
The Rohingya refugees' prolonged presence in Bangladesh: non-traditional security threats to the region

Shamim Hosen *¹ A

*Corresponding author: ¹Assistant Director, e-mail: shamim.du207@gmail.com

^A Assistant Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Abstract

The presence of refugees for an extended period of time may cause a slew of security issues in the host country. This study looked at the worrying sectors of non-traditional security and management issues produced by the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Environmental deterioration, economic risks, political and social unrest are all linked to non-traditional security threats. Bangladesh is deeply concerned about the internal strife within the Rohingya refugee and extremist groups. The prolonged stay of a large number of refugees in Bangladesh has become a concern, complicating issues of socioeconomic, environmental, and personal security. Because of the current inflow of Rohingya immigrants into Bangladesh, this qualitative research has mostly focused on non-traditional security issues. The study looked into whether the presence of Rohingya refugees caused any security concerns. Although the thorough literature study has improved awareness of the idea and concerns of non-traditional security, the research questions have highlighted the research difficulties through qualitative interviews. Thematic analysis of the transcript was employed in this study. The study's findings have provided an opportunity to investigate the non-traditional security threat brought on by the presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh from a different angle.

Key words: Rohingya Influx, Security Concerns, Non-traditional Security, Bangladesh.

Introduction

The Rohingya crisis, which has heightened tensions in South Asia, is the topic that receives the most attention at the moment. Bangladesh and Myanmar have had a tense relationship as a result of it. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya extremist group, was subjected to a harsh crackdown by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) in 2017, which resulted in the displacement of Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh has been engulfed in a major refugee crisis as a result of the brutal operation in Myanmar. The regional power blocs have backed Myanmar's military-backed government in its diplomatic obstinacy, producing an imbalanced situation.

Non-traditional security concerns include socioeconomic inequity, political instability, and environmental damage (Chaijaroenwatana and Haque, 2020). This study identified the possibilities of non-traditional threats and managerial crises due to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. As it has been assumed that the recent influx of the Rohingya poses a threat to Bangladesh's socioeconomic, cultural, political, and environmental security.

The Rohingya, Myanmar's biggest homeless ethnic group, lost their citizenship in 1982 (Chaijaroenwatana and Haque, 2020), resulting in state-sanctioned repression that has led to forced migration today (Lee, 2019). The host country is up against a big task, with challenges to non-traditional security and limited resources (Rahman, 2010). Refugees in thirty-four camps get

necessities from the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), including food, shelter, sanitation, and other necessities (Lejano et al., 2020).

The term “refugee” conjures up pictures of people who have been compelled to leave their homes due to their misfortune. “Refugees are persons who have escaped war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international boundary to find shelter in another country”, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (UNHCR, 2020). However, the host nations believe that refugees pose a threat to human security. Human security refers to concerns such as refugees, crime, drugs, the environment, and piracy, whereas non-military issues refer to theories of world security (Booth, 2012). The Copenhagen School of Security Studies, under the direction of Buzan, Waever, and Wilde, examined the non-military aspects of security (Buzan and Hansen, 2008, Buzan et al., 1997). Concerns for human security have been investigated from a number of perspectives, including those related to the economy, food, health, environment, and personal, social, and political issues (UNDP, 1994). Protection from oppression, hardship, and disease, as well as fortification against unexpected disturbances, are further elements of human security (UNDP, 1994).

Furthermore, the recent inflow of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh has sparked fears of non-traditional security issues and dangers. Non-traditional security challenges in South Asia may eventually morph into military security concerns. This study aims to examine the non-traditional security issues that have arisen as a result of the presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and to see if the notions of security are being challenged or not. In addition, the research looked at the management problem that has resulted from the huge exodus of Rohingya refugees. Non-traditional security problems are also crucial to the management team to address the impending challenges posed by the presence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The study’s findings provide a new understanding of the problem, allowing it to be approached from a different angle. Because of this, the study is crucial to understanding the non-traditional security challenges that have developed as a result of the prolonged presence of Rohingya.

