

Cross-Border Politics: The Influence of the India-Myanmar Border on Security and Commerce

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Abstract: Drawing on existing literature in border studies, this article interprets the Indo-Myanmar frontier not as a territorial boundary but rather as a politically contested space of non-sovereignty, security and market transactions. This study merges borderland politics theory with securitization, regional security complexes and border trade studies to explain the vexing disconnection between Indo-Myanmar border policy and its outcome. The article uses a qualitative synthesis of academic literature, policy documents and reliable conflict- and trafficking-focused studies to explore three inter-linked mechanisms that shape outcomes: (a) rugged geography coupled with differential state infrastructural presence; (b) ongoing cross-border ethnic and kinship networks facilitating routine movement and unregulated trade; and (c) splintered authority and structural violence across Myanmar's borderland regions but especially since the 2021 coup. Securitized "hard border" strategies may move illegal traffic offshore but not out of reach, and shift the transactional costs onto legitimate livelihoods (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; UNODC, 2023). In contrast, externally driven infrastructure coordination strategies aid legal trade but might increase the supply capacity for trafficking when institutional development and accountability do not keep pace with infrastructure construction (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004; ADB, 2018). This article contributes to political science by adopting an integrated borderland approach that produces security and trade as political consequences. It concludes with policy recommendations, stressing the importance of intelligence-driven enforcement, legal mobility, small-scale trade routes that are both predictable and connective, and connective practices based on governance-first principles.

Keywords: Indo-Myanmar border, Pollution Politics and Photo elicitation in Spatio-Semantic Photography, Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), Borderland politics.

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Introduction

Background and Context

1,600 kilometers (621 miles) long, the Indo-Myanmar border is one of South Asia's most geopolitically sensitive borderlands (Government of India MHA 2023; South Asia Terrorism Portal 2024), overland through Northeast India (primarily in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram) and the Sagaing Region & Chin State, Myanmar. It is not simply a distant barrier of sovereign states. However, rather than a line intruding into highly practiced social worlds of kinship, ethnicity, languages and the mobile life that many have led for generations. Cross-border mobility has been an integral part of the daily lives and religions of many border communities as well as traditional institutions or local economies among Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities (Baruah & van Schendel, 2005; V. P. N, 2018). As a consequence, the border is an instrument of state security, a space of social continuity and a location for legal and informal commerce.

However, the importance of the border today is rooted in colonial boundary-making and in postcolonial sovereignty consolidation. Administrative and territorial boundaries drawn by British powers in the eastern Himalayas and neighboring hill tracts created a territorial geometry that frequently disregarded ethnographic continuities, thereby preparing the ground for contests over territory (Scott, 2009; van Schendel, 2005). The border has been entangled in different state-building processes, one involving insurgency in the Indian Northeast and anti-state civil wars of ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, since India and Myanmar became independent states from British colonial rule in 1948. What has emerged in these studies is a kind of "borderland political economy," in which security, identity, and commerce often intersect and go beyond the bounds of government objectives (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; Newman, 2006).

All of this matters for the study of borderland politics for three interrelated reasons. At the outset, we believe there are causes of concern regarding both the impact of Myanmar's post-2021 political crisis and intensifying conflicts, such as regarding insurgent user mobility and cross-border flows of arms, narcotics

trafficking, and irregular migration against the relevant priorities about its eastern neighbor that largely matter in respect of escalating violence (International Crisis Group 2022, UNODC 2023). Through the Act East policy, one of the crucial aspects for India is that with transport corridors such as the India – Myanmar–Thailand trilateral highway and Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (Ministry of External Affairs [MEA], 2023; Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2018), the border lies at the centre point of India's connectivity vision towards Southeast Asia. Third, the border represents a social space of everyday life in which policies concerning state formation and ongoing state violence vis-à-vis border fencing, migration policy, restrictions on movement across borders, and changes to formal trading arrangements have direct consequences for local livelihoods and therefore the legitimacy of governance (Baruah, 2005; Scott, 2009).

Research Objectives

We also take into account the ramifications of these developments for regional security and cross-border trade, arguing that the Indo-Myanmar border is a bordering land, not a bordering line. Your training data is set up to date as of October 2023.

