

BETWEEN DIPLOMACY AND DILEMMA: INDIA–MYANMAR RELATIONS AMID THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

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ABSTRACT:

The Rohingya have become a stateless community, deprived of citizenship and belonging to no nation. Forced to flee Myanmar, they seek refuge across borders but find few countries willing to accept them. This paper highlights the ongoing discrimination and persecution faced by the Rohingya, including mass killings, sexual violence, and the destruction of villages. As a result, thousands have fled to neighboring countries to escape violence. The United Nations has described these atrocities as “ethnic cleansing.” While the international community has condemned Myanmar’s actions, India has avoided direct criticism, maintaining a cautious stance due to strategic and security dilemma. However, India’s domestic policy toward Rohingya refugees remains hostile, viewing them as illegal immigrants and potential security threats.

Keyword: Rohingya, Myanmar, India, Crisis, Citizenship, Military, Refugee, ARSA, ASEAN, Relation, Connectivity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya people have become a stateless community with no country to call their own. Although they have lived in Myanmar for centuries, the Myanmar government refuses to recognize them as citizens under its 1982 Citizenship Law, effectively revoking their nationality and expelling them from their homeland. As a result, the Rohingya have been forced to wander across borders, seeking refuge in neighboring countries, none of which are willing to grant them citizenship. In Myanmar, the Rohingya have faced some of the most severe human rights violations in modern history, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, land confiscation, destruction of homes and mosques, torture, and widespread sexual violence against women. They are among the most economically marginalized and persecuted communities in the world.¹

The Rohingya are an ethnic, linguistic, and Muslim minority primarily residing in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine State. Despite their deep historical presence in the region, they are denied recognition as citizens and are excluded from Myanmar’s list of 135 official ethnic groups. The ongoing Rohingya crisis is widely regarded as one of the greatest man-made humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century. Thousands have been massacred due to their religion, ethnicity, and language; women have been subjected to sexual violence, and children have been brutally killed. Following the destruction of their homes and villages, Myanmar’s authorities reportedly used heavy machinery to erase all traces of Rohingya settlements—demolishing houses, shops, markets, and even clearing vegetation to prevent their return.²

The United Nations has described this campaign as “ethnic cleansing,” a deliberate policy by one ethnic group to eliminate another through violence and persecution.³ Historically, many Rohingyas are believed to be descendants of laborers brought by British colonial authorities from East Bengal to western Burma in the mid-19th century. However, other evidence suggests that the Rohingya have roots in the region dating back to the 8th century. Despite this, Myanmar’s government continues to label them as “illegal immigrants” or “Bengalis.” As a result, the Rohingya have not been recognized as an official ethnic minority in Myanmar since the 1982 Citizenship Amendment Act, and Rohingya

citizenship rights have been effectively revoked. They are no longer considered one of the country's 135 official ethnic groups.⁴

Former State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has also refused to acknowledge the Rohingya by name, insisting they are migrants from Bangladesh who have no right to citizenship. Her stance, shaped by political considerations and the desire to maintain Buddhist support, reflects the government's broader anti-Rohingya sentiment. As a result, between August and December 2017 alone, more than one million Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar's Rakhine State and seek refuge in Bangladesh, marking one of the largest refugee crises in recent history.

2. FACTORS LEADING TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

Over the decades, several waves of violence have erupted against the Rohingya community—in 1978, 1991–92, 1996, 2012, and again in 2016 and 2017. The events of August 2017 marked the most severe and devastating phase of the crisis. On 25 August 2017, a group of armed Rohingya men belonging to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) reportedly launched coordinated attacks on police outposts in Rakhine State, resulting in the deaths of around 30 members of Myanmar's security forces.⁵ These attacks resembled earlier ones carried out by ARSA in October 2016, though on a much larger scale.