Material and methods

The world’s largest stateless people, the Rohingyas, are labelled by the UN as “the world’s most persecuted minority” (Dyer, 2017). Unauthorized and coerced migrations from Myanmar to neighboring countries, particularly Bangladesh, have become an ongoing issue since the 1970s. The Rohingya (religious, ethnic, and linguistic group) minority was not acknowledged as a minority group by the Myanmar government (Lewa, 2009), which declared them to be people of Bengali origin in Rakhine because of their varied culture and civilization (Haque, 2013). However, the current crisis began on August 25, 2017, when the ARSA allegedly assaulted a police checkpoint in Myanmar’s northern region. Conflict-induced displacement can be attributed to the recently forced movement of Rohingya refugees (Melander and Berg, 2003). The influx of Rohingya migrants into Bangladesh has been described as “unprecedented in terms of numbers and pace” by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Economist 2017; Lee, 2019).

In addition, non-traditional security focuses primarily on problem-solving and society's ethical responsibilities (Newman, 2010). Bangladesh has been experiencing non-traditional security difficulties due to the forced migration of huge refugees (Koser, 2007). The lengthy presence of displaced individuals generated a slew of anxieties in host countries. In Rwanda, for example, refugee safety and social networking issues have been raised (Fajth, et al., 2019). Military capability, internal instability, and necessities are all impacted by refugees (Jacobsen, 1996).

Research on the Rohingya ethnic minority has been done from a variety of angles (Fisher, 2017; Qadir et al., 2019), particularly regarding the causes, dimensions, and phrases of the Rohingya disaster in Myanmar. It can be noted that limited study on the security and human rights

implications of the Rohingya crisis has been conducted (Hossain et al., 2020; Lejano et al., 2020). In terms of security issues and risks to the host country, the current research has filled in the gaps of earlier research.

From an ethno-demographic perspective, Qadir et al. (2019) examined the Rohingya crisis, concentrating on two crucial actors: the Buddhist Rakhine and the Muslim Rohingya. The Rohingya problem is brought on by denial of citizenship, loss of independence, and a lack of essential services. However, the research did not address the geopolitical interests of regional powers in Myanmar's Rakhine (Rohingya) State, which has resulted in a major refugee catastrophe.

Several studies have indicated that the state's persecution of Rohingyas (Forino et al., 2017; Bhatia et al., 2018; Fink 2018) resulted in a massive exodus into neighbouring countries, with Bangladesh hosting over ten million refugees (Economist, 2018). The concentration camps are under stress as a result of the tremendous influx of migrants who may attempt to leave to interact with the population (Hossain et al., 2020). Another choice would be to establish radical Mujahidin groups like the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (Group, 2018). Security officials have thought that the extreme Rohingya refugee group could damage Bangladesh's credibility (Uddin, 2015; Bashar, 2017).

In addition, it is anticipated that Bangladesh is currently home to 4.7% of the world's refugees (UNOCHA, 2018).

Bangladesh's government has classified the Rohingya refugees as "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals". The Macro Settlement Development Plan (MSDP) for refugees in Cox's Bazar was developed by the RRRC, IOM, and UNHCR (Chowdhury, 2019). The MSDP is collaborating with the refugee camps' different actors to provide elementary and humanitarian services and support. The refugees have caused a slew of issues in the social, economic, environmental, and



Figure 1 – Deforestation at the Camps areas, Cox's Bazar

cultural realms. According to a United Nations study, over 43,000 acres of mountainous and forest land in Cox's Bazar were destroyed for temporary homes and fuel (Report, 2019). Figure 1 also demonstrates the real scenario of the camps area (Bangladesh Post-09 August 2019/ SHB Shuvro). Problems with the cost of everyday necessities, money, and land have developed in the vicinity of the camps. The government has recommended that a particular level of help, especially 20-25 per cent of national and foreign grants, be sanctioned for the native community (Sohel and Siddiqui, 2019). This prediction has yet to come true. Again, only 2500 police officers are stationed in the camps to manage a large number of migrants. Consequently, it is currently causing disruption and raising concerns within the host community.

