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The rhino horn trade, transnational organised crime and Vietnamese state-run media: The news framing of enforcement of laws against the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn in the Vietnamese digital newspapers

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Michael Scott Smith



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Abstract

An illicit trade in rhino horn from Africa, particularly South Africa, to Vietnam is threatening the survival of the species. This thesis has explored the news framing of the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue in Vietnam, a major trafficking hub and market country since 2008. It focuses on an important time when Vietnam faced and responded to international pressure—from a series of global Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) conferences and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)—to take greater action to combat this trade. Using a qualitative approach, derived though a constructivist epistemology, this study employs news framing theory as a tool to explore the news media stories of rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers from 2016—when Vietnam signalled its political will to fight the trade—to 2020. The sources linked to particular frames within these texts were analysed and semi-structured interviews with the framers of these texts—Vietnamese journalists, personnel from environmental non-government organisations (ENGOs) and an expert in Vietnamese journalism—were conducted.

The study finds that framing indicates a 'war on the rhino horn trade' approach that is reminiscent of other 'war on crime' strategies applied, for instance, in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. With this 'war' approach, the accent in Vietnam tends to be on tougher sentences for rhino horn couriers, which is quite unhelpful at reducing the crime, rather than finding solutions to underlying issues and bolstering investigations into rhino horn trade 'kingpins'.

It was found that Vietnamese officials, ENGOs and international sources—including the United Nations, foreign embassies and security actors—were included in deliberations in the news. Indeed, framing around Serious Crime and Compliance owes much to the strong reliance of Vietnamese

journalists on press releases from official and ENGO sources. Despite demonstrating that such frames have been introduced to the Vietnamese news media landscape by the global elite—suggesting that a transnational public sphere is operating—this study argues supranational organisations and international actors can only influence the Vietnamese state-run media under Vietnam's own terms. Specifically, the study finds that Vietnamese news media presents the Criminality meta-frame by initially problematising it through a series of Serious Crime frames, emphasising the magnitude of the problem, and then framing the government's political will, determination and commitment in dealing with the issue through a series of Compliance frames. Criticism of this compliance narrative is presented through Lack of Enforcement frames; this is not, however, prolific in the text.

The prevalence of Serious Crime and Compliance frames and the dearth of Lack of Enforcement frames observed in the news is coupled with Vietnamese journalists' strong reliance on press releases and press conferences, particularly from Vietnamese official sources. This suggests that journalists may be straying outside of the government narrative sparingly and cautiously given the politico-cultural confines of an authoritarian media system. The interviews with journalists suggest that, rather than the news being a place where opposing frames openly collide, journalists carefully navigate the eddies of Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames with politico-cultural dexterity borne through professional experience in navigating Vietnam's authoritarian media system.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CITES	Convention for the International Trade in Endangered Species
CoP	Conference of Parties
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
EIA	Environmental Investigation Agency
ENGO	environmental non-government organisation
ENV	Education for Nature Vietnam
ICCWC	International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime
IWT	illegal wildlife trade
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MT	machine translation
NIRAP	National Ivory and Rhino Horn Action Plan
OCN	organised criminal network
RQ	research question
TCM	traditional Chinese medicine
TEC	transnational environmental crime

TOC	transnational organised crime
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime
US	United States of America
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores how the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade is framed in Vietnamese digital newspapers. The news media in the authoritarian state of Vietnam has been reporting on the rhinoceros (hereafter 'rhino') horn trade since 2010, when Vietnam's last rhino was killed for its horn (Nguyen 2017). Press coverage (or non-coverage) of international wildlife trafficking is a significant issue with policy and professional practice implications for the relationships among journalists, governments and environmental non-government organisations (ENGOs). This study continues in the theme of my previous master's research, which explored the framing of rhino horn demand reduction in the media outputs of ENGOs in Vietnam, drawing on it in places because of the lacuna of research in this area. This study further explores the framing of this important transnational environmental crime (TEC) by investigating the criminality framing of the rhino horn trade in four Vietnamese digital newspapers.

Vietnam is a one-party state ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) with a heavy hand to quell opposition (Economist Intelligence Unit n. d.). Vietnam retains its 'classification as an authoritarian state', along with six other countries in Asia (Economist Intelligence Unit n. d.), and the CPV uses the media as an important arm of control (Thayer 2009). During the study period for which online news articles were examined, 2016 to 2020, Vietnam maintained a highly censored mediascape. All media is state-owned and controlled (Human Rights Watch 2024; Mach & Nash 2019; Thayer 2009), with surveillance and control having a chilling effect on media freedom, causing journalists to self-censor (Freedom House 2019b). Online dissent and anti-state propaganda is not tolerated and subject to crackdowns and possible imprisonment under Article 117 of the penal code (Amnesty International 2020; Reporters Without Borders 2020).

Although rhinos in their main range state of South Africa have faced a decade-long poaching frenzy to feed high levels of demand in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government has been slow to implement laws against the trade and stop rhino horn trafficking into their country (Emslie et al. 2019; Milliken & Shaw 2012; WWF 2019). This is despite protracted pressure from the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Simultaneously, there has been a global push for countries and their enforcement agencies to take illegal wildlife trade (IWT) more seriously (Lupton 2023; Wellsmith 2011; Wyatt 2014). The United Nations (UN) has urged member states to strengthen 'legislation and regulations necessary for the prevention, investigation, prosecution and appropriate punishment of such illegal trade, as well as by strengthening enforcement and criminal justice responses' (United Nations 2021, p. 6). In addition, the United Kingdom (UK) has convened a limited series of four global IWT conferences that have been aimed at redefining IWT as a criminal issue rather than a conservation issue (Massé et al. 2020).

Research has explored the factors that drive demand for wildlife and rhino horn consumption in Vietnam (see, e.g., Dang Vu & Nielsen 2018; Drury 2011; Greenfield & Veríssimo 2019; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016), the nature of the transnational criminal syndicates profiting from the rhino horn trade (Hübschle 2016, 2017a; Ngoc & Wyatt 2013) and the framing of social marketing campaigns to reduce demand for endangered wildlife parts and rhino horn (Burgess 2016; Jeffreys 2016; Lin 2012; Smith 2018, 2021; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016). Studies have also investigated environmental protests and the media (Anderson 1997; Brown & Harlow 2019; Lester 2007) the mediatisation of transnational environmental conflicts (Hutchins & Lester 2015), crime reporting in Vietnam (Cain 2014; Huong 2012), the framing of IWT as a serious crime at international IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020), the global conservation and crime convergence (Duffy 2021, 2022) and concerns stemming from the securitisation and militarisation of conservation (Duffy et

al. 2019). Securitisation relates to the communication of the rhino horn trade as ‘a speech act … referring to that form of linguistic representation that positioned a particular issue as an existential threat’ (McDonald 2008, p. 566).

Studies of reports of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese news media appear to be limited to two nonpeer-reviewed papers: a survey to quantify seizures, arrests, prosecutions and convictions reported in Vietnamese media (Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018) and a master’s thesis on the framing of rhino conservation in the Vietnamese media (Nguyen 2017). Thus, given that little exists in the literature on the framing of the enforcement of laws against the illegal trade in rhino horn in Vietnam—an important topic in the Vietnamese media and one that affects rhino conservation—there is a research gap.

In Vietnam, the percentage of the population using the internet has steadily increased, rising from 53% in 2016 to 70% in 2020 (World Bank 2022). This makes digital newspapers in the Vietnamese language an increasingly important media segment to study. Studying how the illegal rhino horn trade is framed in the Vietnamese online news media may also have wider ramifications. These go beyond understanding the symbiosis between the Vietnamese press, policy makers, international stakeholders and the public, to offering insights on how such narratives are shaped by a wider global perspective on the rhino horn trade. Such study may provide greater insights into the shifting nature of global rhino horn policy and implementation and their effects on the long-term conservation of the last remaining rhinos.

Using a qualitative approach, derived though a constructivist epistemology, this study employs news framing theory as a tool to explore reporting in the Vietnamese digital newspapers on the rhino horn trade from 2016, when Vietnam signalled its political will to fight the trade, to 2020. A

qualitative framing analysis was conducted in conjunction with a qualitative content analysis of news articles and semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese journalists, ENGO personnel and an expert in Vietnamese journalism to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do online newspapers in Vietnam frame the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue?

RQ2: Who are the sources behind the Criminality meta-frame?

RQ3: What are the factors that influence news framing in the coverage of the illegal trade in rhino horn?

My experience as an English subeditor in national and metro English language newspapers in Vietnam positioned me well for this study. From 2007 to 2011, I worked with Vietnamese journalists and translators to translate Vietnamese language news stories into English. I have edited thousands of news stories written by Vietnamese journalists and translated by Vietnamese translators in a Ho Chi Minh City newsroom over four years of fulltime work. The English subeditor role entailed regular discussions with Vietnamese journalists and translators to ensure that the reproduction of Vietnamese news stories in English maintained original intended meanings. This work has prepared me to understand and analyse translated versions of stories and I drew on these skills for this project. When translated stories in the sample had terms that were ambiguous or seemed unclear, I was able to clarify the meaning. Terms were also checked with an accredited translator or with Vietnamese speakers. Having several native Vietnamese speakers who are also fluent in English as ready contacts also positioned me well for this research, as did rudimentary skills in speaking Vietnamese.

To clarify my own position on the rhino horn trade in Vietnam and provide a contextualisation for this study's rationale, my experience working in newspapers in Vietnam and my work as a

freelance journalist and as a researcher are all pertinent. During my time as an English subeditor, I was able to report on the local Javan rhino species for a Vietnamese national newspaper. I reported on local rhino conservation efforts and researched and wrote reports for national news media following the species' extinction in Vietnam in 2010. This alerted me to the transnational rhino horn trade and the poaching crisis in South Africa that supplied the strong demand for rhino horn in Vietnam. Subsequently I completed a piece of investigative journalism into the reasons why Vietnamese consumers were buying rhino horn and the ease with which rhino horn could be purchased in Ho Chi Minh City. I then wrote a review of ancient Chinese texts on the use of rhino horn in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which was published online. I have also conducted a journalistic investigation into rhino poaching in South Africa. I found that rhinos were being poached widely. Although militarised measures were being employed to stop the poaching, poachers tended to rely on 'intel' (intelligence) from within game reserves. I also found sources in South Africa who spoke of Vietnamese illegal syndicates that were based in South Africa and trading in rhino horn. My master's research project found that Vietnam seemed to have done little to enforce laws against the trade (Smith 2017). Hence my rationale for this study was in the context of an illegal rhino horn trade that was inadequately policed in Vietnam.

The implications of this research, which illuminates the issue of Vietnam's declared political will to fight the rhino horn trade amid international public deliberation, concerns the future survival or extinction of rhino species. It also may help alleviate the urgent issue of the suffering of individual rhinos at the hands of poachers. Finally, it is pertinent to other endangered species listed by CITES.

1.1 Subsequent Chapters

This background understanding of the importance of the overall issue of the illegal rhino horn trade, its effects on an endangered species and the role of Vietnam in the process leaves open the important issue of the relevance of the news media and its framing of the rhino trade as an issue, particularly in Vietnam. This is the focus of Chapter 2, the literature review, which reviews the work of other scholars on news media framing, environmental communication, criminology and crime reporting in the broader and theoretical context before drilling into the small amount of work that has examined the political, social and cultural context of the Vietnamese media and how its framing of important issues has been influenced. The section on framing in the literature review underpins RQs 1, 2 and 3 by exploring the literature that has defined and explored frames, the sources behind them and the factors that influence them.

Subsequent chapters of this thesis will outline the research methods used in this study (Chapter 3), before presenting the results and discussion through the lens of the key criminality themes identified in the data to answer RQ1 and RQ2. More specifically, Chapters 4 and 5 answer RQ1 and RQ2 by describing the three level 1 frames under the Criminality meta-frame and the sources behind them. Chapter 4 describes the Serious Crime frame and the sources behind it, and Chapter 5 describes the Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames and the sources behind them. The last data chapter (Chapter 6), which answers RQ3, discusses the factors that influence the frames. Chapter 7 highlights the key findings, links them back to the original RQs and existing literature, provides concluding analysis and foreshadows the need for future research.

1.2 Limitations

Every study has some limitations. This project has been limited by the usual constraints of time and scope. Given the limited time frame of a doctoral candidature, the data collection period was limited to 2016–2020. The project also only studies online newspapers, excluding television, radio news and social media, which are all important areas of information about rhino horn trafficking and enforcement. The number of online newspapers examined also had to be limited because of the amount of data they generated and the challenges of cross-linguistic research. Although some linguistic and cultural nuances of news framing may have been unclear in the translation, a reliability check process was in place to mitigate the potential for loss of meaning. In addition, the benefits of being able to analyse the news stories that the Vietnamese public and government officials read balances out, or potentially outweighs, the disadvantage of that limitation. The decisions made in this regard are explained in Chapter 3. The COVID-19 pandemic also prevented semi-structured interviews from being performed in person. The process of approaching potential interviewees and doing the interviews was conducted online, which reduced the expected number of interviews.

1.3 Background: Understanding the Global Rhino Horn Trade

Rhino horn is a rare and expensive ingredient in TCM and one that continues to be sought after in Vietnam for medicinal purposes and, more recently, as a way of signifying the wealth and status of the owner or consumer (Burgess 2016). The local context of a growing middle class in Vietnam's rapidly developing economy has been a factor in the rising demand. Possessing, gifting and consuming rhino horn signifies status because it has traditionally been highly valued and expensive. Combining this demand with a 'low risk high profit' (Scanlon 2016) situation for criminal networks

has created trade that Vietnamese journalists describe as ‘hot’ (*Lao Dong* 24 November 2017). This demand is driving a rhino poaching crisis in Africa (Milliken & Shaw 2012), with high prices attracting organised crime groups that have never been involved in IWT before (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] 2016).

The illegal trade in rhino horn poses a conservation threat to all rhino species. The ENGO monitoring the wildlife trade, TRAFFIC, has estimated that there are just 30,000 rhinos of all species left in the world, with South Africa home to 87% of the most common species, the white rhino (TRAFFIC 2019a). Between 2006 and 2016, 7,246 rhinos were poached, 6,151 of these in South Africa (Knight & Emslie 2017). Between 2017 and 2021, 4,000 rhinos were poached Africa-wide (Save the Rhino n. d.). An average of three were poached every day from 2013 to 2017 inclusive (TRAFFIC 2019a). The South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (2021) has reported that poaching losses reduced to 594 in 2019 and reduced again to 394 in 2020. In 2023, however, it increased, with 499 rhinos poached across South Africa (South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment 2024). Although the statistics are dropping, the drop may simply be because of the heavily reduced rhino population. South African National Parks (2021) detailed a 59% decline in the rhino population in Kruger National Park since 2011. Kruger, which is home to the largest population of rhinos in the world, was reported to have only 3,529 white rhinos and 268 black rhinos left, down from 11,000 total for both species in 2011 (South African National Parks 2021). The International Union of Conservation of Nature categorise white rhinos as near threatened and black rhinos as critically endangered (IUCN 2020).

Since the start of the rhino poaching crisis in 2008 (Save the Rhino n. d.), Vietnam has remained a key consumer and transit country of illegally sourced rhino horn, with a great number of transnational illegal syndicates operating in the country and Vietnamese syndicates operating in

Africa (Ngoc & Wyatt 2013; Nguyen & Roberts 2020; UNODC 2019). The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF; 2019) reported that Vietnam topped the top five destination countries for rhino horn from 2010 to 2017. In a report to the 2016 Conference of Parties (CoP) CITES conference, Elmslie et al. (n.d.) stated that Vietnam was the world's most concerning import country for rhino horn illegally sourced in Africa. At the 2019 CITES CoP, Vietnam was identified by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) as 'one of the Parties most affected by rhinoceros horn trafficking' (EIA 2021, p. 8).

In 2011, Vietnam gained international media attention that highlighted how freely available rhino horn was in Vietnam. American journalist Dan Rather's documentary, 'Horn of Africa', exposed the rampant extent of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam. Of the documentary, Tom Milliken of TRAFFIC said that it indicated Vietnamese authorities were not doing their part to stop the trafficking and that, as a consequence, there was a complete disregard in Vietnam for the law by rhino horn traffickers and retailers.

Although evidence of the full extent of rhino horn trade is lacking because of the clandestine nature of organised crime, rhino poaching statistics are well recorded and released yearly by South Africa. In addition, UNODC argues that records of the seizures of poached rhino horn provide a clear indication of the serious extent of the issue. There have been 793 rhino horn seizures globally since 2006, with only 63 of these made in Vietnam (EIA 2021).

Seizures of rhino horn at airports and border crossings in Vietnam are the result of failed smuggling efforts. Smuggling is an established, centuries-old practice in Southeast Asia, particularly since the colonial period, and it is unlikely to disappear anytime soon (Tagliacozzo 2002). Since the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Vietnam and South China border was a 'sieve for

contraband goods… often by syndicates of Sino Vietnamese smugglers' (Tagliacozzo 2002, p 196). Smuggling continued to evolve in the twentieth century into commercial enterprises of enormous size and scope with maritime, air and land connections, and dealing in national resources, drugs, weapons and humans. Hence smuggling routes and infrastructure are well established in Vietnam. With regard to poached rhino horn, Vietnam is indicated as the most important destination country, followed by China, the Czech Republic, the United States of America (US) and Thailand (UNODC 2016). Smuggling is through organised crime networks with transnational links to other organised crime networks. These are 'typically African-based Asian criminal networks that are involved throughout the entire poaching and trafficking process' (UNODC 2019, p. 111). The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), which was adopted in 2000, 'contains no specific definition of organised crime' (UNODC 2020, p. 3). 'The implied definition of "transnational organized crime" encompasses virtually all serious profit-motivated criminal actions of an international nature where more than one country is involved' (UNODC 2020, p. 3). The UNTOC explains that such serious crime is defined by a jail sentence of four years or more. The convention itself specifies that transnational organised crime (TOC) is a serious crime that involves multiple factors: organised crime networks that are linked transnationally; the committing of serious crime; corruption; money laundering and matters of national sovereignty (UNODC 2000). 'Typical forms of organized crime of a transnational nature include drug trafficking, human trafficking, firearms trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, in which organized criminal groups work across many different jurisdictions to achieve their illicit goals' (UNODC 2020, p. 3).

The rhino horn trade has not been a Vietnamese government priority (EIA 2013; WWF 2016a, 2016c). At the 2016 CITES CoP in South Africa, members claimed there was a lack of priority

assigned by Vietnam to the rhino horn trade, noting that prior to 2016 Vietnam had not made one prosecution in response to the trade. Thus, the parties at the CoP endorsed a CITES Secretariat mission to Vietnam to review the lax law enforcement efforts. After being called out by CITES in 2016 for not seriously fighting the rhino horn trade, the Vietnamese government improved its stated position. Specifically, it declared a commitment to take a very strong approach against IWT by implementing tough laws, DNA programs, international cooperation and specialist IWT training of 1,000 officers (UK Govt. 2018). However, more work still needed be done (EIA 2019).

The legal frameworks against the rhino horn trade in Vietnam have been tightened, with the promulgation of a new stricter penal code (Article 244) that came into force in January 2018. The local ENGO, Education for Nature Vietnam (ENV), outlined that the consequences for traffickers were tougher because of the update: 'The new Penal Code allows the courts to apply fines of up to VND 2 billion (USD 86,000) and prison sentences of up to 15 years for major offenses' (ENV 2020, p. 3). In addition to the enhanced legal framework, ENV (2020) reported prosecution rates of traffickers were improving as Vietnam took IWT more seriously.

However, the lack of enforcement continues to be a problem (EIA 2019; GlobeScan 2019). A report by the EIA, 'Running out of time' (2019), expresses concern regarding inadequate implementation of existing laws and the new penal code concerning rhino horn. This is because even simple steps to progress investigations have not been taken in Vietnam. Further exacerbating this shortcoming of enforcement, a survey showed that although heavy penalties are a top concern for rhino horn consumers, they are also aware of the lack of law enforcement and the small risk of consequences (GlobeScan 2019).

The trade in rhino horn not only presents a conservation challenge for rhino in Africa (Williams, Parry-Jones & Roe 2016), it has security effects for Vietnam. UNODC, which supports Vietnam to tackle wildlife crime through bolstering the legal system, noted that IWT poses a threat to governance. ‘Forgery, fraud, and corruption remain major facilitators of wildlife crime, enabling smugglers to subvert the regulatory systems and move shipments of wildlife products across borders’; these factors pose a ‘significant threat to state integrity, governance and human security’ (UNODC 2017, p. 15). Simultaneously, CITES, under the leadership of John Scanlon between 2010 and 2018, advocated and lobbied internationally for IWT to be treated as a serious organised crime and an international security threat (Duffy 2022, p. 34). Vietnam has recognised these threats to national security and sustainable development allegedly posed by rhino horn trafficking by signing the London Declaration in 2014, as well as similar declarations at three subsequent IWT conferences: Kasane 2015, Hanoi 2016 and London 2018. However, in Southeast Asia, the extent of IWT as an organised TEC is expected to grow because of growing demand, massive infrastructure development, corruption, weak law and customs enforcement, lack of awareness and low prioritisation as a serious crime (UNODC 2019).

In 2013, an international meeting was convened by the UK because of concerns about growing levels of IWT and the need to galvanise the international community to fight it at top levels of government (Wilson 2014). The advent and success of the first global IWT conference in London in 2014 snowballed into a series of four global conferences with IWT recognised as an organised serious crime (Wilson 2014). As a result, the first global IWT conference was held in London in the following year. Stakeholders signed the 2014 London Declaration, thereby establishing a joint framework of attack: ‘Positive developments [to fight IWT] occurred at the country level from signatories’ (Wilson 2014). Botswana offered to host the next conference in the capital Kasane in

2015, after which Vietnam offered to host a third—the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. London 2018 tied up the series with the largest and last global IWT conference and announced 'real progress' (UK Govt. 2019). Vietnam's hosting of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference and its first ever destruction of its ivory and rhino horn stockpiles with representatives from 42 other countries was seen as a 'moment of optimism' (Lever 2017). The final conference in London was still needed, however, because the battle against IWT was 'not yet being won' (Lever 2017).

International players have been framing IWT as a serious crime for at least a decade (Wellsmith 2011; Wyatt 2014). At the four international IWT conferences—London 2014, Kasane 2015, Hanoi 2016 and London 2018—the UK, which organised the events and other international actors, pushed for IWT to be framed within the UNTOC as a serious crime carried out by organised criminals (Massé et al. 2020). This framing push culminated in the final IWT conference in the series—London 2018 (Massé et al. 2020). This excerpt from the London Declaration illustrates this reframing intent:

> We, the representatives of Governments, gathered in London on 11 and 12 October 2018, recognizing the significant detrimental economic, environmental, security and social impacts of the illegal trade in wildlife, make the following political *commitment* and call upon the international community to act together to support and build urgent collective action to tackle the illegal wildlife trade as a serious crime carried out by organized criminals, and to close markets for illegally traded wildlife. (UK Govt. 2018, p. 1)

Questions may need to be asked of Vietnam's claims of commitment and compliance, with ENGOs watchful of Vietnam paying only lip service to its obligations (Smith 2021; WWF 2016c). For instance, although Vietnam's claims of commitment at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference were followed up by a positive progress report a year after the conference, WWF (2019) argued the

reports were self-assessed with no requirement for accompanying evidence, were very hard to verify and lacked clarity on who was leading the activities—for example, whether it is an ENGO or a government body. WWF claimed the reports' 'focus on activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impact' and their 'lack [of] consistency of reporting' illustrated cherry-picking rather than objective analysis, making them 'extremely partial, subject to bias and inconsistent' (WWF 2019, p. 50). A report by EIA (2021) reflects that Vietnam is making efforts, but that it needs to do better:

> For a decade, Vietnam has been repeatedly highlighted for its role in the international illegal wildlife trade, so it is encouraging to see the recent efforts taken by the Government to address its involvement; it is to be congratulated for the measures it has taken and the successes it has had domestically … Yet despite these efforts to tackle illegal wildlife trade in country, Vietnam's reputation is tarnished by the fact that it is the primary destination for illegal wildlife products sourced from across Africa.

