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A Brief Analysis of Refugees and Crime Issues on the Myanmar-Thailand Border Based on the Focus-Field Methodology

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Abstract: ***The border region between Myanmar and Thailand, as a complex area where historical legacies and contemporary circumstances intersect, has garnered significant attention from regional countries. The focus-field methodology, a research approach in regional and country studies characterized by its "six major attributes," provides a verifiable, effective, and appropriate framework for in-depth analysis and understanding of the issues arising in this region. By tracing the colonial historical roots of the refugee crisis and the current policy imbalances, decoding the underlying causes of criminal disorder, revealing the interactive dynamics within the "power vacuum zone," precisely analyzing the activities of various stakeholders, and identifying universally prevalent "common" challenges, it becomes clear that a comprehensive solution is required. To break the deadlock, a "dual-track" governance framework must be established: Myanmar and Thailand need to urgently develop a collaborative border law enforcement and livelihood security system, while the international community should create a long-term intervention mechanism through financial assistance, intelligence sharing, and judicial cooperation, offering a pathway to address all "similar problems."***

Keywords: Myanmar; Thailand; Refugee; Crime.

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1. Introduction

The Myanmar-Thailand border area, as a key region in the geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia, has long been in a state of "intertwined overlap" characterized by complex geopolitics and social economy. This state presents a "complex interactive relationship". When we thoughtfully examine nature, human history, or human spiritual activities, what first comes into view is a picture woven infinitely by various connections and interactions, in which nothing is static or unchanging, but everything is in motion, change, generation, and passing away [1]. In recent years, with the continuous turbulence of the domestic situation in Myanmar, the refugee issue in the Myanmar-Thailand border area has become increasingly prominent, becoming the focus of international attention. The southeastern and southern parts of Myanmar are adjacent to Thailand, with the Myanmar-Thailand border stretching approximately 1,799 kilometers [2]. According to statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of December 31, 2023, Thailand has accommodated approximately 82,400 refugees from Myanmar in nine official border camps (also formally designated as "temporary shelters") along the Myanmar-Thailand border. These were set up in the mid-to-late 1980s for "people fleeing the conflicts" between ethnic armed groups and the Myanmar military. Although Myanmar launched a repatriation program in 2016, the events that followed the Myanmar military's takeover in February 2021 have further reduced the possibility of voluntary repatriation [3].

Since its independence in 1948, Myanmar has seen slow progress in its national reconciliation and peace process, leading to a large number of refugees being displaced. As a major refugee-exporting country, a significant portion of these refugees have fled to Thailand. Relevant statistics indicate that in recent years, the number of refugees from Myanmar flowing to the Thai border has continued to rise, with the annual inflow reaching as high as tens of thousands. Refugees in Thailand face numerous difficulties, covering various aspects such as education, employment, medical care, and safety. At the same time, the chaos of crime in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas

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has shown an increasingly severe trend. In 2024, Myanmar's economy continued to face problems such as slow growth, high inflation, worsening poverty, and declining real wages. Due to intensified conflicts and poor domestic economic conditions, trade has declined. Myanmar's economy in 2024 continued to struggle with slow growth, high inflation, increasing poverty, and declining real wages [4]. These factors have collectively contributed to an increase in criminal activities in Myanmar. In the country's ethnic minority regions, such as Kachin State, Shan State, Wa Special Region 2 of Myanmar, and Kayin State, organized criminal activities linked to local armed groups have long persisted, including smuggling of weapons and drugs, human trafficking, and organized gambling. In terms of drug-related crimes, Myanmar is one of the major opium-producing countries and an important part of the "Golden Triangle". Opium cultivation expanded for three consecutive years followed by a limited decline in one year, which may indicate that the regional heroin market supplied by Myanmar has become saturated to a certain extent. The drop in the price of fresh opium in Myanmar and the adjusted price resulting from the decline in the purity of heroin in the regional market are likely to prevent Myanmar from further increasing its production in 2024. Meanwhile, the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on the global opium supply and distribution patterns poses a risk of escalating demand for opium produced in Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. These developments, coupled with the continued surge in synthetic substances, indicate that drug production and trafficking will keep the Golden Triangle as a significant hub for illegal drug production [5]. Human trafficking is also a prominent issue in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas. Myanmar is one of the major source countries of human trafficking in the world, involving various forms such as labor trafficking, and trafficking of women and children. Meanwhile, gambling is rampant in the Myanmar-Thailand border region. Myanmar has a long history of gambling. Although gambling was once prohibited by law, in recent years, the Myanmar government has considered legalizing casinos to attract tourists and increase fiscal revenue. At the same time, cross-border gambling crimes have become even more rampant.

To sum up, the refugee issue and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas are intertwined, forming a complex network that integrates domestic and foreign factors. The influx of refugees (mainly from Myanmar, but also including other foreign source countries) has greatly increased the difficulty of social management in Thailand's border areas, providing more potential targets and opportunities for criminal activities. Conversely, the rampant criminal activities have further worsened the living environment of refugees, creating a vicious circle that is hard to break. Therefore, in-depth research on the refugee issue and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas holds significant practical significance and theoretical value.