Furthermore, security experts expressed their fear that extremist organizations might have an impact on the Rohingya issue. It has been suggested that the uncertainty may lead to a long-term catastrophe, with a global terrorist organisation such as Al-Qaeda or IS threatening revolution (Bashar, 2019). Internal security concerns have also been recognized as a source of anxiety as a result of the humanitarian crisis and resulting in the emergence of a new security component (Bashar, 2017). The Rohingyas pose a security danger to Bangladesh's non-violent atmosphere (Hossain et al., 2020:25). Unemployed and illiterate Rohingyas are involved in a variety of illicit and criminal activities in the campsites, posing a threat to the host country (Molla, 2019; Anjum, 2020;

Banerjee, 2020). As a result of the Rohingya refugees' presence, the host country is dealing with social, environmental, economic, and legal issues (Babu, 2020).

Methods

The Rohingya refugees were forced to flee their homes owing to violence, persecution, and harassment. It is possible to utilize the "Push-Pull Models," which are comparable to the neo-classical macro model (Haas, 2008), to analyze the forced movement of Rohingya refugees, depending on whether these factors operate in a bi-directional or single direction. State persecution acts as a push factor in the Rohingya issue, while humanitarian aid and safety in the host nation work as a pull factor in forced migration.

This study has concentrated on a specific structure and technique for investigating the research problem and focused on human security, or non-traditional security (UNDP, 1994). The research was expected to be completed using the given methodology and conceptual framework.

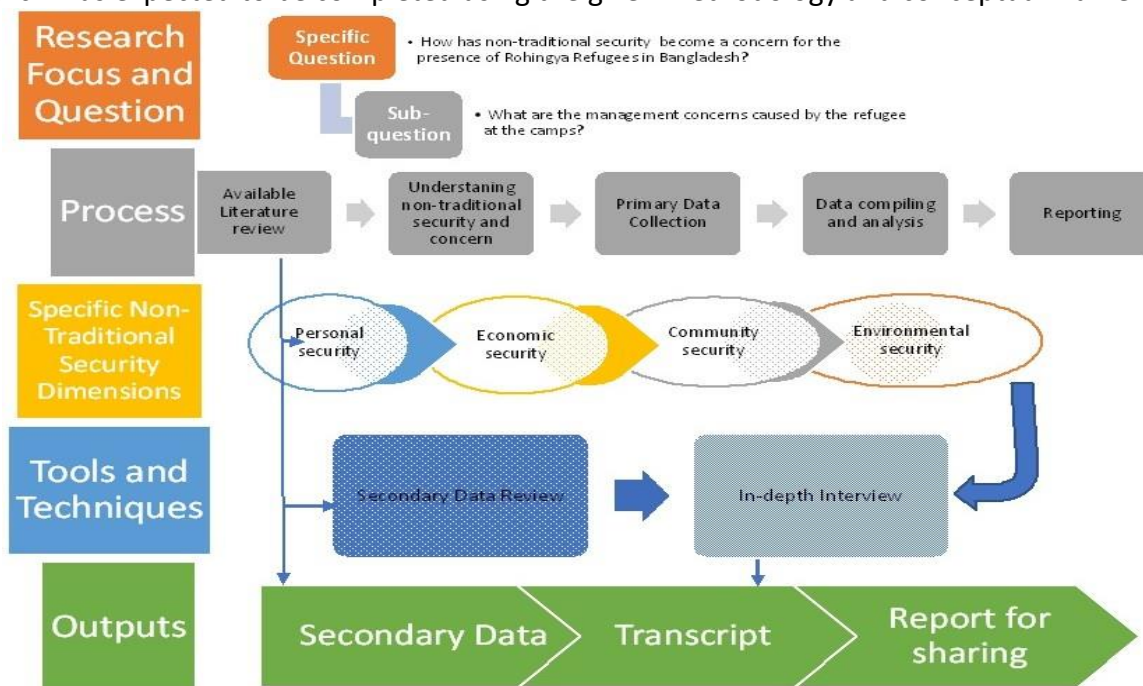


Figure 2 – Methodology and Conceptual Framework

The research question serves as the main foundation for this qualitative investigation. The study's first and most important question is a) how has non-traditional security become a concern for Rohingya refugees? and the research's sub-question is: b) what are the management problems caused by the refugee at the camps? In-depth interviews and a comprehensive examination and analysis of secondary data were used to examine these research issues.

