Exploring State Values and Interests in Pursuit of International Justice in Asia:
INDONESIA

BRAC
UNIVERSITY

Inspiring Excellence
Centre for Peace and Justice

ASIA JUSTICE
COALITION

About the Exploring State Values and Interests in Pursuit of International Justice in Asia Report Series

At time of writing, it has been more than 7 years since the so-called 'clearance operations' conducted against the Rohingya people of Myanmar. Since 2017, the situation in Myanmar has deteriorated further, marked by the military coup in 2021, widespread human rights violations, and escalating armed conflict across the country. Impunity, it appears, begets instability and further impunity.

Legal accountability[1] is one part of addressing the permissiveness that enables ongoing violations.

The situation in Myanmar is representative of an 'accountability gap' for international crimes.[2] Despite ongoing proceedings in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, accountability for non-State actors for harms committed in Myanmar are limited. Universal criminal jurisdiction matters [3] assist in bridging this gap, but proceedings in, for example, Argentina are geographically and culturally distant.[4]

In an AJC closed-door expert convening on universal jurisdiction in Asia, participants discussed why there are not more opportunities to pursue international justice matters in Asian domestic courts. It was acknowledged that Asia has the lowest regional uptake of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and few States have incorporated international crimes into their domestic criminal codes. However, discussing why the legal avenues that do exist are not used more often, participants discussed the issue of absent political will.

Participants stated that, particularly throughout Asia, the principles of 'sovereignty and non-interference act as practical and manufactured hurdles to bringing' crimes committed in other States' jurisdictions in domestic courts. Participants also pointed out that the geographical distance of international justice mechanisms from Asia 'lends itself to States making stronger rhetorical arguments regarding violations of sovereignty and non-interference [when] the mechanisms were created not "by the region, for the region"'.

To understand political will, participants recommended considering States' 'values' and 'interests'. The two concepts are interconnected. 'Values' reflect decision-makers' understanding of a shared identity and appeal to preferences such as 'consultation and cooperation' and 'adherence to the rule of law'. 'Interests', on the other hand, may relate to a State's diplomacy, security concerns, or economic opportunities.

This project examines the concept of political will through the lens of values and interests in three States—Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. While each case study addresses distinct political dynamics, all are anchored in policy responses related to crimes experienced by the Rohingya.

To inform the project, AJC and the Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University (CPJ) held two, two-hour closed-door discussions in February 2023 with humanitarians, academics, and lawyers from across ASEAN Regional Forum members and South Asia whose work addresses the protracted refugee situation in Bangladesh and crisis in Myanmar or related issues. Among other questions, participants were asked whether they could identify particular State 'interests' in or 'values' related to preventing or addressing impunity concerning Myanmar and where these ranked in domestic priorities. These discussions resulted in a scoping paper, upon which this report series builds. The research team is indebted to those who shared their thoughts and expertise.

The three resulting reports provide differing perspectives and approaches to understanding political will in relation to accountability for the Rohingya crisis. The Bangladesh report explores how accountability is framed in relation to the country's primary policy objective: repatriation of the Rohingya. The Indonesia report uses an analysis based on the Narrative Policy Framework to examine how the Indonesian government's narrative on the Rohingya crisis shifted from an initial focus on international and regional cooperation for restoring stability and humanitarian aid (2017, 2021) to prioritising national security interests (2022, 2023). The Malaysia report takes a comparative approach, examining the country's significant engagement with the International Court of Justice in relation to crimes committed in Palestine, and assessing whether—and how—this political will might extend to accountability for crimes against the Rohingya.

Across the case studies, we identify opportunities for advocacy by reframing the pursuit of international accountability not only as a matter of values, but also as one aligned with national interests. This framing could open greater political space to promote all available accountability mechanisms—including the exercise of universal jurisdiction where available—as both a principled and pragmatic policy objective.

Papers produced within this project should not be taken to reflect the views or positions of all AJC members.

---

[1] Although 'justice' and 'accountability' are interlinked concepts addressing impunity, these reports adopt a distinction identified in the Asia Justice Coalition's (AJC) Women in International Justice and Accountability consultations. For this project, 'justice' is broader than 'accountability'—it is systemic, structural, holistic, and expansive. What constitutes achieving 'justice' is specific to the lived experience, preferences, and needs of affected individuals and communities. In contrast, 'accountability' is narrower—pursuing 'accountability' is about holding a specific individual or group responsible, including through formal legal processes. Making this distinction recognises that 'accountability' is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for 'justice'. For more about AJC and it resource, please visit: www.asiajusticecoalition.org.

[2] 'International crimes', here, includes the core offences found in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court such as genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as 'torture' defined by the United Nations Convention against Torture.

[3] 'Universal criminal jurisdiction' refers to the capacity and competence of a State's domestic courts to prosecute foreigners committing crimes against other foreigners and committed outside of the State. See also AJC's primer on Domestic Justice for International Crimes. https://www.asiajusticecoalition.org/_files/ugd/811bc6_9d465765ba8848b1a980c56b9ebf50c2.pdf.

[4] See, e.g., Global Justice Center and Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK), 'Update: The Universal Jurisdiction Case Against MyanmarOfficials' (February 2025) https://www.globaljusticecenter.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ArgentinaMyanmarUJ_QA_UPDATE.pdf (accessed 1April 2025).

Table of Contents

Introduction

Analysis of policymakers' statements can assist researchers to understand the belief systems, ideologies, and interests that shape a government administration's actions. It also provides insight into how and why a State responds to policy problems, reflecting its preferences, priorities, and favoured governance approaches—whether through self-interested or collaborative strategies.[5]

Policy studies scholars argue that policy statements are 'framed' in a way to reinforce the States' main values and beliefs. These 'frames' emphasise certain elements of a policy problem, such as its consequences or impacts, and are a part of the process of 'strategic problem definition' which helps set a government's agenda for intervention.[6]

This study explores how Indonesia's interests, and hypothesised political preferences, shape its policy response to the growing influx of Rohingya refugees[7] to Aceh, Indonesia. Using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), it examines the evolution of the Government of Indonesia's (GoI) statements from 2017, 2021, 2022, and 2023 on the Rohingya and their presence in Aceh. It concludes its analysis just before the February 2024 Indonesian general election.

The study reveals a shift in the dominant narrative frame over time. Earlier statements (2017 and 2021) adopt an outward-looking perspective, highlighting the need for regional and international cooperation to support the Rohingya. In contrast, later statements, particularly in late 2023, take an inward-looking approach, emphasising enhanced security measures for Indonesia's benefit.

Identifying and understanding this shift is important because it offers insight into how Indonesia's evolving priorities—particularly its security concerns—influence its policy response to the Rohingya refugee crisis. By examining this and related shifts in the GoI's narrative frames, the study offers insights related to the pursuit of accountability for 'the root cause' of the crisis and its alignment with Indonesia's national interests.

---

[5] Giliberto Capano, 'Understanding Policy Change as an Epistemological and Theoretical Problem' (2009) 11 Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice 7-31 http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13876980802648284.

[6] Daniel S Schiff and Kaylyn Jackson Schiff, 'Narratives and Expert Information in Agenda-setting: Experimental Evidence on State Legislator Engagement with Artificial Intelligence Policy' (2023) 51 Policy Studies Journal 817-842 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/psj.12511.

[7] Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic minority group from Rakhine state, Myanmar. The Myanmar government argues that they are not Myanmar nationals but rather are the illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. 'Explainer: Rohingya Refugees Face Crowded Camps, Dangerous Sea Journeys and COVID-19' (Amnesty International, 15 November 2018) https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/why-rohingya-refugees-shouldnt-be-sent-back-to-myanmar/. As refugees displaced from Myanmar, the Rohingya most recently began arriving in Aceh, Indonesia in 2009. Government of Aceh, 'Aceh Tampung 6.150 Pengungsi Rohingya Sejak 2009' (27 August 2024) https://acehprov.go.id/berita/kategori/umum/aceh-tampung-6150-pengungsi-rohingya-sejak-2009. It is noted by the Aceh local government that there were 41 waves of migration of the Rohingya communities to Aceh since 2009, accumulating to a total of 6,150 persons as of 2024 (ibid). The biggest wave came at the end of 2023, in which the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Indonesia found that eleven boats carrying 1,752 Rohingya refugees landed in Aceh from mid-November 2023 to end of January 2024. UNHCR Indonesia, 'Emergency Update: Rohingya Boat Arrivals as of 22 January 2024' (ReliefWeb, 22 January 2024) https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/unhcr-indonesia-emergency-update-rohingya-boat-arrivals-22-january-2024. While the Government of Indonesia (GoI) permitted these boats to land, the GoI has not ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) or its 1967 Protocol. As a result, the GoI has argued that it is more broadly the UNHCR's responsibility to provide for the arrivees' protection (see **Analysis** below).

Study Context & Research Questions

The broader project, of which this study is one part, examines Indonesia's political will for greater engagement with opportunities to provide accountability for international crimes experienced by the Rohingya. Indonesia is particularly interesting because of its geographic proximity to Myanmar, its position as a 'transit State' for migrants and refugees, and its membership of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Despite Indonesia's historical engagement with the Rohingya crisis through diplomatic efforts and humanitarian aid, its options for pursuing legal accountability for crimes committed in Myanmar remain constrained. At time of writing, Indonesia has not incorporated international crimes—such as genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes—into its domestic criminal code.[8] As a result, its national courts lack jurisdiction to prosecute individuals responsible for atrocities against the Rohingya. This legal gap limits Indonesia's ability to take independent action in addressing the accountability deficit for crimes committed in Myanmar.

Likewise, Indonesia's engagement with international justice mechanisms is limited. While it is a party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and publicly affirmed commitments to combat human trafficking and people smuggling, it is not a member of three other relevant conventions (discussed below): the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention). Likewise, while Indonesia has condemned Myanmar's military actions (as will be discussed), it has stopped short of explicitly endorsing international legal processes—notably, Indonesia is also not a party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and cannot intervene in The Gambia's case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice.[9]

This cautious stance aligns with Indonesia's broader foreign policy, which emphasises regional stability, sovereignty, and non-interference in line with ASEAN's core principles.[10] However, as the impact of the Rohingya crisis increasingly affects Indonesia domestically—particularly with the rising number of refugees in Aceh—there may be emerging incentives for the government to reassess its engagement with international legal avenues.

If we focus on narratives and narrative frames related to the Rohingya as a way of considering political will towards greater use of accountability mechanism, this leads to the following research questions:

1. What narrative frames dominate the GoI's statements regarding the migration of Rohingya refugees to Indonesia?
2. How have these frames changed overtime?

---

[8] Note, however, that this will change when Law No. 1 of 2023—a reform of the Indonesian Penal Code—comes into effect on 2 January 2026.

[9] See, e.g., here discussing South Africa's matter in the International Court of Justice regarding Israel's alleged violation of the Genocide Convention: Riyaz ul Khaliq, '"Morally, politically:" Indonesia Backs South Africa against Israel at ICJ' (AA, 10 January 2024) https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/-morally-politically-indonesia-backs-south-africa-against-israel-at-icj/3105258.

[10] See Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (December 2007) https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf, art 1.

Timeline of Relevant Events in Myanmar and Indonesia

Relevant Myanmar Political Events and the Impact on the Rohingya	Relevant Indonesian Events regarding Myanmar and Notable Rohingya Arrivals
October 2016 and August 2017: Military-led 'clearance operations' result in the mass killing of the Rohingya. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh for seeking asylum.	**4 September 2017:** Statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs 'Indonesia Urges Myanmar to Immediately Stop Violence in Rakhine State'
November 2019: The Gambia brings a case against Myanmar before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), asserting that the Myanmar government has violated the Genocide Convention.	**2018 - 2019**
2020	**22 June 2020:** Ninety-nine Rohingya arrive in Aceh and are taken onshore by fishermen.
1 February 2021: The Myanmar military seizes power of the Myanmar government. Prospects for the safe repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar are diminished further.	**1 February 2021:** Statement by Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'Indonesia Urges All Parties in Myanmar to Exercise Self-Restraint'
2022	Between **November 2022** and **February 2023**, five boats carrying 644 Rohingya refugees arrive in Aceh.
Early 2023	
November and December 2023: To escape increasingly crowded camps, more than 1,700 Rohingya refugees leave Bangladesh and arrive in Aceh, Indonesia.	Between **14 and 19 November 2023**, five boats carrying over 870 Rohingya refugees arrive in Aceh. One boat is initially pushed back, but refugees can eventually come ashore. Disinformation and hoaxes regarding Rohingya in Aceh start spreading, especially relating to the threat to the local communities.
	27 December 2023: University students in Aceh protest by storming a shelter where Rohingya refugees had been temporarily placed in Aceh. More than 100 refugees are forced into trucks. (See also here.) Defence Minister and presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto appears in Aceh one day later. As reported by Radio Free Asia: *'He said that while Indonesia should be humanitarian towards the stateless Rohingya, it should also prioritise the welfare of its own peoples. "Many of our people are struggling, and it is unfair to take in all the refugees as our responsibility, even if we feel humanitarian and sympathetic," Prabowo said, according to local media.'*
2024	**7 January 2024:** A presidential debate particularly on Indonesian international affairs, defence, and national security interests is held. Notably, there is no mention of Rohingya in Aceh as a national security concern. (See here, here, and here.)
	14 February 2024: General Elections in Indonesia
	March 2024: Prabowo Subianto is confirmed as President-Elect.