Herein lies a tussle over compliance between Vietnam and powers outside. For example, the EIA report continues, using stronger words to highlight Vietnam's failure:

> The failure to pursue intelligence-led investigations into these major [rhino horn] seizures, even when detailed information and intelligence on some networks and the individuals involved has been presented to Vietnamese authorities by a range of stakeholders, is a significant problem. It suggests that law enforcement is either inadequate or under-resourced and that there is lack of coordination between the agencies involved, including customs and police. (EIA 2021, p. 5)

The Vietnamese Government structure is composed of the CPV, the National Assembly, the government, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuracy. At the top, Vietnam has the CPV, which is the 'force leading the

state and society' (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America 2024). The CPV represents the interests of workers according to 'Marxist–Leninist doctrine and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts' (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America 2024). The National Assembly is the highest representative organ of the people, controlling all activities of the state. The National Assembly has 498 members, who do not have to be CPV members, and elects the president and the prime minister. It is the 'only organ with constitutional and legislative powers' (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America 2024). The government is the executive organ of the National Assembly, while the Standing Committee of the National Assembly is the National Assembly's permanent committee, each legislature having its own standing committee. 'The Supreme People's Court, the local People's Courts, the Military Tribunals and the other tribunals established by law are the judicial organs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam' (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America 2024). Trials held before these courts are overseen by judges and assessors and are held publicly, unless otherwise determined. The Supreme People's Procuracy 'controls obedience to the law by Ministries, organ of ministerial rank, other organs under the Government, local organs of power, economic bodies, social organizations, people's and armed units and citizens' (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America 2024). 'The government prohibits independent or privately owned media outlets', maintains strict control over all media and the courts are party controlled (Human Rights Watch 2024).

This background section has demonstrated that the authoritarian government of Vietnam is at the centre of high-level international deliberations concerning the illegal rhino horn trade. The study

of framing of this trade is an important case study in framing in this country and context, further helping to elaborate Vietnam's standpoint among the deliberations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Having discussed in Chapter 1 the context and background of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, it is important to understand how the enforcement of the trade is framed in the Vietnamese media. The literature review presented in this chapter is arranged in sections that are ordered in a funnel-like structure. It starts with a broad view of the relevant framing theory. To explore framing theory in relation to the issue at stake, which is the criminality of the rhino horn trade, the chapter will examine the relevant areas of news framing research in environmental communication and crime reporting, including intersecting areas of green criminology, securitisation and TOC. It will then funnel into media studies of IWT, before finally exploring media studies in Vietnam and the news framing of the rhino horn trade.

2.1 Framing Theory and Framing News

The concept of news framing explicates the idea that, as a mediated form of reality, news is invariably shaped and framed. News is not 'reality' in its entirety but part thereof, crafted into a narrative, and that narrative, in turn, shapes the social reality of how people see the world. News frames suggest a specific interpretation of the news text and suggest how audiences can interpret, classify or categorise an issue or event (Akpoghiran 2023; Kuhne & Schemer 2015; Paul 2022; Tewksbury & Scheufele 2019).

In his seminal work on frames, Entman (1993) argues that framing essentially involves selection and salience:

> To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal

> interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman 1993, p. 52)

Debates exist about the future of framing research. Framing has stayed on the agenda of scholarship in the fields of sociology, psychology, political science and media and communication for at least 100 years because of its importance as a tool for understanding new issues and the public's understanding of them. At the same time, framing is a common form of communication research that may be overused and sometimes misused (D'Angelo et al. 2019); it is often carried out inductively in unique situations (De Vreese, Peter & Semetko 2001). Hence, framing in the field of communication can appear as a vague concept without clear definition or boundaries (D'Angelo 2002; D'Angelo et al. 2019; Entman 1993; Scheufele 1999; Tewksbury & Scheufele 2019). Whereas some communications scholars argue that framing should be abandoned or have its focus significantly narrowed (Cacciatore, Scheufele & Iyengar 2016; Krippendorff 2017), others say it should keep embracing a wide range of paradigms (D'Angelo 2002) with allowances for conceptual flexibility (Samoilenko 2020). Arguments also exist for an emphasis on producing framing literature that interprets language used. In expert discussions on framing, In a forum for framing researchers, Lule argued that framing literature should provide examples explaining how language is interpreted rather than relying on codification (in D'Angelo et al. 2019). As part of the forum, Lule (in D'Angelo et al. 2019) argued for researchers to do closer readings of news language and to pay close attention to metaphors. Lule has argued that this approach would bring framing back to its roots with studies such as Goffman (1974), Gitlin (1980), Tuchman (1978), and Entman (1993) (D'Angelo et al. 2019).

Entman's (1993) article—possibly the one of the most influential articles on framing (Samoilenko 2020)—provided a clear definition and explication of framing and aimed to remedy what Entman

claimed was a lack of a general statement of framing theory in communication studies. ‘Despite its omnipresence across the social sciences and humanities, nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking’ (Entman 1993, p. 51). Entman further contended that communication studies at that time ‘lacked disciplinary status because of deficient core knowledge’ (p. 51). Hence, as a case study, he sought to draw ‘together insights and theories’ (Entman 1993, p. 51)on framing that were scattered among other disciplines and paradigms. Explicating a general statement on framing would also ‘help constitute framing as a research paradigm’ (p. 56) that could be applied broadly across disciplines, including public opinion, political science, sociology and cultural studies.

Central to the divide in the framing debate is that media framing does not cover other elements, such as culture. Culture refers to the sets of myths, codes, stereotypes, beliefs, norms, frames and values that are organised in a group or society’s shared collective memory (Van Gorp 2007; Zald 1996). Entman (2004) argues that some frames that have been identified are better termed as scripts, because they do not link to the frames in the culture and the cultural frames in the schema of the person. Frames function to express the problems, causes, morals and treatments in all the frame locations, whether they be in the text, the communicator, the culture or the audience (Ardevol-Abreu 2015; Benford & Snow 2000; Entman 1993; Lakoff 2010; Van Gorp 2007). Van Gorp (2007) argues that for a frame to be true, the cultural aspect needs to be brought back in.

Entman’s later work (Entman 2003, 2007; Entman & Usher 2018) has explored framing’s relationship to political power, ‘transnational information flows’ (Knupfer & Entman 2018) and culture and communicators in the context of the digital age. Such concepts are relevant to the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, which is the topic of a considerable transnational information flow. Relevant

to the international pressure on Vietnam to comply with CITES commitments, Knupfer and Entman (2018) theorise that new international interpretive communities, such as nation states and political elites, can influence foreign political decisions and institutional structures. Although framing may be simultaneous around the globe it seems to be 'aimed at localised institutional contexts' (Knupfer & Entman 2018, p. 484).

This section, which links with descriptions in Chapter 3 regarding the framing analysis of news articles, draws on and updates framing research that has stood the test of time and is regularly referenced (see, e.g., Paul 2022). Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 3) have demonstrated, for instance, that frames in media texts are 'central organising ideas' comprising 'condensing symbols' that suggest 'what is at issue', with the implication that there are a 'range of positions' alongside various 'reasoning devices [causal, consequential and moral] that justify what should be done about it', thus allowing for a 'degree of controversy'. Hence, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) show how framing is a core part of news about the public deliberation of issues.

Frames are signified by smaller elements and images in the news texts that act as framing devices. These include words, phrases, exemplars, images and metaphors (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp 2007). Metaphors are particularly powerful conceptual framing devices (Joris, d'Haenens & Gorp 2019; Temmerman 2022). All these framing devices derive meaning through the journalistic processes of selection, emphasis and exclusion (Entman 1993; Gitlin 1980; Poindexter, Meraz & Weiss 2010), processes that can be both conscious and unconscious (Akyurek et al. 2020; Gitlin 1980; Goffman 1974).

As an idea, framing dates back over one hundred years. Lippmann (1922) argued, for instance, in his seminal book, *Public Opinion*, that people's cognition of the world and the pictures that we

form in our minds come largely from the media rather than from the physical world. Lippmann (1922) argued for the power of framing because he proposed that people are more likely to derive their views from the pictures in their heads than from critical analysis and logic.

Studies of framing generally concern three main areas: how stories are framed, the production of frames and their effects (Hansen 2011, p. 7); however, there are other areas of interest (Entman 1993; Goffman 1974; Van Gorp 2007). Other areas may include studies of cultural frames that do 'not need to be explicitly mentioned in media content' (Van Gorp 2007, p. 73). Cultural frames are relevant to this thesis because the Vietnamese culture plays a significant role in frames related to crime and the rhino horn trade.

The underlying justification for all aspects of framing research is that news framing 'has an impact on social policy and plays a role in social control' (Hertog & McLeod 2001, p. 160). This expands Lippmann's views concerning the role of the media in the public's construction of reality, reinforcing the importance of understanding how and why the rhino horn trade is framed in particular ways in the Vietnamese news media.

Goffman (1974) studied framing from a sociological perspective, theorising that frames present a 'schemata of interpretation' (p. 21) that provides the basis for us to 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' (p. 21) what is happening. That is, framing is how humans organise their experience and make sense of the world in ways that are already considered valid (Goffman 1974). Hence, frames occur in both communicators and their audiences. Goffman theorised that as humans we understand and communicate our experience by associating new topics with old familiar topics and their meanings. This means that old frames constantly attach to new topics and become persistent. This idea is manifest in how existing frames in the minds of journalists or in their audiences in Vietnam

can attach to newer frames of the rhino horn trade, making them more salient. Occurring in patterns, frames enable 'journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely … and package it for efficient relay to their audiences' (Gitlin 1980, p. 7). Gitlin (1980, p. 7) defined news frames as 'persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse'. A study of the framing of female candidates in the US 2020 presidential election has reinforced the persistent nature of frames (Gibbons 2022). As this study has shown, a focus on common frames persisted at the expense of more relevant information about the candidates' policy platforms. 'Although there are efforts to have more equitable coverage of women candidates and breaking traditional norms is more accepted, covering women with the same schemas persists in the news media' (Gibbons 2022, p. 155).

Agenda setting is strongly related to framing. It concerns the media's role—often alongside politicians and political communicators—in putting new topics on the agenda and telling us what topic to think about. McCombs and Shaw's seminal agenda-setting study (1972) showed that selected objects of attention during the 1968 Presidential election were transferred into the public, political and news agendas. Agenda-setting theory later converged with framing, both concerned with perspectives that 'direct attention toward certain attributes and away from others' (McCombs & Shaw 1993, p. 62).

Gitlin's (1980) research was in response to the role that the media played in portraying divided opinions and discrepancies with regard to US involvement in the Vietnam War. Michael J. Arlen, *The New Yorker* television critic, said that the unpopular war was 'a living room war', which, it is often said, was lost in American living rooms not on the battlefield (Leonard 2014; McLuhan 1968). In other words, the Americans lost the war because of the way it was covered and framed

in the media—the way media frames created pictures of the war in the American public's minds. Gitlin's (1980) book, *The Whole World is Watching*, studies the framing contest between the US authorities and the US anti-war movement in the *New York Times* and CBS News. He took a constructivist perspective when he argued that the news is not merely an efficient way for journalists to convey information quickly—holding up a mirror to reality—but, at least in part, also composes reality.

Given that this framing research project also concerns Vietnam, it is interesting to consider what frames Gitlin might have found had he studied the news framing in the Vietnamese news media (instead of the American media) on the Vietnam (née American) War in the 1960s and 70s. Gitlin's research demonstrates that the US media actively helped set agendas and frames for political discourse in the US on the Vietnam War—frames that he suggested reinforced the ideology of dominant institutions and 'if not usurping the whole of ideological space, still significantly limiting what is thought throughout society' (Gitlin 1980, p. 10). Showing that the media was centralised and commercialised as a 'social force', an 'instrument of cultural dominance' (p. 8), Gitlin retained Gramsci's (1971) core conception of hegemony—that the ruling class dominates through ideology (Gitlin 1980, pp. 9, 10). The findings of my research (discussed in later chapters) suggest that Gitlin's ideas concerning the link between media framing and the social forces utilised by dominant institutions are relevant to the framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese press.

The enduring theoretical value of the early work on framing cannot be over-emphasised. Contemporary scholars (see, e.g., Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; D'Angelo et al. 2019; Ewart & McLean 2015; McLean & Power 2007; Phalen & Algan 2001; Poindexter, Meraz & Weiss 2010; Yousaf, Rahman & Yousaf 2020) do not just continue to engage with this work but draw out new details according to their case, whether it be political, sociological or environmental.

The study of the construction of media messages and frames as a part of newsroom processes concerns its own area of scholarship—the sociology of journalism (Anderson 2013; Beam et al. 2009; Bennett 1990; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Schlesinger 1981; Schudson 1989; Tuchman 1978). Anthropogenic studies of newsrooms, interviews with journalists and editors and analysis of media coverage have revealed sociological factors that influence framing. In such studies, which are called frame building studies, framing is treated as a dependant variable. Ideological and political orientations of journalists, social norms and values, journalistic routines, organisational pressures and constraints and pressure from interest groups are key factors that influence frames (Scheufele 1999) and that are relevant to this research. Other factors of influence found in frame building research include elite discourse (De Vreese 2005), media bias (Entman 2003), the salience of government media frames (Rodelo & Muñiz 2019) and the media inputs of political groups (Hanggli 2012).

News frames and news values play a strong role in daily newsroom processes and decisions. They 'facilitate each other' to help journalists interpret a complex world (Moernaut, Mast & Temmerman 2019, p. 95). News values are core elements in the practice and ideology of journalists (Hall et al. 1978) and are widely shared and similar globally (Masterton 1995). Masterton (1995) listed six core news values: conflict, significance, proximity, human interest, novelty and prominence. Journalists tend to share similar ideological values with their audiences, allowing them to sort through and select stories that will interest their audience (Wykes 2001). More up-to-date studies of news values have provided lists that fluctuate from the short list above. Harcup and O'Neill (2017), for example, found ten news values; however, areas of parallel and overlap tend to reinforce the six theorised by Masterton (1995). Research has revealed that crime news has its own news values (Curran et al. 2010; Jewkes 2011). These include the severity of the crime, its effects,

reliable sources (Curran et al. 2010), visual imagery and conservative ideology, the latter of which relates to tough-on-crime approaches (Jewkes 2011).

Environmental news is often event-centred, strongly visual and tied to a 24-hour cycle (Anderson 1997). Journalists are also likely to report on environmental news that has an emotional impact (Cox 2010c). As the factors in news that make it interesting, news values thus 'represent the changefulness, the unpredictability and conflictful nature of the world' (Hall et al. 1978, p. 54). News values will be discussed further in Chapter 6 with regard to the influencing factors for framing the rhino horn trade. This section has discussed how framing—which is present in most aspects of media, communication, expression, thought and culture—functions to help journalists efficiently communicate issues and events, plays a role in how news content, issues and events are interpreted and is influenced by a range of sociological factors.

2.1.1 Discursive Communities and the Power of Framing

Coming from a social constructivist perspective that posits ideas or reality are socially constructed, this study, with regard to addressing RQ2, strives to identify the claim makers whose frames are advanced in news content. Hence, this section reviews the literature on how political actors rely on framing to express their arguments, enter public deliberation and policy debates, achieve political potency, be understood and exercise power over narratives and, ultimately, people.

Pan and Kosicki (2001) have asserted that the framing efforts of claim makers position them within discursive communities. Framing, therefore, not only concerns social issues but social groups of knowledge leaders. United by common ideologies, discursive communities tend to promote certain frames in relation to an issue. Such frames may unite diverse groups (Nisbet 2009), defining both their communicators (Hertog & McLeod 2001; Wichgers, Jacobs & van Spanje 2021) and the

groups they belong to. Communicators adept at framing can use the media as a powerful tool (Lester 2007), making framing an exercise of power (Allan & Hadden 2017; Entman 2003, 2010; Reese 2001; Roslyng & Dindler 2023) for both sources (Das 2019; De Vreese 2005; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Gans 1980; Hall et al. 1978; Lester 2007; Reese 2001; Tuchman 1978) and journalists (Das 2019; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Ericson et al. 1987; Hall et al. 1978; Roslyng & Dindler 2023). The power dynamic of framing, which is a focus of this study given its need to consider an array of diverse sources and frames, needs to be better explored in media research (D'Angelo et al. 2019; Gamson 2001; Reese 2001).

Journalists engage in complex interactions with activists, government and industry. Hence, journalists' choice of information sources is one of the most important dimensions of framing (Zoch & Turk 1998). There is a corpus of research that demonstrates that journalists' use of sources influences news frames (Tankard 2001; Zhang 2021) and may vary in different situations (Das 2019; Eek & Elstrom 2007; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Ewart & Massey 2006; Lester 2007; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) have contended that sources quoted in news stories have more power over which frame dominates than journalists. This can mean that news organisations often produce stories carrying frames that are consistent with the frames of elite sources (Carragee & Roefs 2004). For sources, frames can be strategic (Pan & Kosicki 2001) or 'an exercise in power' (Reese 2001, p. 10). Frames, however, are not partisan—they are open to multiple sides of the debate (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Lakoff 2010) and the journalistic principle of balance. However, frames can exclude actors (Pan & Kosicki 2001) who may be associated with certain frames (Hertog & McLeod 2001; Wichgers, Jacobs & van Spanje 2021).

Because of work and financial pressures, contemporary journalists write less of their own copy than they did in the past and strongly rely on copy from public relations and news agencies (Lewis, Williams & Franklin 2008). Scholars have demonstrated that journalists have a preference for elites and government officials as sources—what Hall et al. (1978) termed primary definers of frames (Cook 2005; Curran 2019; Hall et al. 1978; Lester 2007; Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis 2017; Takahashi 2011; Tuchman 1978). Such closeness between the media and the establishment elites circumscribes democratic debate (Curran 2019). Hall et al. (1978) have demonstrated that the police are often primary definers of frames, in which case the police interpretation of the issue or event becomes the dominant interpretation. This can affect policy decisions (Schindeler & Ewart 2014), illustrating the power of frames and the potential power or favourable outcome a journalistic source can achieve. This issue may be exacerbated by effective media relations activities of the police (Johnston & McGovern 2013; Mawby 2010). The ideological perspectives of media sources need to be considered (Baranauskas & Drakulich 2018).

In environmental conflicts, the media is a 'weapon for powerful sources' (Lester 2007, p. 136). Claim makers who are skilled in framing environmental conflicts can promote their frame of the issue to make it the dominant interpretation (Lester 2007). Single events or major appeals, such as the global IWT events of 2016, can establish framing and subsequent debate for decades (Tulis 1987; Wagner 2008). For example, Tulis (1987) has argued that a single speech, the Truman Doctrine Speech, led to many of the excesses of the Cold War and the way it was framed in the news. Similarly, Fleetwood and Seal (2017) have identified ex-president Nixon's 1971 coining of the 'war on drugs' as a frame that still persists. Western case studies point out that journalists can develop frames themselves. Hence, journalists can be primary definers of frames that are advanced

in news stories (Das 2019; Entman 1993; Pham & Nash 2017; Roslyng & Dindler 2023; Schindeler & Ewart 2014).

2.1.2 Images as Framing Devices and the Nuances of Framing

Some studies have demonstrated that words, short phrases and metaphors are framing devices (Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; McLean & Power 2007), with others emphasising the framing power of images (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Greenwood & Thomson 2020; Tankard 2001; D'Angelo et al. 2019). Visual images play a symbolic role in competing constructions of reality (Gamson 1992). Pictures are constructions, often with meaning seen as 'an intricate web of connected frames' (Abdel-Raheem 2017, p. 327). By functioning rhetorically to persuade, images provide vital opportunities for social movements to challenge official frames in the media (Chowdhury, Olsen & Pracejus 2008; Cox 2010c; Taylor 1997). Cox (2010c) concurs with the rhetorical point when he argues that environmental images, such as distressed polar bears, are visual condensing symbols that stir audience's basic values. This relates to this study because of the numerous images of rhino horns included in the news stories studied.

A study of photographs of refugees fleeing Turkey in 2015 (Greenwood & Thomson 2020) exemplifies the capacity of images to select and emphasise certain aspects of an issue. It was found that the images put emphasis on refugees' vulnerability rather than how they benefitted from billions of dollars in aid. Similarly, visual depictions, including photographs and paintings, may falsely present the environment as pristine, free from human-made features (DeLuca & Demo 2000). In agreement with Gitlin's definition of framing as selection, emphasis and exclusion, DeLuca and Demo (2000) have argued that equal importance should be attributed to what is included in a picture of the environment and what is left out. DeLuca and Demo (2000) posit that creating a myth of the pristine is harmful because it creates false impressions among the public.

The photographs that accompany rhino horn seizure stories in Vietnamese newspapers—featuring offenders standing in custody alongside rhino horns—are far from pristine. Nevertheless, when compared with photographs of wild rhinos in Africa, it could be argued that these seizure photographs are also environmental photographs that show reality, a condensing symbol of the environment.

The positioning of framing devices in a text can affect their salience. Headlines, kickers, photograph captions, leads, selections of quotations and sources, statistics, charts or graphs and concluding paragraphs are all focal points for framing (Tankard 2001; Zhang 2021). Because headlines tend to be the first part of a news article that the audience sees (Tankard 2001), Pan and Kosicki (1993, p. 59) have argued that headlines are 'the most salient cue to activate certain semantically related concepts in readers minds'. To illustrate the salience of headlines, framing media researchers sometimes analyse only headlines (see, e.g., Bleich et al. 2015; Liu et al. 2019; Trimble & Sampert 2004). In addition, McLean and Power (2007) have attested to the lead paragraphs of news stories as focal points, and Nash and Bacon (2013) have contended that the first, second and third sources quoted in the news are key focal points that support the frame. Focal points for framing have helped guide the framing analysis in this project. Although the entire articles were analysed, special attention was paid to the focal points.

Cultural nuances in the text and images are imbued with significant frames, with such framing also strongly influenced by culture (Melki 2014). Blood, Putnis and Pirkis (2002) have noted that emphasis is not only achieved through the prominent placing of framing devices in the news, but also by how information is placed in association with culturally familiar language and symbols, building on framing's crucial interplay with culture (Entman 1993; Gamson & Modigliani 1989).

Entman (1993) has suggested that frames are so intrinsic to culture that the culture is the sum of all frames.

2.1.3 Seeing the Big Picture: Thematic and Episodic Framing

Another factor that influences frame salience is whether frames are episodic or thematic (Boukes 2022; Ciuk & Rottman 2021; Iyengar 1990). Whereas episodic frames occur in brief news reports that present the basic facts, thematic frames look deeper at issues and are more developed. Importantly, reliance on episodic rather than thematic frames obscures the connection between political problems, their underlying causes and the actions or inactions of political leaders—weakening the latter's accountability. In the case of media coverage of rhino horn, the distinction between episodic and thematic reporting is important because of the mix of short news reports of rhino horn seizures with longer stories of court cases and investigative journalism-style pieces.

Iyengar's (1990) article explored US television news about poverty. He discovered that there were two distinct categories of reports—one describing poverty as a societal or collective outcome (thematic frame), the other focusing on particular victims of poverty (episodic frame). Iyengar (1990) argued that episodic frames outline the cause and treatment of each incident in isolation, placing responsibility for the problem and its treatment on the individual. Conversely, thematic frames place responsibility on society and political actors via delivering a more in-depth analysis of the causes of the problem and a fuller development of the frame—that is, performing more functions and promoting better public understanding of policy. The audience and their existing schema also play a factor in the salience of episodic and thematic frames. There can be inconsistencies. The attribution of responsibility from either episodic or thematic frames is contingent on the political right-wing or left-wing standpoint of the audience (Boukes 2022). Reports of individual cases may also communicate moral convictions about what is right and

wrong, which are often fixed in the culture and the schema of audiences, more effectively than thematic frames (Ciuk & Rottman 2021).

2.1.4 News Frames and Policy Issues in the Global South

Traditionally, media research has been conducted on a wide range of policy issues with a strong bias to Western democratic countries (see, e.g., Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gitlin 1980; Iyengar 1990; Pan & Kosicki 2001). Curran and Park (2000) have argued, for instance, that British and US media scholars are parochial in their focus on Western media, treating the media in other countries as a 'forgotten understudy' (p. 2). This is an area that requires more research and potentially different theoretical frameworks (Cho & Wang 2021). Studies in Asian or communist countries are still an emerging area (see, e.g., Cho & Wang 2021; Colby, Cao & Doussantousse 2004; Eek & Ellstrom 2007; Escalada et al. 1999; Huong 2012; McKinley 2007, 2013; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). A key debate in this emerging field concerns whose views are most represented in media in communist countries (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). This is a question relevant to RQ2 and has been answered through a content analysis of sources and quotations.

The examination of news framing in the Vietnamese press is placed within this latter body of growing research, helping to build a transnational base for the knowledge of framing. The aim is to identify the frames to answer RQ1, the sources behind the frames to answer RQ2 and the influencing factors of the news frames to answer RQ3. Rather than reducing framing to a form of media effects, this approach considers frames—rather than their effects—as the dependent variable. Treating frames as the dependent variable can shed light on frames' relationship with social and political power. This approach follows Gitlin's (1980) approach, specifically his encouragement of students of the mass media to pay attention to the symbology of messages before

considering media effects. Echoing Pan and Kosicki's (2001) point, this approach may be productive for understanding the public deliberation around enforcing laws regarding this lucrative and global environmentally criminal issue of the rhino horn trade, which involves many powerful actors and a threatened iconic species on the African side of the transnational trade.

