

# The Impact of Border Externalization and Militarization in Asia

Results from Phase 1 of the project

*Border Externalization and Militarization: A Global Analysis*

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This report contains the results from Phase 1 of the Project Border Externalization and Militarization: A Global Analysis. The research was commissioned by the AFSC International Programs Just Migration Thematic Hub/ Lead, and highlights the results of research that was conducted by AFSC to critically examine the global impact of border externalization and militarization on people on the move, border, transit and impacted communities.

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# General Migration Context

Over the course of history, people have crossed borders seeking safer living conditions, better opportunities, and improved quality of life (Charles-Edwards et al., 2019). The influence of migration on Asia's politics, economy, and society has generated significant discussion. The area has seen a significant increase in both local and global migration, due to factors such as rapid urbanization, financial inequality, and political instability (Takenaka et al., 2019). The growing concentration of economic activity in urban areas of the Asian continent has contributed to internal migration (Wang, 2016). Consequently, major population influxes have been witnessed by megacities such as Beijing, Tokyo, and Mumbai, resulting in a variety of socioeconomic and infrastructure issues (Charles-Edwards et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the primary causes of international migration include demographic imbalances, economic inequalities, climate change, religion and cultural factors, political instability, regional conflicts, and wars in Asia. These factors have made it easier for many people to travel across borders both inside and outside of the region (Takenaka et al., 2019). According to the 2016 New Asia-Pacific Report's Benefits and Challenges of Migration, some countries—like Malaysia, Singapore, and the Gulf States—have developed into popular migration hotspots, while other countries—like China, India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal—have become significant sending nations. Hugo (2016) claims that this has resulted in a range of migratory patterns, including forced relocation due to conflict or other external factors, labor migration, and family reunions.

Consequently, bordering processes have grown in importance in Asia in recent years as governments have worked to control and regulate cross-border migration (World Bank Group, 2017). Malaysia and Thailand, for instance, have established guest worker initiatives in order to alleviate the labor scarcity in Southeast Asia (Kaur, 2010). Special consideration is given to destination nations including Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Some countries have developed a range of entry requirements targeted at attracting immigrants with specific skills in an attempt to limit immigration. These regulations seek to strike a compromise between worries about demographic shifts and social integration and the economic advantages of migration (Arifianto, 2009).

Aside from migration, Asia's geopolitical landscape has witnessed significant advancements in border security and administration. Concerns over border disputes, transnational terrorism, and the impact of border security measures on migration trends have become more significant in the region (Van, 2021). The development of transnational crime, human trafficking, and smuggling networks further complicates the migration scenario and necessitates concerted action to counter these problems (Shivakoti, 2020). However, in light of these trends, it is crucial to comprehend the intricate character of migration in Asia and how it interacts with bordering dynamics

## MIGRATION FLOWS AND TRENDS

The majority of migration in Asia happens inside its subregions, such as Southeast, South, and Central Asia, as well as between its bordering nations (Sugiyarto, 2014). But there are also a significant number of foreign migrants living in Asia, both from inside the continent and from elsewhere in the world. Considering that estimates from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) place approximately 30% of all migrants in the world in Asia (Sharma et al., 2015),

Numerous unique migration systems have been established, and international migration within Asia differs greatly throughout nations (Yun, 2017). Variations in governmental policies, economic development phases, and urbanization levels are reflected in these systems. Significant variation is also evident in internal migration within Asia. Data from the IMAGE project, for instance, show variations in the lifespan intensity and spatial redistribution pattern among 16 Asian nations (Bell et al., 2014). Labor migration from nations like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines to nations like Malaysia, Singapore, and the Gulf states—all of which provide greater economic opportunities—is one of the distinctive migration movements in Asia (Hugo, 2016). According to Wickramasekara (2016), labor migration in the Asian region primarily consists of migration from rural to urban areas within nations like China and India, or migration from less developed to more developed countries, such as South Asia to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Young people looking for work in industries including manufacturing, services, construction, and domestic work make up the majority of labor migrants (Bauder, 2006). While males have traditionally dominated labor migration patterns, women have recently been more involved, particularly in sectors including domestic work, healthcare, and hospitality (Afsar, 2011). As per Gachter (2022), migrant workers frequently encounter bias, mistreatment, and misuse in their destination countries. Additionally, many labor migrants deal with legal issues such contract violations, tight visa restrictions, and restricted access to legal resources.

