University of Nevada, Reno

Good Rohingyas, Bad Rohingyas:

How Narratives of Rohingya Refugees Shifted in Bangladesh Media, 2017-2019

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by

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Abstract

This study investigates how Rohingya refugees were framed in Bangladeshi media outlets from August 2017 to December 2019. Rohingyas are ethnic and religious minorities in Myanmar's Rakhine state who have faced persecution since after the post second world war. The majority of Rohingyas fled to neighboring Bangladesh after a massive crackdown in Rakhine state in August, 2017. A total of 914,998 Rohingyas are now residing in refugee camps in Bangladesh (as of September 30, 2019). The current study uses framing theory and a qualitative content analysis of 448 news stories and opinion pieces of six daily newspapers and two online news portals. This study examines the dominant frames used by Bangladeshi news outlets to describe Rohingya refugees. The study then goes on to investigate how those frames shifted over time from August 2017 to December 2019. It also investigates whether framings vary based on character of the news outlets and their ideologies. The findings suggest that the frames varied over time, and online news outlets were more hostile towards refugees than mainstream newspapers. Contrary to previous research, this study finds that right-wing news outlets are pro-refugees in Rohingya crisis.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents- A. S. M. Abdul Wadood and Shahara Wadood, without whose inspiration and support I could not pursue my degree.

The work is also dedicated to the Rohingya people who are the most persecuted ethnic group in the world. I sincerely hope Rohingya people will get a solution to their long-standing problem.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I first visited Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox'z Bazar district to assist Washington Post South Asia correspondent in their coverage of the Rohingya crisis soon after the crisis began in October 2017, I found the local people very sympathetic towards Rohingya refugees who fled *en masse* from Myanmar's Rakhine state because they faced persecution. Many local people brought food for Rohingyas, gave them shelter, and helped them built tents.

After a few months, when I returned the same camps in mid-2018 for another reporting assignment, I found a difference about how local people feel about Rohingyas. In my conversations with the local people, I found a section of the people very hostile towards refugees. The situation got worse at the end of 2019 when some refugees were beaten to death allegedly by local people (McPherson, 2019).

Interestingly, the narratives about Rohingya people in Bangladeshi media outlets have also shifted. In the beginning of the crisis, Bangladeshi newspapers were sympathetic with the Rohingya people. Rohingyas seemed to be framed as victims, while the Myanmar military and the government were framed as villains by Bangladeshi media. Most of the news stories during that time focused on the plight of the Rohingya people and the brutality of Myanmar military. However, after three months, the same Rohingyas seemed to be framed as villains in Bangladeshi media. From mid 2019, Rohingya refugees witnessed widespread negative coverage from Bangladeshi media outlets. Rohingyas were portrayed as criminals, drug traders, and security threats by the Bangladeshi media outlets (Shishir, 2019). The question is: why this shift?

Is there any relation between the shift of the public opinion of Rohingyas and the shift of media narratives? These are the questions that provided the impetus for the current study.

In addition to the shift in media coverage, the Bangladeshi government's policy towards Rohingya has also shifted over the same time frame. This can best be illustrated by two separate statements of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On October 1, 2017, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that "if necessary people of Bangladesh would eat one meal to feed Rohingya refugees (Dhaka Tribune, 2017). After two years, on November 11, 2019 the Prime Minister termed the Rohingyas a "threat to the security" of the entire region (The Times of India, 2019). Newspapers also reported that government policy towards Rohingyas has also shifted. The Bangladesh government tried to send Rohingyas to a distant island. Later, it did not go with the plan as aid organizations and the Rohingyas opposed the idea (The Daily Star, 2019). One wonders, then, whether government policy influenced both the media and the public in their negative attitude towards Rohingyas?

Background: Who are Rohingyas

The term "Rohingya" is a controversial word in Myanmar's politics. The term itself has become a key conflict issue between the Buddhist and the Muslims in Myamar. Rohingya is a term that the Muslim population in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state want themseleves to be identified. Most Muslims in Northern Rakhine consider the self identification as Rohingya the first step to ensure their human rights (Ullah, 2017). On the other, the Myanmar government and majority people in Myanmar have objection to use the term Rohingya. They consider using this term a political assult on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation. They call them

"Bengali" or "kala" inside Myanmar. "Kala" is derogatory term meaning "foreigner" or "stranger", particularly of South Asian origin , and they are also referred to as Bengali for political reasons. By calling them Bengali, the Myanmar government wants to indicate that they are not citizens of Myanmar but rather from neighboring Bangladesh (Ware & Laoutides, 2018).

Rohingyas are both religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Rohingyas are Muslims, while the majority of the population in Myanmar is Buddhist. The Rohingya's skin color is also different from the majority Burmese. Often senior Myanmar officials describe the Rohingyas as being as 'ugly as orges' and as not sharing 'the fair and soft' skin of other Burmese ethnic groups (Ibrahim, 2018, p. 4).

Rakhine is the westernmost state in Myanmar along the Bay of Bengal. It has an overall length of about 450 kilometers and it shares a 256-kilometre border with Bangladesh. It was formerly called Arakan until 1989. The area is relatively isolated from the central Myanmar because of a significant mountain range and so it is historically better connected to Bangladesh than the mainland of Myanmar. Arakan has a long history of independence from Burma. Arabs and Parsian traders are said to have visited the area from at least the ninth century (Yegar, 1972). Mrauk-U was a strong Arkanese Kingdom independent from the Burmish kingdom from 1430. It was conquered by Burmese in 1784. Historial documents show that subjects of Mrauk-U included both Muslims and Buddists. As such, scholars have consensus that Muslim settlements in Arakan or Rakhine dated back to at least fifteenth century (Gutman 1976; d'Hubert & Leider 2008; Serajuddin 1986; Ware & Laoutides, 2018).

Before the current crisis, Rakhine was home to approximately 3.2 million people. Of them, about 2 million are ethnic Rakhine while 1.1 million were Muslims and the rest of the population are Burman and from small ethnic minority groups (Uom, 2015). The conflict in Rakhine is three

dimentional and there are three parties in the conflict: Rohingya Muslims who are seeking citizenship and basic human rights; Rakhine (Buddist) a local ethnic minority in Rakhine state who are running arms and political struggles for autonomy for centuries and the Myanmar government who want to establish Burman nationalism in Rakhine state. The Myanmar government has also two centers- powerful Burman dominated millitary and the ruling party NLD government. Rohingyas have conflict with all the parties in Myanmar politics (Ware & Laoutides, 2018).

The Rohingya crisis is at least eight decades old. The crisis periodically flared up, but it has intensified in the last few years (Ware & Laoutides, 2018). Research finds that the flaring up of the crisis has some relation with Myanmar's domestic politics. Ibrahim (2018) observes

> "Ever since Burma became independent in 1948 they (Rohingyas) have been targetted whenever ambitious (or desparate) politicians need to deflect attention from other matters. Both government officials and party leaders have called for their expulsion from their homeland, and the main opposition ignores their plight. The build up to the elections in late 2015 witnessed the final destruction of their civic rights in Myanmar (completing a process that began with the 1947 Constitutions) and increasingly they are detained in what are now permanent internal refugee camps, where they are denied food, work and medicare (Ibrahim, 2018, p. 1)."

Ware & Laoutides (2018) observes that "profound social cleavages date back more than a century, and cyclical bouts of violence have occurred every few decades since at least the Second World War. There were atleast four previous mass exoduses from Arakan, in 1784, 1942, 1978, and 1991-2, with a mass exodus of Indians from the whole of the Myanmar in 1962-4 also adversely affecting Arakan. Several of these were comparable in scale to that of 2017, and bear an eerie resemblance (Ware & Laoutides, 2018, p-14).

