

Rethinking Thailand's Strategic Posture toward Myanmar (I): A Strategic Framework for Security, Humanitarian Governance, and Economic Resilience

Don Pathan and Supalak Ganjanakhundee for ISP
Bangkok, April 2026

Executive Summary

This report calls for a significant recalibration of Thailand's strategy toward Myanmar, based on the new reality that the post-election situation in Myanmar has not led to stability, peace, or national reconciliation. Instead, it represents a reconfiguration of military power in a new form—one that is likely to prolong and further complicate internal conflict.

The elections held in December 2025, and January 2026 did not meaningfully open political space. Major opposition forces were excluded, many ethnic groups—both armed and unarmed—did not participate, and voting took place amid ongoing conflict. The outcomes were effectively predetermined within a military-designed power structure. What emerged, therefore, is not genuine stability but an illusion of parliamentary governance, lacking legitimacy and incapable of controlling violence on the ground.

While Myanmar's leadership—particularly the military—has long sought to establish a strong, centralized unitary state, recent crises have transformed the country into a system of fragmented authority. This system consists of the Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organizations, hybrid forces, resistance networks, and deeply interconnected grey economies.

This transformation has direct implications for Thailand. Myanmar has become a systemic risk, affecting Thailand simultaneously across security, humanitarian, and economic dimensions. The traditional state-to-state policy approach is no longer adequate. The report therefore proposes a strategic shift based on two core axes: a three-dimensional policy framework and a three-corridor spatial approach.

1. New Dynamics in Myanmar and the Need for a Three Dimensions–Three Corridors Strategy

The fragmentation of authority in Myanmar has increased the complexity of border challenges, creating overlapping risks driven by diverse actors. Thailand must therefore recalibrate its strategy across three dimensions:

Security: Encompassing both traditional threats (cross-border clashes, stray artillery affecting border communities) and non-traditional threats (transnational crime, scam centers, human trafficking, smuggling, narcotics, and small arms). Environmental issues such as transboundary air and water pollution are also emerging as critical security concerns.

Humanitarian: Prolonged civil war and deteriorating living conditions have driven large-scale displacement into Thailand. What began as temporary refuge has evolved into long-term settlement. Many displaced persons seek better livelihoods in Thailand, entering the labor market through both legal and irregular channels, placing sustained pressure on public health systems, budgets, and governance—especially as international assistance declines.

Economic: Instability in Myanmar disrupts formal trade routes while pushing economic activity into informal channels. Distorted policies—such as unrealistic exchange rates and restrictive import controls—force Thai businesses into alternative pathways, often reinforcing grey economies that generate both opportunity and risk.

These three dimensions are deeply interconnected and must be addressed in an integrated manner.

Geographically, the report proposes managing the border through three corridors:

- **Western Corridor:** From Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ratchaburi into southern Shan, Karenni, Karen States, and Tanintharyi Region
- **Northern Corridor:** From Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai into central and northern Shan State
- **Andaman Maritime Corridor:** From Ranong across the Andaman Sea toward the Gulf of Martaban

This corridor-based framework allows Thailand to tailor policies to specific local dynamics instead of applying uniform measures along the entire border.

2. Risks and Actors

Effective policy design requires understanding who holds real power on the ground. The report identifies at least five categories of actors:

- **The Myanmar State and Tatmadaw** – still the primary institutional actors but with fragmented territorial control
- **Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs)** – such as KNU, KNPP, RCSS, and NMSP, which exercise de facto governance in many areas
- **Hybrid actors** – including Border Guard Forces, loosely connected to the military but operating with significant autonomy and often linked to grey economies

- **Parallel state actors** – notably the United Wa State Army (UWSA), with defined territory, strong military capacity, autonomous economy, and governing structures beyond central control
- **Transnational criminal networks** – connecting all actors through activities such as scams, narcotics, trafficking, and money laundering

Risks arise not from individual actors alone but from their interactions—such as links between hybrid forces and scam operations, or between ethnic groups and illicit economies.

By corridor:

- **Western Corridor:** conflict-driven violence, humanitarian pressures, and scam-related activities
- **Northern Corridor:** structural risks from grey economies and transboundary environmental degradation
- **Maritime Corridor:** maritime security risks, irregular migration, and fisheries-related tensions

3. Operational Approaches by Corridor

3.1 Western Corridor: A Fragile Buffer Zone

- Establish localized governance mechanisms led by provincial authorities and security agencies
- Develop flexible systems for managing displacement (both sudden influx and long-term settlement)
- Enable pragmatic engagement with ethnic armed groups
- Combine economic and security measures to address scam cities

A key principle is recognizing that Thailand is not the sole actor controlling the space and must work with others.

3.2 Northern Corridor: Long-Term Structural Risks

- Strengthen financial intelligence capabilities to track criminal networks
- Develop monitoring systems for transboundary pollution (water and air)
- Engage academic institutions and civil society in evidence-based solutions
- Open informal channels with actors such as UWSA and RCSS to address root causes

The core challenge is that Thailand cannot directly control upstream sources of risk but bears their consequences.

3.3 Southern Maritime Corridor: A Strategic Alternative Space

- Upgrade Ranong Port to enhance Thailand–Myanmar trade capacity
- Develop Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) systems to monitor vessels and cross-border activities

- Integrate data across agencies (navy, customs, marine police)
- Address humanitarian and labor migration issues within a unified framework

4. Policy Recommendations

- Establish a Myanmar Strategy Center to integrate policy and operations across agencies
- Shift from a state-centric to an actor-centric approach, engaging directly with influential non-state actors
- Develop advanced financial and intelligence tools to precisely target grey economies and criminal networks
- Implement corridor-based policy seriously, tailoring measures to each area:
 - Western Corridor: prioritize safe zones
 - Northern Corridor: address transboundary pollution and structural risks
 - Southern Corridor: accelerate development of Ranong Port as an alternative trade gateway

List of Acronyms

AA : Arakan Army

AIS : Automatic Identification System

ASEAN : Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BH : Brotherhood Alliance

BGF : Border Guard Force

BIMSTEC : Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

CBM : Central Bank of Myanmar

CDF : Chinland Defense Force

CLMV : Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam

CMEC : China-Myanmar Economic Corridor

CNF: Chin National Front

COPD : Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

DKBA : Democratic Karen Benevolent Army

DSI : Department of Special Investigation

EOs : Ethnic Armed Organizations

EDF : The Education and Development Foundation
EWEC : East-West Economic Corridor
FATF : Financial Action Task Force
GMS : Greater Mekong Sub-region
ICRC : International Communities for the Red Cross
IDPs : Internally Displaced Persons
IOM : International Organization for Migration
ISP : Institute for Strategic Policy
IUU : Illegal Unreported Unregulated
KIA : Kachin Independence Army
KNA : Karen National Army
KNU : Karen National Union
KNLA : Karen National Liberation Army
KNPP : Karenni National Progressive Party
KTLA : Kawthoolei Army
LNG : Liquefied Natural Gas
MDA: Maritime Domain Awareness
MECC : The Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center
MNDA : Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MNLA : The Mon National Liberation Army
MOGE : Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
MOI : Ministry of Interior (Thailand)
MOU : Memorandum of Understanding
NDAA : The National Democratic Alliance Army-Eastern Shan State
NGO : Non-Governmental Organization
NLD : National League for Democracy
NMSP : New Mon State Party
NSB : Narcotics Suppression Bureau
NSC : National Security Council (Thailand)
NUG : National Unity Government (Myanmar/Exiled)

ONCB : Office of Narcotic Control Board

OTC : Over the Counter

PDFs : People's Defence Forces

PM2.5 : Particulate Matter (≤ 2.5 micrometers in diameter)

PTTEP : PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited

RCSS : Restoration Council of Shan State

RMCs : Regional Military Commands

RTA : Royal Thai Army

RTAF : Royal Thai Armed Forces

RTN : Royal Thai Navy

SAC : State Administration Council (Myanmar)

SCEF : Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union

SEZ : Special Economic Zone

SRO : Shan Refugees Organization

SSA : Shan State Army

SSPC : State Security and Peace Commission

TAO : Tambon Administrative Organisations

Tatmadaw : Myanmar Armed Forces

THB : Thai Baht currency

TNLA : The Ta'ang National Liberation Army

UAV : Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

UCC : Union Consultative Council

UNHCR : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USDP : Union Solidarity and Development Party

UWSA : United Wa State Army

Chapter 1: Why Thailand Must Recalibrate Now

1.1 The Post-Election Reality in Myanmar¹

The 2026 General Election in Myanmar, which concluded in late January, has failed to provide a pathway to peace. Instead, a “new normal” has emerged, directly threatening Thai national interests. As a frontline state, Thailand will have to develop a “calibrated re-engagement” strategy to manage the following post-election realities:

Elections Unlikely to Resolve Conflict

The outcome of the three-phase election held from December 2025 to January 2026 has been widely condemned as a “sham” intended to legitimize military rule rather than promote peace and reconciliation. Over 50 political parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD), were barred from participating, disenfranchising approximately 90 percent of the 2020 electorate. The election period was marked by armed clashes and hundreds of civilian deaths from junta airstrikes. Voter turnout of 50-55 percent, along with reports of “voting at gunpoint,” indicates the results lack the mandate needed to end the civil war.

The election, held on December 29, January 11, and January 25, delivered a predictable victory to the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which secured 739 of the 1,025 seats contested at both national and subnational levels. The party won 232 of 263 seats in the Lower House and 109 of 157 seats in the Upper House. When combined with the constitutionally guaranteed 25 percent military quota—equivalent to 166 seats across both chambers—the military bloc now controls a total of 538 seats, comfortably exceeding the 294-seat threshold required by law to form a government.

Shortly after the election, Myanmar’s paramount leader Min Aung Hlaing established the Union Consultative Council (UCC)—a new junta-like body widely seen as consolidating his control over both the armed forces and the newly “elected” government. He then transferred the position of Commander-in-Chief to his trusted lieutenant, Ye Win Oo, before being elevated through a parliamentary process to assume the presidency in early April.

Fragmented Territorial Control

Myanmar’s territorial fragmentation has deepened into a multi-layered system of parallel authorities, further eroding the feasibility of any centralized governance model. The military now controls well under half of the country, with electoral processes confined to a limited

¹ Institute for Strategic Policy (ISP) Roundtable on Myanmar (security and General Election 2025-26), National Defence Studies Institute, Bangkok, Thailand, November 27, 2025. More than 50 political parties, including the previously dominant National League for Democracy (NLD), were barred from participating, disenfranchising approximately 90 percent of the electorate in 27, 2025.

portion of townships. At the same time, resistance forces—including Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), People's Defense Forces (PDFs), and more recently a coordinated command structure between the National Unity Government (NUG) and key ethnic armies—have consolidated control across substantial parts of the country, particularly along border regions.

While many dissident groups were reluctant to join the newly set up Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), this evolving configuration marks a shift from fragmented resistance to increasingly coordinated territorial governance outside Naypyidaw's authority, reinforcing the reality that Myanmar no longer operates as a unitary state in practice. For Thailand, this necessitates a recalibration of engagement strategy. Reliance on formal state-to-state channels alone is no longer sufficient; effective border management now requires structured, pragmatic engagement with local power holders. Such an approach is essential not only for managing spillover violence and displacement, but also for sustaining humanitarian access and stabilising cross-border trade under conditions of contested sovereignty.

Rising grey-zone economies

The collapse of effective state control in Myanmar has led to a rise in illicit activities affecting Thai security and the regional economy. Lawless border areas have become hotspots for cyber scams targeting global citizens and have seen record levels of drug production. Thailand is a key transit route for narcotics trafficking abroad and precursor chemicals destined for the laboratories of Myanmar's drug armies and opium warlords. Managing these threats and the influx of displaced populations costs Thailand an estimated 300 million Baht annually, according to Chiang Mai University's Border Security Affairs Project.

2. Myanmar as a Systemic Risk to Thailand

The ongoing crisis in Myanmar has evolved into a systemic risk for Thailand, impacting national security, humanitarian stability, and the economy.

Security - Border Instability and Transnational Threats

The 2,400-kilometre border has transformed into a volatile grey zone marked by fragmented state control, airstrikes, and escalating drone activity. In January 2026, heavy fighting near Mae Sot involved kamikaze drones and Myanmar military airstrikes. Stray bullets and crashed UAVs have repeatedly landed in Thai villages, damaging property and prompting military alerts. In February 2026, a kamikaze drone carrying an explosive gas-canister warhead was discovered in Mae Sot after anti-drone systems disrupted its signal. In July 2025, a Myanmar military drone crashed 15 kilometres inside Thai territory in Tha Song Yang district.

The interconnectedness of these issues elevates the risks from mere bilateral irritants to systemic threats. The security vacuum in Myanmar creates conditions favorable to the criminal economy, which in turn generates pressures of migration and health risks. This migration burden places strain on Thailand's institutions, and as these institutions become overwhelmed, the country's capacity to respond diminishes. This reduced capacity allows the criminal ecosystem to take root more deeply.

Meanwhile, geopolitical actors—particularly China—are leveraging the crisis to expand their security presence in Thailand's own backyard, creating risks to Thai sovereignty that compound over time. China is reportedly seeking to establish joint law enforcement centers in Mae Sot and Bangkok to monitor scam centers.²

The rise of cyber scams is alarming

The Thai-Myanmar border is home to a multi-billion-dollar transnational crime empire that thrives on state complicity. This borderland features two main hubs—KK Park and Shwe Kokko—located along the Moei River, which separates Thailand and Myanmar. These crime hubs operate outside traditional state control; they are neither part of Myanmar nor under Thai jurisdiction and are not bound by conventional legal frameworks. Instead, they function through crypto-financed transactions, encrypted communications, and private security forces in areas controlled by the EAOs.

In January 2025, under pressure from China, Thailand cut off electricity, internet, and gas supplies to five border towns in Myanmar. Enclaves like Shwe Kokko and KK Park host a massive online scam industry that generates tens of billions of dollars annually. These centers rely heavily on human trafficking, with over 300,000 individuals forced into fraudulent operations across the region. In early 2025, following pressure from China, Thai authorities disrupted underground fiber-optic lines that provided high-speed internet to these scam centers. Other measures included cutting off petrol, electricity, and Internet services. However, the Chinese crime syndicates operating there, under the protection of the pro-government Karen National Army (KNA)—formerly the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF)—adapted to these disruptions by using powerful generators, Starlink satellite connections, and smuggled petroleum from within Myanmar.

Raids conducted by Myanmar government troops on these compounds in late 2025 have done little to change the negative perception of these illicit multi-billion-dollar operations, which benefit not only the KNA and Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) but also

2 Panarat Thepgumpanat and Panu Wongcha-um, "Thailand and China to set up coordination centre to combat scam call networks," Reuters, January 24, 2025.

Myanmar government officials.

The scam complexes are notorious for trafficking victims under horrific working conditions, which involve constant surveillance, threats of physical punishment, and beatings. Thailand's border towns, particularly Mae Sot, have also benefited from the presence of these illicit establishments, supplying the hotels and entertainment complexes with day-to-day goods needed to run their operation.

The scam crisis has already demonstrated how criminal activities linked to Myanmar can directly harm Thailand's economy, particularly in terms of investment and tourism. For instance, a 33 percent drop in Chinese tourist arrivals following the Wang Xing (Chinese celebrity) trafficking incident was a significant economic shock. Thai authorities are especially concerned about the impact on Chinese tourism, which is still lagging behind pre-pandemic levels and constitutes a vital part of the sluggish Thai economy.

However, the implementation of the “three-cut” strategy—cutting electricity, fuel, and internet access—to combat scam centers operating along the border with Myanmar since February 2025 has led to significant adverse effects on the border economy. While the government claimed early success, evidence suggests that illicit operations have simply relocated and replaced cut-off power supply with powerful generators, while local populations have borne the brunt of the policy's economic fallout.

Humanitarian:³

The deteriorating economic and security situation in Myanmar has led to an exodus of its youth. Many of these migrants face exploitation and forced labor due to restrictive legal pathways for migration. This vulnerable population puts increasing pressure on Thailand's social infrastructure. Following the U.S. foreign aid cuts in 2025, over 100,000 Myanmar displaced persons in Thailand have lost vital access to food and medical assistance, placing them at serious risk. In a historic policy shift, the Thai government in October 2025 officially began allowing these internally displaced persons (IDP) from the nine temporary camps to work legally. But the new regulation did not produce the desired outcome, as the infrastructure was not in place to assist the transition.

The public health implications are particularly concerning. The collapse of Myanmar's healthcare system increases public health risks such as drug-resistant tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV, which threaten the wider region. As the main destination for Myanmar's displaced population, Thailand is the first country to encounter these disease

3 UN News, “Four years after the coup, Myanmar remains on the brink,” January 29, 2025; See also: Briefing note from the Institute for Strategic Policy (ISP) Roundtable, National Defence Studies Institute, Bangkok, Thailand, November 27, 2025. See also: Briefing note from ISP Roundtable on Myanmar's humanitarian situation, Bangkok on December 4, 2025.

vectors. Additionally, the human trafficking issue further exacerbates the humanitarian instability.

Economic Risk: Trade Disruption, Labor Dependence, and Reputational Damage:⁴

Thailand's economic exposure to Myanmar is most immediately manifested through the disruption of cross-border trade and logistics networks. Protracted armed conflict across large parts of Myanmar has damaged critical transport infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and key border corridors, while rendering major checkpoints increasingly unreliable. As a result, trade flows have become fragmented and unpredictable, with frequent rerouting through secondary crossings or longer maritime alternatives, raising both costs and transit times.

For Thailand, this volatility directly affects border-dependent economies such as Mae Sot, where local businesses are deeply integrated with Myanmar's supply chains. More broadly, the erosion of trade reliability undermines Thailand's strategic objective of using Myanmar as a gateway to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. Instead of serving as a connectivity multiplier, Myanmar is increasingly functioning as a bottleneck within regional logistics networks.

At a structural level, the disruption of trade is not merely a function of insecurity but reflects the breakdown of state capacity in Myanmar, where regulatory fragmentation and conflict-driven territorial control limit the enforceability of trade regimes. Consequently, cross-border commerce is shifting toward informal and semi-regulated channels, increasing transaction risks and complicating customs oversight on the Thai side.