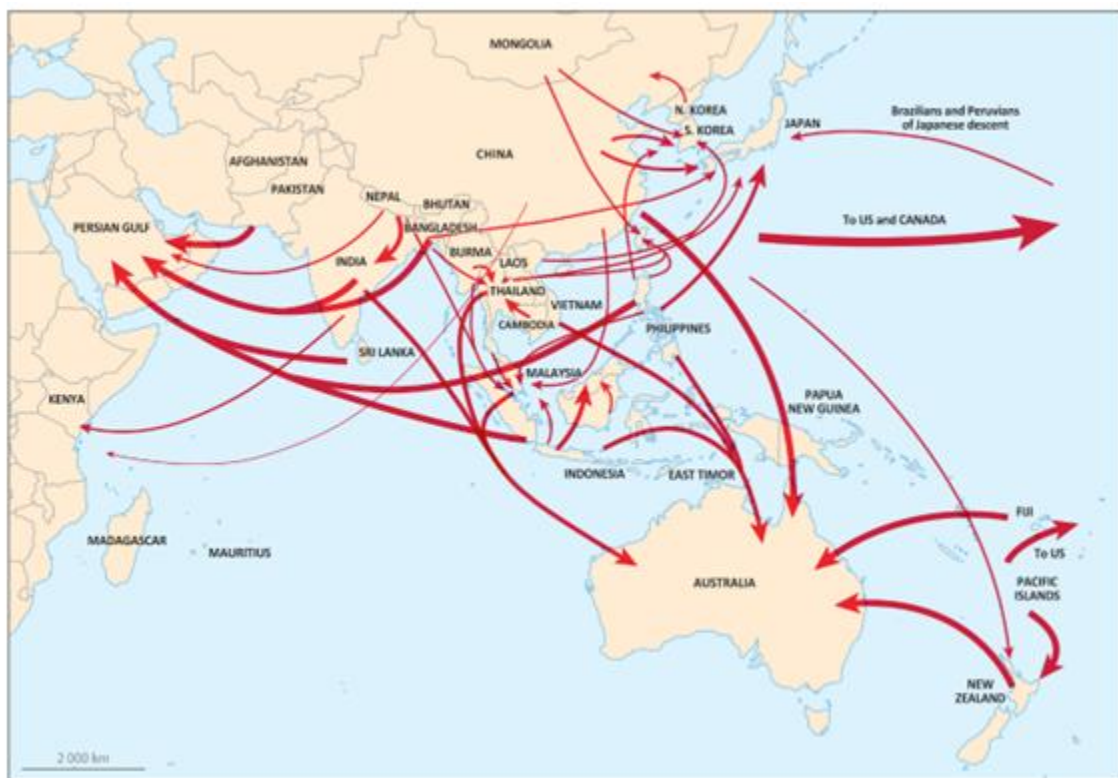
According to Abel et al. (2019), forced displacement in Asia is mostly caused by conflicts, persecution, and environmental conditions. These displacements can occur inside countries or across borders. Members of ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and political dissident organizations comprise the population of Asian refugees and asylum seekers (2018, Ngin). Important refugee movements include Afghan refugees in neighboring countries, Syrian refugees in Turkey and Lebanon, and Rohingya migrants from Myanmar (Fransen & De Haas, 2022). During their journey, asylum seekers and refugees encounter a range of risks including human trafficking, exploitation, and violence. Many of them also encounter legal problems like being held in custody, sent back to their country, and having restricted opportunities to apply for asylum. Among the challenges refugees encounter in integrating are social marginalization, language barriers, and limited access to healthcare and education (Ngin, 2018).

