

Mapping Simultaneity: A Parallel Agencies Framework for Sociopolitical Analysis in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Current approaches to Bangladesh's sociopolitical analysis often work through isolating incidents. It prioritizes single-agency causality. They obscure complex interactions among non-state, state, societal, and international actors. This paper introduces the parallel agencies framework. It systematically maps simultaneous agency interactions across governance contexts. It is based on theoretical foundations from the agent–structure debate, network theory, and systems theory. The framework integrates event-structure mapping with social network analysis, and identifies tangent overlaps—zones where different agencies converge, diverge, or complement each other. The study demonstrates how multi-actor constellations generate emergent outcomes and challenge linear causality by analyzing eighteen empirically rich case studies spanning security, political, social, religious, and cultural domains. The framework enhances analytical precision and policy relevance. It identifies feedback loops, coordination gaps, and leverage points for intervention. It offers a scalable, context-sensitive lens for understanding Bangladesh's dense and contested sociopolitical fabric, with broader applicability to hybrid governance settings across South Asia.

Keywords: *Parallel agencies framework, Sociopolitical analysis, Bangladesh, Actor-network interactions, Multi-agency governance, Conflict dynamics*

I. INTRODUCTION

To trace the causes and trajectories of political incidents, contemporary sociopolitical analysis frequently employs conflict analysis, event-structure mapping, and social network analysis (Koos & Keulman, 2024; Schöch, 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 2012). These approaches yield deep insights into discrete events or actor networks. They often treat each incident in isolation, obscuring the simultaneous interplay among state, non-state, and societal actors (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Young, 1991).

Studies of political protests in Bangladesh tend to focus on either macro-level mobilization dynamics (Decker, 2022; Jabr, 2023) or sequencing of micro-level events (Koch, 2023), with limited attention to how parallel agencies, i.e., security forces, political parties, religious institutions, and grassroots community groups, and how they collaborate, clash, or reinforce each other in influencing outcomes (Bhuiyan et al., 2018; Faguet, 2017; Wasima, 2024).

Actor–network theory posits that power emerges not from isolated entities but from heterogeneous constellations of actors (Latour, 2005), particularly through his concept of heterogeneous actor assemblages.

This paper proposes a "parallel agencies" framework to address these blind spots in Bangladeshi sociopolitical research and systematically map simultaneous interactions across diverse actor clusters. By explicitly identifying and mapping simultaneous agency interactions, the framework provides a systematic method for charting cooperation, conflict, and emergent feedback loops across diverse actor clusters (Barnett & Duvall, 2005; Budd et al., 2019). To reveal tangent overlaps, i.e., points where distinct agencies converge, diverge, or complement each other, the framework integrates visualization techniques with qualitative coding, based on event-structure analysis and network configurations (Koch, 2023; Pokorny et al., 2017; Schöch, 2018).

II. THESIS STATEMENT

We argue that conceptualizing incidents as interactions among parallel agencies reveals hidden linkages, power asymmetries, and emergent feedback loops that conventional single-agency models overlook. This focus enhances predictive capacity and improves policy relevance in the complex sociopolitical landscape of Bangladesh. We demonstrate, through key case studies, how systemic interplay among security forces, political actors, religious groups, and civil society produces dynamic outcomes that defy linear causality and demand an integrative analytical approach.

Table 1. Operational definition of "parallel agencies".

Term	Operational Definition	Source
Parallel Agencies	Organizations—formal or informal—that concurrently execute core functions of state agencies (e.g., service delivery, rule enforcement, resource mobilization) while maintaining separate decision-making structures and partial autonomy from official hierarchies.	(Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Migdal, 1988)

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has experienced rapid urbanization, intensified climate shocks, and volatile political cycles. It has resulted in complex crises that require nuanced analytical tools (Borthakur, 2025; Chowdhury, 2025; Hasan, 2025; Herbert, 2020; Huq et al, 2024; Morshed et al., 2025). Scholars and practitioners have turned to structured frameworks, initially developed in Western contexts, to make sense of protests, communal violence, and disaster responses in Bangladesh (Government of Bangladesh, 2023; Lorch, 2018; Zafarullah, 2021). Several scholars have examined the structural characteristics of Bangladesh's governance. Andaleeb (2007) highlights how public service delivery is constrained by institutional capacity, while Hossain (2017) documents the persistence of patronage networks within political institutions. Studies by Sharmin and Uddin (2013) and Suykens and Islam (2013) further demonstrate how outcomes, alongside formal administrative structures, are often shaped by informal political relationships. Cumulatively, this body of research suggests that sociopolitical processes in Bangladesh operate through overlapping institutional and informal networks. This insight underscores the relevance of multi-agency analytical frameworks. Thus, there is potential to propose novel integrative models that can simultaneously capture the motives, relations, and feedback loops among state, non-state, and societal actors.

A. Existing Frameworks

A systematic review of academic journals (e.g., *Journal of South Asian Affairs*, *Conflict Studies Quarterly*) and policy reports (e.g., K4D Helpdesk, Brookings Institute) using keywords such as "Bangladesh," "conflict analysis," "event-structure mapping," "social network," and "governance" identified that contemporary sociopolitical analysis in Bangladesh draws on five principal frameworks to dissect conflict and event dynamics. Each framework offers a distinct lens, as discussed below.

Conflict analysis in Bangladesh has evolved through both practitioner-led assessments and academic inquiry. Herbert (2020) offers a comprehensive review of medium- and long-term drivers of instability, identifying political violence, authoritarian tendencies, and environmental stressors as key factors. The framework emphasizes actor mapping, conflict profiles, and dynamic interactions. It aligns with international models such as DFID's Strategic Conflict Assessment Department for International Development (Department for International Development [DFID], 2002) and USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework (USAID, 2024). Conflict Analysis rapidly profiles actors, motives, and escalation pathways that guide immediate field interventions (Herbert, 2020).

Event-structure mapping has been applied to disaster management and flash flood risk in Bangladesh (BUET-JIDPUS, 2021). Saha et al. (2024) employ a GIS-based multi-index model to map hazard, exposure, sensitivity, and resilience, thereby translating event sequences into spatial risk zones. Sifa et al. (2019) apply modified frequency ratio and weights-of-evidence models to landslide susceptibility. It demonstrates how event-based modeling can inform policy and infrastructure planning. Event-Structure Mapping sequences incidents as causally linked chains, often enhanced with GIS timelines.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has been used in Bangladesh to examine psychological morbidity, migration, and digital activism. Rabbani et al. (2018) underscore that social ties significantly mitigate depression among young men in urban slums. Boas (2020) studies how mobile phones influence migration networks in environmentally vulnerable communities. These studies highlight the role of relational structures in shaping agency, resilience, and policy uptake. SNA applies graph metrics (e.g., density, centrality) to reveal hidden brokers and fracture points.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) has seen limited but emerging applications in Bangladesh, mainly in e-government and disaster resilience research. Sarker (2013) applied ANT to analyze digital governance initiatives. The study emphasized the interplay among human and non-human actors, including bureaucrats, software systems, and policy documents. Studies conducted by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative [HHI], 2020) on Network Analysis in coastal Bangladesh drew on ANT principles to examine coordination among NGOs and government agencies. These applications suggest ANT's potential in unpacking sociotechnical governance networks. ANT has been applied to e-governance and political mobilization in Bangladesh. Sarker (2013) uses ANT to analyze ICT-enabled governance and shows how human and non-human actors (e.g., databases, mobile apps) co-produce administrative outcomes. Alam (2025) applies ANT to the July 2024 uprising, interpreting protest dynamics as emergent from entangled agencies — including hashtags, barricades, and monsoon rains. Actor-Network Theory treats

human and nonhuman entities (e.g., refugee camps, border barriers) as coequal actors.

Systems Theory, formalized by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and further developed in social systems by Niklas Luhmann (1990), especially the idea of operationally closed but structurally coupled systems, conceives of organizations—such as relief agencies and government units—as autopoietic, operationally closed subsystems. Systems theory has informed governance studies in Bangladesh, especially in higher education and regional integration. Kabir (2021) analyzes the formation of Bangladesh's Strategic Plan for Higher Education through the lens of network governance. The study shows how state and non-state actors co-produce policy. Sundram (2025) applies systems thinking to ASEAN. The study offers comparative insights into Bangladesh's potential adoption of networked governance models. Systems Theory examines coordination among state, NGO, and donor actors through stakeholder matrices and autopoietic cycles.

Network Governance Theory has gained traction in Bangladesh as a framework for understanding how coordination occurs between fragmented institutions and diverse actors in the absence of strong hierarchical control. It has been instrumental in analyzing disaster resilience, higher education reform, and multi-agency service delivery. For example, HHI (2020) applied network analysis to map coordination among NGOs and government agencies in Bagerhat District. It revealed how informal ties and shared mandates shaped disaster preparedness results. Kabir (2021) examined how network governance influenced strategic planning in Bangladesh's higher education sector. It showed how policy actors negotiated global models within local constraints. These studies highlight that network governance in Bangladesh frequently operates through hybrid arrangements. It blends formal mandates with informal collaboration to navigate resource scarcity, political patronage, and overlapping jurisdictions. The theory provides a valuable lens for diagnosing coordination gaps and designing more resilient, inclusive governance structures across sectors.