Theoretical Framework

Narrative Policy Framework

Within public policy literature, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) emphasises the role of stories in shaping public policy. NPF assumes that policymakers use narratives (or stories) to highlight problems, set agendas, and justify solutions to complex issues. These narratives are socially constructed[11] solutions to perceived public policy problems, further justifying the aims and goals of the policies.[12] They can be studied systematically through scientific methods (e.g. statistical modelling) or more subjective means like interviewing.[13]

According to NPF, policy narratives are found in different forms of policy communication, including policy statements or public speeches by policymakers and the government. Regardless of the form of communication, policy narratives contain at least one of four key elements:

(1) Settings (the context of the issue);
(2) Characters (the actors within the narrative dependent on their described role, including the villains, heroes, or victims);
(3) Plot (the sequence of events or challenges requiring a policy solution); and
(4) The moral of the story (the proposed solution or lesson).

These elements help to describe what the problem is, who or what is responsible for it, and what should be done to address it.[14] More broadly, these elements indicate the beliefs or ideologies underpinning the understanding of policy problems.[15]

'Framing' & The NPF

For the purposes of this report, it is necessary to distinguish the terms 'narratives' and 'frames'. As discussed above, the term 'narrative' is used to describe the structural elements that can be identified in policy statements—the 'setting', 'characters', 'plot', and 'moral of the story'. We use the term 'frame' to be broader than 'narrative'; as described by Shanahan and others, 'framing' is a form of 'issue categorisation' with several distinct, but related 'narratives' potentially sitting within one 'frame'.[16]

In NPF literature, some authors[17] argue that 'frames' are inferred from the key narrative elements listed above and help to simplify complex policy issues or clarify policy beliefs for the public. Frames that align with stakeholders' beliefs and demands, such as those of citizens, make the stories more persuasive, promoting stability through public trust and obedience to the government.[18]

---

[11] Shanahan and others, 'The Narrative Policy Framework' in Christopher M Weible and Paul A Sabatier (eds), Theories of the Policy Process (4th edn, Westview Press 2017) 173, 195.

[12] Christina Boswell, Andrew Geddes and Peter Scholten, 'The Role of Narratives in Migration Policy-Making: A Research Framework' (2011) 13 The British Journal of Politics and International Relations 1-11 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00435.x.

[13] Garry Gray and Michael D Jones, 'A Qualitative Narrative Policy Framework? Examining the Policy Narratives of US Campaign Finance Regulatory Reform' (2016) 31 Public Policy and Administration 193-220 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0952076715623356.

[14] Caroline Schlaufer and others, 'The Narrative Policy Framework: A Traveler's Guide to Policy Stories' (2022) 63 Politische Vierteljahresschrift 249-273 https://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11615-022-00379-6.

[15] Kristin L Olofsson and others, 'Using Nonprofit Narratives and News Media Framing to Depict Air Pollution in Delhi, India' (2018) 12 Environmental Communication 956-972 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17524032.2017.1309442.

[16] Shanahan and others, 'Bounded Stories: How Issue Frames and Narrative Settings Help to Construct Policy Realities' (2018) 46(4) Policy Studies Journal 922, 926-927.

[17] See e.g. Elizabeth A Shanahan and others, 'Bounded Stories' (2018) 46 Policy Studies Journal 922-948 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/psj.12269.

[18] Michael Mintrom and Ruby O'Connor, 'The Importance of Policy Narrative: Effective Government Responses to Covid-19' (2020) 3 Policy Design and Practice 205-227 https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2020.1813358.

Methodology

Adapting Migration Studies' Frames

Migration studies literature offers frames to analyse how States respond to mass population movements, including how States balance humanitarian obligations and diplomacy with domestic interests like national security.

Heidenreich and others investigated how the media framed migration in Hungary, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Spain.[19] Their work is adapted here to provide categories of classification for examining what is, at least in part, a migration issue—that of Rohingya entering Indonesia. Of the 16 common frames identified by Heidenreich and others, the following were deemed relevant to this context, with adaptations made as follows: [20]

1) *Economic problems*, which involves concerns about migrants taking jobs or straining public resources. This frame appears where it is suggested that migrants are taking over the jobs, putting further financial strains on the public resources;

2) *Welfare issues*, which involves concerns about migrants' use of public services, including healthcare and education;

3) *Accommodation*, which pertains to the challenges of housing and integrating migrants;

4) *Humanitarian aid*, which focuses on the plight of migrants, advocating for compassion and aid through global solidarity;

5) *Borders*, which emphasises a need for border control and territorial sovereignty;

6) *National refugee policy*,[21] which emphasises the role of the State managing the refugee inflow in general.

7) *Regional governance*, which is adapted from Heidenreich and others' '[European Union] refugee policy'. This frame highlights that the governance of refugee and migration policies is not driven by solely national governments, but rather also shaped by regional bodies. The 'regional governance' frame is relevant where the emphasis is on the role or mandate of the regional body in relation to addressing migration.

8) *Elections*, which draws attention to migration as a significant issue impacting political campaigns;

---

[19] Tobias Heidenreich and others, 'Media Framing Dynamics of the "European Refugee Crisis": A Comparative Topic Modelling Approach' (2019) 32 Journal of Refugee Studies (Special Issue) i172-i82 https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/32/Special_Issue_1/i172/5688809. Notably, there are at least two important differences in the context of the present study and that of Heidenreich and others: (1) that Heidenreich and others analysed media reporting rather than policy statements and that Heidenreich and others' examination is of so-called Global North States. Addressing these differences in turn, the frames that Heidenreich and others use for media reporting are nevertheless useful because media framing can make an issue salient and shape public opinion. This, in turn, influences the policy agenda-setting process and leads to policy development. (See: Holly L Peterson and Michael D Jones, 'Making Sense of Complexity: The Narrative Policy Framework and Agenda Setting' in Nikolaos Zahariadis (ed), Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Setting (Edward Elgar Publishing 2016) 106–133.) The Global North focus in Heidenreich and others is relevant for so-called Global South State analysis because, while it could be hypothesised that Global North States have sufficient administrative or economic 'capacity' to implement migration policies, the literature indicates that there is decreasing political will to do so. This suggests that any difference between Global North and Global South States in overall 'capacity' to respond to refugee flow is shrinking. Fiona B Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, 'Migration Diplomacy in World Politics' (2019) 20 International Studies Perspectives 113-128, https://academic.oup.com/isp/article/20/2/113/5253595.

[20] Additional frames identified by Heidenreich and others include: refugee camps, which concerns the living conditions in camp; unaccompanied children, which emphasises the vulnerability of child migrants travelling alone; Brexit, which focuses on migration's role in European economic or political debates.

[21] Note that the national refugee policy and the regional refugee policy frames centre the role of State(s) rather than the movement, needs, or impact of migrants themselves.

9) *Crimes and terrorism*, which links migrants to internal and localised security issues (which wedifferentiate from 'national security');

10) *Refugee movement*, which emphasises patterns and scales of migration, including how refugees flee;

11) *War*, which links migration to conflict, with a focus on migrants' vulnerabilities;

12) *Values and culture*, where migrants are positioned as a threat to cultural identity and nation-building; and

13) *Human interest*, which focuses on individual migrants, their experience, and personal challenges.

Additionally, we include:

14) *National security interests*, as a sub-category of 'national refugee policy' and distinct from 'crimes and terrorism'. This includes emphasis on whole-of-State security threats such as transnational crime or foreign interference. National security interests is a relevant frame where migration is described as threatening to the State's security more broadly.

15) *International governance,* as an extension of 'regional governance' and in recognition that Heidenreich and others' study had a more limited focus than the issues and jurisdictions involved here.

These frames were then used to analyse GoI policy statements regarding the Rohingya crisis, including statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Law and Human Rights, and the President's Secretariat.

It is hypothesised that *regional governance* and *international governance* may appear together because they represent interconnected levels of decision-making and policy implementation in addressing migration and refugee flow.

The *regional governance* frame is particularly relevant in statements describing how regional organisations, such as ASEAN, play a role in addressing migration challenges.

However, because migration and refugee issues extend beyond regional boundaries, the *international governance* frame acknowledges a wider range of actors, agreements, and jurisdictions.

Both *regional* and *international governance* frames are understood to incorporate the systems and institutions that regulate State behaviour. For example, this includes referencing to international agreements such as the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN Charter)[22] (related to *regional governance*) or the Refugee Convention and UNTOC (related to *international governance*). Therefore, both frames also incorporate principles such as the rule of law, which requires that State actions are based on established legal obligations and guided by consistency in decision-making and accountability for violation of those obligations.

---

[22] Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (December 2007)
https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf.

Data Selection, Scope, & Limitations

GoI policy statements on the Rohingya from 2017, 2021, 2022, and 2023 were chosen to examine significant events:[23]

· In August **2017**, the Myanmar government conducted 'clearance operations' of Rohingya villages that resulted in the mass killing and displacement of over 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh.[24]

· In February **2021**, before the Myanmar parliamentary announcement of the November 2020 election results, the Myanmar military (known as the Tatmadaw) seized control, detaining government figures including cabinet ministers and other politicians.[25] This coup d'état marked the strengthening of military power and the collapse of democratic governance in Myanmar, lessening the feasibility for safe repatriation of the Rohingya.

· In **2022**, regional emphasis appeared to be on returning Myanmar to democratic governance. With little movement on this, focus was given to humanitarian aid and supporting the responsibility of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) who were registering Rohingya arriving in Aceh. Between November 2022 and February 2023, five boats carrying 644 Rohingya refugees arrive in Aceh.[26]

· In **2023**, repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar remained infeasible, despite several countries advocating for democratic transition and the Rohingya's safe return. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, conditions worsened as refugee camps continued to be overcrowded, risking an increase in violence.[27] In November 2023, five boats carrying over 870 Rohingya arrived in Aceh, with one boat pushed back to sea before finally being permitted to come onshore.[28] The large influx of Rohingya arriving in Aceh prompted the Indonesian authorities to issue statements, clarifying their stance on managing the situation. This occurred alongside widespread disinformation targeting the Rohingya, including viral videos accusing them of being ungrateful for aid or labelling them as a 'danger'. Disinformation intensified after Minister of Defence and presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto delivered a political speech in Aceh on 26 December, arguing that national security interests should take priority because the host community in Aceh were themselves suffering from a lack of

---

[23] See **Timeline of Relevant Events in Myanmar and Indonesia.**

[24] 'No Justice, No Freedom for Rohingya 5 Years On' (Human Rights Watch, 23 August 2022) https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/video/2022/08/23/no-justice-no-freedom-rohingya-5-years. See also: 'Myanmar: UN Fact-Finding Mission releases its full account of massive violations by military in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States' (OHCHR, 18 September 2018) https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/09/myanmar-un-fact-finding-mission-releases-its-full-account-massive-violations; 'UN Concerned as Thousands Flee Myanmar "Clearance Operation"' (DW, 28 June 2020) https://www.dw.com/en/un-concerned-as-thousands-flee-myanmar-clearance-operation/a-53972650; and 'Thousands in Western Myanmar Flee as Army Plans Operations, Monitors Say' (Reuters, 28 June 2020) https://www.reuters.com/article/world/thousands-in-western-myanmar-flee-as-army-plans-operations-monitors-say-idUSKBN23Y0Q0/.

