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### The Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx in Bangladesh

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#### Abstract

The objective of this research was to determine the political, environmental, and economic implications of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. The Rohingya, a tribal people from Myanmar's Rakhine provinces, are in some ways referred to as "Illegal Bengali Immigrants." They were driven to escape their homeland and attempt to enter Bangladesh by the Myanmar government forces as part of an ethnic cleansing campaign. Bangladesh has opened its doors to Rohingya refugees from their initial effort to migrate there, despite being a lower middle-income nation with a substantial population and scarce land resources. Despite the Rohingya refugees' heavy burden and the need for shelter, Bangladesh's natural resources, economy, and national security are all severely affected. Bangladesh saw a skyrocketing inflation rate as a result of the supply chain disruption and the high domestic demand. The nation saw its greatest inflation rate of nearly 10% between September 2022 and August 2023. Bangladesh, which imports the third most food, is dependent on foreign grains. As a result, the standard of living for the general public has suffered and the value of Bangladeshi currency has decreased.

**Keywords:** Rohingya Refugee Influx, Bangladesh, Political, Environmental, and Economic impact.

#### 1. Introduction

The migration concept has become one of the concerning issues in the twenty-first century because of terrorist attacks in several countries including Iraq, Syria, Myanmar (Burma), and many other countries leading the people stateless or engaging in conflicts. Literally, Rohingya are somehow called '*Illegal Bengali Immigrants*' who are originally from the Rakhine states of Myanmar (Burma) a tribal nation of this country that attempted to flee to Bangladesh forced by the government forces of Myanmar as a part of ethnic cleansing (Chamie, 2016). Regardless of

being a lower middle-income country, with a sizable population, and limited land resources, Bangladesh has welcomed Rohingya refugees since their first attempt to migrate to Bangladesh (Hazis, 2017).

The Rohingya refugees have been sheltered in two distinct districts of Bangladesh such as Cox's Bazar and Bandarban. Consequently, the Rohingya refugees have a significant impact on the local communities of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts. According to UNDP (2018), Bangladesh is the home and shelter of almost 5% of the total refugees in the globe even though not have more than 0.31% of the population of

the world. The majority of the Rohingya refugees had been sheltered in the different Rohingya sheltering camps of Cox's Bazar. As the census of 2011 was published in 2013, the population of Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh was 4,71768. Consequently, the Rohingya population in this district is almost 2.5 times more than the native population.

Undertaking the massive load and sheltering of the Rohingya refugees, the national security, economic conditions, and natural resources of Bangladesh going through deep troubles. Different studies have been conducted to identify the impacts of Rohingya re-

fugees in Bangladesh. These studies found that the cost of the commodities has increased in a large scale. In contrast, income or wages for low-skilled employees have decreased as a result of the influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The previous studies also illustrate that the natural environment has been impacted negatively; creating huge pressure on infrastructures, affecting public services badly, and numerous tensions for the local community and Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh are the major problems (Hasnat and Ahmed, 2023).



**Fig. 1:** Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and Rakhine State, Myanmar (Source: Rohingya crisis explained in maps-Aljazeera).

The economy of Bangladesh has had a bad time in recent times as the Russia-Ukraine war has emerged and pushed the economy of this country beyond its control. Due to the disruption of the supply chain, and huge demand within the country, the inflation rate touched the sky in Bangladesh. From September 2022 to August 2023 the country experienced its highest inflation rate of almost 10%. Being the 3rd largest food-importing country, Bangladesh has to rely upon imported grains. Consequently, the value of Bangladeshi currency has been reduced and common people's standard of lives hampered. FAO predicted that Bangladesh is on the list of 45 countries that are

facing a serious food crisis. The reality is that Bangladesh is facing a serious economic crisis and the people of Bangladesh are suffering more. Over an extended period of time, the Bangladeshi government has responded to the Rohingya refugee influx problem with great generosity. The Rohingya repatriation issue is becoming more complex and intractable.

### Objectives of Study

The primary objective of the study is to identify the economic impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh. Besides identifying the economic impacts of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, the study also involves figuring out the following issues.

- a) To identify the economic impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh.
- b) To analyze the socio-cultural impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh.