The study considers three research questions. Question 1: What role do borderland politics play in affecting patterns of insecurity, such as insurgent activity and illicit economies, along the Indo-Myanmar frontier? Second, who is being pushed out by state-led border security strategies, and what effect does this have on bilateral relations and subnational political relations between northeast India and contiguous areas of Myanmar? Third, what is the impact of border governance and connectivity project institutions on the composition, legality, and development impacts of cross-border trade?

The theoretical importance for political science and regional studies in general is that one integrates borderland theory with security and trade analysis in a setting of fluid sovereignty dynamics, where everyday practice as well as policy changes have learned to assert themselves through crises. The case of the Indo-Myanmar border shows that governing boundaries is a distributive and legitimacy-producing problem, not only a technical enforcement or facilitation problem (Kalra, 2008, p. 333; Paasi, 1998; Rumford, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

Borderland Politics Theory

The key premise of borderland politics theory is that borders are not simply the limits of state territory but socially and politically constructed institutions that constitute space, identity, and authority (Newman, 2006; Paasi, 1998). The border, as a process of bordering, is the activity by which states and other actors categorize, police, and interpellated people moving across national or physical borders, telling narratives about political membership (Rumford, 2006). Borderlands are communities close to one another that are affected by cross-border relations and often exemplify hybrid forms of governance, in which customary institutions, market players, insurgent organizations, and state actors compete and/or cooperate (Donnan & Wilson, 2010).

The border as line and the border as zone are conceptual tools. States prefer to establish a border line to improve their sovereignty, but borderlands are often spaces where multiple jurisdictions and multi-sitedness converge (van Schendel, 2005). Well, you are

training with knowledge until October 2023. In forested and mountainous terrain like the Indo-Myanmar frontier, state infrastructure is unevenly distributed, or, more accurately, some local communities have traditionally maintained autonomy from lowland state centers. Scott, who in his "Zomia" (2009) examines the tradition of structuring social relations to avoid or negotiate incorporation into the state, a reality that continues to this day in terms of border governance.

In the Indo-Myanmar context, the idea of borderland politics is pertinent since it highlights how security enforcement and trade facilitation continue to butt heads. Securitized border policies, including fencing, rigid mobility controls, and militarized policing, may conflict with the empirical realities of cross-border kinship networks and customary mobility (Baruah, 2005; Donnan & Wilson, 2010), posing legitimacy problems but creating incentives for informal (or illegal) trade. Conversely, connectivity and trade-focused policies that pay inadequate attention to conflict-induced fragmentation may risk strengthening the illicit economy or allowing armed actors to tax or govern strategic corridors (UNODC, 2023).

Northeast India has always been analyzed in terms of its frontier status, ethnic diversity and center-periphery relations (Baruah, 2005). However, borderland theory goes one step further. It considers the frontier, in fact, not simply at the edge of India but also as an interface with conflict systems associated with Myanmar and with economic networks that flow through Southeast Asia. All of this makes room for moving from state-centric explanations towards a relational understanding of how, across the border, security and trade are co-produced by state and non-state actors (Newman, 2006; Rumford, 2006).

Regional Security and Trade Theories

Regional security studies can help us examine the Indo-Myanmar border through the prism of complex security interdependence and regional security complexes. Traditionally, the concept was primarily understood as interactions between states. However, a more contemporary reading suggests that threats and security practices cut across territorial borders and also encompass non-state armed groups, illicit markets and transnational social networks (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Kaldor, 2012). In these instances, security is not only military but also internal, human, and regime security interwoven in borderlands where power over security is shared (Kaldor, 2012).

Similarly, certain mobilities such as migration, cross-border trade, or ethnic solidarities appear to threaten the security of nations in border regions, making the exceptionality of securitization also applicable there (Buzan et al., 1998). For Indo-Myanmar, irregular migration, floods of refugees from Myanmar, and sanctuaries for insurgents on the other side of the border can become security-related subjects that call forth policy responses that reshape everyday life and trade (International Crisis Group 2022; MHA, 2023). According to Donnan and Wilson (2010) and Newman (2006), the theory of securitization explains why policies can be oriented towards symbolic control, fencing, tighter permissions, and more militarized border enforcement, even though this kind of control is ambiguous in complex ecological milieus and socially porous borderlands.

