

Cross-Border Narcotics Trafficking and Borderland Governance along the Indo–Myanmar Frontier: Cross-case Analysis using BONES Framework

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Abstract

Purpose – One of South Asia’s most interesting and complex borderlands is the Indo–Myanmar frontier, with difficult mountainous terrain, informal trade, cross-border mobility, and transnational trafficking of narcotics. This paper investigates such an ecosystem, integrating cross-case analyses to understand its effects on the socio-economic environment.

Methodology – The study examines the Indo–Myanmar cross-border trafficking and governance issues through a conceptualised BONES framework. Secondary data evidence extracted from government reports, Narcotics Control Board publications, peer-reviewed literature, and well-documented case materials are thematically analysed. Further, a cross-case comparison is conducted on three select borderland cases: Zokhawthar–Champhai in Mizoram, Moreh–Tamu in Manipur, and the Nagaland–Myanmar frontier. Three key research questions guide the cross-case analysis in synthesising structural vulnerabilities, trafficking networks, narco-economic linkages, and the limitations and effectiveness of law enforcement and governance responses.

Findings – The findings indicate that narcotics trafficking across the Indo–Myanmar frontier cannot be adequately understood as a conventional border-control problem. Rather, it represents a networked borderland governance problem in which physical geography, legitimate mobility, informal economies, criminal brokerage, financial flows, local vulnerabilities, conflict and institutional fragmentation interact. Current evidence also indicates a significant increase in synthetic-drug trafficking. Indian authorities reported seizures of 4,626 kg of ATS and 2,652 kg of heroin in the country during 2021–2025, while the Government of India identifies Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland as particularly vulnerable to synthetic-drug flows originating in Myanmar.

Implications – The study argues that a sustainable response requires moving beyond seizure-oriented enforcement toward intelligence-led border governance, inter-agency coordination, financial disruption, precursor-control mechanisms, community resilience, technology-enabled surveillance, and structured cross-border cooperation.

Originality/value – The BONES framework integrated in the study is a unique and original contribution by the authors and a highly valuable framework for practitioners, domain experts, researchers, and policymakers in strategising border management challenges, law enforcement governance measures, and enhancing socio-economic conditions in border regions. The paper proposes five policy recommendations and five future research directions on these aspects.

Keywords: BONES framework; border management; case study; Indo–Myanmar border; law enforcement; narco-economy; narcotics trafficking; Northeast India; organised crime; synthetic drugs.

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1. Introduction

International borders are simultaneously territorial boundaries, economic interfaces, cultural spaces and security environments. Their significance is therefore not restricted to the physical control of movement. Borderlands constitute complex socio-political spaces where formal state institutions coexist with informal markets, ethnic networks, cross-border kinship, legitimate trade and, in some circumstances, illicit economies.

The Indo–Myanmar border landscape is quite complex, as India shares over 1,643 km of its international boundary with Myanmar, along the geographies of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. This terrain comprises dense forests, porous borders, difficult mountainous regions, and stretches difficult to conduct reconnaissance. Historically, the communities that inhabit both sides of the borderland have shared unique economic, social, and cultural relationships

for decades. The Free Movement Regime has a distinct facilitation of border permeability for legitimate trade and movement; however, illicit movements of narcotics, weapons, contraband, or even persons are prevented.

Myanmar remains a security-sensitive source, as most illicit synthetic drugs and opium trafficking is carried out across the region, popularly known as the “Golden Triangle.” Large-scale cultivation of poppy happens across Myanmar and Chin State that borders India. Adding to the burden, the regional drug market has seen structural transformations, with synthetic drugs (e.g., methamphetamine) flowing from Myanmar towards South Asia, and further into Northeast India.

In response, India has expanded its border management strategy from conventional border patrolling to more surveillance technology, fencing, intelligence-led interdiction and ensuring inter-

agency enforcement. Citing internal security issues, the Government also decided to withdraw the earlier Free Movement Regime (FMR). Physical border control alone cannot fix such trafficking issues on grounds that involve people, legitimate trade, vehicles, financial channels, precursor chemicals, digital communication, and adaptive criminal networks. Hence, the central research question arises: How do we understand the Indo–Myanmar narcotics problem, and what enforcement and governance strategies could be implemented? The study conceptualises and proposes the application of the B-O-N-E-S (Border management - Organised networks - Narco-economy - Enforcement and governance - Socio-economic impact) framework as an integrated lens to resolve the challenge beyond arrests and seizures only.