Labour Dependence

Thailand's economic model in agriculture, construction, fisheries, and manufacturing is substantially underwritten by Myanmar labor. Over 4 million Myanmar migrants are now in Thailand, nearly half of whom are undocumented, facing the constant threat of harassment, arrest, and deportation.⁵ The registered component is significant: over 2.3 million registered Myanmar workers are in Thailand, making up 75 percent of the total CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) migrant workforce, and the number has nearly doubled since the pandemic ended.

4 World Bank, "Compounding crises hit Myanmar's economy and its people," December 11, 2024. See also: Briefing note from the Institute for Strategic Policy (ISP) Roundtable on Myanmar (Economy), December 4, 2025.

5 Human Rights Watch, "I'll Never Feel Secure: Undocumented and Exploited: Myanmar Nationals in Thailand," July 14, 2025. Please note that the future of how many Myanmar workers in Thailand varies from agency to agency. Some estimate has the number of Myanmar in Thailand up to 6 million. See also: Amfori, "Protecting Myanmar Migrant Workers in Thailand: Ethical Recruitment and Labour Migration in Focus," March 3, 2025.

Myanmar workers are embedded in supply chains that power Thai exports — seafood processing, agricultural production, and construction. Thailand's aging demographics make this dependency structural: the elderly share is projected to surpass 35 percent by 2050. The vulnerability is not just demographic but political. Since February 2024, a conscription law in Myanmar applies to an estimated 14 million individuals, driving internal displacement and cross-border movement to Thailand. This means Myanmar labour supply to Thailand is partly driven by conscription flight — an irregular and volatile pipeline that could be disrupted if the junta tightened border controls or conflict escalated near crossing points. Progress on worker protection has been uneven: informal broker use fell to 35 percent in 2025 from 60 percent in 2020, and 55 percent of CLMV migrants have completed pre-departure training, up from under 20 percent. However, a large share remains undocumented and outside formal protection frameworks, creating persistent exposure to exploitation and indirect costs for Thai employers and the state.⁶

From Temporary Shelter to Semi-Permanent Settlement:⁷

What began as a temporary humanitarian response has evolved into a protracted, intergenerational reality. Thailand has hosted displaced populations from Myanmar since the mid-1980s, with refugee camps along the border gradually transforming from emergency shelters into de facto permanent settlements. Today, approximately 77,000 refugees remain in nine camps across four provinces—Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ratchaburi—according to the Ministry of Interior (as of December 2025), down from earlier peak figures of around 108,000. Notably, nearly half of the camp population was born in Thailand, underscoring the long-term and self-reproducing nature of displacement.

The majority of camp residents—primarily from Karen, Karenni, Shan and other ethnic communities—have lived in Thailand for decades, having fled successive waves of armed conflict and military abuses in Myanmar. This demographic reality highlights a critical policy dilemma: Thailand is no longer managing a temporary humanitarian influx but rather sustaining a semi-permanent population with evolving social, economic, and protection needs.

The situation has worsened since the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, which escalated an already prolonged crisis. The camp population has increased by 35 percent due to military atrocities that have forced over a million people to flee to neighboring countries. Beyond the camps, the numbers are even larger.

Meanwhile, the prospects for safe return have effectively collapsed. Myanmar's ongoing civil war, compounded by a devastating

6 Rapid Asia, "Are Migrant Workers in Thailand on a Positive Trajectory?," October 7, 2025.

7 IOM, "Overview of Myanmar Nationals in Thailand," January 2025.

7.7-magnitude earthquake near Mandalay on March 28, 2025, has resulted in over 3,500 deaths and widespread destruction, increasing the number of people in need of humanitarian services from 1 million to 5.2 million in the affected areas. These compounding crises make voluntary repatriation impractical in any near-term planning horizon.

Education and Health Bottlenecks:⁸

The humanitarian system supporting camp life is collapsing under the strain of two simultaneous crises: a surging population and the withdrawal of U.S. foreign aid in early 2025. Education is severely impacted, as students and school-aged children account for about 30 percent of camp residents. The number of students has risen by 33 percent, increasing from approximately 18,000 in 2020 to around 24,000 in 2025. Classrooms in migrant learning centers are often overcrowded, with some accommodating up to 60 students at a time. Teachers report a critical shortage of learning resources, including textbooks, as well as science and IT equipment.

On the health front, a halt on U.S. foreign aid forced the closure of hospitals in IDP camps in Thailand, leaving thousands without access to essential medical care. On July 31, 2025, all food aid for standard households was cut, impacting over 80 percent of families. Aid workers have observed an increase in drug and alcohol use among camp residents, particularly among especially vulnerable young people.

Fiscal Pressure on the Thai Government:

Thailand has historically deflected refugee care costs to international donors. That model has broken down. The Thai government has noted that international and NGO contributions have dwindled, increasing the government's burden. Residual costs include border security, administration of nine camp sites across four provinces, policing of informal settlements, healthcare spillover into provincial hospitals, and deportation and repatriation logistics. The Cabinet's decision to allow registered camp refugees to work legally was partly a fiscal calculation aimed at reducing aid dependency while channeling refugee labour into a workforce facing structural shortages from an ageing population.

Illegal Border Economies:

The Thai-Myanmar border is one of the most economically active illicit zones in Southeast Asia. Contraband ranges broadly: fuel smuggling exploits persistent price differentials between Thailand and Myanmar, while jade, gemstones, timber, human, narcotics, weapons and wildlife are also trafficked.⁹ Most significantly, Mae Sot Customs data shows that 68.7 percent of imports and 61.85 percent of exports

⁸ ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, "Funding Cuts Endanger Thai-Myanmar Refugee Camps: Southeast Asian Lawmakers Urge Urgent Action," July 21, 2025

⁹ Alastair MacBeath, "Cashing in on conflict Illicit economies and the Myanmar civil war," Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 2025.

moved through unapproved channels in fiscal year 2025 — revealing that most border commerce operates outside regulated frameworks.¹⁰ Methamphetamine from Myanmar's Shan State manufacturing networks continues to dominate drug trafficking into and through Thailand.

Energy supply vulnerability

Myanmar's gas field is in terminal decline. Thailand's power sector carries a structural dependency on Myanmar that is now entering a critical phase of unraveling. Myanmar's gas fields — especially Yadana and Zawtika — together account for 17 percent of Thailand's total gas supply. Supply disruptions from these fields continue to constrain gas availability, and the long-term outlook is limited by the lack of new reserves and political risks in upstream territories. The depletion timeline is now pressing. Production at the Yadana, Zawtika, and Shwe gas fields is expected to rapidly decline between 2025 and 2030.

A rapid decline in gas production from Yadana, Zawtika, and Shwe between 2025 and 2030, with output falling to less than one-fifth of 2022 levels by decade's end. Thailand has accelerated LNG imports in response: LNG increased more than sevenfold between 2014 and 2024 and is projected to account for nearly 50 percent of gas supply by 2030.¹¹ This shift carries real cost: LNG prices were more than double domestic gas prices in 2025 and 29 percent higher than Myanmar pipeline imports.¹² In October 2025, Thailand's National Energy Policy Council suspended 4 GW of gas-fired capacity, signaling overcapacity and cost pressure. U.S. sanctions on Myanmar's state-owned oil and gas company (MOGE) pose compliance risks for PTTEP, Thailand's upstream operator.

Cross-border pollution

Cross-border environmental pollution has emerged as a structural risk in Thailand–Myanmar relations, with water contamination driven by unregulated mining constituting the most acute and immediate concern. Rivers such as the Kok, Sai, and Ruak—key tributaries of the Mekong—have been contaminated by upstream gold and rare earth mining activities in Myanmar's Shan State, including areas under the control of the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Elevated concentrations of heavy metals, particularly arsenic, have exceeded international safety standards, posing direct health risks to communities in northern Thailand and disrupting local livelihoods through restrictions on water use, fishing, and agriculture. The scale of contamination, confirmed through satellite mapping of extensive mining sites near river headwaters, underscores the systemic nature of the problem.

10 “Myanmar Border Closure Cripples Thai Exports Worth Billions,” *The Nation*, August 18, 2025.

11 Clean, Affordable and Secure Energy for Southeast Asia (CASE), “Key Insight on Thailand's Natural Gas Crossroads: Rethinking Security, Affordability, and the Energy Transition,” March 3, 2026.

12 The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), “Thailand's gas fleet faces dual challenge of rising costs and underutilization,” February 26, 2026.

Unlike episodic environmental challenges, this type of pollution is persistent and accumulative, driven by extractive activities that operate beyond effective regulatory oversight. Efforts at bilateral engagement have been limited by Myanmar's fragmented governance, as key sources of contamination are outside the authority of the central government, reducing the effectiveness of state-to-state cooperation mechanisms.

While transboundary PM2.5 pollution from biomass burning in Myanmar remains a serious seasonal concern, its dynamics are more diffuse and partially mitigable through domestic policy measures. In contrast, water contamination from mining represents a harder, more entrenched problem with longer-term ecological and public health consequences.

Absent a more inclusive framework that engages non-state actors and external stakeholders, cross-border environmental degradation—particularly from unregulated mining—will remain an enduring and under-addressed risk for Thailand.

3. Limits of Thailand's Current Approach¹³

Despite its geographic proximity, historical ties, and economic interdependence with Myanmar, Thailand's response to the ongoing crisis has been constrained by structural, institutional, and diplomatic shortcomings. Four principal limitations define the inadequacy of the current approach.

1. State-to-State Model Mismatch

Thailand's policy architecture toward Myanmar—both in humanitarian response and broader cross-border governance—remains anchored in a conventional state-to-state framework. This model presumes the existence of a recognised, coherent counterpart government capable of exercising authority across its territory. Accordingly, existing bilateral mechanisms—such as Joint Commissions, and military-led High Level Committee as well as border management pacts—are designed to operate through formal state institutions.

However, the realities along the Thailand–Myanmar border have fundamentally diverged from this assumption. Both humanitarian and environmental challenges are increasingly driven by non-state and sub-state dynamics in areas where the Myanmar central government exercises limited or no effective control. Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), local militias, and hybrid governance structures play a decisive role in shaping conditions on the ground, from displacement flows to unregulated economic activities such as mining.

In practice, Thailand has adapted by maintaining informal engagement with EAOs along the border—often without explicit objection from

¹³ This section drew from Institute for Strategic Policy (ISP) Roundtable, National Defence Studies Institute, Bangkok, Thailand, November 27, 2025.

Naypyidaw—reflecting a degree of operational pragmatism. At the same time, sensitivities persist, particularly regarding security-related support and the potential transfer of dual-use technologies. Compounding this complexity, Myanmar's current authorities lack broad international recognition, while parallel actors such as the National Unity Government (NUG) and the People's Defence Force (PDF) operate outside formal diplomatic channels. Taken together, these dynamics expose a structural mismatch: problems are transboundary and multi-actor, but policy instruments remain narrowly state-centric.

2. Fragmented Bureaucratic Ownership

Responsibility for Myanmar-related humanitarian issues is dispersed across multiple agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Prime Minister Offices and agencies under its jurisdiction such as the National Security Council and National Intelligence Agency, the armed forces, as well as provincial and local administrations, without a clear lead coordinator. Each agency operates according to its own mandate and risk calculus, producing incoherent and contradictory signals. The fragmentation has three consequences: policy inconsistency (the Foreign Ministry may signal openness to humanitarian corridors while the Royal Thai Army enforces strict detention of arrivals); accountability gaps (no single body holds overall responsibility for outcomes); and bureaucratic inertia (inter-agency coordination requirements slow responses to fast-moving displacement events).

3. Border Policy Not Geographically Differentiated

Thailand shares a 2,400-kilometre border with Myanmar spanning radically different political, ethnic, and conflict contexts — from the Mon and Karen borderlands of the west, to the Shan-influenced north, to the Tanintharyi corridor in the south. Yet Thailand applies a broadly uniform border management framework that does not account for these variations in displacement drivers, ethnic relationships, or local security conditions. Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces, bordering Karen and Karenni conflict zones, have historical refugee infrastructure. Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai face northern Shan State, with newer and more dynamic conflict frontlines where absorption capacity is far weaker. Applying identical admission thresholds, detention protocols, and return timelines across such diverse borderlands is both operationally inefficient and, in higher-risk zones, potentially life-threatening for those fleeing active hostilities.

Chapter 2: Strategic Logic of the Area Approach

2.1 Why Geography Matters

Thailand's border with Myanmar is not a single security space, but a set of distinct geographic systems, each producing its own configuration of risks, actors, and policy demands. Geography, in this context, does not merely define territory—it shapes the character of the problems Thailand faces, from the speed and scale of displacement to the structure of cross-border economies and the type of actors in control.

The Western Corridor (Mae Hong Son–Tak–Kanchanaburi–Ratchaburi ↔ Karen/Karenni/Mon) is defined by depth and institutional memory. Decades of conflict have produced a relatively mature system of refugee camps, humanitarian actors, and cross-border coordination mechanisms. The challenge here is not the absence of systems, but their overextension and structural rigidity—managing protracted displacement alongside periodic conflict surges, while also safeguarding strategic assets such as energy infrastructure further south.

By contrast, the Northern Corridor (Chiang Rai/Chiang Mai ↔ Shan/Wa/some Kachin) is characterised by fluidity and opacity. Armed actors, illicit economies, and environmental degradation intersect in ways that are less visible but more difficult to regulate. Displacement here is faster, less formalised, and often embedded within broader flows of labour, trafficking, and criminal networks. The problem is not volume alone, but velocity and governance gaps, requiring a different mix of financial intelligence, environmental monitoring, and informal political engagement.

The Southern Maritime Corridor (Ranong Mon/Tanintharyi) presents yet another configuration—where maritime geography reshapes the problem set. Here, protection concerns are intertwined with labour migration, fisheries exploitation, and irregular sea movements. At the same time, the corridor carries disproportionate strategic weight, linking Thailand to the Andaman Sea, the Bay of Bengal Initiative Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) connectivity, and offshore energy infrastructure. The challenge is managing overlapping humanitarian, economic, and maritime security risks within a space of limited institutional capacity.

Finally, the emerging Sagaing–Chin front represents a frontier of instability with minimal pre-existing governance infrastructure on the Thai side. Unlike the western corridor, there are no deeply embedded humanitarian systems to absorb shocks. Any escalation in this zone would therefore translate rapidly into unmanaged displacement and ad hoc responses, exposing the limits of Thailand's current preparedness.

These geographic differences make clear that a uniform, one-size-fits-all policy is inherently inefficient. Applying identical frameworks across such diverse environments leads to resource misallocation—over-investment in established systems in the west, bottlenecks in the north, and under-preparedness in emerging zones. It also produces operational incoherence, where agencies respond to symptoms rather than the underlying geographic logic of the problem.

A corridor-based approach, by contrast, allows the Thai government to align resources, institutions, and policy tools with the specific risk profile of each geographic system, turning geography from a constraint into a basis for strategic prioritisation.

2.2 Risk Typology Across the Thai–Myanmar Border

Conflict Spillover Zones

The region in question is on the western and northern corridors (Mae Hong Son, Tak, Chiang Rai), where Myanmar military operations have in the past generated sudden, high-volume cross-border displacement, artillery overshoot incidents, and armed actor proximity. The policy gap identified is Thailand's lack of any formal temporary protection status mechanism, leaving protection contingent on local military commanders' discretion.

Criminal economy hubs covers two interlinked dimensions: the scam compound phenomenon (the KK Park/Shwe Koko zone and the Mae Sot axis), where fortified facilities house tens of thousands of trafficked workers coerced into online fraud; and the narcotics and arms dimension, where the Golden Triangle's methamphetamine output transits Thai border provinces while black market weapons flow in the reverse direction, creating a feedback loop in which Thailand's criminal border economy partly sustains the conflict generating displacement.

Labour–Trade Corridors centres on the Mae Sot–Myawaddy SEZ axis (100,000–200,000 Myanmar workers) and the new flows created by Myanmar's 2024 military conscription law. It traces how structural exploitation of irregular status, MOU system rigidity, and the stranding of formerly legal workers in overstayed-visa limbo creates a humanitarian caseload that falls between the MOI's refugee frameworks and the Labour Ministry's worker protection systems.

Maritime vulnerability zones address the Andaman Sea coast (Ranong, Phang-Nga, Satun), covering Rohingya sea-crossing attempts from Rakhine State, forced labour on Thai fishing vessels, and Thailand's total absence of a maritime asylum, with a documented Royal Thai Navy pattern of pushback rather than protection.

3. Criteria for Corridor Prioritisation:

Trade value

Trade value is framed not as a revenue metric but as a leverage indicator — identifying where economic interdependence can be deployed as a diplomatic instrument to negotiate humanitarian access. Mae Sot–Myawaddy anchors this criterion with THB 60–80 billion in annual bilateral trade.

Conflict proximity

Conflict proximity is treated as the most time-sensitive criterion, requiring dynamic quarterly reassessment. It distinguishes between Myanmar-initiated offensives (which push civilians into Thailand) and EAO operations, since the two imply different diplomatic responses.

Humanitarian pressure

Humanitarian pressure is deliberately separated from conflict proximity to capture chronic, cumulative caseloads that don't generate acute crisis events but represent enormous aggregate unmet need. Complaints from medical personnel in Mae Sot are that the RTA constantly pressures the Myanmar patients to return to their side of the border, overlooking the need for medical checkups and long-term consequences.

Criminal intensity

Criminal intensity is broken into four sub-dimensions; narcotics, human trafficking (compound-based and individual), arms smuggling, and financial crime, recognizing that these generate their own distinct humanitarian caseloads and require integrated rather than siloed policy instruments.

Strategic connectivity

Strategic connectivity maps five geopolitical vectors: China/China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, India/Act East and its economic corridor, Western donors, ASEAN/Mekong, and Indian Ocean maritime geometry. A corridor's strategic connectivity measures how many powerful external actors care about what happens there, and therefore how much diplomatic and financial support Thailand can mobilise by acting in that corridor. Strategic connectivity is seductive because it maps onto where Thailand receives the most international attention and donor money, creating an institutional temptation to prioritise corridors simply because great powers are watching, while neglecting corridors with acute humanitarian need but low geopolitical salience. Strategic connectivity should therefore function as a multiplier — telling Thailand where it can punch above its weight and attract external resources — not as a primary driver of corridor prioritisation.

