Myanmar Blind Spot in Manipur

Sanjib Baruah

The 2021 coup in Myanmar triggered a refugee influx into India. The problem has been framed in Manipur in incendiary language, with tragic consequences.

One key effect of the disruption in Myanmar since the coup of February 2021 is the expansion of the cultivation of opium poppy. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, its cultivation increased significantly in 2022 and opiates accounted for a larger share of the national economy than in the previous year. It is only to be expected that some of this opium cultivation would accompany the refugee influx into India as many in Manipur have suggested. But the demagogic language of “narco-terrorism” in which the problem has been framed in Manipur may have been a product of a politically engineered moral panic that overstates the problem.

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The author is Professor of Political Studies at Bard College, New York.

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