In terms of practical significance, since the military took over and established the State Administration Council (SAC) of Myanmar in February 2021, the situation in Myanmar has undergone drastic changes, with political instability, escalating armed conflicts, economic recession, and reduced access to basic services. At the same time, widespread social instability continues, which has been exacerbated by crop failures caused by climate change. With the rise in inflation, it is estimated that nearly half of the population lives in poverty [6]. This research is conducive to a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the situation in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas, providing a basis for relevant countries and international organizations to formulate reasonable policies, thereby effectively addressing the refugee issue, cracking down on criminal activities, and maintaining regional peace and stability. In terms of theoretical value, this study will adopt the focus-field methodology, a interdisciplinary research approach in regional and country studies, to conduct a preliminary analysis of the complex issues in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas from a "brand-new perspective", enriching and expanding the theoretical systems of disciplines such as international relations, regional and country studies, and sociology. The focus-field methodology regards specific countries, regions, or events as "relational entities", which enables in-depth exploration of the "hidden" causes and "intertwined" relationships between the refugee issue and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas, and provides new research paths and analytical perspectives for solving similar regional problems.

2. Theoretical Foundation: Explanation of the Focus-Field Methodology

The "focus-field" approach is an innovative and distinctive methodology in regional and country studies. It breaks through the limitations of traditional research methods by regarding a specific country or region as the "focus" and the broader regional or contextual space where it is located as the "field". By clarifying the characteristics of the focus and the field, their interaction patterns and mutual transformation, the behavioral characteristics of the focus within the field, and the relational connotations involved in both the focus and the field, this methodology enables us to grasp the development dynamics and evolutionary trends of specific regions or countries [7].

This study "draws on and adds new insights" to the focus-field methodology. While retaining the perspective

proposed by scholar Zeng Xianghong that a unified country and region can serve as the focus, it modestly suggests that specific objects and elements can also function as the focus. It regards the refugee and crime issues in the Myanmar-Thailand border area as the research focus, and takes the geopolitical pattern of Southeast Asia and the broader international political and economic context as the field. Complex cross-border issues involve multiple parties' games, and to poke "the fog" and find "the truth" requires different perspectives. In the field of academic research, previous discussions on the Myanmar-Thailand border issues have mostly focused on a single dimension and perspective—either concentrating on the analysis of the political situation or focusing on the consideration of economic factors. With the emergence of the focus-field methodology, it has opened up a new path for in-depth study of this complex problem, like using a key "to fit into" the complex "lock hole".

Specifically, the focus-field methodology regards a specific country or region as a relational entity, which is believed to possess at least six characteristics: generativity, holography, transformability, relevance, multidimensionality, and circularity [8]. This approach holds that the phenomena of a specific country or region have the following characteristics, The following elaborates on several characteristics selected from the article.

First, it possesses holography, which means that certain characteristics and laws of the field where the focal region is located can be mapped out from this focal region, and it can even reflect information of broader-level fields. It is like a mirror "reflecting" things: the refugee issues and chaotic criminal phenomena in the Myanmar-Thailand border area not only reflect the political, economic, and social problems within Myanmar and Thailand themselves, but also, to a certain extent, reveal the "common" problems existing in refugee management, cross-border crime governance, and other aspects across the entire Southeast Asian region.

Second, it has relevance. When observing a specific country or region based on the focus-field methodology, it mainly involves dealing with four types of relationships: internal and external, left and right, upper and lower, and past and present [9]. In terms of politics, the diplomatic relations between Thailand and Myanmar, as well as their cooperation and games on issues such as border management, will have an impact on the situation in the border area. Economically, economic activities in the border area, such as trade exchanges and labor mobility, not only bring development opportunities to the local area but may also trigger some problems.

Third, it exhibits multidimensionality, meaning that the actions of the focus within the field involve dimensions such as power-exchange, symbol-emotion, rule-creation, and strategy [10]. This characteristic of multidimensionality implies that the research object needs to be examined from a "comprehensive" perspective. When studying the refugee issues and chaotic criminal phenomena in the Myanmar-Thailand border area, it is necessary to comprehensively consider factors such as central-local relations and ethnic relations in the political dimension; the gap between the rich and the poor in the core and peripheral areas, and irrational industrial structures in the economic dimension; ethnic belonging, religious conflicts, and cultural discontinuity in the cultural dimension; and low educational levels and poor medical and health conditions in the social dimension.

Fourth, it demonstrates circularity, which focuses on the interactions and influences between a specific country or region and objects at different levels and scopes within the field. Such influences can be referenced to Fei Xiaotong's theory of "differential mode of association" in From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society [11]. The Myanmar-Thailand border area has a hierarchical structure with objects at different levels, such as local communities, national governments, and international organizations, and this hierarchical structure promotes interactions to varying degrees. By analyzing these interactions at different levels, we can better understand the complexity of the issues in the Myanmar-Thailand border area and explore effective solutions.

The innovations of this study are mainly reflected in the following aspects: First, the innovation in research perspective. By applying the focus-field methodology and starting from the relationship between the region and the whole, combined with the "system theory", it breaks through the previous limitations of focusing solely on refugee issues or criminal issues, and places the two in an interrelated system for analysis and judgment, thereby comprehensively revealing the essence of the complex problems in the Myanmar-Thailand border area. Second, the innovation in research content. It not only pays attention to the superficial phenomena of refugee issues and chaotic criminal phenomena but also deeply explores the underlying factors related to "high politics" and "low politics". Multiple interpretive perspectives are more conducive to understanding the interaction mechanism between the two, providing "targeted" suggestions for solving these problems.