The mistrust between Muslims and the Buddists in Myanmar intensified during the Second World War. During the war, Myanmar was part of British Monarchy. In the war, Muslims were loyal to the British while Buddhist supported Burman nationalists and the Japanese. When Japanese forces with the support of Burmese and Arakanese forces chased an estimated 500,000 colonial officials and sympathizers out of Burma, the British used Muslim volunteers for intelleigence and guerrilla operations (Smith, 1994; Murray, 1949, 1980). It is said that the British forces would have been defeated and the Japanese forces would have captured major parts of the regions without Muslim help (Irwin, 1946). Thus, the Muslims and the Rakhine fought in the opposite side in Second World War.

The recent crisis started on 25 August 2017 when a group of Rohingya militants of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked more than 30 police posts killing more than 12 people. The military crackdown in the subsequent days forced tens of thousands of Rohingyas crossing the border and taking shelter in Bangladesh (Al Jazeera, 2019). Inside Rohingya camps in Bangladesh, they cannot go outside the camps or enroll in educational institutions or work.

Background: Geopolitics of Rohingya Crisis

Myanmar as a whole and Rakhine state in particular is considered a geopolitical hotspot in South East Asia. Myanmar has border with two rising Asian powers – China and India – and it has access to the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar has taken advantage of US-China competition for influence in South East Asia (Kundu, 2018). In the recent years, both China and India invested heavily in Rakhine state. In 2019, China invested around $4.8 billion in Myanmar, up slightly from the $4.7 billion in investments a year earlier. As part of One Belt One

Road initiative, the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) was established and China building $1.3 billion deep-sea port at Kyaukphyu in Rakhine state, high-speed rail links and special economic zones. These projects would allow China to bypass the Strait of Malacca and directly access the Indian Ocean (Albert, 2020). India is also building a highway spanning a distance of 109 kilometers and connecting Paletwa and Zorinpui on the Indian border in Mizoram under flagship Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Bhattacharyya, 2020).

The latest Rohingya crisis emerged at a time when Myanmar has been trying to balance its foreign policy between China and the Western power. Historically, China has dominance in Myanmar's foreign policy. Since its transition to democratic rule in 2010, it has significantly improved its relations with the West, particularly the United States (Han, 2017). However, the crisis resulted less western influence and more Chinese influence following the West's condemnation over the repression on Rohingyas (Albert, 2020). Myanmar always gets China and Russia on its side whenever the United Nations security council tries to take any measures against the country for atrocities on Rohingyas (Nichols, 2018).

Background: Rohingyas in Bangladesh's Domestic Politics

The Rohingya are a debated issue in Bangladesh's domestic politics. Islamist groups who have strong influence in Bangladesh's politics are supportive of Rohingya cause and giving them shelter. Bangladesh's largest Islamist party Jamaat E Islami and some small Islamist groups are said to have connection with Rohingyas (Brennan & O'Hara, 2015). Most Islamist groups in Bangladesh carried out street processions across the country following military crackdown on Rohingyas in 2017 and called the Bangladesh government to arm Rohingya refugees (The Indian

Express, 2017). Two parties dominate Bangladesh's politics: the ruling Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Bangladesh's largest Islamist party, Jamaat E Islami, and other small Islamist groups have strong influence in BNP and shared power during its regime from 2001-2006. Political observers said that one of the reasons the ruling party decided to give shelter to Rohingyas was to make sure Islamist groups cannot do politics with the issue and to gain support among Islamist voters. The ruling Awami League successfully used the issue for their domestic political gains. The AL activists campaigned that the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the "mother of humanity" for giving shelter to the Rohingyas. Some pro-government news outlets ran stories that the Prime Minister was short-listed for Noble Peace Prize (Yayboke, 2018, p. 1).

Bangladesh's Media Landscape

In terms of the overall number of publications, Bangladesh has a vibrant media system. However, scholars often question the quality of the journalism in the country. According to a study, in 2017 there were 2,320 newspapers, 1,781 online news sites, 72 radio stations, and 43 television channels in Bangladesh. It said that there are 17,300 organized journalists working in Bangladesh (Bour et al., 2017).

Elahi (2013) argues that the quality of the journalism is not encouraging in Bangladesh. His study finds that journalists' ethical standards are poor and that many indulges in corrupt practices. He observes that "some journalists and certain sectors of the media imposed self-censorship because of journalists' and editors' personal political bias or the media owner's political position (Elahi, 2013, p. 197)."

As most of the print media is owned by businessmen cum politicians, there is an indirect political influence (Riaz and Rahman, 2016). In late nineties, Bangladesh government disbanded the state-control trust. It also closed all state owned newspapers and this was the end of the decade old government ownership in the print media. Mahmud (2013) argues that the entrance of business conglomerations into print media may appear depoliticization of the state ownership but it is actually a form of "corpo-politicization" (Mahmud, 2013, p. 44)."

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has found media coverage can influence refugee policies (Somaini, 2019; Gunter, 2015; Kingsley & Timur, 2015). The photograph of the little body of Alan Kurdi face down in the water on a Turkish beach is a good example how media coverage influences refugee policies. After the publication of the photograph, many Europeans became sympathetic with the suffering of refugees, and European policies towards Syrian refugees shifted (Somaini, 2019).

Mass media has power to influence people by creating narratives about people and crises. The research of how mass media influence public opinion has received immense scholarly attention in the last few decades. Johnson-Cartee (2005) argues that "the mass media potentially have two potential levels of effects: 1) micro-effects, or those effects related to an individual, or 2) macro-effects, or those effects related to society at large." She says that effects on the individual can be 1) cognitive effects, which are associated with influence on what an individual knows or is aware of, 2) affective effects, which are influences on how an individual emotionally responds to what is known, or 3) behavioral effects, which include influences on how an individual acts on what is known and felt (Johnson-Cartee, 2005, p.8). Johnson-Cartee (2005) also argues that "knowledge is socially constructed, and the news media, in particular, play an increasingly powerful role in the process of constructing political reality" (p. 147).

Research also shows that mass media plays an important role in societal effects. Kraus and Davis (1976) observe that,

"The mass media create common reality by shaping the conceptual environment in which
humans communicate….Political reality is formed by mass communication reports which
are talked about, altered, and interpreted by citizens in a society. The totality of this
process constitutes reality (211).

Research also says that there is a relationship among audiences, media, and the social
structure. None of these three elements cannot attain its goals without depending on the other
two (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1990). I assume in this study that Bangladeshi media outlets
needed both the public and the social structure to create Rohingya narratives and that these three
forces are interdependent. Rohingya refugees have put pressure on the government and the
public in a country where resources are very limited. In a country where 24 million people live
below the poverty line, it is challenging to host 914,998 Rohingyas (World Bank, 2020). To a
certain degree, then, one can understand why a portion of the population and the policymakers
are not happy with the refugees. However, these sentiments are amplified and circulated by
media, policymakers, and the public, which can shift the tone of the narrative over time.

I also assume that news is a narrative and it has an effect on shaping public opinion.
However, whether news is narrative or not has been a long-debated issue. Scholars have
observed that journalists feel uncomfortable when academics and social critics refer to their
communication products as either stories or narratives (Bird and Dardenne 1988; Schudson
1991). The Oxford Dictionary (1996) defines narratives as " a spoken or written account of
connected events in order of happening," providing as synonyms " story, tale, chronicle,
description, revelation, portrayal, account, reports, record history, recital, and statement (Oxford
Dictionary, 1996). As such, I understand journalism as involved in the creation of narratives. I
have found McNair's (1998) observation useful in this regard:

Journalism, therefore, like any other narrative which is the work of human agency, is

essentially ideological – a communicative vehicle for transmission to an audience

(intentionally or otherwise) not just of facts but of assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and

values of its maker(s), drawn from and expressive of a particular world-view (6).