Many migrants choose Afghanistan as a point of origin, transit, and destination as they flee persecution, conflict, and harsh economic conditions. The risks faced by migrants traveling through Afghanistan include landmines, harsh terrain, criminal networks, and armed conflict. Afghan migrants frequently go on dangerous multi-country travels in an attempt to

reach Europe or other destination nations, where they encounter abuse and exploitation (Van Houte, 2017).

Bangladeshi migrants take unauthorized routes through countries in Asia, like Malaysia, Thailand, and India, where they run the risk of being sexually and physically abused as well as being used by traffickers and smugglers. Because they do not have the necessary papers or protection, they are more vulnerable while in transit (Khan, 2020).

In the other scenario, due to Malaysia's stringent immigration regulations, obtaining legal status for migrants is difficult. In Malaysia, a large number of migrant laborers are engaged in jobs in the construction and agricultural industries under temporary work licenses, which are frequently linked to particular companies, making them susceptible to abuse and exploitation. Undocumented immigrants have little access to legal defense or justice against unjust treatment and are at risk of arrest, incarceration, and deportation (Kassim, 2014). Many migrants from surrounding nations including Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia use Thailand as a transit country. Human trafficking organizations take advantage of migrants traveling through Thailand, particularly in the fishing, farming, and prostitution industries (Denney & Xayamoungkhoun, 2023).



Map 1: Contemporary Migrations within and from the Asia Pacific Region

Source: Castles Stephen, de Hass Hein and Miller Mark J. (2014) *The Age of Migration*, Red Globe Press, 420 p. Conception: E. Opigez (IRD/CEPED).

## STATES' ROLE

The policies and responses of various governments, each defined by historical backgrounds, geopolitical concerns, economic interests, and domestic political dynamics, have an impact on the macro-level dynamics surrounding migration in the Asia-Pacific region (Inglis, 2007).

To illustrate, India's past has always involved movement of people from Bangladesh and Nepal, migration of workers to the Gulf countries, and arrival of refugees due to internal conflicts. The Foreigners Act of 1946, overseeing the entry, stay, and exit of foreigners in India, as well as the Emigration Act of 1983, governing the employment of Indian workers abroad, are among the laws and policies that oversee migration in India (Khadria et al., 2008).

Khan (2020) reported that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has generated controversy, leading to discussions and demonstrations concerning the rights of immigrant citizens in neighboring countries where Muslims predominate. Bangladesh serves as a major hub for labor migration and attracts Rohingya refugees who are escaping violence in Myanmar. Bangladesh has enacted laws to control immigration, safeguard the rights of migrant workers, and support those returning home. The Overseas Employment and Migrant Workers Act of 2013, for instance, regulates hiring practices and guarantees the well-being of migrant workers from Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugee crisis is placing a great deal of strain on camp infrastructure and resources, making it difficult for the government to manage huge numbers of refugees (Rahman & Sakib, 2021).

Similarly, China's industrial and economic expansion have brought about a noticeable shift from rural to urban regions and increased immigration from overseas, including skilled laborers and Chinese diaspora communities. China has also put laws into place to attract skilled immigrants; the China Talent Visa (R) is one such initiative. China has enacted policies like the reform of household registration (hukou) and urbanization programs to regulate internal migration. The government has made action to draw in skilled migrants and international students in addition to tightening laws pertaining to irregular migration and border security (Richter, 2023). Pakistan has a track record of movement from neighboring countries, which includes labor migration to the Gulf and Europe, as well as Afghan refugees escaping conflict. Policies centered on voluntary return, registration, and support measures have made it challenging for Pakistan to manage sizable refugee populations, particularly Afghan refugees. The government has also put policies in place to control labor migration, safeguard migrant workers' rights, and stop human trafficking and smuggling (Ahmad, 2017).