2. Research Gap and Rationale

Existing literature on Northeast India highlights narcotics trafficking from multiple perspectives, including insurgency, drug markets, informal trade, public health, socio-economic vulnerability, or border security. Research on Manipur borderlands, for example, has identified relationships between drug trafficking, the local economy, political dynamics and organised criminal activity. Research on border communities has also demonstrated that formal border trade can generate livelihood opportunities while simultaneously creating vulnerabilities. Case studies of Zokhawthar and Moreh regions show that border communities are deeply embedded in informal and formal cross-border economic systems. Nevertheless, three gaps remain.

Gap 1: First, much of the literature treats border security and narcotics trafficking as separate subjects.

Gap 2: Second, enforcement studies frequently focus on seizures, arrests and interdiction while paying comparatively less attention to the organisational and financial structure of trafficking networks.

Gap 3: Third, socio-economic impacts are often examined independently of enforcement and governance.

The BONES framework addresses this fragmentation by treating the five dimensions as interconnected rather than independent.

3. The BONES Analytical Framework

The BONES framework conceptualises cross-border narcotics trafficking as a five-dimensional borderland system.

Table 1. BONES Framework for Analysing Indo–Myanmar Narcotics Trafficking

BONES dimension	Central question	Key analytical elements
B – Border Management	How does the physical and institutional border create or reduce	Terrain, fencing, surveillance, checkpoints, FMR, border

	trafficking opportunities ?	roads, border trade, patrols, intelligence
O – Organised Networks	How do trafficking organisations operate and adapt?	Suppliers, brokers, couriers, transporters, receivers, local facilitators, digital coordination, network adaptation
N – Narco-Economy	How does the illicit economy generate, move and redistribute value?	Drug production, wholesale/retail markets, precursor flows, profits, financial networks, hawala, money laundering
E – Enforcement & Governance	How effectively do institutions respond?	NCB, DRI, Assam Rifles, state police, Customs, ED, intelligence, NDPS Act, inter-agency coordination
S – Socio-Economic Impact	How does narcotics trafficking affect border communities ?	Livelihoods, youth vulnerability, addiction, household income, social cohesion, conflict, informal economy, governance legitimacy

(Source: Conceptualised by Researcher)

The framework is conceptually related to the reference article's treatment of border governance as a combination of operational enforcement, sovereignty management and institutional capacity. These studies demonstrate that enforcement and intelligence-sharing mechanisms could improve operational effectiveness, yet institutional fragmentation or trust deficits could constrain these efforts.

4. Research Questions

Three research questions guide the study.

RQ1: How do geographical, institutional and socio-economic characteristics of the Indo–Myanmar border shape vulnerabilities to cross-border narcotics trafficking?

RQ2: How have organised trafficking networks and the associated narco-economy evolved across the Indo–Myanmar border, particularly in relation to changing drug types, routes, logistics and financial mechanisms?

RQ3: How effective are existing enforcement and governance mechanisms in disrupting narcotics trafficking, and what institutional and community-level strategies are required to achieve sustainable border security?

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study employs a qualitative, desk-based comparative multi-case-study design. This approach follows the broad methodological logic of the reference article, which relied on secondary sources because of the sensitivity and restricted accessibility of border-enforcement environments. No new interviews or surveys were conducted for this article.

5.2 Data Sources

The analysis draws upon:

- Government of India publications;
- Ministry of Home Affairs reports;
- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence releases;
- Enforcement Directorate reports;
- Narcotics Control Bureau-related information;
- UNODC reports;
- peer-reviewed academic literature;
- government publications from Northeast Indian states;
- documented enforcement cases;
- the attached reference article and its cited literature.

5.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed four stages:

Stage 1 – Document identification - Relevant documents relating to narcotics, border management, organised crime, enforcement and border communities were identified.

Stage 2 – Thematic coding - Evidence was coded according to the five BONES dimensions.

Stage 3 – Case comparison - Three borderland cases were compared.

Stage 4 – Cross-case synthesis - Common structural mechanisms and case-specific differences were identified. This mirrors the reference article's use of thematic coding and triangulation of official, academic and institutional sources.