2.2 Environmental Communication

The diverse field of environmental communication owes its history to communication scholars who studied conflicts over wilderness, forests, farmlands and endangered species using a rhetorical criticism theoretical framework (Cox 1982; Lange 1993; Oravec 1981). Communication as a form of 'symbolic action' (Cox 2010c, p. 20) has continued to be one of the broadest foci in the environmental communication field of study. For over a decade, much of the framing scholarship of environmental communication came from research into climate change (Boykoff & Boykoff 2007; Nisbet 2009), environmental activism (Anderson 1997; Hansen 2011; Lester 2007) and public communication (de Vries 2020), with journalism (Brown & Harlow 2019; Lester 2007) often looking at environmental rhetoric and discourse (Cox 2010c).

Cox (2010c), arguably the founder of the scholarship of environmental communication, defines environmental communication as:

> the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationships to the natural world, it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society's different responses to them. (Cox 2010, p. 20)

This definition is relevant to the coverage of the rhino horn trade given that the news acts as a space in which negotiations of solutions are carried out. Cox (2007) has argued that environmental communication, such as climate change communication, is a form of crisis and risk

communication. Taking Lakoff's (2010) argument another step, Cox has argued that such communication has an 'ethical duty' as a 'crisis discipline' (2007, p. 5) to enhance our ability to respond to environmental signals for the wellbeing of humans and nature.

Journalism-focused environmental communication research, such as carried out in this study, is coupled with a research space inhabited by scholars who study ENGO social marketing and advocacy campaigns for wildlife and habitat conservation—a rapidly growing research area (see, e.g., Anderson 1997; DeLuca 2009; Kidd et al. 2019; Lester 2007; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016). Although the two areas complement each other—ENGOs are common sources of information for journalists and help journalists understand environmental issues—from the perspective of journalism and the news media, ENGO communication is less studied than ENGO social marketing campaigns. This project falls into the media and environmental journalism area of environmental communication; however, it also draws on studies of the social marketing and advocacy campaigns to a small extent. This is because ENGOs are often sources of information for Vietnamese journalists about the rhino horn trade.

2.2.1 Environmental Journalism and Framing in the News Room

Researchers in the area of environmental journalism (see, e.g., Cottle 2013; Cox 2013; Das 2019; Greenberg, Knight & Westersund 2011; Hansen & Linne 1994; Lester 2007; Nash & Bacon 2006, 2013; Pham & Nash 2017) have focused on how journalists and the news media represent nature and environmental problems. Studies have shown that, although the public is interested in environmental issues, environmental news must compete with other issues for attention. Research into the news reporting of the environment has also demonstrated how public interest in environmental issues may wax and wane but will never disappear (Guber 2003). A key aspect of environmental journalism, climate journalism, may be waning (Schäfer & Painter 2021). Studies

show that limited coverage of environmental issues can also be attributed to the vulnerable and marginal position of environmental affairs in the economy (Hutchins & Lester 2011). Conversely, although environmental issues have polarised media consumers, Nisbet (2009) has argued that a greater focus on how environmental issues are framed can bring diverse audiences together.

Lakoff (2010), in his essay, which grows more poignant as climate changes looms larger, has argued that the truth about the environment must be framed effectively for nature's preservation. Lakoff (2010, p. 80) sees the fundamentally 'true' frame as 'the natural world is being destroyed and it is a moral imperative to preserve and reconstitute as much as possible as soon as possible'. His true frame is relevant to this study because Vietnam's IWT, which has already made rhinos extinct in Vietnam, threatens rhinoceroses in their range states in Africa.

Framing that addresses the public's 'personal information needs' (Nisbet 2009, p. 9)—such as reframing environmental issues as health issues—can be effective at achieving communication goals and media coverage. This shows that leveraging self-interest can bring people to care more about the environment. In this way, ENGOs have attempted to reduce demand for rhino horn by promoting health frames that highlight the scientific evidence that rhino horn has no medical benefit (Smith 2018). Environmental reporters, however, believe that the environment is as much about government action, business and politics as it is about health, risk or people's self-interest (Sachsman & Valenti 2022).

Newsroom culture also plays a part in limiting environmental reporting. This is relevant to the Vietnam case and to answering RQ3. Since the first decade of the twenty-first century, the future of environmental journalism has been in question around the world with people seeking information more from the internet and social media (Schäfer & Painter 2021). Following a golden

age of environmental reporting late last century (Sachsman & Valenti 2022), newspapers and television news have faced financial issues, leading to a loss of specialist environmental reporters (Sachsman & Valenti 2022). In an advanced review of scholarship on climate journalism in the global north and south, it was found specialist climate reporters are becoming scarce in news rooms (Schäfer & Painter 2021). Conversely, the environment is the topic of many government announcements, meaning that 'every government reporter must be prepared to deal with it' (Sachsman & Valenti 2022, p. 185).

Although reporters recognise the environment is an issue of government action, business and politics (Sachsman & Valenti 2022), Sachsman (1976) found that journalists rely on press releases from claim makers as much as half of the time for their environmental coverage. This is because whether the stories are covered is often a matter of cost and convenience (Greenberg, Knight & Westersund 2011). This is increasingly the case as journalists are more and more deskbound (Trench 2009), with this trend potentially affecting independent reporting and the public's access to a broad range of views rather than just the views of sources with privileged access to the news (Hall et al. 1978). As a cost-effective strategy for news organisations in uncertain times, 'churnalism' has become a 'mainstream journalistic practice' (Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis 2017, p. 1006). Churnalism is the recycling of news from press releases from commonly used elite sources across popular and converging sites of news. This accelerates the production of news and aligns with research into the media framing by the environmental movement (Anderson 1997, 2022; Collins 2013; DeLuca 2009; Griffin & Dunwoody 1995; Lester 2007; Sachsman & Valenti 2022). As with other genres of reporting, environmental journalists now work in a digital workspace, with technological change affecting their reporting on environmental issues (Anderson 2022).

The need to sell papers is also a factor in the quantity of coverage the environment is given and the way it is presented (Anderson 1997), as is the need to win audiences in digital formats. Hence, stories need to be interesting and draw on news values to be published. While attention grabbing, such framing may not necessarily animate public discourse or unite people to the environmental cause. Environmental issues are also often unobtrusive events that are remote from people's daily lives. To make them more interesting, they are often portrayed in sensational ways (Cox 2010a) rather than as long-term issues. More specifically, environmental news stories are often presented as event-centred and focused on conflict, as having strong visuals and as tied to the 24-hour news cycle (Anderson 2022). The journalistic ideology of news values is relevant to this study in answering RQ3 and discussed in Chapter 7.

The ownership of news publications may also affect how environmental issues are reported and framed, as does the country or publication. This is relevant in Vietnam, a socialist/communist country that is deemed an authoritarian state with state-owned media. In an example of how ownership can influence frames, Beder (2002) has argued that newspaper corporations in Australia with multinational financial connections are often biased against the environment and environmental regulations because of the disadvantage environmental concerns pose to business interests. Thus, media bias creates framing bias (Entman 2007). Hansen and Linne (1994) also found important differences in the framing of the environment between countries caused by cultural and attitudinal differences. Brossard, Shanahan and McComas (2004) have argued that these differences are also caused by variations in journalism culture. Journalism culture and practice has changed with technology, requiring better understanding through digital ethnography research (Anderson 2022).

2.2.2 Environmental Communication, Social Marketing and Advocacy Campaigns

Although this study is positioned within the journalistic end of the environmental communication spectrum, the role of social marketing and advocacy by ENGOs cannot be ignored. Knowing that journalists are often too busy to collect facts on environmental issues themselves, ENGOs are skilled at gaining media coverage by providing journalists with factual and newsworthy information (Konisi 2018).

Environmental social marketing and advocacy campaigns are the subject of a growing area of research (Anderson 1991, 1997; Yang & Calhoun 2013), with increasing focus on the intersections between IWT, ENGO campaigns and environmental communication (Burgess 2016; DeLuka 2009; Jeffreys 2016; Lin 2012; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016). ENGOs are a part of an emerging green public sphere in China, which is increasingly tolerant of certain segments of civil society such as the environment (Yang & Calhoun 2013). To run evidence-based campaigns, ENGOs tend to conduct research into all aspects of environmental problems, including consumer behaviour (see, e.g., Truong, Dang & Hall 2016; Thomas-Walters et al. 2021), in countries where there is a recognised large number of consumers (Greenfield & Veríssimo 2019). In Vietnam, ENGOs run evidence-based social marketing demand reduction campaigns (Wallen & Daut 2018) to change rhino horn consumer behaviour (Offord-Woolley 2017). To discourage the purchase and consumption of rhino horn—and, thereby, reduce demand for horn—such campaigns tend to discredit belief in the medical efficacy of rhino horn, explain Vietnam's role in driving rhinos to possible extinction, empower young conservation-minded people to discuss these issues with the older generation and call out Vietnam for its lack of enforcement concerning the IWT (Smith 2021). A lack of cultural understanding and respect may mean ENGOs may lack legitimacy, affecting their success in achieving environmental goals (Lin 2012). Cultural sensitivity in ENGO media

outputs is particularly required for the local Asian press, despite less sensitive, more impactful communication being more effective in the international media for gaining international support for the issue (Lin 2012).

ENGOs in Vietnam sometimes use two-way communication techniques—such as informal 'media cafe chats' with journalists—to not only better educate journalists on the rhino horn trade issue but also, potentially, discover from journalists what information in press releases is the most newsworthy (Smith 2018, p. 249). ENGOs tend to single out the few Vietnamese journalists who are passionate about environmental issues for two-way communication (Smith 2018). ENGOs working in the IWT area in Vietnam may also differ in their target audiences and goals. There are some indications that although some ENGOs target end users with behaviour change campaigns, others target the government with messages that call for better enforcement (Smith 2017).

2.2.3 Environmental Conflicts and Transnational Politics

The literature on transnational environmental conflicts is vital to review because the rhino horn trade is a transnational environmental conflict that is reported in the Vietnamese news media. Environmental conflicts 'over landscape use, resource access and environmental futures' (Lester 2014, p. 167) are central features of contested politics that occur in the media (Hutchins & Lester 2015). These environmental issues increasing occur across national boundaries (Cottle 2013; Cottle & Lester 2011; Lester 2014). International players can be engaged in national environmental conflicts (Anderson 1997; Lester 2007), including transnational action groups. Transnational action groups most often function to raise awareness in the media to an environmental issue, but can also be involved in government lobbying and direct enforcement (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Bondaroff 2014). Direct enforcement campaigns—for instance, those by Greenpeace and Sea Shepherd—can attract media attention, both positive and negative. The broad political and

economic international context helps explain shifting levels of environmental protection (Mitchell 2003), which is relevant to the global context in which the Vietnamese news media has reported on enforcement of the rhino horn trade.

A key emerging debate that underlies this research concerns the public deliberation in the Vietnamese news media of a transnational environmental conflict occurring between the supply countries in Africa and the market country of Vietnam. This discursive conflict concerns local actors (e.g., police, customs, officials and ENGOs) and supranational organisations (Papastergiadis 2000), including international governmental organisations, treaties and international ENGOs. Lester (2014) has explored the complex array of local and international actors involved in a transnational environmental conflict caused by Japanese and Malaysian companies sourcing timber from Australian forests. She coined the term 'distant others' to describe distant supporters of the local Australian conservation groups who were involved in the conflict. Vietnam's role in the rhino horn conflict as a destination country and the role of 'distant others' in deliberations and the media differ from the transnational conflict studied by Lester (2014) because, in Lester's case, the trade in timber was legal. Nonetheless, Lester (2014) and Papastergiadis (2000) signal transnational conflicts involve mediated transnational political communication.

Papastergiadis (2000) has argued that, through their media activities, supranational organisations can undermine certain countries' cultural authority. This issue of supranational organisations undermining culture (Lester 2014; Lin 2012) is relevant to this study of framing the rhino horn trade because rhino horn is an ingredient in traditional medicine in Vietnam. The cultural aspect of rhino horn demand in Vietnam is highlighted by the process that international and local ENGOs undertake to create culturally appropriate messages for social marketing campaigns to reduce the demand for rhino horn (Smith 2018).

The literature on international environmental negotiations is relevant to the various agreements that Vietnam is party to in the context of IWT. It is also relevant to news reporting of environmental conflict and transnational publics in the current context given recognition of the role of the media in this literature. Mitchell (2003) has contested that increasing global media and public attention has led countries to change practices to reduce environmental harm. Tallberg (2002) argued for international bodies turning up the pressure to make compliance an attractive option for countries that are slow at complying to agreements. Spector and Korula (1993) have suggested that the media may play a role in educating the public and policy makers to mobilise concern, helping speed up the understanding, ratification and implementation of international agreements by countries. These theories will be discussed in relation to RQ2 and RQ3, as well as in Chapter 8.

2.2.4 Framing Law, Policy and Enforcement in Environmental Communication

Although law, policy and enforcement are growing and widely advocated responses to environmental problems and conflicts, the media reporting of environmental enforcement does not appear to be adequately addressed in environmental communication research. This omission seems particularly stark when considering that, in Cox's (2010c) broad guide to environmental communication, he nearly completely omitted the topic. Further demonstrating this gap, Anderson (1997) has noted that the environment is often presented via a 'Law and Order' frame but does not expand on this frame.

Environmental enforcement is an important field of criminology, covering diverse areas of enforcement of environmental crimes, such as IWT, illegal logging, pollution, illegal waste disposal, smuggling, illegal land clearing and habitat destruction. Although environmental enforcement clearly intersects with environmental communication, few media researchers have focused on the intersection between environmental communication, criminology and crime

reporting. Nor do environmental governance scholars crossover often into anything more than a scant mention of the importance of media. One relevant exception to this lack of consideration is a study of environmental governance and regulations in China (see, e.g., Rooij et al. 2013). This study examined a growing government tolerance of media coverage and the increased likelihood of an enforcement response to civil society, citizen complaints and media coverage about environmental issues (Rooij et al. 2013). The study did not examine the media coverage but noted the media's positive role in prompting enforcement of environmental matters: 'Greater media exposure has also led enforcement team staff to adopt a more formalistic approach to enforcement in order to avoid criticism' (Rooij et al. 2013, p. 341). The study concluded that 'social forces [such as media] only had an influence if they did not run against political forces within the authoritarian state' (p. 341).

Although several relevant studies with references to media appear in law journals, there are only a few studies of the media articles about environmental issues themselves (see, e.g., Tilt & Xiao 2010). Tilt and Xiao (2010) have examined the media framing of a major pollution incident in China. In the government cover-up that followed this incident, this study found a contrast between two media outlets: one espousing trust in the government and the other sending investigative reporters to the site and publishing more critical articles about the government's treatment of the problem and its non-enforcement of laws. Tilt and Xiao (2010) concluded that, amid growing citizen concern and ENGO activism, the media in China will play an increasing role in environmental affairs.

Jarrell's (2007) study of print news reporting of a trial of a US petroleum refinery for environmental violations is one of few media studies concerning environment and enforcement. As a case study, however, it has little relevance to this research project because its key finding is about the framing

power of a corporation, whereas this study does not concern corporations or corporate environmental crime. The dearth of media research on environmental enforcement issues may indicate a lack of news reporting in this area. Thus, because the rhino horn trade has attracted significant media attention in Vietnam, this may suggest that the media in Vietnam holds the rhino horn trade enforcement area relatively dear.

The media reporting of ecotage is an area related to environmental enforcement that has received attention in the environmental communication field. Wagner (2008) studied the reframing of ecotage—which is sabotage in the name of environmentalism—as a form of environmental terrorism in six US newspapers. Although Wagner's study concerns framing of the environment and enforcement, this is from the somewhat dislocated perspective of environmental activists allegedly breaking laws. Wagner (2008) explored the reporting of how police enforce laws against protesters rather than of how enforcement is enacted against actual environmental criminals. Police enforcement against environmental protesters is at the intersection between environment communication and enforcement. Lester (2007), for example, completed media research on the Gordon-below-Franklin dam protests in Tasmania.

The literature on news reporting of environmental crimes reviewed in this section provides a segue to the next section of this chapter. This section examines literature in the field of green criminology, crime reporting and the securitisation of conservation.

2.3 Green Criminology, Crime Reporting and the Securitisation of Conservation

Having reviewed the relevant literature on framing and environmental communication, this section considers the literature on green criminology, crime reporting and securitisation. This literature is

essential to this study because the rhino horn trade represents the interface between the 'green' and the 'crime'. Historically, criminology and victimology have focused on crimes against humans, commonly taking an individualistic approach to the understanding of harm. In the 1990s, the criminology field grew significantly through the work of criminology scholar Michael J. Lynch, who is considered the father of green criminology. Green criminology is broadly defined as the study of environmental harms, (in)justice and environmental law and regulations (Lynch 2020). The strand of green criminology that intersects with case studies of news framing, such as this one, is known as green cultural criminology. Green cultural criminology concerns the intersection of green criminology with media representations (Brisman & South 2014). More specifically, it encompasses 'the social construction of green harms, particularly the media's construction of environmental harms, and the political dynamics of constructing environmental harms' (Lynch, Long & Stretesky 2021, p. 360). This section will first position the rhino horn trade though a green criminology lens, then review literature on crime reporting, transnational crime reporting and wildlife crime reporting.

2.3.1 Green Criminology

The reporting of the enforcement of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers indicates a human-centred (criminology) rather than a rhino-centred approach (green criminology). Nevertheless, the news reporting of Vietnam's actions and deliberations at home and in high-level arenas is inexorably linked to the rights of every rhino that has been or could be poached for its horn, hence the relevance of green criminology.

The criminological focus on victimisation was expanded by Lynch (1990) from humans (either singularly or collectively) as victims to ecosystems and nonhuman beings as victims—and as worthy of discussion. Lynch (1990) observed that early scholarship within the broad field of

criminology encompassing crime and justice mainly focused on street crimes—noting that the policing of which could be seen as a study of class control. Lynch (1990) pointed out the extensive harm of white-collar crime to the environment, thus beginning the study of green criminology. Green criminology in the 1990s was a reaction to expanding evidence of corporate crime and ecological damage to nature (Lynch 2020).

Rhino horn trafficking can be categorised as a crime in numerous ways: environmental crime, TEC, wildlife crime, conservation crime, IWT and TOC. It has been studied as part of conservation criminology scholarship (Van Song 2008), as well as under environmental justice or green justice banners (Leader-Williams 2003; Ngoc & Wyatt 2013).

IWT has received global interest in the green criminological area, particularly because of threats to endangered species (‘t Sas-Rolfes et al. 2019). It is clear that IWT needs adequate mitigation measures with regard to supply, transaction and demand, including regulations that are enforced: ‘Ensuring that wildlife trade is adequately regulated, and enforcing these regulations, is a key transactional measure’ (‘t Sas-Rolfes et al. 2019, p. 2016). Sadly, for a long time, this was not the case. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis in the background information about the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, Wellsmith (2011) has argued that IWT enforcement faces five key challenges: under-resourcing and marginalisation, the true extent of the trade not being known, corruption, the trade not being taken seriously as a crime and the lack of deterrent effect. Deterrence, in this case, concerns the idea that it is the fear of being caught and punished—rather than the severity of the punishment—that deters would-be criminals (Nagin 2013). Indeed, criminologists argue that heavy sentences historically do not deter criminals (Nagin 2013), especially when there is a lot of money to be made. These challenges—which conservation stakeholders have acknowledged and are now meeting head-on via the ‘serious crime’ push—

highlight the significance of studying the coverage of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese media. IWT researchers agree that the news media can play a role in addressing the challenges of IWT (Wellsmith 2011; Wyatt 2014). Although IWT, green criminology and environmental enforcement are growing areas of research, there is a gap in media research about news coverage.

2.3.2 Crime Reporting and the Politics of Power

Studies of crime reporting and its relationship with power (Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Chibnall 2013; Hall et al. 1978; Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018; Pizarro, Chermak & Gruenewald 2007; Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis 2017; Schindeler & Ewart 2014) are vital to review as the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade in Vietnam involves an authoritarian government and international elites, amongst other powerful players. Crime reports and crime reporters hold a mirror up to society (Hall et al. 1978). This reinforces the social structures, central to maintaining the dominant ideology (Chibnall 2013), from which the ruling class draw power (Gramsci 1971)—issues relevant to this transnational issue. More than other kinds of reporting, crime reporting illustrates the power of government (Hall et al. 1978)—especially at election time when reporting on crime and crime policy may increase—making it a contentious political issue (Baranauskas & Drachulich 2018). Official sources, politicians and law enforcement officials are 'primary definers' of crimes in the news (Hall et al. 1978; Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018; Welch, Fenwick & Roberts 1997); they set the initial definition of what the problem is. Gamson notes in the forward to Sasson (1995) that the Republican conservatives in US politics use crime—particularly violent crime—to create a narrative to unite Americans with them against a common enemy. To be primary definers of crime problems, police are both reactive and proactive in their work with journalists and the media. They employ professional media relations to improve their image, build legitimacy

and put certain types of crimes on the news agenda (Johnston & McGovern 2013; Mawby 2010; Rantatalo 2016)

Although governments and official sources tend to be the first to define issues (Conway 2021; Hall et al. 1978), new primary definers can emerge (Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018) and present alternative frames with which to contest the frames that dominate the news. News room operations tend to dictate that journalists over-rely on criminal justice sources to define crime (Pizarro, Chermak & Gruenewald 2007). Nevertheless, social actors including personal campaigners (Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018), NGOs (Schlesinger, Tumber & Murdock 1991) and journalists themselves (Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018; Marinescu & Balica 2021; Schindeler & Ewart 2014) can be important definers of issues in the news media. Notably, this is more likely after the initial definitions of crimes by police and officials have been made.

Framing scholars have identified a variety of commonly recognised crime frames in their media case studies that are relevant to discuss in this study, which explores representations in the Vietnamese digital newspapers of a crime, the criminals and the authorities. For example, between 2000 and 2009, US news stories of drug busts concerning heroin and cocaine carried the 'ongoing fight', 'dangerous use' or 'violent traffickers' frames (Orsini 2017). Beckett (1994) identified the 'get tough', 'more resources' and 'war fails' frames used by state actors in news about the 'war on drugs' in the US between 1982 and 1991. Such crime frames have promoted tough-on-crime themes to achieve goals. They call for more police powers or more punitive approaches to particular crimes, further discrediting illegal substances and the character of the criminals who supply them. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, Orsini and Beckett's findings present strong framing parallels with this study.

Crime reports using government and official sources often influence and skew public perceptions of crime, justifying government actions to increase police resources and toughen punitive measures (Baranauskas & Drakulich 2018; Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Hall et al. 1978; Schindeler & Ewart 2014). In Vietnam, police sources' accounts are most favoured in crime news (Huong 2012).

The public rely on the news media to understand and assess the effectiveness of the legal system (Barak 2007). News reports of lenient sentencing may create the impression that a faulty criminal justice system makes it too easy for criminals to get away with crime or get off lightly (Hall et al. 1978; Sasson 1995), justifying the government to become tougher on crime. Furthermore, government sources and journalists can frame minority cultural groups as responsible for crime waves, portraying them as 'folk devils' (Cohen 1972; Hayle 2013). These portrayals may also serve to justify government calls for tougher punitive approaches (Cohen 1972; Hayle 2013). However, there are signs of a possible shift in the tough-on-crime approach, with news organisations appearing receptive of positively framing lenient sentencing if promoted by criminal justice organisations (Altheide & Coyle 2006). An interesting point concerning Cohen's descriptions of moral panics and folk devils is the increased capacity of folk devils in more recent times to resist their negative portrayals in the news media (Hier 2019; McRobbie & Thornton 1995).

2.3.3 Securitising IWT by Framing It As Serious TOC

This section concerns literature related to the criminalisation and securitisation of conservation and IWT, as discussed in the introduction background section. It is important to understand research concerning TEC, TOC and securitisation. TEC is defined as the illicit procurement, transportation and distribution of endangered wildlife or natural resources across international borders (Warchol, Zupan & Clack 2003). Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde (1998) have defined securitisation as 'the process through which an issue is presented as an existential threat requiring emergency measures

and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure', with such actions often involving military actors. Framing IWT as a TOC was promoted at the four global IWT conferences, including the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference (Massé et al. 2020). This framing focused on promoting IWT as a serious crime, as well as promoting policing and law enforcement as the appropriate response (Massé et al. 2020).