In addition to Rohingya refugees, Malaysia has drawn labor migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Indonesia, among other nearby nations. The Immigration Act, 1959/63, which governs non-citizens' admission, residency, and removal, and the Employment Act, 1955, which governs the rights and working conditions of migrant laborers, are two examples of Malaysia's immigration laws. Malaysia has put laws in place to control labor migration, including requirements for work permits and employing foreign labor only through approved means. Claims of maltreatment, exploitation, and discrimination have been made regarding

the government's handling of migrant labor in complaints (Nah, 2012). There have been migrations both within and outside of Japan for a variety of reasons, including employment, education, and refugee status. Japan is drawing skilled migrants in part by offering a points-based permanent residency program. The Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which establishes procedures for immigration and refugee status judgments, and the Technical Intern Training Program, which permits non-Japanese individuals to get training in Japan, are two examples of immigration laws in Japan. Furthermore, the government has enacted immigration reform measures to tackle demographic issues such as labor shortages and aging populations (Kwon, 2020).



# Border externalization, militarization and criminalization in Asia

Border externalization, militarization, and criminalization are significant aspects of migration policies that impact various countries in Asia. These practices involve transferring border management to countries of origin or transit, increasing military presence at borders, and treating migrants as criminals. Several countries in Asia are involved in these processes, collaborating with external entities to enforce strict border controls and deter migration. The term "border externalization" describes the delegation of border control authority to nations outside of the region. This strategy aims to prevent migrants and refugees from reaching their intended destinations by limiting their movement at the start of their trips (Keeping Them Out, Killing Them Off, 2018). European Union (EU) member countries are actively seeking to externalize borders by establishing agreements with countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. To police its border rule overseas, for instance, the EU has worked with nations like Turkey, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Libya (Keeping Them Out, Killing Them Off, 2018).

The use of militarization to limit movement across borders is common in Asia. The UNODC has highlighted the increasing militarization of borders in the Asia-Pacific region as a response to migrant smuggling issues (Migrant Smuggling in Asia – Current Trends and issues, Vol.2, 2018). This militarization often leads to increased security measures, detention centers, and surveillance activities aimed at preventing unauthorized crossings (Migrant Smuggling in Asia – Current Trends and Challenges, Vol.2, 2018).

Criminalizing migration involves constructing immigrants and refugees as a threat. This has direct consequences on their ill treatment of migrants. They are often considered as criminals rather than individuals seeking safety or better opportunities. The EU has been criticized for criminalizing migrants and refugees within its member states (Keeping Them Out, Killing Them Off, 2018). This approach forces migrants into vulnerable positions where they face detention, deportation, or reliance on criminal networks for assistance (Keeping Them Out, Killing Them Off, 2018).

The border externalization, militarization, and criminalization are interconnected practices that impact migration policies in various Asian countries. These strategies often result in human rights violations and create barriers for individuals seeking safety and better livelihoods.

The below sections discuss several border issues between Asian countries.

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## **MYANMAR AND THAILAND**

Thailand is a middle-income country with four land borders, making it challenging to manage migrant flows, particularly from neighboring countries like Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia (Migration Context | IOM Thailand, n.d.). The importance of migration to Thailand's economy is demonstrated by the demand for migrant labor in sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, and fishing (Thailand Migration Report 2019, 2019).

The process of expanding national borders in order to manage immigration is known as border externalization. Thailand and Myanmar are using this strategy more and more to manage erratic migration flows. According to estimations from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (World Migration Report 2020 | IOM Thailand, 2019), 4.9 million individuals are estimated to have migrated to Thailand in 2020, with a significant chunk arriving from Myanmar. Thailand has increased efforts to fortify its borders and collaborate with Myanmar on border control projects in response to this inflow.

The border between Thailand and Myanmar has been heavily fortified for an extended period of time as a result of ethnic tensions and security issues. The presence of armed groups like insurgent forces and ethnic militias has enabled the area to become militarized. Conflicts between ethnic armed groups in Myanmar and the military have caused insecurity along the border and forced people to flee their homes, according to the International Crisis Group (Chotisut et al., 2023). Armed soldiers from both nations have been sent in to stop unauthorized crossings and stop smuggling.

Thailand's policies include criminalizing irregular migrant labor, with an estimated 1-2.5 million migrants holding irregular status out of 4-5 million living and working in Thailand. The government's campaign against undocumented employment and migratory migration has resulted in harsh punishments for companies and undocumented workers, posing problems such as human trafficking, exploitation, and subpar working conditions (Reid, 2020).

Humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of border externalization, militarism, and criminalization policies are profound. Even if the goals of these policies are to improve security and manage migration, they frequently disregard the rights and welfare of migrants, worsen humanitarian crises, and prolong cycles of poverty and vulnerability. A comprehensive strategy that prioritizes human rights, encourages regional collaboration, and addresses underlying factors including poverty, violence, and political instability is needed to combat irregular migration.

## **CAMBODIA AND THAILAND**

Over the past 20 years, Thailand has emerged as a major hub for labor migrants from surrounding nations, particularly Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. The need for migrant labor was exacerbated by Thailand's steady economic growth and infrastructural development, which started in the 1960s and peaked in the 1980s when the country switched to an export-driven economy. Since then, net immigration has replaced net emigration in Thailand's population, making it one of the most popular migration destinations in Asia (Tipayalai, 2020).

Thailand's immigration regulations changed after a coup d'état in 2014 brought a military government to power. A crackdown on foreign workers was promptly proclaimed by the incoming government. Even though this was never realized, the threat caused 220,000 Cambodians—roughly one-third of the country's population at the time—to flee in large numbers and seek employment in Thailand. Even though they were brief, the returns caused havoc on both sides of the border. Returning laborers in Cambodia faced hardships such as debt, unemployment, and a shortage of food, housing, and healthcare. In places where migrant earnings are utilized to pay off loans, microfinance providers became concerned when remittances decreased. Employers in Thailand had to deal with a labor shortage, which resulted in output reductions, delays in construction, and worries about a possible recession in an already unstable economy (Kittivorapoo & Patchimnan, 2019). Following the migration, the governments of Thailand and Cambodia announced plans to expedite registration

procedures, enabling migratory individuals to return to Thailand at a reduced cost and with greater speed. Unfortunately, the majority of migrant workers had to return through unauthorized means as a result of the inadequate planning and execution of these initiatives (Kittivorapoo & Patchimnan, 2019).

After the 2014 exodus, the Thai government introduced "pink cards," a new type of documentation that let foreigners work in Thailand for a limited period of time while they finished completing a process to verify their national identity. A far smaller number of Cambodians were able to meet the standards for national verification, which included getting a passport, even though a large number of them enrolled for pink cards at this time. Migrants reported a variety of obstacles to obtaining documentation, such as exorbitant fees, ineffective bureaucracy, continuously changing regulations (such as the obligation to re-register after changing jobs), a lack of transparency and processing information, and corruption (Reid, 2020).

## **BANGLADESH AND MYANMAR**

Bangladesh currently has legitimate concerns about its security due to Myanmar's transgressions of international law and protracted conflict. Due to Myanmar's persistent violations of international law, including intrusions into Bangladeshi territory and attacks, tensions along the border have grown (Rahman, 2024). The situation has gotten worse and it is now harder for the Bangladeshi government to tackle the crisis because over 950,000 Rohingya refugees are housed in overcrowded camps (Macdonald, Mekker, & Mooney, 2022). The border region has become more militarized as a result of conflicts between rebel groups like the Arakan Army and Myanmar military, which has increased violence and instability (Rahman, 2024). The approximately 1.3 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have put a burden on infrastructure and resources, forcing the government to prioritize repatriation operations while enforcing severe regulations to prevent the refugees' social integration. (Macdonald, Mekker, & Mooney, 2022). Criminalization aspects are evident in the involvement of Myanmar Border Guard Police in clashes with ethnic resistance organizations, leading to their fleeing into Bangladesh. Calls for investigations into possible involvement in atrocity crimes in Myanmar highlight the complex nature of the conflict and the need for international justice mechanisms to address these issues (Fortifyrights, 2024). The seriousness of the situation and the significance of justice and accountability in ending the crisis are highlighted by the border guards' possible complicity in crimes against the Rohingya (Fortifyrights, 2024).

In conclusion, the externalization of borders, militarization, and criminalization between Bangladesh and Myanmar—especially in light of the Rohingya crisis—indicate a complex web of issues that, in order to be effectively addressed, call for international cooperation, observance of international law, and a focus on humanitarian principles.