4. Active actors on the ground inside Myanmar

Understanding Thailand's strategic options along the border requires a clear-eyed account of who actually controls territory, generates displacement, and shapes access conditions on the Myanmar side. The post-2021 political landscape has fragmented what was once a two-party conflict — the Tatmadaw versus a relatively coherent set of ceasefire ethnic armed organisations — into a multi-polar battlefield in which state authority, ethnic resistance, revolutionary militia, criminal enterprise, and border guard hybrid forces occupy overlapping, contested, and rapidly shifting spaces.

This section profiles five categories of active armed actors operating inside Myanmar, analyses their internal structures and territorial reach, and draws out the specific implications of each for Thailand's border management and humanitarian engagement strategy.

Tatmadaw

The Tatmadaw — the Myanmar armed forces — is the institutional backbone of the State. While the coup created a new political superstructure, the Tatmadaw itself is a pre-existing institution with deep roots: founded in 1945, it has governed Myanmar directly for most of the post-independence period and maintained dominance in the country's political economy even during the decade of nominal civilian rule from 2011 to 2021.

Structure and Command

The Tatmadaw is organised into regional military commands (RMCs) — geographically defined operational zones each commanded by a lieutenant general who exercises significant operational autonomy within broad strategic directives from the policymakers in the capital. This structure means border-relevant military behaviour is often driven by regional commanders rather than centralised Tatmadaw decision-making: the commander of the Western Regional Military Command (covering Rakhine State and parts of the Chin-facing border) may behave differently from the Triangle Regional Military Command commander (covering Shan State border zones) even on nominally identical policy matters.

Since 2021, the Tatmadaw has sustained severe battlefield attrition. Operation 1027, launched by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in October 2023, resulted in the largest territorial losses the Tatmadaw has experienced in decades, with significant portions of northern Shan State falling outside effective government control. Subsequent Arakan Army (AA) offensives in Rakhine State have further eroded Tatmadaw territorial holdings. The Tatmadaw's response has increasingly relied on aerial bombardment as a substitute for ground manoeuvre capability. This shift is directly relevant to Thailand: aerial strikes

generate large, rapid civilian displacement events that arrive at the Thai border faster than ground-warfare displacement historically did.

Profile

Origin & structure	Territorial presence	Displacement role
– Founded 1945; coups in 1962, 1988, 2021 – Commanded by Senior General Ye Win Oo, former chief of military intelligence – Organised into Regional Military Commands (RMCs) with significant autonomy – Estimated 150,000–350,000 personnel pre-attrition; current strength degraded – Heavily reliant on air power post-2021 to compensate for ground losses	– Nominal sovereignty over all Myanmar; effective control contracted sharply since 2023 – Retains major cities, key highways, and resource extraction zones – Lost large portions of Shan State, Chin State, and Rakhine State since late 2023 – Still holds Karen State lowlands and Kayah State urban centres; contested in border hills – Thai border-facing RMCs: South-East (Karen), Central-West (Kayah/Chin), Triangle (Shan)	– Primary generator of mass displacement through aerial bombardment and scorched-earth operations – Tatmadaw offensives are the direct trigger of the most acute conflict spillover events reaching Thailand – Tatmadaw border gate authorities remain Thailand's formal bilateral interlocutor for crossing-point management – Myanmar forces have fired into Thai territory; military communication channels exist but are strained – Myanmar revenue dependency on Thai trade gives Bangkok limited but real economic leverage

Engagement with Myanmar's authorities as the de facto border counterpart remains unavoidable for practical purposes, particularly in managing crossing points, customs procedures, and basic trade facilitation. However, extending this state-centric approach to complex transboundary issues—such as humanitarian access and environmental degradation—has proven increasingly ineffective. In the environmental domain, for instance, many of the most severe sources of cross-border pollution, including unregulated mining activities, are located in areas beyond the effective control of the central government, particularly in territories administered by Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs). As a result, bilateral engagement confined to Naypyidaw is structurally incapable of addressing the root causes of environmental harm.

A similar limitation applies to humanitarian policy. Treating the Myanmar Government as a legitimate and sufficient partner—particularly in negotiating repatriation or relying on its assurances of civilian protection—risks undermining Thailand's credibility among displaced populations and the international community. The gap between formal diplomatic engagement and on-the-ground realities has become increasingly apparent.

Thailand must therefore adopt a dual-track posture. This would involve continued transactional engagement with Myanmar's authorities on administrative and border management functions, while simultaneously developing parallel, carefully calibrated channels of engagement with non-state actors—including EAOs—for humanitarian access, environmental mitigation, and civilian protection. Such an approach reflects not a departure from diplomacy, but an adaptation to a fragmented governance landscape in which effective solutions require engagement beyond the state alone.

Thailand implication	<i>The Myanmar Government remains Thailand's unavoidable formal interlocutor for border gate operations and bilateral administrative agreements. Thailand should maintain transactional engagement while explicitly declining to treat Myanmar assurances as a sufficient basis for returns or protection guarantees—insisting on independent UNHCR or ICRC verification before any repatriation process is initiated. Myanmar's economic dependency on Thai trade should be treated as a calibrated last-resort instrument, not squandered in routine diplomatic courtesies.</i>
-----------------------------	---

Border Guard Forces (BGF)

Border Guard Forces (BGFs) are among the least understood and most consequential actors in the Thai–Myanmar border zone. Created under the Tatmadaw's 2009 BGF transformation programme—which pressured ceasefire ethnic armed organisations to reconstitute under nominal Tatmadaw command—BGFs are hybrid formations combining institutional Tatmadaw affiliation with operational autonomy, ethnic community roots, and deep integration with both licit and illicit border economies. They are not a Tatmadaw sub-component; they are a distinct category of armed actors with their own command structures, territorial interests, and political calculations.

Structure and post-2021 fragmentation

There are approximately 23 BGF battalions along the Myanmar–Thailand border, the majority in Karen State. Each battalion is technically under Tatmadaw light infantry division command but retains significant day-to-day autonomy. BGF commanders exercise quasi-feudal authority over their territorial zones—controlling border

crossings, taxing trade, and regulating or hosting economic activities, including criminal enterprises. The post-2021 coup fractured even the nominal BGF unity: several BGF commanders, faced with pressure to conduct offensive operations against Karen civilian communities on behalf of the Myanmar Government, broke with Tatmadaw's chain of command and allied with resistance forces. Others deepened their Tatmadaw alignment.

The scam cities problem

The most internationally visible BGF dimension of the Myanmar crisis is the role of BGF-linked militia structures in operating cyber-scam compounds in the Karen State border zone — particularly the Shwe Kokko / KK Park development opposite Mae Sot. BGF Battalion 1013 (Karen National Army - KNA), commanded by Saw Chit Thu, became the primary security architecture for a cluster of compounds housing tens of thousands of trafficked workers forced to conduct online fraud.

Profile

Origin & structure	Territorial presence	Displacement role
– Created under Tatmadaw 2009 BGF transformation from ceasefire EAOs – ~23 battalions along Thai border, majority in Karen State – Nominal Tatmadaw command; substantial de facto operational autonomy – Post-2021: some BGFs broke with SAC; others deepened alignment — now a fragmented mosaic – BGF commanders exercise quasi-feudal control over zones including border crossings	– Concentrated in Karen State (Myawaddy, Three Pagodas Pass, KK Park) and eastern Shan State – Control key formal and informal border crossings used for trade and migration – KK Park zone (opposite Mae Sot): BGF-linked militias control scam compound infrastructure – Anti-SAC BGFs have opened territory to KNU and NUG forces post-2021 – BGF territorial control is hyper-local: battalion-level, not region-wide	– Direct infrastructure controller for Thailand's worst-adjacent criminal economy hub – BGF-controlled crossings are primary conduit for trafficked workers entering KK Park – Anti-SAC BGFs create potential humanitarian access channels that bypass SAC obstruction – BGF commanders are critical informal interlocutors for Thai military border management – BGF fragmentation means Thailand must engage individual commanders, not a unified structure

The BGF's dual character — as both a potential humanitarian access partner and the primary enabler of Thailand's most acute criminal emergency (in KK Park and Shwe Koko) — makes it the most complex actor for Thailand to calibrate engagement with. A single policy toward 'the BGF' is not merely insufficient; it is analytically incoherent. Thailand needs differentiated, commander-specific engagement strategies that distinguish sharply between BGF units involved in criminal enterprise and those repositioned as resistance-aligned forces.

Thailand implication	<i>Law enforcement engagement with BGF-linked scam compound operators must be treated as a priority track, led by the DSI and Royal Thai Police — not subordinated to diplomatic considerations. Simultaneously, Thailand should develop quiet engagement channels with anti-Myanmar EAO commanders who control territory relevant to humanitarian access in Karen and Karenni states, treating them as de facto border authorities in their zones regardless of their lack of formal legal standing.</i>
-----------------------------	---

Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs)

Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) are the oldest category of armed actors in Myanmar's conflict landscape, predating the Tatmadaw's current incarnation and rooted in ethnic minority communities' resistance to Burman-majority central state authority from independence in 1948. EAOs are not a monolithic category: they range from large, institutionally sophisticated organisations with decades of governance experience and significant territorial control, to smaller, newer formations that emerged specifically in response to the 2021 coup. What unites them is their ethnic community basis, resistance to Tatmadaw authority, and claim to represent the political and security interests of specific ethnic nationality groups.

Major EAOs relevant to the Thai border

The Karen National Union (KNU), founded in 1947, remains the most significant ethnic armed organisation along the Thai-Myanmar border. It has long maintained working relations with Thai authorities and humanitarian actors, forming the backbone of cross-border assistance. However, the KNU is no longer a fully unified actor. Since Myanmar's 2021 coup, internal divisions and breakaway factions have increasingly undermined its cohesion, despite its broader alignment with the National Unity Government (NUG) and People's Defence Forces (PDF).

This fragmentation is exemplified by the Kawthoolei Army (KTLA), a splinter group led by Saw Ner Dah Mya. In January, he declared a so-called "Republic of Kawthoolei" near Myawaddy, opposite Thailand's Mae Sot. The move is widely seen as politically unrealistic: the KTLA

controls no defined territory, governs no stable population, and lacks administrative capacity or recognition.

The KNU has rejected the declaration, highlighting its impracticality. More importantly, such symbolic acts reflect deeper fractures within the Karen movement. Rather than strengthening resistance against the Tatmadaw, fragmentation risks weakening coordination and legitimacy—potentially creating opportunities for Myanmar's military regime to exploit internal divisions.

Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), founded in 1957, is a major ethnic political organization in Myanmar representing the Karenni (also known as Kayah or “Red Karen”) people. It is one of the oldest ethnic armed groups in the country, having fought for self-determination and autonomy for nearly seven decades. Initially, the group fought for a fully independent Karenni State. However, since the early 2000s, it has shifted its objective toward establishing a federal democratic union that grants ethnic groups high levels of self-administration.

The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and its military wing Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) operate in southern Shan State, adjacent Mae Hong Son border zones. Once a part of the Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army, SSA-South refused to surrender to the Tatmadaw and instead, became a buffer for Thailand.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) — comprising the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA - Chinese Kokang) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), formed in June 2019 — has been the most militarily consequential EAO grouping since 2023. Operation 1027's enormous territorial gains in northern Shan State have indirectly altered the balance of forces along the Thai border by dramatically degrading the Myanmar military's capacity. But pressure from China forced MNDAA and TNLA to return much of the territories they accumulated back to Myanmar. In March 2026, territorial dispute between MNDAA and TNLA over the Lashio-Muse trade route, a vital economic corridor linking Myanmar to China's Yunnan province, resulted in an all-out clash.

The United Wa State Army (UWSA), one of Myanmar's most powerful ethnic armed groups, has evolved from a northern Shan State force into a key actor shaping security dynamics along Thailand's border. Numbering up to 20,000–30,000 troops, the UWSA maintains strong external backing and operates as a de facto autonomous authority.

Since the collapse of Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army in 1996, the UWSA has steadily expanded southward toward Thailand, seeking to consolidate a “Southern Wa State” across areas east of the Salween River. This expansion has brought Wa forces into proximity with Thai border

provinces such as Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Mae Hong Son, often displacing local communities and reshaping the ethnic and security landscape.

Recent tensions underscore the security implications. Thai forces have reportedly been placed on alert following incidents of alleged Wa encroachment into Thai territory, reflecting growing concerns over sovereignty and border stability.

A critical dimension of UWSA expansion is the rapid growth of unregulated mining, particularly rare earth extraction in southern Shan State near the Thai border. Mining sites—some located at the headwaters of rivers flowing into Thailand—operate without formal oversight, often under UWSA protection.

These activities carry significant implications for Thailand. Environmental degradation, including toxic runoff and river contamination, threatens downstream ecosystems and communities. At the same time, the fusion of armed control, illicit economies, and cross-border influence networks complicates Thai governance and border management, turning the UWSA into both a security and environmental challenge for Thailand.

*Note: The crossing from Mae Hong Son's (MHS) Mae Sariang leads to the headquarters of the Karen National Union (KNU), while the crossing from Ban Nai Soi reaches the headquarters of the Karen National People's Party (KNPP). The 400-kilometer stretch along the border from Ban Nai Soi down to Mae Sot is controlled by both KNU and KNPP. Although Mae Sot is bustling with economic activities, Mae Sariang holds significant strategic importance due to its role in supplying goods and reinforcements to rebel troops. Local organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce in Mae Hong Son and Mae Sot maintain smooth interactions with the KNPP and KNU, respectively.

Profile

Origin & structure	Territorial presence	Displacement role
– Oldest conflict actors, most predating independence (1948) – KNU (Karen): founded 1947; most directly Thai-border relevant; allied with NUG post-2021 – KNPP: founded 1957 – RCSS/SSA-S (Shan South): ceasefire-aligned but strained; near Tachilek and Mae Hong Son zones – 3BHA (MNDAA, TNLA, AA): militarily dominant since Op. 1027; China-border and Rakhine focused	– KNU: substantial highland territory in Karen State opposite Mae Sot and Mae Hong Son – RCSS: portions of southern Shan State; corridor to Tachilek and Mae Sai border zones – KNPP control area adjacent to Mae Hon Son – 3BHA: much of northern Shan State post-Op. 1027; effectively governing civilian populations – Arakan Army: majority of Rakhine State townships as of 2024–25; critical for Rohingya dynamics	– KNU is the single most important humanitarian access partner for the western corridor – EAO territorial control determines where cross-border humanitarian delivery is feasible and safe – Strong possibility for cross-border activities with Thai agencies – EAO-governed zones are generally safer for displaced civilians than SAC-controlled territory – EAO governance capacity varies enormously: KNU has functional civil administration; newer formations do not

The EAOs represent Thailand's most important — and most underutilised — non-state humanitarian access partners. The KNU's longstanding relationship with Thai border communities and authorities, built over seven decades, constitutes a structural asset that no state-to-state agreement with the SSPC (formerly SAC) can replicate. Thailand's reluctance to engage EAOs formally, driven by diplomatic risk aversion about recognising non-state actors, has systematically prevented it from activating this asset. A corridor-based strategy must be willing to engage EAOs as de facto border authorities in the zones they control — on the same transactional logic that justifies engaging BGF commanders and Myanmar Government border gate officials.

Thailand implication	<i>Thailand should develop a formal — if unpublicised — engagement framework with the KNU, KNPP, and DKBA for humanitarian access coordination in the western corridor, building on existing informal relationships. Engagement with the RCSS on Shan State border management and with CNF/CDF on the Sagaing-adjacent northern corridor should follow. Thailand does not need to recognise EAOs as political entities to engage them, but as humanitarian access facilitators: a pragmatic, protection-focused relationship is legally defensible and operationally essential.</i>
-----------------------------	---

People's Defence Force (PDF) & NUG

The People's Defence Force (PDF) is the armed wing of the National Unity Government (NUG), established in May 2021 as the primary resistance military organisation of the post-coup opposition. Unlike EAOs — ethnic community-based organisations with decades of institutional development — the PDF was created rapidly from scratch following the coup, drawing recruits primarily from the urban Burman majority and ethnic minority communities that had not previously participated in armed resistance. Its emergence represents a qualitatively new development in Myanmar's conflict landscape: a politically organised, nationally-framed armed resistance rooted in communities that previously supported civilian governance.

Structure, capacity, and diversity

The PDF is formally commanded by the NUG's Ministry of Defence but operates in practice as a relatively decentralised network of local units with varying levels of training, equipment, and tactical competence. The NUG provides political direction, some external financing, and international legitimacy but direct operational command over specific units in specific areas is limited. Many PDF units operate in close tactical partnership with EAOs, effectively functioning as the Burman-majority and multi-ethnic component of a broader resistance coalition. Others operate more independently, particularly in the urban Sagaing Region, Magway Region, and Mandalay Region, where EAO presence is limited.¹⁴

NUG political structure

The National Unity Government, formed in April 2021 by elected parliamentarians, ethnic political parties, and civil society representatives, is recognised as a legitimate representative institution by most Western governments and maintains significant international humanitarian and financial support networks. It operates a shadow

¹⁴ Brian McCartan, "Funding the People's Defence Forces in Myanmar," Armed group economies Southeast Asia, May 2025. See also: Don Pathan, "Myanmar's Drone War: An Escalation," Stratsea, March 13, 2026.

administrative structure — including health, education, and justice services — in areas where SAC authority has collapsed. The NUG's relationship with the EAOs is formalised through bilateral memoranda of understanding, though the depth of real integration varies considerably across the EAO landscape.