Wildlife crime was once considered a low-level offence committed by hunters for sustenance and minor profit-seeking players (Ngoc & Wyatt 2013; Runhovde 2017). Conservation was left in the hands of park wardens, game rangers and conservationists. However, in the effort to guard rhinos and their valuable horns, African game rangers have increasingly been replaced with armed guards and military-style anti-poaching units. Given the significant changes to conservation that have resulted, it is important to understand this militarisation of IWT (Duffy 2022). Similar framing shifts and their effects can be seen in recent shifts in the framing of human trafficking from a human rights issue to a criminal issue, which has resulted in governments increasing policies of criminalisation (Simmons, Lloyd & Stewart 2018).

Tougher enforcement and militarisation in the form of armed anti-poaching teams are common responses to rhino poaching in Africa, which is now often entrenched in armed criminal forces, state and non-state (Gore et al. 2019). Measures to mitigate poaching are 'grounded in militarisation' (Gore et al. 2019, p. 1) and security, involving governments, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs, with coordination between all actors, enforcement and legislative reforms (Gore et al. 2019). Gore et al. (2019) have argued that TEC presents severe threats to peace, health and environmental security and that it needs to be addressed urgently in the sustainable development frameworks of the UN.

Massé et al. (2020) have noted that a trajectory of securitisation and criminalisation have been applied across the entire spectrum of IWT, from supply to market countries, such as Vietnam. This trajectory was promoted at global IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020), including the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. IWT was framed as a serious crime and grouped with human and drug trafficking as a TOC (Massé et al. 2020), positioning it under the UNTOC. The proponents of securitisation justify boosting enforcement responses by the 'articulation of biodiversity losses as an emergency' (Duffy & Brockington 2022). Previous research has demonstrated that the threat to rhinos has been articulated in the Vietnamese news media by ENGOs as an emergency or crisis (Smith 2018). Although there is some literature examining the representations in the Vietnamese media of the crisis that Vietnam was causing, there is little or no literature on whether the push for securitisation of IWT has been felt or seen in Vietnam's news media or in other countries' media.

When grouping IWT with transnational crimes that present national security issues (e.g., human and drug trafficking), scholars argue that IWT presents a global or national security threat. Securitisation studies concern threat construction of an issue that requires an extraordinary enforcement response and the communication of this for the purpose of increasing security and policing. For example, studies (Buzan, Wæver & De Wilde 1998; Kaufmann 2004) of the Bush administration's claims of 'weapons of mass destruction' to justify the US invasion of Iraq is an example of securitisation research. Hence, it could be argued that the ramifications of securitisation can be severe. Massé and Lunstrum (2016) refer to a growing field of securitisation of conservation scholarship. They describe the securitisation of conservation as 'a two-step process consisting of an initial framing of conservation matters as security issues and a subsequent move to address these issues via security measures often instituted by security actors' (Massé & Lunstrum 2016, p. 229).

Although a growing body of literature addresses the securitisation of IWT (e.g., Bocarejo & Ojeda 2015; Duffy 2021, 2022; Duffy & Brockington 2022; Hu, Lee & Shi 2022; Kubo et al. 2022; Massé & Margulies 2020; Runhovde 2017), no studies appear to address its framing in the media. The view that increasing weak legislation and enforcement concerning IWT is needed to protect the environment (Ngoc & Wyatt 2013; Wyatt 2014) has evolved in the past decade into a view that TECs and TOCs, such as IWT, present severe threats to peace, health and environmental security and drive social conflicts (Duffy 2022; Gore et al. 2019).

Despite some proponents promoting the securitisation of IWT, there are arguments against it. Gore et al. (2019) have noted, for instance, that militarised-style responses not only reflect tensions between the environment and the economy, but present environmental security problems of their own. Furthermore, emerging research suggests that strict laws and tough approaches may fail to stop IWT (Hu, Lee & Shi 2022; Kubo et al. 2022), with calls for policy evaluation to prevent further species loss (Kubo et al. 2022). Runhovde (2017) has demonstrated that advocating militarisation promotes a false understanding of wildlife crime. These authors have warned that caution is needed before going down the securitisation and militarisation path; such initiatives may hinder effective conservation responses.

This section has explored the literature on the securitisation of conservation and IWT. It has found that debate exist about this whether this approach is conducive to conservation. The next sections focus on the literature at the intersection between IWT framing and Vietnamese media.

2.4 Media Studies about IWT

This section reviews the literature on ENGO social marketing efforts to reduce demand for rhino horn and news media reporting and framing of IWT and rhino horn law and enforcement. It appears

that news reporting of the rhino horn trade has been largely ignored in the literature in favour of social marketing studies of demand reduction and behaviour change campaigns. However, conservation-led social marketing studies of behaviour change campaigns (e.g., Jeffreys 2016; Lin 2012; Veríssimo & Wan 2019) can provide some insight into the wider representation of IWT in general and the rhino horn trade in particular.

2.4.1 A Social Marketing Campaign Focus in Research on IWT

There has been a growth of environmental communication research into the social marketing and advocacy campaigns of ENGOs (Cox 2010a). It is mostly from this perspective that what is known about news reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam has been derived. This section considers this growing area from a news media research perspective, where social marketing research is a form of source strategies research—the study of how external sources strategise to influence media narratives. Although the research that is at the core of this thesis focuses on the framing of the rhino horn trade in news media coverage, studies of ENGO campaigns provide unique insight with regard to understanding ENGOs as external actors who promote frames that are conveniently fed and readily consumed and reproduced by journalists.

Many studies in this area focus on sites of environmental conflict in Western contexts (see, e.g., Anderson 1997; Brown & Harlow 2019; DeLuca 2009; Lester 2007). However, more recently, source strategies (as they are known in the journalism discipline) or social marketing research turned its attention to Asia (Lin 2012; Veríssimo & Wan 2019) and the communist states of Vietnam (Smith 2018; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016) and China (Jeffreys 2016; Yang & Calhoun 2013). Such research has raised questions of cultural appropriateness (Jeffreys 2016; Lin 2012; Smith 2018), the challenges of changing values (Truong, Dang & Hall), the power of elites (Jeffreys 2016; Lester 2007), source legitimacy (Anderson 1997; Jeffreys 2016; Yang & Calhoun

2013), the need for evidence over rhetoric in environmental framing (Cox 2010a; ‘t Sas-Rolfes et al. 2019), the growing green public sphere in China (Yang & Calhoun 2013) and Vietnam (Wells-Dang 2010) and the factors and ENGO routines that influence environmental framing (Lin 2012; Smith 2018, 2021).

Sumrall’s (2009) important participant observation study of a Vietnamese ENGO, ENV, provides insight into ENV’s work, including with the Vietnamese news media. ENV is an important direct action ENGO relevant to this study, because it features in news of the rhino horn trade. Sumrall provided a brief analysis of ENV’s work with journalists, albeit only from ENV’s perspective. In her master’s thesis, Sumrall (2009) recommended that the ENGO—which specialises in investigating IWT cases, passing evidence to Vietnamese authorities and lobbying government for better law and enforcement—develop better relationships with journalists. This would allow it to, among other things, encourage journalists to write about IWT enforcement events portraying law enforcers positively. Sumrall (2009) and Drury (2011)—who carried out an important study of demand for wild meat in Vietnam—both concluded that more media coverage was needed to raise public awareness and compliance with IWT laws.

Behaviour change for demand reduction is largely achieved through a combination of social marketing campaigns and effective enforcement (Balmford et al. 2021; Burgess 2016; Sumrall 2009). Regulation is a traditional method relied on for conservation (Balmford et al. 2021; Thomas-Walters et al. 2021), because it is a key factor that mitigates illegal consumption (Wallen & Daut 2018). There is a new trend for ENGOs to focus on behaviour change campaigns (Balmford et al. 2021; Veríssimo & Wan 2019).

Numerous studies have explored the efficacy of behaviour change campaigns to reduce IWT (Balmford et al. 2021; Ege et al. 2020; Macdonald et al. 2021; Offord-Woolley 2017; Wallen & Daut 2018; Thomas-Walters et al. 2021). Human values and beliefs factor into the drivers of illegal consumption of wildlife, meaning that more understanding and application is necessary for behaviour change (Wallen & Daut 2018). Drury (2011) has argued, conversely, that behaviour change campaigns do not work, and that only better enforcement can be effective at reducing illegal wildlife demand. This would be a return to an approach that was common prior to the trend in IWT social marketing campaigns (Balmford et al. 2021; Veríssimo & Wan 2019). Drury's view is supported by Vu, Nielsen & Jacobsen (2020) who found rhino horn demand reduction campaigns have little influence on Vietnamese rhino horn consumers.

ENGOs campaigning to change rhino horn consumer behaviour in Vietnam and, thereby, stem the rhino trade, have focused on four key frames in their media releases (Smith 2021). A common theme employed was the myth around rhino horn's medical efficacy. The ENGO press releases thus argued that consuming rhino horn had the same value as chewing fingernails (Aldred 2016; Smith 2018). ENGOs also tried to appeal to consumers by emphasising that it was Vietnam's rampant demand for rhino horn that was driving rhino poaching to a crisis level in South Africa. Hence, the ENGO TRAFFIC campaigned that Vietnamese businesses should condemn the consumption, gifting or buying of rhino horn in their corporate social responsibility policies (TRAFFIC 2019b). A third theme aimed to empower Vietnamese youth, who care about rhino conservation, to discourage older generations from rhino horn. The fourth theme was critical of the Vietnamese government for not doing more to fight the rhino horn trade (Smith 2021; WWF 2016c).

2.4.2 A Deliberate Reframing of IWT by Global Elites

This section discusses the literature on the global efforts to make governments take IWT more seriously. Of primary importance here is the work of Massé et al. (2020), who have shown that the 2018 London IWT conference promoted the idea of IWT globally as a serious crime and law and enforcement issue, shifting the issue away from conservation. Massé et al. (2020) highlighted that the purpose of the series of IWT conferences—that started in 2014 in London, then Kasane 2015, Hanoi 2016 and back to London 2018—was to frame IWT as a serious crime. They found that the IWT conferences achieved the serious crime framing by privileging certain elite voices in international enforcement and security and marginalising other voices that seek community-based solutions to IWT as a conservation issue. Massé et al. (2020) also found that the conferences framed the organised criminal networks involved in IWT as ruthless and evil.

Wyatt's (2014) study has provided information that adds historical context to Massé et al.'s (2020) claims about privileged international actors promoting the serious crime reframing of IWT. Wyatt (2014) examined international news coverage in all languages, revealing that the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) and its member organisations (INTERPOL, CITES, UNODC, the World Customs Organisation and the World Bank) aimed to increase the profile and awareness of wildlife crime and enforcement. This was because the risk of detection and punishment was too low, with IWT not being taken seriously by governments and enforcement agencies. Wyatt (2014) showed that after the ICCWC formed in 2010, the ICCWC and its member organisations had some success in gaining attention for IWT in the international media. Relevant to this research project, the ICCWC managed to double the small quantity of IWT international media coverage through press releases (Wyatt 2014). These alerted journalists to IWT, which was

evidenced by an increase of coverage of seizures internationally, an increase initiated independently by journalists.

Together these two papers (Massé et al. 2020; Wyatt 2014) suggest that international enforcement agencies have promoted the enforcement of laws against wildlife crime as a solution, with privileged voices continuing this push through the global IWT conferences from 2014 to 2018. Originally, the UK only intended to hold one conference; however, the fight against IWT seemed to be gaining momentum. Botswana and Vietnam volunteered to host subsequent conferences to declare their commitment to fight IWT, with London holding a fourth one because the organisers declared there was still more work to be done. Through ICCWC's efforts, IWT managed to gain some traction in the media, in turn gaining the attention of academics and law enforcement agencies. Wyatt's (2014) findings are significant when cross-referenced with Massé et al.'s (2020) findings, as they suggest that ICCWC planted the seed, which the global IWT conferences continued to advance.

By answering RQ1, 2 and 3 through examining the criminality framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers, the findings of this project build on these studies. This is significant given that Vietnam is a leading consumer and transit nation in IWT and the rhino horn trade.

2.5 Vietnamese Media: Environmental Framing and Crime Framing

This section explores the framing of the environment and crime in the Vietnamese digital newspapers and the role of the sources of information and other factors that influence frames. Such a review—outlining Vietnamese news media coverage of the rhino horn trade and examining journalistic agency in constructing such frames—must first establish the degree of autonomy

enjoyed by the Vietnamese press and explore its coverage of commensurate environmental issues. This section begins by reviewing the literature on what is known about the news in Vietnam.

2.5.1 Media Freedom in Vietnam

A small but significant amount of scholarly research has been published on the Vietnamese media (in English) since Vietnam re-opened to the world economically in the mid-1980s, a decade after the North's victory over the South in the Vietnam War. Many studies have explored the shifting relationship between state control and editorial freedom or censorship in the socialist communist state (Cain 2014; McKinley 2007; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Sidel 1998; Vaagan 2011). All media in Vietnam is owned and controlled by the state (Human Rights Watch 2024; Mach & Nash 2019): 'There are no private media in Vietnam' (Eek & Elstrom 2008, p. 1).

Vietnam's levels of 'internet and digital media freedom' (Freedom House 2019b, p. 25) and 'political rights and civil liberties' (Freedom House 2019a, p. 16) were rated as 'not free' throughout the study period. In addition to restrictions on the news media, Vietnam has a social media surveillance program and severely punishes non-violent activists for criticising the government (Freedom House 2019b). In 2017, a journalist with the US government-funded Radio Free Asia's Vietnamese language service, who had published an environmental story about a pollution fish kill in Vietnam, was temporarily detained under a charge that carried a possible seven-year sentence (Committee to Protect Journalists 2017). In 2018, Vietnam's National Assembly passed a cybersecurity law that curtailed press freedom by banning information published online that could offend the nation, cause confusion among people or create difficulties for authorities (Committee to Protect Journalists 2018). In 2019, the US criticised Vietnam's freedom of press situation strongly in its human rights report, stating the worst forms of restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including arbitrary arrest and prosecution of

government critics, censorship, site blocking, and criminal libel laws exist there (US Department of State 2019).

According to the four models of the press proposed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956)—which, although dated, are still relevant in the case of the communist socialist state of Vietnam—the media model in communist states is different to the libertarian model of media in Western democracies. In particular, the soviet communist model of the press differs from the libertarian model with regard to free speech, the fourth estate and the right to know. The soviet communist model of the press outlines that its role is to accomplish state objectives and not criticise the state (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm 1956). The media in Vietnam is strictly controlled by the Vietnamese government, but the level of control and press varies over time and topics (Cain 2014; Eek & Ellstrom 2007; McKinley 2007; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Sidel 1998; Vaagan 2011). Although censorship conditions are always present in Vietnam, they constantly change. The media's official purpose is to promote state policy and views. Editorial conditions are in a 'state in which the highly complex informal politics of response to state, security and legal officials and to the public (rather than slavish response to intensive external guidance from the state) played a major role in press coverage' (Sidel 1998). However, there can be elements of freedom to criticise bureaucracy, corruption, abuse of power and mismanagement (Tønnesson 1993; Vu 2015).

Although many newspapers are state-owned, this may be in name only, with ownership and control sometimes complicated by the financial involvement of other interests (Mckinley 2007; Vu 2015). Vietnamese media are also becoming more assertive as technology shifts to online publication (Kurfurst 2015) and newspapers become more financially independent (Lehmann-Jacobsen 2017; McKinley 2007; Wells-Dang 2010). Among the proliferation of websites and blogs, not all media is censored (Kurfurst 2015). Eek and Elstrom's (2008) study of Vietnam's first semi-privately

owned and completely online newspaper reinforces this point. They found that *VnExpress*—which, as its name suggests, presents news in short form—is more objective in its reporting and quotes an array of non-government sources, as well as government sources (Eek & Ellstrom 2008). The development and success of *VnExpress* in the Vietnamese media was partly a result of its diverse use of sources, stemming from an editorial commitment to objectivity (Eek & Ellstrom 2008). Hence, the authors argued that *VnExpress* provided an objective alternative to more propaganda-style news.

Because newspapers have 'different personalities' (Hall et al., p. 60), the style and content of reporting varies between mastheads. Whereas *Cong An Nhan Dan* (the police newspaper) is factual about the details of crime, others, such as the tabloid-style *Tien Phong*, focus on the human side of stories (Huong 2012). The importance of Vietnam's tabloids in the media landscape should not be underestimated. Thomas and Heng (2001) have argued that they play a growing role in re-shaping political views and values.

Styles of reporting vary because some newspapers are subservient to the state, such as *Nhan Dan* (Pham & Nash 2017), with others being more objective, such as *VnExpress* (Eek & Ellstrom 2008). The most widely read papers are based in the south (McKinley 2007). *Tuoi Tre* and *Thanh Nien* are known be the 'two largest outspoken newspapers' (Cain 2014, p. 94) and tend to run some of the most liberal reporting and feature controversial stories on corruption and environmental issues (Cain 2014). Cain (2014) also mentioned that *Tuoi Tre* ran exclusives with CPV insiders.

There are few studies published in English available that analyse Vietnamese news articles. Some of these analyse articles in English language newspapers in the country, whereas others study Vietnamese language newspapers (see, e.g., Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Pham & Nash

2017). The latter typically have a native Vietnamese speaker on the research team with a native English speaker.

Vietnamese language national newspapers are routinely read by officials working at various levels of Vietnamese government (Hoang 2019; Huong 2012) and are the key source of information of local and international news for the Vietnamese public (Huong 2012; Thomas & Heng 2001). The Vietnamese Prime Minister, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, is reputed to read the national newspaper, *Lao Dong*, every day (D. Nguyen 2016, pers. comm.), and a copy of *Nhan Dan*, which is the newspaper arm of the CPV, is placed on every government official's desk every morning. The reporting in national newspapers is important to understand because of its influence with government. Globally, the press is 'primarily a national medium, which has in many countries a continuing importance among national elites' (Curran & Park 2000, p. 9), including Vietnam (Huong 2012). Vietnam also has a segment of English language newspapers, which are read by diplomatic and business workforces and NGOs and are a major venue in the contest of power in decision-making for the Vietnamese government and international stakeholders (Nash & Bacon 2006). McKinley (2011, p. 89) has outlined a vibrant Vietnamese newspaper system made up of 76 national newspapers and 102 local newspapers, describing it as a state-owned two-tier system with national newspapers occupying the more independent tier:

> Vietnam's newspaper sector is fully state-owned and exhibits a clearly defined 'two tier' system in which the lower and substantially larger tier acts as a propaganda machine for the state and, in return, receives heavy subsidies. A smaller, elite tier has developed within the national-level media in which some newspapers are attempting to develop editorial independence through financial independence.

Hence newspapers—particularly national newspapers, which have some independence—have a role in forming public opinion, which has some influence on government policymaking in Vietnam (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). About half of all Vietnam's newspapers have online versions (McKinnley n.d.). Huong (2012) has asserted that hardcopy newspapers in Vietnam carry more stories and more detail than their online versions, but McKinley (2011) has identified that online sites carry the same stories as printed newspapers, except in a few cases, such as *Lao Dong*. McKinley (2011) has described how Vietnamese newspaper circulation revenues are weakening and there is a steady shift to online platforms. Hence, it could be argued that online versions are a more important population to study than print versions; however, the online version may lack some stories or parts of stories that are in the printed versions.

Vu (2015) has argued that the financial constraints of newsrooms play a greater role in what is reported than censorship. Her thesis that the financial realities of journalism in Vietnam play a large role in influencing reporting is relevant to this research.

2.5.2 Environment and Crime Reporting in the Vietnamese Press

There are few studies available on environmental news and reporting in Vietnam. Nash and Bacon's (2006) study of environmental sustainability reporting on such topics as water, forests, pollution and waste by the English language Vietnamese press has, however, shown that the environment occupies a prominent place in the Vietnamese press. Nash and Bacon (2006) have demonstrated that stories rely mostly on government sources for quotations about the environment but also quote oppositional voices, such as ENGOs, occasionally, excluding corporate sources. McKinley's (2013) findings have, conversely, shown that civil society sources are significantly represented in environmental news. Protecting the environment is viewed as significant in the press in Vietnam and throughout Asia (Nash & Bacon 2006).

ENGOs have a large influence on climate change reporting, an influence that is unprecedented in Vietnam for ENGOs (Pham & Nash 2017). Media reporting on REDD+—an international initiative to protect forests to manage carbon emissions in Vietnam—suggests that news reporting on international environmental initiatives strongly reflects the government viewpoint (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). This is particularly true when the government has something positive to announce, such as being active in international initiatives (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). Pham, Di Gregorio and Brockhaus (2017) were optimistic about a 'growing inclusive political space' (p. 69) in Vietnamese news media. The prominent place of the environment in the news allows journalists to challenge Vietnamese government positions (Nash & Bacon 2006), and the issue of state or private ownership of newspapers has little influence on editorial freedom in environmental stories (Nash & Bacon 2006).

Doi Moi, which was the economic opening of Vietnam in the mid-1980s, saw the press opening up and, at the turn of the century, there was increasing reporting on crime, corruption and legal issues in Vietnam (Sidel 1998) because the government granted the press increased autonomy in this area. Established police newspapers, such as *Cong An Nhan Dan*—one of the digital newspapers selected for this study—have always focused on crimes and continue to do so. Newer, sensational-style magazines sell newspapers aimed at low-income earners that include reports with questionable accuracy on 'strange crimes' (Vu 2015). Overall, the newspaper readership is interested in crime stories in Vietnam, with online police tabloids 'filled with lurid tales of sex and violence, of gang crimes and prostitution' (Vu 2015, p. 331).

Party or government authorities have also acknowledged, at times, the positive role of public opinion in high-profile criminal cases (Sidel 1998). Additionally, the Vietnamese government sometimes uses the press as a muckraker on corrupt low-level officials (Cain 2014) and the press

can provide a way for the government to supervise the courts. The top levels of government may monitor court proceedings in the press. In the case of corrupt low-level officials, the government's muckraking strategies in the press—in which a person's reputation is muddied or questioned—aim to show the government as getting tough on corrupt officials. However, this strategy has at times backfired on the government when emboldened journalists follow the threads of corruption further up the chain. Such reporting can result in a harsh government backlash on editors and journalists (Cain 2014). Online dissent can also result in possible imprisonment under Article 117 of the penal code for journalists and editors (Amnesty International 2020; Reporters Without Borders 2020). Reporters Without Borders (2020) ranked Vietnam at 172 of the 179 countries surveyed in its 2020 World Press Freedom Index and reported state-sponsored armies of internet trolls. The government, wanting to be seen to represent public opinion, can also put pressure on the courts to prosecute cases strictly when the public calls for it. The tough approach can then be reflected in the newspaper reports on the events (Cain 2014; Sidel 1998). These issues will be discussed further in Chapter 4 (see, e.g., subsection 4.2).

As Hall et al. (1978) found in the UK (see subsection 2.3.2), Huong (2012) found that Vietnamese reporters relied mostly on police for crime stories, sometimes also relying on court proceedings or government officials. Sociological studies of journalism, such as Huong's (2012), have used a mix of framing analysis of articles and interviews of journalists and their sources, such as police. Huong's study sought to understand the reporting and framing of rape crimes in Vietnam. She found culture strongly influences frames in Vietnamese crime reporting (Huong 2012). Vietnamese journalists sometimes use cultural nuances common in Vietnamese conversation as framing devices in their reporting (Huong 2012).

Scholars have researched the news framing of corruption in many countries, including China, Turkey, Sudan, New Zealand, Italy, Mexico and Chile. In their study of news framing of corruption in Turkey, Panayiirsi, İşeri and Şekercioglu (2016, p. 554) have provided a useful definition of a corruption frame that 'focuses on government members' attempts to directly or indirectly abuse their power for their own material benefit. Coverage of such events either explicitly mentions or implies that legal norms and/or ethical principles are violated'. Although there are several key media studies concerning corruption in Vietnam (see, e.g., Cain 2014; Ho, Progler & Vuong 2021; McKinnley 2008), there is little on how it is framed in the news. Scholars agree that the Vietnamese government uses the state-run news media to expose corruption, albeit with a varying degree of censorship and management. The government recognises corruption poses the worst threat to the one-party state's legitimacy, which is necessary to maintain in the eyes of the Vietnamese public (Cain 2014; McKinnley 2008). Framing studies of corruption in the state-run media in China demonstrate there is little reporting on sensitive issues such as corruption. Different Chinese news organisations play different roles, producing a mix of stories. Whereas some reflect government views, others play a watchdog role by being more critical of the party (Zhou & Moy 2007). Some report the government is fixing the problem and punishing offenders (Chen & Zhang 2016).