Table 2. Evidence Base and Analytical Treatment

Evidence category	Principal sources	Analytical purpose
Border governance	MHA, state governments	Border vulnerability and

		institutional response
Narcotics seizures	DRI, NCB, state police	Drug-flow indicators
Organised crime	ED, DRI, academic literature	Network and financial structure
Myanmar drug production	UNODC	Upstream supply conditions
Border communities	Academic studies	Livelihood and vulnerability analysis
Legal framework	NDPS Act and government policy	Enforcement architecture
Cross-border dynamics	UNODC and regional literature	Transnational governance

The NDPS Act, 1985 remains the principal statutory framework for controlling narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in India, including provisions relating to prohibition, enforcement, offences, procedure and forfeiture of illicitly acquired property.

6. Indo–Myanmar Borderland Context

The four Indian states sharing the Myanmar boundary are Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

Table 3. State-wise Indo–Myanmar Border Profile

State	Approx . border length	Major analytical characteristics
Arunachal Pradesh	518–520 km	Remote mountainous terrain; difficult surveillance environment
Nagaland	213–215 km	Cross-border social networks; emerging synthetic-drug vulnerability
Manipur	~398–400 km	Moreh–Tamu corridor; significant trafficking and conflict interaction
Mizoram	~510–512 km	Zokhawthar–Rih corridor; major methamphetamine/heroin flows
Total	1,643 km	Integrated transnational borderland system

Government sources identify the Indo–Myanmar boundary as 1,643 km, running through these four states. The border therefore cannot be viewed as a homogeneous security space. Different sections possess different combinations of terrain;

settlement density; legal trade; informal movement; road connectivity; security presence; local political conditions; cross-border ethnic relationships; and trafficking routes.

7. Findings

7.1 RQ1: Border Management and Structural Vulnerability

The first major finding is that border vulnerability is produced by the interaction of geography and governance rather than by physical porosity alone. The Government of India has identified unfenced stretches, forest routes, foot tracks and hilly terrain as being exploited by trafficking networks. Drug consignments are increasingly concealed in passenger vehicles, commercial cargo and goods carriers. This demonstrates a fundamental limitation of a purely physical conception of border security.

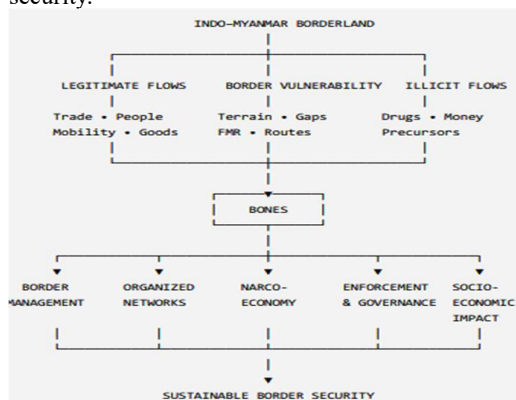


Figure 1. BONES Analytical Model for the Indo–Myanmar Border

[Indo–Myanmar Borderland Security] (Source: Model conceptualised by author)

7.2 Case Study I: Moreh–Tamu, Manipur

Moreh–Tamu is arguably the most strategically significant land corridor along the Indo–Myanmar frontier because it combines international trade, transportation connectivity and security vulnerability. The Government of India identifies the Moreh–Tamu border as a major transit point for heroin and methamphetamine originating in Myanmar. The case also illustrates how trafficking does not necessarily terminate at the border. Rather, consignments can cross international boundary regions and subsequently travel via Indian transportation networks (areas like Assam, Imphal, etc.) to other parts of India. In May 2025, Assam Rifles and DRI joint search operations, on intercepting a truck in the Manipur region, recovered over 1039 grams of methamphetamine tablets and 569 grams of heroin, safely concealed in a specially fabricated cavity of the vehicle. Such cases reveal three crucial characteristics about the use of:

1. multi-modal transportation;
2. vehicle-based concealment;
3. multi-agency interdiction.

The case of Moreh demonstrates that the existing border enforcement strategies are inadequate and

must extend beyond actual international boundaries, investigating more downstream logistics corridors.

7.3 Case Study II: Zokhawthar–Champhai, Mizoram

The Zokhawthar–Champhai corridor illustrates ever-changing synthetic-drug landscape.

In May 2025, the DRI intercepted a vehicle near Seling (i.e. Aizawl–Champhai highway), and surprisingly seized 9.72 kg of methamphetamine tablets.