Profile (NUG/PDF structure)

Origin & structure	Territorial presence	Displacement role
– Established May 2021 as NUG armed wing; formed from scratch post-coup – Primarily Burman-majority with multi-ethnic participation; distinct from ethnic EAO basis – NUG Ministry of Defence provides political direction; operational command is decentralised – Estimated 65,000+ fighters; highly variable training, equipment, and command discipline – NUG operates a shadow civil administration in contested territories	– Most active in Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay Regions — further from Thai border – Significant presence in Karen State and Kayah State alongside KNU/KNLA – PDF in Chin State and Sagaing periphery generates displacement into Mae Hong Son – NUG claims parallel governance authority where SAC administration has collapsed – Limited direct presence in Shan State border zones opposite Thailand	– PDF operations in Kayah and Karen States contribute — alongside SAC offensives — to border displacement – NUG is the principal political interlocutor for humanitarian access in resistance-controlled areas – NUG's international legitimacy makes it more diplomatically accessible than EAOs or BGFs – NUG shadow administration is a potential coordination counterpart in border-adjacent areas – PDF checkpoint taxation creates some access complications similar to other armed actors

The NUG presents Thailand with its most diplomatically straightforward non-state engagement option. It has international recognition, articulated political positions, and a functioning institutional structure. Its commitments to democratic governance and human rights provide normative common ground with Thailand's formal positions. However, Thailand has been reluctant to engage the NUG formally, fearing diplomatic blowback from Myanmar and ASEAN complications.

Thailand implication	<i>Thailand should open quiet, deniable communication channels with the NUG, initially focused narrowly on humanitarian coordination — specifically, advance notification of Tatmadaw offensive operations affecting border-adjacent civilian populations, and coordination of cross-border humanitarian delivery routes. The NUG channel does not require formal diplomatic recognition; it requires political willingness to treat the NUG as the interlocutor in the territories relevant to Thailand's border management.</i>
-----------------------------	---

Other Armed Actors

Beyond the four primary actor categories, several additional armed and quasi-armed formations operate in Myanmar's border zones in ways directly relevant to Thailand's corridor management. These actors do not fit neatly into the state/resistance/ethnic typology; they occupy the overlapping spaces between armed conflict, criminal enterprise, and local governance vacuum.

People's Militia Forces (Pyi Thu Sit)

People's Militia Forces (Pyi Thu Sit) are locally raised paramilitary units established and nominally controlled by the Tatmadaw as a force multiplier for Tatmadaw operations. Unlike BGFs, which have ethnic community roots and institutional coherence, PyiThu Sit are raised on a more improvised basis — often from local young men incentivised by payment, coercion, or local grievances. Their conduct has been associated with some of the most egregious human rights violations of the post-2021 period, including mass atrocities against civilian communities in Sagaing Region and Kayah State, where Tatmadaw ground manoeuvre capacity is thin, and atrocity-by-proxy has become a substitute for effective military control.

Scam compound militias

The BGF-linked militias directly controlling scam compound infrastructure in Karen State and Shan State border zones constitute a distinct sub-category of armed actors whose primary logic is economic-criminal rather than political or ethnic. The most significant formation — associated with BGF Battalion 1013 and the Saw Chit Thu network in the KK Park zone — operates with sufficient scale and coercive capacity to be treated as an independent armed actor for border management purposes.

Ceasefire splinter and hybrid formations

Several armed formations exist in states of partial dissolution, ceasefire suspension, or post-split fragmentation. The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) — a splinter from the KNU created under

Tatmadaw pressure in 1994 — has further fragmented since 2021 into sub-units with varying political alignments. The Karenni Army (KNPP's armed wing) has absorbed significant new recruits since 2021 while simultaneously managing relationships with newly formed Karenni PDF structures. These fragmented formations complicate humanitarian access in the central Mae Hong Son corridor because no single armed actor exercises coherent command over the full relevant territory.

China-aligned formations in northern Shan State

In the northern Shan State border zone adjacent to Yunnan Province, several formations maintain close relationships with Chinese border authorities and business networks — including the National Democratic Alliance Army-Eastern Shan State (NDAA) in the Mong La Special Region. These formations are nominally independent, largely autonomous from both the State Security and Peace Commission–SSPC (formerly State Administration Council –SAC) and NUG and substantially integrated into Chinese cross-border economic systems. Their relevance to Thailand is indirect but significant: they shape stability in the northern Shan corridor and are part of the actor landscape any Mekong sub-regional security framework must account for.

Profile

Origin & structure	Territorial presence	Displacement role
– PyiThu Sit: SAC-raised local militias; associated with worst atrocities; Sagaing and Kayah active – Scam militias: BGF-linked criminal enterprise networks; KK Park and Shan border zones – DKBA splinters: fragmented post-2021; mixed political alignments in lower Karen State – Karenni formations: KNPP/Karenni Army and new PDF hybrids; Kayah State corridor – Northern Shan China-aligned: NDAA and Mong La Special Region; Yunnan-integrated	– PyiThu Sit: Sagaing, Magway, Kayah State — generating worst civilian harm in Thailand-adjacent zones – Scam militias: KK Park zone (opposite Mae Sot) and Tachilek-adjacent Shan areas – DKBA splinters: lower Karen State hills; some crossings used for informal migration – Karenni: Kayah State borderland opposite Mae Hong Son central corridor – NDAA/Mong La: far northern Shan; more relevant to China–Thailand than Thai–Myanmar bilateral	– PyiThu Sit atrocities are a primary driver of acute displacement surges into Mae Hong Son and Chiang Rai – Scam militias create the operational context for Thailand's most acute anti-trafficking challenge – DKBA fragmentation complicates humanitarian access in lower Karen State — no reliable single interlocutor – Karenni fragmentation creates access gaps in Kayah State despite proximity to Mae Hong Son – China-aligned northern formations must be factored into any Thailand–China border security dialogue

Thailand implication

Thailand's 'other actors' challenge is primarily one of mapping and monitoring rather than direct engagement. With the exception of scam militia networks — which require active law enforcement counter-engagement — most other-category actors lack stable enough command structures to serve as reliable interlocutors. Thailand should invest in real-time armed actor mapping, potentially through a dedicated border intelligence function or civil society partnership, to ensure corridor strategies reflect current actor distributions rather than historical ones.

Inter-Actor Relationship Matrix

The five actor categories do not operate independently. The strategic environment at any point along the Thai–Myanmar border is shaped by the specific combination of actors present and the nature of their

relationships — competitive, cooperative, transactional, or hybrid. The matrix below maps the primary relationship type between each actor pairing, with direct implications for Thailand's corridor engagement strategy.

Actor → vs ↓	Myanmar / Tatmadaw	BGF	Major EAOs	PDF / NUG	Criminal networks
Myanmar / Tatmadaw	—	Formal command; BGF nominal subordination, often fractious in practice	Active hostilities; Myanmar conducting air and ground offensives against all major EAOs	Declared enemies; Myanmar conducts lethal operations against PDF and NUG-affiliated forces	Tactical tolerance: Myanmar border units allow criminal operations in exchange for revenue sharing
BGF	Nominal subordination; BGF retains independent command	—	Fluid: some BGFs allied with EAOs post-2021; others remain SAC-aligned	Varies by unit: some BGFs oppose PDF; others tacitly permit PDF passage	Deep integration: BGF units in KK Park and Shwe Kokko directly control the scam compound infrastructure
Major EAOs	Active armed conflict against SAC; some ceasefires fragile or suspended	Mixed: 3BHA fights SAC- aligned BGFs; other BGFs are EAO partners	—	Formal PDF integration under NUG; some EAOs retain independent command	Varies: some EAOs tax criminal operations; others actively combat trafficking
PDF / NUG	Active armed conflict; PDF primary target of SAC counter- insurgency	Cooperative with anti-SAC BGFs; hostile to SAC-aligned BGFs	NUG formally commands PDF; operational depth varies by region and EAO	—	NUG leadership opposed to criminal ties; some local PDF commanders implicated in border taxation
Criminal networks	Revenue relationship: networks pay Myanmar and BGF units for operational space	BGF units in compound zones are direct criminal partners, not merely tolerant	EAO taxation relationships; some receive criminal revenue; others adversarial	NUG opposes criminal ties formally; some local PDF commanders implicated	—

Note: Relationship descriptions are generalisations based on the post-2021 conflict landscape as of 2024–25. Local variations are significant: BGF unit alignments, EAO–PDF coordination depth, and SAC–militia relationships vary considerably by geographic zone and must be assessed at the corridor level.

The actor landscape inside Myanmar is not merely complex — it is structurally resistant to simplification. A state-to-state model that treats the Myanmar Government as a unified sovereign interlocutor misses the BGF commanders who actually control the crossing points, the EAOs who govern the territory from which displaced populations flee, the PDF units whose operations contribute to displacement, and the criminal militias whose compound infrastructure defines Thailand's most acute adjacent humanitarian emergency.

Chapter 3: Western Corridor

The corridor spans, which basically links Mae Sot - Myawaddy to inner land and business hub of Yangon, the border areas of Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ratchaburi, encompassing a wide range of interconnected issues, including spillover from Myanmar's civil war, trade surges, refugee and migration flows, illicit economies, and energy security. Collectively, these dynamics make the Western corridor arguably the most strategically complex bilateral border zone Thailand manages—where energy dependencies, labour economics, regional connectivity ambitions, and security pressures converge at a single crossing point.

Within this broader framework, the implications are immediate. The fluidity of armed actors and quasi-governance zones across Myanmar's border regions—particularly in nearby areas such as Karen and Karenni States (officially Kayin and Kayah)—create both opportunities for humanitarian coordination and risks of fragmented authority. At the same time, intermittent escalation continues to generate displacement flows into Thai territory, adding pressure on border provinces.

The proximity of these dynamics to the four border provinces underscores the need for Thailand to balance border security with adaptive humanitarian engagement. In practice, this corridor is no longer defined solely by trade and connectivity, but by the constant interaction between conflict, mobility, and governance challenges that demand a more integrated policy response.

3.1 Strategic Significance¹⁵

Primary trade gateway

Mae Sot–Myawaddy is Thailand's most significant land border crossing with Myanmar, handling the overwhelming majority of formal and informal bilateral trade. Its strategic value lies in being the natural chokepoint connecting Thailand's north-central industrial hinterland with Myanmar's interior markets. Any disruption — conflict spillover,

¹⁵ Institute for Strategic Policy Roundtable on “Myanmar's Economy: Finance & Banking, Energy, Human Resources/Labor, Border Trade, Economic Connectivity, and Other Issues,” Bangkok, December 4, 2025.

bridge closures, or regulatory shifts — creates immediate cascading effects on cross-border supply chains, including agricultural inputs, consumer goods, and construction materials. For Bangkok, controlling and modernising this gateway is both an economic and a geopolitical lever over Yangon.

Major labour pipeline

The corridor functions as the primary arterial route for Myanmar migrant labour entering Thailand, particularly into Tak, Samut Sakhon, and the broader industrial estates of the Central Plains. This flow is structurally embedded in Thailand's agro-processing, seafood, construction, and manufacturing sectors. Its strategic significance is twofold: Thailand's labour-intensive economy has grown dependent on this supply, while remittances flowing back through the corridor represent a critical macroeconomic lifeline for Myanmar's border communities. Any hardening of the border — whether from armed conflict or Thai immigration crackdowns — generates labour-related problems such as shortages and illegal workers in Thailand and humanitarian pressure in Myanmar simultaneously.

Conflict adjacency

The corridor sits directly adjacent to the Karen National Union's contested zones in Karen State and various groups including Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army, and recently formed Karenni Nationalities Defense Forces in Karenni State, making it one of the most conflict-proximate border corridors in Southeast Asia. The strategic risk is not merely humanitarian — armed contestation for control of Myawaddy and the surrounding border crossings directly affects who collects taxation on trade flows, who controls refugee and migrant movement, and whether Thai territory becomes an operational rear area for non-state armed groups.

Scam economy proximity

Myawaddy and the adjacent KK Park and Shwe Koko have become globally significant nodes in the industrial-scale cyber-scam complex, hosting operations that have victimised hundreds of thousands of people across Asia and beyond. The strategic significance for Thailand is acute: Thai territory is used as a recruitment, transit, and financial relay zone. The corridor's permeability — by design, for trade and labour — simultaneously enables scam operations to import trafficked workers from Thailand and export illicit proceeds through Thai banking networks.

Energy resource from the Gulf of Mataban

Myanmar's offshore gas fields in the Gulf of Mataban supply natural gas to Thailand via pipeline infrastructure that traverses the corridor zone, representing a foundational element of Thailand's energy security.

This single linkage has historically given both Yangon (previously) and now the military junta significant structural leverage — disrupting the pipeline would have immediate consequences for Thai electricity generation. Conversely, Thailand's dependence on this supply has complicated Bangkok's willingness to take a harder line on the post-coup junta, creating a persistent tension between energy pragmatism and foreign policy positioning.

East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) linkage

The EWEC — the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) highway connecting Da Nang (Vietnam) through Laos, across Thailand via Mukdahan–Khon Kaen–Tak, and terminating at Myawaddy before proceeding toward Yangon — designates this corridor as a transnational economic spine. Its strategic significance is long-horizon: the corridor is not merely a bilateral Thailand–Myanmar interface but a continental connectivity node that embeds the border within the larger ASEAN and China-linked logistics architecture. However, the EWEC's full potential remains unrealised precisely because Myawaddy is simultaneously a scam hub, a conflict zone, and an infrastructure bottleneck — meaning that the corridor's geopolitical promise and its governance deficit are inseparable problems.

3.2 Risk Assessment

SECURITY RISKS

Armed group proximity

Along this corridor, KNU/KNLA, the BGF/KNA (Border Guard Force/Karen National Army), PDF units, various Karenni EAOs and Tatmadaw remnants operate within direct proximity of the Friendship Bridge and the Myawaddy crossing. Since late 2023, KNU's Brigade 6 has engaged in sustained operations in Kawkaik Township — the first section of the Myanmar road network after the bridge — effectively fragmenting the corridor's usability.

Drone/artillery spillover

Multiple documented incidents since 2021 of stray mortar rounds, artillery shells, and debris from Tatmadaw airstrikes landing inside Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces. The specific geography of the Mae Sot crossing — where Myawaddy sits within 500 metres of the Thai bank of the Moei River — means that any armed exchanges in the town centre has a near-certain probability of overflight or fragmentation spillover into Thai territory. Commercial first-person view (FPV) drone proliferation by PDF and KNU units means the threat is no longer limited to conventional munitions: cheap drones with payloads are now routinely deployed within 10km of the crossing.

Grey-zone governance

The Myawaddy border zone operates under three simultaneous, contradictory governance layers: Tatmadaw-aligned BGF (Saw Chit Thu's BGF/KNA) controlling formal checkpoint revenue; KNU/KNLA controlling access to the Kawkaeik highway segment; and the KK Park/Shwe Kokko scam compound operators controlling an autonomous economic zone with its own security apparatus inside and BGF/KNA in the perimeters. Thai customs, immigration, and intelligence agencies face an adversarial environment where their official interlocutors — typically Tatmadaw-aligned BGF — do not represent actual ground control and may actively conceal information about the compounds.

HUMANITARIAN PRESSURE

Long-term displacement Refugee camps along the Thai–Myanmar border represent one of Southeast Asia's longest-running displacement situations. Approximately 80,000 registered refugees remain across nine camps, with thousands of additional unregistered arrivals since the 2021 coup, including civil servants, professionals, and families linked to resistance groups. This demographic shift complicates Thailand's traditional containment approach, as many new arrivals possess skills—such as medical training—that cannot be utilised under current legal restrictions, creating both inefficiencies and humanitarian frustration.

The camps themselves, particularly Mae La in Tak province with around 40,000 residents, were designed as temporary shelters in the 1980s but have evolved into semi-permanent settlements. Governance is largely refugee-led, with elected committees managing administration, service delivery, and dispute resolution under Thai state oversight. While this system has enhanced stability and community resilience, it is under increasing strain.

A critical challenge is declining international funding. Since 2015—and more sharply after recent donor withdrawals—resources have failed to keep pace with renewed population inflows. The reduction of U.S. support has triggered a “secondary displacement” effect, pushing refugees out of camps into already fragile border economies and public services.

At the same time, protection gaps persist. Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, limiting refugees' legal status, mobility, and access to employment. Youth initiatives highlighted by UNHCR demonstrate resilience and self-organisation, but also underline the absence of sustainable pathways.¹⁶

¹⁶ Morgane Roussel-Hemery, “Along the Thai-Myanmar border, refugee youth empower each other to build a better future,” UNHCR, November 14, 2023.

These overlapping pressures—protracted displacement, funding contraction, demographic change, and legal constraints—underscore the need for more proactive Thai engagement, particularly in integrating livelihoods, public services, and humanitarian governance into a coherent border policy framework.

Health system burden

Tak province's health infrastructure — Mae Sot General Hospital in particular — functions as a de facto referral centre for the entire border zone, absorbing trauma cases, childbirth emergencies, and complex infectious disease presentations that Myanmar's collapsed health system can no longer manage. Since 2021, attacks on clinics operated by the Backpack Health Worker Teams and other community-based organizations (CBOs) inside Myanmar have pushed more complex cases across the Moei River. Provincial health budgets in Tak bear costs that are not fully reimbursed by Bangkok's central budget system.

ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES

Trade volatility

Mae Sot–Myawaddy is Thailand's most important land trade gateway with Myanmar, handling an estimated THB 50–80 billion in annual two-way trade pre-coup. Since 2021, formal trade has contracted by 40–60 percent due to Myanmar's banking system collapse (Central Bank of Myanmar -CBM restrictions on foreign exchange), government currency controls, and physical corridor closures during combat operations. Thai exporters in consumer goods, construction materials, and agricultural inputs face a market effectively inaccessible through conventional trade finance.

Gas pipeline vulnerability

The offshore gas infrastructure supplying Thailand through the Gulf of Mataban-Mon State-Ratchaburi pipelines represents a critical vulnerability. Armed conflict in Tanintharyi Region — where Myanmar forces conducted the longest offensive since the 2021 coup in Thayetchaung Township, displacing 5,000 civilians, while KNLA, PDF, and Mon forces captured portions of the Ye–Dawei highway and pushed toward the Dawei Special Economic Zone — is now occurring in proximity to energy infrastructure that is foundational to Thailand's power grid.