It aimed to provide a comprehensive contextual perspective (Punch, 2014) of in-depth comprehension of the concept by employing creativity, adaptability, and sensitivity to make sense of the study topic (Mayan, 2009). This study looked at a variety of sources to have a better grasp of non-traditional security issues faced by Bangladesh for Rohingya refugees. In this study, non-probabilistic purposive sampling was used to conduct Key Informant Interviews and collect in-depth data to address the research questions (Battaglia, 2008). The interview eschewed 'methodolatry' and focal queries to avoid getting erroneous study findings in a flexible manner (Janesick, 1998).

Additionally, qualitative methodologies are more appropriate for analyzing weak and vulnerable communities, such as the Rohingya refugees (Liamputtong, 2006). Since it takes into account qualitative interviewing of service providers at the camp locations, this study has worked methodically on a variety of ambivalent data (Edwards and Holland, 2013). It was a thrilling

adventure (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). However, in light of the present pandemic situation (WHO, 2020), an online interview through Zoom and Skype was recommended. Four of the five interviews were done using Zoom, while one was done using Skype. Although there are certain technological disadvantages and hazards to online interviewing, it is cost-effective and excellent for distance interviews (Archibald et al., 2019; Jenner and Myers, 2019).

The research included in-depth interviews with government officials with practical experience working in refugee camps, particularly RRRC officials in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. It has purposefully chosen the respondent to obtain important information from the appropriate individual. People and study with people are not value-free (Janesick, 1998: 41), therefore the bias may be questioned. However, by ignoring the researcher's personal views and ideas, this study has minimized biases (Brewer, 2004). The interviews for this study were digitally captured and analyzed sensibly. The truth has been preserved from falsification because of an understanding of research ethics.

Thematic analysis was also used in the study to analyse the transcript and data because it is important for qualitative researchers (Jugder, 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The study also used NVivo for digital coding because it is quicker and easier than manual coding (Burnard et al., 2008). According to the highest ethical standards and with considerations based on the knowledge and research design, the study was carried out. The importance of ethics, morals, and truth in knowledge sharing has been highlighted at every stage of the research process.

Results and discussion

To better understand and obtain unique information on unconventional security concerns related to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, five thorough in-depth interviews were conducted as part of this qualitative research. The shadow names of the respondents were used to write the transcripts. The following is a summary of the interviews (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Briefly Interview

<i>SI No</i>	<i>Shadow Name</i>	<i>Interview Dates</i>	<i>Through</i>
<i>01</i>	<i>Shaha</i>	<i>15th December 2020</i>	<i>Via Zoom</i>
<i>02</i>	<i>Methy</i>	<i>17th December 2020</i>	<i>Via Zoom</i>
<i>03</i>	<i>Hasan</i>	<i>18th December 2020</i>	<i>Via Zoom</i>
<i>04</i>	<i>Islam</i>	<i>23rd December 2020</i>	<i>Via Zoom</i>
<i>05</i>	<i>Abu</i>	<i>26th December 2020</i>	<i>Via Skype</i>

Over the NVivo data analysis program, the research was coded using the following nodes. It may not be particularly remarkable to a novice researcher, but it has provided the researcher with new expertise using the software. Although the program contains flaws (Zamawe, 2015), it has reduced the amount of time researchers spend coding and evaluating data.

For this study, the grounded approach theory (Charmaz, 2009) was utilized to create four parental nodes and six child nodes in NVivo. The transcript was coded in order to better comprehend the Rohingya problem, its roots, and the current inflow, as well as non-traditional security concern (economic security, social security, environmental security, personal security, management concerns, and repatriation challenges).