Preliminary investigations indicated that the consignment had entered into Mizoram through the Zokhawthar region. Another operation conducted in June 2025 led to the seizure of over 16 kgs of methamphetamine tablets, once again linked with Myanmar. Subsequently, seizure operations in July 2025 by DRI in the Champhai district made seizures involving 1,920 grams of heroin that were found to be transported from Myanmar following the Indo–Myanmar border region. Such real-world cases demonstrate that the Indo–Myanmar corridor is a haven for both precursor outflows and drug inflows. Investigation of financial accounts, bank accounts, cross-border money movements, and hawala channels revealed a major conceptual shift: (a) The Indo–Myanmar border receives finished narcotics and also functions as a two-way interface for financial, chemical, and logistical support. The Zokhawthar–Champhai case is an exemplar for strong activation of all five BONES elements.

7.4 Case Study III: Nagaland–Myanmar Frontier

Exploring the Nagaland–Myanmar frontier reveals a totally different sort of border vulnerability. The Myanmar boundary, approximately 215 kms has a complex geographic and social environment, demonstrating growing synthetic-drug problems. In August 2024, the Nagaland Police and the state registered over 199 NDPS cases, arresting about 343 persons related to the crime. The seizures reported include 15.21 kg of heroin, 57,794 Yaba tablets, and 694 grams of crystal methamphetamine, among other substances. The Police also established interstate and international linkages between trafficking networks. This case demonstrates that border trafficking may not necessarily operate in areas geographically adjacent to the border, but with any easy access to a border-entry corridor, such trafficking distribution channels can decentralise and extend into interstate transportation systems. The state therefore functions as: a borderland; a transit environment; a consumer market; and a downstream distribution space.

8. Cross-Case Comparison

Table 4. Comparative BONES Analysis of the Three Cases

Dimension	Moreh–Tamu	Zokhawthar–Champhai	Nagaland–Myanmar frontier

Border Management	High strategic importance; formal trade corridor	Mountainous and dispersed routes	Difficult terrain and multiple informal pathways
Organised Networks	Transport and receiver networks	Cross-border suppliers, transporters and financial facilitators	Interstate/international network linkages
Narco-Economy	Heroin + methamphetamine	Strong synthetic-drug and precursor dimension	Heroin + methamphetamine/Yaba
Enforcement	Strong multi-agency operations	DRI, state agencies, NCB/ED involvement	State police and central agencies
Governance challenge	Balancing trade and security	Managing border trade and illicit flows simultaneously	Coordinating border and downstream enforcement
Socio-economic dimension	Trade-dependent border economy	Border livelihoods and vulnerability	Community and youth vulnerability
Principal lesson	Border control must extend into logistics corridors	Need to target both drugs and precursor/financial flows	Need network-wide and interstate coordination

9. RQ2: Organised Networks and the Narco-Economy

9.1 Organised Networks

The focus of RQ2 concerns the evolution and structure of organised trafficking networks. Known evidence suggests that traditional concepts of trafficking (i.e. hierarchical criminal groups) are increasingly redundant, as such operations happen through distributed networks, such as upstream

suppliers; cross-border brokers; local facilitators; transporters; receivers; storage operators; financial intermediaries; precursor suppliers; and downstream distributors. The Government of India also highlighted the increasing use of alternative and legitimate passenger and cargo vehicles, parcel and courier networks, encrypted communication, and social media platforms, evolving into more adaptive networked trafficking.

9.2 From Drug Trafficking to Supply-Chain Criminality

The evidence indicates that the Indo–Myanmar narcotics problem increasingly resembles a criminal supply chain rather than isolated smuggling incidents. UNODC has reported increasing precursor trafficking into Myanmar, particularly through areas affected by conflict and security gaps along the Myanmar–India border. This has major policy implications.

Indian enforcement concentrating only on finished methamphetamine products entering India may address only a part of the supply chain. It would be an ideal strategy to simultaneously target cross-border chemical movement; precursor procurement; manufacturing infrastructure; downstream distribution; local storage; border transportation; and related financial proceeds.

9.3 Narco-Economy

The narco-economy flourishes with the production, distribution, and consumption of several of these illicit drugs. Myanmar's perpetual opium narco-economy is a case exemplar of structural economic conditions, where illicit cultivation is also closely associated with insecurity, poverty, debts, inadequate government services, and limited legitimate livelihood possibilities. The challenge is not so simple that we could link poverty to drugs; rather, an environment of conflict, weak governance, illicit demand, limited livelihood opportunities, and criminal networks all lead to narco-economic dependence. In the case of other borderland regions of India, it is understood that communities may become involved as transport providers, couriers, informal traders, temporary storage providers, brokers, and even facilitators in this illicit trade.

