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Impact of the geopolitical status quo vis-à-vis the Rohingya crisis on the social, economic, and political aspects of Bangladesh

Iqthyer Uddin Md Zahed

School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia

Correspondence
Iqthyer Uddin Md Zahed, School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.
Email: izahedcu@gmail.com

Present address
Iqthyer Uddin Md Zahed, Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

Abstract

The long-standing Rohingya crisis has become complicated due to geopolitical complexities, and more than a million Rohingya refugees remain stranded in Bangladesh. This situation has had a dramatic impact on Bangladesh. Shortages of international funding exacerbate the situation further, and a regional security threat could be created if the current situation continues unabated. The empirical research undertaken in this paper examines the impact of the Rohingya refugees on the social, economic, and political aspects of Bangladesh from a micro level perspective. This study follows a qualitative research methodology that uses analysis of documents and analytical interpretations of 20 in-depth interviews from Bangladesh. Environmental destruction and the government's dilemma with controlling law and order are apparent consequences of the Rohingya influx. Competition in the labor market, economic hardships, acquiring land, and deforestation create a conflict between the host community and the Rohingya refugee group. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A series of massacres of the Rohingya ethnic community in Myanmar that occurred at the hands of the Myanmar Government and military have been recognized as crimes against humanity. These events took place during so-called military-led operations in 1978, 1992, 2012, 2016, and 2017 (Akins, 2018; Zahed, 2021b). The Rohingya have also experienced discriminatory state policies, especially the Citizenship Law of 1982, which has taken away their ancestral rights to call Myanmar home (Faulkner & Schiffer, 2019). Hence, this group of people no longer have a "country" or piece of land anywhere in the world to call home. They have consequently been dubbed "Asia's Palestinians" (I. Ahmed, 2010, p. 12).

Stateless and subjected to a wide range of human rights violations, the only option for the Rohingya has been to either flee or die. An estimated three-quarters of a million Rohingyas had left Myanmar for Bangladesh in August 2017 after the clearing operations took place in Rakhine state (Roy Chowdhury, 2019; UNHCR, 2019). Bangladesh is the country that has taken more than a million refugees, which has become a problem for Bangladesh, a country of approximately 163 million people and is one of the most densely populated countries in the world (Akhter & Islam, 2019). Bangladesh is neither a signatory to the Refugee Convention of 1951 nor its Protocol of 1967 (UNHCR, 2017); however, it had no other option but to open the border on humanitarian grounds to hundreds of thousands of refugees who fled genocide and brutality in neighboring Myanmar. Bangladesh has no specific refugee-related law or national policy regarding refugees, and based on the country's Foreigners Act of 1946, refugees are considered foreigners (Myat, 2018). According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar, which was signed on April 28, 1992, around 236,599 Rohingyas were repatriated to Myanmar between 1992 and 2005 (I. Ahmed, 2010, p. 101). Although the two governments signed another voluntary repatriation agreement in January 2018, it failed to materialize because the Myanmar Government did not agree to allow the Rohingya to regain their citizenship rights and could not ensure their safety and security (Dhaka Tribune, 2019).

Despite the refugee problem, the Bangladesh Government has focused on the country's economic development, encouraging foreign investors rather than engaging in conflict with neighboring countries like Myanmar (Hossain et al., 2020). Powerful countries like the United States, China, Russia, and India influence small countries in South Asia politically (Hossain et al., 2020). However, Bangladesh has not received reliable support from any of these nations to resolve the Rohingya crisis, possibly because of the economic interests that particular superpowers have in Myanmar. There have been suggestions that the refugee influx from Myanmar into Bangladesh has had political, social, and economic impacts on Bangladesh that are discussed hereafter in the paper.

This article discusses the social, economic, and political impacts on Bangladesh of the Rohingya exodus from Myanmar. The realistic conflict theory and conspiracy theory are studied to understand the relationship between Rohingya refugees and the local host community of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. And then it discusses the geopolitical status quo of

the Rohingya predicament. It then then describes Bangladesh's social, economic, and political concerns with the influx of Rohingyas as reflected in the literature and presents the interviews with the informants, which are organized according to themes. The last section examines the results before concluding the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative methods of research. Primary information for the research was obtained from 20 in-depth semi-structured face to face interviews undertaken between August 2019 and February 2020. The participants were academics, historians, journalists, politicians, and officials of NGOs and the Bangladesh Government who were directly or indirectly connected with the Rohingya crisis in their respective professions. The in-depth interviews with the experts were conducted in the Dhaka, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar districts of Bangladesh. Participants were selected by searching ResearchGate, LinkedIn, Academia, different universities, newspapers, NGOs, and the Bangladesh Government's website to identify experts who had recently published books or research articles or presented and published in conference proceedings that were related to the Rohingyas' predicament. The participant journalists were selected who are or have recently been editors or members of editorial panels, politicians or government officials who have participated in government committees related to refugee management, and NGO officials who had produced reports on different humanitarian projects related to the Rohingyas. The interviewees were selected as persons who possess a depth knowledge and can be able to explain complexities of phenomena. The semi structured questions were asked about the Rohingya crisis that related to socio political and economic aspects of Bangladesh. The author invited 30 participants for interview; however, 20 in-depth interviews were taken as data saturation occurred. Interviews were only conducted after written consent was procured. They were performed in Bengali or a mixture of Bengali and English languages. The author recorded the transcripts and translated the interviews into English. The researcher collected documents from the Ukhiya police station in Bangladesh. Coding of the data involved integrating both inductive and deductive approaches and then analysing information thematically. Narrative content was also analysed to highlight information relevant to the research question. This process ensured that data analysis could provide deeper insights with conceptual and theoretical contrast (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The themes were developed and reviewed based on coded data and the whole dataset. These data were informed by and in turn illuminated a further body of secondary sources, including books, academic journal articles, reports, and online materials. The documents, and secondary sources assisted in validating the findings obtained from the primary data. The research design and processes were approved by relevant Human Research Ethics Committee.