Informal labour flows

Mae Sot functions as the primary entry and processing node for Myanmar migrant labour into Thailand's north-central and coastal industrial zones. The corridor's labour flow is highly sensitive to border security posture: a Thai crackdown (as in 2021–22) creates acute labour shortages in Tak's garment factories and downstream in Samut Sakhon's seafood processing plants within 4–6 weeks. Conversely, a surge in conflict-driven migration (as occurred after major Tatmadaw offensives in late 2023) overwhelms registration capacity and generates untracked population movements in Thai border towns. Neither

scenario — shortage nor surplus — is manageable under current bilateral labour agreement frameworks.

Financial opacity

KK Park and Shwe Kokko — both within 20km of the Friendship Bridge — generate estimated annual scam revenues of USD 1-3 billion, significant portions of which transit Thai financial infrastructure via hawala networks, cryptocurrency OTC desks in Bangkok and Mae Sot, and shell company structures in Thai border towns. The informal networks that facilitate post-coup trade finance for legitimate Myanmar businesses are structurally identical to those used for scam revenue laundering — Thai banks cannot distinguish between them at the transaction level. Financial opacity reaches beyond Tak province into Thailand's banking system, its Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standing, and potentially correspondent banking relationships with U.S. and European institutions. Thai banks with Mae Sot branches have accumulated undisclosed exposure to Myanmar-origin financial flows that could become a liability once the U.S. begins to question these transactions.

3.3 Priority Policy Package for a Pilot Project in Tak Province

SECURITY LAYER

Smart Border Monitoring

This component addresses the fundamental challenge of managing a porous, mountainous border stretching across Tak Province's five border districts — Mae Sot, Mae Ramat, Phop Phra, Tha Song Yang, and Umphang. The package envisions deployment of integrated sensor networks, thermal cameras, radar-based intrusion detection, and real-time data fusion platforms to give Thai security agencies a common operational picture. The rationale is clear: the Mae Sot–Myawaddy crossing has become increasingly unreliable due to ongoing conflict, causing disruptions for migrants, traders, and civilians alike.

Anti-Drone Capability

In response to the drone incursions, the Thai Army has set up an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Warfare Centre and a UAS battalion to direct, plan, control, oversee, and integrate Army UAV operations, with trial operations conducted from October 2025 to March 2026. The Tak Pilot would localise these national-level efforts into a dedicated frontier counter-UAS posture.

Joint Deconfliction Mechanism

Given that the border opposite Tak is controlled by multiple armed actors — the Tatmadaw, the KNA/BGF, the KNU/KNLA, and the DKBA — and that these groups are often in active hostilities with each other, there is a critical need for a structured communication

channel to prevent incidents from spilling into Thai territory. This mechanism would establish crisis hotlines, agreed signaling protocols, and liaison officers to communicate with each actor separately. The precedent of Thailand's Third Army Area and the Naresuan/Ratchamanu Task Forces already filling this role informally suggests an institutionalisation pathway.

HUMANITARIAN LAYER

Humanitarian Corridor Pilot

This component builds directly on an existing precedent. Thailand's plan to open a humanitarian aid corridor with Myanmar was designed to create a safe zone to provide food and medicine to displaced populations through the Mae Sot–Myawaddy border crossing; it was unanimously endorsed by ASEAN Foreign Ministers in January 2024. The Tak Pilot should address this by designing a multi-channel corridor that engages not only the Myanmar Red Cross but also EAO-affiliated civil society organisations, enabling aid to reach populations in resistance-held areas.

Biometric Harmonization

Thailand has already deployed biometric data collection as part of its migrant worker management framework. Health checks, biometric data collection, and the creation of worker files were underway as part of national migrant worker registration processes. However, the system suffers from fragmentation — separate databases for immigration, labour, health, and police. Biometric harmonization under the Tak Pilot would integrate these into a unified identity management platform, enabling faster identification of genuine IDPs versus economic migrants versus persons of concern.

Border Health Strengthening

Thailand has hosted over 48,000 refugees who crossed into Thailand since February 2021, with major waves in Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces, managed through Temporary Safety Areas (TSA) where necessities were provided. However, TSAs have been minimal in the health infrastructure. The Tak Pilot's border health component would establish permanent or semi-permanent field medical facilities at key entry points, with staffing protocols that activate during surge events. The Red Cross Society of Thailand, through a project with The Asia Foundation, has carried out a series of training of village-based volunteers that can be called upon for assistance when needed.

ECONOMIC LAYERS

Formal Labour Fast-Tracks

With an average 100 billion baht in trade volume annually over the past decade, Mae Sot is Thailand's second-largest cross-border trade

checkpoint, accounting for 40 percent of total trade between Thailand and Myanmar. Despite this significance, the formal labour pipeline is chronically dysfunctional. Following Myanmar's 2024 conscription law, tens of thousands flooded into Thailand within months; IOM observed a 30 percent increase in cross-border mobility. A July 2025 IOM rapid assessment found that Myanmar workers in Tak and Ranong called on the Thai government to simplify and reduce registration costs, and for employers to support documentation.

Trade Facilitation Reform

The current informal trade economy around Mae Sot is vast but largely undocumented. The Pilot's trade facilitation reform component would consolidate customs, immigration, and commerce workflows at the border into a single integrated checkpoint process. This reflects the recommendations of the Tak Provincial Chamber of Commerce (identified as a key actor in 3.5) and would require close coordination between Customs, the Provincial Commerce Authority, and the Interior Ministry.

Remittance Formalization

Myanmar migrant workers in Tak Province send significant portions of their earnings back to families in Myanmar, but the bulk of these flows move through hawala-like informal channels beyond the reach of anti-money laundering regulations. Formalising this channel requires cooperation between Thai financial regulators, commercial banks or licensed money-transfer operators, and — critically — a counterpart on the Myanmar side that does not expose remitters to junta surveillance or asset seizure.

3.4 Active Actors (Mapping Contacts: Mae Sot–Myawaddy–Yangon Corridor)

SSPC/Tatmadaw

Under the new post-election arrangement—where Senior General Min Aung Hlaing assumes the presidency and Ye Win Oo takes over as Commander-in-Chief—the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) has become an even more central pillar of Myanmar's power structure. Established in 2025 under the National Defence and Security Council, the SSPC functions as a high-level strategic body closely embedded within the Tatmadaw's command architecture, overseeing internal security, regime consolidation, and the management of a controlled political transition.

While the leadership reshuffle signals an attempt to formalise military dominance under a quasi-civilian framework, the underlying power configuration remains firmly anchored in the armed forces. In this context, Thailand must continue to maintain pragmatic working channels with Naypyidaw on essential issues such as border trade,

deportation procedures, and formal boundary management. However, it should avoid treating the Tatmadaw-led state apparatus as the sole legitimate interlocutor for border security. The persistence of multiple armed actors and fragmented authority along the frontier necessitates a more flexible engagement approach that reflects the realities on the ground.

BGF / Karen National Army (KNA)

The Karen BGF, now rebranded as the Karen National Army (KNA), controls the northern Myawaddy area, including Shwe Kokko across from Mae Ramat and Mae Sot districts in Tak province, led by Saw Chit Thu and his lieutenants Saw Mote Thon (southern Myawaddy) and Saw Tin Win (KK Park area, opposite Mae Ku in Mae Sot district). Thailand On 5 May 2025, the US Treasury sanctioned Saw Chit Thu and his two sons, citing their role in organising scam centres, human trafficking, and smuggling.

All Active Karen and Mon EAOs

The KNU/KNLA remains the dominant resistance force opposite Tak, controlling approximately 61 percent of Karen State and a third of the Thailand-Myanmar border as of mid-2025. The KNU is a necessary interlocutor for any humanitarian corridor that intends to reach populations in resistance-held areas.

Karenni EAOs

Karenni armed ethnic organisations have emerged as one of the most dynamic resistance forces long ago but more active after the 2021 coup. The core actor is the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and its armed wing, the Karenni Army (KA), which now operates alongside newer groups such as the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), and allied People's Defence Forces (PDF). Together, they form a relatively coordinated resistance structure that plays a leading role in Karenni State's political and military landscape.

Since the coup, these groups have expanded territorial control significantly, at times holding up to 70–75 percent of Karenni State and capturing multiple towns and military outposts. They have also experimented with bottom-up governance structures, including local administrative bodies and budgeting mechanisms, positioning Karenni State as a model for federal democratic governance in Myanmar.

Other Warlords and Militias

The southern part of the Tak-facing border area, known as Chong Kaeb or Tai Chang zone opposite Ban Chong Kaeb in Phop Phra district, is under the control of Saw Kyaw La (Ko Sai), leader of the DKBA, which has been engaging with Chinese criminal investors. The Thai-Myanmar

border hosts a multi-billion-dollar transnational crime empire that thrives on state complicity, comprising two main hubs — KK Park associated with Chinese triad connections, and Shwe Kokko — both within Myawaddy Township, adjacent to Mae Sot district.

3.5 Thailand's Responsible Agencies

NSC (National Security Council)

The NSC is the natural lead agency for the Priority Policy Package as a whole, providing the inter-agency coordination mandate and direct access to the Prime Minister's Office. Its role is to set strategic objectives, resolve inter-agency conflicts, and ensure that the security, humanitarian, and economic layers are not siloed from one another.

Third Army Area Command

The Third Army Region (headquartered in Phitsanulok), through its Naresuan Task Force and the Ratchamanu Special Task Force, deployed specifically to Mae Sot, provides the ground security architecture.

Local Administrative Authorities under the Interior Ministry

Mea Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi and Ratchaburi's Provincial Administrations, District Offices, and Tambon Administrative Organisations (TAOs) are the front-line implementers of Temporary Safety Area management, registration of displaced persons, and community-level service delivery. Their capacity is currently under-resourced relative to the scale of cross-border displacement events they are expected to manage.

Police

The Royal Thai Police, through Tak Provincial Police and the Border Patrol Police (BPP), plays a dual role — law enforcement against trafficking, smuggling, and narcotics on one side, and first-contact management of refugee and migrant arrivals on the other. Coordination between the police and the Immigration Bureau is a known friction point that the joint deconfliction mechanism must address internally as well.

Provincial Commerce Authorities and Customs

These agencies are the institutional home for the trade facilitation reform component. Customs— which are under jurisdiction of the finance ministry— at the Mae Sot checkpoint manages Thailand's second-largest border trade node, and Provincial Commerce authorities track trade flows and licensing. Their integration into a unified checkpoint model is essential for reducing informal trade's dominance.

Immigration

The Immigration Bureau— a division under the Royal Thai Police,

through its Tak Provincial Office, manages border crossings, visa documentation, biometric registration, and detention. The Immigration Bureau's system now records biometric data for all foreign detainees to place them on blacklists as prohibited persons. Harmonization of its databases with those of the Labour Ministry, Public Health, and the Interior Ministry is a core deliverable of the biometric harmonization sub-component.

Public Health Agencies

The Ministry of Public Health's provincial health office in Tak, district health centres, and the disease surveillance network are essential for the border health strengthening component. Their role extends beyond clinical care to epidemiological monitoring of cross-border disease transmission, vaccination coverage among migrant populations, and mental health support for trauma-affected refugees.

Educational Authorities

Both national-level (Office of the Basic Education Commission) and local-level educational authorities are actors because a significant proportion of Myanmar migrants in Tak Province are school-age children or parents seeking education for their children. Integration of migrant children into Thai schools, or recognition of informal education provided by NGOs and community schools in the refugee camps, requires this actor's active engagement.

Provincial Chamber of Commerce

As the institutional voice of the local business community, the Chamber plays a pivotal role in the formal labour fast-track and trade facilitation components, bridging government agencies and employers who rely on Myanmar migrant labour. Their cooperation in legitimate remittance channels is also critical for the economic layer.

NGOs and Local Community

The Mae Sot-based civil society organizations have been active in submitting policy petitions to the Ministry of Labour and working with parliamentary sub-committees on migration reform. These actors possess the community trust and ground-level access that government agencies lack, making them indispensable partners — particularly for the humanitarian corridor, biometric harmonization (given migrant fears of exposure to the Myanmar authorities), and border health components.

Chapter 4: Northern Corridor

Corridor Overview

The R3B North-South Economic Corridor runs from Kunming through Tachileik and Mae Sai in Chiang Rai to Bangkok — a 1,280-kilometre artery linking southern China to Thailand's economic heartland. Unlike the Mae Sot corridor, the Mae Sai–Mong La route passes through territory controlled by multiple ethnic armed organisations, a de facto independent Wa State, and a Chinese border economy zone at Mong La before reaching Yunnan's Xishuangbanna. The corridor simultaneously functions as a legitimate trilateral trade route, a narcotics highway, a cybercrime supply chain, a rare earth smuggling track, and the primary vector for the environmental destruction poisoning three of northern Thailand's most important rivers — requiring all dimensions to be engaged together. The three most affected Thai provinces are Chiang Rai (primary border interface), Chiang Mai (receiving water contamination and transboundary air pollution), and Mae Hong Son (the most chronically PM2.5-exposed province, sharing the longest mountainous border with Shan and Kayah (Karenni) States). The corridor's defining challenge is the combination of a near-sovereign non-state actor (the UWSA) with deep Chinese state entanglement in both the licit and illicit economy — making policy responses a three-player calibration among Thailand, Myanmar's armed actors, and China, rather than a bilateral Thailand–Myanmar framework.

The Realization of the Trilateral Trade Flow (Thailand–Myanmar–China)

Myanmar and Thailand are actively discussing designating the Mae Sai – Tachileik – Kengtung – Taphin – Mong La route as the R3 B section of the North-South Economic Corridor, facilitating Thailand's fruit exports to China and the smooth export of sixteen key items from Myanmar including maize, black gram, sesame, and rice. The commercial logic is compelling, but the corridor faces a structural obstacle: the Myanmar Government controls the Tachileik–Mae Sai crossing, and traders report persistent delays, tight inspections, and disruption. The route from Tachileik to the interior passes through over 60 checkpoints manned by both regime and anti-regime groups, each extracting informal fees — making the formal corridor more theoretical than operational. The crossing was closed to foreigners as recently as 2025, with only a fragile partial reopening reported in February 2026. Smooth export provisions are therefore not simply customs questions — they require a parallel political track ensuring the route is not weaponised as a revenue chokepoint by whichever armed actors hold the checkpoints at any given time.

Navigating the Security Landscape

The security environment along this corridor differs fundamentally from Mae Sot's Karen-facing landscape. Thailand here confronts the UWSA — not a guerrilla movement but a de facto state with its own government, schools, and an estimated 30,000-strong military. Historical mistrust from cross-border clashes persists, and tensions resurfaced in November 2024 over allegations of UWSA encroachment on Thai territory.

The UWSA's 171st Military Region, bordering Mae Hong Son and Chiang Rai, makes it the corridor's most consequential actor for Thai security planning. Its neutrality in the civil war gives it insulation from the fighting disrupting other border areas, but its deep involvement in narcotics, mining, and hosting Chinese criminal networks makes it simultaneously Thailand's most stable and most problematic border neighbour. Compounding this is the Chinese state and criminal presence throughout the Kengtung–Mong La stretch. Towns like Mong La — controlled by the multi-ethnic National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) — host telecom fraud compounds that relocate regularly to evade enforcement, with Chinese yuan as currency and Chinese clientele dominating the economy. Mong La functions, in effect, as a Chinese special economic zone in all but name.¹⁷

Provisions for Smooth Export

Smooth export under the R3B route requires three simultaneous provisions: first, a functional phytosanitary and customs clearance mechanism at Mae Sai-Tachileik capable of processing perishable fruit exports without current delays; second, a secured transit guarantee through Myanmar — either a negotiated passage arrangement with checkpoint-controlling armed groups along the Kengtung road, or a diplomatic agreement preventing junta officers from obstructing transit cargoes; and third, a coordinated Mong La-Xishuangbanna entry procedure with China's Yunnan customs authorities. Multilateral agreements on driving licences and vehicle inspection certificates have already been signed, and further transport agreements under the ASEAN Framework on Cross-Border Goods Transport are in the pipeline, including phytosanitary protocols for fruit exported through third countries. The legal architecture exists; what is missing is the security and political architecture to make it viable.

Focal Point for Pollution Management

In late 2024, a senior military officer from Thailand's Third Army Area met with Wa leaders at Mong Hsat — the UWSA's southern command headquarters — to discuss overlapping territories along the border and water contamination from Chinese gold and rare earth mining

¹⁷ Further reading: Bertil Lintner, "Wa of Myanmar and China's Quest for Global Dominance," Silkworm Books, March 2021.

operations in UWSA-controlled territory polluting the Kok and Sai rivers. The UWSA acknowledged Thailand's concern but took no concrete action. Thailand has since pursued two parallel tracks: raising the issue with Myanmar in the hope that Naypyidaw would intervene, and engaging Japan's support for systematic water testing of the Kok and Sai rivers through the Pollution Control Department. In late March 2026, a source in Beijing indicated to ISP that the Chinese government had begun taking up the issue, and appeared to be seeking Thailand's assessment of how the contamination problem reflects on China from the perspective of the government and from the RTA. This opens a strategic question: if China has intervened in Myanmar's conflict on the Naypyidaw's behalf, abandoning its pretense as an honest broker, it should be equally capable of pressing the UWSA to address pollution flowing into Thai rivers. In a separate course, Thailand needs to establish a direct communication line with the UWSA's headquarters in Panghsang, which sits on the Chinese border, and must think seriously about what concessions it is prepared to offer the UWSA in exchange for meaningful cooperation on environmental remediation and related matters.

4.1 Strategic Profile

Cyber-Scam Epicentre

The Mae Sai-Mong La corridor is the access corridor to the world's largest concentration of cyber-fraud infrastructure. Since the COVID-19 pandemic and Myanmar's 2021 coup, cyber-scam networks have flourished across the Mekong, costing tens of billions in fraud including crypto-related crimes and "pig butchering" scams. Throughout 2024, syndicates built new hubs in UWSA-controlled towns such as Tangyan and Wanhai. The major "Four Families" running the Kokang compounds — the Bai, Wei, Liu, and Ming crime families — have largely been dismantled by Chinese enforcement: eleven Ming family members were sentenced to death by a Chinese court in September 2025. However, structural conditions enabling the industry remain intact. China's mid-2024 decision to refocus its Myanmar crackdown on propping up the military regime rather than dismantling criminal networks was a significant setback, and the scam industry is now pivoting from Chinese victims toward targets in the US, India, Japan, South Korea, and Africa. For Thailand, the corridor's cyber-scam dimension is an active human trafficking infrastructure operating through Thai territory, with recruitment, logistics, and money laundering all passing through the corridor.¹⁸

For Thailand, the corridor's cyber-scam dimension is not merely a cross-border crime management problem — it is an active infrastructure of human trafficking operating in large part through

¹⁸ Angelica Ang, "A national security problem and a homeland security problem: The world targets Southeast Asia's notorious scam centers," *Fortune*, November 15, 2025.