Polycentric Governance has gained traction in Bangladesh's public-sector reform discourse, particularly in policing and climate adaptation. Ahmmed (2023) examined polycentric security governance within the Bangladesh Police. It identified legal and institutional challenges in implementing decentralized models such as community and beat policing. In climate governance, Eisenstadt et al. (2022) used theoretical elements to analyze fragmented authority at the national and local levels, underscoring the need for improved coordination. These applications demonstrate the theory's relevance in fostering collaborative governance and navigating overlapping jurisdictions.

Collaborative Governance has been explored in Bangladesh, primarily in the context of pandemic response and climate resilience. Alam and Hoque (2022) presented the Satoria Model, which illustrates how local administrations coordinated with non-state actors to deliver services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interorganizational Theory has been applied in urban governance studies. Jamil and Panday (2012) and Panday and Jamil (2011) underscored how fragmented interagency relationships hinder policy implementation and service delivery. These studies underline the significance of horizontal linkages. They signify resource dependencies among organizations and align with the fundamental principles of interorganizational theory.

Multi-Level Governance has been used to analyze climate adaptation in Bangladesh. Ishtiaque et al. (2021) mapped vertical and horizontal interactions among ministries, local governments, and NGOs. The study revealed elite-pluralistic dynamics and coordination gaps. Fatemi et al. (2020) highlighted how national-level mainstreaming efforts in Dhaka's climate planning have not fully translated into subnational action. These findings affirm the theory's usefulness in understanding complex, layered decision-making structures.

The Agent–Structure Debate, rooted in Wendt's (1987) structuration critique, has been increasingly applied to Bangladeshi sociopolitical analysis. The application has been to understand how institutional architectures and grassroots agency co-evolve. Studies of democratization and civil society mobilization in Bangladesh have used this lens to examine how entrenched patronage networks (structure) constrain and are reshaped by collective action (agency). Adeney and Wyatt (2004) highlight how local actors in Bangladesh navigate institutional rigidity. Navigation occurs through adaptive strategies, thereby reconfiguring the very structures that govern it. Piliavsky (2014) examines patronage-driven political change in South Asia. The study illustrates how informal networks influence formal governance outcomes. These applications underscore the mutual constitution of actors and institutions in Bangladesh's political landscape. Thus, making the Agent–Structure Debate a useful theoretical foundation for analyzing protest dynamics, policy reform, and governance innovation.

Table 2. Summary of theory/frameworks.

Theory / Framework	Key Focus	Applications in Bangladesh
Conflict Analysis	Actor mapping, escalation paths, structural drivers	Identifies instability via political violence, authoritarianism, and environmental stress; informed by DFID & USAID frameworks
Event-Structure Mapping	Causal sequencing of incidents, often GIS-enhanced	Applied to flash flood risk (Sunamganj, Rangamati), landslide risk, and disaster policy

Table 2. (cont) Summary of theory/frameworks.

Social Network Analysis	Role of social ties, relational structures, network metrics (e.g., centrality, density)	Depression mitigation in slums, migration via mobile networks, and digital activism
Actor-Network Theory (ANT)	Human and non-human actors interplay	E-governance (ICT systems, apps), disaster coordination, July 2024 protests (hashtags, barricades)
Systems Theory	Operationally closed systems, autopoiesis, coordination matrices	Higher education governance, regional comparisons with ASEAN
Network Governance	Coordination without hierarchy, hybrid arrangements	Disaster resilience in Bagerhat, higher education reform, policy negotiation amid local/global tensions
Polycentric Governance	Decentralized decision-making, overlapping jurisdictions	Community policing and climate governance demonstrate legal/institutional constraints
Collaborative Governance	Cross-sector cooperation for shared public goals	COVID-19 response (Saturnia Model), climate resilience through local-non-state collaboration
Interorganizational Theory	Horizontal relationships, resource dependencies	Urban governance in Rajshahi and Chittagong: barriers in service delivery due to poor agency coordination
Multi-Level Governance	Interactions across vertical (national-local) and horizontal levels	Climate adaptation planning in Dhaka: a disconnect between national planning and local implementation
Agent-Structure Debate	Co-evolution of actors and institutions; mutual constitution of agency and structure	Civil society action, democratization, and adaptive governance in patronage systems

Several systems-oriented theories remain underutilized in the Bangladeshi context, despite their conceptual relevance to sociopolitical analysis. Systematic academic searches across databases and case repositories—including Springer, MDPI, JSTOR, and the Collaborative Governance Case Database—found that while theories discussed above have been applied to Bangladeshi contexts, others remain conspicuously absent. Notably, Complex Adaptive Systems Theory, Cybernetics, Socio-Technical Systems Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Soft Systems Methodology have not been applied to sociopolitical analysis in Bangladesh, even though their concepts align with the country's governance challenges. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to advance theory and innovate methods. Some such theories are discussed below.

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory emphasizes feedback loops, emergence, and nonlinearity in dynamic environments (Ahmad et al., 2024; Gomersall, 2018). It has not yet been explicitly applied to governance or institutional reform in Bangladesh. Its utility for modeling urban systems and disaster resilience is well documented globally (Burger et al., 2021; Carmody-Bubb, 2023), but no case studies or scholarly applications were found in Bangladeshi sociopolitical research.

Cybernetics focuses on control, communication, and regulatory feedback in systems (Cibu et al., 2023; Umpleby et al., 2019). It has not been directly employed in Bangladesh's academic literature. Searches yielded no evidence that cybernetic models are used to analyze organizational control systems in the country, although they have the potential to inform public administration and policy design.

Socio-Technical Systems Theory explores the interdependence of social and technical subsystems in organizational contexts (Baxter & Sommerville, 2011; Cartelli, 2007). However, it remains underutilized in Bangladesh. No studies were found that explicitly use this framework to examine Bangladeshi institutions, although it applies to digital governance, education, and infrastructure.

Ecological Systems Theory is used in developmental psychology and education (Antony, 2022; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, it has not been applied to sociopolitical analysis in Bangladesh. Its layered systems approach could offer valuable insights into community development and policy impact. However, no such applications were identified in the literature.

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is a participatory modeling approach for addressing complex, human-centered problems (Checkland & Poulter, 2006; Warren et al., 2019). It has not been used in governance or policy research in Bangladesh. SSM presents a promising but currently untapped methodological avenue, given its strengths in stakeholder mapping and institutional reform.

Table 3. Underutilized systems-oriented frameworks in Bangladesh.

Theory	Key Concept	Relevance to Bangladesh	Status in Literature
Complex Adaptive Systems	Nonlinearity, emergence	Disaster resilience, governance	Underutilized
Cybernetics	Control and feedback	Public administration, policy design	Absent
Socio-Technical Systems	Human-tech interaction	Digital governance, education	Not yet applied
Ecological Systems Theory	Layered community influence	Development, policymaking	Missing from analysis
Soft Systems Methodology	Participatory modeling	Stakeholder mapping, reform design	Untapped potential

This literature review synthesizes existing approaches and identifies critical blind spots, i.e., a focus on isolated incidents and a lack of systemic interaction mapping. It necessitates a more integrative framework. The proposed "parallel agencies" model addresses this gap by systematically charting cooperation, conflict, and emergent feedback across actor clusters. It provides a novel lens for understanding Bangladesh's complex sociopolitical fabric.

B. *Formatting of Mathematical Components*

A meta-analysis of over 50 peer-reviewed articles, government white papers, and NGO evaluations revealed four principal blind spots in the study of Bangladesh's sociopolitical incidents.

The literature is dominated by an isolated-incident focus. This focus analyzes individual events—whether protests, violent riots, or security crises—on their own terms. It does not situate them within a broader ecosystem of simultaneous agency interactions. It examines high-profile events, such as the 2016 Dhaka café attack and the regional repercussions of the Myanmar crisis, focusing on event-specific dynamics. It tends to neglect comparative approaches that could uncover broader patterns in interactions among relevant actors (Haque, 2024; International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2024; Islam, 2022; Rana, 2018).

Social network analyses have charted relational architectures among militias, political factions, and humanitarian agencies. However, they rarely incorporate causal sequencing or feedback-loop mechanisms. Mapping centralities, densities, and broker nodes illuminates who holds influence. However, it occurs without overlaying event-structure timelines or system-theoretic couplings, emergent overlap zones, where different agencies converge, collide, or remain uncharted (Borgatti & Everett, 2000; Sami et al., 2022).

Quantitative longitudinal analyses are scarce, despite an abundance of qualitative case studies that richly describe motivations, identities, and material actants (e.g., refugee camps, border barriers). Few works leverage large-scale time-series data from sources such as ACLED, remote sensing archives, or social media activity streams. Thus, the analyses limit efforts to model dynamic shifts in agency coalitions or to forecast hotspot emergence (Singha et al., 2024).