[25] Richard C Paddock, 'Myanmar's Coup and Aftermath: Explained' (New York Times, 9 December 2022) https://www.nytimes.com/article/myanmar-news-protests-coup.html.

[26] 'Recent Developments Concerning Rohingya Refugees in Aceh, Indonesia' (UNHCR Indonesia, 16 February 2023) https://www.unhcr.org/id/en/16523-recent-developments-concerning-rohingya-refugees-in-aceh-indonesia.html.

[27] 'Crisis Mounts for Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh' (International Crisis Group, 06 December 2023) https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/355-crisis-mounts-rohingya-refugees-bangladesh.

[28] 'Indonesia – Refugee Arrivals' (ECHO Daily Flash, 20 November 2023) https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-refugee-arrivals-dg-echo-partners-unhcr-media-echo-daily-flash-20-november-2023.

provisions.[29] This speech was followed, only one day later, by a violent student demonstration in Aceh where protesters stormed a temporary shelter for Rohingya refugees and attempted to 'deport' them.[30]

Online Hate, The General Election, & Relevant Frames

In late 2023 and early 2024, negative sentiments towards the Rohingya were amplified by social media users on several platforms. An analysis by Drone Emprit found that the negative narratives were created by a fanbase account with numerous followers which posted tweets showing hatred against the arrival of Rohingya refugees in Aceh.[31] An analysis by Narasi Newsroom found that 1.08 million mentions from November 2023 to February 2024 were dominated by the negative sentiments against the Rohingya and were followed by disinformation, such as 'Rohingya will colonise Indonesia' and 'Rohingya was accused of being the perpetrator of riots in Sidoarjo'.[32] Further analysis by the same source argues that coordinated actors orchestrated and calibrated the disinformation campaign, as comments on the post soared a day after it was posted and then suddenly disappeared.[33] This hatred was echoed in the 'real world' by the violent studentdemonstration in Aceh (see **Timeline of Relevant Events in Myanmar and Indonesia**).

The prominence of these negative campaigns appears to have correlated to, or have impacted discourse ahead of, the 2024 presidential election. For example, presidential candidate Anies Baswedan argued that community hostility to the influx was a matter of 'political will', suggesting that it was the responsibility of political leadership to ensure that refugees were welcomed *and* that local communities were appeased.[34] In contrast, Prabowo Subianto, the Defense Minister and presidential candidate who ultimately won the election, argued that he would always prioritise the local community, implying that this prioritisation was over the humanitarian needs of refugees.[35] This debate reflected broader societal tensions about balancing humanitarian aid with domestic welfare.

Notably, while the surge of negative sentiment and mis/disinformation campaigns may have influenced the shift in narrative framing, the shift itself is less important than the underlying values and interests it seeks to protect. Drawing from the broader project's scoping paper, three key 'values or interests' emerge: **burden-sharing, upholding the international legal order**, and **protecting national security**.

---

[29] This speech is not analysed below because it appears to reflect Prabowo Subianto's role as a presidential candidate, rather than his role as Minister of Defence. See Firda Cynthia Anggrainy, 'Prabowo soal Pengungsi Rohingnya Melonjak: Kita Utamakan Rakyat Sendiri' (detiknews, 26 December 2023)
https://news.detik.com/pemilu/d-7109751/prabowo-soal-pengungsi-rohingnya-melonjak-kita-utamakan-rakyat-sendiri.
[30] 'Indonesian Students Evict Rohingya from Shelter Demanding Deportation' (Al Jazeera, 27 December 2023)
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/27/indonesian-students-evict-rohingya-from-shelter-demanding-deportation.
[31] 'Fake News, Online Hate Swell Anti-Rohingya Sentiment in Indonesia' (The Straits Times, 3 February 2024)
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/fake-news-online-hate-swell-indonesia-anti-rohingya-sentiment.
[32] Narasi Newsroom, 'Unmasking Anti-Rohingya Hate Campaigns' (Film) (2024) available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7-IFOGYxmU.
[33] ibid.
[34] Yvette Tanama, 'Presidential Candidates Set to Spar on Foreign, Defense Policies' (The Jakarta Post, 6 January 2024)
https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/01/06/presidential-candidates-set-to-spar-on-foreign-defense-policies.html.
[35] Nino Viartasiwi and Antje Missbach, 'Rohingya Refugees Facing a Hostile Reception in Aceh' (New Mandala, 4 December 2023)
https://www.newmandala.org/rohingya-refugees-facing-a-hostile-reception-in-aceh/.

The gap between 2018-2021 is not examined in full because it is hypothesised that, following the 2017 so-called 'clearance operations', the GoI viewed the Rohingya crisis initially as an issue internal to Myanmar; in contrast, the 2021 *coup d'état* had wider regional impacts affecting Indonesia.

Statements from these years help to contextualise the policy choices facing the GoI to the continued influx of refugees and ongoing instability in Myanmar.

The data examined in this study was collected from related ministries' statements, such as those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Human Rights and Law, published on their websites. The researcher also took the statements from the media that directly quote the officials on the major arrival of Rohingya refugees in Aceh, as well as statements by the National Commission on Human Rights (known as Komnas HAM). The keywords searched include: 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs Rohingya', 'Ministry of Human Rights and Law Rohingya', 'Joko Widodo Rohingya' and 'Politician on Rohingya'. All the terms were written in Bahasa Indonesia to generate the maximum number of speeches and statements by policymakers on the issue.

The search generated one statement in 2017, two statements in 2021, and three statements in 2022, and six statements in 2023. Where possible, statements in Bahasa were preferred and translations by the author are provided. Where it differs, the English translation provided by the website is also noted.

The selected data captures a shift in framing over time; however, a future study could also considerstatements made after the February 2024 general election. Beyond the scope of this investigation, such a study could help determine whether the identified shift primarily reflected an election-driven emphasis on national security or whether it signalled a deeper, long-term realignment of Indonesia's interests as the conflict in Myanmar persists.

Analysis

Using NPF, we analyse policy statements describing the GoI's responses to the Rohingya crisis in 2017 and from 2021 to 2023, identifying the narrative elements within them. Since multiple narratives can exist within a single frame, we also determine the dominant narrative frame. This serves as a validation measure—given that the study identified only eleven relevant statements, establishing the dominant frame helps suggest that an expanded study would yield consistent findings.

Following The 2017 'Clearance Operations': Regional Cooperation For Security & Stability

This study's search in Bahasa identified only one GoI statement in 2017. [36]

Statement Analysis Summary (2017)

Public Statement	Setting (Legal Mandates, Geographic Boundaries, Environmental Characteristics)	Characters	Plot (Stories of Decline/ Rise)	Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)	Dominant Narrative Frame
'Indonesia urges Myanmar to immediately stop violence in Rakhine State' Ministry of Foreign Affairs 4 September 2017 https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-urges-myanmar-to-immediately-stop-violence-in-rakhine-state/	**Setting:** International/ regional community '[Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi] said that both Indonesia and the international community are 'really concerned' about the latest situation…' 'Security and stability are of great importance so that humanitarian aids, rehabilitation processes and inclusive development including development conducted by Indonesian government can be carried on'	**Hero:** The Indonesian government and Indonesian non-governmental organisations **Villain:** The Myanmar military **Victim:** The population of Rakhine State, 'including Rohingya Muslims'	Story of Decline: Actions by the Myanmar Armed Forces have led to a humanitarian crisis and instability. 'According to [Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi], violation[s] in the region has led to humanitarian crisis that claim many lives, injured many people and left many people homeless'	**Moral of the Story:** Provide humanitarian aid to those affected. However, for this to occur, there must be a measure of stability. 'Efforts to de-escalate situation in Rakhine State should be the top priority of the authority of Myanmar Armed Forces'… 'Indonesia's non-governmental organizations have been cooperating with Myanmar NGOs in distributing humanitarian aid[]…' '…responding the request of Minister Retno, General Hlaing answered that the authority of Myanmar continues in making efforts to restore the security and stability in Rakhine State.'	Humanitarian aid

---

[36] In contrast, an English search identified 8 additional statements. The fact that only one statement appeared in a Bahasa search may suggest an issue with the available search function. However, it may alternatively reflect that the GoI viewed the 'clearance operations' as a notable event, but one best addressed externally to Indonesia. Notably, all 2017 statements in English have similar narrative elements and frames to that analysed here. See: Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Indonesia Continues to Encourage All Sides to Halt Violence in Rakhine State: Minister of Foreign Affairs' (2 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-continues-to-encourage-all-sides-to-halt-violence-in-rakhine-state-minister-of-foreign-affairs-2/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Indonesian Foreign Minister to Meet with Bangladesh PM to Discuss Rohingya Issue' (5 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesian-foreign-minister-to-meet-with-bangladesh-pm-to-discuss-rohingya-issue/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Government to Send Humanitarian Assistance for Rohingya Refugees As Soon As Possible' (7 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/government-to-send-humanitarian-assistance-for-rohingya-refugees-as-soon-as-possible/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Criticism, Harsh Statements Cannot Solve Rohingya Conflict, President Jokowi Says' (13 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/criticism-harsh-statements-cannot-solve-rohingya-conflict-president-jokowi-says/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'President Jokowi Dispatches Aids for Rohingya Refugees' (14 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-dispatches-aids-for-rohingya-refugees/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Indonesia Never Stand Idle to Problems Faced by Other Muslims, President Jokowi Says' (17 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-never-stand-idle-to-problems-faced-by-other-muslims-president-jokowi-says/; Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 'Indonesian Govt Continues to Send Humanitarian Aid for Rohingya' (21 September 2017) https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesian-govt-continues-to-send-humanitarian-aid-for-rohingya/.

Given shortly after the start of the so-called 'clearance operations' in August 2017, the one GoI statement stresses the importance of establishing stability within Myanmar—and specifically Rakhine State—to ensure timely distribution of humanitarian aid to the Rohingya community. Given by the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, the statement indicates the Foreign Minister's concern on behalf of 'Indonesia and the *international community*' (emphasis added). Therefore, the 'setting' is situated within the regional or international community—noting that Indonesia is not alone in seeking to address the situation.

The GoI is positioned as the 'hero', actively seeking a policy solution to the humanitarian crisis. While the Rohingya are explicitly mentioned once, the statement's 'victims' are more broadly identified as the population of Rakhine State. The Myanmar military is cast as the 'villain' responsible for their suffering, but who also has the agency to end it. The GoI's 'moral of the story' (or policy solution) appears to be the delivery of 'humanitarian aid, rehabilitation processes and inclusive development including [that] conducted by the Indonesian government'. However, this can only happen if the GoI's counterparts ensure 'security and stability'

Indonesian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also positioned as 'heroes', who 'have been cooperating with Myanmar NGOs in distributing humanitarian aid'. This suggests that collaboration is also essential to achieving the policy solution.

The statement reflects multiple narrative frames. First, its emphasis on security and stability within Myanmar suggests that a 'war' narrative may be relevant, highlighting the factors driving the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State. Additionally, elements of 'regional governance' emerge through references to cooperation between Indonesian and Myanmar NGOs. However, the dominant frame appears to be **humanitarian aid**, because the statement underscores how addressing instability through collaboration ultimately facilitates the delivery of aid.

Following the 2021 Coup: Regional Governance through ASEAN

Two statements in 2021 were identified as relevant, with only one statement coming directly from a government website.