Furthermore, this study draws from framing theory. Gitlin (1980) argues that media frames are tools that both news media professionals and audiences use to contextualize information. He explains,

Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for

journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports.

Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of

selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize

discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of

information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive

categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. Thus, for

organizational reasons alone, frames are unavoidable, and journalism is organized to

regulate their production (Gitlin, 1980, pp. 6-7).

For the purposes of this study, I want to investigate the ways in which journalists used different frames in interpreting the Rohingya refugee crisis. The primary goal of this study is to find out dominant frames used in Rohingya refugee narratives. Second, I want to investigate how the frames changed over time from August 2017 to December 2019 as well as whether frames varied based on the format and ideology of the media outlets.

The study will contribute to the existing literature in three ways. First, this will help understand the dominant frames used in Rohingya coverage. Second, the study will help understand how frame can change over the time and based on the format and ideology of news outlets. Third, the study will also contribute to the existing literature of refugees. This will contribute to an understanding of the growing hatred against refugees worldwide.

Framing Theory and the Rohingyas

Media framing of Rohingyas get little scholarly attention. I have found only five articles that discuss media framing of Rohingyas. Two of them compare media framing in different countries. For example, Afzal (2016) discussed media framing of Rohingya crisis by British and Pakistani media outlets (Afzal, 2016). Islam (2018) discussed media framing of Rohingya crisis by Bangladeshi, Indian and Chinese newspapers (Islam, 2018). One article discusses the framing of Rohingya refugee crisis by Bangladesh's largest circulated English daily *The Daily Star* (Ubayasiri, 2019). It should be mentioned that Afzal's (2016) article was written before the present crisis began. In my review of the literature, I did not find any articles that discuss variation of frames about the Rohingya over the time or differentiates between the format and the ideology of the media outlets.

I also reviewed the articles that discuss how refugees worldwide are framed by the media outlets. A few articles discuss about the variation of media framing. Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) discuss the most dominant frames employed in the coverage of refugee and asylum issues between January 2015 and January 2016 in six Austrian newspapers. The article mainly focuses on potential differences between quality and tabloid media, and on frame variations over time.

A review of early research of refugee framing shows that there are mainly three dominant media framing of refugees. First, refugees are framed as victims. When framed as victims, news stories generally focus on the plight and suffering of refugees and illegal migrants, and the stories often encourage support for the 'victims' by demonstrating how they are not responsible for their condition (Van Gorp, 2005; Horsti, 2008). In victimization framing, news stories attempt to call for humanitarian assistance (KhosraviNik 2009; Harrell-Bond 1999). Second, refugees can be framed as a problem (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). The "problem" frame can be of two different varieties. On the one hand, refugees and asylum seekers are often framed as criminals and terrorists (Bennett et al. 2013; El Refaie 2001; Goodman and Speer 2007; Ibrahim 2005). On the other, refugees and asylum seekers are framed as responsible for economic crisis and "are accused of draining public resources" (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Furthermore, Lynn and Lea (2003) demonstrate that when refugees are framed as an economic problem people start questioning whether refugees and asylum seekers should get support or not. Third, refugees are framed as threats to the society of the host country. Refugees are blamed for destroying language, cultural identities and values (Gilbert, 2013). Research finds that this framing creates polarization in the society of the host country (Hickerson and Dunsmore, 2016; Benson, 2013).

The study is built on framing theory. Goffman (1974) argues that "individuals cannot understand the world fully and therefore actively classify and interpret their life experiences to make sense of the world around them. The individual's reaction to sensory information therefore depends on schemes of interpretation called 'primary frameworks'" (Goffman, 1974, p. 24). Goffman's main argument is that the public can see events in different ways and it is the journalist who employs the framework. Goffman says, "The type of framework we employ provides a way of describing the event to which it is applied" (p. 24).

Scheufele (2000) argues that "two concepts of framing need to be specified: media frames and audience frames. Media frames have been considered "a central organizing idea or story line that "provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events. ... The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (p. 143). Audience frames are defined as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information (Entman, 1993, p. 53)."

Frame Variation Over Time

Downs (1972) shows that news coverage of an issue has five cyclic stages. The five stages are 1) Pre-problem stage, 2) Problem stage, 3) Discovery stage, 4) Declining stage, and 5) Post problem stage. In the pre-problem stage, only experts and interest groups know about the problem. In problem and discovery stage, the public know about that problem. Some people become hopeful that the problem can be solved. When the problem is not solved and the economic and social costs become unbearable, public lose interest in the problem and this is the declining stage. And this declining stage leads to post problem stage (Downs, 1972; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Post problem stage refers to situation after the problem is over.

Frame Variation Among Tabloids, Mainstream Media , and Online Media

Research shows that media organizations' format or characteristics are important factors for their reporting (Vliegenthart and van Zoonen 2011; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Scholars argue that mainstream media are more serious reporting style (Jandura and Friedrichm, 2014). On the other hand, tabloids have tendencies to give one-sided and populist narrative to an event (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Furthermore, research shows that tabloid media has a

central role in creating negative narratives of migration related groups and asylum seekers (Innes 2010; Van den Bulck and Broos 2011). It is argued that in case of immigration and asylum coverage, tabloid papers use significantly more negative terminology than mainstream papers (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Threadgold 2009; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017)

Also**,** based on qualatative interview, Khan (2012) observed that his "interviewees perceived the right-wing press as allied to the Conservative Party and likely to report that migration was an economic liability to the state (Khan, 2012)." Research also finds that right-wing media in their coverage oppose migration (Delanty, 2008, p. 680).

Considering all this, the Rohingya crisis provides an interesting case study. It offers an opportunity to investigate the ways in which news framing of the crisis shifted over time as well as the ways in which those frames varied across different media outlets. The research questions guiding this study, then are as follows:

RQ1:   What are the dominant media frames about Rohingya refugees in mainstream Bangladeshi news outlets from August 2017 to January 2019, and how did they change over time?

RQ2:   Does the framing of the Rohingya refugees differ depending on the format (newspapers, tabloid, and online newspaper) or ideology of the news outlets?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Content from six daily newspapers and two online portals was analyzed for this study. I wanted to study the coverage of Rohingya refugees by tabloid outlets. However, there was only one taboild in Bangladesh (Manab Zamin). This outlet is tabloid in format but not in characteristic. It covers serious issues. The paper has also recently shut down its print edition. As such, I have excluded the outlet. Six out of eight newspapers are Bengali language newspapers and two of them are English language paper. The news outlets are *Prothom Alo*, *The Daily Star*, *Dhaka Tribune*, *Naya Diganto*, *Bangladesh Protidin, Inqilab* and online *Bangla Tribune* and *bdnews24.com*. News stories and opinion pieces were selected based on time published between August 25, 2017 and December 30, 2019. Two news stories from each news outlet were selected for each month of the timeframe. The sampling was random. I have selected one story from the beginning of the month and one from the end of the month. Thus, a total of 448 news and opinion stories were gathered. Of them, 48 were opinion pieces and 400 were news stories.