3. Current Situation of Refugees and Crime on the Myanmar-Thailand Border

3.1 The Reality of the Refugee Problem

The border areas between Myanmar and Thailand have long been plagued by refugee issues, with a large and dynamically changing number of refugees. There are different perspectives on the definition of a refugee: a refugee is someone who is forced to leave their place of origin to make a living because they have lost the protection of the government of their country of origin or residence. In contrast, an immigrant has not lost such government protection and leaves their country of origin only to seek a better living environment [12]. There exist discrepancies in terms of its connotation and extension. In this paper, in accordance with the statistical standards of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the definition of refugees mainly covers related concepts such as refugees in the narrow and broad senses, internally displaced persons, and stateless persons. According to statistics from the UNHCR, up to now, the number of Myanmar refugees in Thailand has reached approximately 100,000. The number of internally displaced persons within Myanmar itself continues to rise at an accelerating rate. Based on the estimated figures at the end of June, there are nearly 3.2 million internally displaced persons in the country. In the first half of 2024, it is estimated that around 900,000 people became newly internally displaced. Prior to the military takeover in February 2021, internally displaced persons in Myanmar were mainly concentrated in Rakhine State. Since then, especially since the escalation of armed conflicts in October 2023, the displaced population has spread across the entire country [13]. These refugees are mainly from ethnic minority regions in Myanmar, such as the Karen, Karenni, and Mon ethnic groups. Due to the subsequent violent incidents, tens of thousands of Karen people in Myanmar have been forced to flee their homes to Thailand. The United Nations estimates that 72,000 people had to flee Myanmar after the political turmoil, among whom many are Karen refugees. As one of the largest ethnic minorities in Myanmar, the Karen account for a relatively high proportion of refugees in the Myanmar-Thailand border area, approximately 65.4% [14]. Following the military takeover in Myanmar in 2021, the domestic situation has become further destabilized, with political, economic, and social orders disrupted to a certain extent. This has led to a larger number of Myanmar citizens fleeing their homes, resulting in an upward trend in the number of refugees along the Myanmar-Thailand border.

One of the characteristics of the focus-field methodology is “transformability,” meaning that as perspectives shift, a focus can become a field, and a field can become a focus. This mutual transformation between the two provides us with a dialectical way of thinking. Both the “country of origin” and the “receiving country” can each serve as a focus. From the perspective of refugee origins, people from all over Myanmar have fled to Thailand due to political, economic, and military reasons, with the largest number coming from Kayah State and Kayin State. From the perspective of the “receiving country,” refugees along the Myanmar-Thailand border are mainly concentrated in Thailand’s border provinces, such as Tak, Mae Hong Son, and Chiang Mai. Specifically, there are 9 major refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Most of these camps are located near Myanmar’s Kayah State and Kayin State, while those near Shan State and Tanintharyi Region are relatively fewer in number. Specifically, the refugee camps near Kayah State include “Ban Mai Nai Soi” and “Ban Mae Surin”; those near Kayin State include “Mae La Oon,” “Mae Ra Ma Laung,” “Mae La,” “Umpiem Mai,” and “Ban Don Yang”; and the refugee camp near Tanintharyi Region is “Tham Hin.” As of January 2025, the total population in the aforementioned refugee camps was 90,764, compared to 90,759 in December 2024.

An analysis of the living conditions of refugees in the Myanmar-Thailand border area reveals that the protection of their lives, subsistence, and livelihoods is severely inadequate. Affected by various factors, they have long been trapped in a state of “physical and mental” suffering. In terms of housing, most refugees live in simple bamboo shacks, with extremely harsh living environments; at the same time, sanitation facilities are seriously insufficient, making diseases prone to spread. In terms of employment, refugees face numerous “identity” restrictions and “recognition” difficulties. In terms of education, the educational rights and interests of refugee children are difficult to be guaranteed. Due to insufficient funds, it is hard for schools to provide a normal teaching environment for students. In terms of medical care, medical facilities and resources in refugee camps are severely scarce.

In addition, the psychological problems of refugees require extra attention. All refugees are confronted with the “uncertainty” of life and the “instability” of the future. Up to 50% of Karen refugees suffer from high rates of mental health problems, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. Under the influence of multiple factors, they are directly afflicted by various psychological torments such as fear for their own safety. Many refugees have psychological problems of varying degrees, such as anxiety, depression, and mania. However, due to the lack of professional psychological counseling and support, these psychological problems often fail to be resolved in a timely manner. Overall, the actual situation of refugee protection is more severe than expected.

3.2 Crime Types and Current Status

The types of crimes in the Myanmar-Thailand border area present a "diversified" trend, among which criminal activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and telecom fraud are particularly prominent. These criminal activities not only seriously endanger the lives and property safety of local residents and refugees but also pose a huge threat to regional stability and development.

First, drug-related crimes have a long history in the Myanmar-Thailand border area and are showing a growing trend. As an important part of the "Golden Triangle," Myanmar is one of the world's major opium-producing countries. Opium growers in Myanmar have seen a period of prosperity amid political turmoil. By 2024, Myanmar's opium production is now more than twice that of Afghanistan, making it the world's largest source of illegal opium [15]. Drug production in Myanmar is mainly concentrated in conflict-prone border regions such as Shan State and Kachin State. These areas are home to numerous ethnic armed groups, making government control extremely challenging. Furthermore, the lengthy border provides favorable conditions for drug production and smuggling. According to a report by the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (THAI PBS), Thai anti-narcotics police stated that the quantity of drugs seized along the Myanmar-Thailand border has increased fourfold compared to the previous year. At a press conference, Thai anti-narcotics police revealed that between December 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024—a period of eight months—210 million ecstasy pills, 1,990 kilograms of methamphetamine, 254 kilograms of heroin, 190 kilograms of green opium, and 21 kilograms of ketamine were seized along the Myanmar-Thailand border [16]. International drug trafficking organizations smuggle chemical raw materials into Myanmar through its borders with multiple countries, process them into heroin and synthetic drugs in factories within Myanmar, and then distribute them worldwide via complex transportation routes.