The study looked into certain aspects of non-traditional security, such as social, personal safety, environmental, and economic. The presence of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar has caused significant anxiety for the Bangladeshi government in terms of non-traditional security problems, according to the study's results. For the humanitarian ground, the migrants were given a humanitarian shelter. However, the refugees are now behaving strangely and disturbingly toward

the host population. From a security standpoint, the problem has gotten national and international attention. While non-traditional security shares some theoretical ground with human security, human security has recently grown in importance as a component of all security (Ahmed, 2018). Unusual security worries, such as social, economic, environmental, and personal issues, are unsettling and a threat to the host nation. Security aspects have been highlighted as being particularly relevant in the research interviews.

Table 2 – NVivo Codebook

<i>Name of Nodes</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Files</i>	<i>References</i>
<i>Management Concern</i>	<i>Management challenged caused by the refugees</i>	8	40
<i>Non-Traditional Security Concern</i>	<i>Non-traditional security has become a concern</i>	12	81
<i>Economic Security</i>	<i>The dimension of economic security has become a concerning issue</i>	6	10
<i>Environmental Security</i>	<i>The dimension of environmental security has become a concerning issue</i>	7	9
<i>Personal Security</i>	<i>The dimension of personal security has become a concerning issue</i>	7	15
<i>Social Security</i>	<i>The dimension of social security has become a concerning issue</i>	6	6
<i>Repatriation</i>	<i>Repatriation is significant</i>	9	30
<i>Rohingya Crisis</i>	<i>Understanding Rohingya crisis</i>	27	480
<i>Causes and Factors of Forced Migration</i>	<i>State-sponsored persecution is the primary cause of the ethnoreligious Rohingya crisis</i>	9	126
<i>Recent Influx and Management</i>	<i>Recent influx caused through blaming Rohingya extremist group those who attacked the police post in 2017</i>	7	63

Social Security Concerns for the Region

Women's and children's affairs, drug and narcotics prevention, crime, and terrorism are all linked to social security (Ahmed, 2018). The Rohingya refugees have become the country's Achilles heel, spreading societal anxiety throughout the country. Mr. Abu has expressed that **"...I do think that the socio-economic and environmental dimension of human security has become a concern for the host community"**. Again, Mrs. Methy has said that **"Of course, the socio-economic and environmental perspective of human security has become problematic and concerning matter nowadays. The Rohingya refugees are engaged in drug dealing, smuggling, gang fight, kidnapping, and other social and political issues"**. As a result of the refugee's long-term presence in Bangladesh, social instability and internal clashes have led to a rise. By using the Bangladeshi National Identity Card (NID) and Passport, the Rohingya refugees are attempting to blend in with Bangladesh's general population. Social security in the nation has been affected, which is a problem.

Economic Security Concerns for the Region

The refugees put enormous strain on the camp regions' demand and supply chains for food, water, medicine, and other necessities. As there is no banking sector, illicit and unauthorized money transactions have become an issue for the camp region. Mrs. Methy said that **"The refugee has created economic pressure on the camps areas as their number is more than one million"**. Islam also said that **"There is an economic threat.... when some people get the subsidy from the government and other people don't get the subsidy.... make an economic imbalance"**. Mr. Hasan

expressed that **“the price of daily goods and services has been increased for the refugee camps in Ukhia and Kutupalong camps areas. Illegal money circulation inside the camps has created internal grouping among the Rohingyas”**. In addition to raising the prices of local items, the migrants have posed a threat to the tourism sector in Cox’s Bazar. The flow of illicit funds has grown to be a significant source of worry for Bangladesh's economy.

Environmental Security Concerns for the Region

The presence of more than a million Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh influences biodiversity loss, ecological imbalance, and environmental deterioration. Mr. Shaha said that **“...there were huge trees and reserve forest which has become a narrowed and deforestation. They had cut huge trees for firewood and accommodation.... soil erosion has become a serious problem for building shelter by leveling hilly areas”**. Mr. Hasan exposed that **“two main challenges caused by the refugees’ long-staying are the destruction of reserve forests and the water crisis”**.