Theoretical underpinnings

Muzafer Sherif and his associates developed the realistic conflict theory, one of the established social intergroup conflict theories, based on their "Robbers Cave experiment" (Muzafer Sherif, 1966; M. Sherif et al., 1961). Realistic conflict theory suggests that the relationship between particular groups is based on an immediate reaction to a conflict and the history of the

interconnection between the groups concerned (Goldman et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The realistic conflict theory also states that the competition for valuable but limited resources breeds hostility between groups (McKenzie & Gabriel, 2017; M. Sherif et al., 1961; Terhune & Matusitz, 2016), and describes that the feelings of prejudice and discrimination towards the "enemy" group contributes to intergroup hostility and strengthens in-group solidarity (Muzafer Sherif, 1966). This intergroup competition presents a zero-sum structure that results in a winner or a loser. The realistic conflict theory directly addresses intergroup conflict and how the groups perceive and act toward each other (Terhune & Matusitz, 2016). Terhune and Matusitz (2016) and Jackson (1993) argue that this kind of competition creates hostilities, and such hostility can develop into fighting for political power and lifestyle-associated issues. Muzafer Sherif (1966) argues that people tend to obtain many resources for themselves, and the competition turns into a win or lose situation. An "in-group" attitude leads to discrimination and negative stereotypes of the out-group (Kampaki et al., 2020; Terhune & Matusitz, 2016). Such discrimination is created by in-group favoritism and marginalization of the out-group, which leads to an unwillingness to communicate and animosity towards the out-group that can then lead to prejudice and violent extremism (Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; Terhune & Matusitz, 2016). The intergroup competition creates a win-lose situation that causes prejudices and negative stereotypes, creating an ethnocentric situation (Terhune & Matusitz, 2016). These hostile intergroup relations create conflict based on group interests, which can lead to hostility toward the out-group, positive attachment to the in-group, and increased in-group identification and social cohesion (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Because of competition for the same goal in a zero-sum game, the relationships of out-groups become negatively stereotyped, and consequently, social distance increases (McKenzie & Gabriel, 2017). Jackson (1993); McKenzie and Gabriel (2017); M. Sherif et al. (1961) argue that real-world factors may include a threat to real or imagined group security. Zarate, Garcia, Garza, and Hitlan (2004) argue that local people think their job security is threatened when others have similar skills and attributes. They also argue that locals carry more negative attitudes towards immigrants, as they believe immigrants take jobs away from local citizens. The out-group's economic and political power grabbing is considered a real threat to members of the in-group (LeVine & Campbell, 1972); thus, the host community is unwilling to cooperate with the out-groups (i.e., immigrants) if they believe that a gain in economic wealth and power of the out-groups may cause economic and power losses in the host population (Echebarria-Echabe & Guede, 2003). According to Coser (1956) conflict could be internal (within-group) or external (between groups). The external conflict accelerates social integration and makes a group distinction—"us" and "them." The massive influx of Rohingya into Bangladesh who remained stranded due to geopolitical status creates a hostile relationship and external conflict between the host community and Rohingya refugees. The host community of Cox's Bazar is undoubtedly distinct from the Rohingya refugee group and makes a group distinction between "us" and "them." The local community members are poor and struggle to get jobs for earnings. Resources and economic opportunities in the host country are limited. Since the locals have to share their limited resources with more than a million constrained refugees, they consider Rohingya refugees rivals (Habib, 2022). The NGOs supply more aid to Rohingya than the poor locals, and international funding and assistance come for the vulnerable Rohingyas. But many needy locals also need aid that they are not getting because of the stranded Rohingyas. Meanwhile, many Rohingya sell their cheap labor, and many local laborers struggle to get work. The unfair competition for limited opportunities and resources creates a conflict between these ingroup and outgroup communities.

Given the current crisis, there is a sense of doubt and suspicion among Bangladesh's local population and the Rohingya refugees. As a result, it is crucial to consider the possibility of conspiracy theories when analysing the relationship between the Bangladeshi local community and the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Generally, conspiracy theory is associated with pejorative connotation and speculative evidence (Cassam, 2019; Napolitano, 2021). These theories propose that certain events are caused by conspiracies, which may or may not have occurred (Duetz, 2023). Cassam (2019, p. 7) argues "conspiracy theories are implausible by design." Knight (2003, p. 16), suggests that conspiracy theory often incorporates misleading speculation and implicit accusations. The political scientist Uscinski (2018, p. 20) argues, "if conspiracy theorists investigate a theory that eventually turns out to be true, that theory stops being labeled conspiracy theory." Conspiracy theories are also linked to engaging in nonnormative political actions led by state-based anger (Jolley & Paterson, 2020).

Geopolitical status quo

The ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya and China's global capitalist business plan in Myanmar can be seen as two sides of a coin (Yilmaz & Talukder, 2019). China has significant strategic and economic interests in Myanmar. For instance, the deep seaport of Kyaukpyu in northern Rakhine is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and provides an alternative pathway to the Indian Ocean for importing energy from the Middle East, which allows China to avoid pirates operating in the Malacca Strait (Zahed, 2022). It will also contribute to a regional network, called the Chinese "string of pearls strategy," that includes Chittagong in Bangladesh, Gwadar in Pakistan, and Hambantota in Sri Lanka (Aung, 2020). To compete with China, India also has considerable investment in Myanmar. The rivalry between China and India concerning Myanmar is prominent. India has significant investment in Rakhine, including the Sittwe seaport, the Kaladan Multi-Model Transit Transport Project, gas, oil, and the IT education sector (McCartan, 2008; Sidhu, 2020), while China has several growing relationships and is influencing South Asian countries, which is creating problems and a sovereignty threat for India, especially Chinese control of the Gwadar Port in Pakistan and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Nataraj & Sekhani, 2015). Roy Chowdhury, (2020) argued that during the democratic transition in the country, geopolitical and neoliberal interests fueled the violence further to eliminate Rohingyas from affluent areas of Rakhine. Bangladesh depends on the international community to resolve this crisis. Despite the vast Rohingya influx into Bangladesh, the Bangladesh-Myanmar relationship is stable and peaceful. Both countries maintain friendly and diplomatic relationships. Bangladesh's government relies on the international community to resolve the Rohingya predicament as it believes it is a global problem. Though India recognized its relationship with Bangladesh as a "golden age" in its relations, New Delhi is not cooperative concerning the Rohingya issue to gain its geopolitical and strategic interest in Myanmar. As a result, China and India have little concern about the Rohingya crisis (Zahed, 2022).

There is an alliance referred to as "Quad," which is a collaboration between the US, Australia, Japan, and India. These countries are working together in the Indo-Pacific region to compete with China's BRI. All Quad members have investments in various development and humanitarian projects in Myanmar. The Western community has also frequently called for international intervention to create a safe zone for the Rohingya; however, China believes such interventions pose considerable threats to its investments in Rakhine (Aung, 2020). The US

interest in the Rohingya crisis is to promote democracy and establish human rights in Myanmar. Nevertheless, China wants to prevent US interference in Rakhine. Accordingly, China put forward a "three-step plan" based on its analyses that identified a lack of development and investment in Rakhine as the root cause of the Rohingyas crisis (Song, 2018). However, this plan failed in 2019 when voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya as agreed on legal grounds did not eventuate. China subsequently assumed the role of safeguarding Myanmar in the UN Security Council, using its veto power to block every resolution on the Rohingyas and Myanmar in 2017, 2018, and again in 2021 (Han, 2020; Zahed, 2021a).