Statement Analysis Summary (2021)

Public Statement	Setting (Legal Mandates, Geographic Boundaries, Environmental Characteristics)	Characters	Plot (Stories of Decline/ Rise)	Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)	Dominant Narrative Frame
'Indonesia urges all parties in Myanmar to exercise self-restraint' Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1 February 2021 https://kemlu.go.id/publikasi/siaran-pers/indonesia-mendesak-semua-pihak-di-myanmar-untuk-menahan-diri?type=publication	**Setting:** Regional community/governance *'Indonesia calls for the observance of the principles of [the] ASEAN Charter…'* *'Indonesia urges all parties in Myanmar to exercise self-restraint and put forth dialogue in finding solutions…'*	**Hero:** GoI **Villain:** Myanmar military (implied) **Victim:** The Myanmar people (implied)	**Story of Decline:** The Myanmar Military's actions have caused instability. (Implied) *'Indonesia expresses concern over the recent political situation in Myanmar'* *'Indonesia urges all parties in Myanmar to exercise self-restraint [and collaborate] so as not to exacerbate the condition.'*	**Moral of the Story:** *'Indonesia calls for the observance of the principles of ASEAN Charter, among other things, adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government'.* *'Indonesia also underscores that all electoral differences be addressed in accordance with available legal mechanism…'*	Regional governance
'Indonesia Leading ASEAN Push on Myanmar Coup' Sebastian Strangio, *The Diplomat* 18 February 2021 https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/indonesia-leading-asean-push-on-myanmar-coup/ citing **'Indonesia's Foreign Minister in Diplomatic Push for ASEAN Action on Myanmar Coup'** *Radio Free Asia,* citing the Minister of Foreign Affairs 17 February 2021 https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/push-02172021164525.html	**Setting:** Regional community *'I continue to maintain communication with my counterparts at ASEAN and foreign ministers from many countries, and the U.N. envoy on Myanmar…'* (Radio Free Asia)	**Hero**: GoI (emphasising role within ASEAN) *'Indonesia will continue its efforts to contribute to finding the best solution for the people of Myanmar and for efforts to maintain regional stability, security, and peace…'* **Villain**: Myanmar military (implied) **Victim**: The Myanmar people (implied)	**Story of Decline:** As above, it is implied that the Myanmar Military's actions have caused instability. Members of the international and regional community have 'raised concerns', but no solution has been found. *'Many countries, including Indonesia, have raised concerns. Raising concerns is one thing, but the question is: What can Indonesia, and ASEAN do to help Myanmar get out of this delicate situation?'*	**Moral of the Story:** Limited regional diplomatic intervention is necessary while still respecting the ASEAN principle of non-interference; ASEAN is the ideal forum to resolve the crisis. *'Nonetheless, despite these structural constraints, Retno said in her statement that her government believed that ASEAN "is the most effective mechanism to help Myanmar deal with this delicate situation…'*	Regional governance

Following the February 2021 *coup d'etat*, the 2021 GoI statements focus on themes related to a return to stability through predictable legal processes. This emphasis on collective governance and adherence to the rule of law puts the 'setting' of both statements within the domain of the regional—and particularly ASEAN—community. In both statements, the implied 'villain' is the Myanmar military as the party responsible for the crisis and the implied 'victims' are the people of Myanmar.

Indonesia is an influential Member State in ASEAN and was the ASEAN Chair in 2023. Indonesia also held the Co-Chairmanship in 2023, with an agenda focusing on economic growth rather than peace and security.[37]

The **first 2021 statement** comes from the day of the coup. Without explicitly naming the military's conduct, the first statement appears to suggest that the instability caused by the Myanmar military's political actions is because of a usurpation of the 'rules'. Therefore, the 'moral of the story' is to abide by those rules—the 'principles of ASEAN Charter, [specifically] among other things, adherence to the rule of law, good governance, the principles of democracy and constitutional government.' In this, the GoI positions itself as a neutral actor reminding Myanmar of its obligations—a dispassionate 'hero'.

Although dispassionate, the GoI's positioning nevertheless suggests a story of control, with the relevant narrative frame being **regional governance** for the purpose of restoring order.

The **second 2021 statement** is derived from news reporting; despite being described as GoI statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs the statement is no longer available on the government website. Delivered following diplomatic meetings in Brunei and less than a month after the coup, the second statement suggests the 'plot', and therefore the 'story of decline', continues beyond instability caused by the Myanmar military. Here, the Minister notes that members of the international and regional community have rhetorically 'raised concerns' about the crisis, but there is not yet sufficient concrete action. The Minister's language includes Indonesia in this as well, therefore not casting blame on others. The 'moral of the story', or the policy solution to this problem, is proposed through ASEAN, a forum through which diplomatic problem-solving may be conducted without threatening Myanmar's sovereignty.

As above, the GoI's positioning and commendation of ASEAN suggests again a story of control, with the relevant narrative frame being **regional governanc**e for the purpose of restoring order.

Waves of Migration in 2022: Mixed Approaches – Regional Governance and Domestic Crime

There are three statements found in 2022. Each statement appears to be directed to a different audience, which is reflected in the identified frames. For example, the first statement is given at the United Nations General Assembly and therefore is presumably directed at the international community. The second statement is given at an ASEAN Summit and therefore is presumably directed at the regional community. Finally, the third statement by the Directorate General of Migration is directed to the Indonesian citizens, with a focus on local and national security concerns.

Across all three statements, the dominant narrative appears to prioritise the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. This was arguably feasible at the time because only a year had passed since the *coup d'état*.

---

37 See ASEAN Indonesia, ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on ASEAN as an Epicentrum of Growth (2023) https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ALD-Epicentrum-of-Growth-merged.pdf.

Statement Analysis Summary (2022)

Public Statement	Setting (Legal Mandates, Geographic Boundaries, Environmental Characteristics)	Characters	Plot (Stories of Decline/Rise)	Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)	Dominant Narrative Frame
Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia at the UNGA High-Level Side Event on 'Rohingya Crisis' Ministry of Foreign Affairs 22 September 2022 https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/4049/pidato/statement-by-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-unga-high-level-side-event-on-rohingya-crisis-new-york-22-september-2022 At time of publication, the original link is broken. However, the statement is also referenced here: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://journal.lspr.edu/index.php/jcpr/article/view/613&ved=2ahUKEwign6jjmfKLAxWLxzgGHX7aAkYQFnoECBMQAQ&usg=AOvVaw1mZ1ddwaFltngi-FLocBkb	**Setting:** International community, noting international instability including continuing conflict in the region[38]	**Hero:** Minister of Foreign Affairs/Government of Indonesia and the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh (referencing the refugee influx to Cox's Bazar) **Villain:** Those responsible for the 'ongoing political crisis' in Myanmar **Victim:** The Rohingya, especially as refugees and noting their vulnerability to human trafficking	**Story of Decline:** Ongoing conflict in Myanmar has made Rohingya flee the country, continued instability means the conditions are not right for their return *'Myanmar is a home to Rohingya people, but the ongoing political crisis has made it difficult for them to return…'*	**Moral of the Story:** Ensure Rohingya outside of Myanmar are supported and work to end the instability through inclusive dialogue, resulting in a return to democracy[39] *'First, create a conducive environment for their return. Myanmar is a home to Rohingya people, but the ongoing political crisis has made it difficult for them to return.'* *'We must protect their safety and security in Cox's Bazaar [sic]… and ensure that their basic needs are met'.* *'…a conducive environment for the return of [Rohingya] refugees, urging peace and national reconciliation and inclusive dialogue and national reconciliation involving all stakeholders are keys to bring back democracy, and Rohingyas must be part of these efforts'.*	**Regional governance and international governance**
President Jokowi Delivers Statement on Myanmar Office of the President 11 November 2022 https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-delivers-statement-on-myanmar	**Setting:** Regional community *'The implementation of [Five-Point Consensus] remains the main reference for [] ASEAN in helping Myanmar overcome its political crisis…'* *'The sixth point, according to the President, is to respect the principle of non-interference, so that the ASEAN does not provide support for elections that are not inclusive and are not prepared based on national dialogue.'*	**Hero:** ASEAN **Villain:** Those responsible for Myanmar's 'political crisis' (impliedly the military junta) **Victims:** The people of Myanmar, those harmed by the political crisis	**Story of Decline:** The political crisis has caused instability and created a considerable challenge for ASEAN. If ASEAN is not able to act in accordance with its principles, *'then ASEAN's credibility and its relevance will be at stake…'*	**Moral of the Story:** Implement the ASEAN agreed upon Five-Point Consensus (5PC), which adheres to ASEAN principles, in order to restore stability and order. *'…President Jokowi underscored the urgency to stop violence in order to immediately create a conducive situation in Myanmar….* *According to the President, humanitarian assistance to support life-sustaining measures has become more important at this time…* *The decision on non-political representation from Myanmar must also be implemented…* *ASEAN engagement with all Myanmar stakeholders must be carried out immediately. Because only by opening dialogue with all parties will the ASEAN [sic] be able to facilitate the national dialogue mandated by the [5PC]…'*	**Regional governance**
Siaran Pers: Plt Dirjen Imigrasi: UNHCR dan IOM Jangan Lari dari Tanggung Jawab dalam Penanganan Pengungsi Directorate General of Immigration 25 November 2022 https://www.imigrasi.go.id/id/2022/11/25/siaran-pers-plt-dirjen-imigrasi-unhcr-dan-iom-jangan-lari-dari-tanggung-jawab-dalam-penanganan-pengungsi/ (Translation from original Bahasa by author; link also available in English)	**Setting:** National (Indonesia) and local community *'UNHCR and IOM have to take the responsibilities of handling the refugees from overseas… do not run away from their responsibilities [by] only giving them certificates and [doing] nothing afterwards which would cause social problems in Indonesia…'* *'As reported by [the local head of Immigration in Lhokseumawe, North]…'*	**Hero:** The local government and Directorate General of Immigration **Villain:** The Rohingya, the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) **Victim:** The local community	**Story of Decline:** Arrival of Rohingya to Aceh causes social disruption; the UNHCR and IOM fail to provide the needed services. This causes host community resistance to the arriving Rohingya. *'The Acting Director General of Immigration Widodo Ekatjahjana regretted the attitude of the [international agencies] who did not take a role in handling refugees…'* *'The public rejects the arrivals of the Rohingya refugees who attempt to destroy the walls and to enter the immigration office in Lhokseumawe, Aceh.'*	**Moral of the Story:** Coordination between the international agencies and the local authorities; hold international agencies responsible for their role. *'UNHCR and IOM should give them shelter, food, clothing, and other basic necessities…'*	**Crimes and terrorism**

---

[38] This is the same 'setting' in the Minister for Foreign Affairs speech in the UNGA General Assembly General Debate four days later, noting that the political instability in Myanmar is one of many concurrent crises: '…The current state of our world is very worrying. The pandemic persists and global economy remains sluggish. War among nations is no longer a possibility but has become a reality. Violation of international law has become a norm in pursuit of narrow self-interest. Crisis after crisis is unfolding around the world: climate change, rising inflation, food and energy shortages…'. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly' (26 September 2022) https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements/10.0010/20220926/o2HXfwNDXN6v/zUV2qC5eaBoU_en.pdf.

[39] This is also reinforced by the Minister for Foreign Affairs speech in the UNGA General Assembly General Debate four days later, particularly emphasising ASEAN's role (ibid): 'In many places, post-War regional architecture was built as a tool for containment and alienation…This is not what regional architecture should be. It must serve as the building block for peace and stability rather than undermining them. ASEAN was built exactly for this purpose…. ASEAN will also continue to seriously address the situation in Myanmar. Indonesia is deeply concerned by the military's lack of commitment to implement the Five-Points Consensus. ASEAN must move forward and not be taken hostage by the situation in Myanmar. The support of the international community, in particular the neighboring countries of Myanmar, is very important to bring back democracy in Myanmar'.

Between data gathering and publication, the **first 2022 statement** appears to no longer be available on the GoI website. This speech by the Minister for Foreign Affairs was given at a side-event to the 77th United Nations General Assembly in 2022.

In the speech, the Minister praised the Government of Bangladesh and particularly the former Bangladeshi Prime Minister for taking in the Rohingya. She also sets out conditions that the GoI believed were necessary for addressing the crisis, noting the creation of 'a conducive environment for the return of [Rohingya] refugees, urging peace and national reconciliation and inclusive dialogue and national reconciliation involving all stakeholders are keys to bring back democracy, and Rohingyas must be part of these efforts'. The Minister called on international stakeholders—including ASEAN—to play a role in this.

The 'hero' in this story is, in part, the GoI, because Indonesia is positioned as the actor calling for resolution to the crisis and a 'conducive environment' for the Rohingya's return. However, the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh is also depicted as a 'hero' because she is positioned as generous for accepting Rohingya into Bangladesh in reference to Cox's Bazar. The 'villain' is not expressly given as the Myanmar junta, but it appears implied; instead, the 'villain' might more appropriately be identified as 'those responsible for the "ongoing political crisis"'. However, the 'victim' is clear—in this statement, it is the Rohingya.

