of Diversity, the ethnic groups often feel bar from power and resources, which has led to long-term tensions and crisis.
- **Struggle for Independence and Power:** Myanmar got independent in 1948 from British colonial rule. After independence, the government, mostly headed by the Burman ethnic group, favored its own people, which has created dissatisfaction among other groups.
- **Demand for Autonomy:** Many ethnic groups who felt neglected and left out has start demanded autonomy or independence. Some have even took the arms against the government to fight for their rights and freedom.
- **Government's Call:** The government act with the use of military force, which made the situation more terrible than before. In some cases, like Rohingya Muslims, these actions have been seen as genocide.
- **Cause of Terrorism:** This is long history of ethnic conflict, government oppression, and violence which has led to the rise of armed insurgency. These group of people fight for their cultural rights and independence, often being labeled as terrorists by the government.
- **Circle of Violence:** The action of government and rise of the insurgency movements which has deepened ethnic division and created a continuous rotation of terrorism and ferocity in Myanmar.

2. UNREST IN MYANMAR

The terrorism is deeply into the blood streams of its ethnic and religious division. For decades, the country has faced violence from armed forces and insurgencies, which have worsened due to historical conflicts and government actions.

2.1. ARMED GROUPS AND INSURGENCIES

Myanmar has divided into several armed groups representing ethnic minorities. These groups fight for more rights, autonomy, or independence. Let's discuss few such groups:

- **Arakan Army (AA):** This group is active in area called Rakhine State, and it demands for autonomy for the people belongs to this particular ethnicity.[2]

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[1] Jashim Uddin, *Resolving Rohingya Crisis: Obstacles and Prospects*, 5 Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal (2018)

[1] "Myanmar." *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

[1] Elliott Prasse-Freeman, *The Rohingya crisis*, 33 Anthropology Today, 1-2 (2017)

[1] Brian Gorlick, *The Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Rethinking Solutions and Accountability*, SSRN Electronic Journal (2019)

[2] South Asia Journal. "Explained: What is Myanmar's Arakan Army?" *South Asia Journal*, 13 Nov. 2024, southasiajournal.net/explained-what-is-Myanmar's-Arakan-army/. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

- **Kachin Independence Army (KIA):** It represents this particular group called Kachin ethnic group and fights for self-independence.[3]
- **Karen National Union (KNU):** This is one of the oldest groups of Myanmar, it seeks for better rights for its people.

Along with this, these groups also clash with the military and control parts of the country, creating zones where other civilians face hardships and fear.

2.2. IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC DIVIDES
- **Cultural Conflicts:** The diversity of Myanmar has led to divisions. Ethnic minorities, such as the Rohingya, they often face exclusion and violence from government and other groups.
- **Rohingya Crisis:** These community of Muslims are one of the most ill-treated communities. Attack on them by the military forces and Buddhist Nationalist Groups have led to displacement and the rise of militant groups like ARSA.[4]
- **Religious Mistrust:** The extremists people use religion to justify violence, increasing mistrust between Buddhist, Muslim, and other communities.

2.3. STATE AND NON-STATE RESPONSES
- **Action Of Military**- The government rely majorly on its military, the "Tatmadew", to tackle insurgent groups.
- Large-scale Operations often target entire regions, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement.
- The military's actions, especially in Rakhine state, has been criticized internationally for human rights violation.[5]

2.4. NON-STATE EFFORTS
- International Organizations and neighboring countries have tried to maintain peace talks between the government and armed groups.
- However, these efforts are often ineffective due to ongoing violence and mistrust.

2.5. THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE
- **Response and Recruitment:** The Military crackdown often harm civilians, which leads to the indignation and new recruits for insurgent groups.
- Insurgent attacks, in turn, provoke harsher military responses, continuing the cycle of violence.

2.6. HOW TO BREAK THIS CYCLE?
- To end terrorism, Myanmar needs to addresses the root issues which are deep rooted from decades like- Cultural Discrimination, Unequal representation, and economic struggles. (It can learn from Indian Constitution and United States Constitution about equality, just, and fair treatment).
- Through promotion of justice, inclusion, and open dialogue is essential to building trust between ethnic groups and the government.