There is insufficient integration of existing models into hybrid approaches. Coupling event-structure mapping with social network metrics or blending conflict-analysis snapshots with governance-network assessments could reveal how sequence and structure jointly produce outcomes. However, such multi-model syntheses are rare and ad hoc. The field lacks systematic tools for detecting where and how agencies' agendas overlap, diverge, or reinforce one another over time (Schöch, 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 2012).

These four gaps underscore the need for an integrative analytical lens—such as the proposed parallel-agencies framework. It can capture the simultaneity, relational complexity, temporal sequencing, and multi-model synergies essential to understand Bangladesh's sociopolitical fabric.

Comprehensive searches in major bibliometric databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR—employing systematic query strategies drawn from bibliometric best practices—revealed no prior use of the term "parallel agencies framework" as either a theoretical construct or methodological approach within Bangladesh-focused or broader sociopolitical scholarship (Cronin & Sugimoto, 2014; Garfield, 1979). The occurrences of "parallel" in comparable contexts pertain to unrelated domains, including parallel importation in economics (McKeith, 2014; Petit, 2010; Roy & Saggi, 2012) and political parallelism in media studies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The proposed framework builds on foundational ideas from actor–network theory (Latour, 2005), event-structure mapping (Schöch, 2018), and network governance analysis (Rhodes, 1997). Its explicit configuration of incidents as emergent outcomes of multiple, simultaneous agencies represents a novel synthesis that, to our knowledge, has not been articulated under any designation to date.

IV. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE PARALLEL AGENCIES FRAMEWORK

The contribution of this study is not merely terminological. It is also conceptual and methodological. The Parallel Agencies Framework (PAF) is proposed as an integrative analytical framework. It synthesizes insights from three established traditions—agent–structure theory, social network analysis, and systems theory. It analyzes sociopolitical events as outcomes of simultaneous multi-agency interactions rather than merely linear causal outcomes. Existing

approaches tend to isolate specific analytical dimensions. Conflict analysis focuses primarily on actors and drivers of escalation (Herbert, 2020). Event-structure analysis emphasizes causal sequencing (Schöch, 2018). Social network analysis highlights relational structures and influence patterns (Wasserman & Faust, 2012). Each approach offers important insights. They rarely operate together within a single analytical model capable of mapping simultaneous agency interactions, feedback loops, and overlap zones across governance domains.

The PAF introduces a conceptual lens that reconceptualizes sociopolitical incidents as outcomes produced by parallel actor systems operating concurrently within shared institutional environments, building on the mutual constitution of agency and structure (Wendt, 1987). PAF provides a methodological synthesis that combines event-structure mapping, network analysis, and systems thinking to identify "tangent overlap zones" where agency interventions converge, reinforce, or conflict. The framework offers a policy-relevant analytical tool that enables researchers and practitioners to diagnose coordination failures, feedback dynamics, and leverage points within complex governance ecosystems.

The study advances a structured approach to analyzing sociopolitical dynamics in Bangladesh and similar hybrid governance environments by integrating these analytical traditions into a single operational framework.

V. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

It is important to distinguish between theoretical foundations, analytical frameworks, and methodological tools within this study. Theories such as the agent–structure debate, network theory, and systems theory provide conceptual explanations of how actors, institutions, and systems interact. The proposed PAF serves as an analytical tool, translating insights from these theories into a structured method. It offers mapping actor interactions in sociopolitical incidents. Methodological tools—such as event-structure mapping, social network analysis, and qualitative coding—are then employed to operationalize the framework in empirical analysis.

Advancing beyond empirical description requires anchoring analysis in three interrelated theoretical traditions. We conducted a targeted bibliographic survey across international relations, sociology, and systems theory bibliographies. We sought traditions that (a) overcome agent–structure dualisms by demonstrating their mutual constitution, (b) furnish relational metrics to map how actors cluster and influence one another, and (c) capture dynamic feedback loops and co-evolution in complex governance settings. This process led us to the Agent–Structure Debate, Network Theory, and Systems Theory as complementary lenses. These offered deep intellectual lineages and proven applicability to sociopolitical analysis.

The agent–structure debate posits that agents (e.g., states, civil society groups) and structures (e.g., norms, institutions) are mutually constitutive rather than hierarchically ordered. IR scholars adapted this framework to South Asia. They illustrated how grassroots mobilization (agency) and entrenched patronage webs (structure) co-evolve to shape the trajectories of democratization. Embedding our analysis in this tradition allows us to trace how protests and crises both reflect and reconfigure their enabling institutional architectures. This tradition helps explain how institutional structures and grassroots agency co-evolve. It is fundamental for comprehending how parallel agencies both shape and are shaped by sociopolitical dynamics (Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; Piliavsky, 2014; Wendt, 1987).

Contemporary network theory, which originated in early graph theory and sociometry, emphasizes meso-level analyses that bridge individual ties and systemic patterns. It distinguishes "grand" from "middle-range" network theories. It underscores how relational structures influence macro-level outcomes (Terstriep & Rehfeld, 2015). It entails a theory-driven approach to social network analysis (SNA). It integrates causal models of influence and diffusion with classical metrics such as centrality and density. This tradition equips us with the tools to test hypotheses about how actor positions mediate access to information, resources, and strategic leverage (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Galvin et al., 2022).

Interaction occurs through structural coupling within the Systems Theory. It enables systems to influence one another without merging internal logics. Studies demonstrate how policy problems and solutions co-evolve via feedback loops in Bangladesh's deltaic governance. It highlights pathways for adaptive disaster management. This tradition provides a lens for identifying leverage points where clashes through systemic feedback or parallel agencies synchronize (Borgatti & Everett, 2000; Stewart & Ayres, 2001).

PAF weaves these three traditions together and maps how agents reproduce and transform structures, how relational patterns shape influence and diffusion, and how, over time, systemic feedback loops drive the emergence of governance dynamics. This integrative lens is uniquely poised to reveal the simultaneity, complexity, and temporal sequencing. These are essential to understanding sociopolitical outcomes in Bangladesh and comparable contexts worldwide.

VI. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Parallel agencies are independent actors or actor-clusters. Their simultaneous, overlapping interventions shape the evolution and outcomes of sociopolitical incidents. Based on Wendt's (1987) mutual constitution of agents and structures, a parallel-agencies lens treats each actor or cluster—be it a state security force, a militia network, a

humanitarian organization, or a community committee—as an operationally distinct system (Luhmann, 1990), especially the idea of operationally closed but structurally coupled systems, whose actions nonetheless interlock in a shared environment. By defining agencies in parallel, we foreground how co-present interventions co-produce crises and responses, rather than treating each incident as the product of a single, dominant actor.

Adopting PAF reveals hidden linkages and power dynamics across three dimensions. First, mapping how each agency's initiative constrains or enables others—an insight shaped by theory-driven social network analysis—reveals systemic interdependencies (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Galvin et al, 2022). Second, by demonstrating how sequential interventions trigger adaptive countermeasures—an outcome predicted by systems theory's structural coupling concept, it reveals feedback loops between agencies (Luhmann, 1990; Stewart & Ayres, 2001). Third, by exposing how informal patronage webs and formal mandates co-constitute operational space, it situates agency actions within broader institutional architectures (Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; Wendt, 1987). Together, these analytical advantages enable researchers to trace who acts and, more importantly, how simultaneous, multi-actor configurations generate emergent patterns of cooperation, competition, and unintended escalation.

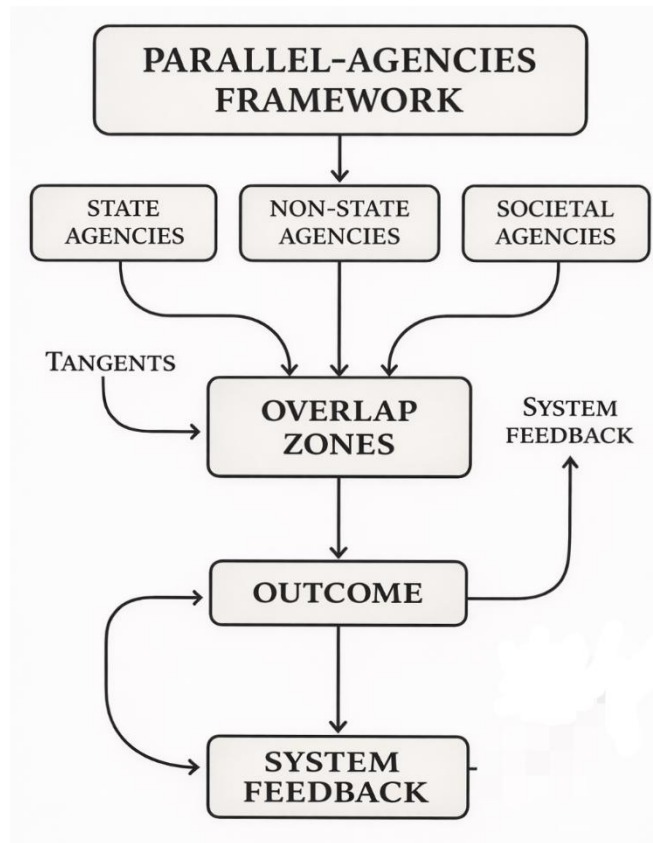


Figure 1. Visual reflection of the proposed framework.