The phrase '[*we*] must protect [the Rohingya's] safety and security in Cox's Bazar' (emphasis added) underscores the GoI's appeal to both the regional and international community to play their roles in ending the 'ongoing political crisis'. Bringing this together, the narrative frame appears to be **regional governance** and **international governance/cooperation.**

With deteriorating conditions in Myanmar, the **second 2022 statement** is given by Indonesian President Joko Widodo. In it, the President emphasised the importance of adhering to ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus (5PC).[40] It focuses on ASEAN's role 'help[ing] Myanmar overcome its political crisis… and [addressing] the urgency to stop violence'. The 'setting' therefore is clearly the regional community, as the GoI appeals to the ASEAN mandate.

Here the 'hero' is, in part, ASEAN as the body who collaborated—and included Myanmar—in devising a way forward. However, the President warns that if the 5PC is not implemented, and stability does not return, 'then ASEAN's credibility and its relevance will be at stake'. Therefore, the GoI is also positioned as a 'hero' as it calls for practical application of the 5PC.[41] As above, the 'villain' is not explicitly named as the military junta; instead, the 'villain' appears to be 'those responsible for the crisis.'

From this, we can infer that the narrative frame is **regional governance** for the purposes of ensuring humanitarian aid and restoring democratic order in Myanmar.

---

[40] In April 2021, the nine members of the ASEAN Member States and Myanmar junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing agreed to the following points: (1) an immediate end to violence in Myanmar, (2) dialogue among concerned parties, (3) ASEAN would appoint a special envoy to facilitate dialogue, (4) the provision of humanitarian assistance through ASEAN, and (4) the ASEAN special envoy would visit Myanmar. 'ASEAN Demands "Immediate Cessation of Violence" in Myanmar' (Al Jazeera) https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/24/myanmar-coup-leader-in-jakarta-for-southeast-asian-summit. As recently as July 2024, former Indonesian Retno Marsudi criticised the 5PC's lack of progress and resistance by the Myanmar junta. Sebastian Strangio 'Indonesian FM Criticizes Myanmar Junta Over ASEAN Peace Plan' (The Diplomat, 26 July 2024) https://thediplomat.com/2024/07/indonesian-fm-criticizes-myanmar-junta-over-asean-peace-plan/.
[41] Notably, this is also just before the GoI's chairmanship of ASEAN.

Finally, as the numbers of Rohingya coming to Indonesia increased,[42] the **third 2022 statement** is issued through the Directorate General of Immigration. This statement focuses on the role of the IOM and the UNHCR in addressing the increasing humanitarian crisis. However, the 'setting' is in the local community, noting the need to preserve their interests from being disrupted by 'others'.

In contrast to the above calls for humanitarian aid, there appear to be two 'villains' in this statement: the UN agencies *and* the Rohingya. This is because the UN agencies are admonished not to 'run away from their responsibilities'; otherwise, the Rohingya will 'cause social problems' in Indonesia and their host communities. The 'moral of the story' focuses on getting the UNHCR and IOM to provide shelter and other basic needs for the Rohingya in Indonesia, after which the statement implies that the Rohingya will not 'cause social problems'.

Particularly regarding the Rohingya, this suggests an othering, distinguishing the Rohingya from the local community specifically in Aceh. More strongly, the statement declares, 'The public rejects the arrivals of the Rohingya refugees who [commit property damaged alleged in this statement] to enter the immigration office in Lhokseumawe, Aceh'. The 'victims' are not the refugees themselves, but the local community in Lhokseumawe.

Because of this and for the first time in the analysis, **crime and terrorism—**in other words, security interests *internal* to Indonesia—appears as a narrative frame. Although casting the UNHCR and IOM as the 'villains' first, the GoI appears to justify this belief because of the host community's resistance to the presence of the Rohingya. This resistance-in turn-is allegedly caused by the Rohingya's property destructio-a crime-at the local immigration office.

---

[42] Please see: **Timeline of Relevant Events in Myanmar and Indonesia**.

Continued 'Crisis' in 2023: Shift to National Security and Domestic Politics

There are six policy statements found in 2023, with differing frames regarding a sudden influx of Rohingya refugees arriving in Aceh.

Statement Analysis Summary (2023)

Public Statement	Setting (Legal Mandates, Geographic Boundaries, Environmental Characteristics)	Characters	Plot (Stories of Decline/ Rise)	Moral of the Story (Policy Solution)	Dominant Narrative Frame
Indonesia Foreign Minister: The Rohingya Cry in Silence Ministry of Foreign Affairs 22 September 2023 https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/5287/berita/indonesian-foreign-minister-the-rohingya-cry-in-silence-we-must-not-remain-silent (Translation from original Bahasa by author; link also available in English) At time of publication, the original link is broken. However, the statement is also available here: https://voi.id/fr/berita/313101#google_vignette	**Setting:** Regional community	**Hero:** GoI and ASEAN *'ASEAN will continue to help the Rohingya and will never forget [them].'* **Villain**: Those not working for political stability, the acting government of Myanmar (implied) **Victim**: Rohingya refugees and more broadly the people of Myanmar *'[I]n general, the people of Myanmar need humanitarian assistance. However, assistance for the Rohingya is most needed…'* *'Meanwhile, those who live in the Rakhine area are also facing a very difficult situation. They are vulnerable to being victims of organized crimes.'* *'The Rohingya [are] crying in silence… we cannot remain silent…'*	**Story of Decline:** Continued political instability is resulting in deteriorating conditions for the people of Myanmar and specifically Rohingya refugees *'The global [situation] and domestic [conditions] in Myanmar makes the issue more complex and difficult, requiring strong political commitment to resolve this issue…'* *'The people of Myanmar need humanitarian assistance, but aid for the Rohingya is most needed…'*	**Moral of the Story:** International and regional cooperation efforts are required for resolution of the political crisis and meeting the humanitarian need. *'The Rohingya issue is a humanitarian one, but it is also very political. Therefore, the only way out is through a political solution.'* *'Inclusive national dialogue efforts encouraged by ASEAN through the 5 Point Consensus plan must also include solution to the Rohingya refugees…'* *'[Next,] in general, the people of Myanmar need humanitarian assistance. However, assistance for the Rohingya is most needed.'* *'Support from the international community needs to be strengthened…'*	**Regional governance** and **International governance**
Wapres nilai pengungsi Rohingya sebagai masalah kemanusiaan, harus diatasi Office of the Vice President 5 December 2023 https://www.wapresri.go.id/wapres-nilai-pengungsi-rohingya-sebagai-masalah-kemanusiaan-harus-diatasi-bersama/ (Translation from original Bahasa by author; link also available in English)	**Setting:** National (Indonesia) *'We will not remove them from the land; however, we need to anticipate that there will not be any rejections from the local communities, or any future comings of the refugees.'*	**Hero:** GoI **Villain:** Those responsible for the continued refugee flow (implied) **Victim**: Rohingya refugees *'The Rohingya refugees are humanitarian issues which we need to tackle through humanitarian means.'* [English translation on website: *'They [Rohingya refugees] [sic], after all, this is humanity. Because it is humanity, we must address it.'*]	**Story of Decline:** As refugees continued to come to Indonesia, the strain on the host communities increase, which cause greater problems for the national government. *'We have to accommodate them however, we need to anticipate that they will not become a burden to the country, to the community and the government…'* [English translation on website: *'So far, it is impossible for us to refuse, but of course we also anticipate that there will be no rejection by the community, and then how to anticipate that they will continue to run, all running to Indonesia, here. That is a burden.'*]	**Moral of the Story:** Indonesia will build on past policy approaches to provide for the humanitarian need, but expects other actors to share the burden. *'We had used Galang island to accommodate the refugees from Vietnam. We will have to talk again about what kind of accommodation we need to pursue.'* *'We will also discuss with UNHCR, which is responsible for refugee issues in the UN. This discussion needs to be done together…'* [43]	**National refugee policy**

---

[43] Prior to this direct quotation, the statement provides the following context [from the English translation]: 'The Vice President said that similar problems were actually also faced by European countries such as Greece, so it is appropriate to have discussions especially with the United Nations High Commissioner…'.

President Jokowi's statement on the Rohingya in Indonesia Office of the President 9 Dec 2023 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bqi2al42jCE (Translation from original Bahasa by author)	**Setting:** National, addressing needs of local communities, specifically Aceh Province. *'I have received a report about an increasing number of Rohingya refugees entering Indonesian territory, especially Aceh Province.'*	**Hero:** GoI **Villain:** Criminal trafficking networks/ human traffickers **Victim:** Local communities	**Story of Decline:** The criminal trafficking network has caused the rising number of Rohingya refugees entering Aceh province *'There are strong suspicions that there is an involvement of criminal trafficking network [enabling the entry of the refugees] into the Province.'*	**Moral of the Story:** Locate the traffickers to limit the number of refugees entering Indonesia. *'The Indonesian government will take strong action against the criminal trafficking network[s].'*	**National security interests**
Yasonna Laoly Sebut Pengungsi Rohingya di Aceh Korban Sindikat Mafia TPPO Minister for Human Rights and Law 11 December 2023 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_VFvc8pP7g (Translation from original Bahasa by author)	**Setting:** National, addressing needs of local communities	**Hero:** GoI *'The government has done good deeds in the handling of refugees, we welcomed refugees, such as those coming from Iran, Afghanistan and the last one is the Rohingya refugees.'* **Villain:** Human trafficking syndicate **Victim:** Rohingya refugees *'They're the real victims.'*	**Story of Decline:** The Rohingya people are vulnerable, and trafficking syndicates have taken advantage of that. When the Rohingya arrive, tensions rise with the local community based on culture, expectation, and availability of support. *'[The Rohingya] are being persuaded about a better life [by syndicates]…'* *'However, there has been a difference of culture between the local community and therefore, resistance arises by the local community…'*	**Moral of the Story:** Increase vigilance and take a law-and-order response to address criminal syndicates bringing refugees; increase cooperation between levels of government and with international aid agencies to address humanitarian needs—both ideally also reduce the tensions rising in the local community. *'…This is a syndicate that has been arrested by the police and we hope we can avoid this in future…'* *'…We hope that the regional government, the central government, and, of course the IOM and UNHCR will work together to find the right solution.'*	**National security interests**
MenpanRB - Atasi pengungsi Rohingya, Indonesia buru pelaku penyelundupan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson as published by the Ministry of Bureaucratic Reforms 13 December 2023 https://www.menpan.go.id/site/berita-terkini/berita-daerah/atasi-pengungsi-rohingya-indonesia-buru-pelaku-penyelundupan-orang (Translation from original Bahasa by author)	**Setting:** National (Indonesian domestic and international legal obligations) *'All options are in our discussion…. [But o]ur focus is how to solve the situation in Aceh.'*	**Hero:** GoI *'Indonesia will do everything it can to help so that the conflict in Myanmar can be resolved immediately, and democracy can be restored immediately.'* **Villain:** Transnational trafficking networks *'Indonesia is determined to hunt down the perpetrators of human smuggling and trafficking who play a role in bringing Rohingya refugees to Aceh.'* **Victims:** The Rohingya people; host communities and host States *'The arrival of Rohingya refugees has faced rejection from Aceh residents. The people there began to be reluctant to accommodate them.'*	**Story of Decline:** Continued instability in Myanmar is exacerbating the need for the Rohingya to leave. Traffickers are taking advantage of this and vulnerable Rohingya are being trafficked to Aceh. The local community in Aceh are beginning to reject the Rohingya because of the burden and danger they bring. *'…[t]he root of the problem is the conflict in Myanmar which until now has not been resolved.'*	**Moral of the Story:** Domestically, investigate and prosecute traffickers to reduce the number of Rohingya refugees reaching Aceh, which is exacerbating tensions with the local community. Internationally, Indonesia continues to uphold its obligations, but so too must other States. *'Indonesia, as a party of the UN Convention against Transnational Crimes, has international obligations to prevent and combat human trafficking and people smuggling…. The Indonesian government reaffirms its commitment to prosecute the individuals involved in crimes, such as both human trafficking and people smuggling.'* *'We are demanding and encouraging the states which ratify the [Refugee] Convention to get involved in resolving the issue.'*	**National security interests**