Following the attack, ARSA claimed responsibility, stating that their actions were defensive and intended to draw international attention to the ongoing persecution, killings, and sexual violence committed against the Rohingya Muslim minority by Myanmar's military. Despite this justification, the attacks were widely condemned by the international community, including the United States, which criticized ARSA's use of violence while simultaneously urging Myanmar's security forces to avoid indiscriminate retaliation against civilians.⁶

3. "MYANMAR MILITARY'S 'CLEARANCE OPERATIONS' AND ETHNIC CLEANSING OF THE ROHINGYA"

The Rohingya crisis escalated dramatically following the attacks on police outposts by the ARSA on 25 August 2017. These assault which was killed around 30 members of Myanmar's security forces, were used by the Myanmar military as a justification to launch brutal "clearance operations" against the entire Rohingya population. Soon after, the government officially declared ARSA a terrorist organization.

In retaliation, Myanmar's military deployed more than 35,000 heavily armed troops to Rakhine State's Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung townships. The military threatened Rohingya community, warning that their villages would be burned if they did not leave. What followed was a large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing. Approximately 362 Rohingya villages were destroyed, and more than 10,000 people were killed during these operations.⁷ Civilians attempting to flee were shot, homes were set on fire, and even children and the elderly were targeted.⁸ Reports also indicate that extremist Buddhist monks from nearby villages assisted the soldiers in killing Rohingya civilians. Mass graves were dug to conceal the atrocities, further evidencing systematic genocide.

Women bore the worst consequences of this violence. Sexual violence was weapon as a deliberate strategy to terrorize and drive the Rohingya out of Myanmar. Soldiers and police personnel committed rape, gang rape, and other forms of sexual abuse, often in front of victims' family members. Women were forced to strip naked in public as a form of humiliation, and many were subjected to sexual slavery, forced abortion, and other brutal acts. According to a United Nations investigation conducted in Bangladesh's refugee camps, about 52% of Rohingya women reported experiencing rape or other forms of sexual violence.⁹ The UN Secretary-General, after visiting the Cox's Bazar camps, described

the accounts of survivors as some of the most horrific examples of gender-based violence in recent history.

Throughout this humanitarian crisis, Myanmar's then-State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi faced global condemnation for her silence and apparent complicity. Despite her international reputation as a pro-democracy icon, she failed to condemn the military's actions or protect the Rohingya population. Many observers argued that her stance was politically motivated to preserve support from Myanmar's Buddhist majority.

The Rohingya tragedy drew widespread international attention and condemnation. Western nations, including the United States and the United Kingdom, imposed economic and military sanctions on Myanmar for gross human rights violations. The United Nations described the violence as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing." The UK government suspended all military training and cooperation with Myanmar, while U.S. Vice President Mike Pence called for stronger UN action against Myanmar, labeling the crisis a threat to global security.¹⁰ At the UN Security Council, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley condemned Myanmar's military operations and criticized China and Russia for shielding the regime from accountability.¹¹

In a landmark move, The Gambia, supported by the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), filed a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of violating the Genocide Convention through atrocities committed against the Rohingya in Rakhine State.¹²

4. BALANCING DIPLOMACY AND SECURITY: INDIA'S RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

The Rohingya crisis has posed a major diplomatic challenge for India, testing its ability to balance moral responsibility with strategic and security interests. India has chosen to maintain cordial relations with Myanmar and has refrained from issuing any direct criticism of the Myanmar government over its treatment of the Rohingya population.

There are two primary reasons behind India's cautious approach. First, India's geopolitical and economic interests in Myanmar are significant. Myanmar serves as India's gateway to Southeast Asia under its "Act East Policy", which aims to strengthen regional trade, connectivity, and influence in the Indo-Pacific. India has invested heavily in infrastructure and energy projects in Myanmar, including the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. Furthermore, New Delhi seeks to counter China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region, making Myanmar an important strategic partner.

Second, India's stance is shaped by internal security concerns. The Indian government views the Rohingya refugees as illegal immigrants who pose potential threats to national security. Intelligence agencies have warned of possible links between Rohingya individuals and terrorist organizations such as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), as well as connections with extremist networks in Pakistan and West Asia. Reports suggest that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and other jihadist groups have attempted to exploit the displaced Rohingya population for recruitment and infiltration.¹³

Security fears were heightened following the Sunjuwan Army Camp attack in Jammu in February 2018, where investigations revealed that illegal immigrants, including Rohingya settlers living near the military base, had allegedly assisted militants in reconnaissance activities.¹⁴ This incident reinforced India's apprehensions that Rohingya refugees could be used by terrorist groups for espionage or logistical support.