## **CHINA AND MYANMAR**

Burmese migrant workers are economically included in and spatially limited by Chinese border cities, giving rise to a mode of limited inclusion for border control. This mode turns border cities into spaces of compromise where Burmese migrants can live and work but must endure economic exploitation, spatial confinement, and social discrimination. China's compromise-oriented border control toward Burmese migrants offers evidence of how borders can become flexible and prohibitive and be enforced through intense surveillance, policing, and fear in the border cities, instead of only at the borderline. With militarized border control remaining highly capricious and controversial, compromise-driven institutional arrangement (through the armor of coercion) to handle the tension among national security, capital accumulation, and labor supply does arguably offer an alternative but has its flaws.

## **BORDER EXTERNALIZATION AND MILITARIZATION IN MALAYSIA**

Malaysia is home to millions of undocumented immigrants, making irregular migration a significant issue for the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered around 177,000 refugees and asylum seekers as of 2020 living in Malaysia (Nurdin, Sathian, & Hussin, 2020). Millions more illegal migrants, mostly from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and the Philippines, also live and work in Malaysia without the required paperwork.

The Immigration Act 1959/63 of Malaysia governs foreign nationals' employment, entrance, and residence in the nation. Immigration laws can be broken by staying in the nation after a visa has expired or without the required paperwork, which can lead to fines, imprisonment, and expulsion. The Immigration Department and the Royal Malaysian Police are in charge of enforcing immigration laws and carrying out operations to apprehend undocumented immigrants. Workplaces, communities, and border regions where undocumented migrants are known to dwell are frequently the targets of enforcement efforts (Nah, 2012). Neither the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol have been ratified by Malaysia. As a result, Malaysia does not formally recognize or provide legal protection for refugees or asylum seekers. They face the possibility of being detained, arrested, and deported since they are usually perceived as unauthorized immigrants (Kaur, 2007).

The Malaysian government has implemented various actions to tackle irregular migration in the country, such as policies and strategies. One of these efforts is the establishment and implementation of the foreign worker policy, which commenced in 1992 to manage the influx of foreign workers and stop the increase of undocumented migrant laborers. The number of illegal migrants has increased in tandem with lawfully recruited migrants even after this strategy was put into place, suggesting that controlling irregular migration flows is still a difficult task (Kassim & Zin, 2011).

Malaysia has also undertaken amnesty and legalization programs to address the problem of irregular migration. Amnesty, which permits all irregular migrants to return home lawfully without facing charges or penalties, targets legalization efforts, which seek to regularize the status of irregular migrant labor. There are obstacles in the way of these exercises, though, as businesses may object owing to production disruptions and possible cost rises brought on by legalized workers earning higher wages and benefits, and some migrants may not be aware of the legalization procedures (Kassim & Hj, 2013).

## **BORDER EXTERNALIZATION AND MILITARIZATION IN INDONESIA**

Since Indonesia satisfies nearly every need for a transit country, it might be considered the embodiment of the ideal transit migration nation. Geographically, it is situated halfway between Australia and the Middle East, Africa, and Asia on one side. Comparable to this, the peripheral locations of Turkey and Russia inside Western Europe have made them crucial hubs for unauthorized migrants attempting to enter Europe from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. (Hugo, Tan & Napitupulu, 2017). There are countless options to enter into Indonesia by boat due to its archipelago topography, which consists of over 3,000 islands. The Middle East and South Asia are the primary origin nations for several groups seeking asylum in Australia, and these connections have existed for millennia (Hugo, Tan & Napitupulu, 2017). The intricate modern migration system that exists not only encompasses significant migrant flows to the countries of origin for asylum seekers and other transit nations, but has also witnessed the growth of a sizable migration industry. A political structure that heavily relies on bribery and corruption creates opportunities for both remaining in Indonesia and enabling migration outside (Hoffstaedter & Missbach, 2021).

