

Temporality in International Relations: Analyzing Rohingya Statelessness through Temporality Framework

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ABSTRACT

This article places temporality – the critical emphasis on time – as a critical yet understudied dimension in International Relations (IR). In order to make clear the value of a temporal framework, this study examines the protracted displacement of the Rohingya, a refugee community originating from Myanmar whose plight has emerged as a major regional issue across Southeast Asia. Traditional analyses tend to place the Rohingya crisis in a frame of forced migration and extended statelessness, one that is preoccupied with both short-term political or humanitarian intervention. In contrast, this article considers the Rohingya experience in interconnected dimensions of past, present, and future temporalities, revealing how historical legacies, current governance norms, and anticipations of an uncertain future shape policy interventions as well as everyday life experiences. The argument demonstrates how the inclusion of the concept of time in the study of international phenomena enhances the analytical lens of IR scholars, leading to enhanced understanding of long-term conflicts, the governance of migration, and refugee protection politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Temporality in International Relations (IR) fundamentally reintroduces the concept of time as a critical analytical lens in the study of International politics where its consitutite, governed, and experienced not merely see time as a chronological

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backdrop. Although time is frequently employed to explain political change, crisis or historical sequence, it has rarely been treated as a theoretical object within the discipline. This article advances the argument that temporality – understood as the socially and politically constructed organization of time – offers a necessary corrective to the discipline’s long-standing spatial bias and its reliance on linear narratives of progress, development, and resolution.

In this article, temporality is conceptualized as an analytical framework distinct from time or chronology. While ‘time’ refers to chronological sequence and duration, and ‘history’ to ordered past events, temporality refers to how time is politically organized, valued, and governed within social and institutional contexts. Temporality therefore captures how institutions, legal regimes, and governance arrangements produce differentiated temporal experiences, shaping who is allowed to move, who must wait, and whose future remains indefinitely postponed. Framed in this way, temporality functions as a theory of power in IR, illuminating how global politics operates not only through territory and material force, but also through temporal control.

Theoretical Framework

Temporality fundamentally emphasizes time as a key analytical framework in understanding phenomena within specific cases. These terms are used consistently throughout the article as analytical categories rather than metaphors, and are not used interchangeably with chronology, duration, or historical sequence. As Bardhoshi (2018) notes “time is a fundamental human category, part of social life and culturally determined”. Bardhoshi (2018) further situates the discussion of time within anthropological discourse, arguing that the politics of time reveals the relationship between power and knowledge—relations that were historically structured by colonialism as a political system. Bardhoshi (2018) even connects temporality with dictatorship, as discussed in his work *modus operandi of ethnographic temporalities*, which explores how temporality mediates the relationship between the dictatorial state and society. In his 2016 study, Bardhoshi further argues that “temporalities were part and parcel of the dictatorial situation—the political economy of time (i.e. backwardness versus modernization)—and integral to the liminalization of society during state socialism.” “Everything we do is embedded in time and we are in some way fundamentally aware of time, yet there is something about time that makes it beyond the human mind’s capacity to fully grasp” (McKay, 2016)

Analytically, the article distinguishes between temporality as theory and temporality as lived experience. Temporality as theory refers to the structured ways in which political systems govern through time – by organizing legal status, mobility, and rights across extended durations. Temporality as lived experience, by contrast, captures how individuals and communities inhabit these temporal regimes in their everyday lives, particularly under conditions of prolonged displacement. This distinction allows the article to maintain conceptual clarity while linking abstract IR debates to empirical realities without collapsing one into the other.

The Rohingya case is employed not as a metaphor for temporality, but as an empirical site through which the operation of temporal power can be examined. Long-

term statelessness, protracted displacement, and indefinite waiting are not treated here as purely humanitarian conditions, but as outcomes of temporal governance embedded in regional and international political orders. Time for the Rohingya does not unfold as linear progress from past to future; instead, it is characterized by suspension, repetition, and uncertainty. Bureaucratic delay, historical denial of belonging, and the deferral of political solutions together produce a condition of what can be described as permanent temporariness.

