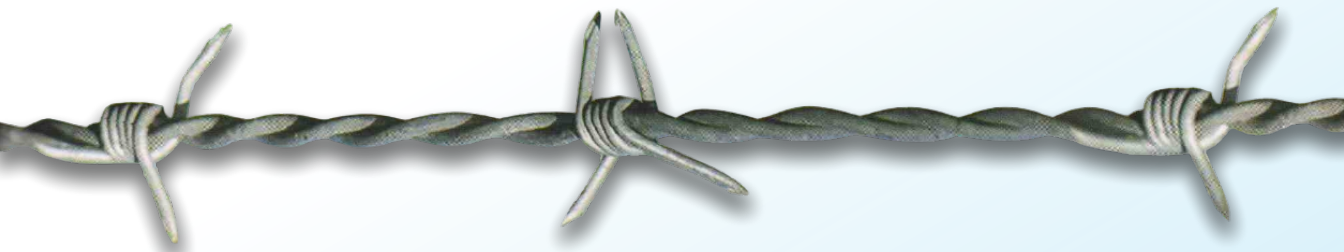




August 2025

**BORDERLINES OF SECURITY:**  
**A STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF**  
**WEST BENGAL'S CROSS BORDER THREATS**



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# **Borderlines of Security: A Strategic Assessment of West Bengal's Cross Border Threats**

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# Executive Summary

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1. The violence in the Murshidabad District highlights a larger, long-standing issue in West Bengal: the pattern of radicalization, infiltration, and the resulting demographic shift. This shift encourages such incidents, particularly in border districts near Bangladesh.
2. There is an urgent need to combat the rampant forgery of crucial identification documents, such as Aadhaar cards and Indian passports, which are being duplicated to obtain various benefits in India. These are being supported by officials and influence groups which are part of the eco-system in the region. This has led to increase in smuggling of cattle, gold, and weapons which have been smuggled in across borders.
3. Financial incentives are a primary motivation for cross-border migration from Bangladesh. In West Bengal, due to shared language and culture, illegal cross-border migration is normalized. The state, with its agriculture-based economy, has a high demand for labour, and these illegal migrant workers are employed at lower wages for specific time periods.
4. In the assessment, it was found that a key narrative justifying infiltration is the shared Bengali identity between India and Bangladesh. Political parties argue that religion is the only difference, thereby justifying providing opportunities to Bangladeshi Bengalis who cross the border illegally.

5. The implementation of a National Register of Citizens (NRC) across West Bengal and Northeast India is required to curb infiltration and prevent Bangladeshi citizens from naturalizing in India through document forgery.

### **Objective:**

1. This study endeavours to understand the causes of the Murshidabad violence and assess the rising concerns of cross-border radicalization, illegal immigration, and smuggling (including cattle, gold, and other items) to and from West Bengal and the affiliated eco-system around it. The study will primarily focus on West Bengal and Bangladesh, given their shared border and interconnected challenges.

# Background

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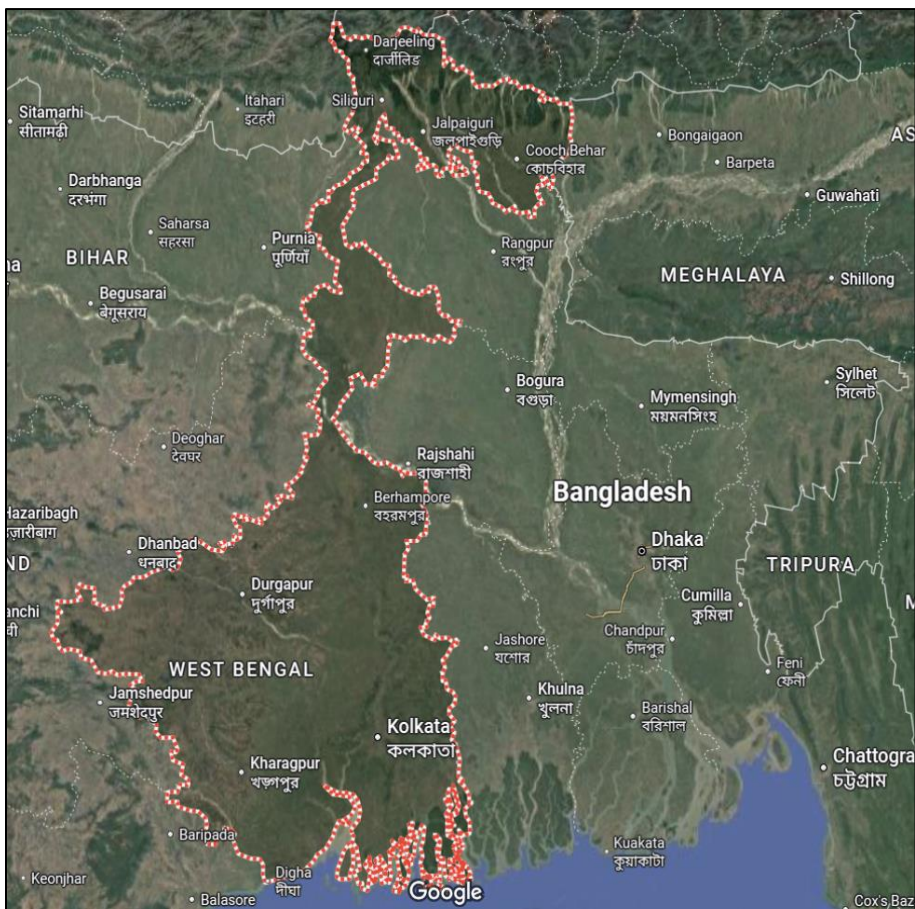
1. The Lok Sabha passed the Waqf Bill on April 3, 2025, with 288 votes in favour and 232 against. On the same day, Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of the West Bengal, sparked controversy by proposing an amendment to nullify the Bill, aiming to prevent its implementation<sup>1</sup>.
2. Following these events, a series of violent incidents erupted, drawing attention to a larger, long-standing issue: the pattern of radicalization and demographic shifts in West Bengal's border districts.
3. These districts, particularly Murshidabad, have been significantly impacted by illegal migration from Bangladesh. With alleged support from West Bengal's political establishment to consolidate for votes and a seemingly hostile interim government in Bangladesh led by Md. Yunus, this situation presents an emerging security threat.
4. The State of West Bengal shared an international border of 2,216 Km with Bangladesh. This border is protected by the Border Security Force (BSF). With the rising inequality, lack in employment in Bangladesh, and the economic opportunities in West Bengal which makes cross border infiltration more lucrative.