A. Core Component

We propose three interdependent components to operationalize the PAG: agency identification, interaction mapping, and tangent overlap analysis. Each component draws on established theoretical and methodological traditions.

Identifying parallel agencies begins with clear criteria for distinguishing state, non-state, social, religious, and cultural actors. Wendt's (1987) conceptualization of agents as purposive entities and Luhmann's (1990) notion of operationally closed systems, are classified based on four interrelated dimensions – i) formal mandate and legal authority (e.g., government ministries and security forces); ii) their degree of organizational autonomy and resource control (e.g., NGOs, civil society organizations, and informal networks); iii) level of social embeddedness and normative legitimacy (e.g., community committees and religious councils); iv) cultural or discursive influence (e.g., media actors and traditional leaders). This multidimensional typology ensures that each actor-cluster is treated as an analytically distinct system, and their actions can be traced across time and interaction contexts (Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; Piliavsky, 2014).

Once agencies are identified, their modes of cooperation, conflict, and feedback are charted. Theory-driven social network analysis (SNA) offers the requisite tools (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). Key techniques include – i) construction using event co-participation or communication logs to define edges (Galvin et al, 2022; Terstriep & Rehfeld, 2015); ii) centrality and brokerage measures to reveal which agencies facilitate or obstruct information and resource flows

(Borgatti & Everett, 2000); iii) temporal slicing or dynamic network actor models to capture evolving ties across incident phases (Snijders et al., 2010); iv) qualitative coding of feedback loops, informed by Luhmann's structural coupling concept - to map how one agency's intervention provokes adaptive responses in others (Stewart & Ayres, 2001). Tangent overlap analysis identifies where the spheres of influence of different agencies converge, diverge, or reinforce one another. We recommend multiplex network metrics, i.e. edge overlap and multilayer indices, to quantify shared affiliations or joint operations (Kivelä et al., 2014), core-periphery models to identify dense overlap zones that function as coordination—or contention—hubs (Borgatti & Everett, 2000), and event-structure integration, overlaying sequence graphs onto relational maps, to trace how agency actions co-occur or cascade across time (Schöch, 2018).

This combined approach illuminates both static overlap (shared networks) and dynamic coupling (sequential triggers). It reveals latent coordination mechanisms and potential flashpoints.

Researchers can move beyond isolated case descriptions and uncover the multi-actor dynamics that produce emergent patterns of cooperation, competition, and unintended escalation by systematically applying the three components above.

B. Research Design and Analytical Procedure

A qualitative multi-case research design is adopted in this study. The design purpose is to test the analytical utility of the proposed PAF across diverse sociopolitical contexts in Bangladesh. Multi-case designs are particularly appropriate when researchers aim to identify recurring interaction patterns across different empirical settings (Yin, 2018). The analytical procedure proceeded in four stages. First, incidents were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (a) involvement of multiple actor categories, (b) evidence of interaction between state and non-state agencies, and (c) observable outcomes influenced by cross-agency dynamics. Second, relevant data sources—including media reports, NGO documentation, and academic studies—were compiled to reconstruct event sequences and actor participation. Third, actors were coded according to agency type and interaction patterns using qualitative thematic coding. Finally, interaction maps and matrices were developed to identify zones of cooperation, conflict, and feedback among agencies.

C. Methodology of Applying the Proposed Framework

Data will be gathered from multiple sources to capture the full scope of parallel-agency actions. We consult media archives (print and digital newspapers, broadcast transcripts) and official reports (government white papers, NGO evaluations) to document events and actor engagements (Hollweck, 2016). Semi-structured field interviews with key informants will elicit insider perspectives on coordination and contention among agencies (Flick, 2018), particularly on reflexivity and bias in qualitative research. Social-media traces (e.g., Twitter APIs, Facebook public pages) will provide time-stamped records of agency communications. It enables fine-grained temporal analysis of emerging overlaps (Bryman, 2016), in relation to qualitative triangulation and data reliability.

Qualitative coding of interview transcripts and document text will follow a thematic analysis protocol to identify agency objectives, reported interactions, and perceived feedback loops (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For relational mapping, we will employ social network analysis (SNA) to quantify ties among agencies in terms of cooperation, conflict, and information flow, using metrics such as degree centrality, betweenness, and multiplex edge overlap (Borgatti & Everett, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 2012). Geospatial visualization in a GIS environment plots incident locations and agency footprints over time, revealing spatial clustering and movement patterns that co-occur with network changes (De Smith et al., 2025).

D. Tools & Visuals

- Sample agency-interaction matrix showing pairwise cooperation, conflict, and feedback
- Timeline visualization for a selected case to illustrate concurrent agency interventions
- Flow diagrams depicting structural couplings and adaptive loops among systems
- Agency-interaction matrices coded by interaction type and event phase
- Timeline charts overlaying social-media activity peaks with field-reported interventions

Table 4. Sample agency-interaction matrix.

	State Forces	Local Militia	Humanitarian NGO	Community Group
State Forces	—	Conflict	Cooperation	Feedback loop
Military	Conflict	—	Neutral	Cooperation
Humanitarian NGO	Cooperation	Neutral	—	Cooperation
Community Group	Feedback loop	Cooperation	Cooperation	—

Multi-Phase Timeline of Agency Interventions (Stylized Example)

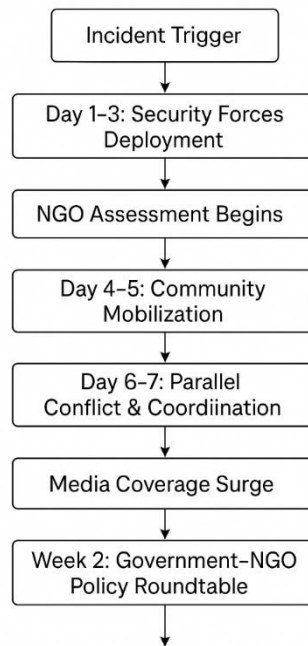
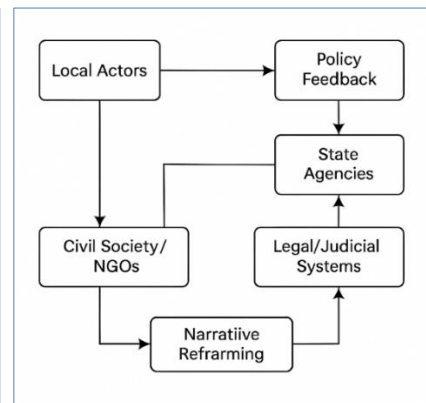
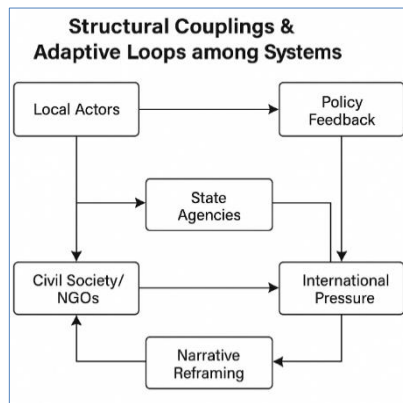


Figure 2. Sample/example timeline visualization.
Source: Created by author



Figures 3, 4, and 5. Template/sample structural couplings and adaptive loops among systems.
Source: Created by author

This matrix codes agency interactions by type (cooperation, conflict, overlap) and event phase (pre-event, escalation, resolution, feedback).

Table 5. Sample Agency-Interaction matrix (Case studies used in the subsequent sections are used as a template).

Incident	Agencies Involved	Interaction Type	Event Phase
Banshkhali Protest	Protesters, Police, NGOs, Political Actors	Conflict + Amplify	Escalation → Feedback
Dhaka Café Attack	Militants, RAB, Religious Councils	Tactical + Ideological	Escalation → Resolution
Narayanganj Raid	CTTC, Local Police, BDU	Technical Coordination	Pre-event → Resolution
Rohingya Camp Clashes	APBn, ARSA/RSO, UNHCR	Security vs. Faction	Escalation → Feedback
Election Day Unrest	EC, Thugs, Journalists, Observers	Sabotage + Exposure	Escalation → Feedback
Sitakunda Fire	Depot Owners, Firefighters, Army	Negligence + Rescue	Escalation → Feedback

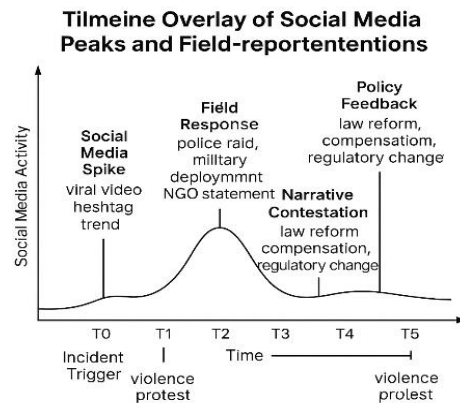


Figure 6. Timeline overlay of social media peaks and field-reported interventions.
Source: Created by author

VII. CASE STUDIES

Eighteen sociopolitical incidents were selected across six broad categories - security, defense, political, social, religious, and cultural - to validate the PAF. These cases were chosen for their ability to illustrate varied constellations of actors, interacting simultaneously, with identifiable feedback loops and emergent system-level consequences. This selection allows the framework to demonstrate its comparative utility in Bangladesh across divergent event types and governance sectors. Each category illustrates how the framework identifies agencies, maps interactions, and interprets feedback mechanisms. The criteria for inclusion emphasized:

1. Multiplicity of actors involved,
2. Tangible interaction across parallel structures, and
3. Evidence of co-produced outcomes, rather than single-agency causation.