The concept of temporality has thus been a familiar and contentious aspect of anthropology, that is, relative to power, modernity, and social transformation. In IR, temporality, however, remains a new but promising trend. *Time, Temporality and Global Politics* is such a valuable contribution in this regard, as it challenges IR scholars to revisit the temporal assumptions of central concepts within IR. The book argues that temporality is not a static background condition but an active force forming political ontology, ethical imagination, and the global power structure. In view of the growing need for multi-temporal thinking to address global crises such as climate change, migration, and pandemics, temporality offers a critical alternative framework for analyzing the dynamics of contemporary global phenomena.

In relation to refugee issue, Gruss (2015) suggests that perception of time is rooted connected to the perception of place the experience of time cannot be understood independently of the experience of place, meaning that one cannot fully grasp the experience of time without considering the experience of place.

Drawing on these theorists, Rohingya – widely recognized as one of the most persecuted ethnic groups in the world – encounter Myanmar primarily as a non-place, a space that denies them even belonging, identity, and permanence. For them the homeland, something that can signify rootedness and common memory, has become a scene of exclusion and displacement. They cannot project or imagine a “home country” they might have some meaningful sense of ownership over. The lack of something substantial to hold onto, in other words, further motivates a heightened quest for ways of relating oneself to time more flexibly and adaptively.

For Rohingya refugees time is an abstract adaptive to experience, not a linear progression from past to future. Long-term waiting of Rohingya’s individual and shared experiences are grounded in enduring time: waiting for an opportunity to depart from long-standing exile, and waiting to legitimate their identity through a formal national recognition of citizenship by Myanmar Government and International community.

This condition produces a temporal orientation centered on the future. There is a dream that one day they, like the other Myanmar people, might live with human dignity and recognised legal status. Yet the present does not move smoothly toward that future. It functions instead as a transitional period marked by uncertainty. In this in-between time, refugees hold on to hope while continually adjusting their strategies for survival. Their days encapsulate the struggle to bridge a stilted present and an imagined future.

Hope for citizenship becomes a political--and temporal--goal, influencing how Rohingya refugees negotiate uncertainty in their daily lives. Their desire for a settled existence bracketed by safety, justice, and acknowledged legal standing is temporal but unmarked by any clear end time. Although rooted in the imperatives of existence at the moment, it transcends calculated time and opens out onto a future that is unclear.

The longing for a post-refugee life-- or the kinds of movements that return to a place where both personal and collective histories remain in memory -- is not just geographical relocation but existential and moral journey. That place -- whether real or imagined, offers the possibility of identity formation, continuity of memory, and enduring social relations . For the Rohingya, this journey goes beyond historical time and spatial boundaries as it conveys a continued striving for recognition, security, and to live in the world not as stateless persons but as fellow citizens.

In making this argument, this article analyse that the Rohingya crisis is not analytically intelligible (nor effective as a political category) through displacement or legal exclusion in space, but rather is produced by temporal mechanisms: of prolonged waiting; of imagining the future; and of the irrelevant injustice politics in the past histories. It makes an empirical contribution to the IR literature by demonstrating the ways in which temporality adds depth to the examination of forced migration, refugee governance, and long-run insecurity, emphasizing time as a fundamental dimension of power within global politics.

For conceptual clarity, this article uses “temporality” to refer to the socially and politically constructed organization of time; “liminality” to describe conditions of prolonged in-betweenness produced by governance practices; and “spatial bias” to denote IR’s tendency to privilege territory and space over time in political analysis.

This article is organized in four analytical stages. The first section develops temporality as a theoretical framework in International Relations. The second section outlines the research design and analytical strategy. The third section applies the temporality framework to the Rohingya case through empirical analysis. The final section discusses the implications of temporal governance for refugee protection and international politics.

Temporality and the Rohingya Experience

The main objective of this research is to demonstrate a new understanding by employing the lens of temporality, which allows for a rethinking of time beyond its current conceptualizations. This approach enables the development of new interpretations of temporal experience. The research employs empirical explanatory study using secondary data on the Rohingya ethnic group, encompassing both historical developments and contemporary conditions, to identify and analyze the distinct phases of their trajectory. To achieve this aim, the study examines the social construction of temporality in analyzing the experiences of the Rohingya across different temporal dimensions—their past, present conditions, and the broader Rohingya crisis—within the framework of forced migration and extended statelessness. Through this temporal lens, the study seeks to capture how the

Rohingya's lived experiences are not only shaped by spatial displacement but also by temporal regimes that define and constrain their existence as perpetually temporary.