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[3] Myanmar Peace Monitor. "The KIO/KIA: Political Unknowns." *Myanmar Peace Monitor*, 13 May 2024, mmpeacemonitor.org/en/327653/the-kio-kia-political-unknowns-issue-144/. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.
[4] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Durable Solutions to the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar." *OHCHR*, 13 June 2023, ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/06/durable-solutions-rohingya-crisis-myanmar. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.
[5] Human Rights Watch. "Myanmar: Armies Target Ethnic Rohingya, Rakhine." *Human Rights Watch*, 12 Aug. 2024, hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

- Balanced Solutions must be followed, security and human rights of every person has to be ensured for long lasting peace and stability.

Myanmar's journey toward peace and stability need its change in behavior and approach which is in force from past. With time society evolves so the rules and ways of dealings should also be changed, and it should be just and fair for all equally.

3. MIGRATION CRISIS

The migration crisis of Myanmar is one of the biggest one, where thousands of people are forced to leave their homes due to violence, discrimination, and instability. Cultural conflicts, especially the persecution of Rohingya Muslims, have played the major role in the crisis, it did not just affected the Myanmar but also its neighboring countries and the international community.

3.1. FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND REFUGEE OUTRUSH

- **Cultural and Political Conflicts:** Groups of ethnic people in Myanmar, including the people from Rohingya, Karen, and Kachin, have been victims of Government actions and violent conflicts. Because of which millions of people have been displaced over the years.
- **Rohingya Diaspora:** The crisis led to the displacement of these people and this is the worst refugee crisis of current history. After military attacks in 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya ran away to Bangladesh within the months, for seeking safety and security.[6]
- **Other Displaced Groups:** The ethnic groups like- Karen and Kachin, have also forced to migrate, and some of them seeking refuge in Thailand, China, and India.

3.2. ROHINGYA CONFLICT AND MIGRATION TRENDS

- The denial of citizenship to Rohingya people under the 1982 Citizenship Law, which do not allow them legal recognition and leaving them stateless. Because of this they cannot travel as they do not possess the legal documents, they won't allow to work, access to healthcare is also not allowed due to these reasons they are seeking for a better life elsewhere.
- The "Tatmadaw" (Military Force) has attacked on Rohingya villages, burnt their homes, committing mass killings, and force people to leave.
- Many of the Rohingya people take a life-threatening journey by boat so that they can reach to the nearby countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. During this many were died at sea due to hunger, violence, or drowning.[7]

3.3. EFFECTS ON REGIONAL AND GLOBAL STABILITY

- **The Burden on Neighboring Countries:** The Millions of Rohingya has taken refuge in Bangladesh due to which nation's resources are stretched thin. The Cox's Bazar one of the overcrowded and largest refugee camp in the world is dealing with poverty, disease, and lack of basic necessities.

In countries like India, Thailand, and Malaysia has given refuge to these people but they are facing legal restrictions and limited support.

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[6] UNICEF. "Seven Years after Forced Mass Displacement of Rohingya from Myanmar, Deadly Attacks on Children Continue in Rakhine State." *UNICEF*, 25 Aug. 2024, https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/press-releases/seven-years-after-forced-mass-displacement-rohingya-myanmar-deadly-attacks-children. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

Anthony Ware & Costas Laoutides, Myanmar's 'Rohingya' conflict (Oxford University Press) (2019)

[7] Ibrahim, Azeem. "Ethnic Conflict and Violence in Myanmar: The Exodus of the Rohingya." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-25. JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27072161. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

3.4. SECURITY CONCERNS

- The stateless and Jobless refugees are at risk to human trafficking and recruitment by extremist groups.
- The government officials are fearing that these refugee camps will become a breeding ground for radicalization.