Bangladesh Protidin is the largest circulated Bengali daily in Bangladesh. Its daily circulation is 553,000. *Prothom Alo* is the second largest circulated Bengli language newspaper while *The Daily Star* is the largest circulated English language newspaper in Bangladesh (The Daily Sun, 2020). *Prothom Alo* has a daily circulation of 500,000. *The Daily Star* has a daily circulation of 44,814. *Dhaka Tribune's* daily circulation is 40,600. *Inqilab*'s and *Naya Diganta's* circulation is more than 100,000 for each publication (Banik Barta, 2020). *Naya Diganta and Inqilab* are selected because of its right-wing ideology while bdnews24.com and Bangla Tribune

was selected because they are online outlets and they have a pro-government stance. The
Nayadiganto and Inquilab are religious conservative media outlets. Nayadiganto's founding
chairman was a leader of Bangladesh's largest Islamist party Jamaat-E-Islami. The Islamist
group is said to have strong influence in the newspaper (Chowdhur and Abdullah, 2016). The
founder of the Inqilab was a leader of teachers organization of Bangladesh's Islamic education
system popularly known as madrassa. Madrassa based Islamist groups are said to have strong
influence in this newspaper (Riaz and Naser, 2011). Table 3.1 below provides a clear illustration
of the publications selected for analysis.

Table 3.1. Publications Selected for Analysis

	Publication Title	**Format**	**Daily Circulation/Views**	**Political Ideology**
1.	*Bangladesh Protidin*	Newspaper	553,000	Liberal/Secular
2.	*Bdnews24.com*	Online	333,333	Liberal/Pro-government
3.	*Bangla Tribune*	Online	158,141	Liberal/Pro-government
4.	*Inqilab*	Newspaper	100,000	Right-wing
5.	*Prothom Alo*	Newspaper	500,000	Liberal/Secular
6.	*The Daily Star*	Newspaper	44,814	Liberal/Secular
7.	*Dhaka Tribune*	Newspaper	40,600	Liberal/Pro-government
8.	*Naya Diganta*	Newspaper	100,000	Right-wing

The time between August 25, 2017 and December 30, 2019 was chosen because this was the most important time of Rohingya crisis. On August 25, 2017 Myanmar security forces started the crackdown against the Rohingya minority groups after a group of Rohingya insurgents attacked several police posts. A total of 914,998 Rohingyas are now residing in refugee camps in Bangladesh (as of September 30, 2019).

To gather relevant stories from each of the publications, I conducted a search by using the search engines embedded in the websites of these eight news outlets. I began by simply searching for the term, "Rohingya." In *Prothom Alo*, 74,600 results were found, which included news stories, opinion pieces, editorial and a few letters to the editors. To reduce the total number of stories, while also ensuring that I captured stories across the relevant time line, I selected two stories or opinion pieces from each month. This gave me meaning 56 total news stories and opinion pieces from the desired time frame.

Table 3.2 Selection of Research Sample from Each Publication

News outlet	Search Result	Stories Selected for Analysis
Prothom Alo	74,600	56
The Daily Star	529,000	56
Dhaka Tribune	102,000	56
Bangladesh Protidin	320	56
Naya Diganta	11,800	56
Inqilab	23,700	56
Bdnews24.com	3,301	56
Bangla Tribune	69,800	56
Total	*814,521*	*448*

I repeated this same process for each of the other publications as well. In *The Daily Star*, the key word search Rohingya generated 529,000 results. A total of 56 stories and opinion pieces were selected from there. A total of 102,000 results were found in the key word search in *Dhaka Tribune* website and 56 were selected from there. A key word search in *Bangladesh Protidin* website generated 320 results, or which 56 were selected. A total of 11,800 results was found in *Naya Diganto* website and 56 were selected. The search in *Bangla Tribune* generated 69,800 result. Of them, 56 were selected. In bdnews24.com, I got 3,301 results and 56 were selected.

Analysis

To analyze the selected articles, I first downloiaded the selected articles from the each publication's website and compiled them in a single Word file. I followed Staurt Hall's advice of "a long preliminary soak" in the material (Hall, 1980). In drawing inspiration from Hall's techniques for her study, Steeves (1997) argues that the purpose of this "soak" is to "identify valid themes and illuminating examples consistence with a concentual argument or question" (Steeves, 1997, p. 24)." Klaus Krippendorff (1980) also argues that "after inferences have been made, that is, after it is known what the data mean or what they indicate, there is the need to do the following:

- summarize the data, to represent them so that they can be better comprehend, interpreted, or related to some decision the user wishes to make

- discover patters and relationships within data that the "naked eye" would not easily discern, to test relational hypotheses

- relate data obtained from content analysis to data obtained from other methods or from

  other situations so as to either validate the methods involved or to provide missing

  information (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 109).

I follow Krippendorff's advice. I read the articles several times and took notes each time. I should mention that I was in Bangladesh during the time these stories were written. Not only did I read most of the news everyday, but I also had the chance to discuss the news stories in the news room. Discussions about these news stories on Facebook has also provided additional contextual familirity with the stories.

To develop the frames for this study, I followed Todd Gitlin's method of framing. Gitlin (1980) revealed hegemonic processes at play in the *New York Times* and *CBS News* television coverage of the anti-Vietnam War resistance movement, Student for a Democratic Society (SDS), in the 1960s. He argues that "media frames, largely unspoken and unackowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusive, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (Gitlin, 1980, p.7).

I identified my frames through a process of initial coding, which then became more refined after repeating my analysis. My process of initial coding began by first categorizing each story based on its type (i.e., whether it was a news story or opinion piece). I did this because I specifically wanted to separate out editorial content from that which was reported as hard news. In my view, identifying the frames used in hard news was going to be more consequential because those stories are presented as factual and therefore can have a potentially more potent impact on the way the public views the Rohingya crisis. Second, I categorized the stories based

on the section in which the story appeared (i.e., international news, national news, business, or culture). I did this because each section of the publication would necessarily highlight certain aspects of the story. Therefore, I wanted to see the degree to which stories either coincided with the section focus or deviated from that focus to offer an additional frame for understanding the crisis.

In following Gitlin's (1980) framework, I also tried to find out if the reporters put emphasis on one aspect while overlooking other aspects. In what such exmaple, the daily paper *Prothom Alo* published a story on October 19, 2019 titled "Rohingya Songkot: Sonchoy Vengechen 28 percent sthaniyo manush" (Rohingya crisis: 28 percent local people lose their savings)." Written by Iftekhar Mahmud and Gias Uddin, the report says the "Rohingya crisis is destroying Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district's forest land, drinking water resources, agricultural land and the local people are suffering from food insecurity." The story focuses on how Rohingyas became a burden on Bangladesh and how they were harming Bangladesh's resources. In other words, the story frames the Rohingya as an economic burden by depleting resources. However, it ignores the fact that Rohingyas are in distress and they have no where to go.

After reflecting on multiple rounds of analysis and further refining my frames, I ultimately arrived at six dominant frames used in the coverage of the Rohingya refugees. They are:

Victims: Rohingyas are framed as victims.

Economic Burden: Rohingyas are framed as an economic burden for the country.

Baby Booming: Rohingya mothers are giving birth to huge number of babies in Bangladesh.

Disease Spreading: Rohingyas are spreading diseases in the local areas.

Security Threat: Terrorism, Law and order deterioration. Rohingyas are framed as a threat to the security of the hosting country.

Prolonged Crisis: The Rohingyas are framed as a crisis which will not be solved in the near future.

Once these frames were established, I returned to the stories again to capture more granular qualitative detail on how these frames were used in stories. This ultimately led to my results, which are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss each of the frames I identified in my study. I ultimately identified six dominant frames: *Victims, Economic Burden, Baby Booming, Disease Spreading, Security Threat,* and *Prolonged Crisis*. I explain the specific emphasis of each frame as well as provide examples of how the frames were used in the stories from my research sample.

Dominant Frames

Rohingya as Victims

The Rohingya crisis is a decades-old issue for Bangladesh. The crisis flares up periodically and often many Rohingyas cross the border or take a sea route into Bangladesh. Immediately before the 2017 Rohingya refugee crisis, there was an influx (Griffin, 2015). Anti-Rohingya sentiment was always there in Bangladesh. Despite this, newspaper coverage in the initial stage was very pro-Rohingya. During that time, Rohingyas were framed by the media as victims who are suffering because of inhumane policies of Myanmar government and the brutality of Myanmar's armies. Anti-Rohingya sentiment was ignored during the time, and this is largely reflected in my research sample.

