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Crossfire in Quotation Marks

Framing and the Legitimation of Extrajudicial Killing
in Bangladesh's English-Language Press

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Political language... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable,
and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.

— George Orwell

Abstract

This thesis investigates the framing of extrajudicial "crossfire" killings in English-language Bangladeshi news media by applying Robert Entman's (1993) framing theory alongside Edel and Josua's (2018) account of authoritarian legitimation. These frameworks have primarily been developed and tested on state rhetoric rather than journalistic texts. Utilizing a qualitative case-study analysis of twenty-five English-language news articles, which report on forty-six deaths published between 2009 and 2020 in *The Daily Star*, *New Age*, and *bdnews24.com*, the study addresses three research questions: the manifestation of Entman's four framing functions in this coverage (RQ1); the extent to which these frames perform legitimating or contesting political work (RQ2); and the methodological implications of applying this combined framework to media texts in a domestic context where the legality of the killings remains officially disputed (RQ3).

The findings suggest that coverage of crossfire incidents in Bangladesh predominantly, though not exclusively, reproduces the state's narrative. Sixty percent of the articles analyzed are situated at the fully legitimating end of a five-point legitimation–contestations spectrum developed for this study. Treatment recommendation is absent throughout the sample, and the diagnostic frames justifying these killings are almost exclusively grounded in security and legality. When contestation occurs, it arises through at least three distinct mechanisms: muted family testimony, internal inconsistencies within the official account's timeline, and direct institutional allegations. These mechanisms are not fully captured by a single legitimation score. Methodologically, the study demonstrates that effective application of Entman's and Edel and Josua's frameworks to journalistic texts requires several adaptations: conceptualizing legitimation as a spectrum rather than a binary, distinguishing the source of contestation from its mere presence, and recognizing that treatment recommendation does not directly translate to the hard-news genre. These methodological adaptations constitute the central contribution of this thesis, extending a framework originally designed for state rhetoric to the analysis of media coverage of contested state violence.

Keywords: framing theory; authoritarian legitimation; extrajudicial killing; Bangladesh; press freedom; state violence

Acknowledgements

There is a kind of preparation for a thesis that no one tells you about. I did not choose this topic by chance. My path here began after more than ten years as a journalist in Bangladesh, where the profession often comes with the constant shadow of detention, intimidation, torture, and even death. Those risks shape not only what gets reported, but also what questions can be asked. For years, I carried a quiet dissatisfaction with the limits of my own profession. But being dissatisfied was never enough. I wanted to understand not just how the media represents violence, but why it does so, and how those patterns come into being.

While coding forty-six deaths, each described in the same careful, restrained language that journalists often use when reporting on state violence, I found myself returning to my own newsroom memories. I thought about colleagues who were abducted, about living with surveillance—both real and imagined—and about the helplessness of being a journalist who could not always ask the question that mattered most. I also remembered being told to protect relationships with those in power because those relationships were often the only way to keep reporting. This thesis became my way of looking back at those experiences from a different place—not as a reporter working within those constraints, but as a researcher trying to understand them.

This thesis was almost left unfinished for reasons that had nothing to do with research. While I was writing, my father survived a heart attack. Soon afterwards, my return flight to Sweden was cancelled because of war, causing a delay I could not control. By the time I returned to Lund, the June deadline had already passed, and for a while I genuinely believed I would not finish this project.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the journalists who continue to report under difficult circumstances, and to the families whose loved ones appear in news reports only after unimaginable loss. I hope this research, in however small a way, contributes to a deeper understanding of how language shapes the public meaning of state violence.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Since 2004, Bangladesh's security forces have been accused of conducting thousands of extrajudicial killings under the term "crossfire." This term refers to reported deaths of suspects allegedly caught in exchanges of gunfire between security forces and armed criminal groups, rather than being killed while in custody. The practice is primarily linked to the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite paramilitary force established in March 2004 under the Armed Police Battalion (Amendment) Act by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) government. RAB comprises personnel from the army, navy, air force, and police. Human Rights Watch's 2011 report on RAB identified a consistent pattern in which the official "crossfire" narrative—that suspects were killed while resisting arrest in self-defense—was frequently contradicted by witness and family accounts indicating that individuals had been detained by RAB personnel prior to their reported deaths. Despite a change in government in 2008 and repeated public commitments to end the practice, extrajudicial killings persisted and, according to some sources, intensified in subsequent years. This trend became particularly pronounced following the initiation of a nationwide anti-narcotics campaign in 2018, during which the incidence of "gunfight" deaths increased substantially.

Domestic and international human rights organizations have systematically documented the extent of this phenomenon. Netra News's Body Count project, an investigative data journalism initiative led by Nazmul Ahasan and used as a data source in this thesis, records 2,597 extrajudicial killings, fatal shootings, and instances of custodial torture attributed to Bangladeshi security forces over thirteen years (Ahasan, 2023). Other organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Odhikar, and Ain o Salish Kendra, have independently compiled casualty statistics and case documentation spanning two decades of RAB and police activity (Bangladesh: Elite Force Tortures, Kills Detainees, 2006). Collectively, these efforts have established a substantial evidentiary record of the persistence of these practices across successive governments and time periods (Bangladesh: Launch a full investigation into alleged extrajudicial executions, 2018).

Despite extensive documentation, limited scholarly attention has been given to the domestic media's role in reporting these deaths. Research on "crossfire" killings in Bangladesh has primarily been conducted by human rights organizations, journalists, and legal scholars, rather

than by media or communication researchers. These studies have largely focused on establishing the scale and pattern of the killings or on analyzing the legal and human rights frameworks implicated by their occurrence. In contrast, Bangladeshi news outlets' practices have received minimal scrutiny. Real-time reporting shapes the narratives that reach domestic and international audiences. The vocabulary employed, causal explanations offered, sources prioritized, and the extent to which coverage diverges from or reproduces the state's justificatory narrative all influence public understanding. This thesis addresses this gap by applying established framing and legitimation theory, originally developed to analyze how authoritarian and semi-authoritarian states justify repressive violence, to the media coverage of Bangladeshi crossfire killings. The analysis treats the press's narration of these deaths as the primary object of study rather than as a secondary source for documenting the killings.

1.2 Problem Statement and Rationale

This thesis draws on two well-established theoretical traditions that share a common limitation it seeks to address. Robert Entman's (1993) framing theory identifies four functions through which communicators construct particular understandings of events: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Mirjam Edel and Maria Josua's (2018) account of authoritarian legitimation, developed through a comparative study of Egyptian and Uzbek state rhetoric regarding the Rabi'a and Andijon massacres, extends framing theory to examine how repressive regimes discursively justify mass killings to domestic and international audiences. Both models, however, were developed and tested primarily on the direct rhetoric of political actors — presidential speeches, press conferences, official statements — rather than on journalistic coverage, which may reproduce, complicate, or contest that rhetoric. Section 2.6 situates this gap against the existing literature; the point is that neither framework has been applied to media texts as independent objects of analysis, nor within a South Asian context.

This thesis conceptualizes this gap as a substantive conceptual and methodological problem, rather than as an unexplored empirical extension. Frameworks designed to analyze the rhetoric of a single strategic communicator constructing a deliberate legitimating narrative cannot be assumed to transfer directly to news texts produced by journalists, who draw on multiple, only partially aligned institutional sources such as police statements, family testimony, and human rights reporting. Each source may influence a text's framing in different directions, independent

of any single author's intent. Determining whether and how Entman's and Edel and Josua's frameworks can be adapted to this distinct type of text constitutes a necessary methodological inquiry, addressed directly through Research Question 3 and developed throughout Chapters 3 to 5.

Bangladesh presents a particularly demanding context for this inquiry: the killings are officially denied as extrajudicial at all, and the press covering them operates under documented political constraint. Section 4.2 develops both points in full as the basis for treating Bangladesh as a critical case in Flyvbjerg's (2006) sense. The practical implication is straightforward: if the combined framework applies here, it is likely adaptable to other, less demanding cases of media coverage of contested state violence.

1.3 Research Questions

The thesis is organized around three research questions, each examined in a dedicated section of Chapter 5 and developed theoretically in Chapter 3.

RQ1: In what ways do Entman's (1993) four framing functions—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—manifest in English-language Bangladeshi news coverage of extrajudicial "crossfire" killings?

This question establishes the thesis's descriptive foundation by examining the vocabulary and narrative structures that define these incidents, the attribution of causation, the evaluation of both state and victim, and the presence or absence of proposed responses. Since Entman's framework was developed for political communication in general rather than for hard-news incident reports specifically, its application here also serves as a preliminary test of the framework's suitability for this journalistic genre.

RQ2: To what extent do these frames serve to legitimate or contest political actions, and in what specific ways?

Drawing on Edel and Josua's (2018) account of authoritarian legitimation, this question shifts the analysis from description to interpretation by examining whether the framing functions identified under RQ1 legitimate the killings documented in the sample, contest them, or occupy an ambiguous position between the two. Rather than treating legitimation as a binary concept, the

analysis uses a spectrum measure, justified in Section 3.2 and tested empirically in Chapter 5, that captures partial or mixed legitimating and contesting content within a single text.

RQ3: What methodological insights arise from applying this combined framework to media texts, as opposed to state rhetoric, within a domestic context where the legality of the killings remains officially disputed?

This final question addresses the adaptation of a framework originally designed for the study of state actors to a substantially different object: journalistic texts assembled from multiple institutional sources, reporting on killings whose official status as "crossfire" incidents rather than extrajudicial executions is itself contested. Addressing this question constitutes the thesis's central conceptual and methodological contribution, discussed in detail in Section 5.4 and Chapter 6.

Together, these three questions progress from description (RQ1), to interpretation (RQ2), and ultimately to methodological reflection (RQ3), mirroring the analytical arc that structures the remainder of the thesis.

1.4 Scope and Approach

This thesis employs a qualitative case-study analysis of twenty-five English-language news articles documenting forty-six deaths, published between 2009 and 2020 in three Bangladeshi news outlets: The Daily Star, New Age, and bdnews24.com. Incidents were selected using Netra News's Body Count dataset and purposive sampling, prioritizing hard-news reports that directly address specific killing incidents to ensure genre comparability across outlets (Section 4.3).

Each article was coded according to Entman's (1993) four framing functions, utilizing a two-axis approach to moral evaluation that independently assesses both the state and the victim. The coding also incorporated a diagnostic frame adapted from Edel and Josua's (2018) typology of endangered values and applied a five-point legitimization–contestations spectrum to operationalize their conceptual continuum as a systematic coding instrument. Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the coding procedure and the rationale for each adaptation.

As established in Section 1.2, this case-study design follows Flyvbjerg's (2006) argument for context-dependent, theory-testing research rather than statistical generalization. Bangladeshi

crossfire coverage serves as a critical case, and this approach's value lies in the conceptual and methodological distinctions it provides for future research, rather than in representativeness.

1.5 Thesis Structure

The subsequent chapters of this thesis are organized as follows.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on framing theory, authoritarian legitimation, and media coverage of state violence. It situates the thesis at the intersection of these scholarly domains and identifies the specific gap it addresses: applying Entman's and Edel and Josua's frameworks to media texts, rather than state rhetoric, in a South Asian context.

Chapter 3 develops the theoretical framework by explaining how Entman's (1993) four framing functions integrate with Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimation logic. It details the adaptations required for this combination, including the two-axis approach to moral evaluation, the five-point legitimation spectrum, and the diagnostic-frame typology. Each element is then linked to the three research questions.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design, including the case-study approach, sample selection, data collection, coding framework, and trustworthiness measures. It also addresses the study's limitations and discusses the ethical considerations involved in analyzing coverage of contested and sensitive state violence.

Chapter 5 presents the findings organized by research questions. Section 5.2 examines Entman's four framing functions across the sample (RQ1). Section 5.3 analyzes the distribution of articles along the legitimation–contestation spectrum and provides close readings of the most analytically significant cases (RQ2). Section 5.4 reflects on the methodological insights generated by applying the combined framework to Bangladeshi media texts (RQ3).

Chapter 6 discusses the findings in relation to existing literature and the thesis's theoretical expectations. It articulates the theoretical and methodological contributions, addresses limitations, and identifies directions for future research. This includes consideration of the approach's applicability to other South Asian contexts, given the political changes in the region since 2022 that have reshaped questions of government and security-sector accountability.

Collectively, Chapters 2 through 6 progress from establishing the theoretical and empirical gap to developing and applying the research design. The thesis concludes with implications for Bangladeshi media coverage of extrajudicial killing and for the broader application of framing theory in constrained press environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Foundations of State Violence and Extrajudicial Killings

Extrajudicial killings are most consistently defined as acts committed by governments or state agents without judicial oversight and outside a valid legal process (Sommer & Asal, 2019, p. 185). Comparative political scholarship distinguishes these killings analytically from political imprisonment and disappearance (Sommer & Asal, 2019, p. 190). However, several studies caution that the broad label may obscure distinct subtypes of unlawful killing, thereby complicating theoretical frameworks and measurement strategies (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018, p. 360).

A more comprehensive legal definition identifies four recurring features: the intended outcome is death, the act circumvents formal legal procedures, state agents are the perpetrators, and the killing is not justified by lawful order or self-defense. Extrajudicial killing therefore constitutes a direct violation of due process and the presumption of innocence, as punishment is imposed before any lawful determination of guilt (Elok & Setiyono, 2023, p. 3249). This conceptualization aligns with international human rights law, which treats the right to life as a protected, non-arbitrary entitlement and defines extrajudicial killing as its arbitrary deprivation by the state (Elok & Setiyono, 2023, p. 3250). It is not merely excessive force, but a form of punishment in which executive violence supplants judicial adjudication.

Critical scholarship expands the concept of extrajudicial killing from isolated abuses to a broader mode of governance. Research on the Philippines, for example, characterizes drug-war killings as "state vigilantism," where the state orchestrates vigilante-style violence against dehumanized individuals (Raffle, 2021, p. 3). Such killings are situated within broader frameworks of authoritarianism, neoliberal coercion, and state terrorism, rather than being attributed solely to failures in law enforcement (Ullero, 2025, p. 73; Holden, 2024, p. 169). Comparative research further emphasizes this distinctiveness, demonstrating that extrajudicial killings are shaped by

specific institutional conditions, such as weak independent judiciaries and violent conflict, which differentiate them from imprisonment, disappearance, or generalized coercion (Sommer & Asal, 2019, p. 201). The literature therefore supports defining extrajudicial killings as state-led unlawful killings that serve both as human rights violations and as a distinct modality of political repression (Sommer & Asal, 2019; Elok & Setiyono, 2023).

2.2 Legitimation and Normalization of State Violence

Research on legitimation and normalization indicates that state violence becomes acceptable through political framing, social endorsement, and routinized security discourse. Within this body of literature, repression is not merely a failure of legitimacy; rather, it can produce legitimacy when violence is presented as essential to maintaining order, ensuring protection, or securing national survival.

Authoritarian regimes develop discursive justifications tailored to both domestic and international audiences, framing repression as necessary rather than arbitrary. In Egypt and Uzbekistan, the prevailing narrative combined terrorism with assertions of security and stability (Edel & Josua, 2018, p. 895). Related scholarship demonstrates that threat narratives and securitization discourse construct specific groups as existential threats, thereby authorizing extraordinary coercion and restricting public participation (Pratt & Rezk, 2019). This rationale extends to strategic narration, wherein states legitimate violence through polarized storytelling that juxtaposes national heroism with an 'ultimate perpetrator,' recasting violence as serving the collective good (Zavershinskaia, 2024, p. 19). This technique is also evident in authoritarian populism, where regimes blur distinctions between legality and illegality, protect aligned groups from punishment, and frame aggression as defense of family, nation, and social order (Yetiş, 2026, p. 6).