In terms of transportation routes for drug smuggling, the characteristics of "diversification" and "concealment" are evident. On one hand, drug traffickers take advantage of the complex terrain in the Myanmar-Thailand border area, such as mountainous regions and jungles, to secretly transport drugs into Thailand, which then serves as a "transit country" for further distribution to other nations. On the other hand, with the development of transportation and logistics, drug traffickers have also begun to utilize "modernized" means of transport, disguising drugs in ordinary goods to smuggle them through formal trade channels at border crossings. They also hire idle social individuals or refugees as "lackeys" to carry drugs; once apprehended, these "lackeys" often become scapegoats, while the real masterminds behind the scenes remain at large. In general, "soft" drugs, primarily methamphetamine, have now become one of the main sources of drugs in Myanmar. Their development rate far exceeds that of other drugs, posing severe harm to Thailand and subsequent countries [17].

Second, human trafficking is another persistent problem in the Myanmar-Thailand border area. Myanmar is one of the world's major source countries for human trafficking, involving various forms such as labor trafficking, and the trafficking of women and children. Myanmar children are often trafficked to Thailand, where they are forced into labor or reduced to begging. Myanmar women are mainly trafficked to countries and regions such as Thailand, Malaysia, China, Bangladesh, India, and South Korea, suffering from the persecution of sexual exploitation. Myanmar men are mostly sold abroad to engage in high-intensity forced labor in industries such as fisheries and construction.

The modus operandi of "headhunters" is extremely despicable. Taking advantage of the Myanmar people's yearning for a better life and information asymmetry, they lure victims into traps through deceptive means. Once the victims fall prey, the "headhunters" extort money from them under the pretext of handling procedures, purchasing air tickets, etc., and withhold their identity documents, thereby depriving them of their freedom. Subsequently, the victims are transported to Thailand through secret channels and then resold to various destinations. During transportation, to prevent the victims from escaping or resisting, the "headhunters" exercise strict control over them and even resort to violent means.

Third, telecom fraud has developed rapidly in the Myanmar-Thailand border area in recent years, emerging as a new "era-specific" form of crime. With the popularization and advancement of Internet technology, telecom fraudsters exploit online platforms and communication tools to carry out cross-border fraudulent activities, causing substantial property losses to victims.

In the process of committing crimes, telecom fraudsters have a clear division of labor and "perform their respective duties," forming a complete industrial chain. Some are responsible for seeking target clients online, some for drafting fraud scripts, and others for money laundering. Certain telecom fraud syndicates set up specialized "script

teams," which, based on different fraud projects, formulate detailed fraud scripts covering aspects such as how to chat with victims and how to guide them into falling for the scams. They also utilize artificial intelligence (AI) technology to automatically make a large number of calls, screen out potential victims, and enhance fraud efficiency. Telecom fraudsters are also adept at using technical means such as virtual IP addresses and encrypted communication software to conceal their real identities and locations, evading crackdowns by law enforcement agencies. They usually establish fraud dens in the Myanmar-Thailand border area, taking advantage of the relatively lenient regulatory environment and low-cost labor there to carry out fraudulent activities.

4. Comprehensive Analysis Based on the Focus-Field Methodology

4.1 Using the "Relevance" Feature to Analyze the Causes of Refugees at the Myanmar-Thailand Border

When observing a specific country or region based on the focus-field methodology, it mainly involves dealing with four types of relationships: Drawing on the proposition put forward by scholar Zeng Xianghong, "When a country or region, as a focal point, acts within a field composed of numerous focal points, its practices will be influenced by various connections, including internal and external, left and right, upper and lower, and past and present [18]." In general, "focal" countries and regions have various interactive relationships, and these diverse forms of interactions ultimately exert influence. The emergence of refugee issues in the Myanmar-Thailand border area stems from complex causes of multiple dimensions. As the "focal points" in this context, Thailand and Myanmar, through their interactions with various actors, have led to the current refugee situation. The application of the "relevance" characteristic can better facilitate the analysis of the underlying causes.

Complex historical reasons and long-term political unrest are the core causes of refugees. The root cause of refugees is the legacy of the colonial period. After Britain declared Myanmar as its colonial territory on January 1st, 1886, it began its own colonial rule in Myanmar and implemented the policy of "divide and rule" in politics [19]. The "Butterfly Effect" eventually led to the formation of a "central local contradiction" and "loose and disorderly" political relationship, which became a fertile ground for the breeding of Myanmar's local nationalism. During the period of the Wu Nu government, the ethnic policy was full of tendentious "Burmese nationalism" and "strengthening centralization", forcing the implementation of the policies of national assimilation and domestication and Buddhism nationalization, which intensified the contradictions and conflicts among various sects of believers. On February 1st, 2021, the military took over and overthrew the National League for Democracy (NLD). After the political turmoil, the military suppressed the protests mainly held by students and young people to oppose the military's attempt to seize power. The army forced thousands of young people to accept armed resistance [20]. The contradictions between the military government and the opposition are intensifying, the social order is in a "disorderly" state, and the people lose confidence in the future of the country and society. Because of the war and economic deterioration, many Burmese choose to flee their homes and seek asylum in the border areas of Thailand.