Mr. Abu explained that **“After the recent influx, more than 1 million Rohingyas are staying in 34 camps in Bangladesh. their shelter needed huge land where the massive forest has been destroyed for their accommodation”**. For the sake of the refugees, Cox’s Bazar’s reserve forest has been devastated. Even though water is an important component of the ecosystem (Ahmed 2018), the uplifting of large amounts of water for a large population is causing a water crisis in the campsites. As a result, the migrants are raising concerns about Bangladesh’s ecology.

Personal Security Fears for the Region

The personal security of an individual has become stressful and stiffness for the refugees. Mrs. Methy recognised that **“...there is a huge chance of an internal clash.... drug dealing is the main reason for illegal money transactions which ultimately shaped conflict and clash”**. Whereas Mr. Hasan said that **“Non-traditional securities have become a concerning matter as the refugees are creating assault, revolts, clashes, drug dealing, smuggling, and other criminal activities at the refugee camps and their surroundings”**. Thus, the Rohingya refugees are involved in a variety of criminal acts, including violating Bangladeshi laws and regulations. Internal fighting has erupted among the Rohingya refugees in the camps. As a result of the rising practices of smuggling, criminality, and terrorist organizations in Cox's Bazar, the government is confronting security threats and challenges.

Management Concerns at the Refugee Camps

To provide humanitarian relief and help to Rohingya refugees, the government of Bangladesh has been collaborating closely with the UN, NGOs, and INGOs since 2017. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) is collaborating with RRRC and UNHCR. A program for food aid and supply is being developed by the World Food Program. The Rohingya crisis in Cox’s Bazar, on the other hand, has raised significant management problems. Maintaining peace and order while providing adequate humanitarian help has become a key management problem for the host country. Mr. Shaha said that **“...Presently, there are 5 camps in Tecknaf and 29 camps in Ukhia including Kutupalong. There are blocs and sub-blocs under these 34 camps. From the RRRC there are one CiC (Camp in Charge) and one Assistant CiC. For the bloc, there is a head Majhi (Majhi system is one kind of established by the Bangladesh government where Majhi was appointed by the Army, Majhi is not an aged or respected people rather an accountable and responsible people) and under a bloc, there are 13 sub-bloc with a Majhi for each sub-bloc”**. The Majhi system’s camp blocs and subblocs, however, do not guarantee an appropriate management environment. Mrs. Methy informed that **“...nine associate organizations of the UN are deployed here.... the UNHCR plays the lead role. IOM also plays a role here. Site management activities are done by IOM and UNHCR, in proportion 50% by IOM and 50% by UNHCR”**. But the management crisis can be noted from the statement of Mr. Abu as he said that **“the management concern of the camps is to maintain the law-and-order situation there along with ensuring the human rights of the refugees”**.

As a result, the study discovered that the management problems generated by the Rohingya refugees are coordination among organizations, keeping peace inside the camps due to internal confrontations, protecting refugee human rights, and ensuring law and order situation.

Returning Home: A Challenge

The effective repatriation methods will determine the Rohingya refugees' ability to live in peace and prosperity in the future. Mr. Shaha said that **"...repatriation is the solution to this problem, where an international organization like the UN and influencing states like Chin, America, and India can play a role. I realized that Rohingyas are interested to go back to their country, but they want to back with their citizen rights"**. The Rohingya's citizenship rights in Myanmar can be established through a peaceful return. If not, Mr. Hasan found that **"the non-traditional security issues for the presence of the Rohingya might spread to the other region of South Asia and become a South Asian Balkan at the Bay of Bengal"**. Sustainable repatriation while safeguarding the fundamental and human rights of the refugees is the long-term answer to the Rohingya dilemma. International agencies like the United Nations and hegemonic nations like the US, UK, EU, China, and India can exert pressure on Myanmar to send its nationals back.