Normalization occurs through both official discourse and everyday social practices, and is not exclusively imposed from above. The Philippines is frequently cited in this literature, both for its extensive documentation and for the 'war on drugs' terminology that closely parallels Bangladesh's 'crossfire' euphemism. Duterte's violent populism legitimized mass killings by distinguishing 'good people' from criminalized others (Thompson, 2021, p. 404, 418; Deinla et al., 2024, p. 301). Survey research demonstrates that support for extralegal punishment correlates

with authoritarian attitudes, preferences for strong leadership, and acceptance of torture and violence as instruments of social progress (Deinla et al., 2024, p. 297, 305). This evidence suggests that public punitiveness, along with state messaging, sustains normalization (Deinla et al., 2024, p. 298). Estimates indicate that the Philippine death toll has reached approximately 27,000 since 2016. A similar pattern emerged in Thailand, where Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's 2003 anti-drug campaign reportedly resulted in approximately 2,873 deaths (Raffle, 2021, p. 1).

Arendtian analysis contends that authoritarian rule normalizes killing by reducing moral reflection and promoting uncritical obedience (Ullero, 2025, pp. 84–86). Additional scholarship links normalization to processes of dehumanization, moralistic justification, and impunity (Regilme, 2025, p. 13). At the community level, extrajudicial punishment may be accepted alongside formal policing, with residents and police jointly authorizing violence as an element of local security order (Gordon, 2019, p. 1175).

2.3 Media Representation of State Violence

While Section 2.2 examines the acceptance of repressive violence by states and publics, this section focuses on the press's role in that process. Media representation studies show that state violence is often sanitized rather than explicitly identified, legitimizing coercion by obscuring agency, normalizing fatalities, and aligning public sympathy with state authority (Edel & Josua, 2018; Zavershinskaia, 2024).

This process of sanitization is deliberate. States and their communicative allies portray targeted groups as threats and justify coercion as a necessary response (Edel & Josua, 2018). In authoritarian and semi-authoritarian contexts, this effect is particularly pronounced, as governments can directly influence messaging through controlled or aligned media outlets (Edel & Josua, 2018; Zavershinskaia, 2024). Repression is consistently framed through narratives of security, stability, terrorism, and public order, shifting attention away from victims' rights and toward the state's claimed protective function (Edel & Josua, 2018, p. 883; Pratt & Rezk, 2019, p. 22). This framing is further reinforced by the heroic-defender and ultimate-perpetrator device discussed in Section 2.2 (Zavershinskaia, 2024, p. 21). In drug-war contexts, dehumanization is

intensified, presenting state violence against criminalized populations as a means of protecting "good people" (Raffle, 2021, p. 1, 3; Thompson, 2021, p. 405).

Media and discourse analyses are methodologically crucial because they reveal the specific mechanisms—such as naming, action description, source selection, and narrative context—by which legitimization occurs within texts. This influence extends beyond individual articles, as many atrocity databases and public records depend heavily on news sources. Consequently, media framing shapes both public understanding and the visibility of subsequent documentation (Lamchek & Jopson, 2024, p. 9). Episodic reporting presents killings as isolated events, whereas structural framing recognizes violence as part of governance, impunity, and broader patterns of rule (Lamchek & Jopson, 2024, pp. 6–8; Ullero, 2025, pp. 84–85).

Public glorification of "encounter" violence and heroic depictions of security actors further legitimize extralegal punishment and diminish moral opposition (Saini, 2025, p. 5). In the Philippines, criticism of the drug war by the media was frequently dismissed as exaggeration or partisan journalism, even as large-scale killings persisted (Fabro, 2024, p. 15). The central implication for this thesis is that media should not be regarded as a passive reflector of extrajudicial killings, but rather as a site where state violence is linguistically softened, morally structured, and, at times, publicly contested (Martin, 2025, pp. 3–5; Meziane, 2021, p. 104).

2.3a Media framing and journalism

Framing theory examines the conceptual foundations, methodologies, and applications by which media and political actors influence public perception (Sharma & Pokharel, 2025). Media framing organizes, defines, and structures narratives by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while minimizing others. First formally theorized in the 1970s, framing describes how media outlets provide interpretive cues that guide audience understanding (Sharma & Pokharel, 2025, p. 12), thereby encoding and, at times, manipulating interpretation. The origins of framing analysis can be traced to Erving Goffman's (1974) work on how individuals organize experience, which was later extended to examine how media organizations adopt specific perspectives to shape public opinion (Thankachan & Thomas, 2021).

Robert Entman's (1993) definition is the most frequently cited in the field: framing involves selecting specific elements of perceived reality and combining them into a narrative that promotes a particular interpretation (Muzakkir, 2018, p. 192; D'Angelo, 2018, p. xxx). Entman

identifies four functions that a fully developed frame can perform: defining a problem, diagnosing its causes, making moral judgments, and recommending treatments. He locates frames in four possible sites—communicator, text, receiver, and culture—and introduces cultural resonance and magnitude as mechanisms through which frames influence public opinion (Sharma & Pokharel, 2025, p. 15).

Framing is integral to journalism. Even when objectivity is the stated goal, editorial decisions regarding which facts, sources, and angles to emphasize inevitably influence interpretation (Sharma & Pokharel, 2025, p. 13). Scholars distinguish between generic frames, which are presentational formats that span topics—such as Iyengar's episodic versus thematic distinction—and issue-specific frames, which are interpretive perspectives unique to a particular subject, such as framing a military intervention as humanitarian or geopolitical (D'Angelo, 2018, p. xxvii). Framing analysis is a central tool in rhetorical criticism and media content research (Sharma & Pokharel, 2025, p. 17). It treats texts as "packages" of meaning (Baden, 2018, p. 13) that can be analyzed through qualitative discourse analysis or quantitative content analysis (Baden, 2018, p. 14; D'Angelo, 2018, p. xv). This approach extends journalism's broader role in constructing political reality, as even ostensibly objective coverage may introduce "slant" (Thankachan & Thomas, 2021, p. 8). For example, mainstream coverage of the 2003 Iraq War often emphasized sensationalized "battle stories" over peace-oriented narratives (Tarish et al., 2022, p. 7). A more recent method, semantic network analysis, maps relationships among concepts, actors, and evaluative attributes within ongoing news narratives. This technique reconstructs how audiences draw on prior news exposure to interpret intertextual meaning (Baden, 2018, pp. 4–10).

2.4 Extrajudicial killings literature in Bangladesh Scholarship Area

Bangladeshi scholarship on extrajudicial killings analyzes the methods by which security forces circumvent due process, identifies the legal and institutional foundations of impunity, and increasingly incorporates post-colonial and Southern theoretical frameworks to explain the normalization of state violence (Tania, 2018; Uddin, 2018).

The dominant strand of scholarship characterizes extrajudicial killings—commonly referred to as "crossfire," which occur when law enforcement disregards due process while engaging suspects

(Daud, 2023, pp. 1, 4)—as a direct violation of both the Constitution of Bangladesh and international human rights law (Monia, 2020, p. 28). These practices contravene Articles 31 and 32, which guarantee the rights to life and personal liberty (Habib, 2015, p. 70), and are inconsistent with Article 35(5)'s fair-trial protections (Monia, 2020, pp. 27–28). Furthermore, Bangladesh fails to fulfill its International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) obligation to ensure the right to life (Habib, 2015), which collectively indicates a dysfunctional and ineffective criminal justice system (Monia, 2020, p. 26).

The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), established in 2004, is identified as the primary state actor involved in extrajudicial killings. Weak criminal justice institutions, shaped by colonial legacies and pervasive corruption, are cited as motivating factors for RAB's creation. RAB subsequently justifies its existence through the practice of extrajudicial killing, and the resulting impunity among law enforcement further entrenches this practice. Bangladesh's National Human Rights Commission has not succeeded in disrupting this culture of impunity (Uddin, 2017, p. 12). Empirical research attributes these killings to limited press freedom, a weak rule of law, and personal incentives such as career advancement.

Theoretical engagement with RAB and extrajudicial killings remains limited; most studies prioritize human rights and legal analysis over theoretical or philosophical perspectives (Sakib & Rashid, 2018, p. 21). However, post-colonial theory has been employed to interpret these practices as manifestations of post-colonial domination (Tania, 2018, p. 2). Tasneem Khalil's Jallad advances this perspective by conceptualizing Bangladesh as one of five South Asian "deep states" where specialized death squads maintain the status quo, and by arguing that state-sponsored violence serves as a persistent form of governance, often legitimized by claims of preventing greater threats (Khalil, 2015, pp. 11–12).

The broader context of state violence in Bangladesh extends beyond RAB's domestic "crossfire" killings to include the Indian Border Security Force's killings of Bangladeshi nationals, which violate international norms and treaties (Rodríguez, 2025, pp. 1–3), as well as enforced disappearances and killings used to suppress political dissent. The murders of gay-rights activists in Dhaka exemplify how certain deaths are rendered unmournable and how queer bodies are selectively politicized (Siddiqi, 2019, pp. 2–5). Although these incidents are outside the

empirical scope of this thesis, which focuses on RAB and police "crossfire" incidents, they provide essential context for interpreting press framing of state violence.

2.5 Comparative International Studies

International studies show that extrajudicial killings are less likely under independent judiciaries and more likely during violent conflict, while broader state-violence research finds that formal democracy alone does not reliably prevent coercive abuse (Sommer & Asal, 2019; Ligon & Logan, 2019; Haschke, 2019).

Cross-national analysis of 146 countries identifies judicial independence and violent conflict as the two clearest structural correlates of extrajudicial killing (Sommer & Asal, 2019, p. 195). Later commentary on the same study reinforces that armed conflict raises the probability of extrajudicial killing, while independent judiciaries reduce it (Ligon & Logan, 2019, p. 183). Studies using torture and ill-treatment data find that elections and judicial constraints protect dissidents more than criminal suspects or marginalized groups, suggesting that institutional accountability is uneven across victim types (Beger & Hill, 2019, p. 641).

These studies therefore treat extrajudicial killing as a narrated state practice. Governments justify it through anti-crime, counterinsurgency, or emergency frames, while selective enforcement, weak oversight, and politicized international responses blur categories and obstruct accountability (Hilal, Pant & Tongbram, 2025, p. 185-187). In comparative international studies, extrajudicial killing appears not as episodic illegality, but as a recurring mode of governance where conflict, impunity, and legitimating narratives converge.

These studies converge on one point: extrajudicial killing is not only a legal violation but a politically narrated practice. Governments count bodies, shift labels, and blur categories, which complicates both accountability and research.

2.6 Research Gap

The existing literature on extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh is comprehensive in its coverage of legal, rights-based, and accountability perspectives, but provides limited analysis of media representation as a framing issue. Research focused on Bangladesh primarily emphasizes the gravity of the practice: Habib (2015, p. 74,75) identifies extrajudicial killing as a violation of the

right to life and of both constitutional and international protections, while Ovi and Mim (2025, p. 146-152) expand this legal-human-rights approach by examining possible justifications under domestic and international law and by highlighting impunity and weak accountability within the criminal justice system. While these studies collectively establish the seriousness of the issue, they do not systematically investigate how media discourse may contribute to the normalization, legitimization, or justification of such violence.

A smaller body of Bangladesh-focused media research addresses the representational dimension, but this scholarship remains conceptually fragmented. Tania (2018) examines "the construction process of legitimizing extrajudicial killings through analyzing text from print and electronic media", utilizing Van Leeuwen's legitimacy framework rather than a framing model. Her thesis, situated within the Sociology of Law, adopts a post-colonial perspective, in contrast to the present study's focus on media and communication theory. Nahar, Tabassum, and Nisa (2024, p. 261) find that Bangladeshi online news frequently employs "victim blaming and character assassination" as framing strategies. However, neither study applies Entman's frame-element structure—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—to systematically map how media outlets construct legitimization.

This gap is further highlighted when considered in relation to the broader framing literature reviewed in section 2.3a. Entman's model is widely used in communication and journalism research, conceptualizing frames as residing in the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. However, this model was developed and primarily tested within Western, particularly United States, political communication contexts. Comparative studies outside Bangladesh (Edel & Josua, 2018; Mustaqim et al., 2025) suggest that media framing operates as an ideological mechanism that produces and stabilizes state legitimacy, even in non-Western, low-accountability environments. These studies, however, employ legitimization and discourse frameworks rather than directly testing Entman's model. Whether Entman's four functions can be reliably identified or are consistently present in Bangladeshi reporting on "crossfire" killings remains an unresolved empirical and methodological question.

Accordingly, this study is positioned as a conceptual and methodological intervention rather than a descriptive case study. It applies Entman's framing model to Bangladeshi English-language press coverage of extrajudicial killings, addressing two interrelated questions: how these outlets

frame the issue across Entman's four functions, and to what extent the model, developed outside this context, adequately captures the observed framing strategies or requires adaptation. This approach is justified because the existing literature treats state violence, legitimation, and framing theory as distinct areas (sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.3a), while Bangladesh-specific research is considered a separate strand (section 2.4). No previous study has integrated these strands by testing Entman's model within Bangladesh's crossfire discourse or examined the methodological implications of applying frame-element coding to contested, state-sensitive reporting.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Framing Theory: Entman's Model

The concept of framing has its roots in Erving Goffman's (1974) work on how individuals organize experience into distinguishable structures of meaning, which Robert Entman later adapted for political communication research. Entman's (1993) definition remains the most widely used formulation in media framing research: to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text. In such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (pp. 52). Framing, in this sense, is not a passive description of events but a constructive construction of meaning through emphasis and omission.

Entman's model delineates four distinct functions that a frame can perform. Problem definition addresses how a text identifies what has occurred and the nature of the issue it represents, such as whether a killing is characterized as a "crossfire" incident, a criminal matter, or a human rights violation. Causal interpretation specifies who or what is held responsible, whether state security forces, the victim's alleged actions, or broader systemic failures. Moral evaluation concerns the judgment of the actors involved. In this thesis, moral evaluation is conceptualized as operating along two distinct axes: the moral positioning of the victim (through demographic labels, prior criminal record, or humanizing detail) and the moral positioning of the state or security actor (as reactive and restrained, or as an aggressor). This bifurcation enables the analysis to identify instances where the typical pairing—negative victim evaluation alongside positive state evaluation—does not hold. Treatment recommendation pertains to the course of action, resolution, or consequence that the text implies or explicitly advocates, such as accountability,

continued security operations, or silence. Initial coding confirms that this function is least frequently stated explicitly in hard news reporting, a point elaborated in Section 3.4.

This thesis adopts Entman's model rather than alternative framing typologies, such as Van Leeuwen's legitimation categories or the generic and issue-specific frame distinctions prevalent in quantitative framing research. This selection directly addresses a gap identified in the most relevant Bangladesh-focused scholarship. Tania (2018) examines the discursive construction of legitimacy in extrajudicial killings using Van Leeuwen's four-category model: Authorization, Moral Evaluation, Rationalization, and Mythopoiesis. This framework has been applied to newspaper reports, audio recordings, and interviews with RAB officers. The approach is effective for identifying the legitimation strategies employed by authorities and media, and Tania's analysis demonstrates that Bangladeshi media legitimize extrajudicial killings through the invocation of official authority, implicit moral framing, appeals to counter-terrorism rationale, and narrative comparison with previous operations.

However, Van Leeuwen's categories are designed to classify legitimation strategies as general discursive phenomena, rather than to trace how a text constructs the underlying event—specifically, what happened, who is responsible, and what should follow as distinct analytical steps. Tania's "Moral Evaluation" category exemplifies this distinction: it captures value-laden language that implicitly legitimizes an act, such as references to actions being "healthy," "necessary," or "for the greater good." This differs from Entman's moral evaluation, which focuses on how a text morally positions the actors involved, including both the victim and the state. The two frameworks are not alternative versions of the same concept, but instead address different analytical questions: Van Leeuwen examines the discursive strategies through which legitimacy is constructed, while Entman investigates how the underlying event is defined, explained, judged, and resolved (Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 91-112).

This distinction is significant for the design of the present thesis. A study intended to compare framing patterns across three outlets requires an analytical structure sufficiently detailed to demonstrate, for example, that an article may adopt the official causal account (as per Entman) while remaining ambiguous regarding treatment recommendation. Alternatively, an article may present a counter-narrative that Van Leeuwen's categories would not necessarily identify as

reducing legitimization, since these categories are designed to detect the presence of authorization or rationalization, rather than the resolution of counter-narratives (Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 91-112).