The daily *Prothom Alo* first ran a report on August 30, 2017 titled " Naikhangchori Shimante Hazaro Rohingyas ("Thousands Rohingyas in Naikhangchori border"). Written by Buddhajyoti Chakma, the six-column-inch report says that Rohingyas were suffering from a food and drinking water crisis on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, as the Bangladeshi government

was still undecided if it would allow Rohingyas to enter Bangladesh. Coupled with two photographers showing Rohingyas in distress and run on the front page of the newspaper, the report starts with the paragraph: "Thousands of Rohingyas took shelter on the no-man's land at Chakdhala and Ashartoli at Naikhangchori in Banderban border. They are staying at six points on slope of the hills using makeshift made of polithines. They are sufferring from foods and drinking water crisis and leading a humanitarian life. Every day new Rohingyas are joining them." The reporter uses sources from government officials, locals and Rohingyas. The report quoted Rohingya Abdul Majid saying that they are not getting drinking water. The report ignored that the fact that the growing number of Rohingya refugees were already presenting a problem for Bangladesh, which had the potential to lead to some crisis in the country.

The Daily Star first reported on the crisis on August 26, 2017. In a story titled, "Fresh influx on" and written by an unnamed staff reporter, the report says Rohingas in large number fled Myanmar to Bangladesh after Myanmar armies fired bullets at the Rohingya camps and burnt their houses. Run on the front page of the newspaper, the 578-word-long story starts with the paragraph: "In the wake of Rohingya insurgents' attacks on police and army personnel in Rakhine State, Bangladesh yesterday saw a sudden influx of Rohingyas who fled Myanmar for fear of persecution." The report does mention that Bangladesh had already been hosting 500,000 Rohingyas for three decades. It also did not talk about the problem this could cause to Bangladesh. Government officials, locals, and Rohingyas are used as sources for the report. The report quoted a Rohingya fisherman, Syed Hossainas, saying he along with his 15 family members fled Myanmar's Maungdaw after he saw fire and plumes of smoke in nearby areas.

Similarly, on August 29, 2017 *Dhaka Tribune* ran a front page leading story titled "'No respite': Myanmar troops force Rohingyas into Bangladesh." Written by Adil Sakhawat, who

reported from Naikhongchhari border in Bangladesh, the report says that the reporter heard two bursts of gunfire, then saw smoke began to curl up from the horizon, and the Rohingyas were in distress as the Bangladeshi government was not allowing them to enter. At the same time, they could not return to Myanmar. Written as a first-person narrative, the report starts with: "I was at a strategic point from where the Bangladesh-Myanmar border fence and a border post of Myanmar Border Guard Forces (BGF) on the other side was visible. What I observed from this vantage point came as a complete surprise. Around 11am, while I was talking to the newly arrived Rohingyas at a temporary shelter at the international border, they were suddenly instructed to voluntarily dismantle their shelters and move near the border fence." The report uses government officials, locals and Rohingyas as sources.

Figure 1: Dhaka Tribune's September 29, 2017 front page leading story titled "No Respite for the Rohingya

Portraying Rohingyas as victims and discussing their situation as a humanatarian crisis was other coverage as well. For example, in an opinion piece published in *Prothom Alo* written by Tahmina Amir, titled "Poshutto Kobe Sesh hobe?" (When will the brutality end?), the writer questions the silence of international community to Rohingya repression. She says she cannot forget the picture of dead bodies of Rohingya children floating on the sea. In another opinion piece in the same same newspaper titled, "Mayer Bari Myanmar: C My Ghor Jayum" (My mother lives in Myanmar: Let's go home, mother), the writer Gowhar Naim Wara describes the plights of some Rohingya children. He tells the story of a three years old child Hafiz who was crying when the writer was speaking to him and asking his mother to go home to Myanmar.

In this frame, Rohingyas are portrayed as victims, and I have found humanitarian appeals used in this frame. This frame was noticed only in the early stages of the crisis. As time went on, humanitarian framing was absent except in the right wing newspapers. Humanitarian framing might be used to justify government decision to give shelter to Rohingyas in the initial stage.

Economic Burden

Earlier research has found coverage of immigrants and asylum seekers is often associated with problem orientation (Gemi, Ulasiuk, and Triantafyllidou, 2013; Heller, 2014; Lynn and Lea, 2003; Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017). I have found a similar pattern. After the initial shock passed, newspapers started discussing the economic burden the crisis could cause to Bangladesh. The discussion of the economic burden started after a few weeks of the crisis. While discussing about economic burden, news outlets overlooked humanitarian and other aspects.

On September 28, 2017, the *Dhaka Tribune* newspaper published a report titled "Rohingya influx may hurt Bangladesh economy." Written by Ishtiaq Husain and Ibrahim Hossain Ovi, the story summaries comments of leading Bangladesh economists and indicates

that Bangladesh's economy is going to face impacts due to the Rohingya crisis. The report starts with the paragraph: "Bangladesh's economy will face multiple adverse impacts if the recently arrived Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine State are not repatriated soon, economists and experts have warned." The reporters spoke to three leading economists in the country: the Centre for Policy Dialogue distinguished fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya, senior economist of Policy Research Institute Ashikur Rahman, and a former finance adviser to the government ABM Mirza Azizul Islam. They also spoke to Bangladesh Hotel and Guest House Owners Association secretary general James Babu Hazra, chief executive officer of Bangladesh Tourism Board Nasir Uddin and some locals. It is worth noting that the Cox's Bazar district where Rohingyas are residing is a tourist spot. The report suggest that the Rohingya crisis will harm Bangladesh's tourism industry. "Once our economy is affected badly, food items and household materials will witness price hikes," economist ABM Mirza Azizul Islam was quoted as saying in the report. Shamsul Alam, a local in the adjacent area of the Rohingya camps was quoted as saying: "The prices of almost everything have risen in the last two weeks due to higher demand following the Rohingya influx."

The Daily Star ran an opinion piece on October 30, 2017, which was written by an economist, Dr Abdullah Shibli. The article argues the crisis has already cost Bangladesh both directly and indirectly: "Among the indirect or imputed costs, we should include the following: infrastructure, government services including security, natural resources, health and sanitation, and the labour market. According to some accounts, the tourism industry in Cox's Bazar has taken a hit," Dr Shibli argues in his opinion piece. The article says: "Bangladesh has been taking in Rohingya refugees from Myanmar since the 70s, right after independence, and the rate accelerated in the 1990s. Currently, we are sheltering, feeding, and providing various assistance

28

to well over a million refugees and it is possible that the situation might get worse before it gets better."

Figure 2: The Daily Star opinion piece titled " Bearing the economic cost of the Rohingya crisis" published on October 30, 2017

Prothom Alo published a story on October 19, 2019 titled "Rohingya Songkot: Sonchoy Vengechen Athash Shotangsho Sthaniyo Manush" (Rohingya crisis: 28 percent of local people ate into their savings)." Written by Iftekhar Mahmud and Gias Uddin, the report summerized a study conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and seven other aid organizations. The report starts with the paragraph: "Rohingyas are destroying Cox's Bazar district's forest land, drinking water resources and agricultural land while the local people are suffering from food insecurity." The report quotes a local, Nabi Hossain, as saying he is in financial crisis because Rohingya refugees had built 22 houses on his agricultural land.

There are similarities in the coverage of all media outlets studied when they frame Rohingya as economic burden. The major narratives are: sky rocketing of neceesity foods, impact on tourism and high cost on local natural resources.