Moreover, the sporadic and attractive border between Bangladesh and Myanmar has become an accessible route for illicit operations like smuggling, drug trafficking, and prostitution. The Rohingya camps have turned into a haven for various sorts of organized criminality. The Rohingya refugees' conduct has changed, and they are becoming agitated towards Bangladesh, so Bangladesh's government is placing limits and limitations on mobility. Thus, concerns and tensions around the Rohingya issue must be addressed as soon as possible to reestablish peace in the area.

Conclusions

This qualitative study looked at a non-traditional security issue for the Rohingya refugee's long-term presence in Bangladesh. Non-traditional security has emerged as a major threat and challenge to regional and humanitarian security in the host community, according to this in-depth interview-based study. The Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar has sparked long-term security concerns and altered security dimensions. The internal security situation in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh is deteriorating and turning into a source of tension that requires immediate and permanent resolution through effective repatriation. If the matter is not resolved, it might become a major problem and a 'South Asian Balkan' in Bangladesh's south-eastern region. With the aid of a global organization like the UN and regional powers like China and India, it will therefore require significant management techniques to cope with internal security and a long-term approach to repatriation processes.

Moreover, the host community has experienced non-traditional security risks and conflicts because of the multifaceted concern generated for the Rohingya refugee. The Rohingya management authority and the government of Bangladesh must implement a security management strategy in order to address the issue until peaceful repatriation occurs (Gaffar 2018).

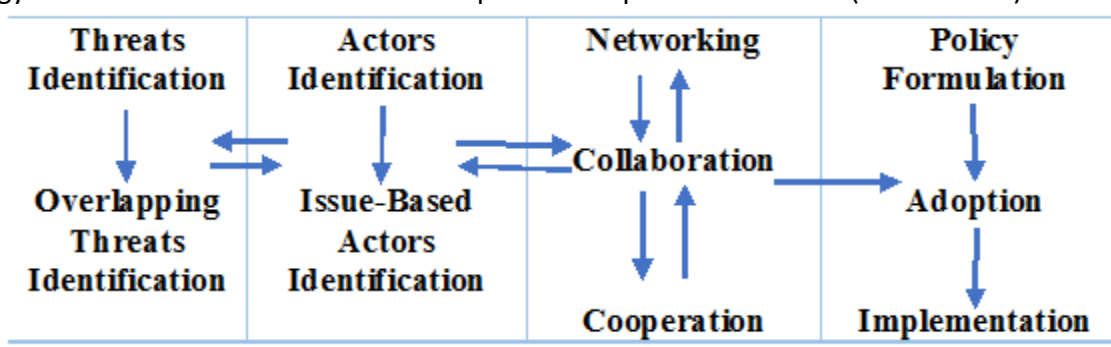


Figure 3 – Management Model of Security (Gaffar 2018)

The above figure (fig.3) shows how the model recognizes important actors by identifying key threats (Gaffar 2018). The model then addresses threat and actor networking and collaboration in order to determine the appropriate policy to execute (Gaffar 2018). This approach may be used to identify critical non-traditional security concerns and prominent actors so that significant management and repatriation measures can be implemented. Politics and internal grouping associations must be stopped to maintain peace and stability. The security governance model and the usage of elite forces are required for the administration that is peaceful. Economic stability is critical for the region's overall security; as a result, aid must be available to the local population as well. The international power bloc should exert pressure on Myanmar to allow for peaceful return and to grant the Rohingya all human and civic rights.

Future Research Direction

The research has opened the possibility of doing more research on the same issue by gathering data from refugees to discover new perspectives. Local people's experiences may also be used to better comprehend and analyze the non-traditional security problem. The study has left a scope and gap which can be addressed by more research on non-traditional security issues from a variety of perspectives.

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Declaration of Ownership

This paper is based on my original research. No one can contest that he or she is the writer of this work.

Conflict of Interest

This research article does not include any conflicts of interest. There are no conflicts of interest in conducting, publishing, or distributing this research.

Ethical Clearance

This study was conducted in accordance with high ethical standards, and it was ethically authorized by the university during my MSc course work at the University of Aberdeen in Aberdeen, Scotland, United Kingdom.

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