In September 2017, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Myanmar shortly after the outbreak of the Rohingya crisis. Expectations were high that India would raise humanitarian concerns with Myanmar's leadership. However, during his meeting with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Prime Minister Modi expressed solidarity with Myanmar in its fight against terrorism and refrained from directly mentioning the Rohingya issue. In a joint press statement, both leaders condemned "terrorist attacks" in Rakhine State but avoided using the term "Rohingya Muslims." Suu Kyi thanked Modi for supporting Myanmar's stance and for cooperating to prevent terrorism in the region.¹⁵

Following Modi's visit, Home Minister Amit Shah reaffirmed India's position, declaring that the government would not accept Rohingya refugees as they were "illegal immigrants" who entered India through West Bengal. The government announced plans to identify and repatriate approximately 46,000 Rohingyas residing in India, emphasizing that they would be deported to Myanmar. This position aligns with the ruling party's long-standing policy of deporting undocumented immigrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar, particularly in India's northeastern states.¹⁶

India's policy on the Rohingya crisis reflects a delicate balance between strategic pragmatism and domestic security priorities. While India supports Myanmar diplomatically to preserve its geopolitical interests, it simultaneously adopts a hard-line stance against Rohingya refugees within its own borders, framing the issue primarily through the lens of national security rather than humanitarian concern.

5. ROHINGYA CRISIS AS A CATALYST FOR CLOSER INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS

The Rohingya crisis has drawn widespread international condemnation against Myanmar for its military's "clearance operations" and alleged acts of ethnic cleansing. In response, several countries — particularly from the West — have suspended military cooperation, imposed sanctions, and reduced economic engagement with Myanmar. However, India has taken a distinct approach, choosing to maintain and even strengthen its relations with Myanmar despite global criticism. This policy reflects India's strategic pragmatism and its long-term geopolitical objectives. While much of the world has isolated Myanmar diplomatically, India continues to engage with Naypyidaw through multiple channels — including defense cooperation, economic projects, and political dialogue. This continued engagement underscores India's effort to balance its commitment to democratic values with its national interests. Historically, India and Myanmar have shared close cultural, economic, and strategic ties. Both nations border the geopolitically sensitive Northeast region of India, and Myanmar acts as a crucial land bridge connecting India with Southeast Asia. Thus, maintaining stability and cooperation with Myanmar remains vital for India's "Act East Policy."

In the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis, rather than distancing itself, India sought to deepen its engagement with Myanmar. The two countries have strengthened bilateral cooperation in several areas — such as counter-insurgency operations along their shared border, trade, connectivity projects, and regional security. India has also provided humanitarian aid to Myanmar through initiatives like 'Operation Insaniyat', aimed at assisting displaced populations in Rakhine State, which allowed India to balance its strategic interests with a limited humanitarian response. This approach demonstrates India's diplomatic balancing act — maintaining strong ties with Myanmar's government while managing international expectations regarding human rights. India's continued engagement despite the crisis has, in fact, brought New Delhi and Naypyidaw closer, as both countries share mutual concerns over border security, insurgency, and Chinese influence in the region.

While the Rohingya crisis has strained Myanmar's relations with much of the international community, India-Myanmar relations have remained resilient and even strengthened. This outcome reflects India's preference for strategic engagement over moral posturing, driven by its geopolitical, security, and economic priorities in Southeast Asia.

5.1. Deepening Defence Collaboration: Strengthening Military Ties between India and Myanmar

In the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis, Myanmar's military faced widespread condemnation and diplomatic isolation from much of the international community. However, India chose to maintain a pragmatic stance, refraining from openly criticizing Myanmar's military regime in order to safeguard its strategic and security interests. While the United Nations General Assembly, along with several Western nations, passed a resolution condemning Myanmar for atrocities against the Rohingya, India abstained from voting, signaling its intent to preserve bilateral relations. Furthermore, India's participation in Myanmar's Tatmadaw Day military parade on March 27, 2021, underscored New Delhi's continued engagement with the Myanmar military establishment.