The economic burden frame was noticed one month after the crisis began. Media occasionally cover the Rohingya crisis and try to give the impression that Rohingyas are responsible for Bangladesh's economic crisis. This frame has created a narrative that Bangladeshi economy is suffering due to the refugees.

Baby Booming

One of the tendencies of news outlets has also been to portray Rohingyas as others, who are "not like us." Some news outlets build a narrative that Rohingya women are uneducated and do not use birth control, which runs the risk of "baby booming" in Bangladesh. On October 4, 2017, the *Dhaka Tribune* newspaper publisheed a report titled, "Why are Rohingyas not interested in birth control?" Written by Abdul Aziz, the 329-word report says Rohingya women have no idea what birth control is, as there is no access to birth control in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The report starts with the paragraph: "The Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) has started working to bring the adult Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh under a family planning programme." The reporter spoke to local health officials, locals and Rohingyas. The report concludes with a quote of Cox's Bazar Family planning official, Dr Pintu Kanti Bhattacharya, as saying, "More than 25,000 expecting Rohinya mothers have fled Myanmar and entered Bangladesh since August 25. More than 700 children were were born since then. At least 10,000 more Rohingya mothers will give birth very soon." The story indicates that baby booming is going to be a problem to Bangladesh.

The Daily Star newspaper ran a similar story on November 3, 2017 titled: "Family Planning: Too important, yet ignored: Rohingya mothers, children in danger for lack of services." Written by Porimol Palma, the 1023-word report quotes a NGO official in the camps as saying, "every Rohingya couple has six to seven children on average and that Rohingyas are not educated." It says that contraceptive is not popular among Rohingyas due to lack of education and awareness. The report starts with the paragraph: "Shortage of family planning services may aggravate the health problems of Rohingya refugees, especially mothers and children suffering from malnutrition, say government officials and experts." The reporter spoke to mainly health experts and NGO officials. However, it did not talk to any Rohingyas. The report quotes a health expert Dr Bhattacharjee as saying they are also considering permanent method of contraceptives like vasectomy and tubectomy for Rohingyas.

Figure 3: The Daily Star's report on baby booming titled "Family Planning: Too important, yet ignored" published on November 3, 2017

The *Prothom Alo* publised a similar story on May 17, 2018 titled "Choy mashe Rohingyashibir a jonmo niyeche cholo hazar shishu (16,000 babies were born in Rohingya camps in 6 months." Written by unnamed desk reporter, the article is based on a report of The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations agency UNICEF. Quoting UNICEF, the report says that 60 babies are born in Rohingya camps every day.

The baby booming frame was observed approximately one year after the crisis began, but it was used less frequently as time went on. This frame provides a narrative among the masses that refugee numbers will surpass the local people because of high birth rates and all the newborn children will be Bangladeshi citizens who will put burden on Bangladesh.

Security Threat

Earlier research has found that one of the aspects of associating Rohingyas with problem orientation is to relate them to the security of the country (Bennett et al., 2013; El Refaie, 2001; Goodman and Speer, 2007; Ibrahim, 2005). I have found a similar framing in Rohingya crisis. In Rohingya's case, the aspect of security threat has two dimensions. They are associated with global terrorism and responsible for the deteriorating law and order situation in the areas of Rohingya camps. In case of deteriorating law and order situation, Rohingyas are framed as drug peddlers and causes for increased crime rates.

Most of the news outlets included in this study published stories framing the Rohingya as a security threat and part of the ongoing threat of global terrorism. For example, *Bangladesh Protidin* ran a story on September 9, 2017 titled "Rohingya der sathe jongi Onuprobesher

Ashongkha (Terrorists can enter Bangladesh along with Rohingyas)." Written by an unnamed reporter, the report quotes a senior Bangladeshi minister namely Obaidul Quader as saying the Bangladesh government is worried that arms, terrorists and national and international conspirators could enter Bangladesh with Rohingyas.

Online *bdnews24.com* ran a story on September 4, 2019 titled "Two NGOs banned in Cox's Bazar for 'secretly assisting' Rohingya rally, 'instigating' no return." Written by the outlet's Cox's Bazar correspondent, the report says the government takes action against two NGOS for "instigating" Rohingyas. The report starts with the paragraph: "The government has ordered a halt on operations of two NGOs in Cox's Bazar for "secretly assisting" a Rohingya rally in and "instigating" the refugees to not return to Myanmar." The report quotes a government official as saying " the two NGOs are also accused of instigating the refugees not to return to their homeland." The official added that the government also ordered a halt on bank transactions of the two NGOs- ADRA and Al-Markazul.

Online *bdnews24.com* ran another story on April 6, 2018 titled "15 killings and 163 crime incident in Rohingya camps in 8 months." Wrriten by Mithun Chowdhury, the report quotes a police official as saying that Rohingyas were involved in 15 killings and 163 crime incidents in the eight months. It added that cases were filled against 336 Rohingyas. The report quotes a senior official as saying that Rohingyas have high tendencies for crime, as they came from a confined area. The report tries to give an idea that crime rates are higher among Rohingyas than the local Bangladeshi community. However, it did not give any comprative figures. A tendency of portraying Rohingyas as "others" who are not like Bangladeshis was also noticed in the report. This report was widely shared among the Bangladeshi Facebook community to establish a narrative that Rohingyas are making Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district a crime zone.

Prothom Alo published an interview of a security expert, the President of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Styudies, Major General ANM Muniruzzaman on December 23, 2019. In the interview, Mr. Muniruzzaman said the Rohingya crisis can be a security threat to the region. He said there are some indications to that. First, there are some conflicts between Rohingyas and the local people. Second, Rohingyas are invovled in the drug business in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar region. Third, Rohingyas are involved in small arms trade in the region.

The Daily Star published a report on May 17, 2019 titled "Refugee Camps: Crime spikes while Rohingyas despair." Written by Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, the report says "With uncertainty shrouding the Rohingya repatriation, crimes – from petty thefts to drug peddling, abduction to murder – have become a commonplace at the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar."

The framing of the security threat started after a few months of the crisis, and the media revisit the issue occassionally. Except the right wing news outlets, all media used the security framing as routine reporting. There is a dominant narratives in Bangladesh that Rohingya refugees are responsible for drug trafficking in Bangladesh. The framing has contributed to anti-Rohingya sentiment.

Disease Spreading

Rohingyas are also framed as the source for spreading diseases in Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Protidin* published a story titled "Myammar a arai lakh AIDS rugi: Bangladesh a Sonkromon er Shongkha (250,000 AIDS patients in Myanmar: Fear of spread to Bangladesh)" on October 15, 2017. Written by an unnamed reporter, the article says that Bangladesh is at high

risk of an AIDS epidemic because of the Rohingyas. Quoting a local health official, the report says that until the report was writted on October 15, 19 Rohingyas were found HIV positive.

On November 23, 2017, *The Daily Star* ran a story titled "83 HIV-infected Rohingyas traced". Written by an unnamed online reporter, the report cited the Health Minister in saying that 83 Rohingyas had tested HIV-positive. The report informed that of them 29 are males, 41 are females. The minister was quoted in the report that the government has taken necessary measures so that it will not spread to the local communities.

In this frame, Rohingyas are considered as a public health threat to the local communities. The media using this frame try to give an idea that Bangladesh does not have AIDS problem but Rohingyas are responsible for the spread. I think this may have parallels to the narrative that Chinese people are responsible for spreading coronavirus in the west. It should be mentioned that these reports try to create fear among the masses. For example, the headline says "250,000 AIDS patients in Myanmar" which creates panic, but the report said only 19 were tested positive. The number of Rohingya patients in Myanmar was used to create panic among the people. There is a dominant narrative in the local communities that Rohingyas are spreading diseases in the areas adjacent to the Rohingya camps and the narrative seems to have created anti-Rohingya sentiment in these areas.