Similarly, the border between Malaysia and Indonesia, which is both land- and sea-based, has occasionally seen conflict because of unauthorized migration. A major part of accepting asylum seekers is Sumatra. Sumatra, an island in Western Indonesia, is very close to Malaysia, with the Strait of Malacca dividing it from the Malay Peninsula on its northeastern coast (Hugo et al., 2014). This movement corridor is well-established, and in order to promote migration along this path, a sophisticated industry of interconnected agents has formed (Hugo et al., 2014). Apart from those seeking asylum, another aspect of irregular migration in this area is the presence of undocumented workers; estimating the number of Indonesian workers in Malaysia between 200,000 and 300,000, who are thought to have bypassed the official migratory channels in 2008 (Ford and Lyons, 2011). People have crossed this border in irregular or unlawful methods due to a variety of factors, including political unrest, economic inequality, and environmental concerns (Firdaus & Umar, 2022). Both nations have established border control mechanisms to regulate migratory flows and handle security concerns, even if there haven't been any significant militarized operations (Firdaus & Umar, 2022).

However, a people-smuggling desk and unit have been established by one of the super-ministries (POLHUKAM), which includes the minister of foreign affairs and the judicial police, in response to the growing significance border concerns are receiving in Indonesia

(Hugo et al., 2014). This falls within the 'whole of government approach' that is being considered for this field. The unit lacks operational capacity and is dependent on the Directorate General for Immigration, which has limited influence, despite this high-level initiative (Hugo et al., 2014).

# Non-State Actors

International NGOs, along with governments in Asian nations, play a crucial role in addressing the various challenges that migrants encounter. The IOM works with governments and partners in Asia to improve migration governance, boost border control capacities, and provide humanitarian assistance to displaced and migrating communities. As an illustration, IOM arranges voluntary repatriation initiatives for displaced migrants, provides humanitarian assistance at border entry points, and provides support in implementing border security measures. In nations such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand, IOM has put into place initiatives focusing on border management, aiding migrants, and combating human trafficking operations (Moretti, 2021). The goal of the UNHCR is to meet the protection needs of refugees in Asia who have been impacted by persecution, forced displacement, and border disputes. The organization offers refugees and asylum seekers education, healthcare, shelter, and legal assistance. UNHCR also advocates for the rights of refugees and sustainable solutions. Through its operations in countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, the UNHCR protects and aids refugees and displaced populations, especially those affected by border conflicts and displacement (Moretti, 2021).

In addition, victims of armed conflict and other harsh circumstances can get safety and humanitarian relief from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It offers emergency relief, healthcare, and protective services in conflict-affected communities, especially border regions. The ICRC works to address the humanitarian effects of conflict, border militarization, and displacement in Asia. People affected by violence and border conflicts can receive emergency help, healthcare, and safety programs from this group. The ICRC frequently holds discussions with armed groups and governing bodies to encourage adherence to international humanitarian law. The ICRC supports individuals affected by violence, particularly those residing near borders, in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Philippines (Thynne, 2019). Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an organization that examines and documents human rights abuses globally, specifically focusing on border security, immigration policies, and the wellbeing of migrants and refugees. By holding nations accountable for their violations, it promotes the rights of migrants and refugees. By holding countries responsible for their transgressions, it advances the rights of migrants and refugees. HRW keeps track of, and documents abuses of human rights associated with border militarization throughout Asia, such as forcible arrest, enforced relocation, and the overuse of force by security personnel. To spread the truth about abuses at borders and advocate for legislative changes, the organization produces reports, conducts investigations, and takes part in advocacy. The treatment of refugees, migratory laborers, and marginalized populations living in border areas are only a few of the human rights violations that HRW has documented in nations including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Thailand (Close & Askew, 2017).

Moreover, Amnesty International is a global human rights organization that studies and advocates for policies related to migration, such as treatment of migrants and refugees,



border militarization, and violations of human rights. It worked for the rights of Rohingya Refugees from Myanmar (Amnesty International, n.d.).