Politics involving China, the United States, India, and even Russia is heavily linked to the Rohingya crisis in the UN and the international arena (Karim, 2021). The United States sees China as a global security threat because of its activities in Myanmar with the BRI. It is also possible that China is concerned that the United States, the UN, and the INGO humanitarian projects could disturb Chinese projects in Rakhine (Aung, 2020). Therefore, reaching a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis is challenging due to interference from the evolving geopolitical status quo.

Social security concerns

The local people of Bangladesh have tolerated and sympathized with the Rohingya predicament. This sympathy was mainly due to shared religious beliefs and a common humanitarian perspective (Joehnk, 2017). However, the continuous refugee influx, its size and the prolonged period of time that the Rohingya have remained in Bangladesh have increased tensions with the locals (McDonald, 2017). The influx of refugees has caused unfair job competition in and around the camp area, as the Rohingyas work for wages that are 37%–50% lower than that of local laborers; thus, the locals have become unemployed (Choudury & Fazlulkader, 2019). Some registered Rohingyas have engaged in shopkeeping, rickshaw-pulling, fishing and laboring work, and many, whether registered or unregistered, have managed to secure illegal jobs in the area (Ullah, 2011). Another bone of contention is that the local community is not getting free healthcare services from the INGOs, NGOs, or UN agencies, all of which tend to focus on the vulnerable refugees in the camps and ignore the needs of the locals (Bussabong Chaijaroenwatana, 2021). In addition, the presence of 35,000 national and foreign NGO workers working and living in the Cox's Bazar area is having an impact on the price of essential food and daily commodities, transportation and house rent, which ultra-poor locals cannot afford (L. Yasmin & Akther, 2020). The result is increasing conflict between locals and refugees (Zafar, 2020). According to Zarate et al. (2004), local peoples worry about job security, and host and refugee communities compete for limited resources. The flood of refugees undoubtedly raised the cost of living and reduced the pay and job losses, fueling conflict between locals and Rohingya refugees.

Of significance, Rohingya involvement in drug, human, and arms trafficking has made the Cox's Bazar region a crime zone (Lewis, 2018). Geographically, Bangladesh is located close to two opium-producing zones: the golden triangle (border of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar) and the golden crescent (border of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan). This proximity makes it a convenient transition zone for opium, heroin, and *yaba* (methamphetamine tablets or speed) (Chin, 2009). The Rohingya became regular carriers of *yaba*, having been recruited by national and international criminal syndicates (Haque, 2016). Controlling this drug trafficking is a challenge for Bangladesh security forces and a significant concern for regional security.

Although prostitution is considered illegal in Bangladesh, Many Rohingya girls and women choose "survival sex" as they do not have any legal source of income in the camp, which is very much a concern for local people with regard to the degrading moral standards of this livelihood (Chakma, 2019). Again, Bangladeshi and Rohingya negotiators are involved in these illegal prostitution activities.

There are frequent environmental challenges in Bangladesh, as it is one of the countries that is most vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Sarker et al., 2020). The Rohingya incursion has contributed to these challenges as there has been a significant impact on the environment (S. Ahmed et al., 2021). The destruction of over 4500 acres of hill-lands and forests was needed to provide makeshift dwellings for the Rohingyas (UNDP, 2018), and it is unlikely that these forests will be able to recover within the next two decades (Bussabong Chaijaroenwatana, 2021; Hammer & Ahmed, 2020). The Kutupalong Rohingya Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazar is known globally as the largest refugee camp in the world, and it was extended after clearing 1365 acres of forest (Hammer & Ahmed, 2020). The estimated value of the occupied forest is five billion BDT, although there is limited focus on predicting the short-term and long-term impacts on the environment (Babu, 2020). Also, a social forestry plantation program in Ukhiya that involved 1730 acres was given up to extend the Rohingya settlement (Babu, 2020), which meant around 2000 locals lost their jobs. Furthermore, the Rohingya engage in deforestation to satisfy the demand for daily 2250 tons of firewood, which is required for cooking purposes (Hammer & Ahmed, 2020). Therefore, the Rohingya influx has had a significant impact on local forests and has intensified the human–wildlife conflict in the Cox's Bazar area (Dekrout, 2018). Threats from wildlife are on the increase, particularly adjacent to the Tekanf Wildlife Sanctuary, where a forest reserve of 28,688 acres is at risk because of deforestation due to refugees gathering resources (Myat, 2018).

Other environmental issues relate to water supply and management. A UNDP (2018, p. 126) report shows that there is a 3.4 million litre demand for drinking water and a 13.8 million litre demand for household water per day in the two Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar. This excessive demand for tube well groundwater has lowered the water level in the refugee settlement area, and it is exacerbated by the decreasing rainfall associated with deforestation. This lowered water level is directly affecting the host community (Chakma, 2019; UNDP, 2018). The areas where the Rohingya live are also at risk from landslides, flooding due to heavy rainfall, windstorms, and soil erosion because of exposed hill cuttings (Khatun & Kamruzzaman, 2018).

Economic outrage

The remaining long-term Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are having a significant negative impact on the Bangladeshi economy. Bangladesh managed modest and steady economic growth in the last few years with a GDP of US$ 221.42 billions and US$ 274.04 billions in the 2015–2016 and 2017–2018 financial years, respectively, and GDP growth rate was 7.11% and 7.86% in the same financial years, respectively (Macrotrends, 2021). However, to maintain over a million Rohingya costs an estimated US$ 1 billion for 12 months (Alam, 2018). According to the UNHCR, the direct costs of accommodating Rohingyas for 10 months in the 2018–2019 financial year was US$ 882 million (Babu, 2020), which was about 3.5% of the Bangladesh Government's revenue in 2017 (László, 2018). The funding required to maintain the Rohingya was US$ 919.5 million in 2019 and US$ 1.3 billion in 2020. However, the funding from international agencies only provided US$ 692.5 million and US$ 687.2 million in 2019 and 2020,

respectively (OCHA, 2021). The lack of funding is a significant burden on the Bangladesh economy. On 15 October 2017, the Finance Minister, Abul Maal Abdul Muhit, said that "Myanmar will destroy Bangladesh's economy this year" (László, 2018, p. 28), suggesting that the Rohingya crisis exerts great pressure on the country's economy. The Bangladesh Government invested US$ 272 million to develop residential facilities in Bhasan Char, a floating island in Noakhali district, to relocate 100,000 Rohingya (Spicer, 2018; Zahed, 2020). The continuous aid gap and the spending on Rohingya residential projects have impacted on the country's national budget and has shrunk government spending on its own development and infrastructural projects.