10. RQ3: Enforcement and Governance

There is almost no doubt about the adequacy of institutional architecture for narcotics control within the country. Several prominent institutions include the Ministry of Home Affairs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Customs, state police, Assam Rifles, state Excise and Narcotics departments, and a host of financial-intelligence mechanisms and judicial institutions that operate across the nation. It is evident that multi-agency operations are increasingly common. Note that "Operation White Veil" in Manipur involved the Customs, DRI, Manipur Police and Assam Rifles in the operation. Similarly, random checking activity was replaced by intelligence-led interceptions by

the DRI in Mizoram. The Government of India has claimed expansion of surveillance capabilities, including CCTV, anti-drone systems, PTZ cameras, night-vision systems and further strengthened the border fencing requirements.

Table 5. Enforcement Strengths and Structural Limitations

Enforcement strength	Persistent limitation
Multi-agency operations	Fragmented intelligence architecture
Advanced surveillance	Difficult terrain and technological blind spots
Strong NDPS legislation	Prosecution and investigation complexity
Financial investigation	Informal/hawala transactions
Border fencing	Criminal route displacement
Intelligence-led interception	Dependence on actionable intelligence
State–central coordination	Institutional duplication
Drug seizures	Seizure-based performance bias
International cooperation	Limited operational continuity across jurisdictions
Community intelligence	Trust deficit in some border communities

It is understood that enforcement institutions can generate impressive operational outputs while still failing to dismantle the underlying network if cooperation, institutional capacity and information-sharing remain fragmented. This observation is directly transferable to the Indo–Myanmar context.

11. From Seizure-Centric Enforcement to Network-Centric Enforcement

The cross-case analyses provide clarity about the urgent need to shift from earlier conventional seizure-centric enforcement approaches (such as Drug → seizure → arrest → prosecution) to a reinforced network-centric strategy. The proposed *BONES model* in this regard can provide an alternative solution for such a network-centric approach (Border vulnerability → network → logistics → drug flow → financial flow → community impact → institutional response).

Seizure activity corresponds only to one minuscule activity when compared with much larger criminal ecosystems. The trafficking network system can easily absorb losses from individual couriers, as they could comfortably be replaced with new couriers. Hence, there is a need for network disruption as a strategic objective rather than mere consignment interception. Such approaches require financial investigation, intelligence sharing,

communication analysis, asset tracking, precursor monitoring, and cross-jurisdictional investigation.

12. Socio-Economic Impact

One of the least visible but potentially most enduring challenges and consequences arising from narcotics trafficking constitutes the socio-economic conditions of communities in these borderland regions. They are constantly exposed to limited economic opportunities, addiction, unemployment, informal trade, conflict, criminal recruitment, drug availability, social stigma, and weakening of community institutions.

Research on the Moreh case highlights that formal and informal cross-border trade is deeply associated with local livelihoods. Zokhawthar case similarly demonstrates the criticality of border trade to existing household livelihood structures. It is also understood that border-management policies with excessive restrictions on legitimate mobility without providing alternative economic systems as a solution may unintentionally enhance vulnerability. The social consequences of these narcotics markets extend beyond economic losses, leading to substantial vulnerabilities among people who inject drugs and associated risks, and social marginalisation.

13. Integrated Discussion

The three unique case exemplars demonstrate that the Indo–Myanmar narcotics problem is more associated with borderland governance systems rather than a simple law-enforcement problem. Even though these cases differ institutionally or geographically, the emerging basic pattern remains the same. The border vulnerability creates opportunity for criminal brokerage, leading to organised trafficking networks. These support the narcotics/precursor movements, helping in financial accumulation. This has an impact on community-level effects and enforcement response, leading to route displacement and network adaptation.

14. BONES as an Integrated Policy Model

The most valuable and original core theoretical contribution of this article is the proposition of an integrated five-element BONES framework, and it should not be treated as mere independent variables. These variables/constructs are mutually reinforcing dimensions for an integrated policy model implementation. It must be noted that weak border management leads to increased opportunities for organised networks that expand the narco-economy. Further, it leads to weak governance, providing easy ground for criminal influence, corruption, and illicit financial flows. Weak governance also increases socio-economic vulnerability, subsequently increasing the recruitment pool available to organised networks. We can easily deduce that each of these conditions are antecedents to undesirable socio-economic consequences and is intertwined with the others. Thus, the novel B → O → N → E → S framework forms a potentially self-reinforcing cycle to find solutions to the existing narcotics menace.