Ethnic conflict is another reason for the formation of the refugee problem on the Myanmar Thailand border. Since its founding, Myanmar is a multi-ethnic country with 135 officially recognized ethnic groups. There have been many contradictions between the main ethnic group, Myanmar, and other ethnic groups for a long time. The Myanmar government has deficiencies in the formulation of ethnic policies and the protection of the rights and interests of ethnic minorities, leading to the accumulation and intensification of ethnic contradictions. Among them, the conflict between Karen and Burmese government forces is the most prominent, which has lasted for more than 60 years. As one of the largest ethnic minorities in Myanmar, the Karen nationality has been pursuing national autonomy and independence, and armed conflicts with government forces have occurred from time to time. Despite these conflicts, the Karen people in Myanmar have established a self-confident national and national consciousness and an internationally recognized political identity. The Karen people in Thailand cannot say so. They lack political and social identity in the larger Thai social context [21]. In the refugee camps along the Myanmar Thailand border, the proportion of Karen refugees is 65.4%, which fully illustrates the huge impact of ethnic conflict on refugees. The historical complex ethnic composition and social structure have led to the gradual increase of refugees in Myanmar Thailand border areas.

The lagging economic development is also an important factor leading to the problem of refugees on the Myanmar Thailand border. In 2024, Myanmar's economy will continue to face problems such as slow growth, increasing poverty, high inflation and general disappointment with military rule. As shown in Figure 1-5, Myanmar's economic performance has been the weakest in Southeast Asia since the political turmoil in 2021. It is estimated that the real GDP in fiscal year 24-25 will decline by 1%, which is another bad annual performance for an economy

that has not recovered from the 18% decline in GDP after the political turmoil [22]. For example, in the Shan region of Myanmar, due to the slow economic development, life is very poor. When the ethnic conflict broke out, they had to leave their hometown and go to the border areas of Thailand to find opportunities to work and live. According to the statistics of 2020, Shan, the largest of the seven ethnic states in terms of area and population, is the seventh largest in terms of GDP in the country. So this often leads to criticism that the central government is too indifferent to the economic construction of ethnic states. The region with the lowest GDP value is kayah. Although kayah has the smallest area and the smallest population among the seven states, it is not a pleasant thing after all that the GDP data is in the tail position [23]. In short, the economic development of Myanmar, which borders Thailand, is relatively low, and the economic cycle is blocked layer by layer, which eventually leads to a vicious economic cycle that permeates every corner of society and eventually induces a steady stream of refugee crises.

Finally, there are internal and external problems in the subject governance of all parties, the governance mechanism is vague and uncertain, the relationship between subject and object is chaotic, and the evaluation problems and mechanism problems are prominent. International factors also have an impact on the issue of refugees on the Myanmar Thailand border to a certain extent. In the context of globalization, the attention and intervention of the international community in Myanmar are increasing. Some western countries used economic sanctions, long arm jurisdiction, universal values and other tools to further interfere in the affairs of Myanmar and Thailand, which further exacerbated the instability of the Myanmar Thailand border. At the same time, the international community's coordination and cooperation in resolving the internal conflict and the refugee problem in Myanmar are insufficient, and it is unable to form an effective solution, leading to the long-term failure to solve the refugee problem. At the ASEAN level, since most of the cooperation mechanisms established between ASEAN and foreign countries are based on the noninstitutionalized conference and negotiation model to promote the development and deepening of the cooperation mechanism, the binding force of such mechanisms on the participating countries is relatively weak, and the implementation capacity of the participating countries will also be uneven, resulting in some defects in the design of the system [24]. Under the framework of the United Nations and other international organizations, although the issue of refugees in Myanmar has been discussed for many times, it is difficult to reach an agreed action plan due to the different interests of all parties, which makes refugees only stay in the Myanmar Thailand border area for a long time, and their living conditions are deteriorating day by day.

4.2 Applying the "Multidimensionality" Feature to Analyze the Root Causes of Crime on the Myanmar-Thailand Border

"Multidimensionality" is an important feature of the focus-field methodology, which means that the actions in the focus-field have dimensions of power exchange, symbol emotion, rule creation and strategy [8]. The criminal activities in the border areas between Myanmar and Thailand are attributed to a "focus". On the basis of using the framework of power exchange and rule creation, the social science methodology is added to analyze its deep roots. The multidimensional crisis, coupled with the need to provide resources (weapons and personnel) for the conflict, and the early release of thousands of convicted criminals from prison (instead of the release of political prisoners), also stimulated the increase of crime rate, leading to the integration of new illegal markets and online trafficking. By 2023, Myanmar has been rated as the country with the highest level of organized crime in the world, contributing to the current surge in human trafficking for the purpose of forced crime in the region [25].

First, Myanmar and Thailand have deficiencies in border control. Myanmar Thailand border is long and complex, which brings great difficulties to border control. In the border mountainous areas, the demarcation of the border line is not clear, and there are "fuzzy zones" and "gray zones." At the same time, local government officials and local criminal organizations collude with each other, the interest chain is deeply bound to both sides, and the complex relationship is intertwined. For example, human trafficking is only one aspect of the growth of TOC (transnational organized crime) in Southeast Asia. Human trafficking for the purpose of forced crime is intertwined with casino operations, large-scale money laundering, corruption, cybercrime and a series of other criminal crimes (such as torture, extortion, etc.). Finally, due to the practical differences in politics, economy and culture between the two countries, it is difficult to fully coordinate the policies and measures of border management. It is worth noting that the Thai side announced on the 4th (February 4th, 2025) that it would cut off power, water and oil supply to Myanmar in the morning of the 5th. The electricity authority of Thailand supplies electricity to five regions of Myanmar, including the Myawaddy region [26]. Thailand can only implement partial and unilateral actions in the border areas between Myanmar and Thailand, while Myanmar has certain shortcomings in effective communication and handling. The "information asymmetry" between the two sides is a key drawback of coordination between the two countries, and it is difficult to consolidate criminal intelligence and clues for unified

analysis and judgment.