Many employers are providing work to Rohingyas because they accept low wages due to their economic hardship. Of course, employers take advantage of the Rohingyas' right to work in Bangladesh but as a result, the government loses revenue and there is also the issue of workers being abused (László, 2018). In addition, the locals in Ukhiya and Teknaf face losses of income and often become unemployed, which leads to deteriorating livelihoods for many locals (Chakma, 2019). As mentioned, 2000 locals became unemployed when the social forestry project ceased due to competing demands from the Rohingya settlements (Yilmaz & Talukder, 2019). The unemployment of locals, in general, is a continuous threat to Bangladesh's economic growth and sustainability (K. Yasmin, 2017).

Cox's Bazar beach is one of the longest sea beaches globally, and it is the country's leading tourist destination for beachgoers. Bangladesh faces the threat of revenue losses from the tourism sector because of the Rohingya influx into this area (Cookson, 2017; Myat, 2018). Hotel reservations decreased by 40% in 2017 compared to the previous year (Yilmaz & Talukder, 2019). Another tourist spot in Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin Island, had a low tourist turnout because of apprehensions about holidaying near the Bangladesh–Myanmar border and government security restrictions (Babu, 2020). The tourism industry is therefore under threat of losing revenue from more than a million tourists yearly, all because of this security issue (Chakma, 2019; UNDP, 2018).

However, the Rohingya influx also has some positive impact on the local economy. The presence of international aid agencies helps to flourish the local business, and many Bangladeshi residents enjoy employment opportunities in the various national and international humanitarian aid agencies. The funding shortage may challenge Bangladesh's refugee management system and economic downfall, exacerbating the conflict between the Rohingya and the host community.

Political security concerns

Bangladesh now sees the Rohingya as a security threat for the country because of their contribution to demographic imbalance and the potential for radicalization in the border areas. The local population of two upazilas (sub-districts), Ukhiya and Teknaf, is approximately 500,000, while there are more than a million Rohingya living in two camps covering an area of 651 square kilometers in the same area (Myat, 2018; Zahed, 2020). The birth rate of Rohingya in the camps is alarmingly high compared to the Bangladeshi population; the birth rate in the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar is 35.6 births per 1000 (Hossain et al., 2020), and the Bangladeshi birth rate is 18.3 births per 1000 population in 2018. (Islam, 2019). This demographic imbalance has caused a security threat for the hosts when locals and Rohingyas frequently die due to violent conflict between locals and refugees. Managing a vast number of

refugees has become a formidable challenge for Bangladesh. On August 25, 2019, about 200,000 Rohingyas gathered in the Kuthupalong Rohingya Refugee Camp without permission from the Bangladesh authorities to commemorate Genocide Remembrance Day (Zahed, 2020). After this event, the Bangladesh Government became more vigilant with security and monitoring suspicious activities that the refugees might organize.

The Rohingya crisis has emerged as a regional security issue in the South Asian region. Bangladesh faces the challenge of tackling international jihadism because international militant groups target the Rohingyas for recruitment due to their vulnerability following their experiences of brutal treatment at the hands of the Myanmar military. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State campaigned against the Myanmar Government and declared in February 2017 that Myanmar is the next battlefield after the Syrian and Iraq Wars (Martin et al., 2018). Although Fair (2018), Lintner (2017), and Kocamis (2019) state that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has no links to international terrorist groups, they do not disagree that the evicted and abused Rohingyas now living as refugees in Bangladesh may be "fertile ground" for different terrorist groups to sow seeds of radicalization. The banned extremist groups in Bangladesh, Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI) and Jamaat-e-Islami, have contact with and finance the Rohingya militants in the camp (I. Ahmed, 2010; Ullah, 2011). A further concerning matter is that ARSA has activities in the camp at night, even though the Bangladesh security forces have consistently rejected this claim (Bussabong Chaijaroenwatana, 2021). ARSA is suspected of recruiting Rohingyas from the camp and engaging them in cross-border fighting and arms and drug trafficking (Hammer & Ahmed, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2018).

The Rohingya refugee issue has also caused cross-border clashes between Myanmar and Bangladesh (Parnini, 2013). The political crisis between these neighboring nations is complex (Alam, 2018). With around 50,000 Burmese soldiers assembled along the border, the Bangladesh Government considers this situation a threat to peace and security (Faulkner & Schiffer, 2019). Burmese military drones and helicopters violated Bangladesh's airspace in Cox's Bazar areas several times in September 2017 (Dhaka Tribune, 2017). In April 2019, Bangladesh deployed a sizable number of heavily armed soldiers of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) brigade onto Saint Martin Island, a small island in the north-eastern part of the Bay of Bengal adjacent to Cox's Bazar (The Independent, 2019).

Moreover, the Rohingya issue has had an impact on the country's domestic politics. Some corrupt Bangladeshi politicians have used refugees for their own political interests by providing them with illegal documents such as Bangladeshi birth certificates, national identity cards, and even passports, so that they could be used to increase their votes in elections (Chakma, 2019; Mortoza, 2017; Roy Chowdhury, 2019). Many Rohingyas traveled to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia using fake Bangladeshi passports, which has added to Bangladesh's security threat. All of this happens with the assistance of corrupted Bangladeshi officials and residents. Many of these illegally integrated Rohingyas are also involved in politics with the Bangladesh Awami League and BNP, and Jamat-e-Islami and became a member and Chairman in the *Union Parishad* (local government) of the Bandarban and Cox's Bazar area (Mortoza, 2017). These Rohingya representatives support refugees fleeing from the camps and spreading across the country. Terhune and Matusitz (2016) and Jackson (1993) argue that political power competition creates hostility. LeVine and Campbell (1972) argues that the out-group's economic and political power grabbing is a real threat to the in-group. Due to the Rohingya's high childbirth rate, the demographic imbalance in Cox's Bazar, and their involvement in Bangladeshi politics, the host community has a negative stereotyped and hatred relationship with the Rohingya group.