Temporality, as defined by Iparraguirre (2016), is

"the apprehension of becoming, which every human being accomplishes through their cognitive system within a cultural context, and time as the phenomenon of becoming in itself, which the human being is capable of apprehending as temporality."

The central hypothesis guiding this work posits that the Western conception of time (Western temporality) is not the only possible understanding; thus, it can be reformulated by first distinguishing conceptually between the phenomenon of becoming (time) and the interpretation of becoming (temporality) (Iparraguirre, 2016).

This study employs the concept of temporal governance to connect International Relations theory with refugee experience, emphasizing how states and international regimes exercise power through waiting, delay, and indefinite temporariness. Building on this conceptual foundation, this study views temporality as a culturally embedded construct. Drawing on this conceptual foundation, in this research, temporality is imagined as a culturally constructed experience. In the case of the Rohingya, their temporalities are given meaning by the lived experiences of displacement, forced migration, and systematic statelessness resulting from ongoing political violence and exclusion in Myanmar. Crisis displacement reconfigures not only space but also time, as displaced populations are forced to inhabit prolonged temporal states of waiting, suspension, and uncertainty that reshape their social identities and political subjectivities (Ramsay, 2020). These conditions generate a specific sense of temporal awareness through which collectively, the Rohingya understand and articulate their lives as eternally temporary. These temporally situated analyses thus serve to uncover how power, culture, and displacement intersect to produce long-term conditions of waiting, uncertainty, and marginality that make up the Rohingya condition.

Together, these studies demonstrate that Rohingya displacement is produced through intertwined regimes of statelessness, securitization, and temporal governance, in which refugees are governed not only through borders and laws but through time itself—through waiting, delay, and the suspension of political futures (Cheung, 2012; Kaveri, 2017; Kyaw, 2017; Masoumi, 2022; Ramsay, 2020).

Temporality in International Relations

Temporality in International Relations (IR) successfully re-centres time as a critical analytical concept within the analysis of global politics. While ubiquitous in explanations of everyday experience and political processes, time has rarely been interrogated as a conceptual or theoretical category within IR studies. This perspective entails a critical and initial reorientation by examining the conceptual reorganisation of time within the discipline.

Temporality in this context means that time is not merely a pre-existing background or a unproblematic framework for international politics, but an active

dimension on which societies bring into being and tell stories of identities, conflicts, regimes of governance, and ethics. Drawing from critical theory, political sociology, and cultural studies, this view seeks to deconstruct the entrenched spatial bias that has dominated much of IR theory. By doing so, it establishes new ontological and epistemological spaces for comprehending politics of temporality.

According to *Time, Temporality and Global Politics*, IR researchers must now critically rethink temporal logics yet seemingly eternal underpin their discipline: sovereignty, progress, modernity, and security. It contends that temporality is not a fixed background but an active force in the crafting of national politics ethics global order power. From the recognition that a variety of temporalities exist, it is possible to see how distinct temporal precepts serve to perpetuate inequalities or allow for transformation. As a result of the multiple temporal demands in today's global crises—climate change, migration, and pandemics for examples—the temporal provides us with excellent tools at a higher theoretical level for understanding how different temporal scales, from immediate historical periods. The temporality framework turn in IR offers a field of critical intersection between structure various discourses and possible transformations of lived experiences of Rohingyas, among other vulnerable subjects.

Given the increasing demand for multi-temporal thought in the meeting of today's global crises—climate change, migration, and pandemics—temporality provides a rich theoretical platform to see how different scales of time (from the near to deep history) intersect in constructing the dynamics of global governance and human experience. This temporal displacement in IR thus thus presents a site of critical intersection between structural reading and lived experience, between world political order and the everyday temporalities of its victims, such as the Rohingya.

Building on these foundations, temporality further reshapes core IR debates by illuminating dimensions of power that extend beyond material capabilities or territorial control. States exert power not only through borders or coercion but through time: accelerating, delaying, or suspending political processes. Contemporary refugee protection regimes increasingly operate through temporal governance, using acceleration, delay, and indefinite waiting as techniques of migration control that effectively regulate mobility without resolving legal status (Masoumi, 2022). Visa regimes, humanitarian processing, asylum systems, sanctions, and border controls all operate as temporal technologies that distribute power unevenly. Time becomes a method of governance, producing hierarchies between those who must wait and those who are permitted to move.