### Research Question

This study is conducted to analyze the impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh based on the following research question.

- a) What are the economic impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh?
- b) What are the cultural impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh?
- c) What are the political impacts of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh?

### 2. Review of Literature

In 1978, Bangladesh received its first group of Rohingya refugees. For almost forty years, it has been a safe haven for the Rohingya. The economy, the ecology, and security have all been severely damaged by the extraordinary flood of Rohingya refugees. Relations between the two countries are strained as a result of the circumstances. As of right now, no Rohingyas have been returned to Myanmar in spite of several diplomatic and bilateral efforts. The UNDP report "Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee Influx on Host Communities," which was released in November 2018, states that the livelihoods of host communities have been significantly impacted by the Rohingya refugee crisis. The host community has been notably negatively impacted by price changes and a decrease in laborers' daily wages. Refugees occasionally sell large amounts of in-kind aid they received as relief goods in local markets, driving down prices. Conversely, because of the high demand for other things they buy, prices are raised (UNDP, 2018).

Overall survey results show that food product prices have decreased slightly while other categories have seen price increases. Low pay was also cited for personnel in the agricultural sector and other unskilled jobs. The country's relatively low socioeconomic development has made the overwhelming burden that the influx has imposed on the host community worse. In addition, there have been grave consequences for the environment and government services (UNDP, 2018).

The several terms associated with refugees that are explained in "An Introduction to International Protection," a UNHCR publication. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the study described the circumstances under which certain individuals might be considered refugees and the reasons why others cannot. The main subjects of this essay are the need for international refugee protection and the international legal framework pertaining to it (UNHCR, 2005). The book "Ethnicity and Geopolitics of Rohingya Crisis" claims that Myanmar is a unique nation where genocide or ethnic cleansing has merged with geopolitics. In Myanmar, it might be challenging to distinguish between geopolitics and genocide or ethnic cleansing. Between Buddhism and Islam, there has traditionally been a great deal of mistrust. In terms of geopolitics, India, China, and the United States are vying for dominance over their own domains of influence. By default, the burden of forced geopolitics is weighing heavily on Bangladesh (Karim, 2021).

According to all of these works, the influx has created two economic groups: a tiny group of people who get employment prospects from the influx, and the broader public who are severely hindered by cheap labor costs and price hikes. On the other hand, nations like the United States, China, and India have a direct impact on the sub-region's geopolitics. Bangladesh is inadvertently being included in the agenda that each person is putting forth. The goal of this dissertation is to close a research gap between the primary concerns of geopolitics and the humanitarian situation, both of which are important to the Rohingya people's successful return to Myanmar.

### 3. Methodology

The study is descriptive in nature. The study is based on secondary data derived from secondary sources such as different types of journals, published materials, books, articles, newspaper articles, etc. As the collection of primary data was not possible author has to depend on the secondary data that are mentioned above. The author of the study tried to generate relevant and authentic data and information that are published in different ways. To get an authentic, accurate, and genuine picture of the issue, the author analyzed, identified, and justified the data

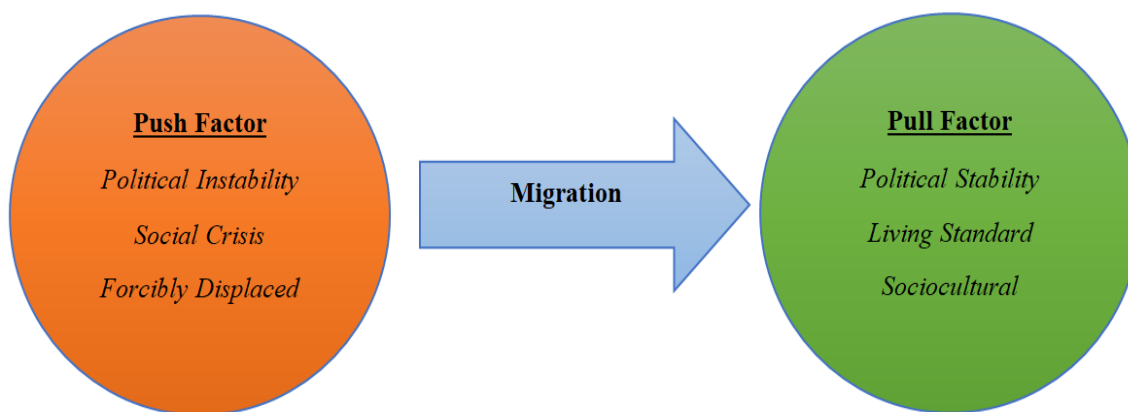
from secondary sources according to the context of the study.