Findings from the field

This article analyses the social, economic, and political impact of the influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Data were obtained using semi-structured interviews of experts in South and Southeast Asian affairs and the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. The data were analysed and the findings were classified into the broad themes of social impact, economic impact, political impact.

Social impact

The Rohingya influx has had social impacts on the people of Bangladesh, especially the local inhabitants of Cox's Bazar. Based on the primary data, the social drawbacks were categorized under three subthemes: conflict with locals, crime involvement, and educational interruption. The Rohingya resettlement also impacts the environment dreadfully.

Conflict with locals

During the Rohingya influx in August 2017, the Bangladeshi people sympathized with the problems the Rohingyas were facing and provided food and shelter even in their own homes. Now they fear that the Rohingyas will never return to Myanmar. Many locals consider the Rohingya influx to be like a "poisonous boil" or "an unexpected bone of our throat," as mentioned in the interviews. The local people feel unsafe because of the demographic imbalance that the Rohingyas have caused. One person interviewed couched it as follows:

> The local people turned into a minority as refugees' numbers are more than the number of local people in Cox's Bazar. One fear of local people is that Rohingyas will never go back. The Rohingyas try to dominate upon locals. The locals who live inside the camp cannot show their discomfort or dare speak it because of their majority in numbers. As a result, there is an extreme inferiority complex among the locals. The members of the young generation of exiled refugees started getting involved in various crimes. Since they are organised and have a large population, everyone is afraid of them in the camp. The way Bangladeshi people enthusiastically embraced them initially has now turned into abuse. Now the local people are creating hatred towards them. If someone says something terrible, then people say - do you become Rohingya? However, they are in danger. Still, there are some sympathetic people towards them; at first, they could not hold on to the sympathetic attitude; for lack of education, they would do anything for short-term gain. (Academic & Author, Dhaka)

Another participant argued about the financial loss that the local people have borne as they lost the social forestry plantation project to make room for Rohingya shelters. He said that "local people did not get any compensation for the destruction of their social forestry project" (NGO Official, Cox's Bazar). Another interviewee mentioned the local people's financial hardship with regard to NGO aid:

> Because of the Rohingya crisis, most international funding comes for the refugees, not for the poor native peoples—the poor Bangladeshi people are depressed from the lack of regular access to financing. (Bangladesh Government Official, Cox's Bazar)

Crime involvement

All of the participants mentioned that the Rohingya are involved in crime, especially drugs/ *yaba* trafficking. The consequences of their crimes are spreading across the country. A participant argued:

> Rohingyas are involved in various evil deeds like local prostitution, child marriage, theft, robbery, *yaba* trafficking etc. This drug [*yaba*] can destroy the youth of the entire nation. (Politician, Dhaka)

Sadly, the drug trade in Bangladesh has increased with the arrival of the Rohingya. Law and order have deteriorated, and murders have also increased. *The Business Standard* reported in October 2019 that drones and helicopters assisted in locating and arresting Hakim [the Rohingya robber] from his secret base in the hills (TBS Report, 2019).

The police filed 848 cases against Rohingyas in the Ukhyia police station alone between 2017 and January 2020, of which 263 were related to drug dealing, which is the top crime on the list. Similarly, there were 118 disappearances and 71 murder cases filed at the same police station (see Table 1). These crime statistics are from only one police station in the country, but it is evidence enough that the Rohingya have become involved in serious criminal activity in Bangladesh.

Educational interruption

Less than a quarter of the interviewees reported on how the Rohingya influx at the end of 2017 caused an educational interruption in schools, colleges, and madrasas in the Cox's Bazar area. One participant said:

> The Rohingyas came from 25 August and through to November 2017. That was the time for the annual examination for primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh. Rohingyas took shelter in schools, *Madrasas* [Islamic school], apart from other places in which they took refuge. So, this affected education in the area severely (Academic, Chittagong).

Some Rohingya tried to gain admission to public colleges and universities with fake identification papers. An interviewee said: "Government provides subsidies to students in the education sectors, from the budget, and every school has a restriction with respect to seat capacities; now the Rohingya fill a proportion of the seats available to local students" (Academic, Chittagong). Another participant argued that the increase in the number of school leavers in the area is because of aid jobs at the camps. He said, "The under-grad student is getting paid very attractive money from the NGOs in the camps. So, students prefer to take up a job instead of studying further. The education system is therefore in crisis" (Journalist, Cox's Bazar).

TABLE 1 Statistics of Rohingya related cases at Ukhiya police station (yearly).

Sr. No.	Type of case	2017 Year		2018 Year		2019 Year		Jan/2020		In total	
		Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases
1	Number of arms cases	03	08	08	14	13	24	–	–	24	48
2	Number of drug cases	07	11	39	67	100	171	05	14	152	263
3	Number of robbery cases	–	–	02	06	–	–	–	–	02	06
4	Rape	02	02	10	18	08	14	01	01	21	35
5	Number of attempted rape/ kidnaping cases	–	–	04	05	05	06	–	–	09	11
6	Foreigners Act	05	11	02	02	–	–	–	–	07	13
7	Number of kidnaping cases	–	–	09	40	05	44, Unknown 10/12	02	34	16	118
8	Number of smuggling cases	–	–	–	–	11	21	01	01	12	22
9	Number of theft cases	01	01	01	02	05	14, Unknown 1	–	–	07	17
10	Number of robbery and	02	06	06	20	02	15	–	–	10	41

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Sr. No.	Type of case	2017 Year		2018 Year		2019 Year		Jan/2020		In total	
		Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases	Number of accused	Number of cases
	robbery preparation cases										
11	Number of murder cases	03	10, Unknown	19	35, Unknown 4/5	16	26, Unknown 7/8	–	–	38	71
12	Number of other cases	03	15	19	38	19	57, Unknown 1900/2000	04	78	45	188
13	Human trafficking	–	–	–	–	03	12, Unknown 7/8	01	05	04	17, Unknown 7/8
14	Total	27	64	119	247	177	372	14	133	347	848

Note: Total Rohingya related cases: 347, total accused: 848, unknown: 5000/5310.

Source: Data collected from Ukhiya Police Station, Cox's Bazar.

Environmental damage

All participants interviewed argued that the Rohingya activities are causing environmental destruction, which has created an ecological imbalance with impacts on the residents in the area as well as the wildlife. One of the participants said:

> The environmental destruction is deadly, catastrophically so in the last two years [from August 2017 onwards], after the authorities allocated 5,000 acres of land to Rohingyas for their stay. They cut down the forest trees and cut into the hillside in efforts to construct hundreds of thousands of homes for the refugees. The habitats for wildlife, elephants and birds for example, are in ruins, which has created an ecological imbalance and fails to protect us against climate change related events. There is even no space left for cattle grazing (Journalist, Dhaka).