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<sup>1</sup> However, under India's constitutional framework, such a move is legally untenable. **Waqf properties** fall under the **Concurrent List**, meaning parliamentary law prevails over conflicting state legislation, as per **Article 254** of the Indian Constitution. Any attempt by a state government to override a central law, once passed by Parliament and assented to by the President, would be unconstitutional and subject to judicial review.

5. To investigate the recent events, the author travelled to West Bengal, visiting key locations and conducting interviews with various stakeholders including journalists, academicians, security agency personnel, and locals, whose names remain anonymous due to requests for privacy.

## Methodology:

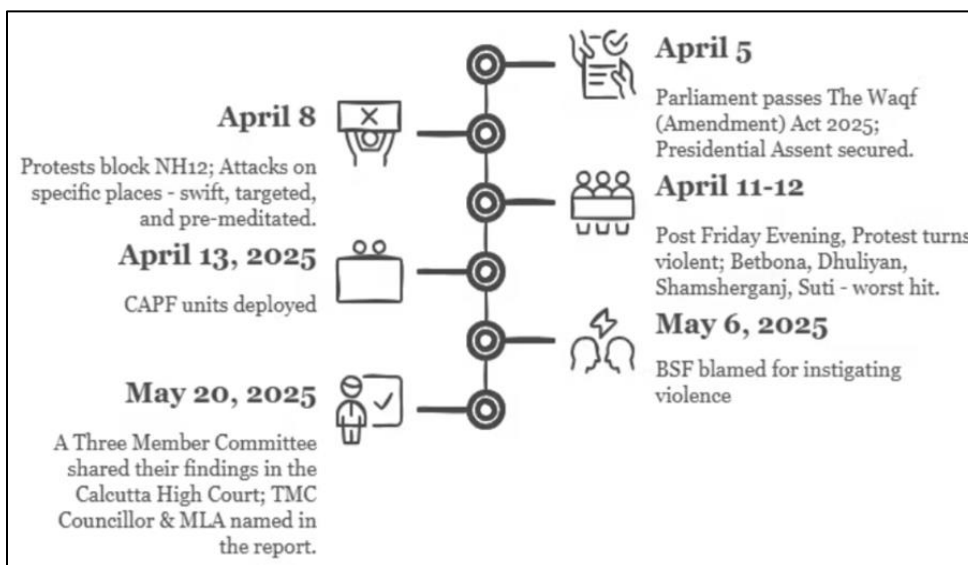


**Figure 1:** Considering the strategic location of the State of West Bengal. The field visit involved visiting key locations near the borders of India and Bangladesh.

The field visit inquiry involved visits to the following places from 24th May to 1st June, 2025.

- **Calcutta:** The majority of interviews and stakeholder interactions were conducted here.
- **NH12 SMR Cafe before Dhulian, West Bengal:** This site was significant as radical elements reportedly pelted stones, attacked police vehicles, and created blockades, delaying police deployment from Berhampore (the police headquarters of Murshidabad District) to the violence-prone area. Vandalized temples were found just 50 meters from the main police station of Dhulian city.
- **Murshidabad District:**
  - ❖ **Samsorganj:** Identified as the epicentre of the April 2025 violence.
  - ❖ **Dhulian:** Bordering Bangladesh, this area is a hub for trade, smuggling, and cross-border movement due to the thinness of the Ganga River here. Houses were ransacked and burnt. The author visited the homes of victims Hargobind Das (74) and Chandan Das (40), who were killed. Smuggling hotbeds, especially ghat regions, were also visited.
  - ❖ **Betbona:** Reports indicated 113 houses were affected, with most residents seeking shelter in a school in Malda. A direct visit to this village was not possible due to the sensitive nature of the situation.
- **Malda:** Interactions with stakeholders occurred outside the city.
- **Siliguri:** Engaged with Indian Army representatives at the Bengdubi Military Station Headquarters, Eastern Command, Indian Army.