Thai territory. Recruitment of workers, logistics of supply chains into the compounds, and money laundering through Thai financial systems all pass through the corridor.

Narcotics Flows

The UWSA is described as a drug trafficking organisation having produced and trafficked large quantities of opioids and methamphetamines since its inception, with its leaders sanctioned and designated as major drug traffickers by American law enforcement. Despite a formal ban on poppy cultivation in the Wa-controlled area declared in 2005, narcotics remain central to the political economy of Wa State — drugs are an engine not just of profit but of survival, helping Wa State transform itself into a bona fide nation with its own laws, schools, and electricity grid.

The shift from heroin to methamphetamine has been dramatic. Methamphetamine tablets and crystal methamphetamine (“ice”) now dominate flows into Thailand. Between December 2024 and May 2025, Thai authorities seized illicit drugs linked to UWSA valued at over 15 billion baht (USD 400 million). This is a stunning figure for a six-month period and illustrates that the narcotics flow from Wa State through the Mae Hong Son–Chiang Rai borderline is the single largest volume drug corridor Thailand faces.

Casino Economy

The casino economy along this corridor is structured at two levels. At Tachileik itself, there are small-scale casinos oriented toward Thai day visitors. More significantly, Mong La hosts a large casino and entertainment complex oriented toward Chinese nationals from Yunnan — one of a string of Chinese-clientele casino economies running along Myanmar’s borders with China. Investigators describe towns like Mong La as zones where telecom fraud operations operate under the protection of local armed groups in exchange for a share of profits, often in non-monetary forms.

Chinese Criminal Networks

For more than a decade, northern Myanmar’s border regions have been governed by local militias and criminal enterprises often led by ethnic Chinese individuals who built scam compounds with the tacit support of the Myanmar junta. Between July 2023 and December 2024, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security managed to repatriate 53,000 telecom and internet fraud suspects from northern Myanmar. Yet the network’s resilience is structural: even with major players behind bars, analysts say the crime syndicates behind the multibillion-dollar industry are rapidly expanding globally.

The Chinese state’s relationship to these criminal networks is paradoxical. Beijing has conducted aggressive enforcement that has

resulted in death sentences for Chinese nationals involved in scam operations. Yet Chinese state-linked enterprises have long operated alongside these same networks in border economic zones — most visibly in the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos, where Chinese state-affiliated commercial interests and criminal actors have coexisted and at times reinforced one another. This raises a pointed question: whether Chinese enforcement selectively targets actors who are commercially inconvenient or reputationally costly, rather than dismantling the broader ecosystem in which Chinese capital — state and private — continues to operate. The pattern suggests that Chinese enforcement and Chinese economic expansion in borderland zones are not opposites but are often sequentially or selectively linked.¹⁹

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

PM2.5

Medical research across eight northern Thai provinces from 2013 to 2022 found peak haze-season PM2.5 levels of 50.7 µg/m³ in Mae Hong Son, 46.3 µg/m³ in Chiang Rai, and 44.0 µg/m³ in Chiang Mai — far above non-haze baselines. Source apportionment research confirmed that biomass burning dominates PM2.5 in Chiang Mai during haze season, with the main source area along the Thai-Myanmar border. The Thai government designated Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, and Mae Hong Son as PM2.5 pollution control zones. However, most fire hotspots are on the Myanmar side of the border, outside Thailand's enforcement jurisdiction.²⁰

Water Contamination & Unregulated Mining in Shan State

This has emerged as one of the most acute and well-documented environmental crises in Thailand's north. The pollution is linked to unregulated mining in Myanmar's Shan State, where extraction of gold has surged since the 2021 coup, and rare earth mining is also rapidly expanding in the UWSA-controlled area. Elevated arsenic levels have been found at testing points in the Mekong, which is fed by both the Kok and Sai rivers.

The Shan Human Rights Foundation reported that the suspected gold mines polluting the Kok and Sai rivers are mainly located south of Mong Hsat in Myanmar's Shan State, approximately 30 kilometres from Thailand's Mae Sai district. Since 2023, seven Chinese companies have been operating gold mines near the Kok River, discharging toxic chemicals directly into the water.²¹

¹⁹ Greg Raymond, "Explaining 'Grey Capital': The Sociology of Transnational Chinese Companies and Crime in Thailand," January 21, 2024.

²⁰ Pachara Sapbamrer, Pheerasak Assavanopakun, and Jinjuta Panumasvivat, "National Library of Medicine, "Decadal Trends in Ambient Air Pollutants and Their Association with COPD and Lung Cancer in Upper Northern Thailand: 2013–2022," April 28, 2024.

²¹ Don Pathan, "Thailand, Myanmar and the Pollution of Thai Waterways," Mizzima News, August 26, 2025.

Today, tens of thousands of people living along the Kok and Sai-Ruak rivers in Thailand have stopped or reduced their use of those rivers, and in November 2025, testing on the Salween River by Thai scientists and government authorities found arsenic levels five times higher than acceptable standards. Satellite data have identified 513 rare earth mining sites across rivers feeding into the Mekong, Salween, and Irrawaddy in Myanmar, including 40 new ones in 2025, with toxic runoff causing an estimated 1.3 billion baht (\$40 million) in losses to Thailand's farming, fishing, and tourism industries.²²

4.2 Risk Diagnosis Border Crime Is a Parallel Political Economy, Not Isolated Law Enforcement Cases

The defining diagnostic of this corridor is that illicit activity is not an aberration from the political and economic order — it is the political and economic order. The crisis reaches Myanmar's elite directly: in 2024 authorities arrested a former general and a Kokang MP for alleged ties to scam syndicates, a stark reminder that cybercrime is deeply interwoven with the country's power structures, both military and ethnic. The same logic applies to narcotics: the UWSA's drug revenues fund schools, roads, and a military academy.

In southern Shan State's Laihka and Mong Kung townships, fraud operations persist under the patronage of pro-military militias, with Chinese-led syndicates frequently relocating to evade raids with militia assistance. Locals are forced to supply these operations with food while authorities take bribes. ReliefWeb Thailand's enforcement efforts — cutting internet, electricity, and oil supplies — achieve temporary disruption but not structural dismantling, because the criminal networks have political patrons who restore their operating conditions.

In August 2024, Malaysian police and anti-corruption commission launched an investigation into the alleged involvement of former deputy minister Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim and her husband, Datuk Abdul Shakor bin Abu Bakar, in the Dongmei Park, a known cyber scam hub in Karen State. Mashitah acknowledged her presence at a groundbreaking ceremony for the project but maintained it was at the invitation of a friend for real estate purposes and that she was unaware of any criminal associations. Later that year, Malaysian police confirmed that no breach of law was found. Abdul Shakor was listed as the director of the Dongmei Group, a Hong Kong-registered company that partnered with former 14K triad boss Wan Kuok-koi (also known as "Broken Tooth") to develop the Dongmei Zone (also known as Saixigang) in Myawaddy.²³ Subsequent investigations highlight how

22 Brian Eyler and Regan Kwan, "Toxic Rare Earth Mining is Ruining Mekong Tributaries in the Golden Triangle," Stimson Center, September 22, 2025.

23 Justice for Myanmar, "Karen BGF/KNA regional criminal network exposed," May 22, 2024. See also: Jason Tower and Priscilla Clapp, "Myanmar's Casino Cities: The Role of China and Transnational Criminal Networks," US Institute of Peace, July 2020.

the compounds relied on Thai infrastructure to remain operational; smuggling of supplies and IT equipment, as well as utilities put Thailand in a negative light.

Unregulated Mining in Shan State

Satellite imagery from late 2025 reveals the scale of unregulated rare-earth extraction across Myanmar's borderlands, with more than 513 mining sites identified along tributaries of the Mekong, Salween, and Irrawaddy River systems, including over 40 newly opened in the past year alone. In Shan State, this expansion has had direct downstream consequences for Thailand, particularly in the Kok, Sai, and Ruak river basins.

Water quality tests conducted in early 2025 near the Thai border found arsenic levels of 0.026–0.037 mg/L in the Kok River, far exceeding the WHO guideline of 0.01 mg/L, alongside elevated levels of lead and other heavy metals. Subsequent studies by Thai researchers confirm widespread contamination, raising concerns over long-term impacts on public health and agriculture in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai.

The environmental damage is driven by highly toxic extraction methods, in which chemical solutions are injected into deforested hillsides, producing waste-laden slurry that is discharged back into waterways. Much of this activity takes place in areas controlled by Ethnic Armed Organizations, particularly the UWSA and NDAA, which operate with limited regulatory oversight and are closely linked to Chinese rare-earth supply chains.

This creates a structural dilemma for Thailand. It has no jurisdiction over upstream mining activities, yet bears the full burden of downstream impacts—polluted rivers, degraded farmland, and rising health risks. The result is a growing environmental crisis that underscores Thailand's vulnerability within an increasingly politicised global rare-earth economy.

Farming and Bush Fire in Shan State Cause Air Pollution

Source apportionment research confirms that during the smoke-haze period, biomass burning contributes the dominant fraction of PM_{2.5} in Chiang Mai at 59.3 µg/m³, with the main potential source area identified along the Thai-Myanmar border — meaning Shan State and its hinterland. The drivers are overlapping: subsistence farmers practising slash-and-burn agriculture on the Myanmar side, conflict-driven clearing of forest for military operations, and deliberate fires set by various actors, including mining companies clearing hillsides for extraction operations. These activities have significantly contributed to worsening floods in Thai border towns like Mae Sai, Chiang Rai.

4.3 Active Actors on the Ground (Mae Sai–Tachileik–Kengtung–Mong La Corridor)

State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC)/Tatmadaw

Tachileik's retention makes the Tatmadaw a necessary interlocutor for the formal border crossing, even as its territorial control of the road to Kengtung and beyond is contested. Thailand must maintain a working channel with Myanmar for formal trade and checkpoint management, while recognising that the SSPC/Tatmadaw authority along the full corridor is limited.

UWSA

The UWSA is the paramount actor for this corridor — simultaneously Thailand's most destabilising neighbour (narcotics, mining pollution, border encroachments) and the most stable armed force in the region. In August 2025, at China's request, the UWSA declared it would no longer provide weapons or financial aid to the TNLA, MNDAA, and SSA-N — a signal of strategic repositioning, maintaining neutrality while managing relationships with both China and Thailand.²⁴

Shan EAOs

The Shan State is the most fragmented armed landscape in Myanmar. Key groups for this corridor include the Restoration Council of Shan State and its military wing Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S), which controls small patches of territories in southern Shan State adjacent to Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai borders. Its political wing, the RCSS, signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), and maintains a formal ceasefire, and the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N), which has historically been closer to China and the UWSA. The Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO), based in Pa-O self-administered zones of Shan State, is also relevant.

NGOs / Local Communities

Civil society in this corridor is thinner than in the Karen border zone, partly because the Shan State's EAO landscape is more fragmented and less engaged with international humanitarian networks. However, the Shan Human Rights Foundation has been the most important civil society actor in documenting mining pollution, providing satellite imagery analysis and community testimony that has driven both Thai government action and international media attention on the Kok River crisis. The Foundation for Ecological Recovery (Thailand) and International Rivers also maintain active monitoring programmes in the Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai border zones.

²⁴ Don Pathan, "Thailand, Myanmar and the Pollution of Thai Waterways," Mizzima News, August 26, 2025.

4.4 Relevant Thai Agencies

NSC

The National Security Council provides the overarching strategic framework and inter-agency coordination mandate for this corridor. Given that the issues span crime, environment, trade, and military security simultaneously, the NSC is the only body with the authority to bring all relevant ministries into a common planning process. Its role is to set priorities, resolve inter-agency conflicts, and ensure that the financial and cyber disruption agenda (primary) does not overshadow the environmental agenda that now has deep public resonance following the Kok River crisis.

RTAF

The Royal Thai Air Force is responsible for airspace monitoring and surveillance, particularly for detecting the drone operations associated with drug interdiction and potential UWSA military activity near the border. Its air assets also provide the fire-detection capability needed to identify cross-border burning hotspots in real time, feeding into the environmental monitoring system.

Third Army Region

The Third Army Region, through its units deployed along the Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son borders, provides the ground security architecture — monitoring UWSA movements, managing the military liaison channel with Wa State, and coordinating drug interdiction operations with the Narcotics Suppression Bureau. The Third Army's frontier intelligence is irreplaceable for understanding the fluid armed landscape in eastern Shan State.

Provincial Authorities in Chiang Mai, and Chiang Rai

These three provincial governments are the front-line managers of the corridor's humanitarian, environmental, and public health impacts. Chiang Rai is the primary interface for Mae Sai border trade, customs, and the water contamination crisis. Chiang Mai's provincial health and environmental offices are the most resourced of the three and have driven much of the government's analytical response to the Kok River pollution through water testing and community health monitoring.

Provincial Commerce and Customs

The Provincial Commerce authorities in Chiang Rai manage the formal trade dimension at Mae Sai — one of Thailand's significant (if currently suppressed) border trade nodes. Their coordination with Customs at Mae Sai is essential for the smooth export framework, and their role in tracking informal trade flows feeding the illicit economy is equally important. The customs intelligence function described in the policy section is their operational mandate.

Immigration

Immigration at Mae Sai manages flows that include formal trade workers, migrants from Shan State, and persons of concern fleeing conflict — a far smaller flow than Mae Sot but growing as fighting in Shan State intensifies. The biometric registration systems deployed at Mae Sai need to interface with the health and labour databases to ensure that persons entering the formal economy can do so without documentation barriers.

Police

The Royal Thai Police, through the Narcotics Suppression Bureau (NSB), the ONCB, and Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son provincial police, carries the primary law enforcement mandate for drug interdiction, anti-trafficking operations, and enforcement against scam recruitment networks operating on the Thai side. The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) has jurisdiction over transnational financial crimes linked to the corridor's scam compound economy.

Provincial Chambers of Commerce

The Chiang Rai Chamber of Commerce is the institutional voice of the business community most directly affected by the corridor's economic disruption — traders whose formal businesses are undercut by smuggling, farmers whose crops and river access have been contaminated, and logistics operators waiting for the formal R3B route to become reliably operational. Their engagement is essential for designing the trade facilitation and smooth export framework in a way that reflects commercial reality.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Given the Kok River crisis and the PM2.5 emergency, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is no longer a secondary agency in this corridor — it is a primary one. Its Pollution Control Department has been driving the water quality monitoring programme since March 2025, and its international engagement through the Mekong River Commission provides the multilateral diplomatic channel for raising the mining pollution issue with both China and Myanmar. Thailand's legal action under international law, flagged by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, would be coordinated through this Ministry.

Public Health Agencies

The Ministry of Public Health's provincial offices in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Mae Hong Son are managing the health consequences of both the water contamination crisis (skin rashes, potential long-term arsenic exposure, fish consumption advisories) and the annual PM2.5 haze (respiratory disease burden, lung cancer rates, COPD admissions).

Research covering 2013–2022 found that haze season PM2.5 levels were significantly associated with elevated COPD fatality rates and re-admission rates across the northern provinces, Thai Examiner, providing a quantified public health case for the environmental policy focus.

Educational Authorities

Educational authorities at both national and local level play a dual role in this corridor: managing the education of children from Shan State ethnic communities in Thai border schools, and serving as an early warning system for emerging social pathologies — including recruitment of young people into the scam compound pipeline and narcotics use in border communities. Language access and recognition of informal education from Shan and Karenni community schools are the key policy gaps.

Educational Institutes

Chiang Mai University and Mae Fah Luang University play critical roles in addressing cross-border pollution along Thailand's northern frontier. Researchers at Chiang Mai University, particularly under scientists like Wan Wiriya, conduct field sampling and modelling of transboundary air and water pollution, identifying sources such as biomass burning and upstream mining that significantly affect northern Thailand.

Meanwhile, Mae Fah Luang University focuses on applied research and community-level solutions, including detecting arsenic contamination from upstream mining and developing filtration technologies to mitigate health risks in affected river basins .

Together, both institutions bridge science and policy, providing evidence for government action while supporting local adaptation to increasingly severe transboundary environmental threats.

NGOs and Local Communities

The Shan community organisations active in Thailand — including the Shan Refugee Organisation (SRO), the Shan Human Rights Foundation's Thailand-based networks, and the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) working with Shan migrant workers — are essential partners for community-level implementation of both the humanitarian and environmental components. Their insider knowledge of UWSA governance structures, informal border economies, and the movement patterns of Shan State populations is irreplaceable for any Thai agency operating in this corridor.

Chapter 5: Southern Maritime Corridor

Corridor Overview

The Ranong–Kawthaung–Yangon maritime corridor has rapidly evolved from a peripheral crossing into one of Thailand's most strategically significant Myanmar interfaces. Unlike the congested and conflict-prone land routes at Mae Sot–Myawaddy and Mae Sai–Tachileik, this corridor operates as a maritime artery across the Andaman Sea—linking Ranong directly to Kawthaung and onward to Myeik, Dawei, and Yangon.

Recent trade data underscores this structural shift. While cross-border trade through Mae Sot declined by approximately 32% in 2024, trade through Ranong expanded by 73% over the same period, reflecting a clear rerouting of logistics flows toward maritime channels.

This transition is driven less by proactive policy than by systemic breakdowns along the Mae Sot–Myawaddy corridor. Armed conflict, damaged infrastructure, destroyed bridges, and the proliferation of informal checkpoints have rendered land transport unreliable, costly, and time-indeterminate. Heavy trucks are often unable to operate, forcing reliance on smaller vehicles, increasing logistics fragmentation and transaction costs.