Economic impact

About half of the interviewed participants argued that the Rohingya refugee influx has had a negative economic impact on Bangladesh. They mentioned that the losses included environmental destruction (forest and water resources), problems in the labor market, higher pricing of daily necessities and transportation, infrastructure damage, and a lack of foreign aid, which has also impacted on Bangladesh's local and national economies. An interviewed participant said:

> It is a massive pressure for Bangladesh to maintain an additional 1.2 million people. It lost valuable forest and water resources. Bangladesh may not have the capacity to calculate these long-term economic costs; the actual price is more than we imagined. It is more concerning that a large part of the funding for Rohingyas comes from all over the world, though every year there is a shortage of required funding; If the world faces a recession in the future, the funding granted will reduce. Then the Rohingyas will be a total economic burden for Bangladesh. (Government Official, Cox's Bazar)

Cox's Bazar is a prominent tourist spot in Bangladesh, and the refugee settlement has had a negative effect on tourism. A participant said, "Cox's Bazar is an important financial contributor to our economy. Government should think seriously to save the tourism industry" (Journalist, Chittagong). Locals face income losses when tourism revenue declines. Moreover, the price of daily necessities increased rapidly due to the many NGO workers in the area spending money for items that locals also need. Thus, the hike in prices of essential goods affects the livelihoods of local people. An interviewee said:

> Now the Rohingyas are selling their cheap labour from which local workers used to earn their incomes via these same means. The price of necessary goods increased 10 times. Even house rent has gone up at a higher rate than in Dhaka and Chittagong cities. The transportation cost in Cox's Bazar area has increased 2-3 times compared to past prices. The salaries of aid workers are in US dollars, but the average local service holder's wage in Bangladesh currency is not comparable with
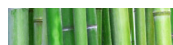
those NGO workers paid with the dollar. So, not only the local labour class but also middle-class people suffer from an imbalance in the job market, which the inflow of NGO workers has definitely caused. (Journalist, Cox's Bazar).

Infrastructure damage

A quarter of the participants mentioned the infrastructure damage in the Ukhiya and Teknaf areas because aid workers are moving materials and goods into an overpopulated refugee camp. The researcher observed regular traffic jams in/out of the refugee camp for 1–1.5 h because a number of vehicles run daily along the narrow, muddy roads.

> The destruction of roads and infrastructure is apparent. Only 50 cars drove on the streets on any day before the camp was established, now 50,000 cars use the same road, particularly in and around Ukhiya and Teknaf, which are remote regional areas that lack resources. The massive inflow of Rohingyas directly impacts essential resources and infrastructure including clean water, sanitation facilities, electricity, roads, and communications networks (Government Official, Cox's Bazar).

Political impact

Bangladesh is facing some challenges in the political arena due to the Rohingya crisis. These challenges were categorized into six broad subthemes: national security, passport fraud, unwelcome social integration, fear of social disorder, political debate, and NGO motives.

National security

All those interviewed were of the opinion that the Rohingyas are not involved in militant activities but are rather anxious to return to their lands in Burma. However, all participants treated the Rohingya as a security threat for Bangladesh, and even South Asia, because of their vulnerability. A participant explained thus:

> I do not think Rohingyas get involved in militancy. The militant network has developed, and some of the events occurred within Bangladesh: blogger killing, 500 bomb attacks, attacks on police, etc. There have been no Rohingyas arrested since 1992. The fact is that there are no records of any Rohingya arrested or accused of militant activities in Bangladesh. So, it is entirely baseless to mention Rohingya involvement in militancy (Journalist, Dhaka).

Although all participants rejected Rohingya connections with militancy, all participants argued that there is the potential for Rohingyas to join in different militant groups, which will destabilize Bangladesh if not the entire region.

The number of Rohingyas in Bangladesh is enormous, more than 1.2 million; many of them are youth. An Islamist, extremist group could easily target Rohingyas for recruitment into planning and effecting militant activities. From my observations and conversations, I can say without a doubt that Rohingyas think their persecution is mainly due to their religion. On examining their education system, I cannot conclude that it is in any way or form enlightened or modern. Islamic sensibilities could easily use ignorance under these circumstances to attract persecuted Muslims into joining militant groups. If they [Rohingyas] get arms from any source, a civil war could start in Bangladesh. From my own experience, I cannot say that militancy will not happen because different forces are at work with different interests in the Rohingya camp. For example, the Islamic fundamentalist political party Jamaat-e-Islami work there; the camp authorities have banned some NGOs (Activist Development & Relief Agency, Al Markazul Islami, Mukti and others). When people are under siege, oppressed, and uneducated, they can be led to militancy, terrorism, and to take revenge for their maltreatment. Unfortunately, their situation is such that it could become detrimental to Bangladesh. The Rohingya crisis could destabilise a large proportion of South Asia. Hence it is necessary and desirable for all concerned parties to end the crisis decisively, sooner rather than later (Journalist, Dhaka).

Passport fraud

Rohingyas are heavily involved in national identity theft within Bangladesh, including passport, national identity card (NID), and voter card fraud (Mortoza, 2017). These are security threats for Bangladesh. Many Rohingya managed to acquire Bangladeshi passports after bribing corrupt Bangladeshi officials. One interviewee said:

Some politicians seem to illegally use Rohingyas as a bank of votes. They provide them with pertinent documents such as the NID, which was not essential in the past to vote, but now these cards enable some Rohingya refugees to vote illegally. This kind of fraud appears in the news informing the general public that Rohingyas have taken up the national identity card (NID). I [interviewee] have seen a few of those illegal cards. This can change the voting equation in that region based on a number of illegal voters adding their support to a politician. From the newspaper, I could see stories that explained how some of these voters or so-called citizens of Bangladesh and have a Bangladesh passport which they acquire through fraudulent means through manipulation of the system in order to travel abroad (Academic, Dhaka).

Unwelcome social integration

More than a third of the interviewees argued that many Rohingya who came to Bangladesh in 1978 or 1992 integrated into Bangladesh illegally and lead their lives as Bangladeshis now. They tend to assimilate, and as one participant said, "Many of them fled to Bandarban and

Rangamati" (Journalist, Chittagong). When the problem continues for a long time, these illegals will forget their intention to return to their origins. Another participant said:

> Many of them [Rohingyas] are socially integrated into Bangladesh, especially those who came in 1978 or 1992. They married local women. Many of them are very influential now. Their second generation is also getting married to locals and working in Bangladesh as Bangladeshis. You will find many in the BCS (Bangladesh Civil service) cadres, police members, and bank officers, whom are of Rohingya origin (Journalist, Dhaka).