- **Timeline of Incidents:**

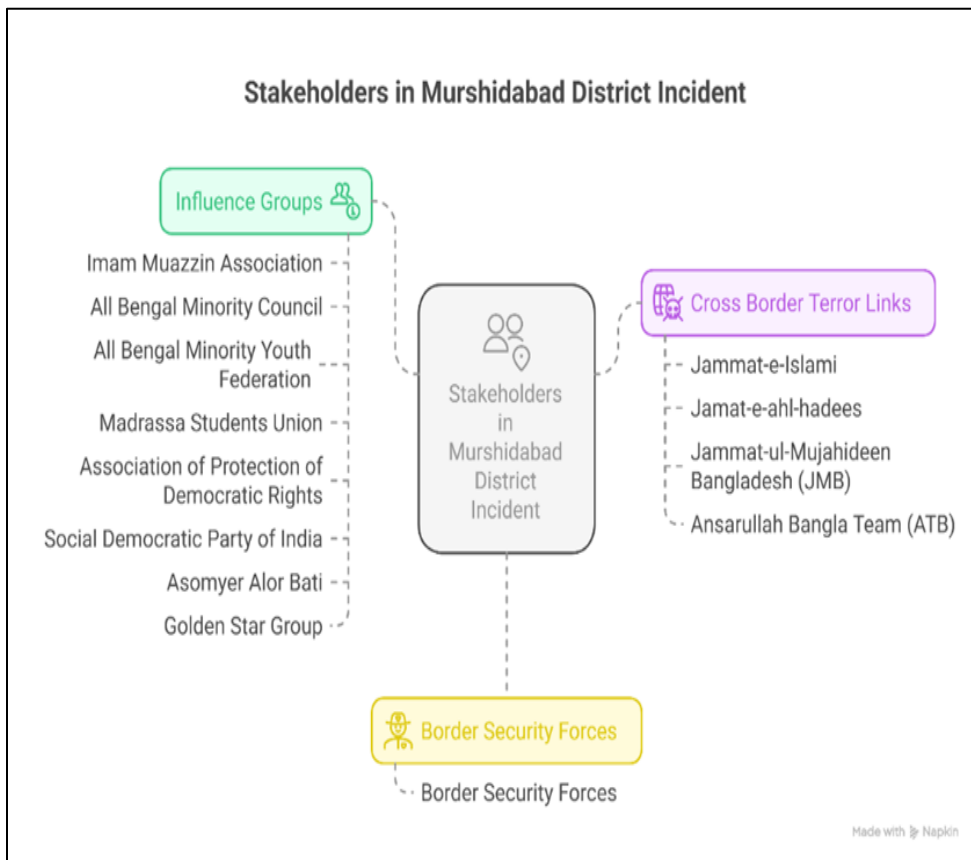


**Figure 2:** The timeline of the incidents in the Murshidabad District violence.<sup>2</sup>

## Stakeholders in Murshidabad Incident:

6. Crowd mobilization in West Bengal is often facilitated by influential groups. While these groups were historically dependent on political party support, they now reportedly operate with more autonomy, pursuing their own agendas while still supporting political parties when needed.

<sup>2</sup> **April 11-12, 2025:** Demonstrations began on the evening of Friday, April 11th, initially under the pretext of a protest against the SSC teacher recruitment process verdict, which then shifted to an anti-Waqf Amendment Act demonstration. Tragically, Haragobindo Das (74) and his son Chandan Das (40) were murdered. Many people were forced to flee their homes; some crossed the Ganga River for shelter, while others, assisted by the BSF, fled to Malda. Many people were forced to flee their homes; some crossed the Ganga River for shelter, while others, assisted by the BSF, fled to Malda.



**Figure 3:** The influence group made an important part of stakeholders in the region.

7. A significant number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), reportedly 22, are active in these areas. They operate with a highly organized structure, employing both male and female cadres who participate in special weekly meetings called 'Jalsa.' Their primary languages of communication are Bangla and Urdu. Rajesh Sheikh, a known handler actively involved in various protests, including those against CAA-NRC and the Nupur Sharma

controversy, has been identified as a notable leader in the Murshidabad incidents. The source of their funding remains unknown.

8. These groups are believed to have played a crucial role in initiating the Murshidabad violence on May 10th-11th. In a highly polarized environment, many families reportedly mobilized after hearing calls from local mosques and imams, as confirmed during interviews. These influential groups were critical in the 2018 local elections. A majority are alleged to have past links with banned organizations such as the Popular Front of India (PFI) and Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). Their income sources include cattle smuggling, facilitating cross-border migration from Bangladesh, and forging documents, which has given them a central role in the area. These activities are reportedly supported by local imams, evidenced by the proliferation of mosques in West Bengal's border regions adjacent to Bangladesh.
9. In line to the High Court Report, during the field visit to these places, a pattern was revealed where specific houses in Suti, Samserganj, and Dhulian villages were attacked. While most houses in the area displayed the Trinamool Congress's (TMC) or Congress's (INC) political symbols, the attacked houses conspicuously lacked any political party's symbol. Additionally, on May 5, 2025, when Mamata Banerjee interacted with the residents who were attacked by the mob, she blamed the Border Security Forces (BSF) for instigating the Murshidabad incident. This highlights ongoing problems of inter-agency coordination, with a similar reaction noted when the BSF's jurisdiction was expanded in 2021.



*Figure 4: The houses which did not have any political symbol being destroyed.*

### **Relevance:**

The Calcutta High Court-appointed three-member committee investigating the Murshidabad violence, after taking victim testimonies, directly implicated local Trinamool Congress (TMC) leadership, including **MLA Amirul Islam and Councillor Mehboob Alam**. The probe report specifically states that the attacks were "*directed by the local councillor Mehboob Alam,*" and "*the local police was completely inactive and absent.*"

According to the committee, the main attack began after 2:30 PM when "*Mehboob Alam came with miscreants*" from Samserganj, Hizaltala, Shiulitala, and Digri, who were masked. The report further states that Samserganj MLA Amirul Islam "*came, saw which houses were not attacked, and then the attackers set them ablaze.*" Villagers' phone calls to the **West Bengal Police went unanswered** (confirmed by various interviewees), and the MLA was present during the vandalism before leaving. The MLA, was formerly a local teacher, now runs his own business, while Alam is linked to the local bidi industry, '*Noor Bidi*' and '*ZS Masala*,' which largely employs Bangladeshi