18. Policy Recommendations

The study is supported by cross-case analyses and based on the synthesis and learning from the BONES framework; five policy recommendations are proposed.

1. *Create a National Border Narcotics Intelligence Grid for Indo–Myanmar or select borderland regions*- such a dedicated intelligence architecture where DRI, NCB, ED, Assam Rifles, state police, Customs, and several other intelligence agencies are integrated to operate jointly, rather than just working on isolated agency databases.

2. *Reform into Border Intelligence and not just conduct border surveillance*- it must be noted that in addition to existing technology to detect movement across border regions, the surveillance data should be mined for predictive intelligence to detect trafficking routes, repeat actors, vehicles, concealment techniques, financial transactions, and emerging trafficking patterns.

3. *Develop Border Risk Assessments using the proposed BONES framework* – continuous annual assessment of border vulnerabilities should be done in the backdrop of the proposed five BONES dimensions, providing a composite risk profile for each border region covering: B + O + N + E + S elements.

4. *Target Financial Infrastructure* – the central component of narcotics enforcement should be focused on targeting financial infrastructure, moving beyond just drugs and arrests towards proceeds of crime, suspicious bank accounts; cross-border remittances; hawala channels; and asset ownership.

5. *Border Livelihoods Protection*- instead of treating border communities as security risks, it is beneficial to protect border livelihoods with formal trade, infrastructure, employment, and livelihood programmes, while also maintaining tighter controls at the borders.

19. Future Research Directions

At least five important research directions emerge from this study: (a) Empirical Validation of the B-O-N-E-S Framework operationalised into measurable indicators and statistically validated; (b) conduct border-Level comparative studies across Zokhawthar, Moreh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland border sectors to identify the framework elements and strategies accordingly; (c) conduct social network analysis of organised networks and organisations using BONES enforcement insights; (d) longitudinal research on route displacements examining whether fencing, surveillance, FMR changes, and major enforcement operations can actually help reduce trafficking or displace them for selecting alternative routes; and (e) examine community resilience and border governance to understand why few border communities resist criminal penetration, while others are vulnerable to social capital; local governance; employment; trust in law enforcement; community organisations;

cross-border kinship; youth unemployment; and informal trade dependence.

20. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it is based primarily on secondary sources and publicly available enforcement information. Consequently, operational intelligence that is not publicly disclosed cannot be examined. Second, seizure statistics represent detected trafficking, not total trafficking. Therefore, seizure increases cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence that trafficking itself has increased. Third, the three cases are analytically selected rather than statistically representative of every section of the Indo–Myanmar frontier. Fourth, information regarding Myanmar-side trafficking networks remains comparatively limited because of the country's continuing political and security instability. Finally, the BONES framework is presented here as an analytical framework. Its full empirical validation requires primary-data collection and quantitative testing.

21. Conclusion

The Indo–Myanmar narcotics problem cannot be adequately addressed through conventional border policing alone. The evidence reviewed in this study demonstrates that trafficking is embedded within a complex borderland system involving geography, legitimate mobility, informal economies, organised criminal networks, synthetic-drug markets, precursor flows, financial systems and socio-economic vulnerability. The three cases—Moreh–Tamu, Zokhawthar–Champhai and the Nagaland–Myanmar frontier—demonstrate different manifestations of the same broader phenomenon. Moreh illustrates the importance of strategic transit corridors and downstream logistics. Zokhawthar demonstrates the increasing importance of synthetic drugs, precursor chemicals and financial networks. Nagaland illustrates the diffusion of trafficking beyond the immediate border into wider interstate and international networks. The central contribution of the BONES framework is therefore to shift the analytical question from: "How many drugs have been seized?" to: "What borderland conditions allow trafficking networks to emerge, adapt, generate economic value and reproduce themselves despite enforcement?" This shift has significant policy implications. Border fencing, surveillance and interdiction remain necessary, but they are insufficient. Effective counter-narcotics governance requires simultaneous intervention across the five BONES dimensions: strengthening border management, disrupting organised networks, attacking the narco-economy, improving enforcement and governance, and strengthening socio-economic resilience. The future of Indo–Myanmar border security therefore lies not in making the border simply harder, but in making the entire borderland system more resilient to organised criminal exploitation.

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