By treating each of the four functions as independently observable, Entman's structure enables this thesis to move beyond the question addressed by Tania's study—whether legitimization occurs—to the more specific inquiry pursued here: through which functions, and to what extent, legitimization or contestation is constructed, and how consistently this process operates across outlets reporting on the same broader phenomenon.

3.2 Discursive Legitimation of State Violence

While Entman's model explains how meaning is constructed within a text, it does not address why those constructions carry political significance. To address this gap, this thesis draws on Edel and Josua's (2018) framework of discursive legitimization, which was developed to explain how authoritarian actors justify violent repression. Their central intervention challenges a common assumption in the literature on authoritarianism: rather than viewing repression and legitimization as opposing strategies, they argue that justified coercion against certain groups can generate legitimacy among other segments of the population. This contrasts with most existing research, which treats repression and legitimization as diametrically opposed strategies of rule.

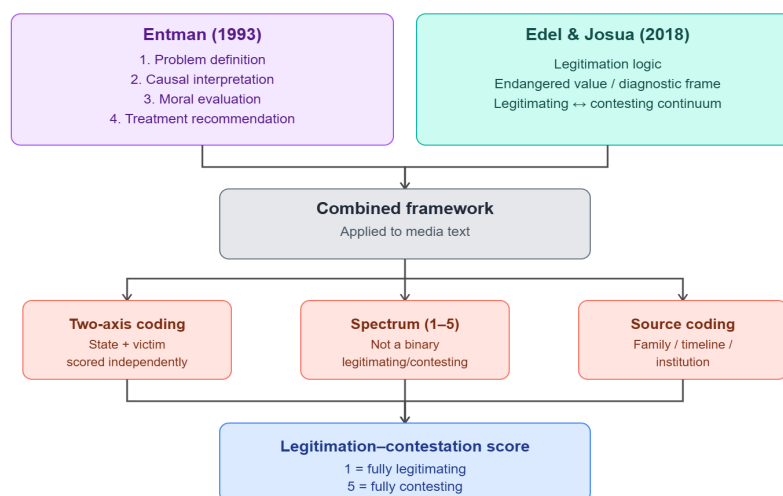
This use of 'legitimation' should be distinguished from Van Leeuwen's discursive legitimization categories discussed in 3.1: where Van Leeuwen's model identifies legitimization as a general discursive strategy occurring in any institutional text, Edel and Josua's framework is specific to authoritarian state contexts and treats legitimization as inherently audience-directed and politically strategic, a distinction that matters for justifying why this thesis combines Entman and Edel and Josua rather than Entman and Van Leeuwen.

Building on this, Edel and Josua show that authoritarian justifications are not incidental but strategically constructed: discursive justifications of repression are directed toward specific audiences, both domestic and international, drawing on particular sources that authorities use to justify their actions. They further note that these justificatory strategies are rarely invented from nothing, but draw on existing sources of inspiration and precedent at both the domestic and international level.

Applied to this thesis, Edel and Josua's framework repositions what legitimization means analytically in a media context. A news text need not explicitly defend state violence to perform legitimating work. It can do so through which problem definition it foregrounds, whose causal account it privileges, and whose moral standing it affirms or denies. Reading alongside Entman, this thesis treats the four framing functions as the textual mechanism through which legitimization or, conversely, contestation becomes empirically observable. Rather than treating legitimization and contestation as a strict binary, however, this thesis treats them as poles on a spectrum, since preliminary coding of the sample suggests a recurring intermediate case: articles that include a counter-narrative (e.g., family testimony contesting the official account) but place it in a secondary, unresolved, or unverified position relative to the official account. Such articles are neither purely legitimating nor genuinely contesting, and the framework embraces this middle ground explicitly rather than forcing a binary classification onto it.

3.3 Bringing the Two Together: A Combined Framework

The primary theoretical contribution of this thesis is the integration of these two frameworks, rather than the isolated application of either. Entman's model provides the analytical categories that make meaning construction visible and codifiable, while Edel and Josua's framework clarifies the political stakes underlying the significance of particular category combinations. Whereas Entman addresses the mechanisms by which a text constructs a version of events, Edel and Josua clarify why such constructions serve to legitimate or contest state violence.



This integration requires substantive adaptation rather than direct application. As established in Sections 1.2 and 2.6, Edel and Josua's framework was developed for analyzing the deliberate rhetoric of a single strategic communicator, rather than journalism produced by multiple, only partially aligned institutional actors. Applying their legitimation logic to media framing thus requires conceptualizing journalism as a domain where legitimation may be reproduced, contested, or complicated by editorial and institutional decisions, rather than assuming that media simply transmit state justifications without alteration.

This adaptation further differentiates the present thesis from Tania's (2018) socio-legal, post-colonial application of Van Leeuwen's model. While her study conceptualizes legitimation as a general discursive property of institutional texts, the current thesis examines legitimation specifically as an authoritarian political strategy manifested within journalism. This approach contributes to media and communication studies rather than to socio-legal scholarship.

3.4 Applicability as an Open Question

Given that these two frameworks originate outside the present context- Entman's model from US political communication and Edel and Josua's framework from Egyptian and Uzbek state rhetoric- this thesis treats their applicability to Bangladeshi English-language press coverage of extrajudicial killings as an open theoretical question rather than a presupposition. Two possibilities were considered at the design stage. The first is that the combined framework is readily transferable: Entman's four functions can be reliably identified and distinguished, and Edel and Josua's legitimation logic applies to journalistic texts as it does to state rhetoric. The second possibility is that the framework encounters restrictions in this context; for example, certain functions may rarely be stated explicitly in substantive findings about how legitimation operates in this genre.

Preliminary coding of the sample indicates that the second possibility is at least partially supported: treatment recommendations tend to be consistently implicit rather than explicit. It is typically inferred from the unqualified relay of official accounts or from incidental details, such as running death tolls presented without critical commentary, rather than from any directly stated instruction to act. This is interpreted not as a coding failure but as a substantive finding about how legitimation operates in this genre. Hard news formats may structurally suppress clear

treatment recommendations, even while performing legitimating work through the other three functions. This observation is further developed in the discussion chapter (RQ3).

3.5 From Framework to Research Questions

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter is not an end in itself: each part of it is built to answer one of the thesis's three research questions. This section makes those connections explicit.

Section 3.1 lays the groundwork for RQ1, which asks how Entman's four framing functions—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—appear in coverage of the killings across the three news outlets analyzed in this thesis. Of particular importance here is the two-axis approach to moral evaluation introduced in that section: rather than treating moral judgment as simply present or absent, it distinguishes between who is being judged (the state or the victims) and how (positively or negatively). This refinement allows the analysis to capture more nuance than Entman's original framework would on its own, since a single article can, for instance, condemn the state's actions while also casting doubt on the victims' innocence.

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 together operationalize RQ2, which asks whether, and if so, how, these frames do political work: specifically, whether they function to legitimate the killings, contest them, or fall somewhere in between. Section 3.2 introduces the legitimization–contestation spectrum used to locate each frame along this continuum, rather than forcing it into a legitimating/contesting binary. RQ2 also asks a more evaluative question: does this combined framework (Entman's four functions plus the spectrum) actually succeed in capturing the range of positions found in the data, or does it strain against cases that don't fit neatly?

Section 3.4 underpins RQ3, which shifts from what the frames show to what applying this framework taught the thesis methodologically. This matters because the framework was originally developed with different material in mind: state actors' public rhetoric, typically in Western or semi-authoritarian contexts with clearer legal categories. Here, it is instead applied to media texts in Bangladesh, where the legal status of the killings is itself disputed. Two recurring difficulties emerged in this process: first, coding treatment recommendations proved harder than

coding the other three framing functions, since news articles rarely propose solutions as explicitly as political speeches do; second, a binary legitimating/contesting measure proved too blunt, which is what motivated the spectrum approach used throughout Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design to examine how English-language Bangladeshi news media frame extrajudicial killings. The case study is defined according to Flyvbjerg's (2006) conceptualization, which emphasizes a bounded, purposively selected instance rather than a single narrative example. The analysis centers on coverage of extrajudicial killings in three news outlets, chosen for their capacity to demonstrate how an established theoretical framework operates beyond its original context. The qualitative approach is justified, as the aim is not to quantify the frequency of predefined frames in a large sample, but to provide an in-depth interpretation of how Entman's (1993) four framing functions and Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimation logic appear within a small, purposively selected set of texts. This methodology facilitates attention to nuance and internal variation that would likely be overlooked in a larger-N, frequency-based design.

Case-study research of this type is sometimes perceived as a weaker methodological choice than large-N quantitative designs, largely due to concerns about generalizability. Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that this view is based on several misconceptions. The first misconception is that generalization from a single case is impossible, which would render case studies irrelevant to scientific progress. The second is the assumption that case studies are primarily useful for generating hypotheses, whereas other methods are better suited for hypothesis testing. In contrast, Flyvbjerg maintains that strategically selected case studies can produce context-dependent knowledge that, although not statistically generalizable, remains analytically rigorous and theoretically significant (p. 221-223).

This distinction is directly relevant to the methodological design of the present study. The objective is not to measure the frequency of specific frames across Bangladeshi media or to generalize findings to all coverage of extrajudicial killings. Instead, the aim is to evaluate whether a framework developed primarily from analyses of state rhetoric in other authoritarian

contexts, specifically Edel and Josua's work on Egypt and Uzbekistan, remains applicable when applied to a case with distinct characteristics: media discourse rather than state discourse, and a context in which the legality of the killings is contested. This constitutes the type of theory-testing application for which Flyvbjerg contends case-study research is particularly well suited.

4.2 Case Selection

According to Flyvbjerg's (2006) typology of case-selection strategies, Bangladeshi “crossfire”, “gunfight”, “shootout” reporting is treated as a critical case for evaluating the combined Entman/Edel-and-Josua framework. Flyvbjerg defines a critical case as one possessing strategic importance for the general problem under investigation (Flyvbjerg , 2006, pp. 230). It is selected because it represents a rigorous test, enabling the researcher to reason, "if this holds here, it likely holds elsewhere" or, conversely, "if this fails here, it likely fails everywhere."

Bangladesh's crossfire discourse qualifies as a critical case in this sense for two compounding reasons, each of which makes the framework's task harder than it would be in the contexts where it was originally developed. First, it combines contested legality: the Entman/Edel-and-Josua framework was built largely around cases where the state's use of lethal force was acknowledged, even if justified through discursive framing. Egypt's post-coup crackdown and Uzbekistan's Andijon massacre were both, at some level, admitted to have happened. Bangladeshi crossfire killings, by contrast, are officially denied as extrajudicial killings altogether; the state's official narrative is that these deaths occur during genuine armed exchanges. This removes a discursive anchor point, an acknowledged act of repression to be justified, that the original framework implicitly assumes exists.

Second, the case is produced within a press environment operating under significant political constraint. Where Edel and Josua analyzed direct state rhetoric, press conferences, court proceedings, presidential speeches, this thesis analyzes journalistic text shaped by self-censorship, indirect language, and the practical risks facing reporters covering state violence. This raises a further question the original framework was not designed to answer: can tools built to code explicit political speech be meaningfully applied to media coverage that may itself be hedging, deflecting, or working around what it cannot say outright?

These two features render Bangladesh a demanding and therefore strategically valuable test of whether Entman's framing model, developed within a Western media-studies tradition, and Edel and Josua's legitimization framework, constructed around authoritarian state rhetoric in Egypt and Uzbekistan, can be jointly and meaningfully applied to a case that diverges from both original contexts along two distinct dimensions.

The 2009–2020 period represents a third dimension of this critical-case logic. The Awami League assumed office in January 2009, and "crossfire" killings intensified during its tenure (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The endpoint is also intentional: the 31 July 2020 police killing of retired army major Sinha Md Rashed Khan, an atypical victim not fitting the usual "drug suspect" profile, attracted scrutiny that is credited with "forc[ing] security forces to confront their culture of extrajudicial executions" (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Following this event, coverage patterns began to change. This timeframe therefore encompasses the period of most sustained "crossfire" narration, providing the most rigorous test for the framework.

This case-selection logic addresses the first misconception Flyvbjerg identifies regarding case-study research: the belief that general, theoretical, context-independent knowledge is inherently more valuable than concrete, practical, context-dependent knowledge (2006, p. 224). According to this view, a single case study is often dismissed as merely preliminary, useful for generating hypotheses but insufficient for producing strong knowledge until validated by larger-N research. Flyvbjerg counters that this hierarchy is flawed: strategically selected case studies do not require statistical generalization to yield rigorous and valuable knowledge. This thesis adopts that logic. It does not assert that its findings generalize statistically to all non-Western media contexts, nor that Bangladeshi crossfire reporting is representative of broader media coverage of state violence. Rather, it contends that a critical-case test of the combined framework in this specific, challenging context produces analytically valuable, context-dependent insights regarding the framework's strengths and limitations. Such knowledge is valuable precisely because the case is difficult.

4.3 Sample Selection

The sample comprises 25 English-language news articles reporting on 46 deaths attributed to extrajudicial killings, locally referred to as "crossfire," "gunfight," or "shootout" incidents, in

Bangladesh. These articles were sourced from three English-language news outlets: *The Daily Star*, the most widely circulated English-language daily in Bangladesh; *New Age*, which is consistently critical of government narratives on state violence and has faced governmental pressure; and *bdnews24.com*, the first online news portal in Bangladesh, which was temporarily shut down by the government in September 2023. All selected articles were published between 2009 and 2020, a period justified in full in Section 4.2 as the interval of least-interrupted "crossfire" coverage in Bangladesh.

Articles were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on hard-news reports that directly address specific extrajudicial killing incidents to ensure genre comparability across outlets. Incidents were identified through *Body Count*, an award-winning data journalism project by Netra News, led by journalist Nazmul Ahasan, which documents 2,597 extrajudicial killings, fatal shootings, and instances of custodial torture by Bangladeshi security forces over a thirteen-year period (Netra News, 2023). Utilizing this dataset, rather than conducting an open-ended web search, ensured that each incident included in the analysis was independently verified as a documented extrajudicial killing. Netra News was excluded as a candidate outlet for the sample because it was founded in 2019, which postdates much of the study's timeframe (2009–2020), and as an investigative outlet, it does not produce the routine hard-news incident reporting required for the sample. Exclusion of Netra News also avoids any conflict of interest due to the author's affiliation with the outlet.

4.4 Data Collection

Netra News's *Body Count* dataset documents 2,597 verified extrajudicial killings, fatal shootings, and instances of custodial torture by Bangladeshi security forces, with each entry linked to its original source news article. From this dataset, English-language news articles published by *The Daily Star*, *New Age*, and *bdnews24.com* were reviewed for accessibility. Bengali-language coverage was excluded to keep the sample restricted to English-language reporting and to maintain accessibility for a broader, non-Bengali-reading audience. Some linked articles returned access errors or had since been removed or unpublished; these were excluded from the sample. This process yielded 11 accessible articles from *The Daily Star*, 7 from *New Age*, and 7 from *bdnews24.com*, totaling 25 articles covering 46 deaths. Because inclusion depended on current online accessibility rather than archival completeness, it is possible that incidents whose original

coverage has since been taken offline or paywalled are underrepresented in the sample; this is addressed further in Section 4.7 (Limitations).

The collected articles were saved and compiled into a single document, then uploaded to Google Pinpoint, an investigative research tool, to support an initial exploratory pass across the corpus. This step helped surface recurring patterns; in language, sourcing, and narrative structure that informed the early development of the study's coding approach.

4.5 Analytical Framework and Coding Procedure

Each article was coded qualitatively against Entman's (1993) four framing functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Consistent with Entman's own specification, a frame was considered present in a text if at least one of these functions could be identified, since not all four functions necessarily co-occur within a single text. Moral evaluation was coded along two axes rather than as a single value; 'the state' and 'the victim' were each assessed independently as positive, negative, mixed, or neutral/absent. Since a single article frequently evaluates the two actors in opposite or non-corresponding directions (for example, a text may frame the state's conduct as procedurally justified while simultaneously undermining the state's own causal account through internal contradiction).