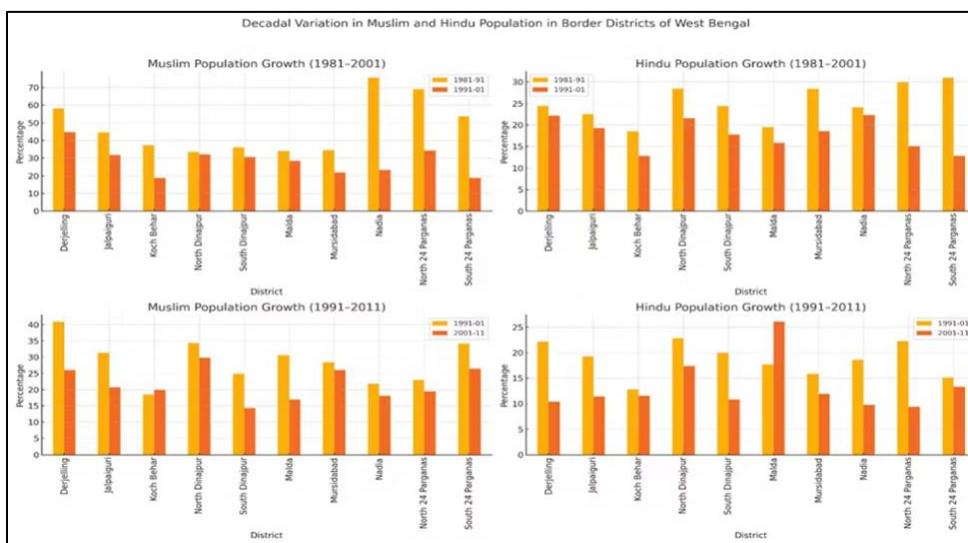


**Figure 5:** The location(s) at which the Murshidabad Riot Incidents took place and their proximity to the Indo-Bangladeshi border. Each of these places are just 1km to 6km away from these borders.

## Assessment:

Based on the identification of the stakeholders, the author suggests that this issue be studied beyond the immediate trigger which is the Murshidabad District incidents. It has deeper, more nuanced, and historical understanding which needs to be studied and has grown ever since.

### Demographic Shifts and Communal Tensions:



**Figure 6:** Census data of the border districts of West Bengal. Analysis of data from the Census of West Bengal for the years 1981, 1991, and 2001 reveals a significant change in growth.

10. Observations reveal significant demographic changes in several West Bengal districts bordering Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>, notably Nadia, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, and Malda. From 1981-1991, these areas experienced exceptionally high Muslim population growth (e.g., Nadia 75.47 per cent, North 24 Parganas 69.11 per cent), aligning with known migration corridors from Bangladesh.
11. This "silent transformation" has profound implications for societal and state dynamics. A working paper by the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council,



**Figure 7:** Desecrated temple statues and charred vehicles which were the victim of the riots in Dhulian, Murshidabad District, as documented by the Author.

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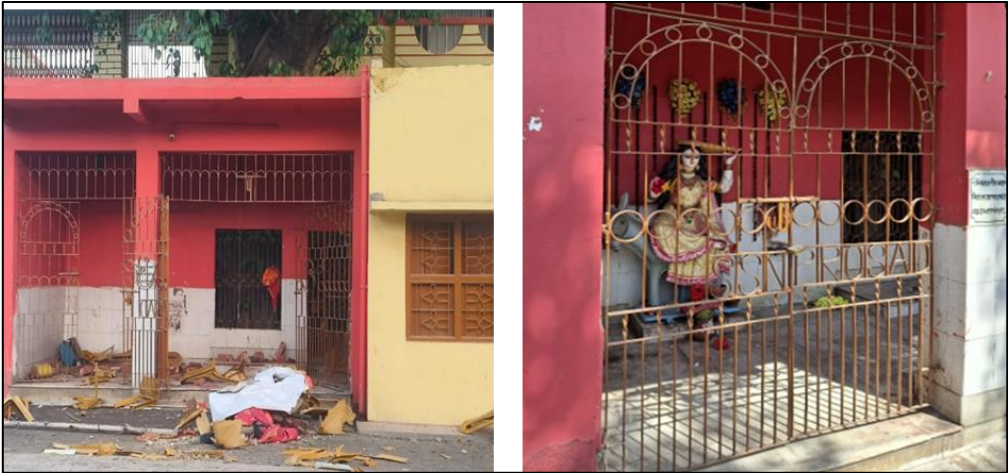
<sup>3</sup> Chattoraj, K.K. (2018) *Impact of Migration and Infiltration from Bangladesh to West Bengal: A Historical and Demographic Perspective*, *Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. Available at: [http://rjhssonline.com/HTML\\_Papers/Research%20Journal%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social%20Sciences\\_PID\\_2018-9-4-27.html](http://rjhssonline.com/HTML_Papers/Research%20Journal%20of%20Humanities%20and%20Social%20Sciences_PID_2018-9-4-27.html).

"Share of Religious Minorities: A Cross-Country Analysis (1950-2015)<sup>4</sup>," showed that India's Hindu majority decreased by 7.82% (from 84.68% in 1950 to 78.06% in 2015), while the Muslim population share increased by 43.15% (from 9.84% to 14.09%) during the same period. These demographic shifts have fueled increasing communal tensions, evidenced by documented attacks on Hindu temples, including triggers for the 2025 Murshidabad violence.

During the field visit and discussion with individuals, it was found that economic drivers are the main reasons for infiltration and smuggling in the border regions.