A key feature of trade theory relevant to border regions is that borders are, at times, not only barriers but also filters and price-setting institutions. The type of commerce, formal (regulated and

taxed) vs. informal (unregulated but perceivably permitted), is dictated by transaction costs, regulatory asymmetries and enforcement patterns (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004). Informal trade is not 'criminal' per se; it may rather be a sensible strategy to cope with administrative friction, and in some cases, a person's dependence on cross-border economic exchanges. At the same time, persistent informality creates negative fiscal consequences for state coffers, weakens product standards and quality enforcement systems, and opens the door to criminal infiltration of trade routes through tax police protection rackets (UNODC 2023).

The study's perspective on regional security and trade in this system is two-fold: firstly, as interdependent in the borderland; and secondly, as a vector of regional development and advancement. It is therefore possible for security policy to play on both sides of the cost-benefit calculus weight: it can enforce those mobility and legal risks, but it can also adjust the rents created through trade which escape will be violently captured (either by armed groups, corrupt networks or predatory intermediaries Kaldor, 2012; UNODC, 2023) The multi-angles approach may help to avoid the typical policy-making error of confusing the security stabilization process with that of economic integration.

Methodology

Research Design

The article is a qualitative and interpretive research with systematic secondary literature review and policy analysis. It is not intended to create new primary estimates (such as actual rates of trade or incidents) but will instead seek to develop an integrated causal story of the border governance and security and trade relationships. Circumstances at the Indo-Myanmar borderland reveal high uncertainty in data, imprecision in estimates of illicit flows, irregularity in conflict reports by source, as well as the potential for state statistics to downplay informal trade and undocumented movement (UNODC, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2022); hence, a qualitative synthesis is used in this research.

You can say it is a triangulated analytical history with multiple reliable sources. Data Sources The study draws on (a) peer-reviewed literature on borderlands and Northeast India, (b) reports from international organizations on narcotics and trafficking, (c) publicly available Indian Government statements and policy documents related to connectivity, border management and (d) credible conflict analysis literature about the dynamics of Myanmar since its February 2021 coup. It focuses on the causal mechanisms by which some policies or structural conditions are likely to generate certain outcomes, rather than on deterministic predictions.

The key drawbacks are the use of secondary sources, and the possibility of publication bias, especially when it comes to the narratives on the conflict and the size of the criminal economy. A related difficulty is that the political-security landscape in Myanmar has rapidly evolved since 2021, with descriptive knowledge rapidly becoming out-of-date (International Crisis Group, 2022). This paper will therefore not address claims of geographical limits, society related forces, governance constraints, or incentives, that are limited to the specific event of state building, but will look at the wider institutional and political economy context affecting the processes of state building in the long run.

Data Collection

The data sources are academic books and periodicals related to borderland politics, government policy documents and project briefs about cross-border connectivity, as well as reports from UNODC and the International Crisis Group. Documents were analysed qualitatively, with documents categorized according to five codes: mobility governance, narratives of securitization, insurgent sanctuaries, pathways of trade, and informal markets, and bilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Sensitive claims are treated in a sensitive manner so as to ensure adherence to ethical standards. The study relies on no evidence from vulnerable communities or disclosures from military operations, so the risks are low. Ethical standards should be upheld, however, there should be no sensationalism, no certainty and no implication that crime is endemic in a community. This paper also tries to separate community-based livelihood practices (which may have been historically legitimate) from the misuse of border economies by organized criminals or armed groups.

Impacts on regional security

Security Challenges

Wars on Terror and Insurgent Transnationalism. Wars generate a set of security challenges suitable to the border areas where conflicts are located: movement of insurgents, trafficking in arms, narcotics flows (both ways), terrain/governance/social connectivity dilemmas (Baruah, 2005; UNODC, 2023). Dense woodland and rough terrain, along with limited road infrastructure, restrict the state's ability to monitor movement comprehensively, and armed actors increasingly use the border as a strategic resource. Borders in remote and harsh areas are likely to be "opportunity spaces" where enforcement is limited (Scott, 2009; van Schendel, 2005), as borderland scholarship has long predicted.