A key driver of India's growing military cooperation with Myanmar is its internal security concern in the Northeastern region. The Indian states of Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh share a 1,645 kilometer-long border with Myanmar—a region historically affected by cross-border insurgency. Rebel groups from these states, particularly Naga militants, have often sought refuge across the Myanmar border after conducting attacks in Indian Territory. To counter this, India has relied on close coordination with the Myanmar army. Both nations have conducted joint military operations, including cross-border “surgical strikes” in 2015 and 2019, targeting insurgent hideouts within Myanmar's territory.

China's growing influence in the region further underscores the importance of India–Myanmar military cooperation. China has reportedly supplied weapons, training, and logistical support to insurgent groups operating in India's northeast and to ethnic armed organizations within Myanmar such as the Kachin, Shan, and Rakhine groups. These groups often act as intermediaries for Chinese arms flowing to Indian insurgents, creating regional instability. Joint military coordination between India and Myanmar has therefore become essential for countering Chinese influence and maintaining border security.

High-level military exchanges have reinforced this partnership. Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief, General Min Aung Hlaing, visited India multiple times between 2017 and 2019, leading to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to further enhance defense cooperation. During these exchanges, Myanmar also extradited several Indian insurgents hiding within its territory—most notably, in December 2020, when it handed over five members of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a Manipur-based militant outfit, to India.¹⁷ This marked a significant step in bilateral counter-insurgency collaboration and highlighted the growing strategic convergence between the two neighbors.

The Rohingya crisis has indirectly contributed to closer defense cooperation between India and Myanmar. Defense ties form a crucial component of their bilateral relations, and India has prioritized this partnership under its Act East Policy. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), defense cooperation between the two nations has strengthened in recent years, with India emerging as one of Myanmar's top five arms suppliers alongside China, Russia, Israel, and Ukraine.

Since July 2019, both countries have expanded collaboration in areas such as joint military training, maritime security, surveillance, medical assistance, and environmental management. A memorandum of understanding further reinforced these commitments. The Indian Ministry of Defense has identified Myanmar as a key pillar of its regional strategy. Notably, India signed a \$37.9 million contract to supply indigenous torpedoes to the Myanmar Navy—marking a milestone in their defense partnership.

As Myanmar seeks to diversify its defense procurement, India's growing role as a reliable defense partner highlights its rising influence in Southeast Asia.¹⁸

5.2. Enhancing India–Myanmar Economic and Strategic Cooperation

The Rohingya crisis marked a sensitive period in Myanmar's international relations, during which India took a distinctive diplomatic approach. Instead of distancing itself from Myanmar amid widespread global criticism, India chose to engage constructively, reinforcing its long-term strategic and economic interests. This was evident when Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Myanmar on 6 September 2017, shortly after the crisis began. The visit underscored India's commitment to maintaining strong bilateral ties and advancing regional cooperation despite the growing humanitarian concerns.

During this visit, eleven Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between the two countries, covering a wide range of areas to enhance multilateral partnership and mutual development. These agreements included cooperation in maritime security, cultural exchange programs, and media collaboration between the Press Council of India and its Myanmar counterpart. Additional MoUs focused on healthcare and medical product regulation, capacity building in law enforcement, and the up-gradation of the Women's Police Training Centre at Yamethin.¹⁹ Another significant agreement involved sharing "white shipping" information to improve transparency and coordination regarding unclassified merchant and cargo vessels.

Through these initiatives, India reaffirmed its support for Myanmar as a key partner under the Act East Policy, recognizing Myanmar's pivotal geographic position as India's land bridge to Southeast Asia. The agreements also aimed to deepen economic integration, promote border trade, and strengthen infrastructure development in the region. By pursuing sustained engagement during a politically sensitive period, India demonstrated a pragmatic approach that balanced moral concerns with strategic and economic imperatives, ensuring continuity in its relationship with Myanmar.

5.3. Connectivity Diplomacy: Strengthening India–Myanmar Regional Linkages

China's growing economic and strategic influence in Southeast Asia has prompted India to strengthen its engagement with neighboring countries, particularly Myanmar. Since the 1990s, India has pursued closer ties with Myanmar to achieve its economic and strategic objectives, but this approach gained significant momentum after the Rohingya crisis, when New Delhi chose to support Myanmar diplomatically. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Act East Policy', launched in 2014 during the 12th India–ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw, India emphasized regional connectivity and economic integration. Owing to its geographic position, Myanmar serves as a vital land bridge linking India with Southeast Asia.