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia at the Second Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, 13 December	Setting:	Hero:	Story of Decline:	Moral of the Story:	International governance
Ministry of Foreign Affairs 13 December 2023 https://arsipportal.kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/5610/pidato/statement-by-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-second-global-refugee-forum-geneva-13-december-2023 At time of publication, the original link is broken. However, the statement is also available here: https://www.unhcr.org/media/statement-indonesia-grf2023.	War zones; International community *'Wars and conflicts are raging across the globe triggering mass displacement.'* *'We all have the same responsibility to respect international law, including international humanitarian law.'*	International community; GoI (implied) **Villain**: Transnational organised crime networks *'I am concerned with recent trend whereas refugees are falling victims to transnational organised crimes.'* States not sharing the burden (implied) *'State parties to the Refugee Convention must abide by their international obligation. The resettlement process has shown very little progress and state parties are closing their doors to new resettlement.'* **Victim**: Refugees *'…Palestinians have been forced for decades to flee their own homes and see their land taken away…the people in Gaza are living through a never-ending nightmare.'* *'[V]iolence has also forced Rohingyas out of their own country.'* Indonesia (implied) *'[W]e also cannot handle these challenges by ourselves.'*	War forces people to leave their countries of origin. Once being forced to leave their countries, refugees, and particularly the Rohingya, then become the victims of transnational criminals. These criminals then bring the Rohingya to Indonesia and Indonesia is left to manage the challenge. *'There is a strong indication [the Rohingya arriving in Indonesia] are victims of trafficking-in-persons and people smuggling.'*	To address the increased numbers of Rohingya in Indonesia, crack down on traffickers/smugglers. *'We will not hesitate to take firm action against these criminal networks, including by strengthening law enforcement measures.'* To address the toll on Indonesia and the root cause of the replacement, increase international cooperation and demand that other States 'play [their] part.' *'Addressing these root causes requires our collective commitment.'* *'We all have to play our part…'* *'Addressing transnational organised crimes requires stronger cooperation involving countries in the region…we must also strengthen cooperation with UNODC, UNHCR and IOM.'* *'Our commitment is firm to strengthen concrete and practical cooperation within the Bali Process…'*	International governance

The **first 2023 statement** is a speech given by Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs on 22 September at a side event in the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly. Made in the wake of worsening conditions in Myanmar causing greater numbers of Rohingya to flee overseas, she stated that 'the Rohingya community is crying in silence'. This emotive language clearly depicts the Rohingya as the 'victims' whose suffering 'we [the global community] cannot remain silent'. The Foreign Minister returns to the role of ASEAN's 5PC and is said to have pledged that 'ASEAN will continue to help the Rohingya and [] never forget [them].' This positions ASEAN, and the GoI as part of ASEAN, as the 'hero' who is seeking further support from the international community to assist.

The statement's 'story of decline' and 'moral of the story' are of particular interest because the Minister reiterates that the complex crisis is primarily political, rather than humanitarian. Thus, dialogue between States is needed to ensure cooperation, which can provide stability and ensure humanitarian aid can be delivered. Framing the policy problems in this way reinforces: (1) that the 'villians' must be those who caused the political instability and who are failing to engage; and (2) the GoI and ASEAN's role as the 'hero' being both practical and humanitarian-minded.

By situating the story in the context of global politics concerning Myanmar, it can be inferred that the narrative frames are **regional governance and international governance**. This framing not only highlights ASEAN's pivotal role in addressing the crisis but also positions regional cooperation-and international cooperation—as essential to achieving both political stability and humanitarian outcomes.

Made by the then-Vice President Ma'ruf Amin, the **second 2023 statement** is in the context of increased refugee flow and host community dissent.[44] Made 5 December 2023 at Universitas Indonesia, the statement is clearly 'set' within Indonesia. While, like earlier statements, the GoI is depicted as the 'hero' that continues to assist Rohingya refugees in Indonesia because, 'after all, this is humanity'. However, there is a sense of weakening political will, particularly in the phrase, 'We have to accommodate [the Rohingya], however, we need to anticipate that they will not become a burden to the country, to the community and the government…'.

Perhaps because the statement is given in a domestic context, there is greater emphasis on the local impact of refugee flow—the Rohingya are still depicted as 'victims', but the GoI 'need[s] to anticipate that they will not become a burden to the country, to the community and the government…'. This is less sympathetic than describing the Rohingya as 'crying in silence'.

Focused domestically, the statement's 'moral' reinforces calls for cooperation and burden-sharing—not just for the Rohingya but also for the benefit of the Indonesian government and public. The GoI appears to acknowledge and accept the challenges of the increased refugee flow while subtly clarifying that it does have its limits. While several other narrative frames could be implied—including 'economic problems', 'welfare issues', 'accomodation', or 'crimes and terrorism'—the exact 'burden' is not named. Because of this, the narrative frame appears to be generally **national refugee policy.**

The **third 2023 statement** was made by then-President Joko Widodo on 8 December in the context of national debates on the presence of Rohingya communities in Aceh. He states, 'I have received a report about an increasing number of Rohingya refugees entering Indonesian territory, especially Aceh Province', situating the 'setting' within Indonesia's mandate and particularly related to the host community's interests.

The statement suggests that the 'involvement of criminal trafficking network[s]' is responsible for the increased presence of refugees in Aceh and implies that the entering refugees are then burdening their host community. In this way, the statement positions traffickers as the 'villains' and the GoI as the 'hero'—'tak[ing] strong action against the criminal trafficking network' and thus reducing the host community's burden. Therefore, the statement's 'victims' are not the refugees vulnerable to such trafficking, but rather the local community who must pay for that trafficking's effects.

Situating the GoI in a position of control and referencing transnational crime, we can deduce that the narrative frame for this statement is **national security interests.** [45]

> It is important to note that the protection of domestic interests is not solely a political talking-point; instead, it is mandated by the Indonesian Constitution that the State is obligated to improve the welfare of their citizens and the people of the nation.[46]

---

[44] The statement begins, 'The number of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia as of Monday (4/12/2023) was recorded at 1,487 people. In addition, there was a rejection by some residents in several areas, such as Aceh, Riau, and Medan against Rohingya refugees who wanted to land.'

[45] It is interesting that statements pertaining to national security do not specifically address the significant escalation of armed conflict within Myanmar following the October 2023 launch of 'Operation 1027' by an alliance of non-state armed groups against the Myanmar military. Kyaw Hsan Hlaing and Naing Lin, '"Operation 1027": A Turning-Point For Myanmar's Resistance Struggle?' (The Diplomat, 30 October 2023) https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/operation-1027-a-turning-point-for-myanmars-resistance-struggle/. This omission further reinforces the interpretation that Indonesian policymakers were focused more on internal concerns rather than regional or external developments.

[46] See the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (1945) Preamble, https://jdih.bapeten.go.id/unggah/dokumen/peraturan/116-full.pdf (unofficial English translation).

The **fourth 2023 statement** shares several similarities with the third statement above, given only two days later. On 10 December, then-Minister of Human Rights and Law Yasonna Laoly delivered the remarks during a media conference at the annual celebration of Indonesia's National Human Rights Day.

The 'setting' appears to be shaped by misinformation and pushback by local communities in Aceh, reflecting concerns that the presence of the Rohingya may pose a threat to the local population. However, the Rohingya are not depicted as the 'villain'. Instead, the Minister refers to transnational trafficking networks—or groups operating across borders to facilitate the illegal movement of people for exploitation and profit—as the 'villains'. He suggests that these syndicates are responsible for persuading the Rohingya—whom he frames as the 'real victims'—to journey Aceh. The Minister states that, '[the Rohingya are] being persuaded about a better life [by the syndicate] … however, there has been a difference of culture between the local community and therefore, resistance arises by the local community'. This situates the local community as the 'setting', noting also that the broader Indonesian Government has the mandate to address such networks.

As before, the GoI is cast as the 'hero', particularly in the phrase: 'The government has done good deeds in the handling of refugees; we welcomed refugees, such as those coming from Iran, Afghanistan, and [most recently] the Rohingya refugees'. As the 'hero', the GoI again presents itself as maintaining control and taking action to ensure stability. However, the statement also indicates that Indonesia cannot handle the issue alone and requires international cooperation, noting 'we hope that the regional government, the central government, and of course, the IOM and UNHCR will work together to find the right solution'.

While the narrative external to Indonesia appears to be on international cooperation, the internal narrative focuses on policy conflicts between the interests of local communities and the interests of Rohingya refugees coming to Aceh. By prioritising local community's interests and impliedly framing that refugees' presence may bring with them a threat of criminal syndicates operating, the narrative frame appears to be **national security interests.**

> Indonesia is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention. However, it has enacted Presidential Regulation no. 125/2016 that outlines measures to protect refugees by providing for: 1) refugees' shelters and accommodation, 2) refugees' security and safety and 3) immigration officials' oversight. While the regulation offers an evidence-based framework for street-level bureaucrats to respond to the 'policy problem' of increased refugee flow, the lack of technical guidelines on how to *implement* such protections hampers its effectiveness.[47] This raises broader questions about the State's political will to prioritise and address refugee issues.

The **fifth 2023 statement** is a written policy statement dated 12 December by spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muhamad Iqbal, but published by the Ministry of Bureaucratic Affairs. This is important because the Ministry of Bureaucratic Affairs does not normally deal with international affairs, but it does have a role in the allocation of resources across the GoI. With the Ministry of Bureaucratic Reforms involved, it suggests that the GoI is prioritising addressing the 'danger' to local communities over humanitarian assistance and regional stability, found in earlier statements. Therefore, this statement's 'setting' is clearly national.

The statement emphasises identifying and prosecuting individuals involved in human trafficking, specifically referring to those 'who play a role in bringing Rohingya refugees to Aceh'. This situates the transnational traffickers as the 'villains'. This further puts the Indonesian government as the 'hero' in the story, and the Rohingya—implied to have been coerced or trafficked—as the 'victims'. By doing so, the belief appears to be that arresting and prosecuting *traffickers* would reduce the Rohingya refugees' presence, which would then reduce the local communities' tensions.

However, the statement also emphasises that Indonesia is not the only actor responsible for combatting trafficking or, indeed, providing refugee humanitarian assistance. The statement references Indonesia's obligations under two different treaties—one it has ratified, and therefore under which owes obligations, and one it has not.

Regarding the former, the spokesperson depicts Indonesia as a 'transit country' for trafficked persons and, referring to its obligations under the UNTOC, notes that Indonesia 'has international obligations to prevent and combat human trafficking and people smuggling'. However, the statement goes on to say: '[These] obligation[s] must not only be shouldered by transit countries such as Indonesia in the context of Rohingya refugees "[b]ut also appl[y] to the country of origin and also the destination country"'. The spokesperson then urges 'all countries related to the [UNTOC] to participate in handling this situation'.

Regarding the latter, the spokesperson emphasises that Indonesia is not a State Party to the Refugee Convention and therefore does not have the same obligations as States who have ratified the treaty. The message for Refugee Convention State Parties is stronger:

> As a country that is not a party to the Refugee Convention, Indonesia continues to submit requests to [Refugee Convention] countries to show greater responsibility in trying to handle these Rohingya refugees… Even some [of these States] do pushback policy or reject policy [sic]… We are demanding and encouraging the states which ratify the Convention to get involved in resolving the issue.

While not depicting such States as 'villains' *causing* the burden on local communities, the statement appears to diplomatically imply a belief that such States may be *contributing to* the burden by not acting on their responsibilities.

Additionally, the statement describes the complexity of the issue, acknowledging that 'the root of the problem is the conflict in Myanmar which until now has not been resolved.' While affirming Indonesia's commitment to restoring democracy and stability in Myanmar, the statement's acknowledgment of this complexity appears to signal a more inward-focused approach—suggesting that if Indonesia cannot control external factors, it will prioritise protecting its own people. This suggests the narrative frame is again **national security interests.**

> **'Migration Diplomacy'**
>
> Literature from the field of migration studies is relevant to this analysis. This literature has increasingly shifted focus from the Global North-to-North migration to examination of the Global South's migration management. [48]
>
> Migration studies literature provides the concept of 'migration diplomacy', where a State's role as a 'migration-sending' State, 'migration-receiving' State, or a 'transit-State' impacts the State's policy development and implementation, specifically in relation to both voluntary and non-voluntary migration.[49] These policies are inherently political and directed towards managing the impacts of migration domestically with specific attention to security,[50] political concerns,[51] and sociocultural concerns.[52] They also shape a State's foreign policy, including diplomatic and diaspora relations.
>
> Interestingly, this statement suggests that Indonesia sees itself as a 'transit-State', meaning that it perceives its role in the Rohingya crisis as a short-term facilitator rather than a long-term host. This 'temporality' may increase the perceived burden Indonesia is bearing if it is expected to assess arrivals, provide basic services, and manage logistic challenges for a population that does not ultimately remain. Moreover, the cycle of arrival and departure could be perceived to create a sense of ongoing disruption, reinforcing the perception that Indonesia is bearing a disproportionate responsibility without long-term benefit. This perception likely influences the framing of these statements by underscoring calls for increased burden-sharing among States and international organisations.