The concept of temporality offer new critical thinking for conflict and security. While conflicts are often approached as spatial struggles, their escalation and persistence unfold through distinct rhythms, cycles, and durations. Anticipation, urgency, protracted waiting, and deferral shape how states act and how individuals experience insecurity. In long-term crises such as the Rohingya displacement, the temporal structure of “permanent temporariness” becomes a form of insecurity in its own right, reproduced by policies that suspend refugees between past dispossession and an uncertain future.

Finally, temporality enriches ethical debates in IR studies. It shifts attention from abstract structures to the waiting, uncertainty, and hope that define everyday life of marginalized communities. For refugees, time is not neutral—it is shaped by bureaucratic delays, stalled processing, and indefinite suspension. Therefore, ethical IR must account for differentiated temporal experiences that structure vulnerability and resilience.

By integrating temporality, the discipline is encouraged to reassess its methodological assumptions. IR has long relied on linear narratives of progress, development, and state formation. A temporal approach challenges these trajectories by recognizing non-linear, interrupted, or stagnant forms of time that shape global politics.

Together, these insights show that temporality is not ancillary to IR but central to understanding how global politics is experienced, structured, and contested. For populations like the Rohingya, whose lives are defined by displacement, waiting, and the suspension of citizenship, temporality becomes key to understanding both their suffering and their agency. Their lived time—caught between a denied past, a constrained present, and an anticipated future—reveals how global politics is experienced not only across borders but across the uneven terrains of time itself.

The temporality contributes to ethical debates in IR research that engage with or set among a marginalized populace. For refugees, time has two faces: administrative delayed and the endless extension of their in-between status. How should research on temporal and ethical international relations view multiple temporal experiences, which condition the vulnerability or resilience of human beings? Emphasizing temporality requires IR to rethink its linear, directed narrative of progress and state formation and admit the existence of temporal systems that are completely outwith ordinary "time" as well influencing world politics. As time governs the experience of and resistance to global politics, this is vital knowledge. The Rohingya, for one, live what might be termed posterior time - the sum of a present which has been confiscated and past reduced to fact. This reality reveals how global politics is experienced not only across borders but across the uneven terrains of time itself.

This article analytically distinguishes between temporality as a theoretical framework in International Relations and temporality as lived experience. The former refers to how political institutions and regimes govern through time, while the latter captures how displaced populations experience waiting, uncertainty, and deferred futures under those temporal regimes.

2. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS: TEMPORAL GOVERNANCE AND STATELESSNESS

Who Are the Rohingya?

This section reads the historical and demographic description of the Rohingya not merely as background, but as evidence of how statelessness is produced and

sustained through temporal governance, in which time itself becomes a mechanism of political control.

The Rohingya, a Muslim minority group of an ethnic identity separate from those living in Myanmar, have become one of the most persecuted communities throughout the world with growing international attention. They are not just one million with an approximate population; they have been long-subjected to a system of discrimination and marginalization that has been enforced by the Myanmar government. This long-term marginalization is not only spatial or legal, but temporal: discrimination is extended, repeated, and normalized over time, producing a condition of prolonged suspension rather than resolution. This current government has categorically denied their existence as citizens and turned them into stateless non-entities with literally no national identity to call their own. Such denial operates as a temporal technology of power, erasing the Rohingya from the political past while suspending their recognition in the present and deferring any claim to a secure future. This denial of nationality is a tragic exclusion from basic rights, including freedom of movement and access to services that already seek to split the Rohingya population between those who have some protection and those who are currently further marginalized since they now face insecurity and vulnerability.

Faced with relentless violence, intimidation, and official discrimination over many decades of their lives in Myanmar, a staggering number of Rohingya have sought sanctuary beyond the boundaries of the country while they desperately continue in search for safety and protection. Their journey, fraught and unregulated for many, have taken them across international frontiers to other countries like Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand – lands of their own whose development grappling with developmental and humanitarian challenges. These movements are not only spatial displacements but temporal dislocations, in which mobility is accompanied by indefinite waiting and the absence of predictable political timelines. Within this destinations, it has been Bangladesh that most acutely felt the impact from the long-term displacement crisis as the situation for refugees there have deteriorated into a life or death matter. There are up to half a million unregistered Rohingya refugees living in the country, according to existing estimates – in vulnerable circumstances. Unregistration functions as a form of temporal suspension, keeping refugees in an administratively unfinished present where rights are continually postponed.