Secondly, economic interests are the core driving force behind criminal activities. There are huge economic benefits hidden behind criminal activities such as drug trade, human trafficking, and telecommunications fraud. In the drug trade, besides the production of drugs in the "Golden Crescent" and "Silver Triangle," the cultivation of drugs in the "Golden Triangle" should not be underestimated. The high profits of drugs, from poppy cultivation, drug processing to smuggling and trafficking, can bring huge wealth to criminals throughout the entire industry chain. Corruption also plays an important role in promoting human trafficking in transportation. It has been found that officials from national immigration and police agencies facilitate the illegal entry of victims of human trafficking into destination countries; Stamping false visa stamps on the victim's passport; Ensure the effective operation of fraud dens; And ensure that victims are released from immigration detention and returned to organized crime groups for further victimization [27]. On the contrary, criminal groups give corresponding rewards of money and power to relevant officials.

Once again, the unstable regional situation provides opportunities for criminal activities. The long-standing civil war and political turmoil in Myanmar have led to social disorder, weak government control over some areas, and prominent "central local conflicts." Thailand is primarily a destination country for human trafficking, but remains an important source and transit country for human trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation in Southeast Asia [28]. The geopolitical situation between the two has led to the Myanmar Thailand border becoming a "mixed zone of multiple forces." Conflicts between local armed forces and government forces continue in Kachin, Shan, and Kayin states, which have become weak areas under government control. Since the beginning of 2022, there has been an increase in human trafficking due to forced crime in Thailand and the wider Southeast Asian region. This situation, coupled with a wider lack of decent job opportunities and social security in many countries, and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and business closures during the pandemic, makes it easy for human traffickers to fraudulently recruit personnel to participate in criminal activities. Thailand is mainly used as a transit country, but it is also a source country for human trafficking for the purpose of forced crime [29]. The instability of the local situation provides a perfect hotbed for crime. With the decline of the government control of the two countries, the local crime "heat" will continue to rise.

4.3 Analyzing the Interactions Among Various Actors Through the Characteristics of "Circularity"

The circle nature mentioned in the previous article is to focus on the interaction and influence between specific countries or regions and objects at different levels and ranges in the field. This influence can refer to the differential pattern theory of Fei Xiaotong's "From the soil." There is a hierarchical structure between the Myanmar Thailand border area and local communities, the national government, regional organizations, NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) and other different levels of actors. At the same time, the hierarchical structure promotes different degrees of "interaction." By combing the interaction of multiple subjects and analyzing the interaction relations at different levels, the interaction frequency and interaction strength can better understand the complexity of the problems in the border areas of Myanmar and Thailand, and seek effective solutions.

From The perspective of local groups and other Organization levels, there are multiple actors, such as Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), NGO (Non-Governmental organizations), TBC (the Border Consortium), etc. Due to the particularity of Myanmar Thailand border, the local "characteristics" were deeply created. At the same time, under the impact of foreign power, the centrifugal and split of regional society was encouraged, further promoting the "2 yuan social structure," leading to the natural fragmented social structure of Southeast Asia community society [30]. The ethnic armed groups also play an important role in the Myanmar Thailand border, which has a profound impact on the local situation and is closely connected with the "interaction" of other types of groups. For example, more than 250 people from 20 countries who worked in Myanmar's Kayin Telecom fraud center have been released by an armed group of ethnic minorities and taken to Thailand [31]. At the same time, many casinos, especially in the Myawaddy area of Myanmar near the border of Thailand, do not seem to have official business licenses. Myanmar is the unique location of nonstate armed groups, which control important border areas and have a history of cooperation with organized criminal groups [32]. It can be seen that the local ethnic minorities armed groups control the local "operation," and there is a certain connection with crime. From the perspective of NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations), NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) groups from various countries have direct and indirect intervention, through in-depth field research on Myanmar Thailand border, making influential reports, speaking on various international stages, and indirectly influencing government decision-making. Finally, all kinds of organizations also participate in the "interaction." Although non-profit organizations and non-governmental organizations such as the border

Union (TBC) and international organizations within the United Nations (UNHCR, IOM, etc.) strive to provide basic food and shelter for the Karen refugees in the refugee camps in Thailand, these communities still lack services and are not fully recognized by the government of Thailand [33].