Prolonged Crisis

News outlets also frame Rohingyas crisis as a prolonged crisis, which will be a burden on Bangladesh for a long time. Stories using this frame seemed indicated that there was no solution in sight for the Rohingya crisis, the crisis will continue and, as such, Rohingyas will stay in

Bangladesh forever. *Bangla Tribune* published a story on October 4, 2017 titled "Choloman Rohingya Somossa Shosai Somadhan Hobe Na" (Rhingya crisis will not be solved soon). The report cites sources from parliamentary standing committee members who warn that the Rohingya crisis will be prolonged.

The Daily Star published an opinion piece on March 20, 2018 titled "Is Bangladesh headed for a prolonged Rohingya crisis?" Written by Nahela Nowshin, an editorial team member of the paper, the article argues that "with every passing day, any hope of the safe return of Rohingyas, who have endured the most horrific of experiences, gets dimmer." The writer concludes that "their [Rohingyas] fate hangs in the balance as Bangladesh continues to grapple with a monumental humanitarian burden and Myanmar does as it pleases with no one to question them."

The framing of a prolonged crisis gives the message to the public that Bangladesh should not be too sympathetic to the cause of Rohingyas, but they should be concenred about the crisis. It's worth noting that I have seen numerous Facebook discussions based on this narrative that Rohingyas will live Bangladesh forever and they will take over the areas from the local people.

Figure 4: The Daily Star opinion piece titled "Is Bangladesh headed for a Prolonged Rohingya crisis?" published on March 20, 2018

Frames Vary Over Time

My findings in this study have have followed a similar to what Downs (1972) identifies as the five cyclic stages of the coverage of an issue, which are: 1) Pre-problem stage, 2) Problem stage, 3) Discovery stage, 4) Declining stage, and 5) Post problem stage. In the Rohingya crisis, the pre-problem stage was the first week when the crisis began. The problem stage then continued during the next four weeks. In problem and pre-problem stages, the media frames were predominantly focused on victimization and the plight of the Rohingya people. Pathos was used during these two stages to appeal the public's sense of sympahty for a downtrodden people. These reports tended to focus on the humanitarian nature of the crisis; Rohingyas were framed as

victims who were tortured by Maynmar army. Things started to change, however, in the next stage.

In the discovery stage, media outlets started framing the crisis as an economic burden and highlighting the long-term costs for Bangladesh. This started at the end of September 2017, one month after the crisis began. Framing Rohingyas as security threat comes a little bit later, approximately one month after the discovery stage. I have found a gap in coverage after that. There were only occassional reporting. I argue that this was a declining stage. The dominant frame during this time is the Prolonged Crisis frame. At the time of writing, the crisis continues, which means I did not find any evidence of Down's (1972) post-problem stage. Anecdotally, I can say that the dominant frames continue to be the Security Threat and Prolonged Crisis frames.

Online News Outlets More Hostile Than Newspapers

Online portals were found more hostile towards Rohingya refugees than mainstrem newspapers. The online *Bangla Tribune* published a news story on August 23, 2019 titled, "Rohingya der mukhe khabar tule deya Faruq Rohingya sontrashi der hate khun" (Faruq who fed Rohingyas was killed by Rohingya criminals). The report says a local by the name Faruq fed and gave shelter to Rohingyas when they arrived. However, he was killed by "Rohingya criminals." The source for this story was a Facebook post. *Bangla Tribune* published a report on August 23, 2019 titled, "Rohingya Der Pisone Dui bosore Khoroch 72 Hazar Koti Taka! (Bangladesh's Spendings on Rohingyas is 72,000 Crore Taka! (720 Billion Bangladeshi taka, USD 8.46 Billion). The report quoted Bangladesh's Foreign Minister as saying the total spending on Rohingyas for two years was USD 8.46 billion. Online *bdnews24.com* published a story on

October 18, 2019 titled, "Rohingya Songkot NGO Der Vumika Niye Proshno" (Rohingya crisis: Questions about NGO's role). The report using the source of a Bangladeshi organization namely "Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee" (Elimination Committee of Colaborators) saying that some Non-Governmental Organizations are using Rohingyas to cause violence inside Bangladesh. Another report published on September 25, 2019 titled, "Who Controls Rohingya Camps" claims that Non-Governmental Organizations are recruiting Rohingyas for jobs, which is a violation of laws. The report also says that money is coming illegally to the refugee camps from Middle East countries. The main tension at the heart of the focuses on how the Bangladeshi government has given land and spent money, yet NGOs are controlling Rohingya camps. On September 30, international NGO Plan International issued a rejoinder saying that the report gave fabricated information about their activites in Rohingya camps.

Right-Wing Newspaper is Pro-Refugee

Earlier research shows that right-wing newspapers typically oppose refugees and migration (Delanty, 2008; Khan, 2012). However, in case of Rohingya crisis, the opposite is true. In my study, there were two right-wing newspapers, *Inqilab* and *Naya Diganta*. Both the newspapers were consistently sympathetic towards the refigees throughout the crisis. Most of the coverage from these sources tends to be pro-Rohingya, and they always try to avoid framing the Rohingya as an economic burden or any of the other problems caused Rohingyas to Bangladesh. Instead, the frames used by the right-wing newspapers tend to emphasize fellow Muslims in distress, Muslim brotherhood, Muslim unity, and Muslim solidarity. One interesting fact is that both the newspapers use the phrase "Rohingya Muslim" in all their reports, whereas other

newspapers only use the word "Rohingya" in describing the Rohingya people. The right-wing newspapers always try to tell the religious identity of Rohingyas to their readers. Also, the right-wing newspapers had a tendency to portray Rohingya repression as *religious* violence than an *ethnic* violence. In truth, repression against the Rohingya is multifaceted and not solely due to their religion. There are other Muslims in Myanmar, but they do not face the same treatment the Rohingyas face (see Ware & Laoutides, 2018).

The reasons why right-wing newspapers are pro-Rohingyas might best be understood by interviewing the reporters. However, this fell outside the scope and possibility of the current study. I would argue that the primary reason is the shared Muslim identity of Rohingyas and the right-wing Muslim newspapers. Therefore, the papers found it an obligation to support fellow Muslims in distress. Additionally, political Islam has a strong influence on the right-wing Muslim newspapers in Bangladesh and pan-Islamism is at center of the political Islam idelogy. Rohingyas are part of this pan Islamism. One of the key figures of political Islam, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been very vocal of Rohingya rights (Barut, 2017).

On August 29, 2017 the daily *Inqilab* published nine stories, and all of them were editorialized. The stories included headlines like "Injured refugees struggling in the border;" "Give Shelter tto Rohingyas: Khaleda" (Khaleda Zia is the opposition leader); "Endangered Humanity;" "We are not terrorist but national salvation army: Interview of Arakan Solvation Army (The Rohingya insergent group);" "World silent despite barbarity against Rohingyas;" "Refrain from human rights violation: Iran to Mayanmar;" "Protest against brutality on Rohingya Muslims, 475 Rohingyas forced to return to Myanmar;" and "UN Chief concerns about Rohingyas, urge Bangladesh to give shelter."

On August 30, the Daily *Inqilab* ran an opinion piece titled "We must stand beside Rohingyas who are facing ethnic cleansing." Identity of the writer was not given in the report. He supports the independent movement the Arakan Rohingya Solvation Army (ARSA), the insurgent group. The writer describes the history of Muslims in Rakhine and how Islam reached there. The article starts with the sentence: "the Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine are facing the most brutal genocide and the longest state-sponsored crime in the recent history." The articles tries to give the impression that Muslisms all over the world are struggling and facing persecution.