The four framing functions were coded using different structures. Moral evaluation and treatment recommendation were assigned dedicated fields in the coding spreadsheet and coded independently for each article. In contrast, problem definition and causal interpretation were identified through close reading of fields already captured during data extraction, primarily the article's headline and primary media label for problem definition (for example, whether the event was framed as a "gunfight" or "shootout"), and the "actor" and "official narrative frame" fields for causal interpretation (for example, whether the state, the victim, or a third party was reported as causally responsible for the death). This approach reflects a practical distinction in how directly each function can be extracted from the text. Problem definition and causal interpretation are typically signaled by a small number of specific words or phrases concentrated in the headline and opening paragraph, making them identifiable through the descriptive fields collected at the data-extraction stage. In contrast, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation required dedicated interpretive judgment applied consistently across the full

text of each article and were therefore given their own structured fields to ensure systematic, consistent coding for every case.

Coding also drew on Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimization logic, treating combinations of these four functions as indicative of a text's position along a legitimization-contestation continuum, rather than a legitimating/contesting binary. This continuum was operationalized as a five-point ordinal score (1 = fully legitimating, no counter-voice present; 5 = fully contesting; the text itself frames the killing as extrajudicial or unlawful), coded per incident based on the presence, source, and prominence of any content that complicates or contradicts the official narrative. This scale is not itself drawn from Edel and Josua, who conceptualise legitimization as a spectrum without proposing a specific coding instrument; the five-point scale is proposed by the author of this thesis and its own operationalization of that concept, developed to allow systematic comparison across the sample. Incidents were also coded for the endangered value invoked in the state's account (adapting Edel and Josua's diagnostic-frame categories, principally security, legality, and public order), which in one case required departing from these categories: coverage of a Chittagong Hill Tracts incident invoking an indigenous political organisation was coded as implicating national unity/societal cohesion rather than ordinary security, since the article's crime-and-security register elided the ethnic-political dimension of the killing.

Coding proceeded in three stages. First, all 25 articles were compiled and passed through Google Pinpoint, an investigative research tool, to conduct an open, exploratory read across the corpus. This process surfaced recurring linguistic and structural patterns, including the routine use of scare quotes around state terminology ("gunfight," "crossfire," "shootout"). The consistent citation of victims' criminal records, and the comparative rarity of counter-narrative content, informed the design of the coding categories described above. Second, a structured spreadsheet was built to extract descriptive fields from each article (victim identity, incident details, official narrative content, recovered evidence, counter-narrative content, prior criminal record, and related fields), which served as the raw evidentiary basis for the interpretive codes applied in the third stage. Third, each article was coded against the full framework; Entman's four functions, the two-axis moral evaluation, the diagnostic frame, and the legitimization–contestation score.

Coding decisions were logged alongside each entry, and articles presenting a genuinely ambivalent or borderline judgment, such as cases combining a legitimating official account with an unflagged internal contradiction, or cases where institutional third-party contestation addressed the broader pattern of killings rather than the specific incident, were flagged for review rather than resolved unilaterally at first pass, in order to preserve an auditable record of interpretive judgment for the trustworthiness measures.

4.6 Trustworthiness and Rigor

Due to the interpretive nature of qualitative frame coding, multiple strategies were implemented to enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis. Coding was conducted in three sequential rounds across the entire sample rather than as a single undifferentiated pass. The first round established basic descriptive information for each article, including victim identity, incident details, and official narrative content.

The second round applied Entman's (1993) four framing functions, while the third round assigned the legitimation-contestation score. This structured approach enabled categories refined during the process, particularly the two-axis moral evaluation of the state and the victim, as well as the handling of internal contradictions within the state's account, to be applied consistently across all 25 articles, as the descriptive and functional layers had been completed prior to the final round.

The coding process occurred intermittently over approximately two weeks, rather than in a single continuous session. During this period, the researcher took several short breaks to review additional articles outside the sample, which helped clarify recurring ambiguities. Most notably, the approach to coding the state's account when its narrative contained internal inconsistencies, such as an official timeline reporting an arrest before the reported killing. Resuming coding after these intervals facilitated more consistent treatment of such cases than would have been possible in a single uninterrupted session.

4.7 Limitations

This design has clear limitations. The small sample size (25 articles, 46 deaths) and single-country case mean findings are not statistically generalizable, though as argued in Section 4.2, this is a deliberate methodological choice rather than a shortcoming, consistent with

Flyvbjerg's (2006) defense of context-dependent case knowledge (p. 223). The outlet distribution across the sample is also uneven (11 Daily Star, 7 New Age, 7 bdnews24.com), reflecting each outlet's actual volume of accessible coverage rather than a deliberately balanced design; conclusions about bdnews24.com in particular should be treated as indicative rather than definitive, given the smaller number of articles available for that outlet.

A further limitation concerns how the sample was assembled: articles were included based on the current online accessibility of links contained in the *Body Count* dataset, rather than on archival completeness. Some linked articles returned access errors or had been removed since original publication. It is therefore possible that incidents whose original coverage is no longer accessible online are underrepresented in the sample, introducing a degree of survivorship bias toward articles that have remained published and indexed.

Coding of implicit frame elements, particularly moral evaluation and the legitimization–contestation score, which are often unstated or only indirectly signaled in hard-news text, necessarily involves interpretive judgment. This is addressed through the measures described in Section 4.6 rather than eliminated entirely, and readers should treat the coding as one systematic, documented interpretation of the corpus rather than an objectively verifiable measurement. Relatedly, because coding was conducted by a single researcher, no formal inter-coder reliability statistic could be calculated; the consistency measures in Section 4.6 substitute for, but do not fully replace, the reliability check that a second independent coder would provide.

A related limitation concerns two functions that were coded without a dedicated structured field. Problem definition and causal interpretation are identified through close reading of existing descriptive fields, rather than through independent coding and recording for each article. Consequently, these two functions are less systematically documented than moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. Thus, the reported patterns for problem definition and causal interpretation in Chapter 5 should be regarded as a close-reading synthesis, rather than as directly auditable coded data comparable to the other two functions.

An additional limitation pertains to the granularity of victim-level data within the 46-death count. This figure is derived from headline and aggregate reporting (e.g., "2 drug dealers killed"), yet numerous individual victims received limited or no elaboration in the article body. This pattern

aligns with the eight articles coded as providing no moral evaluation of the victim (Section 5.2.3). Consequently, the sample enables reliable article- and incident-level analysis, but coding at the level of each named individual was not feasible for a subset of the 46 deaths.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

This study relies exclusively on secondary data: published news articles that were already in the public domain at the time of analysis. No living individuals were directly contacted, interviewed, or approached as part of the research, and no new personal data was collected beyond what each outlet had already published. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required in accordance with the relevant institutional guidelines.

Nonetheless, the subject matter- deaths, many of them contested, involving named individuals and their surviving family members carries ethical weight beyond routine textual analysis. Victims' names, ages, and alleged criminal histories are reproduced in this thesis as they appeared in the original reporting, since altering or anonymizing already-published, publicly attributed information would not meaningfully protect privacy and would undermine the incident-level specificity the analysis depends on. Care has nonetheless been taken to represent family testimony and counter-narrative content, where present in the source articles, accurately and without sensationalizing the circumstances of each death.

The author's professional position as a journalist at Netra News, whose *Body Count* project was used to identify candidate incidents, is disclosed in Section 4.3; Netra News was excluded from the outlet sample specifically to avoid a conflict of interest. More broadly, the author's dual role as both a working journalist covering state violence in Bangladesh and a researcher analyzing how that violence is reported carries an inherent positionality: professional familiarity with the subject matter and with some of the sourcing conventions used by domestic press likely informed which patterns were noticed during coding. This is disclosed here as a matter of reflexivity rather than treated as a source of bias to be eliminated, consistent with qualitative research norms that treat researcher positionality as a contextual factor to be made transparent rather than a defect to be removed.

5. Findings & Analysis

5.1 Introduction to Findings

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative frame analysis conducted on 25 English-language news articles, which report on 46 deaths attributed to extrajudicial "crossfire" killings in Bangladesh between 2009 and 2020. Following the establishment of the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 and the coding procedure in Chapter 4. The current chapter details the results of the coding process, organized according to the thesis's three research questions.

Section 5.2 addresses RQ1, examining how Entman's (1993) four framing functions- problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation- appear across the sample. Particular attention is given to the two-axis coding of moral evaluation developed in this thesis, which allows the state and the victim in each incident to be evaluated independently rather than collapsed into a single judgment, and to the striking near-uniform absence of treatment recommendations across the corpus, a pattern that speaks directly to the genre constraints of hard-news reporting.

Section 5.3 addresses RQ2, presenting the distribution of articles along the legitimization-contestation spectrum introduced in Section 3.2, and examining, through close reading of a small number of illustrative cases, how and where these frames perform legitimating or contesting political work, including cases where contestation emerges not from an external counter-source, but from contradictions embedded within the state's own official account.

Section 5.4 addresses RQ3, reflecting on the methodological insights generated by applying Entman's framework, together with Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimization logic, to media text rather than state rhetoric, in a domestic context where the legality of the killings themselves remains officially contested. Prior to the detailed discussion, Table 5.1 provides a summary of the coded sample across its key analytical dimensions, offering a descriptive overview of the entire corpus.

Table 5.1. Summary of Coded Sample (N = 25)

Dimension	Finding
Articles by outlet	The Daily Star: 11; New Age: 7; bdnews24.com: 7
Legitimation-contestation score	Score 1 (fully legitimating): 15, Score 2: 7, Score 3: 2, Score 4: 1, Score 5: 0
Diagnostic frame	Security/Legality: 24 · National unity/societal cohesion: 1
Moral evaluation of victim	Negative: 15 · Neutral/not mentioned: 8 · Mixed/contradictory: 2
Treatment recommendation present	0 of 25
Institutional third-party contestation present	2 of 25
Linguistic distancing (scare quotes) present	23 of 25

Taken as a whole, these figures point to a sample dominated by articles that reproduce the state's account with little sustained contestation: fifteen of twenty-five articles score at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum, no article scores at the fully contesting end, and treatment

recommendations are absent throughout. At the same time, the sample contains a small number of significant exceptions to this pattern, cases where family testimony, an internal contradiction within the official narrative itself, or institutional human rights reporting substantially complicates the state's account, even without the article ever stating this contradiction outright. The sections that follow examine both this dominant pattern and these exceptions in detail, treating the exceptions not as noise to be set aside but as some of the most analytically revealing cases in the corpus.

5.2.1 Problem Definition

Close reading of the sample's headlines, primary media labels, and framing categories indicates that the dominant problem definition is one inherited directly from the state: an event is presented as a law-enforcement operation; a raid, patrol, or "recovery drive", that escalated into an armed confrontation. This framing is visible even at the level of vocabulary. Twenty-three of the twenty-five articles place scare quotes around the state's own terminology, in either the headline or the body text: "gunfight," "shootout," "crossfire," "criminal," "peddler." This pattern recurs across all three outlets, The Daily Star, New Age, and bdnews24.com alike- suggesting a shared journalistic convention rather than a distinctive editorial stance particular to any one outlet.

This convention serves a subtle yet structurally ambiguous function. The use of quotation marks indicates that the terminology originates with the state rather than the newspaper, thereby distancing the outlet from full endorsement of the label. However, this distancing rarely extends further: after placing "gunfight" in quotation marks, articles typically proceed to recount the event using the state's sequence of facts, without presenting alternative accounts. Consequently, the problem definition is formally hedged but substantively unchallenged. Readers are shown that the terminology is attributed to another source, but are seldom provided with guidance on whose account of the event should be trusted. This pattern closely parallels Edel and Josua's (2018) analysis of Egyptian and Uzbek state rhetoric, where repeated legitimating vocabulary becomes normalized through repetition. In this context, normalization occurs not through state repetition, but through the press's routine and nearly automatic reproduction of state vocabulary, hedged only enough to maintain formal journalistic distance.

A comparison of outlets reveals only limited variation in this pattern. All three outlets employ the same core operational vocabulary and the same scare-quote convention; none in the sample use terms such as "extrajudicial killing" or "unlawful killing" in headlines. Where variation does occur, it is at the level of individual articles rather than as an outlet-wide policy. The most notable example is *New Age's* coverage of Mohammad Belal ("Suspected peddler found dead", row-15), where the headline omits the state's operational vocabulary entirely, using neither "gunfight," "crossfire," nor any quoted term. This represents a distinct linguistic strategy from the scare-quote convention prevalent elsewhere in the sample and corresponds to a case where the causal account is genuinely ambiguous (see Section 5.2.2). The article does not attribute the death to police action, and its headline reflects this uncertainty rather than following a template for police-attributed killings. This case suggests that headline vocabulary is more closely aligned with the clarity of the underlying causal claim than with any outlet-level editorial position, a point further explored in the discussion of causal interpretation below.

5.2.2 Causal Interpretation

Drawing on the sample's coded "actor" and "official narrative frame" fields, causal interpretation follows problem definition closely, and in most of the sample the two functions work in tandem: having defined the event as a law-enforcement operation, an article then attributes the resulting death to the victim's own violent resistance, sourced almost exclusively to police statements. This is the "self-defense" justification pattern that Hess and Martin (2006, pp. 262) identify as a standard tactic for pre-empting public outrage after repressive violence, and it appears here in its most literal form (Perkins & Bourgeois, 2006, pp. 168). The law enforcement officers "forced to retaliate," victims who "opened fire" first. Across the sample, this remains the single most common causal claim, and it is rarely contested outright by any competing source within the article itself (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010, pp. 161).

When this default causal account is undermined, it occurs not through external counter-narratives but through contradictions within the official account's own reported sequence of events. The most notable examples involve a recurring pattern in which police accounts state that the victim was arrested prior to the alleged gunfight. For instance, in the cases of *Mohammad Aziz* (row-18) and *Rasel Dewan* (row-19) (both reported by *New Age*), police narratives indicate that each individual was taken into custody the night or day before, then brought on a subsequent

"recovery drive" to locate hidden weapons or contraband, during which the fatal exchange purportedly occurred. The sequence "arrested, then killed during a joint operation" is inconsistent with the claim that the victim opened fire on police who encountered him unexpectedly. A more explicit example appears in *The Daily Star's* coverage of Saiful Karim (row-5), where the headline states that he was "killed hours after arrest." In this instance, the article itself highlights the tension between custody and causation, rather than leaving it for the reader to infer. In none of these three cases does the reporting establish an explicit causal link between the arrest and the death, nor does it use the term "custody" in relation to the killing; the contradiction is present in the reported facts rather than in the article's argumentation.

A distinct, smaller subset of the sample diverges entirely from the police-centered causal template. In cases involving *Mustaq* and *Mokter* (*The Daily Star*, row-8), as well as two *New Age* articles concerning a Cox's Bazar peddler, causation is attributed to "group-firing" between rival drug-trafficking factions. In these instances, the state is not identified as the causal agent; police are described as discovering the body or arriving after the incident, rather than participating in the killing. This repositions the state's narrative role from active participant to investigative authority, a distinction that has implications for the moral evaluation assigned to these articles (Section 5.2.3), as a state that did not cause a death cannot readily be assessed as having acted justifiably or unjustifiably.

No systematic differences in causal interpretation are observed at the outlet level. Both the arrest-before-death and group-firing patterns appear in *The Daily Star* and *New Age*, indicating that these variations are driven by the specific events being reported rather than by editorial house style in constructing causal claims.