Many Rohingya descendants have become representatives of local government in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tract areas. The researcher met a couple in the camp who married Bengali women living in the camp in spite of the fact that the Bangladesh Government issued a public order in July 2014 prohibiting intermarriage between Bangladeshi citizens and Rohingya refugees (Chowdhury, 2021). An interviewee said the following regarding the integration of Rohingyas:

> They [Rohingyas] are used in politics. Many rich businesspeople have come to Cox's Bazar from Myanmar. Many of them become the chairman of a *Union Parishad* [local government] of Bangladesh, and many of them gained political posts of political parties in Bangladesh (Journalist, Dhaka).

Fear of social disorder

About two-thirds of the participants warned about the possibility of social disorder in the Cox's Bazar area because of the population's demographic imbalance. One-third of participants mentioned the Bangladesh Intelligence Department's failure with regard to the Genocide Remembrance Day observance in August 2019. As stated by one participant:

> The Rohingya crisis will have long-term political consequences for Bangladesh. If they start to do something extreme because they are in a desperate situation, the area becomes unsound. They have gathered two lakhs [200,000] in a single meeting. They have become more like a political party. What did the Intelligence Department [of Bangladesh] do? There is a severe social impact because the Rohingya population is greater than the entire population of Cox's Bazar itself (Academic, Dhaka).

Political debate

Although the Rohingya crisis has not had a significant impact on Bangladeshi internal politics, less than a quarter of participants involved in this research project argued that political debate exists between two big political parties in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party). One of these participants argued that "there is a possibility to hire [potential] terrorists from the camp." Another participant said:

> If any revolt happened in the camp, it would affect the two divided political parties of Bangladesh. Complaints will come against the government, and the opposition can take advantage [of this kind of problem]. So, the government is under some pressure. There is a lot of fear inside. The impact on internal politics has not been apparent yet. Sometimes, the BNP claimed that they repatriated Rohingyas during President Ziaur Rahman's tenure (1977–1981) but the Awami League government is failing to do so. There are such disputes (Columnist & Security Specialist, Dhaka).

NGO motives

About a quarter of the participants expressed their doubt about the attitude of NGOs and the UNHCR towards the refugees. They argued that NGO officials want the crisis to continue because it is in their best interests. One participant said:

> NGOs help and sympathise with Rohingyas, but some NGOs insist on them going against the government or the host community. Some countries are even helping them [Rohingyas] to agitate against the Bangladesh Government. Even the UNHCR wants this kind of crisis to survive. If it persists, the employees [in refugee related work] will continue to enjoy a lot of opportunities and benefits (Journalist, Cox's Bazar).

One of the participants, a Bangladesh Government official, argued about the NGOs' unethical activities and wastage of funding that comes for Rohingya welfare. He said:

> Except for a few NGOs, most of these have come here [Rohingya camp] to do business in the name of humanity. Although they have approved billions of *takas* for the Rohingya, there is no record of where money went. However, I went to some NGOs for auditing. I investigated their procurement systems; I observed that the NGOs purchased and spent money as they wish without following the Bangladesh Government's regulations. They also escaped paying the government's VAT (Government Official, Cox's Bazar).

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the social, economic, and political impacts on Bangladesh of the Rohingya refugees who have been living in Bangladesh since 1978. The study contributes to our understanding of the problems that the host community faces due to the geopolitical status quo concerning the Rohingya crisis. From the literature, it is apparent that only very nominal research on this aspect of the Rohingya crisis has been advanced thus far. This study is based on extensive field research, and the findings of the study contribute to sociological studies on development interactions between states in South Asia.

The research reveals that the sympathy that the Bangladeshi people once had towards the Rohingya refugees no longer exists because of the negative socioeconomic consequences on their livelihoods, particularly for locals in areas surrounding the refugee camps. The tension

between the refugee and host communities escalated because of access to the labor market, deprivation from NGO benefits, land use, deforestation, and demographic imbalance. The demographic imbalance in the area makes local people feel insecure and worried about the impact of the influx of refugees on their residential areas. Fittingly, they have grown to doubt whether the Rohingya will ever return to their homeland in Myanmar. The Rohingya are behaving aggressively and are involved in antisocial activities, which has created an unhealthy relationship with local Bangladeshi people (McDonald, 2017; Zafar, 2020). The destruction of the social plantation/forestry program to construct shelters for the refugees and the deprivation of foreign aid that is funnelled to the refugees leave the local poor to face financial losses, which has contributed to the unhealthy relationship between the refugees and the host communities (Babu, 2020). The anti-Rohingya conspiracy theories sought to blame Rohingya for the destruction of the social forestry project. Nonetheless, the Bangladesh authority selected the location for the refugees' temporary settlement without compensating the affected locals for their plantations, where the Rohingya people have not had a say in this decision. Also, Rohingya involvement is worsening law and order situation and drug trafficking (*yaba*) is destroying the country's young generation (Table 1). Again, as per conspiracy theories, the locals tend to accuse the Rohingya community solely of drug dealing. Nonetheless, the reality is that Bangladeshi drug dealers used vulnerable Rohingya people as carriers of drugs.

The associated environmental destruction is causing ecological imbalance, climate change, and long-term economic loss (Hammer & Ahmed, 2020; UNDP, 2018). There is also no development of infrastructure and resources in the area to accommodate the nearly two million refugees and locals. Traffic jams, air pollution, degrading water levels, and sanitation and electricity requirements all contribute to environmental imbalance and associated hardships for the residents.

Annual examinations were disrupted in the primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools as they were used as refugee shelters and centers at the time of the annual examination. The Bangladesh Government does not allow Rohingya students admission into public schools; however, a few Rohingya students have gained entry using fake identity cards, while local students face difficulties gaining admission into the same schools and colleges due to admission caps.

The Rohingya have become an economic burden on Bangladesh because there are continuing finance shortages from international funding bodies (OCHA, 2021), which causes financial uncertainty in Bangladesh, particularly when the world is on the brink of an economic recession due to Covid-19 related complications affecting economies around the globe. Such a situation has dire consequences for the developing economy of Bangladesh. The tourism industry, which normally contributes considerably to the national economy, is also trending downwards due to the Rohingya influx at Cox's Bazar (Myat, 2018). Illegal access to the job market where desperate Rohingyas sell their labor at a low rate undercuts the locals, increasing unemployment in the area (Chakma, 2019; Choudury & Fazlulkader, 2019). Also, the price of commodities and basic necessities, house rent, and transportation have increased markedly (László, 2018). The lower-income locals, as well as some middle-class people face economic hardships as a result of this local inflation, which is another reason for the enduring conflict between the hosts and refugees.