### **Economic Drivers of Infiltration and Smuggling:**

12. The porous border facilitates these population movements, driven by economic



**Figure 8:** The Temple which was destroyed during the violence in April, now stands restored due to support of the local communities which pooled in money to restore it, as documented by the Author.

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<sup>4</sup> Ravi, Shamika and Jose, Abraham and Mishra, Apurv Kumar, *Share of Religious Minorities: A Cross-Country Analysis (1950-2015)* (May 07, 2024). Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4857767>

motivations. There are various pull factors for infiltration into India:

- i) **Bidi Industry:** West Bengal's bidi industry is highly labour-intensive, largely unorganized, and operates as a cottage industry. Despite notoriously low wages and common exploitation, it offers an accessible entry point into the informal economy, appealing to those seeking readily available income.
  - ii) **Tea Gardens:** The northern districts (Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar) are known for their tea gardens, which historically rely on a large workforce. Seasonal demand for plucking and processing tea leaves during harvest seasons creates additional labour needs.
  - iii) **Rice Cultivation:** West Bengal, often referred to as the "rice bowl of India," extensively cultivates rice, a crop inherently labour-intensive throughout its cycle.
  - iv) **Medical Tourism:** West Bengal, particularly urban centres like Kolkata, offers better medical facilities and healthcare infrastructure. This has been a significant draw, though reduced recently due to fewer visa approvals for Bangladeshi patients seeking treatment in private hospitals.
13. Beyond human migration, a thriving clandestine trade exists along the Indo-Bangladesh border. Items ranging from spices and gold to bicycles are discreetly passed. Smuggling is driven by economic incentives and high demand for goods. For instance, in 2024, Border Guard Bangladesh intercepted 70 lakh kgs of smuggled sugar. The banks of the Ichamati River, particularly Angrail, serve as a major transit point in the South Bengal frontier for cattle smuggling into Bangladesh. Since bovine meat is the cheapest meat, it is

preferred by the poor in Bangladesh. Especially during Eid, each bovine from India can sell for up to 1.5 lakh rupees.



**Figure 9:** Villagers and Cattles crossing river Ganga at Dhulian, West Bengal. Due to the porous borders, illegal immigrants easily cross over and make way into India<sup>5</sup>.

14. The supply chain for this illicit cattle trade is extensive, relying on a wide network of operators. Cattle are transported in crowded trucks from as far as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha. Even when the BSF seizes and auctions off cattle, influential smugglers often manipulate the process to buy back the livestock, maintaining their monopoly. Under the cover of darkness, smugglers

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<sup>5</sup> Mondal, R. (2025) Murshidabad violence of 2025 and cross-border radicalisation from Bangladesh: Implications for India's national security, IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute. Available at: <https://www.impriindia.com/insights/murshidabad-violence/>

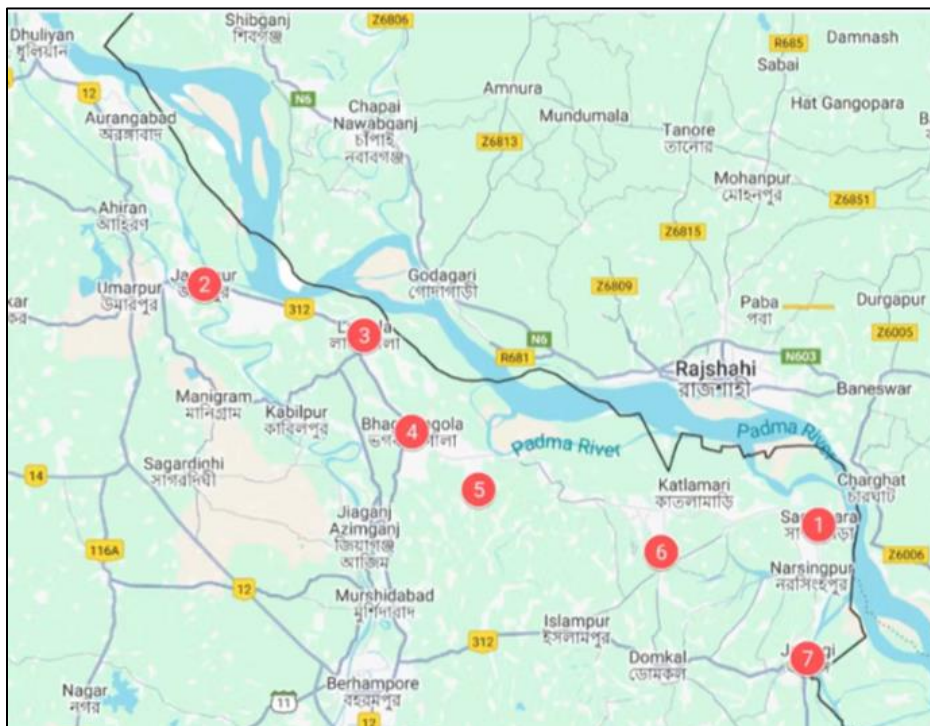
swim across with cattle, often resorting to violent attacks with sharp weapons when intercepted by security personnel. Locals, swayed by cash incentives, aid these couriers by providing shelter, sharing intelligence on security movements, and even pelting stones to facilitate escapes. Further north, in Hakimpur, where the 40-foot-wide Sonai River delineates the border, villagers from both sides use the pretext of a daily bath to secretly exchange goods. The flow of water in riverine areas is constantly observed by smugglers, who look for specific, favourable time periods when the water flow is low to facilitate these risky operations due to high demand and economic incentives.