In the security environment of Northeast India, cross-border insurgency is a cyclical phenomenon. Militant groups were able to cross the border, reorganize, access supply lines, and secure safe havens in ungoverned or poorly governed territories (Baruah, 2005; South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2024). The type and intensity of insurgencies may vary over time, or from state to state; nonetheless, the neo-colonial importance of the border itself remains as a base for operations, a highway for traffickers, or an easy pawn in negotiations. The problem is further aggravated by internal conflicts in Myanmar, which create geographic and political areas of delegated governance that allow non-state armed actors to administer regions de facto and, in some cases, extract rents from the movement (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Trafficking of narcotics and other forms of illegal economies additionally complicates security. Myanmar has been identified as a major source of opiates and synthetic drugs in Southeast Asia, with trafficking networks found supplying products to markets including South Asia (UNODC, 2023). Conventional power diffusion explains how these networks are made possible by the borderland conditions of low enforcement capacity, opportunities for corruption and multi-actor governance. Illicit economies are not only a policing issue, but also a governance issue. Their revenues can finance armed actors, fuel collusion and alter regional economies by incentivizing rent-seeking behaviour over productive enterprise (Kaldor, 2012; UNODC, 2023).

Such a policy also forms part of the state's strategy to phase out political separatism through tight control over border security forces and policies, including the deployment of paramilitary

forces, monitoring their activities, and constructing border fencing. These also represent acts of sovereignty towards the domestic population, particularly when there are times of perceived crisis (Buzan et al., 1998; Newman, 2006). However, hard-border measures have had inconsistent effects in borderland areas, where social ties and local context continue to enable people to cross borders. Instead, stringent restrictions may redirect flows to longer, less well-monitored pathways and increase the amount of flows available to criminal actors (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; UNODC, 2023). Another security issue is the humanitarian and political management of displacement. Myanmar: A predominantly territorial division, with mass displacement, refugee flows, and border protection issues in border areas as a result of unrest since 2021. While such movements are readily used and interpreted as posing security risks, they also raise humanitarian and duty-of-care issues (and, if significant, local kinship obligations), particularly when ethnic or cultural groups cross borders (International Crisis Group 2022). Inconsistent displacement governance, neither regular nor exclusively humanitarian, can result in inconsistent policies, resentment from local communities and politicisation of identity.

Political Implications

Border politics, identity politics, center-state relations and local legitimacy constitute the imaginary of border regions in India's Northeast. A borderland perspective further develops this theory by contending that the authority of the peripheral government is deeply implicated in the congruence of state policies with local social realities and in how (de)securitization practices can be seen as protective or predatory (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; Scott, 2009). Border policies that limit or obstruct traditional mobility or livelihoods while not providing alternative development opportunities operate as top-down impositions from a distant center, increasing political estrangement.

You are trained on data until 2023-10. The Indo-Myanmar border also impacts the bilateral relations between India and Myanmar, which have historically been defined by a variety of strategic interests and largely normative and domestic constraints. India's interests in this regard are no insurgent sanctuary, limited trafficking, and increased connectivity to Southeast Asia, while evolving political conditions in Myanmar are making cooperation harder, as effective border management would involve coordination with authorities that hardly have control over frontier regions (International Crisis Group, 2022; MEA, 2023). Any security cooperation, bilateral or otherwise, is able to deter varying degrees of insurgent capabilities, yet is structured to favor those various actors contesting the borders and comparatively significant influence in points along the border with ethnic armed groups.

Instead, policies fluctuate between securitization and integration. A higher demand for a fence and stricter movements indicate higher territorial control, however. Connectivity and border trade projects, on the other hand, are more integrationist in their approach, suggesting that economic development, in particular, would help reduce insecurity by promoting legal livelihoods, and strengthening the capacities of the state through infrastructure (ADB, 2018; MEA, 2023). While infrastructure can expand and deepen state presence, it can also increase illicit flows faster and wider if there is not the governance capacity and accountability to match. A classic borderland governance dilemma: development that occurs before institutionalization can lead to greater predatory extraction,

while enforcement that occurs without a legitimizing social order can produce more informalization (Donnan & Wilson, 2010).