In contrast, the Ranong maritime route offers predictability, lower transport costs, and clearer regulatory oversight. Shipping schedules are more stable, and both Thai and Myanmar authorities can collect customs duties more effectively due to the formalized port structure—reducing leakage associated with informal cross-border trade.

Crucially, Myanmar has formally designated Ranong–Kawthaung–Yangon shipping as “border trade”, allowing the use of simplified import licensing procedures and even permitting transactions in Thai baht. This policy shift reflects Naypyidaw's strategic preference for maritime trade, which is easier to regulate and tax compared to porous land borders.

At the operational level, cargo volumes through Ranong Port—particularly inbound shipments such as animal feed corn—have increased significantly and are expected to grow further due to continued instability along land routes. This positions Ranong not merely as an alternative route, but as a structural substitute corridor for Thailand–Myanmar trade.

Beyond bilateral trade, the corridor carries wider geoeconomic implications. Ranong's access to the Andaman Sea enables direct connectivity to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, opening pathways to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) markets including India,

Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The port is also capable of handling specialized cargo, including hazardous goods, further expanding its logistical role in regional supply chains.

However, the corridor's development remains constrained by institutional and infrastructural bottlenecks. These include limited container transshipment capacity, insufficient bonded warehouse facilities, and administrative inefficiencies such as port queuing systems and customs procedures. Policy proposals from the private sector emphasize the need to upgrade Ranong into a full transit and transshipment hub, including streamlined logistics processes and expanded warehousing capacity.

In this context, the Ranong–Kawthaung–Yangon corridor should no longer be viewed as a secondary border crossing. It is an emergent maritime logistics pivot, shaped by conflict displacement, regulatory arbitrage, and regional trade restructuring. Yet, this strategic opportunity is coupled with profound governance risks: the same corridor that enables formalized trade also exposes Thailand to legal, humanitarian, and political vulnerabilities in its interaction with Myanmar's military authorities.

5.1 Strategic Relevance

Maritime Security

The Andaman Sea corridor has a distinct maritime security profile from Thailand's land borders. Threats are diffuse: irregular vessels without Automatic Identification System (AIS), fishing boats used for people smuggling, informal cargo trade, and the risk of armed vessels from Tanintharyi's conflict zone drifting into Thai waters. Kawthaung (Koh Song in Thai) itself remains under Tatmadaw control even as much of Tanintharyi is contested by KNLA, PDF, and Mon resistance forces. Traders report only about 20 vessels per day are processed there, with thorough inspections slowing trade. The junta's presence turns Kawthaung into a militarised maritime checkpoint—meaning Thai maritime security at Ranong operates alongside a junta-controlled port. The Royal Thai Navy's Fourth Fleet, based in Phang Nga, provides the primary maritime security architecture but is stretched across a vast Andaman Sea zone. The corridor's policy package must bridge the gap between the Navy's strategic reach and the granular, vessel-level monitoring the Ranong crossing demands.

Fisheries Economy

Ranong is the only Thai province with both a land and maritime border with Myanmar, making it the centre of the country's most Myanmar-dependent fishing industry. Burmese migrants make up roughly 70 percent of Thailand's fishing workforce, including “superworkers” who move back and forth, engaged in dirty, dangerous,

and difficult 3D work. The fishing economy is substantial but structurally vulnerable. Vessels depart Ranong Port for weeks-long trips across the Andaman Sea, creating conditions where labour exploitation is hard to monitor. Undocumented workers face withheld wages, document confiscation, physical abuse, and inability to disembark at will. Persistent issues include high document fees that lead to debt bondage and document retention, plus payment violations such as advance salary loans that trap workers in dependency on vessel captains. The EU's 2015 yellow card on illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing prompted Thailand's regulatory overhaul, but compliance remains uneven. The "Seabook" documentation system for migrant fishers has added compliance burdens without resolving the underlying power imbalances between workers and vessel operators.

Indian Ocean access

Previously, shipments from Thai ports to BIMSTEC countries via the Strait of Malacca took 14–21 days, while the new Ranong multimodal route took just 3 days to Yangon, 4 to Chittagong, and 6 to Chennai or Colombo. This transformation makes Ranong a strategic asset for the entire BIMSTEC region—1.7 billion people across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Energy resources can be shipped across the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal to Myanmar, then piped to China, cutting 3,000 kilometres and five to six days while bypassing the Strait of Malacca. China's strategic focus on Indian Ocean access—central to the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)—gives Ranong and Tanintharyi weight far beyond bilateral Thailand-Myanmar relations. The 2022 BIMSTEC Master Plan on Connectivity aims to link Ranong with Chennai and Colombo, and a 2021 Thailand-Bangladesh MoU seeks direct shipping to Chittagong, enabling streamlined transshipment to Nepal, Bhutan, and Northeast India. Thailand's framing of Ranong as the "only public port on Thailand's Andaman Sea coast" and a BIMSTEC gateway elevates the corridor to regional significance.

5.2 Emerging Risks

Fisheries Conflict and Maritime Escalation

The November 2024 incident, in which Myanmar naval forces fired on Thai fishing vessels near Ranong, marked a clear escalation of a long-standing fisheries conflict in the Andaman Sea. The episode—resulting in one fatality and the detention of Thai crew members—demonstrates a shift from routine enforcement toward coercive, militarised responses.

This conflict is rooted in overlapping drivers: unresolved maritime boundaries, persistent incursions by Thai vessels into Myanmar waters, and structural resource pressure caused by overfishing in Thailand's

own seas. While such disputes have existed for decades, the current context—defined by Myanmar's internal conflict and fragmented authority—has made enforcement more unpredictable and forceful.

For Thailand, the risk now extends beyond regulatory violations to include kinetic confrontation, diplomatic friction, and direct threats to civilian livelihoods, underscoring the emergence of fisheries conflict as a core security challenge in the southern maritime corridor.

Irregular Maritime Migration

The Andaman Sea is one of the deadliest maritime migration routes in the world. UNHCR reported that nearly one in five people attempting perilous sea movements in this region has been reported as dead or missing so far in 2025, making the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal waters among the deadliest in the world. In 2024, there was a 112 percent increase in the number of people attempting boat movements compared to 2023, with at least 15 tragic boat accidents resulting in 657 people reported as dead or missing.

Rohingya interviewed through a regional survey identified Thailand and Myanmar as the locations where protection violations were most likely to occur en route to Malaysia, with Ranong, Mae Hong Son, and Pattani cited as risk hotspots within Thailand. The business of transporting Rohingya across the Andaman Sea has not diminished — it has adapted, becoming more clandestine and more dangerous, once again entangled with jungle camps and extortion networks.²⁵

Labour Exploitation

Labour exploitation in the Ranong corridor operates at multiple levels simultaneously. At the docks and on fishing vessels, migrant workers face document retention by captains and employers, advance salary practices that create inescapable debt, and wage violations where payment is not made as stated in employment contracts. White House The requirement to hold a “Seabook” — a document specific to the fishing industry — has created additional compliance costs that workers bear, often through broker arrangements that build fee debt into the employment relationship before workers board a vessel. The more acute and internationally documented dimension of labour exploitation in this corridor is the deportation-to-conscription pipeline. Between February 2024 and November 2025, Thai immigration officials working directly with a labour attaché from the Myanmar embassy forcibly returned 3,500 Myanmar nationals via the Ranong–Kawthaung border crossing, with survivors and relatives describing forced returns involving extortion by officials on both sides of the border, followed by forced conscription and torture at the hands of the Myanmar government.

²⁵ UNHCR, “A Route-Based Snapshot: Data & Trends for Refugees from Myanmar,” December 31, 2025.

Informal Port Economy

Some traders have resorted to small motorboats to bypass junta inspections at Kawthaung, but this is not sustainable, and domestic supplies are dwindling in Tanintharyi, driving up prices. The informal port economy around Ranong–Kawthaung has historically been substantial, with small vessels carrying consumer goods, construction materials, fuel, and agricultural products across the narrow channel without full customs documentation. This informal trade system serves as a practical lifeline for communities in Tanintharyi Region that the formal trade route cannot adequately supply.

The informal economy at the port also encompasses a well-documented minerals smuggling operation. Nearly all of the lead ore mined in the Tanintharyi region is exported to Thailand, primarily through the porous land border, but lead is also transported via waterways to Ranong — with a trader in Ranong confirming that cargo arrives from Kawthaung by boat, and someone with a Thai metal trading licence buys it at the boatyard and stamps it “Made in Thailand.” The number of mining sites in Tanintharyi has doubled since 2021, and the amount of land being mined has more than tripled, covering more than 10,120 hectares — with devastating effects on farmland, river water quality, and aquatic life.

5.3 Policy Package

Maritime Domain Awareness and Fisheries Conflict Management

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) should be positioned as the policy foundation for managing fisheries conflict in the Ranong–Kawthaung corridor, but it must be embedded within a broader governance framework rather than treated as a standalone technical solution.

At the policy level, MDA enables the Thai state to establish a credible operational picture of maritime activity, supporting enforcement against illegal fishing, monitoring of cross-border movements, and coordination of search-and-rescue responses. However, the escalation seen in recent incidents underscores that detection alone does not prevent conflict.

To be effective, MDA must be integrated with a fisheries conflict management framework comprising three elements. First, clear rules of engagement that prioritise de-escalation and reduce the risk of kinetic confrontation at sea. Second, the development of bilateral communication mechanisms—formal or informal—to manage incidents and prevent miscalculation. Third, strengthened domestic regulatory enforcement, addressing the economic drivers that continue to push Thai vessels into contested waters.

This integrated approach reframes fisheries conflict from a narrow enforcement issue into a policy coordination challenge, linking

surveillance, diplomacy, and regulatory reform within a single corridor strategy.

Fisheries Labour Reform

The fisheries labour reform component must address structural failures simultaneously. Research on Burmese fish workers in Ranong identified the shift from unregulated to regulated migration as creating new forms of legal vulnerability, with structural instability in short-term migration policies compounded by COVID-19 disruptions and the political turmoil in Myanmar. Fisheries labour reform in the corridor must recognise this complexity — that documentation systems designed to protect workers can themselves become instruments of exploitation when combined with high fees, broker dependencies, and the threat of deportation to conscription.

Port Digitalization

Ranong Port saw 281 ships dock during the 2024 fiscal period — a 69 per cent increase — and from October to December 2024, a further 61 ships anchored, representing a 91 per cent year-on-year increase, with containers rising 458 per cent. This explosive growth in formal shipping volume is straining port management systems that were designed for a much smaller facility. Port digitalisation — including electronic cargo manifests, automated customs clearance, integrated vessel scheduling, and digital documentation for migrant fishers — is essential to managing this growth without creating the delays and information gaps that the informal port economy exploits.

Ranong Port will serve as a “sandbox” pilot area for the Land Bridge Project in both policy and operational aspects, acting as a testing ground for various logistics systems such as multimodal integration, digital platforms, and customs management systems — a mandate that explicitly positions port digitalisation at Ranong as a prototype for Thailand's most ambitious infrastructure project. Getting it right here determines whether the Land Bridge can function at scale. The digital platform must integrate with Myanmar customs systems at Kawthaung, requiring bilateral protocol negotiation — a politically sensitive process given the junta's revenue extraction mentality at border crossings.

Ranong Logistics Upgrading

Plans include procuring and modernising quay cranes and cargo-handling equipment, expanding the container yard, upgrading warehouses, and enhancing the integrated logistics network by linking road, rail, and air systems to enable seamless multimodal transport connectivity. Beyond port infrastructure, Ranong's logistics upgrading requires road connectivity improvements linking the port to the national highway network, cold chain facilities for the fisheries export

economy, and bonded warehousing capacity that enables the port to serve as a genuine transshipment hub rather than merely a bilateral border trade point.

An oil rig in the Andaman Sea currently provides the primary high-value cargo serviced through Ranong's existing infrastructure — an indication of how underdeveloped the port's general cargo capacity remains relative to its strategic potential. The logistics upgrade programme should also address the environmental dimensions of port expansion, given community resistance to the Land Bridge's planned deep-sea port in Ao Ang Bay and the concerns of artisanal fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on the same coastal waters the expansion would alter.

5.4 Active Actors on the Ground

SSPC / Tatmadaw

Despite the dramatic erosion of Myanmar's territorial control across Myanmar, the Tatmadaw maintains its hold on Kawthaung and the Tanintharyi coastline as far as Myeik and Dawei. The Ranong–Kawthaung–Yangon and Ranong–Myeik–Yangon border trade routes are considered more cost-effective and secure travel routes compared to the Myawaddy route, and the junta controls these crossings as a primary remaining source of border revenue.

BGF

Border Guard Forces affiliated with the Tatmadaw operate in parts of Tanintharyi Region north of Kawthaung. Unlike the KNA in Myawaddy, the BGF configuration in Tanintharyi is less consolidated and has been subject to pressure from both the KNLA and PDF forces that have captured significant territory in the region since 2021. Their role in the corridor's informal economy — particularly in mineral extraction and taxation of mining operations — makes them a relevant actor for any trade facilitation or environmental remediation agenda.

Mon/Karen

The Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA) operates in Mon State and the Tanintharyi Region, serving as the armed wing of the New Mon State Party, which entered a ceasefire agreement in 2018. However, a splinter group, the MNLA Anti-Military Dictatorship (MNLA A-MD), formed in 2024 after breaking from the MNLA, disregarding the ceasefire, and joining the anti-junta forces. In Tanintharyi Region, resistance is led by the KNU, PDF groups, the New Mon State Party (NMSP-AD), and local anti-regime groups.

The Karen dimension in Tanintharyi also cannot be overlooked: the KNLA operates in the Tanintharyi Region and has been active in fighting against junta forces throughout the post-coup period and

various PDFs operating in the Tanintharyi Region announced the formation of the Southern Brothers Army in late 2024, creating a new umbrella resistance coordination structure in the corridor's Myanmar hinterland.

Local Communities

Ranong is home to more than 5,000 stateless people who, despite strong cultural ties to Thailand, have been denied citizenship due to their birth in the borderlands between Thailand and Myanmar — barred from travelling outside the province or seeking legal employment, they are among the most vulnerable communities in the path of the Land Bridge project. The artisanal fishing communities of Ao Ang Bay — including Thai Muslim fisherwomen who have become prominent voices of opposition to the Land Bridge deep-sea port — represent a local stakeholder constituency whose livelihood interests are in direct tension with the corridor's macro-logistics ambitions.

5.5 Thailand's Responsible Agencies

NSC

The National Security Council must reconcile the Port Authority of Thailand's growth agenda, the Navy's security mandate, the Immigration Bureau's deportation operations (and their legal exposure), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' relationship management with the Myanmar Government, all within a single coherent corridor policy.

Thai-MECC (Third Area Command)

The Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center (Thai-MECC) plays a central role in the Andaman Sea by coordinating civilian and military agencies to safeguard Thailand's maritime interests. It monitors security threats, enforces maritime laws, and integrates surveillance and information systems. The MECC also supports search and rescue, combats illegal activities such as IUU fishing and trafficking, and promotes regional cooperation, ensuring secure sea lanes and sustainable resource management along Thailand's western maritime frontier.

As a specialized integrated state agency, MECC unifies operations from seven core bodies—Royal Thai Navy, Marine Department, Department of Fisheries, Customs Department, Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, Marine Police Division, and Department of Labour Protection and Welfare—with MECC Region 3 overseeing the Andaman coast from Ranong to Satun, headquartered alongside the Third Naval Area Command in Phuket.

Navy (Third Naval Area Command)

The Third Naval Command, based in Phang Nga with operational presence in Ranong, is the primary maritime security actor in this

corridor. Its mandate spans counter-smuggling, interdiction of irregular migration vessels, search-and-rescue, and the protection of Thailand's maritime economic zone in the Andaman Sea.

Fourth Army Region

The Fourth Army Area, headquartered in Nakhon Si Thammarat and responsible for Thailand's southern provinces, provides the ground security framework for Ranong Province — including land border monitoring, support to immigration enforcement, and coordination with the Navy on mixed sea-land security operations. Its intelligence units maintain a liaison relationship with Tanintharyi Region armed actors, including the Myanmar forces at Kawthaung and the EAO/PDF forces that control the territory along the route northward.

Police

The Royal Thai Police in Ranong — through provincial police, the Border Patrol Police, and the Marine Police — is the front-line law enforcement actor at the border crossing. Their role in the deportation pipeline is the most legally exposed dimension of their mandate: in coordinating deportee returns, the Police's responsibility is deemed mission complete, without any knowledge of what happens to deportees on the Myanmar side. The principle of non-refoulement must be respected.

Ranong Provincial Administrative Bodies

The Ranong Provincial Administration, District Offices, and the Provincial Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Office manage the humanitarian reception and community service dimensions of the corridor. Their capacity is structurally limited by Ranong's status as one of Thailand's smallest and least-resourced provinces — with a population under 200,000 — despite managing border security and humanitarian responsibilities that are disproportionate to that population base.

Provincial Commerce and Customs

Ranong's Provincial Commerce Office and the Ranong Customs House manage the formal trade architecture at the crossing. Office of Provincial Commercial Affairs Ranong is a key agency for strategies on promoting border trade and strengthening maritime connections between Thailand and South Asian countries. Customs at Ranong faces the specific challenge of managing the re-stamping of Tanintharyi minerals as Thai-origin products — a systematic fraud that requires active intelligence-led customs inspection rather than document-based compliance checking.

Immigration

The Ranong Immigration Office is the agency most urgently in need of reform within this corridor's policy package. Its current operating procedures — mass deportation to junta authorities without individual protection screening, coordination with junta military officers for conscript selection inside Thai facilities — violate Thailand's obligations under customary international law and create secondary sanctions risk. Reform requires new standard operating procedures, a dedicated protection screening mechanism, and training for immigration officers in refugee status determination indicators — all requiring an NSC-level mandate to override the current practice.

Public Health Authorities

The Ministry of Public Health's Ranong Provincial Health Office manages health services for both the Thai resident population and the large Myanmar migrant community — including the undocumented population that accesses health services through informal channels. The corridor's public health dimension encompasses: occupational health for fishing industry workers, including at-sea injury management and the specific hazards of deep-sea fishing; reproductive and maternal health for Myanmar women migrating through or residing in Ranong; disease surveillance for conditions endemic to Tanintharyi Region that cross with migrants; and mental health services for trauma-affected deportees and persons released from immigration detention.