From the perspective of the two countries, the situation on the border between Myanmar and Thailand is "knowable" but "uncontrollable." The previous article has "peep to the leopard" and analyzed the reasons of the chaos on the border between Myanmar and Thailand. At present, the two countries have more than enough control over the border between Myanmar and Thailand. On the issue of refugees and human trafficking, Thailand is not a signatory of the United Nations 1,951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Myanmar is the main refugee exporting country because of the political turmoil. In addition to the anti human trafficking law, Thailand also signed bilateral agreements with Kampuchea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to protect children and other people from cross-border human trafficking, and set out rights and obligations in bilateral work arrangements. Although gaps have been found, including the care and protection of child victims in human trafficking, it seems that they are not constrained and guided by the best interests of children, but rely heavily on individuals and fewer formal contacts, so as to quickly deal with cases [34]. At the same time, the instability of the local situation has led to a more "conservative" policy implementation in Thailand. Thailand's policy is very sharp and only provides the most basic assistance. There is no channel for the international community, and there is no channel for the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR). It is completely dependent on Thailand's local organizations to deal with new immigrants who cross the border into Thailand. Once the border is considered calm, these people will be sent back [35]. From 2022, the policy was sharp to 2,024, and finally to 2,024, when the new prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra took office, the policy enthusiasm increased. According to Thailand news reports, local security forces, including the Thai border guard, regularly patrol along the Myanmar Thailand border. Along the Myanmar Thailand border, the illegal entrances and exits of 5 towns such as Mae Sot, Mae Ramat and Phop Phra on the Thai side were restored, warning signs were erected and monitoring was installed. At the same time, Tachatichai, inspector general of Thailand's National Police Department, held a meeting to effectively prevent and combat fraud and human trafficking. In April 2024, the Ministry of foreign affairs of Thailand said that it would reconsider the preparation for the influx of more people from Myanmar. Earlier this week, Thailand said it was ready to receive 100,000 refugees fleeing Myanmar. But Thailand's prime minister Sreta Tavici warned on Thursday that the fighting should not spread to Thailand's airspace [36]. Thailand's activities are very frequent. According to "The State of Southeast Asia: 2024 Survey Report," it's no surprise that Myanmar is most concerned about its own problems, accounting for 89.9%, while almost no attention is paid to other issues in other places [37]. On the contrary, Myanmar has not intervened in and expressed its position on the border situation.

From the perspective of other countries, in 2024, a spokesman for the State Department of the United States said a few days ago that reducing violence in Southeast Asia, especially in Myanmar, and maintaining regional stability are the common interests of the United States and China. On from April 24th to 26th, during the visit of US Secretary of state Antony Blinken to China, the Myanmar issue was also an important topic. At the same time, other western countries jointly released it during the second term of Donald Trump. We reiterate our support of the ASEAN and the five point consensus, including the ASEAN Chair's Special Envoy, which plays a core role in dealing with the Myanmar issue and the resulting refugee crisis. We call on the international community to continue to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2,669th (2,022). We emphasize the need for accountability for all atrocities committed by Myanmar, the need to protect human rights, and the need to prevent violations and abuses [38]. It can't be denied that some western countries did provide some assistance and humanitarian care for Myanmar, but the western countries led by the United States have been intervening and infiltrating through various organizations since the 2,021 crisis in Myanmar, the main purpose of which is to meet the U.S. strategy in Southeast Asia.

From the perspective of regional organization level, ASEAN is the most concerned about Myanmar Thailand border. ASEAN intervention has produced a certain effect, and the effect of policy "spillover" is gradually emerging. But the degree and effect of its intervention are still insufficient. From a historical perspective, at the beginning of the establishment of ASEAN, it was "incomplete". The Bangkok declaration is the only document of ASEAN as a charter, but there is no normal legal form - effective provisions, recognition requirements, strict provisions, modification of regulations, etc. It also did not set up a subordinate institution and any other supranational power to play a dispute settlement mechanism [39]. According to a recent report by the Bangkok post, the ASEAN digital ministerial conference was held in Bangkok recently. Basse Minister of the Ministry of digital economy and society of Thailand, said that the participants agreed that network fraud and telecom fraud groups are urgent issues and need to work together to solve them. It also said that the Ministry of digital economy and society of Thailand has reached agreements with many countries to solve these problems, but these agreements

only provide a framework and need to take concrete measures to effectively implement. At the forty-second ASEAN summit, the attention on human trafficking for the purpose of forced crime was raised, because the leaders unanimously approved the Declaration on combating human trafficking caused by technology abuse. In general, ASEAN and the rotating presidency in recent years are extremely concerned about the spillover effect of the "Myanmar crisis," and have a high degree of "concern" for both Myanmar and Thailand within the framework. The Myanmar Thailand border area belongs to the region of "pulling one hair to move the whole body," and the core value of geopolitics always stirs the heartstrings of ASEAN countries.

From the perspective of the level of the United Nations, the subordinate agencies of the United Nations are paying attention to and intervening in the Myanmar Thailand border to a certain extent. Such as UNHCR, The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Security Council. At the same time, countries have also intervened to some extent through the UN Security Council. The Security Council adopted resolution 2,669th (2,022), expressing deep concern about the large and growing number of internally displaced persons, and the sharp increase of humanitarian needs, especially the humanitarian needs of women, children and vulnerable groups. It stressed the need to protect minorities, noted the aggravation of extreme poverty, and stressed the urgent need to mobilize sufficient resources to meet the humanitarian needs of the country. At the same time, the United Nations adopted the Convention on combating cybercrime to recognize the major risks brought by the abuse of information and communication technology, which has made the scale, speed and scope of criminal activities unprecedented. The Convention emphasizes the possible adverse effects of such crimes on the well-being of the state, enterprises, individuals and society, and focuses on protecting them from terrorism, human trafficking, drug smuggling and online financial crimes. The Convention recognizes that cybercrime has an increasing impact on victims, and gives priority to justice, especially for vulnerable groups. It further stressed the need for technical assistance, capacity-building and cooperation between States and other stakeholders.

In general, analyzing the "interaction" of actors by the "circle" feature helps to understand the attention and intervention of all parties on the Myanmar Thailand border. Information is an important resource before the implementation of the decision, and the adequacy of information directly affects the follow-up feedback. In a word, the importance of analysis is to provide information support and policy reference for the follow-up problem solving.

4.4 Revealing "Holography" Issues Through "Holographic" Characteristics

"Holography" can be understood as mapping some characteristics and rules of the field from the focus area, and even can reflect the information of the field at a higher level. The "Spring River water warm duck prophet" and "point and surface" are the most vivid generalization of "holography". The refugee problems and criminal chaos in the border areas of Myanmar and Thailand not only reflect the political, economic and social problems of the two countries, but also reflect the "common" problems in refugee management and cross-border crime management in the whole Southeast Asia and even the whole world.