The **sixth 2023 statement** is dated 13 December, just one day after the fifth statement. Delivered by the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs at the UNHCR Global Refugee Forum 2023, the statement takes an outward-looking stance, urging other States to fulfil their responsibilities. Its 'setting' is thus within the international community. The Minister opens by referencing the 'wars and conflicts…raging [and] triggering mass displacement,' underscoring that the ability to address these policy challenges extends beyond any one State.

The 'story of decline' presented in the statement is particularly complex. It suggests that: (1) war forces people to flee their countries of origin; (2) once displaced, refugees-and specifically the Rohingya-are vulnerable to becoming the victims of transnational criminals; and (3) these criminals facilit Rohingya's arrival in Indonesia, leaving Indonesia to manage the resulting challenges.

---

[47] 'Laporan Tahunan SUAKA 2020' (SUAKA, 28 January 2021) https://suaka.or.id/laporan-tahunan-suaka-2020/.

[48] Fiona B Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, 'The Migration State in the Global South: Nationalizing, Developmental, and Neoliberal Models of Migration Management' (2020) 54 International Migration Review 853-882 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0197918319879057.

[49] Fiona B Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, 'Migration Diplomacy in World Politics' (2019) 20 International Studies Perspectives 113-128, https://academic.oup.com/isp/article/20/2/113/5253595.

[50] Fiona B Adamson, 'Crossing Borders: International Migration and National Security' (2006) 31 International Security 165-199 https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137542.

[51] See: William Rogers Brubaker (ed.) Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America (University Press of America; German Marshall Fund of the United States 1989).

[52] Peggy Levitt, 'Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion' (1998) 32 International Migration Review 926-948 https://doi.org/10.2307/2547666.

This layered story also creates a nuanced set of 'characters'. Unlike in earlier statements, the GoI is not initially depicted as the 'hero'; instead, that role is given members of the 'international community' working together to address the 'root causes' of displacement. However, the GoI later assumes a heroic role through its firm stance against transnational criminals—thus mitigating further suffering for refugee 'victims' of such crimes. Moreover, the GoI is positioned as a 'hero' for taking action despite not being legally obligated under international conventions.

By highlighting the 'little progress' made in resettlement of the Rohingya and appealing to Refugee Convention State Parties to 'abide by their international obligation[s]', the Minister implies that some States are failing in their responsibilities—both within the international community and towards refugees themselves. This suggests that the 'villains' are not only the transnational criminals but also States that fail to provide viable long-term solutions to displacement.

This suggests that the 'morals' of this complex story are at least two-fold. First, address the increasing number of Rohingya in Indonesia by cracking down on traffickers and smugglers. Second, alleviate the burden on Indonesia and tackle the root causes of displacement by strengthening international cooperation and urging other States to 'play [their] part'. Within in this second 'moral' there also appears to be an additional subtext: alleviate Indonesia's burden by limiting the role Indonesia is playing.

Therefore, identifying the dominant narrative frame is difficult: the 'war' frame appears relevant because of the emphasis on continued conflict leading to the vulnerability of refugees to trafficking; so does 'national security interests' because of the reference to threats of transnational crime. However, **international governance** is perhaps strongest: the statement calls for collective responsibility, urges other States to fulfill their obligations under international conventions, and points to the need for enhanced international cooperation. Notably, however, this appeal to regional or international governance is not solely (or even primarily) for the charitable support of refugees, but rather for mitigating the burdens their presence creates.

Discussion

Tracing The Shift In Dominant Narrative Frame

Overall, between 2017 and 2023, the dominant narrative frame appears to shift from regional governance and international cooperation to a stronger focus on national security. However, this shift is not absolute. Calls for regional governance and international cooperation continue, though the perceived benefits and intended outcomes vary depending on the audience.

Identified Policy Problems, Policy Solutions, & Narrative Frames

Plot (Policy Problem)	Moral (Policy Solution)	Narrative Frames
Instability in Myanmar	Diplomatic dialogue, regional cooperation, and reliance on established norms to encourage Myanmar to address this instability	Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation
Humanitarian crisis linked to instability	Diplomatic dialogue, regional cooperation, and reliance on established norms to restore stability	Humanitarian aid; Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation
Instability in Myanmar heightens the vulnerability of the Rohingya, allowing traffickers/smugglers to exploit them and transport them to Aceh	Investigate and prosecute the criminal syndicates responsible for trafficking/smuggling the Rohingya into Aceh	National security
Increased number of Rohingya in Aceh, leading to rising tensions between the refugees and host communities	Address cause of increased numbers, including through investigating/prosecuting criminal syndicates and urging responsible actors to provide relevant support	Crime and terrorism; National refugee policy; National security
International actors' (States and organisations) lack of support/engagement, leading to persistence of crisis and burden on Indonesia	Call out organisations and States with international legal obligations to provide greater assistance; focus on domestic needs	Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation

This shift is evident in three ways: movement from an international or regional 'setting' to a national 'setting,' a change in the characterisation of the 'victim' and 'villain,' and the evolution of the 'plot' and 'moral'.

Change in Setting

> The 'setting' within NPF relates to the space and time in which the stories are happening. The 'setting' often includes undisputed legal norms and the social-economic and geographical context which helps define the policy problem. Identifying the 'setting' of a narrative frame involves identifying the evidence that the narrators are using in substantiating their arguments or policy ideas.[53]

Earlier statements (2017, 2021, and 2022) frame the crisis within the international and regional communities, condemning the Myanmar military's actions against an implied standard of 'acceptable' State conduct and emphasising ASEAN's role in establishing or maintaining stability. However, by November 2022, a notable shift occurs when the Directorate General of Immigration raises damage done

---

[53] Shanahan and others, 'The Narrative Policy Framework' in Christopher M Weible and Paul A Sabatier (eds), Theories of the Policy Process (4th edn, Westview Press 2017) 173, 176.

to an immigration office allegedly by Rohingya refugees. Although criticising international organisations for perceived inaction, this marked a transition toward domestic concerns—the inaction not only effects refugees arriving in Aceh, but also Acehnese communities themselves. By 2023, the statements are firmly 'set' within the domestic community, particularly following the spread of misinformation portraying Rohingya refugees as a disruptive presence in Aceh. Although returning the 'setting' to the international community, the final analysed statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nevertheless implies that other States' failure to act is causing Indonesia to, domestically, bear an unfair burden.

Changes in Characters

> The 'characters' within NPF are the actors of the narrative. At their simplest, they include a 'villain' who is creating the policy problem, a 'victim' who is experiencing the effects of the policy problem, and a 'hero' who is able to resolve the policy problem.[54]

Broadly, who is identified as the 'villains' and 'victims' also change over time. In 2017 and 2021, the Myanmar military is portrayed as the primary 'villain', responsible for violence in Rakhine state and the instability following the coup. In 2017, the 'victims' are clearly the Rohingya people, whereas by 2021, the 'victim' group broadens to include the general population of Myanmar. Yet, the narrative shifts slightly in 2022 as international organisations like the UNHCR and IOM come under some criticism for their perceived lack of proactivity to address the needs of refugees reaching Indonesia.

By 2023, as the refugee situation appears to worsen in Aceh, the 'villain' and 'victim' framing shifts further. The Myanmar military is still at least implied as a 'villain', but attention moves toward transnational organised crime networks and human trafficking syndicates as the *central* 'villains'. The 'victims' continue to be Rohingya refugees, but the impact of their presence depicts host communities like those in Aceh as 'victims' as well. Additionally, the international community-particularly State Parties to the Refugee Convention-faces scrutiny for not equitably sharing the burden of refugee resettlement. This suggests that Indonesia is, in a sense, a 'victim' of both its geographic proximity and its proactive efforts to seek policy solutions, despite lacking a formal obligation under international law.

Change in Plot & Moral

> The 'plot' within NPF can be used to describe the relationship between the characters within the setting, providing the foundation for the policy problem.[55] A 'story of decline' describes the situation—in which the policy problem sits—is deteriorating; in contrast, a 'story of rising' may be presented where 'clear progress is taking place'.[56]
>
> The 'moral of the story' in NPF is the policy solution that 'gives purpose to the characters' actions and motives'.[57]

---

[54] Elizabeth A Shanahan and others, 'An Angel on the Wind: How Heroic Policy Narratives Shape Policy Realities' (2013) 41 Policy Studies Journal 453-483, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/psj.12025.

[55] Elizabeth A Shanahan and others, 'Bounded Stories' (2018) 46 Policy Studies Journal 922-948 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/psj.12269.

[56] Deborah Stone, Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making (3rd ed, WW Norton & Co, 2012) cited in Daniel Béland, 'Narrative Stories, Institutional Rules, and the Politics of Pension Policy in Canada and the United States' (2019) 38 Policy and Society 356-372 https://academic.oup.com/policyandsociety/article/38/3/356/6403953.

[57] Elizabeth A Shanahan and others, 'Bounded Stories' (2018) 46 Policy Studies Journal 922-948 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/psj.12269.

Combining the above changes in setting and characters, we see a change in the 'plot' or policy problem the statements appear to address. Likewise, because the 'plot' changes, so does the 'moral of the story' (that is, the policy solution proffered).

In 2017, 2021, and 2022, the dominant 'story of decline' is shaped by the actions of the Myanmar military. In 2017, the violence against the Rohingya leads to both a humanitarian crisis and domestic instability. By 2021 and 2022, statements suggest that this instability is intensifying, while the political and humanitarian conditions are deteriorating, making the return of the Rohingya increasingly difficult. As a result, the primary policy problem appears to be the ongoing instability, with the impact on the Rohingya emerging as a secondary issue. Therefore, the 'moral of the story' centres on diplomatic dialogue, regional cooperation, and reliance on established norms to encourage Myanmar to address this instability.

Although the impact on the Rohingya is less prominent, the approach to addressing this policy issue aligns with diplomatic efforts to promote stability, with a particular emphasis on providing adequate humanitarian aid to those affected.

In late 2022 and 2023, the chain of events in the 'story of decline' grows longer. By the end of 2023, the narrative suggests that the ongoing instability in Myanmar heightens the vulnerability of the Rohingya, allowing traffickers to exploit and transport them to Aceh. This, in turn, increases the number of Rohingya in Aceh, leading to rising tensions between the refugees and host communities, which are further exacerbated by the lack of support from responsible international actors.

This more complex 'plot' suggests slightly different 'morals of the story' depending on which part of the story is emphasised. For example, focusing on the traffickers' role, the central policy solution is to investigate and prosecute the criminal syndicates responsible for smuggling the Rohingya into Aceh. Focusing on the lack of international support, the central policy solution appears to be to call out organisations and States with international legal obligations to provide greater assistance.

However, focusing on the impact on local communities or the simple presence of the Rohingya in Aceh, the policy solution seems to require a combination of these approaches. While our analysis ends in 2023, the condemnation of international actors could also imply a stronger stance from Indonesia: assist in addressing the root causes and provide support, or we will reconsider our commitment to actions we are not legally obligated to take.

Absent Narrative Frames

While certain narrative frames dominated discussions, others were either only loosely referenced or notably absent. Exploring their absence sheds light on the subtleties within the dominant frames.

For example, three narrative frames—*economic problems*; *welfare issues*; and *accommodation*— were referenced but not dominant. This is significant because these frames are about resource-sharing in a time when the government had a strong focus on economic development.[58] The absence of these frames may be due to the negligible number of Rohingya in Aceh and Indonesia as a whole. Indonesia's population is 281.6 million; [59] according to the UNHCR in November 2024, Indonesia is hosts approximately 11,735 refugees and asylum-seekers in total, with the Rohingya only approximately 10% of this total.[60] This means that the Rohingya represent approximately 0.0004% of this total population in Indonesia. This small percentage may reduce the perceived economic, welfare, or housing burden.