India's connectivity diplomacy aims to enhance trade, infrastructure, and regional development—particularly in the northeastern states—while deepening bilateral cooperation. These initiatives are designed to promote commerce, tourism, and investment and to boost local industries such as agriculture, handicrafts, and services. Major ongoing projects under this framework include the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, and Imphal–Mandalay Bus Service. Together, these projects underscore India's commitment to strengthening economic, political, and social linkages with Myanmar and the broader ASEAN region.

5.3.A. The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project: Strengthening Regional Connectivity and Strategic Links

The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) stands as a cornerstone of India's Act East Policy, aimed at enhancing connectivity between India's eastern seaboard, Myanmar, and the

wider ASEAN region. As one of the most significant infrastructure initiatives undertaken by India in Myanmar, the project is designed to boost trade, strengthen strategic cooperation, and promote economic development—particularly in India’s Northeastern Region (NER). The project links the Port of Kolkata in India to the Port of Sittwe in Myanmar’s Rakhine State via the sea, and from there, extends inland through river and road routes up to the India–Myanmar border in Mizoram. This multimodal corridor—combining sea, river, and road transport—will greatly facilitate the movement of goods between India and Southeast Asia, reducing logistical barriers and transportation costs.

Strategically, the Kaladan Project provides India with an alternative access route to its northeastern states, thereby reducing dependence on the narrow and vulnerable Siliguri Corridor, often referred to as India’s “Chicken’s Neck.” This alternate route enhances India’s strategic resilience and ensures greater regional connectivity in the event of geopolitical or security disruptions. Economically, the project is expected to stimulate cross-border trade, create new business opportunities, and foster growth in sectors such as agriculture, logistics, and small-scale industries in both India and Myanmar. It also aligns with India’s broader goal of counterbalancing China’s growing influence in the region through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Kaladan Project, with an estimated cost of ₹2,904 crore, involves dredging the Kaladan River, constructing roads linking Sittwe, Paletwa, and Mizoram and upgrading port facilities. Though initially scheduled for completion in 2014, the project’s timeline has been extended, with major components—such as the Sittwe Port and the Sittwe–Paletwa waterway—already completed. The remaining road segment connecting Paletwa to the India–Myanmar border is nearing completion and is expected to become fully operational soon.²⁰ Overall, the KMTTP not only enhances India–Myanmar economic engagement but also strengthens strategic connectivity, paving the way for greater regional integration and cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia.

Table 5.1: Route Alignment of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project

Section No.	Stretch	Mode of Transport	Distance	Remark
(A)	Kolkata to Sittwe port in Myanmar	Maritime Shipping	539 km	Provides sea connectivity between India’s eastern seaport and Myanmar’s western coast
(B)	Sittwe to Paletwa (River Kaladan)	Inland Water Transport (IWT)	158 km	Enables cargo movement through navigable stretches of the Kaladan River.
(C)	Paletwa to Indo-Myanmar (in Myanmar)	Road	110 km	Links the inland waterway with the border road network
(D)	Border to NH.54 (Lawngtlai)	Road	100 km	Connects the project to India’s national highway grid, integrating it with the North-East region

5.3.B. Enhancing Regional Integration through the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway

Road connectivity serves as the foundation for fostering economic, social, and cultural exchanges between nations. Given India’s close geographical proximity to Myanmar, developing robust road, maritime, and inland waterway links is essential for integrating the region and accelerating socio-

economic growth. Since the Rohingya crisis, India and Myanmar have intensified cooperation on various connectivity projects, most notably the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMTTH).

The IMTTH project, initiated in 2002, is a landmark initiative jointly undertaken by the governments of India, Myanmar, and Thailand to enhance regional connectivity and trade. The proposed 1,360-km highway will connect Moreh (India) to Mae Sot (Thailand) via Bagan (Myanmar), creating a strategic corridor linking south and Southeast Asia under India’s “Act East Policy.”

Although the project has faced repeated delays, the Government of India has renewed its commitment to its completion. India is responsible for constructing 69 bridges and key road sections such as the Kalewa–Yargyi (120 km) stretch and the Tamu–Kyigone–Kalewa (TKK) road. These works began in 2017 and are now scheduled for completion by 2023. Once operational, the highway will greatly reduce travel time and facilitate the movement of goods, tourism, and cultural exchange between the three nations.