The review of the literature on crime reporting and framing in the Vietnamese news suggests there has been limited research in this area. There is little research on news reporting of corruption in Vietnam and most is dated. The next section will focus on the specific area of research most relevant to my study.

2.5.3 Framing the Rhino Horn Trade in the Vietnamese Press

This section reviews the literature on the reporting of the rhino horn trade and the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in the Vietnamese press. Significant attention has been given in law journals to the

complex legal issues and debates surrounding the rhino horn trade and IWT (see, e.g., Ege et al. 2020; Hübschle 2016; Schloenhardt & Pitman 2022; Sollund 2022). The effectiveness of law and enforcement among the full range of possible interventions into the rhino horn trade and IWT has also received some attention. This includes studies on interventions on the demand side of the supply chain, targeting end consumers through 'behavior change campaigns, enforcement efforts, or incentive programs' (Thomas-Walters et al. 2021, p. 483). For these interventions to be effective, the drivers on the demand side require deeper understanding (Wallen & Daut 2018). A delicate combination of interventions may be required. Widespread behaviour change will require consensus and action among stakeholders (MacDonald et al. 2021). However, a careful approach must be taken to not further marginalise the disadvantaged groups involved in the trade, in the context of the entry of TOC into IWT (Hübschle 2017b).

Research into the reporting of IWT with regard to the supply and demand side of the trade mostly comprises small studies (see, e.g., Easter et al. 2023; Engelbrecht 2020; Grant & Lawhon 2014; Jack 2015; Mendis et al. 2022; Nguyen 2017; Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018; Paudel et al. 2022). Given the attention paid to the debate on legal issues and interventions, the major role that Vietnam plays in the rhino horn trade and the duration of the issue, it is not clear why there is not a greater body of peer-reviewed research on the media's reporting of IWT and the rhino horn trade. Two peer-reviewed papers stemmed from my master's thesis. These focused on the interaction between ENGOs and Vietnamese journalists regarding the framing of behaviour change campaigns (Smith 2018, 2021), also noting that ENGOs were critical of Vietnam paying lip service to its enforcement obligations. Two other small studies explore news media reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam (Nguyen 2017; Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018). One of these includes a quantitative survey of seizure reports (Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018), and the other provides a content analysis of the news

framing of rhino conservation in Vietnam. Studies have also been carried out on the media reporting of other cases of IWT, with findings that suggest a tendency for IWT to not be taken seriously (Easter et al. 2023; Jack 2015).

ENGOs may have been instrumental in originally putting rhino conservation on the Vietnamese news agenda in 2011, when it was officially announced that Vietnam's endemic rhino species, the Javan rhino, had become extinct (Nguyen 2017). Between 2010 and 2016, ENGOs were the most quoted sources in the news about rhino conservation in Vietnam (Nguyen 2017). Nguyen's master's thesis also contends that, in news articles on rhino horn enforcement, customs and the police were the key providers of information for journalists.

The profile of IWT was originally raised globally in the media by the ICCWC around 2010 to encourage governments to take IWT more seriously (Wyatt 2014). Wyatt's study showed that although Vietnam, from 2010 to 2012, was strongly correlated to IWT in the world news, there was little or no media coverage of IWT in the Vietnamese media at that time. In the context of a growing rhino horn trade in Vietnam, the limited media reporting of IWT did little to mitigate the trade, highlighting Milliken and Shaw's (2012) point that media reporting can mitigate IWT. In the case of large seizures, where 'contraband is detected by law enforcement authorities' (UNODC 2016, p. 28), it is commonplace for media reports to alert relevant international bodies to seizures almost immediately (Milliken & Shaw 2012). Nguyen (2017) posited that, in the Vietnamese news media between 2010 and 2016, poor enforcement was blamed for Vietnam's failure to stem rhino horn demand. In addition, 2016 marked an important investigative report into rhino horn trafficking in Vietnam that received some attention in international media. The report highlighted rhino horn traffickers operating with impunity in a North Vietnam village. 'Grinding rhino: an undercover investigation on rhino horn trafficking in China and Vietnam' (Crostia, Sutherland & Talerica

2016) was published in January 2016 and the evidence presented in the Hague Netherlands to an expert panel, who then criticised the Vietnam government on the eve of the Hanoi IWT conference (Broad 2016). Between the beginning of 2012 and the end of April 2018, 50 cases of rhino horn smuggling by Vietnamese criminals and rhino horn seizures in Vietnam were documented by the Vietnamese media; however, reports of convictions and sentencings were almost completely absent, bar two cases (Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018). Nguyen, Bui and Dao's (2018) survey of relevant news articles found a possible spike in seizure reports beginning in early 2017—just after the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference—until the end of the survey in April 2018, following introduction of the new penal code. Media research surveying the work of Vietnam's enforcement and judicial agencies is unlikely to provide a real indication of enforcement success (Paudel et al. 2022).

2.6 Chapter Summary

It has been established in this literature review that news framing of issues such as the rhino horn trade can have real consequences for how the public view issues and, possibly, how the Vietnamese government responds to them (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). The literature review has outlined the substantial body of research using a constructionist theoretical framework available in the West, further showing that there is only small corpus of communication research on environmental, crime and IWT reporting by the Vietnamese media.

It is valuable to synthesise the results of the studies by Massé et al. (2020), Nguyen, Bui and Dao (2018), Nguyen (2017), Smith (2021) and Wyatt (2014), given that this leads to some interesting observations. For example, by cross-referencing the small studies carried out in Vietnam with Wyatt (2014), it appears that there was a lag in ICCWC achieving its goals to promote IWT as a serious issue in the media in Vietnam. From 2010 to 2012, although the goal of increased IWT

reporting was being achieved, to at least some extent, globally, Wyatt's findings suggest that this was not the case in Vietnam. Small studies that focused only on the Vietnamese media in the period following Wyatt's study suggest that although rhino horn seizures in Vietnam had achieved a media profile (Nguyen 2017; Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018), rhino horn trade prosecutions and convictions had not (Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018). Meanwhile, because the push from global elites to frame IWT as a serious crime continued with the series of global IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020), the literature presents a trajectory of pressure on Vietnam and news reporting in Vietnam that ends in a gap. This acts as launching point for this research, which explores the serious criminality framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese media from 2016 to 2020.

To this end, the three RQs that drive this study have been designed to explore the news framing of the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade, key players and other factors that have influenced the framing. The next section will re-introduce the RQs and describe the methods adopted to answer them.

Chapter 3: Methods

Having reviewed the literature on news framing, crime reporting, IWT and the rhino horn trade and the media in Vietnam and identified research gaps, this chapter will outline the methods undertaken to investigate the reporting of this topic in Vietnamese language digital newspapers. This study is situated within a constructivist epistemology, according to which meaning is constructed through people's interaction with the world. That is, meanings are made through the interplay between human interpretation, engagement and imagining of whatever material reality is out there. In accordance with this epistemology, the methods outlined in this chapter are designed to investigate the meanings constructed in articles concerning the rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers.

Within this epistemological perspective, this study builds on the theoretical foundations of framing presented in Chapter 2 to draw out a methodology and outline research methods in commensurate research and establish a method of data collection customised to answer the RQs. Outlining the study's methodological footing starts with the RQs, followed by the notion of framing—the epistemological and methodological underpinnings. This chapter then outlines how four mastheads from a large national newspaper environment were selected and the process and criteria used to collect the sample of newspaper articles from the respective newspaper archives for analysis to answer RQ1 and RQ2. It then describes the processes, in accordance with Griffith Ethics Approval, GU Ref No: 2020/447, of (i) recruiting Vietnamese journalists, ENGO personnel and experts for interviews and (ii) conducting interviews remotely for analysis to answer RQ3.

3.1 Research Questions

In line with the research gaps identified in the literature review, this study has asked three fundamental RQs:

> RQ1: How do online newspapers in Vietnam frame the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue?
>
> RQ2: Who are the sources behind the Criminality meta-frame?
>
> RQ3: What are the factors that influence the news framing in the coverage of the illegal trade in rhino horn?

With regard to addressing RQ1, the framing analysis of both texts and images in the articles is concerned with the manifestation of frames to understand how news of lawmaking and law enforcement against rhino horn trafficking in Vietnam is constructed in the news text. With regard to RQ2, the content analysis of the news texts aims to understand the relationship between the frames and the sources of information used by journalists. Because sources of information influence frames (Gamson & Modigliani 1989), some may see an overlap between RQ2 and RQ3; however, it is important that they are posed as separate questions. This is because this thesis has already described the considerable outside pressure on Vietnam to bring its powers of law and enforcement to the fight against the rhino horn trade, further noting a strong consensus of views regarding the Vietnamese government's culture of lip service to commitments. Through a content analysis of the sources and quotations included in the news articles, RQ2's purpose is to understand how, in the years following Vietnam's symbolic act of commitment of holding the third in a series of global IWT conferences, this transnational deliberation is played out in the Vietnamese media. That is, how are the political contests over this environmental crime issue fought out in the Vietnamese media by contesting sources and their frames? Have international stakeholders and the

series of international IWT conferences, including the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, influenced the framing in the Vietnamese news media about this issue? RQ3's purpose is related to RQ2 but separate. That is, RQ3 requires investigation of the factors that influence framing, which includes understanding the factors underlying the journalists' use of sources and quotations. Interviewing journalists, ENGO personnel and an expert on Vietnamese journalism to answer RQ3 also explores whether journalists in Vietnam look to police or government officials for the source of their information and who has more control over what is in the news—the journalists or their sources (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Zhang 2021). Also to be considered is the extent to which Vietnamese journalists have autonomy when reporting on this topic (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989).

3.2 Epistemological and Methodological Underpinnings

This project's theoretical framework draws on constructivism to study the newspaper coverage of this enforcement issue. Constructivist theoretical frameworks are central to studies of framing because constructivism concerns the study of discourse, meaning and people's experience, which is particularly relevant in studies of the production of frames and the nature of the frames themselves. The constructivist theoretical framework has proved useful in news framing research in a plethora of settings. 'Meaning is constructed not discovered, so subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon' (Gray 2009, p. 18). Hence, news itself is a construction and subjects construct meaning from the news, among other sources (e.g., conversations with community members and trusted friends). McLean and Power (2007) have stated from a social constructivist view that although there is no objective reality, newspapers play a key role in the public's construction of reality. Tuchman (1978) applied the concept of meaning being constructed to the production of news when she argued that the news reporting of

reality to the public uses a constructive process: ‘The act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality’ (Tuchman 1978, p. 12). To illustrate one example of constructivist theory at play in journalism, the standard practice of journalists using sources for quotations and returning to them for subsequent information has substantial effects upon how reality is constructed in the news.

Constructivists argue that environmental problems become recognised not through themselves, but through claim making and media (Hansen 2011; Lakoff 2010). Constructivist investigations at the press level—in this case regarding newspaper reporting of rhino horn crime—are important for understanding the machinations of government policy. For investigations such as this one, specifically with regard to RQ1 and RQ2, the social construction of law-and-order issues are a key line of inquiry (Barak 2007; Sasson 1995). With regard to RQ3, Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) research describes three aspects of framing that form part of the theoretical framework of this research. Specifically they argue that news frames are constructed by ‘three broad classes of determinants that combine to produce particular package careers [frames]: cultural resonances, sponsor activities, and media practices’ (Gamson & Modigliani 1989, p. 5). Scheufele (1999) draws together Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) findings and related research to arrive at five key influencing factors of frames: social norms and values, organisational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines and ideological or political orientations of journalist. These are used as the framework to answer RQ3.

Because the topic and provenance of the articles that are the subject of this research are a relatively under-researched area of media research, this framing analysis has used inductive reasoning, which pays close attention to the nuanced meaning of ‘fragmentary details’, rather than deductive reasoning, which ‘begins with a universal view of the situation’, to analyse framing in news (Gray

2009, p. 14). However, the 'actual process of moving between theory and data never operates in only one direction' (Morgan 2007, p. 71). Following the initial inductive form of analysis, it was acknowledged that every situation has some aspects that are similar with—and some that are uniquely different from—those that have been studied before. Hence, after the inductive stage of analysis there is often a deductive stage (Fleetwood & Seal 2017; Van Gorp 2007). In this project, the protocols of frames that emerge were developed during the analysis and later compared with relevant frames from studies of crime, IWT and environment framing. Such frames, as discussed in Chapter 2, include global elites framing IWT as serious crime and the framing of organised criminal syndicates as ruthless and evil.

3.3 Aligning Mixed Methods with the Problem Being Researched

The methods used in this project are positioned within seminal research into news framing and the sociology of journalism (Bennet 1990; Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Edelman 1993; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gans 1980; Gitlin 1980; Hall et al. 1978; Nash & Bacon 2006; Pham & Nash 2017; Power & McClean 2007; Schlesinger 1981; Tuchman 1978; Van Dijk 1988). This study has departed from the sociology of sources approach (see, e.g., Anderson 1997; Lin 2012; Schlesinger, Tumber & Murdock 1991) and the study of source strategies to return to a traditional media-centric approach, which explores the nature of the news coverage, the sources used and the factors that influenced the coverage. This project brings together two bodies of research with two distinct approaches: (i) research that focuses on a textual analysis of media content and (ii) anthropocentric research that explores how journalists frame these issues and what factors affect their framing.

Qualitative research, such as document analysis and interviewing, helps the researcher 'gain a deep intense and holistic overview of the context under study' (Gray 2009, p. 164) and often involves interactions with the people being researched. Conversely, quantitative designs, which focus on measurable phenomena, can fail to gain access to people's social constructions of their reality, disengage the researcher from the people being researched and overlook nuances and difficult concepts (Gray 2009). The strong points of research projects that are approached through quantitative designs are that they can appear more objective than qualitative studies, with potential for more replicable results (Altheide 1996; Gray 2009; Wimmer & Dominick 2011). Tankard (2001), Van Gorp (2007) and Zoch (2001), however, argue that qualitative framing analysis can be replicable if it is systematic in design. Thorndike (1921, p. 379) echoes an important goal of qualitative research in the statement: 'Whatever exists, exists in some amount. To measure it is simply to know its varying amounts'. This mixed methods study is qualitative, with the researcher exploring deeper meanings and interactions rather than attempting to merely quantify interactions. However, because one of the aims of the study is to gauge the presence of frames promoted at conferences by global elites, incorporating a small aspect of quantification into the study is a useful indicator of part of global elites in deliberations.

The content analysis and frequency count employed in this study to answer RQ2 complements the nuanced examination of frames. Joffe and Yardley (2004) argue that content analysis bridges qualitative and quantitative methods, providing a methodologically adequate description of selected properties of such media messages with the primary goal to be able to make contextual inferences. A method sometimes employed by framing researchers (see, e.g., Bannavong 2005; McLean & Power 2007; Schindeler & Ewart 2014) is a frequency count incorporated into

qualitative research (Gray 2009). This can strengthen the design with elements of mixed methods research.

Mixed methods research 'meaningfully integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches' (Ivankova & Plano Clark 2018, p. 409) to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner 2007, p. 113). The mixed methods approach was important to take in this study. In qualitative methods such as news framing analysis and interviewing, certain framing devices or coded variables may be powerful because of other nodes of emphasis without repetition (Gitlin 1980), whereas quantitative methods emphasise frequency and repetition. A qualitative approach was all that was required to address RQ1 and RQ3 about frames and the factors that influence them. However, RQ2 required some quantification. The address of RQ2, concerned with the sources behind the frames, required revealing the state of deliberation between Vietnamese officials, international sources, ENGOs and other stakeholders with regard to the issue of enforcement of rhino horn trade in Vietnam. That is, RQ2's purpose was to go beyond the various framings of the issue to find which category or categories of sources that standpoint was coming from. Hence, a frequency count of the categories of sources was incorporated into the methods. In essence, through a mixed methods approach, this study aimed to analyse three interrelated phenomena: the nature of criminality frames in media content (RQ1), who initiates the entry of these frames in media texts (RQ2) and the underlying factors that influence these frames (RQ3).

My research adopted an internal approach with the analysis of news articles and interviews with journalists and, to a lesser extent, incorporated an external approach by interviewing ENGO personnel and experts to find out more about the journalists they worked with (see the interview schedule in the Appendix). To answer RQ3, it was envisaged to go into newsrooms to meet

journalists for prearranged interviews, with the possibilities of being introduced to their sources and seeing journalists at work during relevant court trials and press conferences. This was prevented by COVID-19 travel restrictions, forcing the interviews to be conducted remotely. Although the data may have been richer if the research was carried out in Vietnam, all was not lost with the remote interviews. It was possible to interview nine journalists from between 30 minutes to 1 hour each, three ENGO personnel who were familiar with working with journalists on the rhino horn trade issue and an expert in news media in Vietnam who was very familiar with journalists there. Despite not being able to attend and observe in person, the researcher has prior insight of the setting from four years' experience working in Vietnamese newsrooms. The researcher also has experience with the issue of the rhino horn trade through attendance of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference and various online workshops and webinars that concerned the rhino horn trade, including an online two day workshop entitled 'International cooperation between Viet Nam and some African countries in combating the transnational illegal wildlife trade' (Wildlife Conservation Society [WCS] 23–24 September 2021). At this latter, Vietnamese police, customs and government officials spoke alongside lawyers and UN experts on the issues of enforcement of the rhino horn trade and international cooperation. Hence, although no events, including the ones mentioned here, were sites of data collection, my background understanding of the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue was bolstered through these events and peripheral sources.

3.4 A Case Study Approach

This section outlines how a case study approach was considered the most suitable for addressing the questions being researched. Similar to research by Gitlin (1980), Hall et al. (1978) and Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989), a case study approach was considered suitable for this study because the Vietnamese media reporting of the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade presented

a series of related happenings that are situated historically and contextually. Real (1989) asserts that 'The case study approach presents a specific point of impact text in which the culture expresses itself and the public creates interpretations' (p. 70). A 'common qualitative research technique' (Wimmer & Dominick 2011, p. 140), case studies use multiple sources of data that are particularly productive when the selected cases represent and influence aspects of the culture, such as ideology and hegemony (Real 1989). When sample sizes are small, a strong justification for the case is important (Esser & Vliegenthart 2017). In a case study such as this one, the characters 'of social power and conflict, of ideology and hegemony, of human values and bias, all enter explicitly into the case' (Real 1989, p. 71). This applied to this case, which uses digital newspaper articles, as well as interviews with journalists, ENGO personnel and an expert in Vietnamese journalism, as data sources in relation to a Vietnamese cultural and criminal phenomenon concerning the rhino horn trade during a critical period. Hence, a case study method providing a structured series of steps was adopted (see Figure 3.1).

A case study results in a detailed description of the phenomenon under study. Hence, this case study has aimed to provide a valuable heuristic method to understand a new area. Researchers, however, have criticised case studies for not being scientifically rigorous and objective enough, not being conducive to generalisation and producing an overabundance of data leading to delays in reporting data (Wimmer & Dominick 2011). During the course of this case study, these issues of an overabundance of data and scientific rigour were kept at the forefront of considerations.

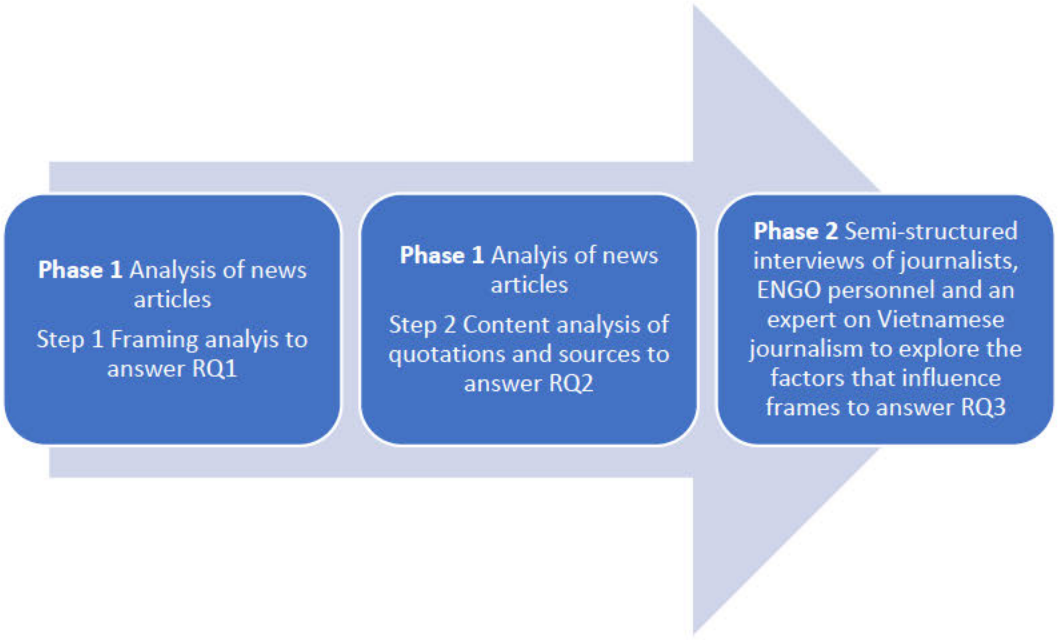
As Figure 3.1 outlines, the mixed methods data collection in this case study consists of two interrelated phases:

Phase 1: framing analysis to answer RQ1 and content analysis to answer RQ2.

Phase 2: semi-structured interviews to answer RQ3.

In the first phase, an analogue framing analysis of relevant news articles in selected Vietnamese digital newspapers was carried out. This involved using coloured highlighter pens to highlight framing devices, including text and images, in the printed articles. This was followed by an analogue content analysis of quotations and source categories included in the news articles. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with journalists, ENGO personnel and experts to explore the factors that influence frames. These interviews were transcribed, printed and analysed in the same analogue style using highlighter pens. The aim was to inductively identify quotations from the interview transcripts that related to the factors that influence frames (Scheufelle 1999).

Figure 3.1: Phase 1 and 2 data collection steps for case study



Considering its poor enforcement record and the international pressure Vietnam was under to improve compliance, news framing analysis was used as a tool to explore how Vietnam was

responding to the pressure and discern what was going on in the rhino horn trade with regard to enforcement.

3.5 Newspaper Selection

This section outlines the methods and justifications used for the newspaper selection and the sample period and sampling criteria for articles and data collection. Four Vietnamese language national newspapers were selected for the study: *Lao Dong*, *VnExpress*, *Cong An Nhan Dan* (*CAND*) and *Nhan Dan.* Only Vietnamese language newspapers were chosen, given that the project aimed to study the framing of the rhino horn trade from within the national Vietnamese perspective. Hence, neither international media nor Vietnamese English-language media in Vietnam were included in the sample.

The four digital newspapers that were the source of the articles sampled were drawn from a large number of newspapers that fitted the following criteria:

- national newspapers written in Vietnamese
- routine reporting on IWT issues (intensity sampling strategy looks for 'information rich cases'; Gray 2009, p. 181)
- available online with a searchable archive of articles
- significant readership (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Vietnamese language newspapers' websites and readership

Online Vietnamese language newspapers	**Readership (TNS 2011)**	**Readership (McKinley 2011)**
Cong An Nhan Dan Online (*CAND*, Police), http://cand.com.vn/	363,000	400,000
Lao Dong (Labour), https://laodong.vn/	207,790	60,000
VnExpress, https://vnexpress.net/	Not available	Not available
Nhan Dan (The People), https://nhandan.com.vn/	220,000 (*Nhan Dan Online*)	180,000

Online newspapers were selected over their print-based counterparts because of their growing significance to the Vietnamese public (McKinley 2011), the strong internet reach in Vietnam (70% in 2020; World Bank 2022) and the accessibility of the sample to the researcher (Gitlin 1980; Gray 2009). It is plausible that the enhanced accessibility afforded by online versions of the newspapers, despite being in Vietnamese, enhances the potential influence of key international actors, such as international governments, intergovernmental organisations and ENGOs.

It should also be noted that the selection of the four newspapers took into account a diversity of potential opinion. Careful consideration of character (Hall et al. 1978; Huong 2012) and positional documentation (Pham & Nash 2017) was applied during the selection of the four newspapers for the study. Instead of selecting a comprehensive sample that 'examines every case of instance in a given population' (Gray 2009, p. 181), four widely read newspapers with different characters that routinely report on the rhino horn trade were selected as the sources for the sample. For example, the appearance of news stories in *VnExpress* is quite different to that in the other three selected newspapers. This is because the *VnExpress* stories are dominated by videos, whereas stories in the other three newspapers, *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan*, comprise text with some photographs.