This continuing influx flow serves as a clear manifestation of the depth of the Rohingya's statelessness and, more broadly, reveals of how national exclusion and regional migration pressures interact with each other and contribute to multi-layered humanitarian emergencies in Southeast Asia. Statelessness is not merely a legal anomaly but a condition that produces enduring social and political vulnerability, as the denial of citizenship systematically restricts access to rights, mobility, and recognition, rendering populations such as the Rohingya permanently exposed to insecurity and marginalization (Kaveri, 2017). Their displacement is more than just a response to immediate conflict, and instead has long-term roots in structural

persecution as well as the visible absence of political and social belonging that has defined their existence for too many years.

The Rohingya are native to Myanmar, have been born citizens and dwell as members of the country's society for centuries. Yet they have become one of the most persecuted minorities on earth. Etymology The name Rohingya is generally thought to be a form of Rajatarangini, an old usage for the word "Rohngya" from Rohang, which was later called Arakan. The name has been associated by some scholars with the Arabic word *raḥam* (compassion, mercy), on account of a local legend in which Arab sailors who were cast away after a shipwreck had taken refuge in the place and begged for divine protection and pity (*raḥam*) but it was rejected to them except once; later on, according to another account, these words linguistically transformed into *Rôháng* or related form (Grønlund 2016 cite Yin 2005).

The Rohingya have been depicted as “non-Myanmar” by the government of Myanmar, to which their very existence has also been denied by previous governments. The Rohingya population transferred to what is now Myanmar as early as the 7th century and later than that, but were for all purposes left out of the citizenship laws enacted in 1982 – effectively making them stateless because they had no recognized nationality of any country. The 1982 Citizenship Law institutionalized statelessness as a temporal condition by converting exclusion into a permanent legal delay with no endpoint. Historical presence is rendered politically irrelevant through temporal denial, in which longevity is erased to justify present exclusion. The Rohingya have lived in the Rakhine (known as Arakan) State in Myanmar for centuries, but they were declared “foreign residents” by the military regime. Consequently they have been denied fundamental rights such as freedom of movement, marriage, and the legal right to their land or property in their own country (Choudhury, 2019 cite Uddin & Ahamed, 2008).

Forcible expulsion and repetitive bouts of violence in Rakhine have resulted in massive exoduses of Rohingya to neighbouring countries, the most prominent among which is Bangladesh. Repetition here is analytically significant: displacement is not episodic but cyclical, reproducing statelessness through recurring temporal interruption rather than final resolution. Some 730,000 Rohingya refugees now live in squalid, overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar – adding to nearly one million Rohingya already residing in Bangladesh. They do not have freedom of movement in Bangladesh and are also at risk of violence from armed groups within the camps. Refugees in these camps suffer from severe food, medicine, and healthcare shortages.

This absence of schooling and the inability to find work has caused high dropout rates in schools, as well as economic deprivation on a grand scale. Added to this, without adequate legal protection and formal recognition, the Rohingya are radically exposed to system violations of their human rights.

Rohingya in the past: Historical Context and Underlying Causes

The ethnic lines of the Rohingya conflict run deep into the complicated history of the region. Most Rohingya claim lineages tracing back to the original inhabitants of what was historically called Arakan and is now known as Rakhine State. Arakan has

a history of changing political fates. Islam entered the area during 712 CE, which gradually resulted in the local formation of Muslim communities. The territory then went through a succession of Buddhist and Muslim rulers. Arakan became a target for the Portuguese and the Mongols before it was occupied by the Burmese in 1785. The British annexed Arakan in 1826 after the First Anglo-Burmese War when they defeated Burma, whose King and Parliament reluctantly signed a peace treaty ending the war (the Treaty of Yandabo), which saw them take over control from then until Burmese independence in January 1948. From a temporal perspective, colonial and postcolonial transitions did not close historical chapters but layered unresolved temporal claims, allowing exclusion to be carried forward into new political regimes.