NGOs and Local Communities

The NGO ecosystem in Ranong is thin relative to Mae Sot but deeply committed. The Meikta Thahaya Self-Administered Funeral Welfare Association has been the primary civil society actor managing detained Myanmar nationals, mediating with immigration authorities, and documenting the deportation-to-conscription pipeline. The Education and Development Foundation (EDF) works with Myanmar migrant communities on documentation and labour rights. Thailand operates a Ranong-based programme providing migrant assistance and vulnerability assessment.

What distinguishes this corridor from the two northern land corridors is the combination of extraordinary commercial strategic opportunity — Thailand's Indian Ocean gateway, the BIMSTEC hub, the Land Bridge pilot — with the most acute documented human rights violations on any of Thailand's borders. The deportation-to-conscription pipeline is not a peripheral management problem; it is the corridor's defining legal and reputational liability.

Chapter 6: Strategic Recommendations

In the current context where the crisis in Myanmar has evolved into a multidimensional risk for Thailand, the existing policy approach—characterized by reactive responses and the application of uniform tools across the entire border—can no longer meet the challenge. Thailand needs to develop a geographically differentiated strategy capable of addressing the specific dynamics of each corridor, while systematically integrating security, humanitarian, economic, and environmental dimensions.

The following recommendations aim to establish structures, mandates, and practicable approaches for the short to medium term. The objective is to enhance Thailand's capacity to manage risks, safeguard national interests, and seize new opportunities for border area development.

6.1 Establish a National-Level Strategic Center for Myanmar Engagement

Thailand should create a central policy mechanism responsible for integrating data, analysis, and decision-making related to Myanmar across all dimensions. This mechanism would synchronize policies implementation for security, law enforcement, economic, diplomacy, humanitarian action, and environmental management, ensuring that state decisions are based on a unified information framework, reducing redundancy, and improving response speed.

The center should have five core functions:

Define policy directions under the “three dimensions–three corridors” strategy

Coordinate approaches and operations across relevant sectors

Conduct cross-dimensional, area-based situation assessments

Set priorities for each corridor

Monitor and evaluate policy implementation continuously

The core principle is not to create a new bureaucracy, but to integrate existing policy and operational agencies into a coherent strategic framework. Key design elements include:

A governing committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Security, with no more than 10 members drawn from state agencies responsible for security, economic, education, public health, labor, environment, private sector, civil society, and experts on Myanmar affairs.

Authority to define strategic frameworks, policies, and operational guidelines that can bypass rigid bureaucratic procedures when necessary

The National Security Council serving as the secretariat, coordinating policy and implementation across diplomacy, intelligence, economic, and military agencies

The humanitarian corridor initiated is a strategic concept to could leverage aid delivery as a entry point for broader political dialogue in Myanmar. By establishing a “safe zone” for aid, Thailand could build the trust necessary to bring the military junta and ethnic resistance groups to the negotiating table.

It is important to recognise that addressing humanitarian concerns serves as an initial step; enduring peace is influenced by a range of factors.

6.2 Pilot Implementation of the “Three Dimensions–Three Corridors” Strategy

Western Corridor

Objectives

Establish safe zones to facilitate trade, economic activity, and humanitarian assistance

Prevent the expansion of scam networks and cross-border crime into Thailand

Link humanitarian policy with labor markets by integrating displaced persons and irregular migrants into formal systems

Operational Measures

Designate safe zones along Asian Highway 1 (Mae Sot–Myawaddy–Yangon) for goods, aid, and passenger transport

Negotiate arrangements with all stakeholders and actors along the corridor based on shared interests

Disrupt scam networks near the border by controlling labor flows rather than closing crossings; cut financial channels using precise financial intelligence and advanced technologies/AI

Apply targeted control of utilities (electricity, fuel, internet) at endpoints in coordination with Myanmar actors, avoiding broad upstream cutoffs that harm legitimate users

Regularize displaced populations into the labor market through legal reforms, cabinet resolutions for long-term stay, registration systems, work permits, labor markets, and skills development programs

Northern Corridor

Objectives

Address transboundary pollution (PM2.5 air pollution and heavy metal contamination in rivers)

Prevent and suppress all forms of cross-border crime

Operational Measures

Engage both formal and informal actors on both sides of the border to access pollution sources

Deploy modern technologies such as satellite remote sensing, water quality sensors, isotope/chemical fingerprinting, drone surveys, satellite fire detection, air mass tracking, and laser air scanning

Develop operational plans to control pollution sources with scientific mitigation measures and commercial incentives, rather than relying on unenforceable legal tools outside Thai territory

Focus on network disruption rather than border control alone in tackling crime—track financial flows, SIM cards, mule accounts, logistics chains, and Thai-based coordinators linked to cross-border scams

Apply precise, endpoint-based utility control only when necessary to avoid harming innocent populations

Southern Maritime Corridor

Objectives

Ensure maritime security to support trade, logistics, and economic activity

Integrate irregular migrants into Thailand's labor system through structured mechanisms

Operational Measures

Develop maritime surveillance focused on small and irregular vessels, including coastal radar, monitoring systems, AIS integration, and intelligence-based tracking

Maintain vessel registries to distinguish normal from suspicious traffic; deploy drones during high-risk periods such as nighttime or monsoon seasons

Create legal labor pathways for maritime migrants instead of relying solely on deterrence or pushbacks, particularly for fisheries, seafood processing, construction, and coastal services

Upgrade Ranong Port to strengthen international trade capacity and

facilitate Thailand–Myanmar commerce

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This report begins with a fundamental observation: Myanmar today is no longer a unitary state with a single center of authority. Instead, it has become a space where power is fragmented across multiple layers, actors, and structures. The post-coup electoral process has not produced stability; rather, it has consolidated military power in a new form—one that suffers from a lack of legitimacy and remains incapable of ending the ongoing civil war.

As a result, Myanmar has evolved into a systemic risk for Thailand, no longer merely a conventional foreign policy issue. This risk does not emerge in isolation within any single dimension but manifests simultaneously across security, humanitarian, and economic domains—each deeply interconnected.

From a security perspective, the more than 2,400-kilometer Thailand–Myanmar border has become highly volatile, marked by continuous clashes, frequent airstrikes, and repeated incidents of cross-border shelling into Thai territory. These developments underscore that Myanmar's internal conflict can no longer be contained within its own borders. At the same time, emerging threats—such as scam centers, human trafficking, narcotics, and small arms proliferation—have expanded in areas beyond state control and are increasingly intertwined with Thailand's economic system.

On the humanitarian front, the refugee situation is no longer temporary but has become a long-term structural issue embedded along the Thai border for decades. New waves of displacement following the coup have placed sustained pressure on Thailand's public health system, fiscal resources, and administrative capacity.

Economically, instability in Myanmar has disrupted formal border trade while simultaneously driving a significant portion of economic activity into informal channels. This has led to the expansion of the grey economy, which both generates income and introduces new risks for Thailand.

However, the challenge does not lie solely in Myanmar's situation but also in the limitations of Thailand's own policy approach. The report clearly highlights that Thailand continues to rely on a state-to-state framework, despite the reality that many influential actors on the ground are non-state actors. Moreover, the policy structure remains fragmented, lacking a central coordinating mechanism, resulting in reactive and inconsistent responses.

Another key limitation is the application of a uniform border management approach across the entire frontier, despite the stark

differences between areas. Consequently, many measures fail to match local conditions and, in some cases, produce more negative than positive outcomes.

In response, the report proposes a fundamental shift in perspective: from viewing Myanmar as an unstable neighboring country to understanding it as a multi-layered system of power that requires differentiated policy tools. The central concept introduced is the geography of power, which emphasizes that each area is shaped by distinct actors who play a decisive role in determining local stability—often more so than the central state.

Under this framework, the border is divided into three primary corridors: the Western Corridor, the Northern Corridor, and the Andaman maritime corridor, each characterized by different dynamics and actors.

The Western Corridor is where security, humanitarian, and economic pressures intersect most intensely. It functions simultaneously as a refugee zone, a trade route, and a conflict area involving multiple armed groups. Its key challenges are volatility of violence and the expansion of the grey economy.

The Northern Corridor presents a different profile, marked by severe transboundary pollution and deeply entrenched networks of illicit economic activity. Actors such as the UWSA exercise significant territorial and economic control, making risks in this area structural and long-term—particularly in environmental degradation and illicit financial flows.

The Southern Maritime Corridor is shaped by labor migration, fisheries, and maritime security issues, requiring a distinct set of policy tools.

This spatial differentiation leads to a critical policy recommendation: Thailand must move away from a “one-size-fits-all” approach and adopt context-specific strategies that align policy instruments with the actors and challenges in each area.

Operationally, Thailand's policy needs to adjust in four key directions:

Systematically engage with non-state actors—including ethnic armed organizations, paramilitary groups, and local networks—given their real influence over territory

Establish a central strategic mechanism to integrate data and coordinate policy across agencies

Develop new tools, particularly in finance, intelligence, and economic regulation, to address complex criminal and grey-economy networks

Adapt border management approaches to the specific characteristics of each area across security, humanitarian, and economic dimensions

In sum, the report argues that the challenges posed by Myanmar can no longer be addressed through traditional tools or conventional frameworks. If Thailand continues to rely on state-centric engagement, linear border control, and reactive measures, it will remain in a position of chasing problems rather than managing risks.

Conversely, by adopting a multi-layered understanding of Myanmar and implementing flexible, area-based policies that integrate security, humanitarian, and economic instruments, Thailand can transition from being a passive recipient of spillover effects to an effective manager of risk.

Bibliography

Official Reports

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Myanmar's Enduring Polycrisis: Four Years into a Tumultuous Journey. January 2025. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-01/undp_four_year_outlook-myanmar_enduring_polycrisis_jan2025-2.pdf]

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A Route-Based Snapshot: Data & Trends for Refugees from Myanmar. December 31, 2015.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Morgane Roussel-Hemery. Along the Thai-Myanmar border, refugee youth empower each other to build a better future. November 14, 2023.

[<https://www.unhcr.org/th/en/news/stories/along-thai-myanmar-border-refugee-youth-empower-each-other-build-better-future>]

World Bank. Myanmar Economic Monitor: Compounding Crises—Special Focus: International Migration from Myanmar. December 2024.

[<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099121024092015654>]

World Bank. Myanmar Economic Monitor: Surviving, Not Thriving. December 2015.

[<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120625204042781/pdf/P507203-7c4662b6-c1d8-4c3c-9b0c-d4835f2763cb.pdf>]

Unofficial Reports

Amfori. Protecting Myanmar Migrant Workers in Thailand: Ethical Recruitment and Labour Migration in Focus. March 3, 2025.

[<https://www.amfori.org/news/protecting-myanmar-migrant-workers-in-thailand-ethical-recruitment-and-labour-migration-in-focus/>]

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights. Funding Cuts Endanger Thai-Myanmar Refugee Camps: Southeast Asian Lawmakers Urge Urgent Action. July 21, 2015.

[<https://aseanmp.org/publications/post/funding-cuts-endanger-thai-myanmar-refugee-camps-southeast-asian-lawmakers-urge-urgent-action>]

CASE (Clean, Affordable and Secure Energy for Southeast Asia). Key Insight on Thailand's Natural Gas Crossroads: Rethinking Security,

Affordability, and the Energy Transition. March 3, 2016.

[<https://caseforsea.org/key-insight-on-thailands-natural-gas-crossroads-rethinking-security-affordability-and-the-energy-transition/>]

Eyler, Brian, and Regan Kwan. Toxic Rare Earth Mining Is Ruining Mekong Tributaries in the Golden Triangle. Washington, DC: Stimson Center, September 22, 2025.

[<https://www.stimson.org/2025/toxic-rare-earth-mining-is-ruining-mekong-tributaries-in-the-golden-triangle/>]

Human Rights Watch. “I’ll Never Feel Secure”: Undocumented and Exploited: Myanmar Nationals in Thailand. July 14, 2025.

[<https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/07/14/ill-never-feel-secure/undocumented-and-exploited-myanmar-nationals-in-thailand>]

Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA). Thailand’s Gas Fleet Faces Dual Challenge of Rising Costs and Underutilization. February 26, 2026.

[https://ieefa.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/IEEFA_Thailand%20gas%20conundrum%20report_updated%20March2026.pdf]

International Organization for Migration (IOM). Overview of Myanmar Nationals in Thailand. January 2025.

[https://thailand.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11371/files/documents/2025-03/myanmar_migrants_thailand_jan25_final-1.pdf]

Justice for Myanmar. Karen BGF/KNA Regional Criminal Network Exposed. May 22, 2024.

[<https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/press-releases/karen-bgf-kna-regional-criminal-network-exposed>]

MacBeath, Alastair. Cashing In on Conflict: Illicit Economies and the Myanmar Civil War. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, March 1, 2025.

[<https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Alastair-MacBeath-Cashing-in-on-conflict-Illicit-economies-and-the-Myanmar-civil-war-GI-TOC-March-2025.pdf>]

McCartan, Brian. Funding the People’s Defence Forces in Myanmar. Armed Group Economies Southeast Asia, May 2025.

[<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/628c94ceae15ed6eb64d03fd/t/6818830d7fd3874344b08cc9/1746436883884/Centre+2025+Funding+the+People%E2%80%99s+Defence+Forces.pdf>]

Rapid Asia. Are Migrant Workers in Thailand on a Positive Trajectory? October 7, 2025.

[<https://rapid-asia.com/news/are-migrant-workers-in-thailand-on-a-positive-trajectory/>]

Media

Ang, Angelica. "A National Security Problem and a Homeland Security Problem: The World Targets Southeast Asia's Notorious Scam Centers." *Fortune*, November 15, 2015.

[<https://fortune.com/2015/11/15/southeast-asia-scam-centers-cambodia-myanmar-human-trafficking-cybercrime/>]

"Arsenic found in residents along Kok River; academics warn of rising health risks" *Trans-border News* February 2, 2016

[<https://transbordernews.in.th/home/?p=45225>]

"Four Thai fishermen released after detention by Myanmar" *The Nation* March 28, 2025

[<https://www.nationthailand.com/blogs/news/general/40047970>]

Maung Kavi "Myanmar Junta Chief Rushes Through New Consultative Council Law" *Irrawaddy*. February 4, 2026.

[<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/politics/myanmar-junta-chief-rushes-through-new-consultative-council-law.html>]

Mark, Eugene and Kyi Sin. "Thailand Pays the Price for Unregulated Mining Boom" *FULCRUM* December 31, 2025

[<https://fulcrum.sg/2025-top-10-thailand-pays-the-price-for-unregulated-mining-boom/>]

"Myanmar Border Closure Cripples Thai Exports Worth Billions." *The Nation*, August 18, 2025.

[<https://www.nationthailand.com/news/asean/40054191>]

"Myanmar election delivers victory for military-backed party amid civil war" *Reuters*. January 30, 2016

[<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-election-delivers-victory-military-backed-party-amid-civil-war-2026-01-30/>]

"Myanmar's former spymaster Ye Win Oo rises to become military chief" *Reuters*. March 31, 2026

[<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-former-spymaster-ye-win-oo-rises-become-military-chief-2026-03-31/>]

“Myanmar opposition forms unity council” Thai BPS World March 31, 2026

[https://world.thaipbs.or.th/detail/myanmar-opposition-forms-unity-council/60852?fbclid=IwY2xjawQ4WitleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkET F q S D J j b T M 3 a T N G Z T Z V R D A 5 c 3J0YwZhchBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc 4ODIwMDg5MgABH p k Z n U S N 0 t 8 d F O Q A u I p Q h e j p d T s D t W m h _ 1 A f 2 A e c P A n M z k C A W s z b a f 6 y S q W _ _ aem_1GsVQJ8VdumjzEAmbqO2fw]

Pathan, Don. “Myanmar’s Drone War: An Escalation.” Stratsea, March 13, 2026.

[<https://stratsea.com/myanmars-drone-war-an-escalation/>]

Pathan, Don. “Thailand, Myanmar and the Pollution of Thai Waterways.” Mizzima News, August 26, 2015.

[<https://eng.mizzima.com/2025/08/26/25758>]

Phoe Tar. “Myanmar Junta Reopens Key Thai Border Trade Route Amid Security Concerns” Irrawaddy April 2, 2026

[<https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/myanmar-junta-reopens-key-thai-border-trade-route-amid-security-concerns.html>]

Sa Tun Aung. “Myanmar dictator ‘nominated’ president in military-stacked parliament” Myanmar Now. March 30, 2026 [<https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/myanmar-dictator-nominated-president-in-military-stacked-parliament/>]

“Thailand records 381 hotspots; neighbouring countries pass 5,000, raising PM2.5 concerns” The Nation. February 11, 2026

[<https://www.nationthailand.com/blogs/news/general/40062412>]

Book

Lintner, Bertil. *Wa of Myanmar and China’s Quest for Global Dominance*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2021.

Journal Articles

Raymond, Greg. “Explaining ‘Grey Capital’: The Sociology of Transnational Chinese Companies and Crime in Thailand.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 34, no. 152: 350–365.

Sapbamrer, Pachara, Pheerasak Assavanopakun, and Jinjuta Panumasvivat. “Decadal Trends in Ambient Air Pollutants and Their Association with COPD and Lung Cancer in Upper Northern Thailand: 2013–2022.” *Toxics*, April 2024.

[<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11125922/pdf/toxics-12-00321.pdf>]

Workshops

Institute for Strategic Policy. Workshop on Thailand's Strategy toward Myanmar. Bangkok, November 27, 2015.

Institute for Strategic Policy. Workshop on Myanmar's Economy and Border Trade. Bangkok. December 4, 2025.

Institute for Strategic Policy. Workshop on Thailand's Humanitarian Initiative. Bangkok December 12, 2025.

Contact:

Mr. Pana Janviroj

Executive Director

Institute for Strategic Policy

Bangkok, Thailand.

Jpana88@gmail.com