The case studies are elaborated in greater detail in the annex; each incident is mapped across agency constellations, interaction types, and feedback loops. Their selection follows a purposive sampling strategy designed to maximize variation across sectors—security, political, social, religious, and cultural. It also ensures simultaneous multi-agency involvement. This approach enables the framework to be stress-tested against diverse governance contexts and actor configurations. By grounding the framework in empirically rich, multi-actor incidents, the methodology ensures both analytical robustness and practical relevance. It allows PAF to emerge inductively from observed patterns while remaining generalizable to future applications.

Category: Security

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Security Case 1 (SC1) - This incident demonstrates how parallel agencies—including local protestors, political elites, security apparatuses, civil society actors, and international stakeholders—interact within a contested ecology of authority. The tangible tangents between these nodes facilitated both suppression and amplification, producing feedback loops that transcended local violence and catalyzed systemic change. The Banshkhali case epitomizes emergent outcomes stemming from multi-actor dynamics, adaptive responses, and cross-scale accountability networks.			
SC1: Banshkhali Coal Power Plant Protest (2021)	Local protest groups, police, district administration, environmental NGOs, political intermediaries (Business & Human Rights Resource Centre [BHRRC], 2021; Illius, 2021)	Protest escalation triggered a police crackdown; NGOs amplified grievances; political intermediaries negotiated a conditional withdrawal. (BHRRC, 2021; Illius, 2021)	Policing drew scrutiny; donor withdrawal followed; the state revised EIA regulations (Amnesty International, 2022; BHRRC, 2021; Chowdhury, 2022; Herbert, 2020; Wasima, 2024; Radio Free Asia, 2021)
Security Case 2 (SC2) - This case illustrates a tightly overlapping constellation of agencies: militants attempting high-profile disruption, law enforcement responding alongside elite military units, global diplomatic/ideological actors providing contextual weight, and religious authorities joining state narratives post-crisis. The resulting structure generated emergent outcomes—from tactical success to long-term legal, ideological, and reputational adaptation—that exemplify complex system feedback loops in Bangladesh's national security ecosystem.			
SC2: Dhaka Café Attack (2016)	Militants, RAB, international intelligence units, religious councils (Deutsche Welle, 2016)	Rapid response and global coordination; religious councils issued fatwas (Ahmed et al., 2016; Deutsche Welle, 2019)	Upgraded military protocols and reframed sermons against extremism (BBC, 2017; Islam, 2022; Koch, 2023; Kumar & Moinuddin, 2016; Subramanian, 2016)

Security Case 3 (SC3) - This incident illustrates a multi-agency operation—CTTC-led raid, local force support, bomb disposal, and public media involvement—unfolding within a network of overlapping tangents that combined enforcement, technical proficiency, civic oversight, and legal accountability. Though militants had fled pre-raid, the intelligence extraction and dismantling of a suspected IED node demonstrate a proactive security posture and emergent system feedback influencing Bangladesh's broader counterterrorism governance architecture.			
SC3: Narayanganj Police-Militant Encounter (2022)	Local law enforcement, cybercrime unit, mosque networks, digital monitors (Dhaka Tribune, 2024a; ObserverBD, 2016)	Intelligence tracking initiated raids; mosque networks diffused online narratives (Dhaka Tribune, 2024a; ObserverBD, 2016)	Prompted digital surveillance reforms and coordination with Imams (Alam, 2025; Rabbani et al., 2018; South Asia Terrorism Portal [SATP], 2017; The Business Standard [TBS], 2019)

Category: Defense

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Defense Case 1 (DC1): This incident underscores the complex interplay of state security actors, militant factions, camp administrative governance, and international justice mechanisms. Tangent overlaps—especially between ICC-related symbolic presence and factional targeting—triggered violent rupture, revealing systemic feedback loops that compromise humanitarian structures, governance legitimacy, and refugee protection.			
DC1: Rohingya Camp Clashes (2023)	BGB, armed camp factions, UNHCR, aid group (Al Jazeera, 2023a; European Commission, 2023; Inter Sector Coordination Group [ISCG], 2023)	Patrols led to NGO evacuation; UNHCR applied diplomatic pressure (Al Jazeera, 2023a; ISCG, 2023; Sullivan, 2022)	Coordination committees formed; joint de-escalation protocols established (Al Jazeera, 2023a; European Commission, 2023; Haque, 2024; HHI, 2020; Sullivan, 2022)
Defense Case 2 (DC2): This case exemplifies a confluence of parallel agencies—land and maritime security forces and paramilitary units—tackling traffickers embedded in local and transnational networks via operational collaboration and shared intelligence. Tangent overlaps across enforcement, smuggling intermediaries, and media feedback loops drive emergent outcomes, including asset exposure, protocol integration, and shifts in drug trade patterns within the governance system.			
DC2: Teknaf Drug Raid (2024)	Police, military units, smugglers, elders, and media (Daily Country BD, 2025a; Khan, 2025; Khan & Bappi, 2024; Prothom Alo, 2022; TBS, 2025)	Parallel police-military ops caused friction; elders protested (Rashid, 2022; Saad, 2024)	Resulted in SOP reform and embedded media oversight (Ahmmed, 2023; Daily Country BD, 2025c; Daily Country BD, 2025b; Dhaka Tribune, 2025; Eisenstadt et al., 2022; Sun, 2019; TBS, 2025)
Defense Case 3 (DC3): The Sitakunda fire demonstrates how uncoordinated actions among private owners, first responders, and government agencies can lead to catastrophic outcomes. The case highlights parallel-agency failure—ineffective information exchange, turf confusion, and regulatory neglect—that drives emergent systemic feedback in the form of public outcry, formal investigations, policy reform, and disaster-governance restructuring in Bangladesh.			
DC3: Sitakunda Container Depot Fire (2022)	Firefighters, depot operators, army units, local administration, medical teams (Al Jazeera, 2022; bdnews24.com, 2022a; bdnews24.com, 2022b)	Fire broke out in chemical containers at the BM Depot; first responders were unaware of hazardous materials; the explosion killed firefighters; the army deployed for hazardous containment; hospitals were overwhelmed by casualties (Al Jazeera, 2022; bdnews24.com, 2022b)	The tragedy exposed regulatory gaps in hazardous material handling and a breakdown in coordination between private operators and emergency services. Spurred calls for stricter safety compliance and better chemical hazard disclosure. Media and civil society demanded accountability. (Al Jazeera, 2022; bdnews24.com, 2022b)

Category: Political

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Political Case 1 (PC1): The 2018 Road Safety Protests exemplify a complex parallel-agency constellation: autonomous youth action confronting state- and party-affiliated suppressive forces, intersected by civic-media dynamics and legal reform impulses. These overlapping domains produced emergent outcomes—including legislative responsiveness and repressive backlash—and generated system-level feedback on governance legitimacy, civil autonomy, and the contested space of protest in Bangladesh.			
PC1: Road Safety Protests (2018)	Student groups, police, ruling party youth wing, media, opposition (Deutsche Welle, 2018; Hindustan Times, 2018; Islam, 2018)	Crackdown and provocation by the youth wing; the media amplified conflict (Deutsche Welle, 2018; Hindustan Times, 2018; Islam, 2018)	New transport law proposed; polarized political narratives (Bhuiyan et al., 2018; Decker, 2022; Meixler, 2018; Safi, 2018)