The preliminary review of a large number of newspapers in Vietnam found none of the digital newspapers reviewed were completely the same in the way they reported the rhino horn trade. Hence, as stated above, the four newspapers selected represent a range of characters and positions, even if not the full range. *Lao Dong* was selected because, in addition to fitting the selection criteria above, it seemed to carry the most stories on the rhino horn trade of any newspapers. Sumrall (2009) observed that *Lao Dong* was a leader in reporting on the IWT issue. *Lao Dong* has a long tradition as a state-run national newspaper with a degree of independence. It has been observed

that its print version is available at almost every news stand in Vietnam, showing its popularity. *Lao Dong* is also a trusted source of news that is read by government officials and is known for its investigative articles, including investigative stories about IWT relevant to the rhino horn trade. It also carries a selection of tabloid celebrity-style stories relevant to the trade.

CAND was selected because, in addition to fitting the criteria above, it was the newspaper arm of one of the ministries and departments directly involved in enforcement—the police. Sumrall (2009) has observed that *CAND* was a leading newspaper in reporting IWT issues. It was chosen from a special group of newspapers relevant to enforcement: *Cong An Nhan Dan* (Police), *Hai Quan* (Customs), *Phap Luat* (Law) and *Cong Ly* (Courts). *CAND* was chosen above the newspapers for customs, law and the courts because it had more stories about rhino horn enforcement and IWT and is more popular. It also contained several feature stories related to rhino horn enforcement.

VnExpress was chosen because it is possibly the most popular digital newspaper in Vietnam (Eek & Ellstrom 2008). It is semi-privately owned, solely available online, generally briefer (living up to its name as an express provider of news), more factual and relies more on video than text in its news reporting. *Nhan Dan* was selected because it is the official arm of the CPV and is best positioned to represent the government's views. It is the only newspaper in the selection that does not report on the rhino horn trade routinely, which was one of the targeted criteria for the newspaper selection. However, as the media arm of the CPV, it was considered critical to include in the study. Critical case sampling strategy includes cases that 'are deemed critical or crucial' (Gray 2009, p 181).

A limitation of this newspaper selection is that it does not reveal a larger picture of the reporting on this issue in Vietnam—only possible by capturing articles from a broad cross-section of

newspapers. The extensive number of national newspapers in Vietnam—including the media arms of relevant ministries—presents a largely unknown and unresearched setting for research. Out of this body of newspapers, very few had been previously studied. Indeed, very little analysis of journalism has been done on Vietnamese newspapers' regarding IWT, police, customs and courts rounds (for some exceptions, see, e.g., Huong 2012; Sidel 1998).

It should be noted that the two top Vietnamese national newspapers, *Thanh Nien* and *Tuoi Tre*, were excluded from the newspaper selection. The key reasoning behind the exclusion of both *Thanh Nien* and *Tuoi Tre* was because they published relatively few stories on the rhino horn trade in the sample period and the reporting presented nothing special. Stories on rhino horn trade did not seem to present either of these newspapers with topics that they were outspoken about. The website of the government's Vietnam News Agency, Vietnam Net, which is a website that might be considered by some to be critical, was also not selected. It was excluded because of the poor functionality of its archive search function to identify rhino horn stories.

One of the aims of this research was to add to existing knowledge about the broader Vietnamese newspaper landscape. This was achieved by including *Lao Dong* (Labour) and *Cong An Nhan Dan* (Police), which have been under-researched. Conversely, the digital newspaper selection included two newspapers that have been studied previously. *VnExpress* has been the subject of several studies (see, e.g., Eek & Ellstrom 2008; Pham & Nash 2017), as has *Nhan Dan* (Pham & Nash 2017). Having identified the newspapers that were selected for analysis and the sample period, the next section will discuss the sample period.

3.6 Sample Period

The five-year sample period, 2016 to 2020 inclusive, was selected to begin in the year that a key international IWT event—the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference—was held in Vietnam and to conclude as currently as possible. The project aimed to explore how Vietnamese digital newspapers framed the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue, from a time when framing patterns were, potentially, being established (Gitlin 1980)—the year of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. The sample time was selected because the characterising of IWT as a serious organised crime with enforcement as the key response was promoted internationally at the entire series of global IWT conferences, of which Hanoi 2016 was the third (Massé et al. 2020). In addition to the series of global IWT conferences, the Serious Crime frame was promoted by the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (European Commission 2016) and the UN Resolution on Tackling Illicit Wildlife Trafficking (2017). Furthermore, Vietnam was singled out for criticism at the 2016 meeting of CITES for non-compliance with CITES regarding the rhino horn trade. Moreover, as discussed in the background section, in 2016 the Vietnamese government's directive made new reporting of Vietnam's zero tolerance of IWT a priority for the state-run media. Hence, 2016 was chosen as the first year of the sample period.

The five-year sample time of 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2020 was selected to be as recent and relevant as possible, while going back to 2016. As described, the sample time encompassed five important events that promoted enforcement of laws against rhino horn crime in Vietnam and potentially influenced media coverage: The European Commission adopted the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking in February 2016, the tri-annual CITES CoP 17 was held in South Africa in October 2016, the high-level Hanoi IWT conference was held in November 2016, the 2018 London IWT conference was held in October 2018 and, in August 2019, the tri-annual CITES

CoP 18 was held in Geneva. These high-level international events featured and highlighted a reframing of IWT, with the involvement of key international actors, and promoted the view that IWT is a serious crime. Hence, the sample period was relevant to criminality framing because it spanned several high-level global events that focused attention on fighting IWT. The matrix of events and happenings that occurred in 2016 also reflects Gitlin's (1980) sample time choice of a year in the anti-Vietnam War movement that he argued was the year that framing conventions were established.

3.7 Criteria for Selecting News Articles in the Four Publications

This section outlines the criteria for inclusion of the 144 news articles in the sample from the online archives of the four selected newspapers: *Lao Dong*, *CAND*, *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan*. It will explain how the sampling criteria were developed in a reflexive process with careful consideration of the translation process and then describe the process of collecting the articles for analysis.

The location of the news articles relevant to the criminality of the rhino horn trade in the selected Vietnamese digital newspapers was a staged process. To develop this method, an initial search for the Vietnamese term for rhino horn, complete with Vietnamese tones—*sừng tê giác* (as it appears in the Vietnamese news)—was carried out in the internal search function of the first newspaper to be sampled, *Lao Dong*. Using a reflexive and iterative process, it was found that including the tones was important, because a more comprehensive set of search results was achieved than if the tones were not included. Quotation marks were excluded from around the search term when it was found that the search results when quotation marks were used omitted some relevant articles. Because my reading skills of the Vietnamese language are poor, translations were used. Google Translate was incorporated into the process to gauge the relevance of search results. The search using the term,

sừng tê giác, provided multiple pages of results for each selected digital newspaper. There was a staged process that reviewed the results of the initial search. Each search result in the list was opened and given an initial review to assess whether the article concerned the rhino horn trade.

In this stage of the sampling process, some cases were obvious choices for inclusion. Photographs provided a good indication. Stories that contained images strongly indicative of rhino horn law-and-order issues were included. Such photographs included seized rhino horns displayed on a police or customs evidence table, sometimes with police and offenders included. However, the criteria for the inclusion of stories without an enforcement photograph were not always immediately clear. These articles were reviewed using a preliminary translation (Google Translate) to identify whether the stories were about rhino horn law-and-order issues. Focal points were given close attention, including photographs, headlines, captions, lead paragraphs, statistics, sources and quotations (Tankard 2001; Zhang 2021). Stories that lacked significant content about enforcement or the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue were discarded. These included stories about rhino conservation issues, ENGO awareness-raising work and rhino horn demand reduction campaigns and click bait stories—for example, videos of rhinos fighting with lions or elephants or attacking tourists in Africa. As each candidate article for inclusion was reviewed individually, the articles that fitted the criteria were copied—including section, date, headline, sub-head, story body, photographs and by-line in their original Vietnamese language form—into a lengthy Word document, with a page break inserted between each. Such a Word document was created for each digital newspaper.

At this stage of the sampling process, the majority of articles in the search results for *sừng tê giác* were about the enforcement of law against the rhino horn trade. Relatively fewer articles in search

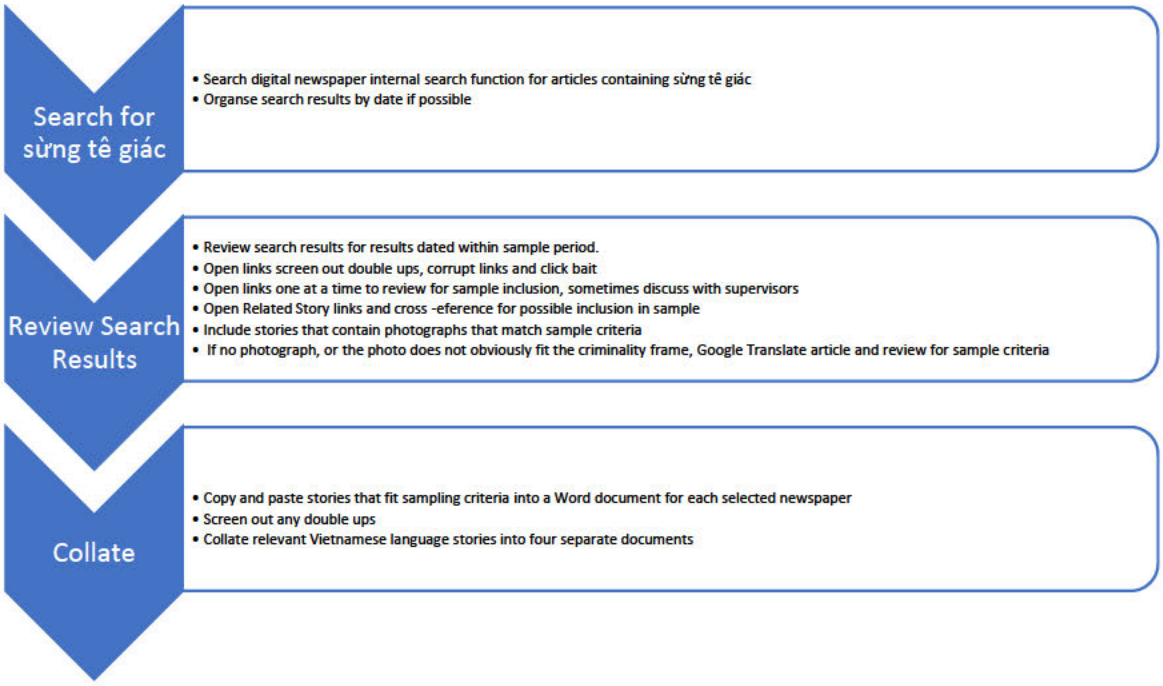
results were about rhino conservation, rhino horn demand reduction or related awareness-raising campaigns or other issues concerning rhinos.

A final assessment of each article for inclusion in the sample was conducted at the translation phase, which is discussed in the next section. The translated articles were again checked for a significant amount of text or images related to the rhino horn trade—such as lawmaking, crime and enforcement events and issues—and relating to Vietnam or anywhere in the world. What constituted a 'significant amount' was judged on the basis that at least one mention or photograph anywhere in the story about enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade was present.

This sampling strategy took an inclusive approach to the sampling to 'tease out' (Gitlin 1980, p. 303) hidden assumptions made about the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese media. Using this approach, the sample contained a nuanced selection of stories that provided more insights than would a sample of bare-fact stories about rhino horn customs seizures, in which the word for rhino horn was in the headline or lead paragraph.

This staged process of selecting the sample—the selection of articles containing the words *sừng tê giác*, and then narrowing down these articles to those focused on lawmaking, crime and enforcement issues (see Figure 3.2)—produced a corpus of 144 stories: 65 from *Lao Dong*, 42 from *Cong An Nhan Dan*, 30 from *VnExpress* and seven from *Nhan Dan*. Although some might consider 144 stories to be a small sample, it should be noted that the qualitative nature of the research justifies such a sample size. Many stories were lengthy, around 2000 words and were accompanied by multiple photographs and sometimes, particularly in the case of *VnExpress*, a video. Importantly, the sample was small enough for a close reading (Gitlin 1980) and repeated examinations (Van Gorp 2007), allowing me to immerse myself in the material.

Figure 3.2: Stages in the collection of the original Vietnamese sample



Having described the process of selecting the news articles for analysis, the next section will describe the process of translation and data management.

3.8 Translation and Data Management

Once all the original Vietnamese language articles were copied into respective documents, it was time for them to be translated. The translation was done with Google Translate with a reliability check process in place. Between three and five stories at a time, depending on their length, were copied and pasted into Google Translate and the text translated into English. The portioned approach was necessary because Google Translate has a limit on the number of words it can translate at a time. This method was developed along the way. It was trialled first with *Lao Dong* and was continually refined with the other three newspaper mastheads.

During this process, the text in the English column of Google Translate was briefly reviewed for a significant amount of content concerning rhino horn law-and-order issues. If the stories fitted the sample criteria, the English translated versions were copied and pasted into a Word document. The headline in Vietnamese, as well as the URL from the webpage, were copied and pasted under the English translated headline. Because Google Translate did not carry the photographs over in the translation process, the photographs from the Vietnamese version were manually copied and pasted. The photographs were reduced in size from the original to save space and printer ink. This process also served as an opportunity for a deep qualitative soaking (saturation) in the material before the framing analysis began, as per Gitlin (1980) and Van Gorp (2007).

VnExpress incorporates videos and photograph slideshows into much of its reporting on the rhino horn trade. The videos in *VnExpress* were translated using a combination of Google Translate and an accredited translator. A Google Translate camera app was used to translate Vietnamese subtitles from images and videos. The visual content of the video was then also described in its place in the English version. For voiceovers, the story links were sent to an accredited interpreter for interpretation.

At the end of the first stage of the translation process, there were four Word documents of translated articles from the four respective newspapers, including photographs and the content of videos in text form. As has been noted, the process was developed in a pilot-like process with the *Lao Dong* articles and honed through the collection of sample articles from next three newspapers. Once the four Word files of translated English articles were prepared, each included story was listed in a table for the respective newspaper, with a number, date, headline in both Vietnamese and English and a URL.

The second stage of the translation process implemented a reliability check process. A selection of five *Lao Dong* stories were sent to an accredited translator to ensure adequate reliability of the Google Translate translated sample. After reviewing the Google Translate English version against the original Vietnamese version, the translator suggested only minor stylistic adjustments to the Google Translate version. These adjustments caused no change to the meaning of individual paragraphs or the articles. The two phases of the translation process will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

3.8.1 Ensuring the Reliability and Validity of Translations

This section provides the rationale for the use of Google Translate as a translation method, in conjunction with a reliability check process, to provide articles in English for analysis to answer RQ1 and RQ2. It will discuss the issues with two forms of translation—human translation and machine translation (MT)—highlight the pros and cons of both and discuss how four years of experience as an English subeditor working with English news translators in Vietnam has beneficially positioned me to do this research.

MT is defined as the 'Automatic translation of text written in a language into another one by using the computer' (Phuoc, Quan & Ock 2016, p. 161). It has been researched and developed for over 50 years and is becoming both widely acceptable as a technological necessity and increasingly 'attractive due to its huge benefits for our society' (Linh 2013, p. 101). MT has dramatically improved in accuracy from what was once a limited technology, becoming a standard feature in the operating systems of smart phones and computers (High 2023). Because many sectors, including academic research, higher education, health and business, depend on MT (Aiken & Park 2009; Crosbie, French & Conrad 2012; Groves & Mundt 2015; Linh 2013; Turner et al. 2014), it was considered reliable and valid for the translation of news articles from the Vietnamese media.

The translation method employed in this study is significant because of the urgency to better understand the rhino horn trade in Vietnam and perhaps help save a threatened species. This point is highlighted by Turner et al. (2014) with regard to the pressing issue of translating health information for migrant groups. There is a dearth of English language news framing research of non-English language news media compared with English language news media. In the case of Vietnamese media, where there is research, generally one or all the researchers are native Vietnamese speakers. Although the research papers are in English, the translation aspect of the analysis seems to not be touched upon (see Huong 2012; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). A possible reason for the dearth of cross-lingual research would be the time and costs associated with human translating (Aiken & Park 2009; Turner et al. 2014).

Aiken and Park (2009) have suggested further reasons for the lack of projects that require translation, arguing that it is unfeasible to rely solely on human translators, because of problems with delays, mistakes and omissions. Turner et al. (2014) conducted research into the use of MT in multilingual public health promotion materials. The researchers claimed that language barriers caused by time and costs of human translations caused disparities in the availability of information, which can have serious health consequences for immigrant populations. They proposed that using MT can provide a cost and time-saving solution. Similar arguments involving time and costs to employ MT could be applied to framing studies of Vietnamese media, particularly in the context of IWT, given the urgency in mitigating Vietnam's damaging role in the rhino horn trade. Standard costs for accredited human translating are between 25 and 28 cents per word and human translators take several days. Google Translate, conversely, is free and instant.

MT is suited to translating general information such as news articles: 'MT tools are often better at translating generic text, such as news articles, than translating domain-specific text containing

specialized vocabulary' (Turner et al. 2014, p. 2). This is borne out by my study of news stories in *Lao Dong* newspaper, which was the source of the first selection of articles to be analysed. The MTs of seizure reports were clear in their meaning despite some wording issues. The translation of a more technical discussion of the medical efficacy of rhino horn in one *Lao Dong* article was less clear in its meaning and wording. The translations of *Nhan Dan* articles were the most grammatically correct of the four newspapers in the sample. This provided a strong case for MT. This highlights Turner et al.'s (2014) finding above.

MT translations are comprehensible, and sometimes impressive (Groves & Mundt 2015). Better results are achieved between Western languages than between Western and Asian languages (Aiken & Balan 2011; Phuoc, Quan & Ock 2016), but work is continuing to improve bidirectional English–Vietnamese MT (Phuoc, Quan & Ock 2016). Advances have been made to MT programs translating from Vietnamese to English with positive reviews (Doan et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2022; Phan-Vu et al. 2019). Google Translate was chosen over other MT options because of its relatively high accuracy and potential for high comprehension (Aiken & Park 2009). Because assessments of the translation quality of MTs were positive during the sample collection, it suggested that reliable translations of the sample can be achieved using Google Translate.

As has been outlined, an accredited translator from National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters carried out a review of five original Vietnamese news articles against the English versions translated by Google Translate to ensure adequate reliability and validity. The results of the review presented very few changes to the articles with no change of meaning to the paragraphs or articles. Turner et al. (2014) have attested to the reliability of this method:

> Evidence indicates that MT combined with human post-editing (i.e., the subsequent correction of MT output by human readers fluent in the source and target languages) produces a quality product at a lower cost. In fact, the use of MT and human post-editing has become a defacto standard for many commercial translation vendors. (Turner 2014. p. 525)

Integrating translators into this qualitative research was performed in accordance with careful, methodological, practical and ethical considerations to avoid concerns with research validity (Chiumento et al. 2018).

In the area of cultural nuances, there are limitations with both machine (Aiken & Park 2009) and human translation (Boulanger 2016; Riggs 2019a, 2019b, 2020). Metaphors and other cultural nuances used in everyday Vietnamese conversation sometimes presented anomalies in the translated text, because only the literal meaning was translated by Google Translate. Hence, crosschecking with accredited translators and native Vietnamese speakers—who were also fluent in the target language, English—was required to reveal the intended meaning of metaphors and other cultural nuances.

The method of translation of foreign news for the purpose of journalism news framing research is an area that has received little attention, having implications for further research. Having argued that the translation method employed was able to provide acceptable reliability and validity, the next section will discuss how the framing analysis was carried out.

3.9 Analysis of Framing in News Story Texts

Having translated the sample, news framing analysis of the news stories was conducted. The aim was to identify criminality frames present in the reporting to answer RQ1. The sample was analysed inductively to see what patterns emerged (Gray 2009).

This approach was drawn from Blood, Putnis and Pirkis' (2002) framing analysis of news depictions that linked mental health and crime in Australian newspapers and Van Gorp's (2007) instructive article on inductive frame analysis. Blood, Putnis and Pirkis (2002) and Van Gorp (2007) refer to the work of the early news framing scholars, who are routinely referenced in the literature (e.g., Entman 1993; Gamson & Modigliani 1989). These examples provided a guided approach for interpreting the meanings behind the news articles in the Vietnamese digital newspapers.

The framing analysis began with a close reading and rereading (Gitlin 1980; Van Gorp 2007) of the translated news stories, considering the original intended meaning of the journalists and their sources of information. The process of collecting and translating the sample also aided in this process of becoming closely acquainted with the material.

During repeated examination and inductive framing analysis of the *Lao Dong* articles—the first group of articles studied—patterns emerged inductively, as described by Gray (2009), regarding the criminality of the rhino horn trade. As these patterns continued to appear in the articles from the other digital newspapers in the selection, coding protocols were developed and tabulated. The coding protocols for the Serious Crime, Compliance, Lack of Enforcement frames (and the hierarchy of level 2 and 3 frames beneath them) consisted of framing devices (Van Gorp 2007). That is, the framing devices emerged as the frames, which are used as subsections in the following chapters. The framing devices are tabulated in Chapters 4 and 5, clarifying the coding. The core purpose of the inductive analysis was to seek the framing devices and reasoning devices that act to 'define issues' (Van Gorp 2007, p. 92). For the three level 1 frames—Serious Crime, Compliance and Lack of Enforcement—questions emerged from the news articles that revolved around the criminality of the rhino horn trade. Why is this crime so serious? Why or why not is Vietnam

starting to enforce these laws? How is news demonstrating that Vietnam is complying? The three level 1 criminality frames—Serious Crime, Compliance and Lack of Enforcement—were eventually named, along with the level 2 and 3 subframes under them. To explicate the Serious Crime and Compliance frames clearly, the level 2 and 3 frames under them contained 'a medley of elements that fit together' (Nelson & Willey 2001, p. 248). This is apparent in how the framing devices tabulated in the findings chapters fit together.

To help with identifying frames, framing theory, which was outlined above and in Chapter 2, was kept in mind during the analysis. According to this methodological framework, identifying frames in the text requires considerable thinking about the issue, its background, context and place in the culture. Reese (2001, p. 1) has noted that labelling, classifying and reducing news stories to a simple theme is not a straightforward task. Framing sometimes seems like an intangible concept. It is often 'unspoken and unacknowledged' (Gitlin 1980), even subconscious (Goffman 1974). However, the methodological framework provided a solid base. A news frame is a 'central organizing principle' (Gamson 2001, p. x), 'idea' (Gamson & Modigliani 1989, p. 3) or 'schemata of interpretation' (Goffman 1974, p. 21). It is persistent (Gitlin 1980) in the news and 'gives coherence to a diverse array of symbols or idea elements' (Gamson 2001, p. x), suggesting 'what is at issue' (Gamson & Modigliani 1989, p. 3). A frame essentially involves selection and salience (Entman 1993) and an exercise in power (Reese 2001).

Frames are expressed in tangible forms called framing devices, such as words, metaphors exemplars, catch phrases, depictions and visual images (Gamson & Modigliani 1989), sometimes with cultural associations (Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Van Gorp 2007). Such expression involves 'persistent selection, emphasis and exclusion' (Gitlin 1980, p. 7), and emphasis can be achieved through placing framing devices prominently in focal points of a story (Tankard 2001), giving the

news story being analysed a dominant or primary meaning. Frames can define the problem, the cause, a moral evaluation and the solution (Entman 1993). With these concepts and guides of framing in mind, the analysis drew out the individual frames present in the sample to answer RQ1.

Using hardcopy versions and coloured highlighter pens, an analogue framing analysis was performed, accompanied with margin notes. The highlighting captured possible framing devices, such as words and phrases, images and cultural nuances. As patterns emerged inductively and frames were identified, the devices that related to particular frames were highlighted in different colours and then tabulated (the tables of framing devices for respective frames are included in Chapters 4 and 5). Although a strong use of cultural nuances was identified in *Lao Dong*, this frame was not identified in the other three selected newspapers. Coding for the frames that emerged was recorded in tables. Cultural slang terms, which are salient because they potentially resonate with the audience's schemata and culture (Entman 1993), were explored and tabulated. Particular attention was paid to news story focal points for framing devices because these points in a story provide more emphasis. Focal points include headlines, sub-heads, photographs, photograph captions, leads, source selection, quotation selection, pull quotations, statistics, charts and concluding paragraphs (Tankard 2001).

Because articles in Vietnamese language newspapers have been little studied, entire articles were analysed to allow for any departures of style from the samples from which Western theories of framing stem. Although numerous framing studies have focused only on key elements of stories, the unfamiliarity of the sample led to the decision that each whole article should be analysed. Because inductive reasoning is never done in a total vacuum (Gray 2009), the inductive coding that emerged was later cross-referenced with the literature on the global elite framing of IWT (Wyatt 2014; Massé et al. 2020) and Vietnam's compliance status.