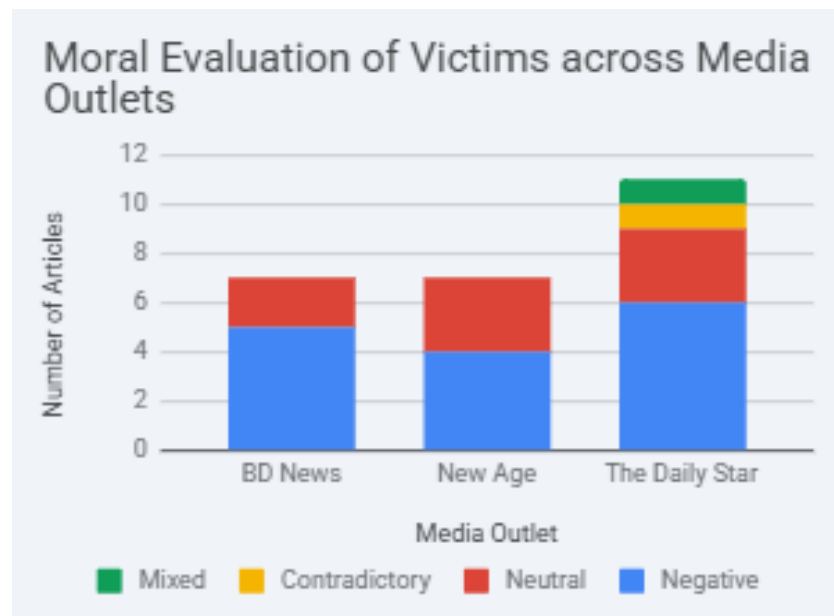
5.2.3 Moral Evaluation

Among Entman's four framing functions, moral evaluation required the most significant adaptation in this thesis. The two-axis approach developed in Chapter 3 provides the primary analytical framework for this purpose. Coding the state and the victim as separate, independently scored dimensions, rather than treating moral evaluation as a single value for the entire article, proved necessary because these evaluations often diverge within the same text. For example, an article may construct a legitimating case around the victim by referencing a criminal record, while simultaneously undermining its own legitimating case for the state through an unaddressed

contradiction in the reported timeline. A single combined score would obscure such tensions rather than reveal them.

On the state axis, evaluation is positive or implicitly positive throughout nearly the entire sample. This positivity is rarely explicit; no article directly praises the conduct of security forces. Instead, positive framing is constructed through procedural detail: officers are consistently named with their rank and station,

recovered evidence such as weapons, narcotics, and cash is itemized, and injuries sustained by law enforcers are reported alongside the victim's death. These elements lend the account an evidentiary, procedural tone that implicitly frames the operation as lawful and controlled. This pattern



persists even in the few articles where the causal account is internally contradictory (Section 5.2.2). The state axis remains coded as positive in the *Aziz*, *Rasel Dewan*, and *Saiful Karim* cases, as none of these articles editorializes against the police, despite reporting facts that a critical reader might interpret differently. The only partial exception is the bdnews24.com article covering the killing of a UPDF member in Rangamati, where legitimation operates through omission rather than positive procedural framing. The victim's identity as a member of an indigenous political organization based in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is never explained, allowing the killing to be categorized within the generic 'armed extremist' register used for ordinary crime-related deaths elsewhere in the sample, without the article making any affirmative case for the state's conduct.

The victim axis reveals considerable variation, which constitutes the primary source of analytical complexity in the sample. Fifteen of the twenty-five articles assess the victim negatively, often by listing prior criminal cases, quantities of recovered contraband, or employing explicit criminal

labels such as "drug trader," "dacoit boss," or "yaba godfather." Eight articles provide no evaluation of the victim; the deceased is named, but no criminal history, occupation, or other distinguishing details are included, leaving the moral status of the death unaddressed. Two articles present genuinely mixed evaluations, warranting closer examination. In the Daily Star's coverage of *Ziaur Rahman* (row-2), the victim is described as "accused in several cases" according to police sources, while his uncle's account portrays him sympathetically, describing his disappearance prior to his death. This juxtaposition of accusation and sympathy is presented without resolution. In the Daily Star's coverage of *Saiful Karim* (row-5), the contradiction is even more pronounced: the article labels him a "yaba godfather" but also notes that he was a three-time top taxpayer in Cox's Bazar and a government-recognized Commercially Important Person. These cases cannot be reduced to a single legitimating or contesting judgment. This irreducibility—where a single text positions the victim as both "criminal" and "sympathetic victim"—motivates the shift from a legitimization binary to the spectrum measure developed in Section 5.3.

5.2.4 Treatment Recommendation

Entman's (1993) fourth framing function, treatment recommendation, which involves proposing a solution or corrective response to the defined problem, is notably absent from this sample. None of the twenty-five articles examined proposes an investigation into the circumstances of the killing, advocates for policy change, or suggests any institutional response beyond reporting the event itself. This absence is consistent across all variables, including media outlet, legitimization score, and the presence of internal contradictions or counter-narrative content. Even the two articles that present the strongest institutional third-party contestation—New Age coverage referencing Human Rights Forum Bangladesh and Ain o Salish Kendra statistics, and bdnews24.com coverage citing Human Rights Watch's direct allegation of custodial torture—limit their reporting to contextualizing contestation, without advancing from evidence to an explicit recommendation such as an inquiry, accountability mechanism, or policy reform.

When any element resembling a "solution" is present, it manifests as narrative closure rather than an explicit treatment recommendation. Typically, an article reports the death, situates it within the state's procedural account, and concludes, thereby implicitly treating the case as resolved. This approach is structurally distinct from Entman's original conception of treatment

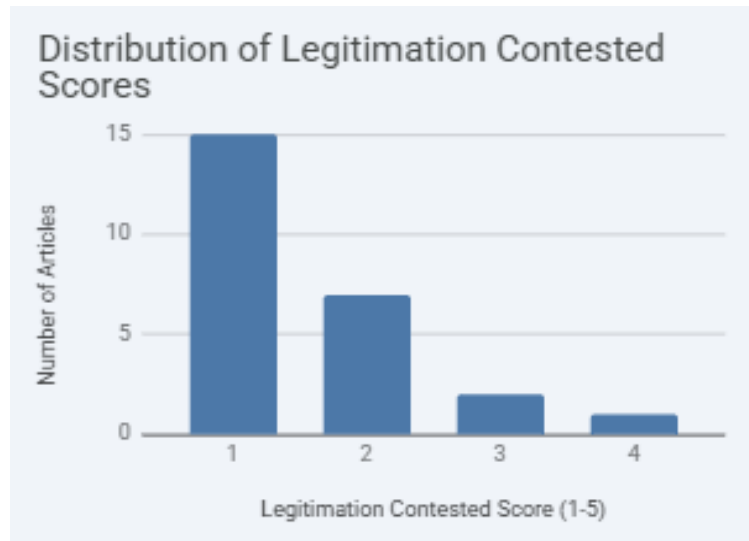
recommendation, which was developed for a broader range of political communication, such as speeches, policy statements, and opinion journalism, where proposing a response to a stated problem is a conventional rhetorical strategy. In contrast, hard-news incident reporting, which predominates in this sample, adheres to a different convention: its primary function is to report an event as a discrete, closed occurrence, rather than to advocate for subsequent action. The near-total absence of this fourth function throughout the corpus should therefore be interpreted as a structural characteristic of the genre, rather than as a deficiency in any individual outlet's coverage. This finding represents one of the thesis's clearer methodological contributions, which is further explored in Section 5.4.

Collectively, the four framing functions analyzed in this section characterize a sample in which the state's problem definition and causal account are reproduced with only formal, hedged distancing (Section 5.2.1). Causal contradictions, when present, emerge through the sequence of reported facts rather than through direct contestation (Section 5.2.2). The state is evaluated favorably in nearly all cases, whereas victims receive a more varied and occasionally internally contradictory moral evaluation (Section 5.2.3). Furthermore, no article transitions from reporting the killing to recommending any response (Section 5.2.4). This combination of functions—largely, though not uniformly, legitimating; formally hedged but substantively unchallenged—frames the central question addressed in Section 5.3: where, and to what extent, this pattern shifts toward contestation when the four functions are considered collectively as a single legitimization judgment.

5.3.1 Distribution of Legitimation Scores

The legitimization-contestation spectrum, introduced in Section 3.2 and operationalized as a five-point scale in Section 4.5, was applied to each of the twenty-five articles in the sample. This process synthesized the four Entman-function codes outlined in Section 5.2 into a single assessment of each text's position between fully legitimating (1) and fully contesting (5) the state's account. The resulting distribution is heavily skewed toward the legitimating end: fifteen articles (60 percent) score at 1, seven (28 percent) at 2, two (8 percent) at 3, and one (4 percent) at 4. No article in the sample scores at 5.

This distribution provides an initial, direct response to RQ2. The prevailing pattern in Bangladeshi English-language hard-news coverage of "crossfire" killings is one of near-total legitimization. In most cases, there is no counter-voice, family testimony, institutional contestation, or internal contradiction in the reported timeline; the state's account is the only version of events presented. This outcome aligns with the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, which anticipates that a press operating under significant political constraint, as established in Section



4.2, will rarely generate contestation without an external source willing to challenge the official account on the record. Consequently, hard-news articles reporting on routine "gunfights" have limited structural opportunities to introduce contestation.

The non-uniformity of the distribution at 1 is significant. Ten of the twenty-five articles (40 percent) diverge from full legitimization to varying degrees, which is central to the thesis's methodological argument. The reasons for these departures do not align with a simple legitimating versus contesting binary. Some articles diverge due to ambiguous causal actors (the "group-firing" cases, discussed in Section 5.2.2, coded as 2), others because of muted or unelaborated family testimony (also coded as 2). One article departs because the official account's timeline undermines itself (*Saiful Karim*, coded as 3), and another due to a direct, named institutional allegation of custodial torture (*Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, coded as 4). Collapsing these four distinct mechanisms into a single "contested" category, as required by a binary measure, would conflate structurally different forms of contestation, a methodological issue addressed in detail in Section 5.4.

5.3.2 Outlet Comparison

The distribution of legitimization scores across outlets complicates any straightforward ranking of the three sources from most to least legitimating. The overall pattern is more meaningfully

interpreted as a distributional shape rather than a single average. The Daily Star (n=11) publishes seven articles at score 1, three at score 2, and one at score 3 (*Saiful Karim*), indicating a distribution weighted toward legitimation with a narrow but notable tail of contestation. New Age (n=7) publishes two articles at score 1, four at score 2, and one at score 3, making it proportionally the least concentrated at the fully legitimating end among the outlets. This pattern results less from strong contestation and more from recurring ambiguous-causation and muted-testimony cases. The bdnews24.com (n=7) exhibits the most polarized distribution: six articles at score 1 and one at score 4, with no articles at scores 2 or 3.

This final pattern warrants further examination. Although the mean legitimation score for bdnews24.com approximates the sample average, this metric obscures the outlet's actual coverage. Six of its seven articles closely resemble the sample's most legitimating cases, whereas the seventh article—covering Mohsin Sheikh and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, as detailed in Section 5.3.4—constitutes the most contesting article in the dataset. Consequently, bdnews24.com's coverage is more accurately characterized as bimodal rather than moderately contesting. The outlet does not consistently occupy a middle ground between The Daily Star and New Age; instead, it predominantly reproduces the dominant legitimating pattern, with a single, pronounced departure.

The New Age exhibits the opposite pattern. Instead of a few strongly contesting outliers, its articles display a broader distribution across the low-to-middle range of the scale. This distribution aligns with the outlet's established position, as discussed in Section 4.3, of being more consistently critical of government narratives on state violence than the other two outlets. However, this critical stance in the sample is expressed primarily through ambiguity and muted tension, rather than sustained or explicit contestation. No New Age article in the sample matches the direct institutional allegation present in the bdnews24.com outlier. Collectively, these outlet-level patterns indicate that an outlet's general editorial reputation—whether more state-aligned or more critical—does not directly determine the presence or absence of contestation in individual hard-news incident reports. Instead, the emergence of a highly contesting article appears to depend more on the availability and willingness of assertive external sources, such as Human Rights Watch, to be quoted on a specific incident than on the outlet's baseline editorial stance.

5.3.3 Diagnostic Frame: Security/Legality and the UPDF Exception

Edel and Josua's (2018) framework identifies the diagnostic frame—the specific value that a state's account claims is endangered by the target of repression—as central to the construction of legitimization discourse. This framework distinguishes categories such as security, legality, public order, and national unity or societal cohesion (Edel & Josua, 2018, pp.884). Application of this typology to the sample reveals a notable pattern: twenty-four of the twenty-five articles invoke Security and/or Legality as the endangered value. In these cases, the victim is framed as a threat to public safety, whether through violence, weapons possession, or drug trafficking, and their elimination is presented as routine law enforcement rather than a political necessity. This near-uniformity contrasts with Edel and Josua's comparative findings for Egypt and Uzbekistan, where multiple competing master frames—including security, sovereignty, legality, and explicitly political framings such as foreign influence or extremism—were mobilized across different targets and phases of repression (Sections 3.1–3.2 of this thesis). In contrast, the Bangladeshi "crossfire" sample demonstrates minimal diagnostic variation: regardless of the specific circumstances of an individual killing, media coverage consistently employs a narrow security/legality vocabulary across all outlets.

The single exception within the sample is analytically significant despite its limited representation. The bdnews24.com article reporting the deaths of two members of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) in Rangamati does not align with the Security/Legality frame that characterizes the remainder of the sample. The UPDF is not a criminal organization as defined elsewhere in this corpus; rather, it is an indigenous Jumma political organization involved in the protracted Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict, which centers on disputes over land, autonomy, and ethnic recognition rather than conventional crime. This context is absent from the article, which instead identifies the victims solely by their armed-group affiliation and describes their deaths using the same "gunfight" or army-raid terminology applied to drug-related killings throughout the sample. According to Edel and Josua's typology, this case is more accurately coded as invoking national unity or societal cohesion. Here, the endangered value is not routine public safety, but the state's assertion of territorial and political integrity in response to an armed minority political movement. Nevertheless, the article's language does not differentiate this incident from an ordinary security threat.

This finding is relevant to Research Question 2 in two key respects. First, it demonstrates that the near-total dominance of the Security/Legality frame in this sample results partly from omission, rather than accurately reflecting the underlying diversity of state violence in Bangladesh. Although an ethnic-political killing is present in the data, the coverage does not distinguish it analytically from a drug-related killing, thereby collapsing two distinct forms of state violence into a single, undifferentiated vocabulary. Second, this case illustrates a mechanism of legitimation distinct from those discussed in Section 5.2. While drug-related killings legitimize the state through accusation, such as by referencing criminal records or recovered contraband, the UPDF case legitimizes the state through decontextualization by removing the political and ethnic dimensions of the killing. The article eliminates any basis for readers to question the reasons behind this particular armed confrontation or its connection to broader political conflict. Although this case represents only one-twenty-fifth of the sample, it highlights a limitation of the present corpus: with only one ethnic-political case identified through the Body Count dataset and outlet-accessibility sampling described in Section 4.4, it is not possible to determine whether decontextualization is a systematic pattern in Bangladeshi English-language media coverage of ethnic-minority political violence, or an idiosyncratic feature of this single article. This question is better addressed through a targeted follow-up study and is noted as a direction for future research in Section 6.4.

5.3.4 Illustrative Cases

The aggregate patterns identified above are most effectively interpreted through a close analysis of specific articles that diverge significantly from the sample's dominant legitimating pattern. This section examines three such cases in detail: *Saiful Karim* (score 3), *Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah* (score 4), and the UPDF killing in Rangamati (score 1, but analytically distinct, as established in Section 5.3.3).

The Daily Star's coverage of *Saiful Karim*'s death represents the sample's most explicit instance of contestation arising solely from within the official account, without reference to any external counter-source. The headline, "'Gunfight' with Cops: Yaba godfather killed hours after arrest," places the state's operational terminology in quotation marks and simultaneously presents a fact that invites critical scrutiny of the state's causal narrative, specifically that Karim was in police custody prior to the reported "gunfight." The article does not make this inference explicit;

instead, it presents the arrest and subsequent death as sequential events, leaving the contradiction implicit. This ambiguity is further complicated by the article's moral evaluation of the victim, which is genuinely bifurcated: Karim is described as a "yaba godfather," yet the same article notes that he was a three-time top taxpayer in Cox's Bazar and a government-recognized Commercially Important Person, both official designations that are difficult to reconcile with the "godfather" label. When analyzed through Edel and Josua's (2018) framework, this case demonstrates a phenomenon not observable in their state-rhetoric-focused study. Journalists, unlike government spokespeople, compile information from multiple sources, such as police statements, official records, and local reporting, rather than constructing a single, coherent narrative from a single source. As a result, a media account can destabilize a legitimating frame simply by presenting facts from different institutional sources, even without deliberate editorial intent to challenge the state's version of events.