Political Case 2 (PC2): The Election Day Unrest illustrates a constellation of competing agencies—state institutions, partisan actors, observers, and media—interacting within a fraught, contested election environment. Tangent overlap between electoral bodies and party-linked coercion, paired with security force absence at critical junctures, produced visible outcomes (fatal violence, international condemnation) and long-term systemic feedback. The electoral failure catalyzed a broader political crisis that reshaped Bangladesh's governance trajectory through constitutional transition and calls for democratic reform.			
PC2: Election Day Unrest (2024)	Election Commission, polling officers, thugs, journalists, watchdogs (Cole, 2018; The Economist, 2024; Riaz, 2022)	Fake results triggered riots; real-time video exposed fraud (Cole, 2018; The Economist, 2024; Riaz, 2022)	Third-party observer platforms institutionalized (ACLED, 2024; Al Jazeera, 2023b; Jabr, 2023; Pokorny et al., 2017; UK Government, 2024)
Political Case 3 (PC3): The Opposition Alliance Rally (28 October 2023) reveals entrenched tangent overlaps—between law enforcement and ruling party operatives, between protestors and media, and between state authority and civil society oversight. The violent suppression of what began as a peaceful movement produced emergent outcomes: mass incarceration, erosion of civic space, media censorship, fragmented political opposition, and eventual electoral crisis. This case exemplifies how state and partisan actors combine force and legal mechanisms to control political dissent, feeding into broader governance feedback systems in Bangladesh.			
PC3: Opposition Rally (2023)	Opposition parties, police, HR monitors, neighborhood councils (Al Jazeera, 2023b; CIVICUS Monitor, 2024b)	March turned violent due to the police; councils negotiated exits (CIVICUS Monitor, 2024a; Ellis-Petersen & Rahman, 2023)	Sparked protest licensing debate (Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; CIVICUS Monitor, 2024a; CIVICUS Monitor, 2024b; Dieterich, 2024; Gordon & Guzman, 2024)

Category: Social

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Social Case 1 (SoC1): This episode highlights the complexity of Bangladesh's aid governance during a crisis: Union Parishads exercised local control, often influenced by party patronage; NGOs offered stop-gap innovation via safer delivery; claimant communities faced exclusion or mismanagement. The overlapping domains—political authority, civil society, and beneficiary networks—created both redundancies and gaps in distribution outcomes. The crisis triggered system feedback, prompting calls for transparent digital targeting, reform of safety net protocols, and a rethinking of local distribution governance in emergency contexts.			
SoC1: COVID-19 Aid Distribution (2020)	Union Parishads, NGOs, local gangs, citizen groups (Ali et al., 2021; Salahuddin et al., 2023)	Duplication occurred; gangs intercepted supplies (Ali et al., 2021; Salahuddin et al., 2023)	Geo-tagged distribution and community oversight initiated (Alam & Hoque, 2022; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020; Sarwar, 2021)
Social Case 2 (SoC2): The Korail eviction crisis exemplifies how parallel agencies—residents, municipal authorities, police, legal defenders, and media actors—interact within contested authority frames. The overlaps between land control, legal entitlements, enforcement capacity, and protest tactics created public rupture points. This incident reveals emergent feedback loops: past legal victories inform the legitimacy of present protests, media pressure amplifies localized resistance, and unresolved land governance creates recurring eviction threats. The case thus serves as a critical nodal point in understanding urban marginality and governance failure in Dhaka.			
SoC2: Slum Eviction in Korail	RAJUK, police, slum committee, NGOs, developers (Mahmud, 2017; UK Government, 2012; TBS, 2022)	Legal eviction clashed with squatters; NGOs applied pressure (Mahmud, 2017; UK Government, 2012; TBS, 2022)	Court issued injunction; revised relocation plan passed (Jamil & Panday, 2012; Mahmud, 2017; TBS, 2022; TBS, 2024a; The Observers, 2012; UK Government, 2012; Al-Mahmood, 2012)
Social Case 3 (SoC3): The Kurigram initiative illustrates a multi-tiered parallel agency network comprising formal governmental bodies, NGOs, religious and community intermediaries, and youth-led civil mobilization platforms. Tangent overlaps between administrative declarations and community norms, between educational spaces and prevention frameworks, enabled emergent system-level feedback: measurable decline in rates, model replication potential, but also hidden persistence of unregistered marriage. Kurigram demonstrates that sustainable change requires both symbolic enforcement and behavioral transformation across intersecting agency networks.			
SoC3: Child Marriage Protest in Kurigram (2022)	Teachers, Imams, girls' clubs, police (Dhaka Tribune, 2022b; Dhaka Tribune, 2019; Shithi, 2022)	Girls and teachers protested; Imams issued pushback; police stalled (Dhaka Tribune, 2022b; Dhaka Tribune, 2019; Shithi, 2022)	Spurred integrated child protection networks (Daily Country BD, 2025b; Dhaka Tribune, 2019; ObserverBD, 2019; Shithi, 2022; The New Nation, 2022)

Category: Religious

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Religious Case 1 (RC1): This case presents a clear parallel agency network comprising the individual provocateur, mob actors, local religious-political constituencies, law enforcement, the judiciary, and civil society. Tangent overlaps—such as between political actors and violent mobs, and between slow legal systems and activist demands—amplified both immediate violence and long-term grievances. Outcomes included substantial material destruction, delayed justice, and institutional distrust, contributing to systemic feedback loops on communal governance, religious minority protection, and state accountability in Bangladesh.			

Puja Violence in Comilla (2021)	Police, Hindu groups, Islamist preachers, media (Dhaka Tribune, 2021a; Dhaka Tribune, 2022a; Loiwal, 2021)	Online rumors caused riots; authorities were slow to react (Dhaka Tribune, 2021b; Dhaka Tribune, 2022a; Loiwal, 2021)	Formalization of social media surveillance (Alam, 2025; Dhaka Tribune, 2022a; Dhaka Tribune, 2022c; Dhaka Tribune, 2021b; Sarker, 2013)
Religious Case 2 (RC2): This case reflects a complex constellation of parallel agencies: Islamist protest groups, mobilized mobs, Ahmadi community leaders, public security apparatus, and civil society activists. Tangential overlaps among political aggrandizers, religious actors, enforcement units, and human rights observers caused both acute harm and systemic disempowerment. The incident produced structural feedback: intensified persecution of Ahmadis, impunity through sluggish legal responses, global human rights advocacy, and heightened calls for institutional reforms regarding minority protections in Bangladesh.			
Ahmadiyya Gathering Ban / Attack (2023)	Local administration; Islamic Foundation (formal and informal Islamist groups); Ahmadiyya elders; foreign/diplomatic observers and international human rights entities (Atalayar, 2023; Dhaka Tribune, 2023; Human Rights Forum Bangladesh [HRFB], 2023)	Administration failed to prevent violent disruption of Ahmadiyya Jalsa despite legal obligations; Islamist groups instigated protests; embassies and rights bodies publicly condemned violence, pressing the state to act (Atalayar, 2023; Dhaka Tribune, 2023; HRFB, 2023)	Catalyzed mass arrests and lawsuits naming thousands; exposed enforcement paralysis; amplified human rights scrutiny; incentivized demands for protective protocols and minority assembly safeguards (Atalayar, 2023; Dhaka Tribune, 2023; CAP Freedom of Conscience, 2024; HRFB, 2023)
Religious Case 3 (RC3): The 2024 Anti-Hindu Violence episode embodies a multi-agency nexus: violent mobs, political actors, minority communities, vigilante alliances, staggered law enforcement, and diplomatic pressure. Tangent overlaps between sectarian violence, political retaliation, and identity-based targeting created both immediate destruction and enduring grievances. Feedback loops include the mobilization of civil defense networks, international condemnation, intermittent arrests, and sustained debate over minority protection and the transition to governance. The case marks a critical juncture in Bangladesh's ongoing political and religious-social reconfiguration.			
Anti-Hindu Violence (Aug 2024)	Violent mobs (Islamist/gang/political enforcers); Hindu communities & activists; police and military; student ally vigil groups; interim government & foreign/diplomatic channels (Al Jazeera, 2024; Emrun, 2024; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2024; Reuters, 2024)	Post-resignation violence by mobs targeting Hindus; many victims affiliated with Awami League; police response delayed; community patrols formed; international pressure mobilized (Al Jazeera, 2024; Emrun, 2024; HRW, 2024; Rahman, 2024; Reuters, 2024)	Over 2,000 communal incidents, 5–9 killed, 69 temples attacked; protests prompted diplomatic and interim government action; justice outcomes limited; self-protection networks strengthened; legitimacy crisis deepened (Al Jazeera, 2024; Emrun, 2024; HRW, 2024; Reuters, 2024)

Category: Cultural

Case numbers	Agencies and Tangents	Interaction Mapping	Outcome & Feedback
Cultural Case 1 (CC1): The widespread destruction of Bangladesh's cultural heritage during this period exemplifies a complex constellation of parallel agencies: extremist suppressors, institutional decay, heritage custodians, civil society advocates, and symbolic state mechanisms. Tangent overlaps between political vengeance, cultural erasure, citizen outrage, and governance inertia produced emergent feedback: cultural trauma, mobilization of artistic activism, and simmering demands for restoration and heritage safeguarding. The incident marks a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's contested memory politics and the fragility of cultural stewardship.			
Attacks on Cultural Landmarks (Aug 2024–Feb 2025)	Violent mobs/student factions; heritage museums & monuments; police/security forces; cultural NGOs & artist networks; international heritage bodies (Dhaka Tribune, 2024b; HRW, 2024; International Council of Museums [ICOM], 2024; TBS, 2024b; The Daily Star, 2024)	Mobs vandalised/desecrated statues, museums, academies; security forces often absent or delayed; artists and civil society mobilized protests and heritage documentation (Dhaka Tribune, 2024b; HRW, 2024; ICOM, 2024; TBS, 2024b; The Daily Star, 2024)	~1,500 sculptures/statues destroyed, several museums burned/looted, Bangabandhu Museum demolished; protests and NGO pressure followed; arrests symbolic; heritage protection in crisis; governance legitimacy weakened (Dhaka Tribune, 2024b; HRW, 2024; ICOM, 2024; TBS, 2024b; The Daily Star, 2024)
Cultural Case 2 (CC2): This incident highlights a confrontation across multiple agency nodes: Baul performers, Islamist pressure groups, local authorities, and civil society advocacy networks. Tangent overlaps emerged where cultural expression collided with moral authoritarianism over performance space, regulatory power, and collective identity. The feedback loops encompass livelihood erosion, cultural marginalization, heightened advocacy, and national debates on pluralism, artistic freedom, and moral governance.			