3.9.1 Qualitative Content Analysis of the Articles to Find the Sources behind the Frames

Once the criminality frames were identified and described, a qualitative content analysis of the sample was conducted to identify and categorise the sources behind the frames to answer RQ2 (see Chapters 4 and 5). Searches for words used in journalistic attributions—for instance, 'says' and 'said'—were carried out across the sample of articles. This was followed by a close reading of the articles to find direct and indirect quotations that the first search had missed. Hence the content analysis explored the relationship between the categories of sources and the frames to answer RQ2.

3.10 Semi-structured Interviews

Having completed the first phase of data collection via a framing analysis and content analysis of the digital newspaper articles to answer RQ1 and RQ2, semi-structured interviews comprised the second, and final, data collection phase with regard to the framing of the research subject. Interviewing is useful when used in conjunction with other research methods; it can reveal more about the subject (Cohen & Manion 2000; Gray 2009) and obtain information that could not be found just by observing the text (Berger 2011).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen over structured interviews because they allow the interviewer to prepare a list of questions as a guide but maintain an open approach (Berger 2011), allowing them to probe and ask people to clarify details (Gray 2009). Because framing is often subconscious (Goffman 1974), and the concept of framing may not be clear for some journalists or sources, semi-structured interviews were well suited for identifying how and why the issue was framed. This style of interview is a 'powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit—to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings' (Arksey & Knight 1999, p. 32). Interviews have traditionally complemented framing analysis in

the cultural case study approaches of media sociology research, including those by Hall et al. (1978), Gitlin (1980) and Huong (2012).

Rather than employing a questionnaire method, in-person interviews were chosen because they allow subjects to meet the interviewer, making people feel more comfortable. Additionally, people are also often more at ease talking about their work than writing it down (Gray 2009). In-person interviews became impossible, however, because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. Interviews were thereby conducted remotely by video on Facebook Messenger or by phone or, in three cases, by email or Facebook direct message. The purpose of the interview was conveyed to the interviewees in conversation and information and consent sheets were provided in accordance with the ethics approval, GU Ref No: 2020/447. Interviewees were given time to read the forms and asked for their oral consent to continue with the interview.

3.10.1 Recruitment and Interviews: The Sample Group of Journalists, ENGO Personnel and an Expert on Vietnamese Journalism

This section outlines the methods used to recruit subjects for the semi-structured interview phase of the study. In case study style, the interview phase of the study collected data from three different populations to answer RQ3. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Vietnamese journalists, three ENGO personnel and one expert. Various sampling and recruitment methods were employed to gain the interviews. These were a combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Gray 2009).

First, a purposive sampling method was employed unsuccessfully to interview journalists who had written on the issue of the enforcement of laws against rhino horn trafficking. In purposive sampling, subjects are selected against a trait (Gray 2009), in this case journalists who had written

on the rhino horn trade. Journalists with by-lines on news reports about enforcement of laws against the illegal trade in rhino horn were contacted directly. Ten email addresses of journalists linked to the by-lines in stories were found. Emails were sent in both English and Vietnamese to these journalists, following the process set by the Griffith University ethics approval, GU Ref No: 2020/447. The initial contact email content was translated by a qualified certified translator. In addition, the editorial sections of the newspapers in which the by-lines appeared were emailed using the initial email content in the Vietnamese language. This was done where emails and phone numbers were available on the respective websites. None of these emailing attempts were successful.

When the recruitment method outlined above was unsuccessful, interviews were achieved through personal journalist and ENGO personnel contacts. These contacts had been formed in my previous work in Vietnamese newsrooms and during my Master of Arts research in Vietnam. Twenty journalist contacts and six ENGO personnel contacts were contacted by email or social media direct messaging. These used the initial contact email content according to the ethics approval. Hence convenience sampling, where subjects are selected by who is conveniently available (Gray 2009), was employed. This was successful, with about half of those contacted willing to do an interview. A snowball method, where a small number of subjects in a population identify additional subjects who fit the criteria (Gray 2009), was also used, with journalists or ENGO personnel contacts suggesting other journalists, ENGO personnel or experts in the population who could be contacted.

Semi-structured interviews with the participants to answer RQ3 were conducted using a prepared list of questions as a guide and recorded using a digital audio recorder (see the Appendix for interview schedule). Questions, which varied according to whether the participant was a journalist, ENGO personnel or expert, were composed to deepen my understanding of the factors that

influenced the framing. These questions concerned the day-to-day routines of journalists in Vietnam, including reporting on courts, police, customs, government ministers, international sources and ENGOs. The interview questions were also composed in accordance with the framework of factors that influence frames proposed by Scheufele (1999). In an effort to understand how the power dynamics in public deliberation were expressed in framing and to shed light on factors that have influenced it, questions also probed the organisational pressure and constraints journalists are under. The interview questions were developed alongside the data as it came to light.

All of the interview participants, bar two, elected not to be identified. Anonymity presents certain advantages for interviewees in a country with an acknowledged low regard for free expression. Identification could entail the interviewees holding back on some information or opinions for fear of retribution. Eight journalists currently working for Vietnamese newspapers that report on the rhino horn trade were interviewed. One former journalist, who has close ties with working journalists in Vietnam, was also interviewed. These interviews lasted between 23 minutes and 71 minutes. No identifying information was included in the thesis, with interviewees referred to as Journalists 1–9, ENGO Personnel 1–3 and Expert 1. Except in three cases, where the participants requested the questions via email or direct message, interviews were conducted online in real time. Some interviews were followed up with additional questions, either by email, direct messaging or phone.

ENGO personnel and expert interviews supplemented journalist interviews to provide additional data about the journalists' framing of the issue in the news from a source or expert perspective. This illuminated social and organisational power dynamics that arose in potential framing contests, as well as providing a valuable cross-reference. Because this is media-centric research, the aim was

not to reveal the source's framing strategies or processes, rather to focus on the journalistic situation.

It was only necessary to engage an interpreter once throughout the 14 interviews. On that occasion, the interview was conducted in a mix of English and Vietnamese with the aid of an accredited interpreter. Accounting for careful methodological, practical and ethical considerations (Chiumento et al. 2018), having an interpreter present increased the reliability and validity of the interview data. Considerations to be aware of included being alert to whether the interpreter summarises or modifies a question or response (Kapborg & Bertero 2002); however, this is clearly better than not understanding the answers. Difficulties can be averted if relevant considerations are weighed and managed (Chiumento et al. 2018; Kapborg & Bertero 2002). Other factors that are important to consider include interpreter positionality, training, supervision and level of independence (Chiumento et al. 2018). Chiumento et al. (2018) have concluded that if these approaches are implemented, it is possible to conduct rigorous research with either lay interpreters or those with professional interpreting credentials. Hence, before the interpreter was engaged, some time was spent familiarising them about the research, gaining an understanding of their competence and positionality and discussing any level of independence they may take during the interview.

During the interview, the interpreter was introduced to the journalist and had an introductory chat, sharing about themselves, the project and their connection with me. Once the journalist was comfortable, had received the consent and information sheet and agreed orally for the interview, the recorded interview was able to proceed. For this interview, the interpreter and I had a list of possible questions prepared. I would ask the question in English, he interpreted the question into Vietnamese, the interviewee answered, the interpreter then interpreted. I asked probing questions following this process, then moved on. Although this interview was a more drawn-out process than

the other interviews, the process produced an instant recording, which provided interpreter's summaries of when the interviewees' responses were longer than a few words or sentences. To resolve any issues with these summaries, which aided in the continuity of the interview, a transcript of the entire recorded interview word for word was provided later by the interpreter.

One limitation was that only one of the journalists interviewed was from a newspaper that had been selected for the study. Another limitation was that only three of the journalists had reported on the rhino horn trade personally. However, all of the newspapers that the journalists worked for reported on the rhino horn trade and all of the interviews contained insights that pertained to the reporting of the rhino horn trade, hence providing relevant data. It should be noted that journalists in Vietnam tend not to specialise in the rhino horn trade, IWT or the environment (Journalist 4). As a result, few journalists have expert knowledge in this area, further justifying the importance of interviewing a range of experienced journalists. Additionally, journalists in Vietnam tend to be part of a large network and community of journalists, which enhances their broader knowledge of other journalists and newspapers. This shared knowledge is achieved through face to face interactions (e.g., in news rooms and at press conferences), word of mouth and through online networks (Journalist 4). The journalists interviewed all possessed at least ten years' experience working in Vietnamese news rooms. They were knowledgeable about the newspapers selected for the study, some having worked in them themselves previously or by having friends, former colleagues and contacts that have worked or work there. The interviews showed that the journalists interviewed were familiar with the rhino horn trade and its reporting. The interviews also showed the journalists' familiarity with the work of the ENGOs that provided information to journalists about the rhino horn trade, given that ENGOs email press releases to between 500 to 1,000 journalists across Vietnam (ENGO Personnel 1).

In relation to RQ3, the journalists were able to comment generally regarding factors that influence frames, such as journalist routines, the pressures and constraints they work under and their own and shared ideologies. They spoke of key influencing factors of frames (Scheufele 1999). Some had particular strengths and knowledge to contribute. In addition, the data were able to be cross-referenced with journalists who had reported on the rhino horn trade, three ENGO personnel who work on the rhino horn trade and an expert who has worked closely with many journalists in Vietnam. Moreover, as is attested in the results in Chapter 7, the interview data illuminated the factors that influence the framing. Limitations were reduced through detailed interviews with four very experienced and respected journalists—each with over 15 years working for newspapers and some with direct experience reporting on the rhino horn trade—an expert with more than ten years of hands-on experience working with journalists in Vietnamese newsrooms and three ENGO personnel with lived experience of journalists in regard to the rhino horn trade.

3.10.2 Analysis of Semi-structured Interview Recordings

The semi-structured interview recording transcriptions were coded with reference to Scheufele's (1999) five factors that influence frames and the frames themselves that emerged from the framing analysis of the news articles. Although the primary purpose of the interviews was to answer RQ3, the topics of frames and sources also naturally entered the interviews and the respondents' answers. This provision of additional data for RQ1 and RQ2 was a benefit of the semi-structured interview method over structured interviews.

As with the news stories, a close reading and rereading of the interview transcriptions was carried out. The transcripts were printed out and an analogue coding was carried out using highlighter pens. The transcriptions were coded and highlighted to identify where the other four of the five influencing factors (Scheufele 1999) and the Criminality frames were mentioned. They were also

coded according to categories of sources, insofar as sources naturally came into discussion when the participants discussed the factors.

Through the development of the coding, a qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts was carried out to answer RQ3. This analysis was important to carry out because its results indicate how and why the rhino horn trade is framed in the Vietnamese digital newspapers. Drawing from the results of the framing analysis, the entire case study approach provided a means to understand the factors that influence specific frames.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methods employed to investigate the news framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers, to thus address RQs 1, 2 and 3. The methods used to answer RQ1 involved selecting four national newspapers to collect articles from, translating the sample to ensure an acceptable level of validity and reliability and performing a qualitative analysis of the news articles, including text and images, to identify and describe the frames. This chapter has also outlined the content analysis used to answer RQ2 about the sources behind the frames, specifically to find the relationship between categories of sources and different frames. The framing analysis and the content analysis of the news articles comprised the first phase of research. Finally, this chapter outlined the second phase, the semi-structured interview methods used with journalists, ENGO personnel and experts. These interviews were used to answer RQ3 about the factors that have influenced the framing of the rhino horn trade. The case study approach to study this setting in Vietnam, incorporating both translating and interpreting, has revealed interesting results that could not have been attained from an analysis of English language articles. The following three

chapters will provide the findings of these analyses, beginning with the Serious Crime frame outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: The Serious Crime Frame

This chapter describes in detail the first frame under the Criminality meta-frame, the Serious Crime frame. It describes the hierarchy of level 2 and 3 frames beneath this frame and the sources behind it that emerged from the news reporting. As discussed in the Chapter 3, the framing devices for the Serious Crime frame were inductively analysed and coded. Hence, this chapter contains the tables of framing devices used to identify the constituent level 2 frames under Serious Crime. It also contains a frequency count of the categories of sources behind the Criminality meta-frame and compares how the Serious Crime frame was presented in the four newspapers that were analysed.

The Serious Crime frame that emerged from the analysis of the Vietnamese digital newspapers presents rhino horn trafficking as a serious crime via a series of thematic ideas. More specifically, the frame encompasses that the trade is transnational, committed by organised criminal networks, run by people of bad character who exploit the vulnerable people they recruit as rhino horn mules, poses a security threat and may involve corruption. Words, phrases and metaphors such as ‘kingpin’ and ‘oligarch’, as well as images and graphics of smuggling and videos of poachers, come together in stories as interpretive packages to signify this frame. This frame is also the first of three level one frames directly under the Criminality meta-frame and differs from the other level 1 frames—Compliance and Lack of Enforcement—because it is about the criminals and the crime. The Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames are, conversely, about the police, the customs and the government.

Prior to describing the Serious Crime frame, it is useful to examine the overarching Criminality meta-frame. This meta-frame depicts the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue involving

transnational criminal activities, criminal groups, enforcement agencies, governments, international agreements and legal frameworks, all of which are reported in the Vietnamese media. Both text and images in the digital newspapers depict the trade as this kind of criminal issue. The data show that there are five categories of journalistic sources behind the Criminality meta-frame: Vietnamese official sources, international sources, ENGO sources, expert sources and others. The frequency count of the different sources is presented in Table 4.1 and suggests that a synergy of Vietnamese official sources, international sources and ENGO sources sponsor the Criminality meta-frame. However, it is also apparent that Vietnamese official sources (40) dominate over international (25) and ENGO (27) sources.

Table 4.1: Source categories and numbers of sources behind the Criminality frame

	Vietnamese Official sources	**International sources**	**ENGO sources**	**Expert sources**	**Others**
Criminality meta-frame	40	25	27	2 (lawyers)	7

To better understand how the issue of criminality is depicted in the news reports of the four digital newspapers, it is important to consider the properties observed during the research of news stories in the Vietnamese press, particularly as concerns the online environment. This preface is needed because frames have a hidden architecture that Entman (1993) describes, part of a structure of framing focal points (Tankard 2001). Burn and Parker (2003, p. 1) note that there is a need to 'recognize the particular properties of digital media texts' and 'explore how such texts are quite different in some ways to their pre-digital predecessors'. Additionally, one of the digital newspapers in the sample has a very different appearance to the other three.

The online stories from *Lao Dong*, *CAND*, *Nhan Dan* and *VnExpress* follow structures with elements similar to traditional print newspapers. These elements include text, photographs and captions. Although the majority of stories have a headline, one photograph and caption at the top of the story, it is not uncommon for stories to have more than one photograph interspersed throughout the story. In contrast to *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan*, which show a reliance on text-based reporting, *VnExpress* relies strongly on video stories in reporting, often with only one sentence of text providing a summary of the story. This gives *VnExpress* a different look to the other three selected publications. Other differences between the online news sites are that whereas *Lao Dong* stories feature a 'Related Story Section'—making transverse connections with related news reports—*VnExpress* features a popular 'Comment Section', enabling greater public interaction. Neither of these artifacts were included in the analysis, but may warrant further research.

Vietnamese news can also be reported a little differently to Western news, which can affect framing. For example, there are some structural differences in articles and differences in quoting and attribution conventions. There are also some differences in framing patterns. Vietnamese journalists do sometimes follow the inverted pyramid structure, which positions the most interesting recent information first. The inverted pyramid is common in Western news writing. However, it was observed in the news articles—and backed up by a Vietnamese journalist (Journalist 2)—that Vietnamese journalists sometimes follow a chronological structure. In this instance, the story starts at the beginning chronologically, meaning that the most recent, interesting details are left until last. Hence, in the context of rhino horn enforcement, the story may start with a seizure and arrest and finish with the details of a recent court case. In inverted pyramid style, the same story would start with the recent court case and include background later about the original

seizure and arrest. This can affect framing. For example, a tough sentence may not be emphasised because it is placed in the last paragraph, influencing framing. As will be discussed in Chapter 5 with regard to the Compliance frame, whereas tough sentencing signifies the War on Wildlife Crime frame, an arrest signifies Vietnam's Demonstrating Commitment frame.

It was observed that the types of stories published on the selected news websites on the rhino horn trade tended to follow the types of stories found in Australian newspapers. These types included:

1. coverage of the justice processes: rhino horn seizures, prosecutions, court trials and international cooperation
2. stories from press conferences and media events
3. IWT investigative features
4. tabloid-style stories about entertainment or business celebrities and their use of rhino horn.

Stories about the rhino horn trade appeared in a broad selection of sections on the websites. The four selected newspapers had different menu sections across the top of the story webpage; however, there were large areas of crossover. Common sections that were observed were Law, Society, Business, Economy, World, Environment, Health and Entertainment. Nguyen (2017) has argued that each section attracts a small cross-section of people, compared with the daily news in the home page. Stories about the rhino horn trade appeared across all the key sections of *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *VnExpress*. In *Nhan Dan*, the very few rhino horn trade stories over the sample period only occurred in the Law and Environment sections. Sections are usually chosen by the journalists who write the article (Journalist 6). For example, a high-profile story (*Lao Dong* 29 September 2019) about a sick baby who almost died after his parents gave him rhino horn to reduce fever appeared in *Lao Dong*'s Health Section. However, the story also featured a photograph of a rhino horn

seizure. Thus, the journalist possibly framed the story as a health issue, but the Criminality frame was also present.

Unsurprisingly, the police newspaper, *CAND*, had a more nuanced selection of sections that related to the law than the basic law sections in *Lao Dong*, *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan*. Some of these—'Against peaceful evolution' and 'Police in the hearts of the people'—were indicative of the newspaper's status as a state-run media arm under the Public Security Ministry. Other sections in *CAND* included sections about legal frameworks (e.g., 'Legal information'), local investigations (e.g., 'Tracking down a crime' and 'Investigate according to reader's orders'), international investigations (e.g., 'World security' and 'Interpol's profile') and the character of crime and criminals (e.g., 'Famous case' and 'Love, money, prison, crime'). The latter was the *CAND* category about gangs, drugs, rape, violence and robbery (Journalist 4). A possible reason for the nuancing and this degree of detail is perhaps that *CAND*, as the police newspaper, specialised in crime and police reporting.

Broadly speaking, both print and online newspapers have sections. Tankard (2001) did not regard the sectioning of traditional newspapers as a framing focal point. Nguyen (2017, p 35) has, conversely, argued that sections can act as a potential framing focal point:

> Deliberately allocating news to a specific section of the newspapers reflects the way the journalists framed the topic of rhino conservation. Being published in the section of Science/Environment and not in the top news shows that the issue was framed more as an environmental subject which could attract only a certain group of audiences and less as an urgent matter of general interest that require full attentiveness to deal with.

It was observed in the sample articles that Vietnamese journalists often paraphrase their sources rather than directly quote them and that attributions are sometimes missing. Quoting and attributing is an integral part of journalism, given that transparently disclosing the source of information builds trust in the information, the journalist and the newspaper. The paraphrasing and lack of attributing information tendencies were more pronounced in *Lao Dong* and *Nhan Dan* than in *CAND* and *VnExpress*. Because *VnExpress* ran mostly video stories, quotations in the interviews and grabs were videoed and the source or talent named. *VnExpress* stories also displayed more balance than other newspapers. In *Lao Dong* and *Nhan Dan*, information is also sometimes attributed generally—for example, to a Vietnamese government department rather than an individual official—suggesting the source is a press release rather than an interview (Journalist 2), although there are no attributions to press releases. In contrast, *CAND* and *VnExpress* contained more direct quotations and specific attributions.

Having begun this chapter with a brief consideration of the style of the digital news space in the sample, the chapter will now describe the Serious Crime frame to begin to answer RQ1 and RQ2. The Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Serious Crime frame emerged via literal references to IWT as a serious crime, but also importantly via framing devices that signified Organised Criminal Networks, Corruption and Security Threats. This may represent a shift in thinking about the rhino horn trade from when it was not being taken seriously as a crime by the Vietnamese government. Hence the frame conveys a cluster of aspects that demand attention. Using framing as a tool to elaborate on these important aspects of the rhino horn trade, this chapter will break the Serious Crime frame down according to a hierarchy of level 2 and 3 frames, further shaping the narrative around the criminalisation of rhino horn trafficking. To elaborate further on RQ2, this chapter will also explore the sources behind the

Serious Crime frame in general and provide specific examples in the respective sections. The excerpts from the newspapers are cited in the thesis via stating the newspaper title and the article date. This section of the thesis will now explain how the Serious Crime frame is judged to be a frame, discuss where the level 1 frame came from within the context of this study, define the constituent level 2 and 3 frames that sit under it and, finally, identify the key framing devices—including words, phrases, cultural nuances, photographs, videos and sources—deployed in the coverage.

The framing analysis revealed that the Serious Crime frame promoted at the global IWT conferences has strong parallels with the Serious Crime frame that emerged from the analysis of the Vietnamese news articles. The frame's definition concerns the rhino horn trade's transnational, organised, sophisticated and high-profit nature, as well as its convergence with other serious crimes via common claims that IWT is also linked to terrorism.

For a country like Vietnam where the consumption of wildlife is common in the culture, the framing of IWT as a criminal issue carries some urgency. As one *Lao Dong* journalist has quoted the Regional Advisor on Anti-Money Laundering and the Manager of the UNODC in Vietnam, Chris Batt, a few months before the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, the goal of UNODC is to take IWT seriously, while there are still rhinos and endangered species left to save: 'It's time to take wildlife and plant crime as serious before it's too late' (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2016). Further down in the same *Lao Dong* story, the UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam, Pratibha Mehta, also defines IWT as a 'dangerous' issue for Vietnam:

> This is an extremely dangerous issue not only for Vietnam, but also globally, and the United Nations in Viet Nam strongly supports the call for Zero Tolerance to crimes related to wild flora and fauna. (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2016)

These statements in the lead-up to the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference show how the Serious Crime frame is used to justify Vietnam taking a strong enforcement 'zero tolerance' approach to IWT, contesting the relaxed approach evident previously. The recent reporting of enforcement and zero tolerance in the Vietnamese news is intrinsically linked to the new perception of the serious nature of the crime and will be discussed further in Chapter 5 with reference to the Compliance frame.

A statement from WWF, which appeared in *CAND* also in the lead-up to the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, makes clear that WWF is promoting IWT as a 'serious crime', specifically in Vietnam:

> Despite many efforts, Vietnam has not been able to stop smuggling networks and prosecute illegal traffickers. WWF said that Vietnam needs to quickly issue new regulations that consider wildlife trafficking a 'serious crime'. (*CAND* 17 September 2016)

This statement could be paraphrased to explain the reasoning behind the strategy that WWF and other supranational organisations want Vietnam to adopt. Namely, that because Vietnam has been so far unable to stop rhino horn smuggling across its borders, it needed to treat the trade as a serious crime and implement a corresponding enforcement crackdown 'with a minimum sentence of 4 years in prison; arrest and thoroughly prosecute those who are involved' (*CAND* 17 September 2016). It is important to point out that under the UNTOC, the threshold prison sentence for serious crime is four years. This would also help combat a damaging and misguided view among many in the Vietnamese public who do not view IWT as serious (Wellsmith 2011). This lack of understanding of the law is reflected in a *Lao Dong* news report where three migrant

Vietnamese workers were 'shocked, unable to imagine that they had … [not just] committed a crime, but a serious crime!' when sentenced for six years in Kenya for a wildlife trafficking offence (*Lao Dong* 27 October 2019). The Hanoi Statement that came out of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference contained clear statements that Vietnam would treat IWT as a serious crime in alignment with the other conferences, as this excerpt from a *Lao Dong* (12 November 2016) news story following the conference demonstrates:

> At the conference, Hanoi's statement on fighting wildlife and wildlife trade will be approved, in which countries identify illegal trade in endangered animals and plants as a serious crime.

This news article on the Hanoi Statement clearly shows that Massé et al.'s (2020) findings concerning the Serious Crime framing at the 2018 London IWT conference apply also at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference in Vietnam. Specifically, it shows the Serious Crime frame was promoted by the Hanoi conference and by the international representatives and supranational organisations that attended it, such as Prince William, the UN, UNODC and WWF.

Table 4.2 presents data from the content analysis of the news articles, demonstrating that two key categories of sources are behind the Serious Crime frame: Vietnamese official sources (18) and international sources (12). The third category, ENGO sources, and the fourth Others category both show a smaller range of sources represented in the sample. ENGO sources numbered four and Others comprised six different sources, such as wildlife traders themselves, who are not political communicators but are, nonetheless, included in the discourse by the journalists. The sources are listed as they appeared in the translated news articles.