The bdnews24.com article reporting the deaths of two students, *Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, represents the sample's most pronounced instance of contestation and differs from the *Saiful Karim* case in a fundamental way. While the *Karim* case generates contestation through an unnamed internal contradiction, this article features an explicit, attributed institutional statement that directly challenges the state's causal narrative. Human Rights Watch is quoted as stating that many deaths officially described as occurring in "crossfire" are, in fact, "extrajudicial executions of people in custody," with bodies exhibiting "wounds that suggested that they had been tortured." This intervention is qualitatively distinct from the subdued, unelaborated family testimony found in most of the sample's score-2 articles; it is a statement from a recognized international organization that directly contradicts the state's central causal claim, using language that allows little room for alternative interpretation. Two caveats should be considered when interpreting this case. First, the article does not explicitly confirm that Human Rights Watch's statement refers to this specific incident, as opposed to describing a broader pattern into which this case is implicitly situated by proximity within the article. This distinction affects the extent to which this case should be read as direct contestation of these two victims' deaths, and this thesis could not resolve the issue with full confidence based on the available text. Second, and notwithstanding this caveat, the victims in this case are demographically distinct from most of the sample: they are identified as students, not as individuals with a cited criminal record. As a

result, the article's moral evaluation of the victims does not engage the accusatory register used in the drug-related cases, which likely contributes to why this case appears more sympathetic and more contested than the sample's other high-scoring article.

The Rangamati case, discussed extensively in Section 5.3.3 for its diagnostic-frame implications, also serves as a case study of non-contestation, particularly when the underlying event arguably requires the most contextualization. In contrast to the *Saiful Karim* and *Mohsin Sheikh/Jinnah* cases, this article presents no internal contradiction, no family testimony, and no institutional counter-source. It therefore scores at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum, despite addressing a killing situated within one of Bangladesh's longest-running and most politically complex conflicts. When considered alongside the other two cases in this section, the contrast is instructive. Contestation in this sample does not depend on the political significance or contestability of the underlying event, but rather on the presence of specific textual mechanisms, such as an internal contradiction, a quoted family member, or an attributed institutional source, within the coverage of that event. The UPDF case arguably had as much basis for contestation as any article in the sample; its absence here does not indicate that no counter-narrative existed, but rather that none was included in this particular report.

5.3.5 Synthesis: Answering RQ2

Collectively, the findings presented in this section provide a nuanced response to RQ2 regarding whether and how media frames of "crossfire" killings in Bangladesh serve legitimating or contesting political functions. At the aggregate level, the evidence is clear: legitimization dominates the sample. Sixty percent of articles are positioned at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum, none are fully contesting, and the diagnostic frame used to justify these killings is highly uniform. Nearly every case (twenty-four of twenty-five) is framed using Security/Legality language, regardless of the specific circumstances or the reporting outlet. These results extend Edel and Josua's (2018) analysis of authoritarian legitimation discourse into a new context. While their study documented state actors constructing legitimating narratives directly, the present analysis demonstrates that Bangladeshi hard-news reporting reproduces a similar legitimating structure. This structure is characterized by security-oriented, procedurally detailed, and morally weighted narratives against the victim, with media outlets contributing little beyond formal linguistic distancing, such as the scare-quote convention discussed in Section 5.2.1.

Nevertheless, the aggregate pattern does not capture the full complexity of the findings. Outlet-level and case-level analyses reveal that Bangladeshi media do not uniformly legitimate state violence. Three distinct mechanisms of deviation from the dominant pattern were identified, each with unique characteristics. First, ambiguous-causation cases, in which police are not credited with the killing, and muted family testimony account for most modest departures from full legitimation. However, these instances represent a weak form of contestation that remains underdeveloped and is not actively pursued by the reporting. Second, the *Saiful Karim* case illustrates a structurally different mechanism: contestation arising from internal inconsistencies within the official account, revealed only because the reporting incorporated multiple institutional sources with conflicting facts. Third, the *Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah* case demonstrates the strongest mechanism: direct, attributed institutional contestation from an internationally recognized human rights organization, which explicitly challenges the state's causal account. The rarity of this third mechanism—appearing only once in the sample and only because Human Rights Watch was available for comment—suggests that the presence of strong contestation in individual articles depends more on the availability of assertive external sources than on the editorial orientation of the outlet.

The UPDF case introduces an additional dimension that a purely quantitative analysis of legitimation scores would overlook. Although this case is rated at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum, it involves a politically and ethnically charged killing that would ostensibly warrant greater scrutiny than a routine drug-related death. This finding demonstrates that legitimation in the sample operates through at least two distinct mechanisms: accusation, which involves constructing a case against the victim (as seen in drug-related killings), and decontextualization, which entails omitting the political and ethnic aspects of a killing so thoroughly that it becomes indistinguishable from an ordinary case. A legitimation score alone cannot differentiate between these mechanisms, as both yield similar low numeric results. Only the close reading conducted in Section 5.3.4 reveals that these are distinct processes serving different functions.

Taken together, these findings—a heavily skewed yet non-uniform distribution, multiple distinct mechanisms of departure from legitimation, and at least one case where a low score conceals a unique legitimating process—form the central empirical basis for the methodological argument

advanced in Section 5.4. Specifically, they demonstrate that a binary legitimating/contesting measure, or even a single-dimensional numeric spectrum, is inadequate for capturing the full range of legitimation and contestation processes present in this corpus.

5.4 RQ3: Methodological Reflections

Research Question 3 examines the methodological insights that arise from applying Entman's (1993) framing functions and Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimation logic to media texts, rather than state rhetoric, within a non-Western context where the legality of the killings remains officially contested. Several insights emerge directly from the findings presented in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

The most significant insight concerns the necessity of employing a legitimation spectrum rather than a binary measure. The central methodological argument, introduced in Section 3.5 and supported empirically in Section 5.3, demonstrates that a binary legitimating/contesting coding would not accommodate cases such as *Saiful Karim*, where contestation arises from an internal contradiction that the article does not explicitly identify. Similarly, it would not capture the distinction between the sample's two score-2 mechanisms (ambiguous causation and muted testimony) and its single score-4 case (direct institutional allegation). Furthermore, the sample indicates that even a five-point ordinal spectrum, while an improvement over a binary approach, is insufficient to fully represent the dynamics within these texts. For example, two articles may receive the same low numeric score through entirely different mechanisms, as illustrated by the contrast between the UPDF case (legitimation through omission of political context) and the more numerous drug-related score-1 cases (legitimation through explicit accusation). Therefore, future applications of this combined framework to media texts would benefit from supplementing the numeric spectrum with explicit coding of legitimation mechanisms. This approach would distinguish, for example, accusation-based legitimation from omission-based legitimation, rather than relying solely on the spectrum score as a comprehensive summary.

A second insight concerns a distinction in the sources of contestation that was not anticipated at the outset of coding but emerged directly from the data. Contestation in this sample is not a single phenomenon; rather, it comprises at least three structurally distinct types, differentiated by the origin of the destabilizing content. Family testimony, internal inconsistency within official

accounts, and institutional third-party allegations each generate different degrees and forms of contestation. As demonstrated by the *Saiful Karim* and *Mohsin Sheikh/Jinnah* cases, the latter two types can occur even when the article's author does not display any discernible intent to challenge the state's account. This methodological finding is particularly relevant for adapting Edel and Josua's framework to journalistic texts, as opposed to political texts. While their study of state rhetoric analyzed a single, relatively coherent authorial voice deliberately constructing a legitimating narrative, the present analysis examined texts compiled from multiple institutional sources, such as police statements, family interviews, and human rights reporting. In this context, contestation may arise incidentally as a by-product of standard journalistic sourcing practices rather than as an editorial act. Future coding schemes applying this framework to media texts should therefore treat the source of contestation as a distinct analytical dimension, separate from the mere presence of contestation.

A third insight pertains specifically to Entman's fourth framing function. The near-total absence of treatment recommendations across the sample (Section 5.2.4) is not considered a defect in the coding process or a peculiarity of the Bangladeshi cases. Instead, it reflects a structural mismatch between this function and the hard-news incident-report genre. Entman's original framework was developed for a broader range of political communication, including genres where a call to action is conventional. In contrast, hard-news reporting on single, discrete violent incidents is generally disinclined to include this function, regardless of context. Researchers applying Entman's framework to this genre should anticipate that this function will contribute little discriminating analytical value. It is therefore advisable, as in the present study, to treat the near-uniform absence of this function as a finding in itself, rather than seeking variation that the genre is unlikely to produce.

The UPDF case demonstrates a limitation in applying Edel and Josua's diagnostic-frame typology to contexts beyond those originally studied. Their categories, developed from cases in Egypt and Uzbekistan, were effective when the object of repression was clearly identifiable within the typology's framework. However, applying these categories to Bangladeshi crossfire coverage necessitated an independent interpretive judgment by the coder. For example, a case labeled by the source article as an ordinary security threat was more appropriately classified under the national unity or societal cohesion category, even though the article's language did not

indicate this. This observation suggests that applying Edel and Josua's typology to media texts, rather than to state rhetoric where the endangered value is typically signaled, may require researchers to code contrary to the text's explicit framing and to rely on external contextual knowledge not provided by the article.

A further insight relates to the practical challenges of solo coding across multiple interacting layers of the framework. The four Entman functions, the two-axis moral evaluation, the diagnostic frame, and the legitimation score were coded sequentially rather than simultaneously (Section 4.6), which meant that some categories only became fully defined partway through the process. In particular, the distinction between contestation arising from the official account's timeline and that arising from external sources had to be applied retrospectively to articles coded earlier. While this limitation is manageable for a sample of twenty-five articles coded by a single researcher within a defined period, it has broader implications for future research. Effective application of this combined framework appears to require an iterative rather than linear coding process, with the expectation that categories will need ongoing refinement and retrospective adjustment as new patterns emerge in the data, rather than being fully determined prior to analysis.

When considered alongside Edel and Josua's (2018) comparative conclusions, the findings of this thesis indicate a need to further refine the international applicability of their framework. Edel and Josua observed that their two cases converged on broadly similar master frames—security and terrorism—despite differing national contexts, attributing this convergence to international discursive diffusion. In their analysis, regimes adopted legitimating vocabulary from each other and from a shared "war on terror" discourse. The Bangladeshi sample in this study demonstrates a similarly narrow diagnostic framing, but this appears to result from a different mechanism: rather than cross-national diffusion among state actors, it reflects the routine conventions of a single national press genre that reproduces consistent domestic security vocabulary across outlets and years. Therefore, while diagnostic-frame convergence is observed in both studies, it may emerge through distinct mechanisms depending on whether state rhetoric or media reporting is analyzed. This distinction was not addressed in Edel and Josua's original framework, which focused exclusively on state actors.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of a qualitative frame analysis of twenty-five English-language news articles reporting on forty-six deaths attributed to extrajudicial "crossfire" killings in Bangladesh, structured according to the thesis's three research questions.

Regarding RQ1, the analysis demonstrates that Entman's (1993) four framing functions are distributed unevenly across the sample. Problem definition and causal interpretation are predominantly derived from the state's account, with distance maintained primarily through the use of scare quotes around terms such as "gunfight" and "crossfire" in twenty-three of twenty-five articles. This linguistic convention signals distance from state vocabulary without substantively challenging it. Moral evaluation, coded independently for state and victim, emerges as the most analytically productive function. The state is evaluated positively or implicitly positively in nearly all cases, whereas victims receive more varied evaluations, including explicit criminalization (fifteen articles), absence of characterization (eight articles), and internal contradiction (two articles). Treatment recommendation is entirely absent, which is interpreted as a structural feature of the hard-news genre rather than a limitation of the coding process.

For RQ2, the analysis indicates a strong skew toward legitimization: sixty percent of articles are positioned at the fully legitimating end of a five-point spectrum, with none reaching the fully contesting end. The diagnostic frame used to justify these killings is almost uniformly Security/Legality, with only one exception. This exception, involving coverage of a killing related to the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), an indigenous political organization in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), suggests that the observed uniformity results partly from decontextualization rather than accurately reflecting the diversity of state violence. Close examination of the more contested cases reveals that contestation arises through at least three distinct mechanisms: muted family testimony, internal contradictions within the official account's timeline, and direct institutional allegations. These mechanisms cannot be fully distinguished by a single numeric score, although such scoring provides a useful ordering along a continuum.

Addressing RQ3, the analysis identifies several methodological insights from applying Entman's framework and Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimization logic to media texts, rather than state rhetoric, within a domestic context where the legality of the killings remains officially disputed. These insights include the empirical necessity of employing a legitimization spectrum instead of a

binary measure, and the importance of distinguishing the source of contestation from its mere presence, since media texts compiled from multiple institutional sources may generate contestation incidentally rather than through editorial intent. Additionally, there is a genre-level mismatch between Entman's treatment-recommendation function and hard-news reporting, as well as interpretive challenges in applying Edel and Josua's diagnostic-frame typology to cases not anticipated by their original framework.

Collectively, these findings characterize a media landscape in which extrajudicial killings are predominantly reported using the state's terminology, with only sporadic and unevenly distributed deviations. Upon closer analysis, these deviations exhibit greater analytical diversity than their aggregate frequency suggests. The subsequent chapter will address the broader implications of these findings, including their significance for understanding legitimation and contestation in Bangladeshi media coverage of state violence, their contributions to relevant theoretical and methodological literature, and the limitations that should inform the interpretation of these conclusions.

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

6.1 Discussion: Interpreting the Findings

The findings presented in Chapter 5 provide an overview of Bangladeshi English-language press coverage of "crossfire" killings. The analysis reveals that the state's account overwhelmingly dominates the coverage. Sixty percent of the sample is situated at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum. Notably, no article reaches the fully contesting end, nor does any article offer a treatment recommendation. The fourth of Entman's (1993) framing functions is entirely absent. When considered alongside the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 3, these results align with what would be anticipated from a press operating under significant political constraints. In the absence of external sources willing to publicly dispute official accounts, routine hard-news reports on single incidents have limited structural opportunities to introduce contestation independently.

However, the more analytically significant finding of this thesis concerns the nature of the minority of cases that diverge from the dominant pattern of legitimation. Chapter 5 identifies three distinct mechanisms of departure, which differ not only in degree but also in kind,

reflecting varying relationships among journalists, the state, and available sources. The weakest form, which accounts for most modest departures from full legitimation, involves either muted family testimony or the presence of an ambiguous causal actor, as seen in the "group-firing" cases. A stronger and structurally distinct form is observed in the Saiful Karim case, where contestation arises from an inconsistency within the official account's reported timeline, rather than from an external source. Specifically, the article notes that *Karim* was arrested prior to being killed, yet does not explicitly state that this undermines the "gunfight" framing. The strongest form of departure appears only once in the sample, with Human Rights Watch's (HRW) direct and attributed allegation of custodial torture in the coverage of the deaths of *Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*.

This gradient is significant because it indicates that the contestation of state violence in Bangladeshi hard news is not primarily determined by an outlet's general editorial stance or political alignment. Rather, it depends on the contingent availability of specific textual sources, such as a family member willing to speak, institutional facts that do not fully align, or an international human rights organization prepared to comment on a particular incident. However, this interpretation is constrained by a notable evidentiary limitation. The present thesis analyzes published texts rather than the underlying reporting processes. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain from the articles alone whether journalists sought input from human rights organizations or family members and received no response, or whether such outreach was not attempted. The near-uniform legitimation observed in this sample is therefore consistent with at least two distinct explanations that cannot be distinguished here: either a genuine scarcity of institutional actors willing to go on record, or a reporting convention in which such outreach is not routinely pursued for hard-news incident coverage of this nature. Both scenarios would yield the same textual pattern, and distinguishing between them would require interviews with the journalists and outlets involved. Such an approach lies beyond the scope of the textual analysis conducted here, but represents a logical direction for future research as discussed in Section 6.4.

The diagnostic-frame findings support this interpretation and introduce an additional dimension. Twenty-four of the twenty-five articles analyzed employ a consistent Security/Legality vocabulary in their coverage, irrespective of outlet or year. This uniformity is notable given that the incidents span more than a decade and encompass a wide range of circumstances, from

routine drug-related deaths to a killing associated with the protracted Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict. In contrast to Edel and Josua's (2018) comparative findings, where Egyptian and Uzbek state rhetoric converged on similar master frames due to international diffusion and shared global 'war on terror' discourse, the uniformity observed in this thesis appears to result from a different mechanism. Specifically, it reflects the routine conventions of a single national press genre, which applies a standardized domestic security-and-crime vocabulary to all incidents, regardless of their distinct political characteristics.