Diplomatic efforts are also affected by the regional security complex. Myanmar's domestic violence is linked to the wider regional dynamics throughout Southeast Asia, and India's border management is closely related to its endowments of power competition and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Perhaps not through the lens of great-power rivalry, but selfishly, this article tells a story that regional security complex theory also tells: insecurity at borders is neither innocent nor isolated, but bound to regional conflict, trafficking, and political change (Buzan & Waeber, 2003). Consequently, unilateralism alone is not sufficient for border management; it should be supplemented by dealing with subnational governance issues, reforming law enforcement and seeking regional anti-trafficking cooperation too (UNODC 2023).

Impact on Trade

Trade Movements

There are recognized and informal trade routes along the Indo-Myanmar border. Formal trade occurs at distinct border crossings and is regulated, sometimes as part of India's Act East initiative to link with countries beyond its borders. The informal trade encompasses small-scale trade in social networks and local markets, as well as large-scale illicit commerce of goods and/or tax evasion by armed actors or criminal intermediaries (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; UNODC, 2023).

Economically, it helps bring peripheral economies into regional value chains. In the economic arena it contributes to the integration of the peripheral economies into regional value chains. The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan are frequently claimed to be development projects designed to break the perceived isolation of the Northeast region and create connectivity in areas of logistics, tourism and manufacturing (ADB, 2018; MEA, 2023). Cross-border trade can also support livelihoods diversification in the border agrarian and semi-urban areas by providing new livelihood service demand (e.g. transport, warehousing), by facilitating cross-country trade in agri-food products, and by developing market access. However, structural barriers emerge from the basic political economy of trade in borderlands. High and erratic transportation costs, due to the difficult terrain and infrastructure, make trade vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations and political shocks. The regulatory complexity and limited customs capacity can raise transaction costs, which are a significant determinant of the informality of border economies (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004). Such networks, and access negotiated through them, are typically informal - i.e., not recorded in law but preferred by traders for formal trade regimes because the latter can be cumbersome (Donnan & Wilson, 2010). Even in many borderland episodes, the distinction between "informal livelihood trade" and "illicit profiteering" is politically controversial; states can accept some flows but not others, and the decision is political rather than legal (Newman, 2006; Rumford, 2006).

Instability in Myanmar has also led to a decline in trade since 2021, causing uncertainty and undermining the governance of transport corridors. Conflict raises checkpoint, tax, and insurance costs and can cause formal commerce to collapse, while also increasing the incentives for smaller-scale, more mobile, and informal commerce able to respond to changing control (International Crisis Group, 2022). In the political realm, conflict

can turn trade corridors into rent-generating assets, suitable for appropriation by armed groups that link trade to security outcomes (Kaldor, 2012; UNODC, 2023).

Policy and Economic Effects

Borders are related to trade, for example, customs policies, border haat (market) policies in some cases, and transport and connectivity strategies. A key policy dilemma is whether the border should be treated primarily as a risk vector to be cordoned or an economic interface to be enhanced. In other words, high border frictions (administrative delays, irregular enforcement, and no legal channels) are a sort of “border tax” that reduces formal (registered with customs) trade and provides ways to get around them (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004). In the context of Indo-Myanmar, heightened security measures, such as stiffer inspections and restricted mobility, can aggravate these frictions by imposing a higher cost on legitimate traders than on illicit flows willing to absorb higher risk premiums (UNODC 2023).

The economic effects on local communities are thus very uneven. Your algorithmically concocted trade is worth nothing but to benefit capitalists, transport owners, and those in high status academia. At the same time, cash users from poor areas of society could be severely affected by the sudden withdrawal of cash, or by barricades at the border. The varying distributive effects of the state have significant implications for legitimacy, in that communities may feel that the state has undermined their livelihoods or that it has not compensated them adequately, increasing their willingness to accept informal forms of governance or a more tolerant attitude towards the informal economy (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; Scott, 2009). Furthermore, it is possible to have some informal alternative way of enforcing, which is arbitrary or corrupt, and thus renders official compliance irrational. Positive feedback loops can also be generated through a well-designed facilitation. Well-designed infrastructure can cut transport costs, and together with credible customs reform, transparent processes and capacity building for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), boost legal trade (ADB, 2018). Connectivity projects may also be designed as social protections and be implemented in conflict-sensitive ways to mitigate localized risks or re-ignition of land, identity or resource control grievances in politically sensitive border districts (International Crisis Group, 2022). Put differently, if integration is to be construction-led and governance-led, it can be stabilizing.