On September 6, 2017, the *Inqilab* ran a story based on a statement of a Islamic party leader titled " Helping Rohingyas is part of religious duty of every Muslim." The report quotes Secretary General of the Islamic party Khelafot Majlish Mawlana Mahfuzul Haque as saying it is the religious duty of every Muslim to help other Muslims in their crisis. He said that Bangladeshi Muslims are ready to help Rohingya Muslims.

On August 29, 2017, the *Daily Nayadiganta* ran 6 stories on Rohingyas, of which four appeared on the front page. The stories are: "Army's rampage in Maungdu's Rohingya village continues"; "Myanmar's army is worse than animals;" "Khaleda (opposition leaders) urges to give shelter to Rohingyas;" "Bangladesh proposes to conduct operation in Myanmar border;" "Even Rohingya children not spared from Myanmar army's bullets;" and "Stop ethnic hate activities against Rohingyas."

The headlines of the reports and opinion pieces show that from the very first day of the crisis, right-wing news outlets were pro-Rohingya. Some of the headlines of the report are even editoralised. The right-wing news outlets tried to use sympathy towards Rohingyas by using Muslim inspiration. One of my research questions was whether frames varied based on the

ideaology of the paper. The right-wing news outlets remained consistently pro-refugee up until the time my study concluded.

On August 29, 2017 the newspaper's leading news on the front page was: "Army's rampage in Maungdu's Rohingya village continues." Written by four reporters – GM Ashekullah, Golam Azam Khan, Humayan Kabir Jushan and Mufizur Rahman – the report gave some descriptions of how Rohingyas are getting killed and fleeing Myanmar. The report was a red-banner headline with a photograph showing a young Rohingya mother with her baby. The report starts with the paragraph: "the cry of distressed Rohingyas in the border continues. The persecuted Rohingyas are passing through hard time in pain and hunger." The reporter spoke to local officials, local people and the Rohingya refugees. Based on interviews of Rohingyas, it gave vivid description of how Myanmar army conducted crackdown on Rohingyas.

On the same day, the newspaper ran a one column report at the left side of the leading report. The report titled "Myanmar's army is worse than animals." Wriiten by an unknown staff reporter, the report is mainly based on interviews of Rohingyas. The report uses the word shelterless, distressed, helpless. The next day on August 30, 2017, the paper ran another red color headline titled "Burning Rohingya houses: killings, rapes continue." Written by Golam Azam Khan, the report uses the world "brutal" to describe the Myanmar army.

On September 9, 2017, the newspaper published an editorial titled "Rohingya humanitarian crisis: Why are the United Nations and the international community silent." Written by an unknown editorial team member, the editorial argues that Maynamr wants to force its Muslim population leave the country and want to make a Buddhist only nataion. The editorial also questions about the "silence" of the United Nations and the international community and calls for the solidarity of Muslim countries.

The policies of Bangladesh's right-wing Islamic political parties is reflected in the coverage of the right-wing newspapers on Rohingya refugee crisis. And the newspapers' framing and pro-Rohingya coverage seem to exert influece on the government to give Rohingyas shelter within Bangladesh because the Islamic political party members have strong influence in the country. This is perhaps due to Muslim identity of Rohingyas. Right-wing newspapers see the issue from an Islamic perspective and want to create a narrative favouring Rohingyas.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Refugee crises are a global reality. At present, there are 25.9 million refugees in the world, and this number is growing every year. This is the highest level ever recorded. Half of these refugees are children who are often growing in hunger, malnutrition, lack of education, and other basic needs. The situation is even worse in poor countries. A third of refugees – 6.7 million people – are hosted by the world's poorest countries (Amnesty International, 2020).

At the same time, refugees are facing growing hostility worldwide (UNHCR, 2020). Refugee issues and human rights violations are considered a defining issue of this century (Betts, 2015). Research finds that host societies' feelings of hostility, anger, and mistrust toward refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants after the September 11 attacks and the subsequent wars (Rebelo, Fernández & Achotegui, 2018). This is especially true for those from Arab countries. And these hostilities and mistrust have a harmful impact on the refugees' "biopsychosocial well-being, often triggering feelings of helplessness, anger, frustration, and general mistrust" (Rebelo, Fernández & Achotegui, 2018, p. 239).

Research also finds that media play a strong role in creating public opinion about refugees especially in creating hostile environment in the hosting countries. Media coverage can also influence government policies towards refugees (Somaini, 2019; Gunter, 2015; Kingsley & Timur, 2015).

The research reinforces Downs' (1972) patterns of frame changes over time. I have found that the frame has changed over time as the crisis entered a new stage. In the pre-problem and

problem stages, news outlets used humanitarian frames and portray Rohingyas as victim. However, in the later stages, they portray Rohingyas as responsible for security, economic and social burden to the local community.

The research has found some new frames used by Bangladeshi media in case of Rohingya crisis that the previous other research I reviewd on refugees did not find. For example, the research has found that Rohingya refugees are considered as a threat to the public health and they are spreading AIDS and other diseases. This narrative seems to have created anti-Rohingya sentiment among the local people. The research has also found that Bangladeshi media has used "baby booming" framing. The framing gives an idea that Rohingyas have very high birth rate and a large number of babies will be born in Bangladesh and they will be Bangladeshi citizens who will burden the society.

One important finding of the research is that right wing news outlets are pro-Rohingya. Early research has found that right-wing news outlets are always anti-refugees. This research contradicts some of the literature on right-wing newspapers being hostile to refugees. Instead, what was most important in this case was the shared religious identity of the refugees and the conservative news outlets. In case of Rohingya crisis, right-wing news outlets saw the crisis from pan-Islam and Islamic brotherhood point of view. They tried to use the crisis to emphasize Muslim nationalism among the population in the Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

The findings will contribute to the existing literature in three ways. First, it reveals the major framing used by Bangladeshi media in their coverage of Rohingya refugees. The study has found some news framings (i.e. spreading diseases) that previous studies did not find. Second, it gives an idea about the root of the hostility towards refugees. Media framing play a key role in the hostility. Third, the study reveals that ideology of the media plays an important role in the

way they frame an event. Even right-wing news outlets can be pro-refugees if the refugees have the same religious of those right-wing people.

Rohingyas are "the most persecuted minority in the world" (Phillips & Sheth, 2017). This study will help policy makers understand that Rohingyas are also facing hostility in their current host country of Bangladesh. It will contribute to the world movement of securing rights of refugees and to take effective measures to solve the crisis.

The study has some limitations. First, a news story comes to the readers through multiple hands. There are reporters, copy editors and other gate keepers. My study did not investigate who influences the framing in Rohingya coverage. Future research can investigate this by in-depth interview of the reporters and other newsroom staff. Second, the study could be expanded through an analysis of television coverage. Television plays a big role on creating narratives and influence the society and government policies. One of the reasons I excluded television coverage from this study was because access to the archives of Bangladeshi television channels would have been too difficult to achieve from the United States where I am residing now. Third, a comparative study that incorporates other international media outlets would be interesting, as it would allow for the opportunity to see similarities and differences in coverage of the crisis.

Also, Rohingyas have very little resources to counter these predominant narratives in Bangladesh where they are refugees as well as in Myanmar. In Bangladesh, they are not allowed to go outside of the camps and enroll in educational institutions. In Myanmar, they are not allowed to leave Rakhine state, and they do not have any representation in the media. However, they are active on social media, especially on Facebook. They try to use different Facebook groups to counter the negative narratives. This study is based on newspaper narratives and investigating the Facebook groups is outside the purvew of this study. However, future research

can investigate the strategies used by the Facebook groups by Rohingyas. Finally, future research could address the public opinion aspects of the crisis to determine whether media reports have made people more hostile towards refugees.

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