Likewise, neither the *borders frame* nor the *refugee movement* frame appears. This is particularly notable given the later dominance of the *national security* frame. This suggests that Indonesia does not view the Rohingya as a direct threat to its territorial integrity, especially as their arrival occurs via irregular maritime routes rather than mass overland movement. Instead, the absence of these frames, combined with the articulation of the *national security* frame, suggest that the Rohingya are seen less as a direct threat and more as a third party whose presence inadvertently disrupts Indonesian domestic stability-whether by raising societal tensions or becoming vulnerable targets for exploitation by criminal networks. This also suggests that Indonesia's security concerns are not purely self-interested but may be tied to broader regional governance.

Further, the *elections* frame, which portrays migration as a major political issue, was absent. This is likely because the analysis focused on statements from acting ministers and ministries rather than political candidates. Similarly, the *human interest* frame—centred on individual migrant stories and personal struggles—was not found. This is unsurprising, as this frame originates from media studies, where storytelling is crucial for engagement. In contrast, policy statements may evoke emotional responses but are more likely to serve as a record of policy actions and provide justifications for their implementation.

Finally, the *values and culture* frame was also absent. This could be due to the small number of Rohingya arrivals or because of a shared Muslim identity.[61] Moreover, highlighting cultural differences could be seen to be counterproductive to Indonesia's broader diplomatic efforts in seeking cooperation and support for humanitarian assistance.[62]

---

[58] For example, initiatives like Indonesia Maju ('Advanced Indonesia') under President Joko Widodo (2014–2024) prioritised infrastructure growth as a key driver of national progress. Similarly, the Indonesia Emas 2045 ('Golden Indonesia 2045') vision aimed to improve living standards for citizens, emphasising domestic priorities over foreign affairs, including refugee management.
[59] As of 28 June 2024. BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 'Mid Year Population (Thousand People), 2022-2024' https://www.bps.go.id/en/statistics-table/2/MTk3NSMy/mid-year-population--thousand-people-.html accessed 2 April 2025.
[60] 'UNHCR Indonesia - Protection Brief' (UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 8 November 2024) https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/112359, accessed 2 April 2025.
[61] Notably, although culturally distinct, Rohingya were also initially welcomed in Aceh, in line with Acehnese customs and maritime laws that emphasise aiding those in distress at sea. 'Promoting Safety of Life at Sea in Selected Coastal Areas in South-East Asia through Local Actors' (Andaman Sea Response Network, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, 2021) https://aprrn.org/media/Publications/files/ASRN-Report_ENG_s_W6jgHBX.pdf.
[62] See, e.g., Indonesia's earlier approach to engagement by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation—of which Indonesia is a member—and the Rohingya crisis. 'Indonesia Defends Approach to Rohingya Problem as International Pressure Mounts' (The Jakarta Post, 18 November 2019) https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/11/18/indonesia-defends-approach-to-rohingya-problem-as-international-pressure-mounts.html.

A Role for Accountability?

The broader project, of which this study is a part, examines whether and how accountability through formal legal processes fits within States' policy responses to ongoing conflict—and the resulting humanitarian crisis—in Myanmar. The inverse of this question frames 'impunity for international crimes committed in Myanmar' as a central policy problem.

Reframing this NPF analysis within the broader project, we note:

• The statements analysed do not explicitly identify 'impunity for international crimes in Myanmar' as a central 'plot' or policy problem. The closest related narrative suggests that Myanmar's military is responsible for instability, but stops short of linking this instability to international crimes.

• 'Accountability through formal legal processes' is indeed depicted as a 'moral' or policy solution—but not in relation to those causing the instability. Instead, it is applied to those *exploiting* the instability, particularly human traffickers. This suggests that references to formal legal processes as part of the policy solution are primarily focused on curbing migration through criminal justice measures-addressing a symptom rather than the root cause.

• The dominant narrative frames of 'regional' and 'international governance' emphasise a commitment to existing norms and the rule of law, particularly through diplomatic engagement and multilateral cooperation. This commitment is reinforced by Indonesia's repeated calls for other States to uphold their legal obligations under international law particularly in relation to refugee protection. This is significant for advocacy efforts, as it provides an entry point for discussions on broader accountability measures. However, advocating for formal legal processes to address international crimes in Myanmar may also be perceived as conflicting with ASEAN's norm of non-interference.

Identified Policy Problems, Policy Solutions, Narrative Frames, Project 'Interests' & 'Values'

Plot (Policy Problem)	Moral (Policy Solution)	Narrative Frames	Project 'Interests' & 'Values'
Instability in Myanmar	Diplomatic dialogue, regional cooperation, and reliance on established norms to encourage Myanmar to address this instability	Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation	Burden-sharing, International Legal Order
Humanitarian crisis linked to instability	Diplomatic dialogue, regional cooperation, and reliance on established norms to restore stability	Humanitarian aid; Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation	
International actors' (States and organisations) lack of support/engagement, leading to persistence of crisis and burden on Indonesia	Call out organisations and States with international legal obligations to provide greater assistance; focus on domestic needs	Regional governance; International governance/ cooperation	
Instability in Myanmar heightens the vulnerability of the Rohingya, allowing traffickers/smugglers to exploit them and transport them to Aceh	Investigate and prosecute the criminal syndicates responsible for trafficking/smuggling the Rohingya into Aceh	National security	Security
Increased number of Rohingya in Aceh, leading to rising tensions between the refugees and host communities	Address cause of increased numbers, including through investigating/prosecuting criminal syndicates and urging responsible actors to provide relevant support	Crime and terrorism; National refugee policy; National security	

Reinterpreting these dominant narrative frames through the lens of State 'interests' and 'values,' as identified in this project's scoping discussions, reveals potential openings for discussions on accountability through formal legal processes. These opportunities arise particularly in relation to fostering burden-sharing and upholding the international legal order. They may also arise—cautiously—within the State interest for security.

'Regional and International Governance' Reframed & Relevance to Accountability

'Regional and International Governance' as the 'Interest in Burden-Sharing'

The frames of regional and international governance have similarities with a project-defined State interest in burden-sharing. As used elsewhere in this project, an 'interest in burden-sharing' arises when there is emphasis on the State's commitment to collective responsibility of nations or the cooperation between States, international organisations, and other actors for addressing the policy problem. Both the frames of regional and international governance and the State interest in burden-sharing emphasise the role of regional or international bodies, rather than just national governments, in managing refugee and migration policies.

The statements in which regional governance appears emphasise burden-sharing, especially within ASEAN. The statements indicate that Indonesia expects other actors to share responsibility for addressing the ongoing crisis in Myanmar and use the principles in the ASEAN Charter—including sovereignty and non-interference—to limit the individual State commitment to that which respects the shared principles.

---

[63] See: Philippe Bourbeau, The Securitization of Migration: A Study of Movement and Order (Routledge 2011).

The statements in which international governance appears also suggest burden-sharing, particularly with States Parties to the Refugee Convention but also with international organisations such as the UNHCR and IOM. These statements juxtapose international organisations with relevant funding and mandates and States that have ratified the Refugee Convention with Indonesia, who is responding to the crisis without a formal mandate or legal obligation. This juxtaposition suggests a desire for more equitable responsibility-sharing.

'Regional and International Governance' as the 'Value of Upholding the International Legal Order'

The frames of regional and international governance also have similarities with a project-defined State value of upholding the international legal order. As used elsewhere in this project, the phrase 'international legal order' encompasses an adherence and advocacy for the rule of law and the role of legal norms in ensuring equity, stability, and predictability between States. Statements in which regional and international governance are the dominant frame similarly emphasise the value of these known, legal norms—including those within ASEAN and more broadly under public international law—in addressing crises such as this fairly.

Rather than emphasising that Indonesia is *not* a State Party to the Refugee Convention, the 2023 statements could be read to highlight the importance of States following through on their existing legal commitments, thereby reinforcing the credibility and strength of international legal frameworks. By underscoring the need for treaty obligations to be upheld, this could be read to assert that international cooperation should be based on adherence to established legal norms rather than selective or politically driven engagement.

Relationship to Accountability

Recognising the importance of upholding regional and international legal orders, it is necessary to frame any consideration of accountability within adherence to ASEAN's non-interference principle. The interest of burden-sharing may mean that framing accountability as a shared international duty is somewhat persuasive, but direct action based on this shared responsibility likely does not overcome the hurdle of non-interference.

Instead, Indonesia's perceived value of holding States to the commitments *they* make under international law—even if Indonesia itself has not made the same commitment—may be more persuasive. For example, a collective call for accountability through formal legal processes that the other State itself has accepted may align more closely with Indonesia's value of upholding international legal norms. Legal processes that address the other State's commitments and have broad international backing may allow Indonesia to both advocate for accountability while respecting the principle of non-interference.

National Security & Accountability

The national security frame maps on to the broader project's consideration of security as a State interest.

In migration studies literature, 'securitisation' explains a government's policy inclinations towards protecting a State's interests and domestic agenda. This includes responses to migration that involve policing and defence, such as where States deploy a law-and-order response to registering or settling refugees in the country.[63]

A framing of, or interest in, security presents a challenge for advocating accountability for several reasons:

• Addressing security concerns is tangible and immediate, while accountability through formal legal processes can seem nebulous and protracted. If Indonesia perceives insufficient burden-sharing or believes States with international legal obligations are not fulfilling their responsibilities, this may lead to a prioritisation of security measures over pursuing justice.

• When refugee issues are framed as national security threats, the immediate harms to be addressed by formal legal processes may focus on issues such as trafficking and the potential harm to host communities *within* Indonesia. This framing can inadvertently sideline the pursuit of accountability for the international crimes committed *outside* Indonesia. Furthermore, an inward-looking, security-focused narrative can vilify the victims, turning refugees into threats rather than acknowledging their experiences as survivors of international crimes. This can perpetuate negative stereotypes and hinder broader support-and political will-for their protection and for accountability measures.

• Where prosecution for harms such as trafficking is undertaken, it may create the impression that the issue has been 'dealt with,' even though the 'root causes' of vulnerability to trafficking persist. This can reduce the urgency of pursuing formal legal processes at the international level.

That said, it is in statements where the dominant frame is national security that Indonesian officials call for formal legal processes. This suggests that while an emphasis on national security may highlight immediate concerns about transnational crimes, it can also be leveraged to argue that justice for Myanmar's crimes is essential for long-term regional stability. Indeed, language that connects the root causes of forced migration-namely, the crimes committed by Myanmar's military-and the continuation of these issues due to impunity, combined with elements of burden-sharing and upholding fairness within Myanmar's own accepted obligations, may be useful.

Conclusion

This study highlights a shift in Indonesia's narrative framing regarding the Rohingya refugee crisis, from an outward-looking focus on regional and international cooperation to a more inward-facing emphasis on national security. This shift, particularly in late 2023, reflects the growing priority placed on Indonesia's own security concerns, especially in managing trafficking and the protection of its host communities.

By analysing the frames used in Indonesia's statements and relating them to the broader purpose of this project, the study reveals potential avenues for advocating accountability through formal legal processes, especially by aligning accountability with burden-sharing and States' voluntary international legal obligations. The tension between national security concerns and the pursuit of broader accountability is problematic, yet it also presents opportunities to leverage security narratives to argue that long-term regional stability depends on addressing-through legal processes-the root causes of forced migration.

Acknowledgments

About the Asia Justice Coalition

Founded in 2018, the Asia Justice Coalition's purpose is to improve the legal landscape in Asia to ensure justice and accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Coalition operates through collaboration, resource-sharing, and coordinating efforts between local and international civil society organizations working in the region. Its work is accomplished by undertaking joint activities relating to justice and accountability and engaging in collective advocacy.

About the Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University

The Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) is a multi-disciplinary academic and research institute established in 2017 at BRAC University. The mission of the Centre is 'to promote global peace and social justice through the means of education and training, research and advocacy' and with the vision of 'a just, peaceful and inclusive society'. CPJ is playing a vibrant role for justice and accountability for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh through organising various national and international conferences, seminars, and public lectures. CPJ is also a co-signatory of an Amicus Curiae Observation to the International Criminal Court on behalf of Bangladeshi Non-Governmental Representatives.

The cover photograph represents the diversity, unity, longing for justice and cultural identity through the expressive symbolism of Mehdi (Henna) applied on the hands.

Each hand tells a story of a Rohingya girl's perception and interests of beauty highlighting the community's heritage.

By placing the hands in a circular harmony, the design emphasizes solidarity, justice, shared conception of beauty and values of Rohingya girls belonging to different backgrounds.

Cover Artist and Description: Mohammed Junaid