### Theory

The study attempts to utilize the theory of the Push and Pull factor to get a better understanding of the context of migration. A permanent or semi-permanent change in one's place of residence is known as migration. To put it another way, migration may be thought of as a particular kind of relocation dispersal, which includes the permanent movement of people to new locations as well as the dissemination of concepts, innovations, habits, and people from one location to another. People migrate for a variety of causes, mostly related to push and pull factor that is, pressures that either compel people to relocate or uproot their previous homes. Economic, political, cultural, and environmental factors could be among them. A per-

son's migration from one country to another is influenced by push factors, which are external causes that might force someone to leave their native country. Push factors include poverty, a lack of work opportunities, rapid population growth that outpaces environmental capacity, "primitive" or "poor" living conditions, desertification, famines, droughts, fear of political persecution, insufficient healthcare, lost wealth, and natural disasters.

In complete contrast to push forces, pull factors draw people to a specific area. Improved living and work prospects, political and/or religious freedom, better welfare and education systems, better communication and transportation networks, better healthcare, a stress-free environment, easy access to land for farming and habitation, and security are all common draw factors for a place.



**Fig. 2:** Push and Full Factor of the Rohingya Refugee Migration to Bangladesh.

According to the push and pull factor of migration, the research shows that the Rohingya refugees are being migrated to Bangladesh to avoid the political instability, to avoid and get rid of the social crisis revealed, and forcibly displaced by the government in their home country Myanmar. Whereas, political stability, living standards, and sociocultural issues attracted the Rohingya refugees to migrate to Bangladesh.

### Economic and Social Impacts of the Rohingya Refugee influx in Bangladesh

#### Economic Impact

The economy of Bangladesh is suffering from several negative effects as a result of housing the Rohingya refugees. Experts warn that the worst would happen if UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

the freshly arrived Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine state are not returned home as soon as possible. The negative effects, in addition to increased strain on our natural resources, are anticipated to include local food shortages, price increases, and a decline in tourism. The strength of these variables will become more apparent when foreign aid stops, but for the time being, that is how foreign countries are assisting. According to experts, a significant sum of money, food, clothing, building materials, medical treatment, and natural resources will need to be set aside in order to support them if the issue is not resolved as soon as feasible (Dey, 2018).

An important study by Kobia and Cranfield, (2009) asserted that migrants can pose a threat because, while

they are a burden if they are unemployed, they also put pressure on the local labor market if they are working. Furthermore, social sustainability and economic development are key determinants of the impact of these complex issues. According to Baldwin and Marshall, (2018) the bulk of refugee camps are located in isolated places with low-income populations who rely on daily wages from menial labor. According to Alam, the national economy is burdened by the total cost incurred by the government for refugee settlement regions (Alam, 2018). Refugees also have an influence on Bangladesh's tourist industry, which brings in a sizable amount of revenue for the nation. According to Tonmoy, (2023) Cookson's research indicates that Cox's Bazar is a popular tourist destination in Bangladesh. However, the significant refugee inflow has also had a negative effect on the country's tourism industry.

As a result of having to provide for the Rohingya refugees' fundamental needs, Bangladesh is financially burdened. Despite the fact that Bangladesh is receiving financial assistance from the US and the World Bank for Rohingya refugees, much more work remains. The international world should shoulder the financial burden and offer aid to Bangladesh, as the country is already overpopulated and has taken in thousands of Rohingya refugees.