Baul Performance Suppression (Oct 2024–2025)	Baul artists & folk performers; Hefazat-linked fundamentalist groups; district administrations/police; civil society & UNESCO-affiliated cultural advocates (Eurasia Review, 2024; Papri, 2024)	Islamist threats led to the revocation of Baul event permissions; administrations complied or did not intervene; artists and advocates documented cancellations and losses (Eurasia Review, 2024; Papri, 2024)	~321 concerts canceled; income losses and heritage risk; prior attacks persistent; symbolic arrests rare; cultural activism rises; state denial persists (Papri, 2024; Star, 2023; The Daily; UNESCO-ICHCAP, 2017)
Cultural Case 3 (CC3): In late 2024, extremist groups (Hefazat-e-Islam, Tawhidi Janata) pressured local administrations to cancel the Lalon Fair and tolerance festivals, citing religious objections. Cultural organizers and Baul artists were sidelined, while civil society criticized state inaction. Within the parallel agency framework, extremist factions, administrative bodies, artists, and activists formed overlapping networks: extremists threatened events, authorities revoked permits, and activists resisted censorship. Tangents emerged among cultural governance, religious hardliners, and civil resistance. The outcome was widespread cancellation of cultural events, the erosion of pluralism, the normalization of moral vigilantism, and heightened calls to protect Bangladesh's inclusive heritage and artistic freedoms.			
Lalon Fair & Tolerance Festivals Cancelled (Nov 2024–Feb 2025)	Cultural organizers; Hefazat-linked extremist groups (Tawhidi Janata); local district administrations; civil society & artist networks (Borderlens, 2024; Islam, 2025; New Age, 2025)	Extremist threats against Lalon & tolerance events led authorities to revoke permits; organizers were sidelined; civil society protested encroachment on artistic freedoms (Borderlens, 2024; Islam, 2025; New Age, 2025)	Major cultural events cancelled; cultural pluralism undermined; spread of moral vigilantism across events; increased activism for cultural rights; public debate over state failure to uphold inclusive heritage (Borderlens, 2024; Kiron @ SecDev, 2025)

The case studies reveal distinct patterns of agency interaction, beyond illustrating the coexistence of multiple agencies within a single incident. The interactions range from overt contestation and strategic bypassing to tacit coordination and symbolic co-presence. These patterns are not merely anecdotal but reflect underlying structural logics. These shape how authority is negotiated and enacted in Bangladesh's governance landscape. In cases where religious processions intersect with municipal regulation, the simultaneous presence of law enforcement, religious bodies, and political intermediaries reveals a layered choreography of influence that conventional state-centric models cannot capture. The PAF foregrounds these relational dynamics. It allows analysts to trace how legitimacy, capacity, and responsiveness are distributed and contested across actors operating in parallel rather than in hierarchy.

The case studies underscore the temporal and spatial fluidity of agency roles. A role may appear as a dominant actor in one phase of an incident, but may recede or be reconfigured in another. This insight is critical for policy design. It cautions against static assumptions about institutional authority. It advocates for adaptive governance strategies that recognize the shifting interplay of actors. By embedding these empirical observations into the framework, the paper advances a more nuanced understanding of governance. It helps explain a dynamic ecosystem of parallel agencies, each with its own logic of action, accountability structure, and mode of engagement. This reframing enhances analytical precision. It also opens pathways for more context-sensitive interventions, particularly in settings marked by institutional pluralism and contested legitimacy.

VIII. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Using the PAF, the analysis of multiple sociopolitical incidents in Bangladesh reveals that a single dominant actor rarely shapes events. Instead, outcomes emerge from simultaneous, interdependent actions across state, non-state, international, and societal agencies. Case study analysis demonstrates that interactions among security forces, political groups, civil society actors, and international stakeholders often produce cascading feedback loops.

A consistent finding is that agency overlaps—whether cooperative, collaborative, or conflictual—serve as pivotal junctures. It influences escalation or resolution. For instance, law enforcement suppression efforts in Banshkhali simultaneously triggered international advocacy, amplifying reputational costs and driving regulatory reform rather than silencing dissent. Similarly, humanitarian organizations' presence during the Rohingya camp violence mediated state-factional clashes but also created friction regarding neutrality and security responsibilities. These dynamics underscore that ignoring cross-agency interactions risks misinterpreting causal chains and underestimating systemic vulnerabilities (Borgatti & Everett, 2000; Schöch, 2018).

IX. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has several limitations, despite its conceptual and analytical contributions. First, the research relies primarily on secondary sources. They may exhibit reporting biases or be incomplete in their coverage of interactions among actors, though they provide valuable insights into sociopolitical events.

Second, the case selection focuses exclusively on Bangladesh. PAF is designed to be analytically transferable to other

governance contexts, but its empirical validation remains geographically limited. To evaluate its broader applicability, future research could apply the framework to comparative cases in other South Asian or Global South settings.

Third, the study adopts a qualitative analytical approach. It does not employ large-scale quantitative datasets such as ACLED conflict data or longitudinal social media datasets. Integrating such data sources could further strengthen the framework's predictive and analytical capacity.

Recognizing these limitations helps contextualize the findings. It helps identify directions for future research. These constraints affected the depth of interaction mapping in several cases. The study addressed this by triangulating multiple data sources. It prioritizes recurring patterns across cases rather than relying on single-source interpretations.

X. CROSSCASE INSIGHTS: AGENCY INTERACTION AND OVERLAP ZONES

Analysis of the case studies reveals multiple forms of agency interaction. Specific patterns—such as political–security convergence—recur across numerous incidents. Other patterns emerge more contextually. They are shaped by the specific actors, geographic settings, and issue domains involved.

A. Frequently Observed Patterns

Political–security convergence is the first observed pattern. State security forces have operated alongside ruling-party affiliates during several political crises in Bangladesh. This alignment blurred the boundary between formal authority and partisan enforcement. The alignment is present particularly during protests and elections. Such convergence often intensified confrontations. It weakened perceptions of institutional neutrality. It contributes to broader legitimacy challenges (Adeney & Wyatt, 2004; Decker, 2022).

Civil society–international feedback is the second observed pattern. By engaging international advocacy networks, domestic civil society organizations frequently respond to political constraints. Through these transnational linkages, local disputes are reframed as international human rights or governance concerns, thereby attracting diplomatic and reputational scrutiny (BHRRC, 2021; HHI, 2020).

The third one is the humanitarian–militant overlap zones. In border and refugee-hosting areas, humanitarian organizations often operate in a context where security forces and militant actors coexist. These overlapping jurisdictions can create tensions between humanitarian neutrality and security enforcement. These require informal negotiation mechanisms to maintain operational access (Haque, 2024; Rabbani et al., 2018).

B. Incident-Specific but Analytically Significant Patterns

The pattern of economic–political–community overlap is illustrated by the Banshkhali Coal Power Plant protests, in which corporate actors, political elites, and local communities intersected. These interactions produced flashpoints in which development agendas clashed with cultural practices and livelihood concerns. They demonstrate how competing institutional interests can escalate local disputes into broader governance conflicts.

Another pattern appears in media–security–public feedback loops. For instance, the Sitakunda container fire and Election Day unrest underscore how intense media reporting amplified public pressure and prompted rapid responses from state agencies. In several cases, these reactions were for reputational management rather than for addressing underlying structural weaknesses.

A further dynamic emerges through the convergence of religion, the state, and civil society. In incidents such as the Comilla Puja violence and the Ahmadiyya gathering ban, religious groups influenced state responses while civil society actors attempted to mediate or advocate for minority protections. These interactions reveal contested boundaries between governance authority and ideological influence.

Industrial crises also reveal conflicts among private, regulatory, and emergency services. Disasters exposed coordination failures between private operators, regulators, and first responders. At Sitakunda, withheld hazard information contributed to avoidable fatalities. It subsequently prompted regulatory reforms to improve oversight of industrial risks.

Finally, humanitarian settings reveal grassroots–militant–security triangles. In Rohingya camps, local leaders (majhis) often functioned as intermediaries between residents, militant actors, and security forces. Their position within these overlapping authority structures made them both facilitators of communication and frequent targets. These contributed to persistent governance instability within the camps.

None of these configurations recur universally. However, they collectively illustrate that Bangladesh's sociopolitical landscape. It is characterized by dense, intersecting networks of authority, where even incident-specific overlaps can have systemic implications.