# Community-Based Organizing and Mobilizations

Human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, along with UNICEF and IOM, are dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights and well-being of migrants. They have focused on guaranteeing that immigrants have access to essential services like healthcare, education, and legal assistance. These organizations have also focused on fighting xenophobia and discrimination against immigrants, in addition to promoting social integration (GAL, 2012).

Organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have been focusing on improving member state coordination and collaboration to handle migration and border-related challenges at the regional level (Petcharamesree, 2017). For instance, the Immigration and Border Management (IBM) Division of the IOM helps Member States develop and strengthen their ability to directly intervene in and disrupt migrant smuggling operations. However, the issues of irregular migration, human trafficking, and the susceptibility of migrants to exploitation and abuse create challenges for IOM. IOM works with governments, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations as well as with regional organizations like ASEAN as well as UN agencies like UNHCR and UNICEF to support migrants and fight for their rights in order to address migratory challenges, it collaborates closely (Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011).

A long-standing collaboration has been established between UNHCR and IOM to guarantee a more coordinated response to displacement circumstances that affect the individual missions of both organizations. A Memorandum of Understanding from 1997 introduced an official foundation for increased collaboration in this field. This cooperation faces a challenge to collaboratively explore innovative approaches and fresh techniques in light of the changing parameters surrounding the asylum and migration issue (Tamas, 2016).

Furthermore, as noted by Cernadas (2015), UNICEF is committed to protecting and enhancing the welfare and rights of children affected by migration, especially those whose parents are migrants or refugees. It emphasizes how important it is to have access to healthcare, education, and protection from violence and abuse. UNICEF finds it challenging to reach vulnerable children in migrant and refugee groups because of barriers such language barriers, documentation requirements, and social stigma. UNICEF collaborates with governments, non-governmental organizations, and community-based groups to provide essential services for children of migrants and refugees in order to organize activities and advance children's rights.

Similarly, to ensure that States uphold their duties to save the lives, maintain the dignity, and lessen the suffering of vulnerable migrants, the ICRC interacts directly and in confidence with all relevant authorities (Bihan, 2017). In addition, it participates in discussions about migration policy in a variety of multilateral, regional, and international fora, helping to guarantee that laws pertaining to migration fulfill the legal commitments of States both domestically and internationally and are in line with humanitarian demands (Bihan, 2017).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has close relationships with the following groups: internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, and migrants who have crossed into another nation. This activity maintains regular contact with the national Red Cross or Red Crescent association in the area, as well as occasionally with other partner institutions like the UNHCR (Bihan, 2017). The Refugee and Migrant Rights Division of Human Rights Watch defends the international rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. According to Close and Askew (2017), they investigate human rights violations caused by government efforts to imprison, divert, or expulse these people while also defending the right to petition for asylum. They investigate abuse and even human trafficking of migrant workers. Their goal is to guarantee that governments reserve immigration detention for extreme circumstances, and they are in favor of alternatives to detention.

Consequently, one of ASEAN's main objectives is to advance regional cooperation and discussion on migration-related issues. Petcharamesree (2017) states that increasing labor mobility, combating irregular migration and human trafficking, and bolstering border security are top priorities. To solve migration-related issues in the area, ASEAN works with global institutions such as IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF. It promotes advocacy and discourse on migration-related problems by interacting with migrant and civil society organizations through platforms such as the ASEAN People's Forum and ASEAN Civil Society Conference. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has created the ASEAN Border Management Cooperation Roadmap framework in an attempt to improve legislation and practical cooperation to combat transnational crime at and along borders. UNODC worked with Thailand during the Roadmap's development and negotiation phases, co-hosting several rounds of conferences and discussions as well as producing and contributing to strategic studies (ASEAN Adopts a Ground-breaking Agreement on Border Management, 2021). At its most serious human rights violation to date, ASEAN has failed to adequately address the rapidly worsening humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in Myanmar. The Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh has worsened as a result of the fallout, which has extended to nations like China, Thailand, and India. ASEAN faces difficulties in reaching a consensus on migration policies and efforts among its member nations. It is also criticized for putting financial gain ahead of social inclusion and human rights (Australia: Spotlight Rights at Summit with ASEAN, 2024).

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