In addition, both India and Myanmar have agreed to establish a cross-border bus service linking Imphal (India) and Mandalay (Myanmar). The Land Border Crossing Agreement, implemented in August 2018, allows travelers with valid documentation to cross the border at Moreh–Tamu and Zokhawthar–Rih checkpoints. The bus service was initially scheduled to launch on 7 April 2020, but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹ Once resumed, this initiative is expected to deepen people-to-people connectivity and further strengthen bilateral relations.

Map 5.1 India Myanmar Thailand Trilateral Highway

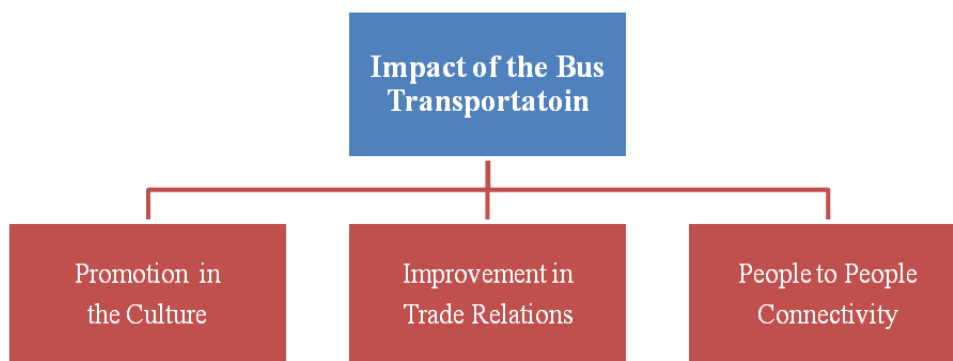


That’s a map of the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, showing the connectivity route from Moreh (India) through Mandalay, Naypyidaw, and Bago (Myanmar) to Myawaddy–Mae Sot (Thailand).

5.3.C. Strengthening Cross-Border Mobility: Imphal–Mandalay Bus Connectivity

Road connectivity plays a vital role in fostering economic, social, and cultural ties between India and Myanmar. Among the key initiatives, the Imphal–Mandalay Bus Service, launched under India’s Act East Policy in 2018, stands out as a major step toward enhancing people-to-people contact, trade, and tourism. This long-anticipated service—spanning approximately 579 km—marks the first bus link between the two countries after 17 years of planning and negotiations.

Figure 5.1 Positive Impacts of Cross-Border Bus Connectivity



To facilitate seamless cross-border travel, the Land Border Crossing Agreement (2018) allows citizens of both countries to cross at the Moreh–Tamu and Zokhawthar–Rih checkpoints using valid passports and visas, eliminating the need for special permits. Once operational, passengers will transfer between Indian and Myanmar-operated buses at the border, ensuring efficient coordination and safety.

The project is being implemented by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and complements ongoing infrastructure efforts, including the Kalewa–Yagyi section of the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMTTH). During Myanmar President U Win Mint’s visit to India in February 2020, both nations reaffirmed their commitment to commence the service—initially scheduled for April 2020, but delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. India’s Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, emphasized that both sides are working toward signing a bilateral Motor Vehicles Agreement to ensure smooth cross-border movement of goods and passengers, further strengthening regional connectivity and cooperation.²²

Conclusion: This research examines the impact of the Rohingya crisis on Indo-Myanmar relations. The Rohingya, rendered stateless and deprived of citizenship, have faced severe persecution, displacement, and violence in Myanmar—actions recognized by the United Nations as ethnic cleansing. While much of the international community condemned Myanmar and imposed sanctions, India chose a different approach. New Delhi extended diplomatic support to Myanmar, abstaining from UN resolutions critical of its actions. This stance reflects India’s strategic and economic interests—particularly its investments in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, its pursuit of connectivity with Southeast Asia, and its aim to counter China’s regional influence.

Thus, despite the humanitarian tragedy, the Rohingya crisis inadvertently strengthened Indo-Myanmar cooperation, fostering deeper political, economic, and strategic engagement between the two nations.

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