XI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policymakers must recognize that crises unfold not only in linear hierarchies but especially in multi-agency ecologies. Effective governance requires anticipating agency collisions. It can be achieved through pre-crisis mapping of likely actor constellations and their overlapping jurisdictions. It would reduce violent escalations. Integrating event-sequence modeling with social network analysis can help forecast high-risk overlap points (Schöch, 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 2012).

Institutionalized mediation mechanisms—such as formal platforms, i.e., joint operations centers, humanitarian–security liaison committees, and neutral oversight bodies—can transform reactive coordination into preemptive alignment.

Process can be enhanced through transparency and public communication. Crises intensify when agencies compete or act in secrecy. Fatalities and reputational crises can be avoided if policies mandating information sharing (e.g., hazardous-material disclosures in Sitakunda) are implemented.

XII. FRAMEWORK STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

The strengths of the framework emerge from its application across the selected case studies, and not as abstract theoretical claims. The three main strengths of PAF (discussed below) are underscored, with its analytical utility evident in practice.

I. **Cross-Context Applicability:** The framework was applied to eighteen cases. The cases spanned across security, political, social, religious, and cultural domains. Each domain involved distinct constellations of actors. Its analytical focus on interaction structures, rather than fixed actor types, allowed consistent mapping across cases. This aligns with Latour (2005), emphasis on relational assemblages in which outcomes emerge from heterogeneous actor configurations rather than predefined categories, and also with Luhmann (1990), concept of operationally distinct but structurally coupled systems.

II. **Integration of Temporal and Relational Dimensions:** Conventional social network analysis often captures static relational structures. However, the framework combines event-sequence mapping with network analysis to trace how interactions evolve. In cases such as election unrest and industrial disasters, this enabled the identification of feedback loops. It was particularly effective when early interventions triggered adaptive responses from other agencies, demonstrating the utility of integrating sequencing (Schöch, 2018) with relational metrics (Wasserman & Faust, 2012).

III. **Policy-Relevant Diagnostics:** PAF proved most useful in post-event analysis and medium-term policy design, where detailed mapping of agency overlap zones revealed coordination gaps (e.g., Sitakunda) and leverage points (e.g., NGO–state mediation in Banshkhali). Rather than offering rapid-response tools, it provides structured diagnostic insights for institutional learning and reform. PAF is not intended for rapid operational deployment. It is intended for post-event analysis and strategic planning, where analytical depth is more critical than speed.

Several limitations accompany these strengths:

I. **Data Constraints:** The study relied heavily on secondary sources, which varied in depth and reliability across cases. In several incidents, incomplete reporting limited the ability to reconstruct interaction sequences in full. To mitigate this, triangulation was employed across media reports, NGO documentation, and academic analyses, following established qualitative research practices (Bryman, 2016), regarding data reliability.

II. **Potential Biases:** Media narratives and interview-based interpretations may reflect institutional or political biases, which influence how agency roles are represented. To address this, the analysis compared multiple sources for each case. It also prioritized convergent patterns rather than single-source claims. It is consistent with reflexive qualitative approaches (Flick, 2018), particularly on reflexivity and bias in qualitative research.

III. **Complexity and Scalability:** PAF requires multi-layered data collection and analysis. It makes the framework resource-intensive, limiting its applicability in real-time crisis response. This limitation does not negate its policy relevance; rather, it defines its appropriate scope. The framework is most effective in analytical, evaluative, and planning contexts, where time and data availability allow for detailed mapping.

These limitations clarify that the framework is not a universal or rapid-response tool. It is rather a diagnostic and analytical model. It is best suited for complex, multi-actor environments where depth of understanding is prioritized over speed. This distinction resolves the apparent tension between policy relevance and operational complexity.

XIII. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Key Arguments

This study demonstrates that single-agency or linear causal models cannot explain sociopolitical events in Bangladesh. By mapping how state, non-state, and societal actors act simultaneously and intersect to generate emergent outcomes rather than predictable sequences, the PAF provides a more comprehensive lens. Through case studies ranging from political protests to refugee camp conflicts and industrial disasters, the analysis shows that agency interactions, whether cooperative, competitive, or unintended, create feedback loops that shape crisis trajectories, policy responses, and legitimacy dynamics.

B. Significance

By integrating insights from the agent–structure debate, network theory, and systems theory, translating them into a practical analytical tool for complex governance settings, the PAF contributes to sociopolitical theory. In the Bangladeshi context, it offers a structured method for identifying overlap zones. It helps anticipate flashpoints and diagnose coordination gaps that are overlooked by traditional conflict analysis, event-sequence mapping, or isolated social network models. For practitioners, the framework's focus on multi-actor configurations enhances policy relevance. It does so by clarifying not only "who" is involved but also "how" their simultaneous actions interact and thus, produce systemic effects.

C. Future Research

Further research could extend the application of the PAF to other South Asian contexts. The extension can be more applicable to similar dense patronage networks, contested sovereignties, and hybrid governance arrangements. Comparative studies could test the framework's transferability. It can incorporate quantitative modeling, such as dynamic network simulations and time-series event analysis, and be used to operationalize predictive capabilities. Doing so would move the approach beyond descriptive mapping. It will move toward a tool for real-time risk assessment and policy design. It will broaden its utility in both academic and applied governance domains.

The following diagram schematically illustrates how parallel agencies interact across distinct phases of sociopolitical incidents, visually consolidating the analytical architecture of the PAF. By mapping state, non-state, societal, and international actors along a temporal axis—from pre-event mobilization to escalation, resolution, and feedback—the image illustrates the simultaneity and interdependence that underpin emergent outcomes. Tangent overlap zones, where agency spheres intersect, are highlighted to emphasize points of convergence, contention, or reinforcement. This visual serves as a conceptual summary and as a methodological guide for applying the framework to future case studies and policy diagnostics.

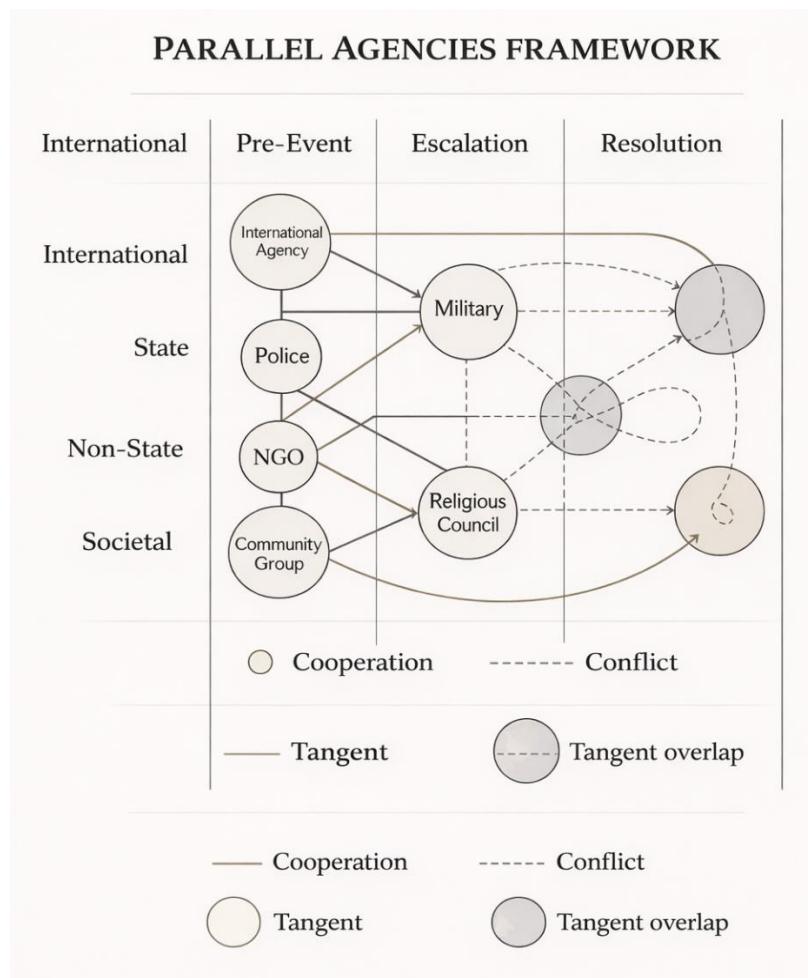


Figure 7. A visual depiction of the parallel agency framework.
Source: Created by the author to demonstrate the discussion in the paper.

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Use of AI Tools: To enhance the clarity, coherence, and academic rigor of this work, I utilized Grammarly, an AI-powered writing assistant. Its function was strictly limited to editorial tasks, such as refining punctuation, fixing syntax, improving sentence structure for better flow, and correcting grammatical errors to ensure the prose is clear and precise. The tool assisted in conforming the language to established academic conventions by suggesting more formal vocabulary, adjusting tone for consistency, and enhancing the overall logical progression of sentences—thereby supporting the precision and intellectual seriousness expected in scholarly writing. All intellectual contributions, research, analysis, and substantive ideas contained herein are our own.

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