State narratives and legal mechanisms excluding them from the country's national community have built the Rohingya status as being *de facto* stateless, rather than their historical eligibility (Kyaw, 2017). Shifts in power and a colonial past have managed to break up the ethnic groups. Burma's occupation by Japan, for example, made it a source of constant tension between Rohingyas who were pro-British and Bamar and Rakhine people representing Japanese interests through their visions for Independence respectively Authorities had little reason to intervene in the conflict. At that time some Rohingya leaders petitioned Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan (Jinnah was Pakistani) to annex northern Arakan into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). The petition was later dismissed, increasing nationalist resentment and paranoia over separatism by Burmese authorities (Yin 2005).

After the independence of Burma, even more political oppression occurred. A succession of national crises – from the killing of nationalist leader, General Aung San (father to Aung San Suu Kyi); through so-called independence uprisings and then the 1962 general Ne Win-led coup that introduced decades of military rule – has played out in Rakhine. The Burmese military government manufactured a refugee crisis by designating the Rohingya illegal immigrants and driving them across the border into Bangladesh. The regime took the stand on the basis that migration, as compared to British rule, was illegal settlement. As a result, many Buddhists in Myanmar began to treat the Rohingya as Bengalis (and not an indigenous ethnic group). The repudiation of the word “Rohingya” itself expresses this conviction, which nationalists declare to be a contemporary invention aimed at securing religious, economic and political benefits.

This history – of colonial inheritances; of political exclusion and ethnic nationalism – is a historical context that has led to periodic flows of Rohingya refugees fleeing across borders for asylum. Together, these historical and structural factors have had a resulting long-term effect on the continued displacement and marginalization of the Rohingya.

The analysis now moves from historical formation to contemporary temporal governance, showing how past exclusions are reproduced through present administrative practices.

The Rohingya Issue status of Statelessness

The problem of the Rohingya, which has lingered for decades, still poses as a challenge to Myanmar and its neighboring states and resulting as one of the significant regional problems in South East Asia. It is widely considered a situation of forced migration, statelessness and a protracted humanitarian crisis. In host countries, Rohingya displacement has increasingly been framed through a security lens, whereby refugees are constructed as potential threats to social stability, national identity, and public order, legitimizing restrictive policies and surveillance practices (Rana & Riaz, 2023). The Rohingya, a muslim ethnic minority in Rakhine State in western Myanmar regard themselves as an indigenous group with a long history in the region. On the contrary, the Myanmar authorities consider them illegal immigrants from Bangladesh who came during the British colonial era and do not recognize "Rohingya" as a legitimate group identity, calling them officially as "Bengalis."

Ongoing fighting in Rakhine and the systematic expulsion of Rohingya from Myanmar have led to a sudden, mass influx into the country's neighbours, particularly Bangladesh, as well as other south-east Asian nations such as Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Relationship between Myanmar and Bangladesh soured greatly after 1978 when the issue of refugees began to crop up as there was a sudden refugee crisis for the first time in Bangladesh. The bilateral relationship between the two neighboring countries has since remained strained.

The systematic deprivation of citizenship and the erasure of Rohingya as a distinct ethnic group by successive governments in Myanmar has left them without formal official status, reduced to living extremely vulnerable and marginalized lives. The rest are largely trapped in displacement camps in Myanmar, living as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in their own country or as refugees throughout the region. Camps operate as temporal spaces of governance, holding lives in abeyance and transforming waiting into an enduring political condition. Hopes continue to shine in the path of reticipateing their right to self formation and citizenship despite recent regional as well as international concern about their humanitarian suffering.

The stateless condition of the Rohingya is one of the most contentious and politically sensitive issues, nationally as well as internationally. Statelessness thus emerges not as a singular legal absence but as a temporally produced condition sustained through prolonged uncertainty, delay, and deferred political settlement. Statelessness, they are not just administrative in nature but socially and politically constructed Through state policies the Rohingyas have been uprooted from their socio-historical cultural roots.

Even as product of mass expulsion and protracted exile since 1970s, Rohingya "statelessness," has re-entered the political stage in 2012 when flare-ups of communal violence occurred between Rakhine Buddhists Muslims and non-Rohingya and Rohingyas. There were significant internal displacements due to this violence, with Rohingyas bearing the brunt of it.

Taken together, these empirical sections show that statelessness persists not because time has failed to resolve the crisis, but because time is actively used to govern it. Bureaucratic delay, historical denial, and future uncertainty function as temporal technologies of power that sustain permanent temporariness.