Most importantly, this study reveals that the Rohingya do not get involved in militancy within Bangladesh. There is no evidence of Rohingya involvement in recent militant activities in Bangladesh, with no cases filed against them concerning militancy (Table 1). However, the Bangladesh Government sees them as a potential threat to national security because of the

demographic imbalance and the potential to become part of a militant group due to their vulnerable situation making them ideal for recruitment into extremist groups (Martin et al., 2018). National identity fraud is another security threat for Bangladesh as many Rohingya have traveled overseas with fake Bangladeshi passports (Chakma, 2019; Mortoza, 2017). Also, many Rohingya have assimilated into local society through the assistance, allegedly, of corrupt politicians who target them to capture their votes during elections (Mortoza, 2017). Some people of refugee origin work in different departments of the Bangladesh Government, and they also become public representatives in local government and influential political leaders (Mortoza, 2017), which is a worry for Bangladesh because their integration into the Bangladesh population took place in illegal ways, and consequently these illegals may not uphold the national interest but instead support their Rohingya interests.

The research suggests that a threat or possibility of an uprising has the potential to create unrest in the camp, which could in turn affect the good name of the Cox's Bazar area. The gathering of people during Genocide Remembrance Day in 2019 made the Bangladesh Government anxious when it was clearly apparent that there was a demographic imbalance on the streets. The two major parties in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Awami League and BNP, constantly accuse each other of diplomatic failure regarding the ineffectual processes for the repatriation of the Rohingya to Myanmar. However, this question of repatriation also requires the support of powerful international entities, namely the UN, China, India and the US governments, to apply pressure on the Myanmar Government for their safe return.

The findings of this study suggest that some NGOs have unethical motives concerning Rohingya welfare and also the Bangladesh Government. Many question the intentions of the NGOs and INGOs, which seem to be keeping the Rohingya crisis alive for the purpose of receiving funds for employment opportunities and the luxurious facilities that they can enjoy. Also, the Bangladesh Government suspects that a few NGOs have created antigovernment sentiments as part of their external agendas. Furthermore, most of the NGO expenditure is not transparent.

Finally, the realistic conflict theory relates very well to the relationship between Rohingya refugees and the local people in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. The movement of the Rohingya to Bangladesh began in 1978 and continued to 2017 and even today. Many Rohingya youth in the camps were born and grew up there and have never been to Myanmar. About a million people have lived for a long time in a small place surrounded by barbed wire, which makes for strong solidarity and cohesion among this out-group of people. Bangladeshi locals complain that the Rohingya settlement has had a substantial negative impact on their livelihoods. Thus, it creates an "in-group versus out-group" conflict (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The locals and Rohingya refugees compete for limited resources in the local job market, and locals continue to lose land that is used to shelter Rohingya refugees. According to McKenzie and Gabriel (2017), Muzafer Sherif (1966), and Terhune and Matusitz (2016), this kind of competition for limited and essential resources creates hostility towards host communities. Zarate et al. (2004) argue that the threat of the in-group's job security could create an imagined threat that could cause a negative or stereotypical attitude towards the out-group. The Rohingya compete for the low-wage laboring jobs and not all kinds of employment. However, locals perceive the situation as being "Rohingyas are taking over local's jobs," which is a stereotyped attitude to the out-group that then increases social distance between the two groups. Many locals call the Rohingya "poisonous bail," which can be described as a local prejudice (Muzafer Sherif, 1966). A few socially integrated Rohingyas are in positions where they have political power in the local government circles of Bangladesh, and according to

Echebarria-Echabe and Guede ([2003]), the host community feels the threat of losing political power which is reinforced further by conspiracy theory.

CONCLUSION

The Rohingya conundrum is long-standing, and no one sees an end to this crisis due to the geopolitical complexities. Chinese and Indian interests in Myanmar have fashioned a geopolitical status quo for this problem, which has hindered any chances of finding a solution. As a result, Bangladesh has become a victim of the Rohingya crisis and continues to face significant social, economic, and political challenges due to the presence of large numbers of Rohingya refugees. As discussed, a number of changes have taken place as a consequence of the refugee camps that have convoluted the lives and livelihoods of host communities in the Cox's Bazar area, and drug trafficking has caused social disorders among locals. The environmental damage and the strain on natural resources are affecting biodiversity losses and are also affecting the local economy. The tourism industry is in decline and infrastructure is damaged with development stagnated. The national security of Bangladesh is extremely vulnerable due to the potential for predictable threats from Rohingya activities: passport fraud, impending rebellion, and the influence of suspicious NGO activities. If the crisis remains unsolved in the longer term, the likelihood of the situation remaining a security concern for Bangladesh alone is unlikely, as it could expand to upset and destabilize the whole South Asian region. I propose a few specific recommendations to improve the situation of the Rohingya issue to enable reasonable policies in practice. First, the Bangladesh government should create more employment opportunities for locals to minimize conflict, as sharing the labor market has been a significant cause of disagreement. Second, international funding bodies should allocate funds to support local low-income families to improve the situation between two groups. Third, the Bangladesh government should provide appropriate compensation to affected locals for any damage caused to their plantation projects due to the settlement of Rohingya refugees. Fourth, the infrastructural development in Cox's Bazar is essential for avoiding impacting locals' livelihood severely by the massive refugee influx. Finally, it is crucial that international actors, including China, India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and organizations such as the UN and ASEAN, work together to find a sustainable solution to the crisis. The status quo of the crisis caused an extended stay of Rohingyas in Bangladesh could worsen Rohingya's plight, and the situation could drive in a dangerous direction. It is essential to address this issue for the well-being of the displaced Rohingya community, as well as to restore Bangladesh's socioeconomic status, which has been negatively impacted by the influx of refugees. Until a solution is found, Bangladesh, the UN, and donor organizations must ensure that the Rohingya living in camps have safe and habitable conditions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
The author declares no conflict of interest.

ORCID

Iqthyer Uddin Md Zahed http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8424-8684

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Iqthyer Uddin Md Zahed holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of New England, Australia. He conducts research on Asian politics, genocide, forced migration, geopolitics, ethnic minority groups, conflict studies, refugee studies, digital health, and child development. He works as a researcher at the Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney, Australia.