The UPDF case illustrates this issue clearly. The article covering this killing provides no indication that the victims were members of an indigenous political organization, as opposed to an ordinary criminal or drug-related network. This coverage effectively erases the distinction between two distinct categories of state violence: routine law-enforcement killings and killings associated with an ethnic-political conflict that has its own history, grievances, and stakes. This omission does not necessarily indicate a deliberate editorial decision to obscure the distinction. It may instead reflect a journalistic template developed for the more prevalent drug-related cases, which is then applied by default to cases that do not fit this pattern. Regardless of intent, the outcome is the same. Readers of this article would be unable to discern that this killing occurred within a substantially different political context than the twenty-four other cases in the sample.

Taken together, the near-uniform diagnostic framing and the single notable exception suggest that the legitimating effect of Bangladeshi crossfire coverage operates significantly through homogenization. Structurally different killings are treated as instances of the same generic threat, rather than being distinguished through more direct accusatory mechanisms such as references to criminal records or recovered evidence, which are documented in most of the sample. This finding has no direct parallel in Edel and Josua's original study, where, according to their account, diagnostic frames applied to different targets of repression were more clearly differentiated by the states themselves. Extending this framework to journalistic coverage indicates that homogenization across dissimilar cases may serve as an important legitimating mechanism. This process is easily overlooked because it creates an appearance of uniformity, rather than advancing an explicit argument in any single article.

Considered collectively, these findings support a layered rather than a singular interpretation of Bangladeshi press coverage of extrajudicial killings. At the aggregate level, the press largely

reproduces the state's account, maintaining only superficial linguistic distance. At the level of individual cases, this reproduction is neither absolute nor uniform, but is instead punctuated by contestation that varies in both strength and origin. At the level of diagnostic framing, the appearance of a single, consistent security narrative conceals at least one instance in which a materially different form of state violence has been incorporated into that narrative without acknowledgment. None of these three levels, when considered in isolation, provides an adequate account of the coverage's function. It is the combination of these levels that the methodological approach of this thesis was designed to capture, and the discussion now turns to that methodological contribution.

6.2 Theoretical and Methodological Contribution

This thesis aimed to evaluate whether an existing analytical framework could be constructed to examine authoritarian state rhetoric. Specifically, it assessed the applicability of Entman's (1993) framing functions, in conjunction with Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimation logic, to journalistic reporting produced by a domestic press operating under political constraints and covering killings whose legality is officially contested. The findings indicate that this framework can be applied, but only with adaptations that represent the principal methodological contribution of this thesis.

The first adaptation is empirical rather than conceptual. Edel and Josua's legitimation spectrum was operationalized as a five-point ordinal scale, rather than using their qualitative continuum directly. This scale enabled systematic comparison across twenty-five articles, which would not have been possible through a purely qualitative approach. However, the close reading in Chapter 5 also revealed limitations of the scale, particularly that two articles may receive the same low score despite employing entirely different legitimating mechanisms, such as accusation versus decontextualization. This finding suggests a refinement for future applications of this framework to media texts: a legitimation score should be accompanied by an explicit code for the legitimation mechanism, as the numeric score alone conflates analytically distinct phenomena.

The second adaptation addresses contestation. While Edel and Josua's original study examined a single, coherent authorial voice—the state, intentionally constructing legitimating narratives—this thesis analyzed texts compiled from multiple institutional sources. In this context, contestation may arise incidentally from standard journalistic practices, such as quoting

family members for narrative depth or incorporating facts from various institutions that may not fully align, rather than from deliberate editorial decisions. This represents a new empirical scenario that frameworks focused solely on state rhetoric would not predict. Consequently, legitimation and contestation in media texts cannot be assumed to reflect the same intentional discursive strategies identified by Edel and Josua in Egyptian and Uzbek state rhetoric.

The third adaptation concerns genre. The near-total absence of Entman's treatment-recommendation function in the sample suggests that this function does not transfer effectively from the political communication genres where Entman's framework originated to hard-news incident reports. This finding should be understood not as a shortcoming of the framework, but as a boundary condition that requires explicit recognition. Researchers applying Entman's four functions to hard-news texts should expect this function to offer limited discriminating value and should interpret its absence as a structural feature of the genre, rather than seeking variation that is unlikely to occur.

This study also engages with the broader literature on media in hybrid or semi-authoritarian contexts. Media systems that are neither fully state-controlled nor entirely independent often reproduce state narratives not through direct censorship, but through routine professional practices such as reliance on official sources, adherence to genre conventions that promote narrative closure, and self-protective caution regarding unverifiable claims. The findings of this thesis indicate that Entman's (1993) framework, when adapted as described above, enables empirical differentiation among these mechanisms of narrative reproduction within a single body of coverage, rather than treating the "state-aligned press" as a uniform category. The Saiful Karim case specifically illustrates that legitimating coverage and inadvertent internal contestation can coexist within the same article, produced by the same outlet and under identical professional constraints. Such complexity would not be captured by a more reductive measure of press freedom or government alignment.

The refinements developed in this study have implications that extend beyond the Bangladeshi context. Euphemistic framings such as "crossfire" for extrajudicial killing are also documented in other South and Southeast Asian settings characterized by similar political constraints. The adapted framework proposed here, which integrates a legitimation-mechanism code, an explicit source-of-contestation dimension, and a genre-aware approach to Entman's fourth function,

provides a foundation for comparative research beyond the current sample. Future studies could investigate whether the mechanisms identified—such as accusation versus decontextualization as distinct legitimating strategies, and family testimony, internal inconsistency, and institutional allegation as sources of contestation—are present in other national press contexts or are unique to the professional and political conditions of Bangladeshi English-language journalism during the period studied. While this thesis's limited, single-country sample cannot directly answer this question, it delineates the specific dimensions along which such comparative analysis could proceed.

Collectively, these three adaptations—a legitimization-mechanism code alongside the numeric spectrum, an explicit source-of-contestation dimension, and a genre-aware treatment of Entman's fourth function—constitute the central methodological contribution of this thesis. This represents a refined version of the combined Entman/Edel-and-Josua framework, specifically tailored for application to journalistic texts in contexts where the object of analysis is a set of news organizations reporting on contested state violence from multiple, only partially aligned sources, rather than a single strategic communicator.

Beyond its contribution to the academic literature on framing and authoritarian legitimation, the findings of this thesis have practical implications for journalism and human rights documentation. The recurring arrest-before-death pattern identified in the *Aziz*, *Rasel Dewan*, and *Saiful Karim* cases (Section 5.2.2) demonstrates that significant evidence of custodial killing may already exist within an outlet's published reporting, embedded in the routine sequence of facts, even if not explicitly framed as significant or recognized as a pattern. This underscores the value of systematic analysis across an outlet's back catalog, as conducted in this thesis, as a potentially productive method for human rights documentation. Such an approach is distinct from, yet potentially complementary to, family interviews and on-the-ground verification methods primarily used by projects such as Body Count. A newsroom's cumulative published record may offer greater evidentiary value than any single report was intended to provide.

6.3 Limitations

Section 4.7 identified the structural limitations anticipated during the design phase, including a small, single-country sample, an outlet distribution shaped by content accessibility rather than balanced sampling, and interpretive coding conducted by a single researcher. Instead of restating

these limitations, this section examines how each specifically influences the conclusions presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The emphasis is on determining which findings are most affected by these constraints and assessing the extent to which their reliability is impacted.

This analysis is limited to textual framing. The photographic choices that often accompany these articles, which may reinforce, soften, or complicate the textual frame, are outside the scope of this study and are acknowledged here as a boundary rather than an oversight.

The most prominent example concerns the UPDF finding. The assertion that Bangladeshi crossfire coverage legitimates through both decontextualization and accusation (Sections 5.3.3, 6.1) is based on a single article. The available sample does not establish whether this approach is a recurring feature in Bangladeshi English-language media coverage of the Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict or unique to this specific report. This limitation is particularly significant for the argument regarding "two distinct legitimating mechanisms" developed in Section 6.2. As one of the thesis's more original theoretical contributions, the strength of this argument depends on the decontextualization component, which currently relies on evidence from only one instance. Consequently, this claim should be considered a hypothesis identified and illustrated by the thesis, rather than one that has been empirically tested.

A second case involves the outlet-level comparison in Section 5.3.2, specifically the claim that bdnews24.com's coverage is bimodal. The sample is predominantly legitimating, with only one sharply contesting outlier, rather than being moderately contesting throughout. Only seven bdnews24.com articles were included in the sample. This distribution is determined almost entirely by the presence of a single score-4 article (Mohsin Sheikh and Mohammad Ali Jinnah) alongside six score-1 articles. If that one article had not been included through the accessibility-driven sampling process described in Section 4.4, the outlet would appear indistinguishable from a uniformly legitimating one. Although the bimodal characterization accurately describes this sample, it should not be interpreted as a stable property of bdnews24.com's reporting more broadly.

A third case concerns the sample's headline finding that sixty percent of articles score at the fully legitimating end of the spectrum (Section 5.3.1). Because incidents were included only when coverage remained accessible online at the time of data collection (Section 4.4), articles

generating legal or political controversy may have been disproportionately likely to be removed, retracted, or restricted after publication. Consequently, the sample may systematically underrepresent the contested coverage that this thesis aimed to examine. If this survivorship effect is present, the true rate of contestation in Bangladeshi crossfire coverage during this period may be higher than the sixty-percent-legitimizing figure suggests. Some evidence may be missing by construction, as it could not have been accessed for this thesis.

A fourth case involves two specific coding decisions that were flagged during analysis rather than resolved with complete confidence. The first was the decision to score *Mohammad Aziz* and *Rasel Dewan* one point below *Saiful Karim*, despite a structurally similar arrest-before-death pattern in the official account (Section 5.2.2). The second was the decision to treat Human Rights Watch's allegation of custodial torture as relevant to the specific deaths of *Mohsin Sheikh* and *Mohammad Ali Jinnah*, rather than as a general contextual statement (Section 5.3.4). Both decisions were defensible, but neither was beyond dispute. An independent coder might reasonably have scored either case differently. The thesis's account of how many distinct contestation mechanisms exist in the sample (Section 5.3.5) depends in part on treating these as separate, correctly distinguished cases. An alternative coding of either case would not overturn the aggregate finding of legitimization dominance, but could alter the more detailed understanding of which mechanisms produced which scores.

A fifth case concerns the claim developed in Sections 5.2.4 and 6.2. The near-total absence of treatment recommendation across the sample appears to reflect a structural mismatch between Entman's fourth function and the hard-news genre, rather than a specific reluctance by any outlet to call for accountability. This interpretation is plausible and consistent with the pattern's uniformity. All twenty-five articles exhibit identical behavior on this dimension, regardless of outlet or legitimization score. However, the evidence available in this sample does not fully distinguish this explanation from an alternative: that Bangladeshi English-language outlets specifically avoid recommending accountability measures for politically sensitive incidents, and that this avoidance coincides with, rather than is explained by, the hard-news genre's conventions. Testing between these explanations would require a comparison sample of hard-news reporting on a less politically sensitive category of violent death, to determine whether treatment recommendation is similarly absent. Without such a comparison, the thesis's

claim that genre convention rather than political caution accounts for the pattern remains the more parsimonious, but not conclusively demonstrated, interpretation.

6.4 Conclusion and Future Research

This thesis examines the presentation of extrajudicial "crossfire" killings in English-language Bangladeshi news media, employing a framework that integrates Entman's (1993) framing functions with Edel and Josua's (2018) legitimization logic. It further investigates the novel insights that may arise when this framework is applied to journalistic texts, rather than the state rhetoric for which it was originally designed.

Empirical findings indicate that the state's narrative regarding these killings is largely reproduced by the media, with only minimal linguistic differentiation. Sixty percent of the sample is positioned at the fully legitimating end of a five-point spectrum. Notably, treatment recommendation—one of Entman's four framing functions—is entirely absent across all twenty-five articles. The diagnostic frame used to justify these killings is almost universally Security/Legality, irrespective of outlet, year, or the specific circumstances of the incident. However, this dominant pattern is not absolute. A minority of articles diverge through at least three distinct mechanisms: muted family testimony, internal inconsistencies within the official account's timeline, and, in one instance, a direct institutional allegation from Human Rights Watch. These mechanisms differ in both strength and origin, even when similar numeric scores are recorded. Furthermore, one article addressing a killing related to the Chittagong Hill Tracts conflict suggests that the apparent diagnostic uniformity may result from the press homogenizing structurally distinct forms of state violence into a single generic template, rather than accurately reflecting the diversity of violence occurring.

Methodologically, the central contribution of this thesis is the development of adaptations necessary to apply the combined Entman/Edel-and-Josua framework effectively to media texts in this context. Legitimation is operationalized as a five-point spectrum rather than a binary, with the recognition that this spectrum must be supplemented by an explicit legitimization-mechanism code to distinguish between accusation and decontextualization. The source of contestation—whether family testimony, internal inconsistency, or institutional allegation—is treated as a dimension distinct from the mere presence of contestation. Because media texts are constructed from multiple institutional sources, contestation may arise incidentally rather than as

a result of deliberate editorial intent. Entman's treatment-recommendation function, originally developed for a broader range of political communication, does not transfer seamlessly to the hard-news incident report genre. Collectively, these adaptations extend a framework designed primarily for state rhetoric into the domain of journalistic coverage of state violence, which operates under fundamentally different authorial and institutional constraints.

These findings and contributions are based on a small, single-country sample coded by one researcher. The limitations outlined in Section 6.3—particularly regarding the evidentiary weight of the UPDF case, the fragility of outlet-level comparisons, and the potential survivorship bias introduced by accessibility-driven sampling—should temper the confidence with which these conclusions are extended beyond the twenty-five articles examined. The primary value of this thesis lies not in the generalizability of its specific findings, but in the analytical distinctions it identifies for further investigation: between legitimation through accusation and through decontextualization, and between contestation originating from a source, an inconsistency, or an institution.

Several avenues for future research emerge directly from the limitations identified in Section 6.3 and from the specific analytical gaps highlighted but not resolved in this thesis.

The most immediate direction is to expand the sample in both size and scope. A systematically drawn, larger sample would enable the outlet-level comparisons in Section 5.3.2 to be tested with greater statistical confidence and help determine whether the bimodal pattern observed in bdnnews24.com's coverage reflects a genuine editorial tendency or is merely an artifact of the small sample size. Additionally, a larger sample would facilitate the identification of further cases of ethnic-political violence comparable to the UPDF killing. The decontextualization hypothesis developed in Sections 5.3.3 and 6.1 should also be tested against multiple instances to establish whether it represents a recurring pattern in Bangladeshi media coverage of minority political conflict or is unique to the circumstances of a single article.

A second avenue for future research involves language. This second avenue concerns language. This thesis focused exclusively on English-language coverage, omitting the substantially larger corpus of Bengali-language reporting on the same incidents. Since English-language Bangladeshi outlets generally serve a more urban, educated, and internationally oriented audience than their Bengali-language counterparts, patterns of legitimation and contestation may

differ significantly between these markets. Comparative analysis of both language segments would clarify whether the observed patterns are representative of Bangladeshi journalism as a whole or are unique to the English-language sector. The current thesis cannot definitively distinguish between a genre-based explanation, in which hard news inherently avoids recommending accountability, and a context-specific explanation, in which Bangladeshi outlets deliberately refrain from such recommendations in politically sensitive cases. Future research could directly test this distinction by comparing treatment-recommendation rates for politically sensitive deaths and similarly violent but less sensitive cases within the same media outlets.