3. CONCLUSION

The following section synthesizes the empirical findings and discusses their implications for International Relations theory and refugee governance.

They are now one of the most persecuted of the region's minorities. The Rohingyas descended from Arakanese (now known as Rakhine), indigenous people in history. They have been expelled from their homeland, are denied citizenship and the rights that go with it and pushed out of a country, leading to a situation of stateless refugeehood which has generated an epic displacement crisis in Myanmar-Bangladesh borderland and, increasingly, become a regional humanitarian crisis across Southeast Asia.

The rejection and obliteration of Rohingya citizenship is a planned and prolonged rule-of-the-game strategy of various Myanmar governments over the years. Through the early 1980s – primarily with the 1982 Citizenship Law – the state has steadily stripped 'Rohingyas' of legal recognition and formal identity. On this jurisprudential platform, military-led operations have identified the Rohingya as illegal aliens and not as fellow members of Myanmar's polity; campaigns that in turn have involved resorption (or forcibly taking people across borders) and other acts causing great harm to life and dignity condemned on a wide scale as grave assaults against human rights such as ethnic cleansing or, according to some, genocide.

The Rakhine displacements have produced layers of precarities and risks: large numbers are internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Myanmar, many fled to Bangladesh, where the camps in Cox's Bazar now comprise one of the world's largest refugee settlements, while there have been further forward movements into countries neighbouring Bangladesh. The influx of Rohingya have come in segmented ways to Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, with the serial refugee waves producing chronic patterns of responsibility management in host countries. Protracted displacement has also transformed everyday relations between refugees and host communities, generating localized tensions over resources, livelihoods, and security that increasingly shape the social dynamics of refugee-host coexistence (Habib, 2023).

Implications for International Relations Theory and Policy

Foregrounding the concept of time in the analysis of international phenomena enhances IR's analytical lens, deepening understanding of long-term conflicts, migration governance, and the politics of refugee protection. The Rohingya case cannot be reduced to a generic problem of displacement or administrative statelessness. If framed only as routine humanitarian crisis, policy responses risk defaulting to cyclical relief efforts that leave the structural drivers intact.

A temporality-informed approach instead excavates the crisis across layered time horizons—linking historical exclusion, legal-institutional change, and present humanitarian conditions to possible futures of protracted exile. Each temporal juncture reveals distinct mechanisms through which vulnerability is produced and reproduced. Careful selection of these temporal “stakes” enables more precise diagnosis and, in turn, more credible remedies: restoring historical dignity and recognition; reconfiguring Myanmar’s legal and administrative frameworks toward inclusive citizenship; and, at the regional level, building durable arrangements that address the ongoing emergency while anticipating uncertain futures—thereby shaping both policy interventions and everyday life trajectories.

By introducing temporality as an analytic in International Relations, this study contributes conceptual and methodological tools for examining international phenomena—probing causes, projecting scenarios, and informing policy design—while enriching the discipline’s literature with a framework attuned to time, endurance, and the governance of forced migration.

Indeed, the issue of statelessness has broader implications within a geopolitical security perspective than it is in humanitarian terms. The lack of citizenship not only deprives people of their legal rights, it contributes to an environment where vulnerability, displacement, and instability persuade individuals and families to exodus across national boundary lines. A wide range of reports confirm that the situation of the Rohingya people has deteriorated to a level well below common international human rights standards, stressing for an immediate political solution.

It is not one that can be resolved by Myanmar acting alone, but rather demands the focussed attention of bordering countries, ASEAN and the broader international community. Regional responses to Rohingya displacement have been characterized by a persistent policy impasse, in which migration control priorities consistently override durable protection solutions, leaving refugees suspended in prolonged uncertainty across South and Southeast Asia (Cheung, 2012). While countries like Thailand and Malaysia have supplied humanitarian support in some form to Rohingya refugees — sometimes under contentious circumstances — they clearly do not have the capacity or bandwidth needed to confront at its source what really should be seen as an international crisis. Although Myanmar is ultimately responsible for the crisis, the ongoing abuse and marginalisation of some Rohingya refugees in host countries must also be addressed. Halting these reprehensible practices is not only the right thing to do; it is also a critical part of the path toward regional peace, human security and a sound political settlement.

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