### ***Environmental Impacts***

Although Bangladesh has been dealing with environmental deterioration for decades as a result of the refugee crisis, the new wave of refugees has had a significantly greater impact. The main negative effects of the Rohingya population on the environment are related to deforestation, soil erosion, natural catastrophes, inadequate waste management, and the lack of access to potable water. Where there had once been orchards of fruit trees, the refugees had cleared land for their shelters and for fuel, leaving behind bare ground. The overuse of Rohingya refugees has put the reserve forest known as Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary in jeopardy. According to Ahmed, (2018) there will be long-term problems for a sustainable environment as a result of the increased demand for natural resources brought about by the additional refugee influx to the already existing local population. With 2,092,016 acres of total forest land, 3500 acres have been lost as a result of the concentration of Rohingya in Cox's

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Bazaar. This indicates a reduction of 1.67% in the Cox's Bazaar forest area and 0.05% in the overall national forest area (Abrar, 2018). The three main materials utilized for shelter in the Rohingya camps are bamboo, aluminum, and tarpaulin. Except for bamboo, they are non-disposable. The Rohingya camps receive their water supply from plastic containers, which are bad for the environment (Zhou *et al.*, 2010).

### ***Political Impacts***

Bangladesh has been a reluctant partner in receiving refugees at their border and enabling the establishment of refugee camps since the beginning of the Rohingya crisis. The Bangladeshi government has demonstrated extraordinary compassion and tolerance for refugees through diplomatic pressure from across the world and pledges of support in the shape of humanitarian aid. The BIPSS Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies asserts that because China and India, two of Bangladesh's closest allies, have sided with Myanmar and have significant strategic interests there, Bangladesh has lost its political and economic support as a result of the refugee issue (BIPSS, 2017).

Bangladesh may suffer as a result of this possible change in regional diplomacy. The people, for the most part, backed the government's decision to give Rohingya migrants' asylum. That being said, this choice could affect the approaching national election (early 2019) based on how the refugee situation plays out. Bangladesh, Idris and Das claimed, is worried about the political ramifications of the Rohingya crisis. For example, one of the government's ministers, Obaidul Quader, has voiced worries that the extremist group Islamic State might try to carry out militancy in the region and radicalize Rohingyas (Idris, 2017).

### **4. Conclusion**

This study attempted to identify the economic, environmental, and political aspects of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh. However, for many years, the government, prominent figures in politics, and common people have been sympathetic to the Rohingya, abiding by international law and permitting refugees to temporarily enter and occupy their territory. The results have a number of ramifications, and the international community, governments, non-

governmental organizations, and donors of international aid must take action in order to improve the situation for the local population who has been negatively impacted by the crisis. In the future, preventative efforts against potential genocide must be strengthened by incorporating the Responsibility to Protect and the Genocide Convention. First and foremost, the government of Myanmar must put an end to the ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Rohingya people. In order to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya Muslims, the international community - led by the United Nations, European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the United States - must learn from the mistakes made in the past by Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The international community ought to alert the Myanmar military about the persecution of the ethnic minority known as the Rohingya. When it comes to addressing crimes against humanity in Myanmar, ASEAN is the most suitable regional body. The United States and the European Union, two of the most significant dialogue partners, must work with the aforementioned regional organization to apply coordinated diplomatic pressure in order to bring about change in Myanmar with regard to the Rohingyas' safety. To make a brighter future for the Rohingya people, enrolling and implementing a legal framework, introducing sanctions wisely, and enhancing cooperative diplomacy are crucial. The UN and other international organizations can take steps to resolve the issue as well.

### Limitations of the Study

Several key aspects limit the study. These limitations are mentioned below: Firstly, the research is based on secondary where the collection of primary data is not possible. So, the study may be biased because of the use of secondary data before by the other researcher. Secondly, the problems that occurred through the evolution of the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh are not constrained. These problems are dynamic and changing day to day. So, the findings and analysis of the study may not be appropriate and applicable in the long way.

### 5. Author Contributions

B.U.: Introduction, Data collection, Discussion and draft writing. M.A.: Introduction, Conclusion and UniversePG | [www.universepg.com](http://www.universepg.com)

final writing editing; and M.B.A.R.: Literature Review and final writing editing. All authors have contributed to the work and approved the final manuscript.

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### 7. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research. They have no financial, personal, or professional affiliations that could have influenced the findings or interpretations presented in this study.

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