A final, more speculative research direction involves applying large language models (LLMs) to scale the coding methodology developed in this thesis beyond the capacity of manual analysis. The solo-coder limitations outlined in Section 6.3 highlight a practical constraint on sample size that affects qualitative framing research more broadly. An LLM trained or prompted using this thesis's codebook could, in theory, implement the four-function, two-axis, legitimation-spectrum coding scheme across a much larger dataset, functioning either as a second coder for reliability assessment or as an initial coder whose results are subsequently reviewed and refined by a human researcher. However, whether such a tool can reliably identify the nuanced mechanisms detected through manual coding—such as internal contradictions within official timelines or distinctions between accusation-based and decontextualization-based legitimation—remains an unresolved empirical question. This issue has direct implications for the feasibility of testing the distinctions proposed in Section 6.2 at a scale unattainable by the current sample.

A related and more urgent research direction concerns legitimation discourse following regime change, particularly in light of events since 2022 across South Asia, including Bangladesh's 2024 uprising and similar transitions in Sri Lanka and Nepal. Edel and Josua's (2018) framework explicitly considers temporal changes in legitimation discourse. Applying this perspective to Bangladesh prompts a question that the 2009–2020 sample cannot address: does legitimation discourse surrounding "crossfire" killings persist, shift, or disappear after a change in government, and do media framing conventions adapt accordingly? A comparative analysis of press coverage before and after 2024 would help determine whether the mechanisms identified in this thesis are specific to a particular administration or are features of the broader security-state apparatus and enduring press conventions in the region.

In summary, this thesis demonstrates that Bangladeshi English-language press coverage of extrajudicial killings predominantly, though not uniformly, reflects the legitimating logic of the state's narrative. The observed deviations from this pattern are analytically more complex and diverse than a simple legitimating/contesting binary or a single numeric spectrum can capture. This research extends Edel and Josua's (2018) analysis of authoritarian state rhetoric into a new context and identifies conceptual distinctions—between mechanisms of legitimation and sources of contestation—that are likely essential for future applications of framing theory to media coverage of state violence in similarly restricted press environments.

Endnote

This thesis was produced with the assistance of the following tools:

- **Google Pinpoint** for exploratory analysis of the news article corpus.
- **Google Spreadsheets** for coding and data organization.
- **Grammarly Pro** for grammar and style editing.

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Appendix 1: Online Sources/ News Links

<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/2-killed-kushtia-coxs-bazar-gunfight-drug-peddler-robber-1664914>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/two-killed-shootouts-1739185>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/five-killed-shootouts-1743652>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/gunfight-cops-yaba-godfather-killed-hours-after-arrest-1751824>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/3-killed-gunfight-law-enforcers-1854607>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/two-drug-traders-one-robber-killed-in-coxs-bazar-gunfights-1692211>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/two-drug-peddlers-killed-gunfight-1715800>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/3-killed-gunfights-rab-1778857>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/2-rohingyas-killed-gunfight-1879918>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/3-robbers-killed-gunfight-1781362>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/three-drug-dealers-killed-shootout-1733296>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/46382/two-more-peddlers-killed-in-gunfight/article/35972>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/54039/peddler-killed-in-coxs-bazar-gunfight>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/56261/suspected-peddler-found-dead>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/121549/one-killed-in-first-gunfight-at-teknaf-after-sinha-killing>

<https://newagebd.net/article/77315/one-killed-in-gunfight>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/88244/articlelist/323/Cartoon>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/1340/articlelist/323/index.php>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/robber-killed-in-shootout-with-rab>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/top-pbcp-outlaw-killed-in-encounter>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2-updf-man-killed-in-army-raid?fbclid=IwAR3zN2MzwNgn34U1LS-nNd4fZfP9N289NAnbrOgNKqquYS4ZDPw1AvF6HH8>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2-gangsters-killed-in-rab-crossfire>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/dhaka-students-were-killed-in-shootout>

https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/dacoit-boss-killed-in-shootout-with-ctg-police#google_vignette

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/top-gangster-killed-in-fatikchharhi>

Appendix 2: Pinpoint Investigation

 Pinpoint

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 Documents

 Saved sessions

 Search documents





☐ Documents 1 - 25 of 25

 'Peddler' killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'.pdf

 <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2-updf-man-killed-in-army-raid?fbclid=IwAR3zN2MzwNgn34U1LS-...>

 https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/robber-killed-in-shootout-with-rab_17-08-2026_01-13-31_UTC

Appendix 3: 1st coding

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A1	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Article Title	Media Org	Name & Age	Demography	Publication Date	Primary Media Label	Date & Time	Location of Incident	Actor	Official Narrative Frame	Recovered Evidence	Reported Injury	Counter-Narrative
Police killed in Cox's Bazar 'roadside'	New Age	Md. Alan (32)	Drug Peddler	25 October, 6:18 A	A suspected drug peddler was killed allegedly in 'gangster' with a 'real group of peddlers'	25 October, 6:18 A	Martini Drive	Group driving	New Age correspondent in Cox's Bazar reported quoting 'bandits' who said that the Spinning group had stolen the police and that the 5000 Yaka soldiers, this locality made gains and 350			Not covered
Investigated peddler found dead	New Age	Mohammad Baki (30-)	Drug Peddler	17 November, 2013, 00 A	A suspected drug peddler was found dead in Bhandari was near Manu Drive Road of Dhaka about 11:55am	17 November, 2013, 00 A	Takraf	Group driving	Takraf police station officer-chief Pradyumn Kumar Das said local gang related to the area, recovered the body had identified to be a 350 suspected that Baki might have killed in a 'gangster' 'bribe'		350	Not covered
One killed in 'drug' 'roadside' in Takraf after 3000 Yaka	New Age	Md Iyad Alan (37)	Drug Peddler	14 November, 2020, 11:0 A	A man was killed Friday night in the first incident of 'gangster' with law enforcers at Takraf At about 10:25pm	14 November, 2020, 11:0 A	Takraf	BOB	Border guards that took the night to Takraf to inspect the road. At about 10:25pm on Friday, the border guards were three suspects			Not covered
One killed in 'roadside'	New Age	Salmi Uthab (34)	Drug Dealer	03 July, 1911, 11:16 A	A suspected drug dealer was killed in a reported gangster with Rapid Action Battalion south about 400m	03 July, 1911, 11:16 A	Martini Drive	RAB	RAB-17 sending officers and took the night to Takraf to inspect the road. At about 10:25pm on Friday, the border guards were three suspects			Not covered
Was killed in Cox's Bazar 'roadside'	New Age	Mohammad Atiq (24)	Criminal	20 October, 2019, 11:22 A	A suspected drug peddler was killed in a reported gangster with police at Mohanabakh area at around 4:00am	20 October, 2019, 11:22 A	Martini Drive	Police	Police who took bullet hit Atiq to Takraf hospital the day of Police also seized a local gun, seven cartridges. The police personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
Investigated microwave killed in 'roadside' in Aduabhi	New Age	Rashed Deras (32)	Criminal	24 October, 2019, 6:27 A	A suspected drug peddler was killed in a 'gangster' with police in Karpooon near under Ashulia at about 3:30pm	24 October, 2019, 6:27 A	Ashulia (Dhaka)	RAB	As soon as police reached the spot, Aduabhi associates opened fire on the police. The police personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
Rubber killed in 'thieves' with RAB	BD News	Rafiqul Islam Akbar (Inquest) (25)	Rubber	24 May 2009, 8:12 AM	Dhaka, May 24 (Inquest-24.com)—RAB killed an alleged rubber in a 'thieves' near the law at 2:30pm	24 May 2009, 8:12 AM	Anshulima (Dhaka)	RAB	As soon as the RAB-50 arrived there, the rubber began firing. The RAB-50 personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
The RAB killed a rubber in 'thieves'	BD News	Siddique Fatahul Rajib (25)	Business	28 June 2009, 7:23 AM	Jamshaid, June 28 (Inquest-24.com)—A suspected rubber of a 'thieves' Bangor Bangor County at around 11:00pm	28 June 2009, 7:23 AM	Jamshaid	RAB Police	As soon as the RAB-50 arrived there, the rubber began firing. The RAB-50 personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
LTPV gun killed in 'thieves'	BD News	Unidentified	Unidentified	11 May 2009, 7:49 AM	Rangpur, May 11 (Inquest-24.com)—The members of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) killed a rubber in a 'thieves' near the law at 2:30pm	11 May 2009, 7:49 AM	Rangpur	Army	As soon as the RAB-50 arrived there, the rubber began firing. The RAB-50 personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
Police killed in RAB 'roadside'	BD News	Isahak (32), Bahu (32)	Tenant	15 May 2009, 7:01 AM	Chittagong, May 15 (Inquest-24.com)—A suspected rubber was killed early on Friday during a so-called 'gangster' with RAB in 'thieves' near the law at 2:30pm	15 May 2009, 7:01 AM	Dhaka	RAB	As soon as the RAB-50 arrived there, the rubber began firing. The RAB-50 personnel, on 350 covered			Not covered
Dhaka rubber was killed in 'thieves'	BD News	Nobin Shabbir (27), Mohammad A (Inquest) (7)	Business (7)	25 May 2009, 6:41 AM	Two youths killed in an alleged showdown with RAB in the two hours of Thursday near Manik at around 09:00pm	25 May 2009, 6:41 AM	Dhaka	RAB	RAB personnel were carrying out search of vehicles by setting up a road at around 09:00pm, two youths passing by were arrested their associates. At the 'thieves' ceased, the RAB personnel on 350 covered			Not covered
Deer horn killed in showdown with Ctg police	BD News	Khalid alias Sobel (37)	Rubber Leader	11 Jan 2010, 7:12 AM	A suspected leader of a rubber gang was killed in a gangster with Ctg police in Chittagong at around 1:30pm	11 Jan 2010, 7:12 AM	Chittagong	Police	At around 09:00pm, two youths passing by were arrested their associates. At the 'thieves' ceased, the RAB personnel on 350 covered			Not covered
Top 'thieves' killed in Fatahshah	BD News	Oman Aziz (35)	Chief	30 Jan 2010, 8:00 AM	An alleged top crime gang leader was killed in a gangster with the RAB and police at around 7:30pm	30 Jan 2010, 8:00 AM	Chittagong	RAB & Police	RAB-77 and police officers of the RAB personnel on 350 covered			Not covered

Appendix: Final Coding

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2	2 'criminals' killed in 'gunfight' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Zwar Rahman (34) Khokon Ali alias Harkara Thanda (34)	15 alleged drug traders have	Score quotes around 'criminals' and 'gunfight'	Positive (implicit)	Mixed (criminal record cited; family testimony)	Absent	2	None
3	Two killed in 'shootout' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Md Abdullah (34), Selimman Bahar		so-called 'shootout' (explicit hedge) = score	Positive (implicit)	Negative for Selimman (? cases incl. murders)	Absent	1	None
4	Five killed in 'shootout' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Azim Ullah (20), Abdu Salam (52)		Score quotes around 'shootout' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Negative (Titas: 16 robbery cases); mixed idea	Absent	1	None
5	'Gunfight' with Cops, 'Yaba' peddler killed here The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Saiful Karim (30-3)		Score quotes around 'Gunfight' and headline	Positive (implicit); deniable	Connectivity: labeled 'yaba peddler' 'knights' Absent	3	None	Headline itself ('killed hours after
6	3 killed in 'gunfight' with law enforcers The Daily Star	The Daily Star	1. Abul Hasim, 36, and Mohammad		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit) for Hasim	Negative for Enayef (13 cases); Neutral for Ht	Absent	2	None
7	Three killed in Cops' Base 'gunfight' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	1. Two Unidentified, 2. Helal Uddin		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Negative for Helal (10 cases); Neutral/unident	Absent	1	None
8	Two 'drug peddlers' killed in 'gunfight' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Munir Khan 35, and Mokim Mda	death of Munir and Mokim led since the nationwide anti-	Score quotes around 'drug peddlers' and 'gun'	Neutral (police do not claim	Negative (lured peddlers, wanted in narcotics)	Absent	2	None
9	3 killed in 'gunfight' with Rab	The Daily Star	1. Md Sumon (39) 2. Abdur Rahm		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Negative for Abdur Rahman & Omar Faruk (8	Absent	1	None
10	2 Robbers killed in a 'gunfight' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Saiful Islam (38), Nur Kamal (34)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (no record mentioned); educizened det	Absent	1	None
11	2 'robbers' killed in 'gunfight' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	Ayub (35), Huayed (33), and Mabe		Score quotes around 'robbery' and 'gunfight'	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	1	None
12	Three 'drug dealers' killed in 'shootout' The Daily Star	The Daily Star	1. Saiful Islam (23), Faruq Hossain 2. Mohiddin (28)		Score quotes around 'drug dealers' and 'shoot'	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	1	None
13	Two more 'peddlers' killed in 'gunfight'	New Age	Enamul Haque (26), Farhad Hossain	a text message said that they	Score quotes around 'peddlers' and 'gunfight'	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	1	None
14	'Peddler' killed in Cops' Base 'gunfight'	New Age	Mofiz Alam (32)	Metropolitan Police officials	Score quotes around 'Peddler' and 'gunfight'	Neutral (police do not claim	Negative (alleged yaba trader on police list, 7	Absent	2	None
15	Suspected peddler found dead	New Age	Mohammad Belal (30-)	Metropolitan Police officials	Headline avoids 'gunfight'/'shootout' entirely	Neutral (police do not claim	Negative (lured drug peddler, several cases)	Absent	2	None
16	One killed in first 'gunfight' at Teknaf after Sinha kill	New Age	Md Syed Alam (35)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit) in the ma	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	3	Human Rights / Institutional contestation is proven

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1	Article Title	Media Org	Name & Age	Arks	Linguistic Distancing	Moral Evaluation	Moral Evaluation: Victim	Treat	Leg	Indepen
14	'Peddler' killed in Cops' Base 'gunfight'	New Age	Mofiz Alam (32)	a text message said that they	Score quotes around 'Peddler' and 'gunfight'	Neutral (police do not claim	Negative (alleged yaba trader on police list, 7	Absent	2	None
15	Suspected peddler found dead	New Age	Mohammad Belal (30-)	Metropolitan Police officials	Headline avoids 'gunfight'/'shootout' entirely	Neutral (police do not claim	Negative (lured drug peddler, several cases)	Absent	2	None
16	One killed in first 'gunfight' at Teknaf after Sinha kill	New Age	Md Syed Alam (35)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit) in the ma	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	3	Human Rights / Institutional contestation is proven
17	One killed in 'gunfight'	New Age	Salam Ullah (34)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	1	None
18	Man killed in Cops' Base 'gunfight'	New Age	Mohammad Aziz (24)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit), though d	Negative (wanted in several cases)	Absent	2	None
19	Suspected microcrack killed in 'gunfight' in Ashulia	New Age	Rasul Dewan (32)		Score quotes around 'gunfight' in headline	Positive (implicit), same an	Negative (14 cases incl. murder)	Absent	2	None
20	Robber killed in 'shootout' with RAB	BD News	Rafiqul Islam Asad Swapan (25)	people have so far died in May	Score quotes around 'shootout' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Negative (2 murder cases)	Absent	1	None
21	Top BCPG cadres killed in 'encounter'	BD News	Siddique Rahman Egleb (30-)		Score quotes around 'encounter' in the headl	Positive (implicit)	Negative (framed as political extremist)	Absent	1	None
22	UPDF man killed in army raid	BD News	Unidentified			Positive (implicit)	Negative (framed as armed political-group me	Absent	1	None
23	2 'assaulters' killed in RAB 'encounter'	BD News	Sohel (30-), Baha (30-)		Score quotes around 'gangsters' and 'crossfir	Positive (implicit)	Negative (linked to extortion around 'Jhur' fahs	Absent	1	None
24	Shaka students were killed in 'shootout'	BD News	Mohim Sheikh (23), Mohammad A	a past five years, the military, Rights Watch and others have	alleged 'shootout' hedge in body text	Positive (implicit) in main	Neutral (victims identified as students; no crim	Absent	4	None
25	Decent boy killed in shootout with Ctg police	BD News	Khalif alias Sohul (37)		Score quotes around 'Decent boy' in headli	Positive (implicit)	Neutral (not mentioned)	Absent	1	None
26	Top 'gangster' killed in Panchkhatra	BD News	Oman Gazi (35)		Score quotes around 'gangster' in headline	Positive (implicit)	Negative (20 cases incl. 2 murder)	Absent	1	None
27										
28										
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