### **Modus Operandi for Acquiring Indian Citizenship:**

15. A concerning modus operandi for acquiring Indian citizenship involves several methods.
  - ❖ A concerning modus operandi for acquiring Indian citizenship involves several methods. Firstly, orchestrated village disputes and increased violence lead to arrests, creating a "paper trail" for documentation.
  - ❖ Secondly, Bangladeshis use India as a transit point to secure Indian documents, enabling them to work in other countries where Indian labourers command higher wages.
  - ❖ Thirdly, many seek medical treatment in India (e.g., Kolkata, Vellore, Guwahati, Tripura). Despite the cost and administrative hurdles for foreigners, individuals resort to acquiring Indian documents to circumvent restrictions on renting accommodation and frequent reporting to authorities.

- ❖ Lastly, there is active support from local officials, including Sarpanchs, District Development Officers, and councillors, in facilitating the creation of these fraudulent documents.

### Border Vulnerability and Radicalization:



16. Border vulnerability is highlighted by the 94.9 km riverine border, with areas like Suti (3 km from Bangladesh border) and Dhulian (6 km) being highly susceptible, especially given the water flow from the Farakka Dam, which aids smugglers. Designated "drop points" near the border, such as **Sagarpara, Jangipura, Lalgola, Bhagwangola, Ranitala, Raninagar, and Jalangi**, have become hotspots for document forgery. Influence groups involved in these

activities generate funds that can be used to support mobilizations when needed. Fixers operate on both sides of the fences to coordinate these illicit activities.

17. The region's educational infrastructure, particularly in Murshidabad, requires significant revamping. Economic strains often compel families to send children to Madrassas, whose curricula warrant evaluation due to their heavy influence. This situation, coupled with the demographic changes, poses a growing threat to the strategically vital Siliguri Corridor.

### **National Level Implications:**

18. The high population density of Bangladesh, coupled with its current interim government and economic issues in the garment industry, exacerbates migration pressures, with climate change also acting as a significant motivator. These various groups involved in illegal activities are often funded through cross-border networks and have links to radical organizations like Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ansar al-Islam (ABT).
19. Considering the hostility of the Bangladeshi government at this point, post the coup in August 2024, and looking at the infiltration potential in the border states of West Bengal, a terrorist attack can be anticipated if not curbed, potentially leading to the establishment of sleeper cells in India. The majority of sleeper cells in the region have a strong affinity for radicalism and involvement with banned terrorist organizations such as SIMI and PFI.

### **Political Patronage and Demographic Shifts:**

20. The idea of demographic shift in West Bengal is a long-standing phenomenon, strategically influenced by political parties to consolidate power. Historically, the CPM-led government, known for its strong rural base built on land reforms and panchayat empowerment, tacitly encouraged undocumented migrants from Bangladesh. Their shared language and culture with the existing Bengali

population facilitated this. The Trinamool Congress inherited these demographic realities and continued, even amplified, this practice in border regions.

21. A key narrative justifying infiltration highlights the shared Bengali identity on both sides of the border, arguing that the only difference between Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis is religious identity, which was only due to the partition, apart from which there are many commonalities. This fundamental linguistic and cultural commonality has led to some acceptance of Bangladeshi citizens by Indian Bengalis and giving them opportunities to work. The ruling party has also adopted similar political rhetoric.

### **Challenges in Land Acquisition for Border Security:**

22. The State of West Bengal has not adopted the 2013 Land Acquisition Act, leading to reliance on a 'direct land purchase policy' which hinders border security efforts with Bangladesh. The State's non-adoption of the 2013 Land Acquisition Act and its reliance on a direct land purchase has significantly hindered security efforts with Bangladesh due to several reasons:

The Land Acquisition Act, 2013, focused on providing a clear framework for compensation, rehabilitation, and resettlement for properties acquired by the government. When a state does not adopt a central act, it often relies on older, more complex, and potentially less efficient land acquisition laws or, as mentioned, a "direct land purchase policy."

23. This can lead to prolonged negotiations with landowners, legal disputes, and significant delays in acquiring the necessary land for border infrastructure like fencing. In the context of border areas, this can be further complicated by local political dynamics, vested interests (such as those benefiting from cross-border illegal activities like smuggling), and community opposition. West Bengal's

border with Bangladesh is often characterized by difficult terrain, including riverine stretches, and densely populated areas. Constructing fencing requires acquiring land in these challenging environments, sometimes necessitating the relocation of villages located near the "zero line." The status of pending fencing projects is 960 km in West Bengal, which poses a significant security threat and supports illegal trade.

## **Complexities of Detection, Detention, and Deportation:**

- 24.** The process of 'detection, detention, and deportation' of foreign nationals who have entered India through illegal means has been a 'complex ongoing process.' More than 3.3 lakh cases of illegal immigration have been disposed of, with 97,714 still pending as of October 31, 2023. In Assam alone, a state that struggles with illegal migration, there are more than 100 foreign tribunals functioning to decide cases of illegal immigration, and the Centre has notified the release of a total amount of ₹122 crore for their functioning. This issue is prevalent in most North Eastern States as well.
- 25.** The declaration of an individual as a 'foreigner' is a lengthy legal process, made even more difficult by the prevalent methods of document forgery. Reports indicate that many individuals are deported by simply 'pushing' them and handing them over to the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). However, this is not a sustainable long-term solution, nor is the formal legal process of declaring someone a 'foreigner,' which involves grounds such as:
  - A.** Overstaying a visa or entering without a valid visa.
  - B.** Involvement in criminal or anti-national activities.
  - C.** Violation of visa terms (e.g., working on a tourist visa).
  - D.** Illegal immigration (e.g., Rohingya and Bangladeshi citizens without documents). Pursuing these cases through courts or tribunals inevitably leads to protracted legal proceedings. Therefore, exploring alternative solutions to address this issue is crucial.