3.5. GLOBAL RESPONSE

- The **United Nations** has continuously condemned Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya and called it genocide.
- Countries like the **United States and European Nations** have imposed sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders.
- After having this much pressure the government has done less to improve the situation and allow safe returns for refugees.
- Calls for peace talks is initiated by **ASEAN** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

4. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Myanmar has weak laws and policies to counter terrorism and migration, this thing has been criticized as well by many cause it violates the human rights. While some laws nationally and internationally exist, but their implementation is remains a challenge.

4.1. EXISTING LAWS IN MYANMAR

- The 1982's Citizenship Law which denies Rohingya people's rights over citizenship, voting, work freely, or access to public services.
- 2014's Counter Terrorism Law which allows Government to arrest and punish people suspected of terrorism. But it has been misused to target ethnic groups and political activists rather than actual terrorists.
- The Laws of Emergency and Military often imposes strictly to control insurgent groups. But there is one drawback it restricts the basic freedom, such as free speech and movement.

4.2. INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND TREATIES ON TERRORISM AND MIGRATION

- The UN's Refugee Convention 1951, protects the rights of refugee and prevents them from forced deportation. But Myanmar is not a signatory, it means it does not officially recognizes the rights of refugee.
- The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, it says that every person has the right to nationality and protection from persecution. Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya violates these principles.
- The ASEAN's policies on security and migration has discussed several solutions for regional security and refugee settlement. But its member countries have different policies, making its cooperation difficult.

Myanmar's legal system does not have such laws which can protect the rights of ethnic minorities or refugees. And it is difficult without stronger national policies and international enforcement, due to this the terrorism and migration will be continue. Global pressure and legal reforms are crucial to ensure justice and stability in Myanmar.

5. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Myanmar needs to implement long term solution based legal system which prioritize everyone and not just any group. And any law or policy can only be effective if it touches the emotion and sense of security of every individual because sometimes we think from our own perspective which might not be better for masses. Let's discuss some solutions one by one:

- End up of ethnic discrimination and recognize the rights of all ethnic groups, which includes Rohingya, by granting them citizenship, voting rights, education, and employment opportunities.

- Peace talks should be promoted and government should open dialogues with ethnic groups and armed forces and address their demands peacefully instead of using military forces.
- The major area which has to be focused more on is Economic development and stability provides jobs, education, and infrastructure. This should be reached to the conflict prone areas so that poverty can be reduced and prevent people from joining the armed groups.

5.1. STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION

- The role of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can take the stronger stand by creating a regional policy for refugee management and conflict resolution.[8]
- Neighboring countries like Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and Malaysia should work together to provide safe shelters, legal work opportunities, and better healthcare for refugees.
- Global Aid and Monitoring Policies might be helpful in long run, the United Nations and Human Rights Organizations must ensure that aid reaches those in need and monitor human rights violations in Myanmar.

5.2. BALANCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- The prevention of Terrorism without Targeting Minorities is very important, Myanmar has to use fair and just laws to fight with terrorism without causing harm to innocent.
- Myanmar should create a safe environment and conditions for refugees to come back.
- Every person whether military leaders or those who are responsible for violation should be held liable and accountable through International Courts.

The Global Refugee Support Fund: Here countries and business individuals worldwide can contribute to a special financial fund managed by the United Nations and Humanitarian organization. Example- UNHRC Refugee Zakat Fund, which helps displaced Muslims through global donations.[9]

6. CONCLUSION

Terrorism in Myanmar is crucial to be tackled soon and forced migration which mainly affecting ethnic minorities like the Rohingya should be stopped. To move forward, it is necessary to make new laws and bring new amendments to avoid ethnic discrimination, promote peace talks, and ensure equal rights for all the communities. Creating a Global Refugee Support fund and Refugee Rehabilitation Centers can help displaced people rebuild their lives. Give them legal work permits will reduce poverty and security risks. With Regional and International Cooperation, Myanmar can achieve great milestone.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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[8]ASEAN. "ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint 2025." *ASEAN*, https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/ASEAN-Political-Security-Community-Blueprint-2025.pdf. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

[9] UNHCR. "Refugee Zakat Fund." *UNHCR*, https://zakat.unhcr.org/en. Accessed 29 Jan. 2025.

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