The intertwined problems of refugees and crimes on the border between Myanmar and Thailand affect the regional situation of the two countries, neighboring countries, other countries and ASEAN. According to the previous analysis, the problem of refugees and crime is "complicated". The interaction between "focus" and "focus" can affect the connotation and extension of "focus", and promote the mutual transformation of "focus" and "focus". One can integrate into the characteristics of the other and "reshape". At the same time, the activities and changes of the "focus" in various fields constantly affect the field, and even reconstruct the field. In all kinds of fields, there are similarities between the fields, and the similarity will show rules in the operation and development.

The issue of refugees and crimes on the Thai border directly reflects the situation of the whole South and Southeast Asia. Using dynamic capture of the change process, it is not a static observation of the fixed state of South Asia and Southeast Asia, but a tracking of the dynamic evolution of the focus in different field levels. The current situation in Myanmar Thailand border can directly reflect the situation of refugees in Southeast Asia. There are similar refugee problems in Rohingya crisis, Bangladeshi refugees, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. The whole South and Southeast Asian countries are part of the chain of refugee problems and criminal chaos. From the perspective of refugee problems, there are not only refugee exporting countries and intermediate transit countries, but also a large number of receiving countries and importing countries. From the perspective of criminal chaos, the visible border between countries does not hinder the "ups and downs" of transnational crime. A large number of criminal organizations are intertwined in various countries, with complex personnel structure, wide organization system distribution, and multi-national level institutions. Generally speaking, the current situation of Myanmar

Thailand border can reflect the current situation of the whole South Asia and Southeast Asia.

When countries are faced with various challenges, they may face the dilemma of "collective action dilemma" and "free riding". If you find commonness through individuality, you will find that some characteristics of individuality will stick to commonness. In the face of the refugee problem and criminal chaos on the border between Myanmar and Thailand, there are many "interactions" of actors, and "interactions" interact with the impact of various fields, so it is particularly important to reveal the "common" issues through the "holographic" characteristics.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

By drawing on the "relevance" "multidimensionality" "circularity" and "holography" inherent in the focus-field methodology, this study conducts a comprehensive and analytical dissection to explore the refugee issue and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas, revealing the close intrinsic link between the two as well as the complex political, economic, social, and other underlying factors. The refugee problem in the Myanmar-Thailand border regions has a long-standing history, with refugees predominantly concentrated in areas such as Tak Province, Mae Hong Son Province, and Chiang Mai Province along the border. Meanwhile, the influx of refugees has further destabilized the situation, fueling the "flames" of criminal activities. Refugees face numerous predicaments in terms of livelihood, employment, education, and healthcare, leading to extremely harsh living conditions. This state of chaos provides "conveniences" for criminal activities in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas, where criminal phenomena exhibit diverse characteristics, with rampant crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and telecom fraud.

There exists a direct and close correlation between the refugee issue and the chaos of crimes. Due to their vulnerable status, refugees have become the primary targets of criminal violations. In order to survive, some refugees have transformed from victims of crimes into participants, engaging in criminal activities such as drug trafficking and human smuggling. In the political field, the long-term political turmoil in Myanmar, its irrational ethnic policies, and the imperfection of Thailand's refugee management policies have exacerbated the connection between the refugee issue and criminal chaos. In the economic field, Myanmar's backward economic development, severe poverty, and the unbalanced economic development in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas have provided a "breeding ground" for the emergence of criminal activities. In the social field, the complexity of the social structure and the difficulty of social integration in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas are prone to generating contradictions and conflicts, thereby increasing the probability of criminal activities.

It is also certain that the governments of Myanmar and Thailand have adopted a series of response measures. In terms of refugee management, they have established refugee camps, provided basic living security, strengthened border control, carried out joint law enforcement operations, and intensified efforts to crack down on new types of crimes such as telecom fraud. International cooperation is of crucial necessity in addressing issues in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas. Through international cooperation, more resources and support can be provided for solving the refugee problem, and the intensity of cracking down on criminal activities can be enhanced. The feasible paths of international cooperation include communication and consultation at the political level, cross-border cooperation at the law enforcement level, aid and development at the economic level, and non-governmental exchanges at the social level.

Future research can further deepen the understanding of refugee issues and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas from multiple perspectives. Regarding refugee issues, greater attention should be paid to the resettlement and integration of refugees. Emphasis should be placed on studying the interactive relationship between refugee communities and local communities, and analyzing the impact of factors such as cultural differences and language barriers on integration. In the study of criminal issues, it is necessary to strengthen the tracking and assessment of new trends and characteristics of crimes. With the "explosion" of science and technology and the rapid changes in the social environment, criminal activities in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas are constantly "evolving". It can be said that "as virtue rises one foot, vice rises ten", so research can focus on the application and integration of emerging technologies in crimes, analyze their criminal methods and prevention strategies, and establish a long-term mechanism for crime prevention in this region. Research from an interdisciplinary perspective is also a future development trend. The refugee issues and criminal chaos in the Myanmar-Thailand border areas involve multiple disciplinary fields such as international relations, sociology, law and psychology. Future research can strengthen interdisciplinary integration, comprehensively use theories and methods of multiple disciplines to deeply analyze the essence and internal connections of the problems. At the same time, it provides another perspective for the current research on regional and country studies. Studying

specific issues of a single country alone can no longer solve similar border problems, and how to study the "intertwined" problems of two target countries remains to be considered.

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