## Coordination Issues between Police and BSF:

26. Furthermore, coordination between the Police and the Border Security Force (BSF) presents a significant issue. An assessment conducted in Murshidabad District, for instance, highlighted a specific tussle between the BSF and the West Bengal Police. This tussle was brought to the attention of the High Court of West Bengal, leading to deployments of forces on 'ground zero.' On May 26, 2025, Brigadier General Md Nazim-ud-Daula, Director of Military Operations Directorate of the Bangladesh Army, stated in a press conference in Dhaka that 'push-ins are unacceptable,' noting<sup>6</sup> that 'Sometimes, even in families, there can be misunderstanding. Similarly, different stakeholders may vary in expressing their opinion in the course of running a country.'
27. While Central Government action on this issue is often portrayed as a move against the State, the Central Government should prioritize plugging holes within its direct administration. This includes cracking down on the forgery of passports and Aadhar cards, officers colluding in the process and indulging in rampant corruption, and the distribution networks for these forged documents, while also establishing accountability for such actions.

## Role of the Border Security Forces (BSF):

28. Corruption within the Border Security Force (BSF) has fueled an increase in cattle, gold, and narcotics smuggling, with constables allegedly accepting payments to overlook illegal activities. Border villagers often sympathize with smugglers, receiving a share of the profits.

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<sup>6</sup> Push-ins from India unacceptable, ready to step in if needed: Bangladesh Army (2025) India Today. Available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/illegal-bangladeshi-from-india-push-ins-unacceptable-ready-to-step-in-if-needed-bangladesh-army-2730909-2025-05-26> (Accessed: 04 August 2025).

29. The frequent appointment of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers to senior positions within Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) like the BSF is a major demotivating factor for BSF personnel. Despite a Supreme Court ruling on May 23, 2025, to progressively reduce IPS deputations, eight IPS officers have since been appointed to Commandant to Inspector General ranks in CAPFs.
30. BSF Commandants expressed frustration, stating they are eligible for, yet overlooked for, leadership roles within their own cadre, hindering faster promotions. Many CAPF officers lament that it takes them 25 years to reach Commandant rank, when it should be achievable in 13 years, a trend seen across BSF, CISF, CRPF, SSB, and ITBP.
31. Instances of BSF corruption are evident through instances which happened in the past. They are as follow:
- i) In 2018, another Commandant at the Indo-Bangladesh Border in Murshidabad was caught with a ₹45 lakh bribe. Notably, BSF sources indicate that many Commandants pay extra to be posted to lucrative locations like the Indo-Bangladesh Border<sup>7</sup>.
  - ii) In 2022, BSF Commandant Satish Kumar, previously stationed in Murshidabad and Malda, was arrested by the CBI in cross-border cattle smuggling case<sup>8</sup>, with bribes totalling ₹12.8 crore traced to his wife and a Dubai dummy company. Assets worth ₹11.67 crore and transactions of ₹418 crore were identified, routed through Haque Industries Pvt Ltd. These instances are the ones which got highlighted or got too greedy.

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<sup>7</sup> Chauhan, N. (2018) *BSF commandant arrested for receiving bribes from cross-border smugglers*, The Times of India. Available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/bsf-commandant-arrested-for-receiving-bribes-from-cross-border-smugglers/articleshow/62727934.cms> (Accessed: 04 August 2025).

<sup>8</sup> *ED arrests former BSF Commandant in West Bengal Cattle Smuggling Case (2022)* India Today. Available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/ed-arrests-former-bsf-commandant-west-bengal-cattle-smuggling-case-1941816-2022-04-25> (Accessed: 04 August 2025).

## Recommendation

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- i) There is an urgent need to combat the rampant forgery of crucial identity documents such as passports and Aadhar cards, which serve as primary tools for illegal immigrants to establish a false legal identity. A robust mechanism must be put in place to identify and prosecute officers — whether from the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) or from various Central and State Government departments — who are found to be colluding in these illicit processes and indulging in rampant corruption. This includes not only those directly involved in document creation but also those who turn a blind eye or actively facilitate these activities.<sup>9</sup>
- ii) There is a critical need for a dedicated task force, whose primary objective should be to collaborate closely with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to meticulously monitor the issuance of Aadhaar cards in border states<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, it is recommended that only district headquarters, operating directly under the authority of District Commissioners (DCs), be

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<sup>9</sup> While any action taken by the Central Government on this issue is frequently portrayed by some as an adversarial move against the State Government, the focus of the Central Government should primarily be on addressing and rectifying systemic vulnerabilities within its direct administrative control. Furthermore, dismantling the intricate distribution networks responsible for disseminating these forged documents is paramount. Finally, and crucially, a clear framework for accountability must be established and rigorously enforced for all individuals and entities involved in these corrupt practices.

<sup>10</sup> Given that Aadhaar cards are currently being issued to minors between the ages of 5 and 7, a thorough review is warranted to ascertain the identities of all other individuals obtaining Aadhaar cards. This is crucial as a common pretext cited in West Bengal for obtaining new Aadhaar cards is the loss of previous ones due to floods or other natural calamities, a claim that warrants stringent verification.

empowered to issue Aadhaar cards to adults<sup>11</sup>. This centralization would establish a more robust and controllable verification process, thereby mitigating the current ease with which foreign nationals from Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and even Pakistan have reportedly managed to acquire Indian Aadhaar cards. Biometric collection of those who are to be deported should be maintained considering the porous nature of the borders and forgery of documents is available easily.