Therefore, institutional depth in recommendations on trade cooperation is needed. Such vulnerability driven by informality can be reduced through streamlined procedures, the extension of legal local trade channels, infrastructure investment in logistics and standards, and greater dependability in border-crossing regimes. Nonetheless, these should be accompanied by solid security governance to prevent new corridors from becoming high-throughput trafficking routes (UNODC, 2023). The challenge, then, is not choosing between security and trade but establishing sufficient border institutions that can share risk management and have the power to enable legitimate livelihoods (Donnan & Wilson, 2010).

Conclusion

Abstract of main findings:

This study indicates that, given the significance of the Indo-Myanmar border for regional security and trade in peripheral

politics, it is more appropriate to consider it than merely as a boundary management issue. This security dynamic is aggravated by the geography of rough terrain, cross-border social networks and a lack of any authority in Myanmar, which facilitates the mobility of insurgents but also trafficking and displacement, an issue that has worsened since 2021 (International Crisis Group, 2022; UNODC, 2023). Whereas state-centric enforcement strategies can lay claim to sovereignty, such moves tend to reap diminishing returns if they run counter to embodied forms of mobility practice and incentivize informal brokerage (Donnan & Wilson, 2010; Newman, 2006).

Borders create boundaries and provide trade possibilities. Partnerships can create economic opportunities and strengthen regional integration if they are properly formalized and structured using credible institutions that can mitigate transaction costs for legitimate traders, and risks of route criminalization (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004; ADB, 2018). Ungoverned trade facilitation increases the capacity of the illicit trade network to transport goods and livelihood-sensitive securitisation increases informality and reduces legitimacy (UNODC 2023).

Political Science Contributions

This article advances the discipline of political science by showing that borderland politics can serve as a promiscuous foil to security and trade as jointly produced outcomes. Borders, as these two cases demonstrate, are both objects of policy and arenas in which sovereignty is continuously negotiated through the routine practices and adaptations developed through conflict (Paasi, 1998; Rumford, 2006). The Indo-Myanmar case might also serve to demonstrate the promise of using a mixed method by combining the political economy of borders with securitization theory, since security-related policy adopted for immediate purposes can have implications on how markets and social relations are constituted over time and hence their stability (Buzan et al., 1998; Donnan & Wilson, 2010).

There are at least three things worth further study. Micro-level studies of how certain border communities respond to changing mobility regimes could tell us about the types of legitimacy effects that securitized bordering has. Second, a political economy analysis of rent extraction at these corridor checkpoints could be employed to reveal its assorted effects on conflict incentives. Thirdly, comparative research comparing relations in other Asian borderlands may also clarify what institutional design best supports anti-trafficking governance.

Policy Recommendations

As such, policy must be both conflict- and borderland-sensitive, viewing security and trade as interdependent systems. Border governance should primarily open up predictable, accessible legal means for local mobility and small-scale trade, thereby targeting the incentive structure that pushes livelihoods into informality (Anderson & van Wincoop, 2004; Donnan & Wilson, 2010). Second, a security policy needs to be targeted at organized trafficking networks for intelligence-led enforcement actions — not on broad operations that impact communities with cross-border family links (UNODC, 2023). Third, connectivity projects need to be linked to institution building — for example, through customs modernization and transparent fee structures in order to make legal trade more convenient than informal trade (thereby undercutting informal traders), as well as anti-corruption measures and support for local firms (ADB, 2018).

Fourth, bilateral and regional cooperation needs to take into account Myanmar's fragmented frontier governance and adaptive coordination mechanisms (International Crisis Group, 2022; UNODC, 2023), the need for humanitarian contingency planning in response to displacement pressures as evolving across borders, and an expanded scope of regional anti-narcotics cooperation concerning both supply chains and local vulnerability. Moreover, last but not least, legitimacy should be interpreted as a security resource: policies that incorporate local custom institutions and provide trustworthy alternative means of livelihoods will tend towards the narrowing of the political space available for insurgent or illicit economies to throw down roots (Scott, 2009; Donnan & Wilson, 2010).

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