- iii) A robust mechanism should be established, incorporating stringent penal actions under an amended Foreigners Act<sup>12</sup>. To effectively implement these measures, it is imperative to expedite the processes for both the National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC). Furthermore, dedicated Ground Survey Teams, ideally operating under the direct supervision of magistrates, should be deployed to conduct thorough on-the-ground verification and identify undocumented individuals<sup>13</sup>. Maybe, a format such as Assam's Foreigners' Tribunal can be taken as a model.

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<sup>11</sup> To enhance security and prevent illegal immigrants from acquiring Aadhaar cards, the process for adult Aadhaar issuance in sensitive border states should be significantly refined and something which can be the mandate of the taskforce.

<sup>12</sup> Effective disincentives are crucial to curb illegal immigration. These penalties should specifically target individuals or entities found harbouring foreign nationals, concealing their presence, facilitating illegal immigration, or engaging in similar illicit activities.

<sup>13</sup> The need for a comprehensive review of mechanisms granting Indian documents to foreign nationals is starkly highlighted by past incidents. For instance, following 'Operation Sindoor,' which demonstrated India's strong resolve against terrorism, India revoked the visas of all Pakistanis residing in the country. A particular case involved a Pakistani individual named Osama, whose video went viral at the Attari Border. Having lived in India for 20 years and even possessing a ration card and having cast a vote, Osama's plea — 'I am currently pursuing my bachelor's degree. I wanted to appear for job interviews after my examinations. I have been staying here for the last 17 years. I appeal to the government to give us some time. I have cast my vote here; I have my ration card...Whatever happened there (Pahalgam) is wrong. I condemn this incident. It is a very shameful act. I have completed my Class 10th and 12th here, what will I do there? What is my future there?' — underscores the critical loopholes in the system that allowed an individual to accrue such documentation and establish deep roots despite their foreign nationality. This case forcefully

Just like the Commission which has directed a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in exercise of its power under Article 324, Section 21 of the Representation of People's Act, 1950 (for the State of Bihar), similar difference should be made for 'ineligible' and 'eligible' citizen in West Bengal as well. The moment this revision started a surge of issuance and submission of voter registration forms and domicile certificates<sup>14</sup>.

- iv) To address this complex challenge more effectively and bypass the protracted litigation currently involved in determining foreign nationality, there is an urgent need for the establishment of a comprehensive national refugee law<sup>15</sup>.
- v) While conducting a comprehensive Census is undoubtedly a critical necessity for informed policymaking, it is equally vital to acknowledge and thoroughly investigate the consistently higher-than-average population growth rates observed in India's districts bordering Bangladesh<sup>16</sup>. In Assam alone, out of the 3.3 crore applicants, 19.06 lakh of them were removed with 60 days reference.

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*demonstrates the urgent necessity to re-evaluate and strengthen the entire process of document issuance to prevent such occurrences and ensure national security.*

<sup>14</sup> Som, M. (2025) West Bengal's 2002 sir Electoral Roll appears on CEO site amidst speculations of fresh voter list revision, *The Hindu*. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/west-bengal/west-bengals-2002-sir-electoral-roll-appears-on-ceo-site-amidst-speculations-of-fresh-voter-list-revision/article69864601.ece>

<sup>15</sup> Such legislation would streamline the process for managing and identifying illegal immigrants. Furthermore, given the challenges in establishing an effective bilateral mechanism with Bangladesh for repatriation, the swift and efficient implementation of the National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) processes becomes even more critical, especially in the bordering districts.

<sup>16</sup> This demographic anomaly is a strong indicator of ongoing illegal migration from Bangladesh and necessitates the collection of accurate, granular data to understand its true scale and impact. Therefore, beyond a general Census, targeted and verifiable data collection mechanisms are required for these specific border regions. This precision would enable the government to formulate evidence-based strategies to manage demographic shifts, address potential resource strains, and enhance border security effectively. It can include decision of suspicious citizenship to the Foreign Tribunals to decide if they are Indians or not? And decide if they can be excluded by the Election Commission of India.

Transit camps were made, taking into consideration that a specific human rights protocol be considered during the movement to transit camps.

- vi) To tackle with the BSF Corruption issue, one can keep a mix of CRPF and BSF and this would actually help in keeping the forces in check for corruption<sup>17</sup>. However, reforms in CAPF's are the need of the hour<sup>18</sup>. Body worn cameras can be deployed to make the forces on the border more accountable.
- vii) A study can be constituted by National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) or the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) studying the similar aspects in all border regions in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This being a pilot short term project, it could only assess the issues around Murshidabad and nearby regions. It would help to comprehensively and effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by the cross-border issues. The author would like to thank India Foundation for their timely intervention along these sensitive frontiers.

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<sup>17</sup> Measures such as Anti-Corruption Units from different CAPS's should be brought in BSF with more financial scrutiny and asset declaration especially those posted in the border areas. With mandate of regular and detailed asset declarations, with mechanism for civilian independent verification. While the idea of mixing CRPF and BSF units could offer a short-term check by introducing external oversight, a long-term, sustainable solution requires fundamental reforms within the CAPFs to address the root causes of demoralization and corruption. It is clear that BSF is the last line of defence protecting the borders, therefore, it becomes important for us to bring reforms in these forces.

<sup>18</sup> The issue of corruption in the BSF, as highlighted by instances of constables receiving payments to overlook smuggling activities (cattle, gold, narcotics), indicates a deep-rooted nexus. This corruption is further exacerbated by the alleged complicity of local villagers who benefit from the illegal trade. The willingness of some Commandants to pay extra for postings to lucrative border areas, particularly the Indo-Bangladesh border, further underscores the entrenched nature of this corruption.



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