Table 4.2: Sources behind the Serious Crime frame

Vietnamese officials (18)
• Hanoi People's Protection Institute, Hanoi Police • Customs Department of Tan Son Nhat International • Saigon Port Area 1 Customs Branch • Deputy Sub-Department of Customs of Noi Bai, Tran Luong Bac • Mr Nguyen Khanh Quang, Deputy Director of the Anti-Smuggling and Investigation Department (General Department of Hai Official) • Le Tuan Binh, Deputy of Customs Sub-division, Tan Son Nhat Airport • Mr Ha Cong Tuan, Deputy of Agriculture and Rural Development Department • Mr Le Thanh Binh, Deputy chief of Customs Sub-Division of Tan Son Nhat Airport • The inspection force • Mr Nguyen Truong Giang, Deputy Director of Hanoi Customs Department • The Traffic Police Department, Ministry of Public Security • Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh, Head of the Steering Committee of 389 • The report of the Standing Office of the National 389 Steering Committee • General Department of Customs • Mr Dam Thanh The, Chief of the Standing Office of the National Steering Committee 389 • Security Investigation Agency (ANDT) of Hanoi City Police • The [court] indictment (according to Nguyen's testimony) • The assessment of Vietnam's CITES management agency
International sources (12)
• Steph Lysaght, the British Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam • The UNODC Wildlife Crime Report 2020 • South Africa's General Administration of Customs • Ansie Venter, South African wildlife prosecutor • Tuesday Reitano, a global crime expert and deputy director of the Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Crime (www.globalinitiative.net) • Mpetjane Kgaogelo Lekgoro, South Africa Ambassador to Vietnam • Ms Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam • US Embassy in Hanoi • The UNODC Wildlife Crime Report 2020 • Khristopher Carlson, a researcher on armed violence at the Small Arms Survey Institute • The UNODC • Chris Batt, the Regional Advisor on Anti-Money Laundering and Manager of the UNODC in Vietnam
ENGO sources (4)
• Ms Nguyen Huong, Communications Director of WCS • Document on anti-trafficking wildlife: Southeast Asia and China 2019 (TRAFFIC) • The director of a rhino conservation fund in South Africa • Dr Van Ngoc Thinh, WWF Vietnam Country Director

Other sources (6)
• Elephant Poacher (Africa) • Ho Sy N • ‘A Tr.’ • Ha • Luan • Witness/insider

As can be seen, the international sources category consists of high-level international officials such as the British and South African ambassadors, the US Embassy and representatives of the UN and UNODC, signifying international interest in the frame. It should also be noted that, although the four ENGO sources behind the frame were international ENGOs, WWF, WCS and TRAFFIC specialise in promoting enforcement responses to the rhino horn trade (Smith 2017). Hence a synergy of Vietnamese officials and international communicators are behind the Serious Crime frame.

Massé et al. (2020) have argued that the Serious Crime frame used by international stakeholders is an attempt to move governments such as Vietnam into action. This is because ‘Using the word “serious” in the definition of IWT serves to align it formally with other areas such as human trafficking, which have their own UN protocols recognizing them as forms of transnational organised crime’ (Massé et al. 2020, p. 35). Such framing also opens avenues for support from global policing apparatuses. The synergy of Vietnamese officials and International sources using the frame suggests that the Vietnam has moved into action. Arguably, this would provide IWT with a clear definition and set the issue in a clear jurisdiction by differentiating it from commonly under-enforced crimes. In the context of Vietnam, such crimes include other environmental crimes, such as polluting and waste dumping, and the smuggling crimes (e.g., wine, cigarettes and fashion) that occur routinely over the Vietnamese border.

The remainder of this chapter reveals that journalists employ a set of three level 2 frames—Organised Criminal Networks, Corruption and Security Threats—to shape and bring salience to the level 1 Serious Crime frame. These frames, and their respective level 3 subframes, are depicted in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Serious Crime breakdown into Level 2 and Level 3 frames

/ Serious Crime: framing rhino horn trafficking as a serious crime

// Organised Criminal Networks

/// Gang Hierarchy

/// Ruthless Criminals

/// Sophisticated Concealment

/// Smugglers

// Corruption

/// Corrupt Officials

/// Punishment

// Security Threats

/// National or Economic Security

/// Zoonotic*

Note: Zoonotic disease, any of a group of diseases that can be transmitted to humans by nonhuman vertebrate animals, such as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2024).

The following three sections (4.1, 4.2 and 4.3) will articulate how each of these three level 2 frames—Organised Criminal Networks, Corruption and Security Threats—are defined, how they were judged to be frames. These sections will also discuss where the frame came from in the context of this study, the coding and framing devices—including words, phrases, sentences,

cultural nuances and images—that activated it and the sources it was related to. Finally, each section will include illustrative examples from the Vietnamese news reporting.

4.1 Organised Criminal Networks

This section discusses the Organised Criminal Network frame, the first level 2 frame in the Serious Crime cluster to answer RQ1. The Organised Criminal Networks frame provides salience to the Serious Crime frame when Vietnamese journalists identify assigned roles in rhino horn trafficking as members of organised criminal networks. This section will outline how this frame signifies that rhino horn trafficking is carried out by professional crime syndicates with hierarchical structures. The frame also signifies that members are smugglers involved in transnational crime who use a range of sophisticated methods. The frame further signifies the bad character of the syndicates—stressing that they are dishonest, dangerous, evil and exploitative.

Massé et al. (2020, p. 31) have observed that during the 2018 London IWT conference, 'speakers presenting IWT as organised crime used a series of narratives that focused heavily on the structure and character of organised criminal networks' to frame IWT as a serious crime. This also occurred at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, which categorised rhino horn trafficking as an 'organised transnational crime' in the official statement. Hence, the frame represents a part of the framing push that has been occurring.

The Organised Criminal Networks frame that emerged from the analysis of the Vietnamese digital news was the first of the three key frames signifying that the rhino horn trade is a serious crime. The frame demonstrates that the Vietnamese news portray the illegal rhino horn trade as being committed by organised crime networks, established and operating transnationally over time. Pruss (2014) has noted that the German Federal Police have described organised crime as involving three

or more persons who are assigned to perform tasks for profit. It emerged from the data that Vietnamese journalists describe many aspects of the organised criminal networks behind the rhino horn trade. Hence it is necessary to break the frame down into four subframes (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: The level 3 frames under the Organised Criminal Networks frame

// Organised Criminal Networks

/// Gang Hierarchy

/// Ruthless Criminals

/// Sophisticated Concealment

/// Smugglers

To answer RQ1, the following four subsections will outline how journalists communicate the four key aspects of the organised criminal networks trafficking rhino horn. The four aspects or four level 3 frames are: Gang Hierarchy, Ruthless Criminals, Sophisticated Concealment and Smugglers. The Gang Hierarchy frame, which is described first, is the most detailed of the four. The sections for the following three are briefer.

4.1.1 Gang Hierarchy

In the breakdown of subframes under the Organised Criminal Networks frame, the first in the level 3 frames in the news reporting, the Gang Hierarchy frame, conveys that rhino horn trafficking occurs through diverse types of networks that operate with hierarchical structures. There are numerous ways a journalist communicates that the crime entails a network rather than just an individual acting alone. For example, the journalists enact the level 3 Gang Hierarchy frame by talking about the criminals in terms of gangs, hydras and organised crime groups that may be made

up of extended families, villages and legitimate businesses. A rich selection of terms depicting gangs emerged from the sample and are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Framing devices that signify gangs

Gang, gangs, smuggling line, wire, chain, trade line, line of trading, trafficking lines, international criminal organisations, global wildlife trafficking, smuggling groups, criminal networks, crime groups, secret groups, organised crime groups, new global mafias, hydra, crime syndicate, system of sly merchants [sellers of black-market goods], the Corleones [the fictional Italian/American mafia family that is the subject of the Godfather movies]

Occasionally, as this excerpt demonstrates, journalists provide some analysis of these organised networks: 'Another feature of the new global mafias [involved in the illegal rhino horn trade] is that they are all multi-million-dollar businesses, with better resources than the law enforcement agencies charged with catching them' (*CAND* 26 February 2019). Analysis of the articles has also shown that the Gang Hierarchy frame was enacted when journalists used terms for gang bosses. As illustrated in Table 4.4, this analysis revealed a rich collection of terms.

Table 4.4: Framing devices used to depict the leaders in a gang hierarchy

'boss' of rare animal products, kingpin, oligarch, boss, giant, tycoons, mandarin, tycoon of the wildlife trade, the leader of a large wildlife smuggling line, leaders of major transnational wildlife trade lines, 'boss of animals', big man, high tigers, giants of the animal trade

Analysis revealed journalists also use verbs in the stories—such as 'commanded' and 'leading'—that depict groups with leaders. In addition, the names of some of the better known and publicised bosses involved in transnational IWT syndicates that appear in the Vietnamese news could be argued to be synonymous with 'kingpins'. For example, Nguyen Mau Chien, Boonchai Bach, Vixay Keosavang and Chumlong Lemtongthai would be recognised IWT kingpins that enact the level 3 Gang Hierarchy frame in Vietnamese digital newspapers.

Journalists also signify the Gang Hierarchy frame when they report the roles of various members. Descriptions of syndicate operatives, such as ‘poachers’, ‘brokers’, ‘mules’, ‘dealers’, ‘couriers’, ‘recruits’ and ‘drivers’, also emerged from the analysis of the news reporting. In terms of this frame, the rhino horn seizures at airports placed attention on the couriers or passengers that carried the horns. In some instances, subsequent prosecutions and court cases are reported with more details, elaborating on how the groups are organised and operate. For example, one news story describes a dealer’s ‘acts of buying and selling rhino horn at home’ (*Lao Dong* 14 June 2019). The story included a photograph of the rhino horn deals that were seized (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Individual deals of rhino horn (photograph, *Lao Dong* 20 May 2020)



The data has also revealed that reporting refers to both supply and demand sides of the organised criminal networks: rhino poaching in Africa and trafficking to Vietnam. The newspapers vary in the provision of a comprehensive story, with their focus unsurprisingly on Vietnam rather than the supply country, Africa. Some stories in *CAND* and *VnExpress* provide details of rhino poaching, poachers and organisers in Africa (see *CAND* 7 August 2019; *VnExpress* 28 July 2017). In a video story about rhino horn and ivory smuggling in *VnExpress*, an actual elephant poacher in Africa was interviewed with his face concealed (the video was not made by *VnExpress*, rather attributed to the *VICE* media organisation). In the interview, the poacher discusses the next link in the chain, 'the collector', to whom he delivered the elephant tusks. In *CAND*, supranational sources and African enforcement personnel are quoted as to the involvement of 'criminal gangs around the world'. An African enforcement officer discusses the poaching in Africa and how the poachers are easily recruited from poor communities: 'The key players usually have no problem recruiting in the villages around Kruger National Park' (*CAND* 26 February 2019). Overall, *CAND* and *VnExpress* provide a fuller picture of the transnational nature of the networks than *Lao Dong* and *Nhan Dan.*

The assigned roles discussed in the Vietnamese news have similarities to some categories that have been established by experts regarding the different levels of rhino horn syndicates. Some of the roles in the South African National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit's description of the organised crime tiers (Milliken & Shaw 2012, p. 12) can be applied to the OCN roles that were revealed in the analysis of the Vietnamese digital newspapers. Key examples of crossover are tiers 4 and 5: couriers, buyers, importers, dealers and consumers. The tiers are as follows:

- Tier 1: poachers and the illegal killing of rhinos in Africa
- Tier 2: local buyers and rhino horn couriers who receive the horns from the poachers in Africa
- Tier 3: couriers, buyers and exporters who consolidate horns from all sources in Africa
- Tier 4: international buyers, exporters, importers and couriers linking Africa to distant markets
- Tier 5: rhino horn dealers and consumers in the end-use markets.

The reporting is illuminating on the syndicate structure. There are detailed descriptions of how the rhino horns are passed along the chains. For example, one news story describes a Vietnamese man named Pho who flew from Angola to Hanoi with a suitcase containing two rhino horns. The journalist writes of interaction between Pho and other operatives in the rhino horn trade network, attributing the information to the 'first instance judgement' of the People's Court of Hanoi:

> At the investigative agency, Pho confessed that during his construction work in Angola, he knew a man named Anh who was a construction contractor (identity unknown). Anh hired Pho to transport from Angola to Vietnam, a suitcase with blue gas cylinders containing 2 pieces of rhino horn. When he returns to Vietnam, Anh will send someone to meet Pho to pick up the goods. Pho accepted Anh's request and brought the suitcase from Luanda Airport – Angola, transited through Bangkok – Thailand to Noi Bai International Airport when it was discovered and arrested by the authorities. (*CAND* 29 November 2017)

In contrast, reporting may also obfuscate the role in the chain that an individual plays. Rather than using terms 'mules' or 'couriers', journalists often discuss rhino horn couriers as 'passengers' who are illegally 'transporting' rhino horn in their 'luggage' on a flight or in a car, train or bus, such as in the following excerpt (*Lao Dong* 20 May 2020): 'A passenger on a bus 14B-029.43 in the direction of Ha Long to Mong Cai—hidden behind in luggage was nearly 3.2 kg of rhino horn'.

The story then revealed that the man was delivering the horn to a ‘Chinese man’ across the border, hence the term ‘courier’ would have been more succinct and accurate than passenger. The term ‘courier’ would also be a stronger signifier of Gang Hierarchy than passenger.

Analysis revealed that investigative stories into the wild animal parts trade also provide important insights into gang hierarchy. *Lao Dong* undercover investigative journalists, who posed as customers, conducted investigations in IWT villages along the Lao border, finding people with connections along the chains that trade in rhino horn. For example, one of the village traders revealed to the undercover journalist that ‘Even the rhino horn and ivory I can grant you, the order of a hundred million dong [Aus$6,333; Xe Currency Converter 5 July 2023]’ (*Lao Dong* 6 February 2018; also see *Lao Dong* 9 February 2018). This shows a web of connections and associations between these traders who mostly trade in wild animals and traders in rhino horns.

The stories that reveal the Gang Hierarchy frame can be both episodic and thematic. They include seizure stories involving couriers or ‘passengers’ carrying rhino horns in their air luggage, or in cars or buses crossing the border to China, Laos or Cambodia, or seizures of unaccompanied check-in baggage or unclaimed air freight. Thematic stories, such as investigative features or stories taken from court, ENGO or police reports, include more detailed descriptions of the trafficking and the structure of the gangs. To answer RQ2, the sources behind this frame will be discussed in more detail at the end of this section.

The four newspapers that were analysed varied in the way this frame was presented. *Nhan Dan*’s small sample presents nothing, or very little, about roles and hierarchies in an organised criminal network. Although two of the seven *Nhan Dan* stories were about seizures, in both stories the journalists only used general terms—such as suspects, subjects, people and passengers—to

describe the people apprehended by police or customs at the border. Hence the terms they use do not act as framing devices to signify the individuals were part of a network. If anything, they suggest that the smugglers acted alone. Neither *Nhan Dan* story suggests that these 'suspects' were or were not working with anyone else. One story suggests they were working alone as they confessed they 'were going to sell through the border gates to China to make a profit' (*Nhan Dan* 25 May 2018), with no mention of a buyer or receiver having been previously organised. Because *VnExpress* did not do any investigative journalism and did not report court cases, they had very thin analysis of the organised network nature of the rhino horn trade, except in one key story that described how the rhinos were poached in Africa, transported in planes to Vietnam then sold in Vietnam. *Lao Dong* published investigative pieces and *CAND* published feature-style stories that may have helped the reader to better understand the organised network nature of rhino horn smuggling. These stories provide data that would be useful for enforcement agencies to investigate further.

The analysis revealed that, in this frame, journalists use Vietnamese cultural nuances and metaphors to describe the bosses of these networks (see, e.g., Table 4.4). *Lao Dong* and *CAND* journalists tended to be freer with cultural nuances, using terms such as 'giant', 'oligarchs', 'mandarin' or 'tycoon'. For example, 'All of the giants who traded containers of wild animals were very clever' (*Lao Dong* 6 February 2018). *CAND* also gave bosses nicknames like 'Tiger Chien' for Nguyen Mau Chien, perhaps the highest-level rhino horn trader arrested and sentenced in Vietnam so far. *VnExpress* journalists did not use slang terms or nicknames. *Nhan Dan* did not mention bosses in any sense. *VnExpress* described the boss, Nguyen Mau Chien, in very different language to *CAND*. Whereas *CAND* had called him a 'giant', nicknaming him 'Tiger Chien', *VnExpress*—a digital newspaper that has a reputation for objectivity (Eek & Elstrom 2008)—

described him as ‘leading a large line of illegal trade in rhino horn’. The cultural influence, via cultural nuances on the Organised Criminal Networks frame, will be discussed more fully in the final chapter.

The textual analysis also showed that Vietnamese digital newspapers made use of popular culture references to signify Gang Hierarchy. This excerpt from an ENGO in a *CAND* story has a reference to the famous Hollywood mafia movie, *The Godfather* (*CAND* 25 January 2018), that lends a popular understanding to the rhino horn trade:

> Steven Galster, founder of the anti-wildlife organisation (Freeland) in Thailand, said Boonchai Bach’s arrest was historic. ‘It’s like capturing one of the Corleones—fictional mafia family members’.

Interestingly, if somewhat confusingly, journalists use the same slang terms, such as ‘giants’ or ‘monarchs’ or ‘tycoons’, to describe both the leaders of rhino horn trafficking syndicates and their rich customers, assumedly because of their wealth. However, the journalists tend to not specify who the wealthy customers are. This may be because among the customers are government officials (Nguyen 2017). This exclusion and the use of slang is important to note in this frame and will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The data from the framing analysis showed Gang Hierarchy is sometimes framed in terms of familial ties, wildlife trading villages and legitimate businesses that are involved in the complicated chains carrying out the rhino horn trade. The digital newspapers describe how family ties factor into the gang hierarchy. Wives, nephews, brothers, nieces and couples are involved. An illustration of this is in the collection of stories in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* that describe the bust and subsequent court case of the ‘famous’ wildlife Vietnamese kingpin, Nguyen Mau Chien, whose network

included his wife, three nephews and nieces in his home town near Hanoi. Another example is when *CAND* refers to the Boonchai brothers, who head major transnational IWT syndicates based in Thailand (*CAND* 25 January 2018). The depictions in the digital newspapers of familial ties or extended family involvement in the Vietnamese syndicates is highlighted by transnational criminologist Luong (2019).

Another way that Gang Hierarchy is signified is in the articles about wildlife trade villages. Undercover investigative journalists for *Lao Dong* describe villages near the Lao border in Vietnam's north as having large open markets specialising in illegal wildlife smuggled from Laos. The journalists interview police and customs along the border as well as the wildlife trading bosses who boil up wildlife parts for the customers. From these interviews and the journalists' own observations, it is signified that entire communities on both sides of the border are involved and financially dependent on the trade in wild animals. Descriptions of how intrinsic the wildlife trade is in the villages includes, 'They hang poles of wild animals along the highway to sell' and 'They collect rare and precious animals in a relatively open wholesale place' (*Lao Dong* 8 February 2018). The analysis of a series of investigative features in *Lao Dong* revealed that the wildlife trading bosses in villages, such as Hat Lot, who were interviewed by undercover journalists have connections that could also get rhino horn. Hence these villages are framed in the articles as a part of the structure of rhino horn trafficking networks.

Journalists also frame Gang Hierarchy in terms of the networks' use of commercial or business-like structures. Pruss (2014) has stated that the German Federal Police describe business-like structures as features common to organised crime. It emerged from the textual analysis that Vietnamese IWT gangs would use an extensive range of businesses and companies (e.g., garages, construction companies, car sales, butchers, fish shops, restaurants, markets and beer shops), as

well as social media (e.g., Facebook, Weibo, Zalo). *CAND* quotes the South African rhino horn trade academic researcher, Annette Hübschle, who explained 'that wildlife trafficking networks also use companies as fronts' (*CAND* 2 February 2019). When reporting seizures, the journalists also often reported that when they smuggled rhino horn as either air or sea cargo, traffickers used company names on their bill of lading, which carriers issue on delivery. This is demonstrated in the excerpt below:

> According to functional forces, this is a shipment of Empire Group Co., Ltd. based in Phu Nhuan District, transiting to Vietnam to Cambodia. On the record, this company declared as asphalt, packed in more than 100 drums. (*Lao Dong* 9 June 2017)

Some of the official Vietnamese sources behind the frame were documents rather than people. It was observed that when journalists use official, publicly available documentation, such as court transcripts (see, e.g., *CAND* 29 November 2017), or Department of Public Security, customs or police reports (see, e.g., *CAND* 30 January 2018) as sources of information, the news reports contain considerable detail about gang operations. This may be significant because it suggests that the collection of case information by the police, customs and courts that is made available to journalists may provide a substantial source of information on the hierarchy, the members, their roles and the legitimate businesses involved in the rhino trade. Journalistic investigations into the wildlife trading villages potentially also contain insights into rhino horn trade syndicates' structures. The analysis revealed that IWT traders along the border with Laos claim they have the connections to get rhino horn. Hence, these traders whose comments the undercover journalists use in their stories are another type of source behind the Gang Hierarchy frame.

This section has described the first level 3 frame, Gang Hierarchy, under the Organised Criminal Networks frame under Serious Crime, showing that the digital newspapers in Vietnam have a

degree of complexity breaking down the Serious Crime frame into three levels. When the journalists report on cases of the rhino horn trade, they sometimes enact the Gang Hierarchy frame. The analysis of the news articles showed that through depicting a hierarchy to the gang members and their roles, the Gang Hierarchy frame is a part of the Organised Criminal Network frame. This signifies that the rhino horn trade is a Serious Crime. To answer RQ2, analysis has shown that key sources behind the Gang Hierarchy frame are official reports such as police, customs and court reports and journalistic investigations where wildlife traders are interviewed surreptitiously. These sources of information enact the frame through the details about the criminals and criminal activity they tend to contain. Hence, the news articles tend to validate global elite broader claims that the rhino horn trade is a serious crime. Having outlined the Gang Hierarchy frame, the next section will discuss the way that the gangs and their operations are framed as being sophisticated.

4.1.2 Ruthless Criminals

As shown in Figure 4.2, the second level 3 frame under Organised Criminal Networks that emerged from the analysis of the coverage, focuses on the ruthless character of organised crime groups. The Ruthless Criminals frame uses a variety of words and cultural nuances that will be described in this section.

This section, to answer RQ1, will discuss the various ways the character of the rhino horn trade syndicates is framed as ruthless. It will outline how the Ruthless Criminals frame in the Vietnamese press has parallels with how the London 2018 IWT conference framed the bad character of the illegal networks. It will also illustrate the cultural influences on this frame and how the framing of the networks as evil portrays them as folk devils (Cohen 1972).

Vietnamese journalists frame the character of the rhino horn syndicates in a variety of negative ways, depending on which newspaper they work for and the type of story. Journalists tend to frame criminals as being violent and of bad character (Cohen 1972; Hayle 2013; Orsini 2017). *Lao Dong* uses colourful terms to describe the character of the gangs as being of bad character, with *Lao Dong* journalists using words such as 'dirty', 'dangerous', 'creepy', 'selfish', 'sleazy'', evil', 'ruthless', 'cunning' and 'dishonest'. This framing was similar to the way the 2018 London IWT conference framed the gangs as 'ruthless', 'unscrupulous', 'despicable' and 'evil' (Massé et al. 2020). The correlation between the framing in the news reports and the London 2018 IWT conference is exemplified in *Lao Dong*'s portrayal of the gangs as evil through a myriad of the words, cultural nuances and images that the journalists use. In *Lao Dong* articles, words in Vietnamese that translate into English for 'creepy', 'selfish', 'sleezy' and 'bogus' are combined with phrases that articulate stronger condemnations, such as 'inhumanity' and 'barbarism'. Other language that journalists use, particularly in *Lao Dong* investigative features, evoked one's senses in their depictions of evil. For example, the journalists used phrases like 'smells of death' and 'not for the faint of heart'.

Lao Dong stands apart from the three other newspapers in their character assessment of members of the networks, particularly in reporting on wildlife trading villages. Their journalists portray these members metaphorically. For instance, 'Ha's laughter screeched through her teeth, reminding me of wild animals baring their teeth'. The journalists described the house where illegal wildlife was traded as a 'lair' or a den, inviting the audience's imagination, as they also did with descriptions of the suffering animals that they found there: 'the [dead] monkeys are curled up like babies' and 'the [dead] animal rolled its eyes, its mouth fluttered as if crying and begging'. The use of metaphor is

a very strong signifying framing device (Gamson & Modigliani 1989), and is presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Metaphors and cultural nuances used in *Lao Dong* investigative articles to describe the Ruthless Criminal frame

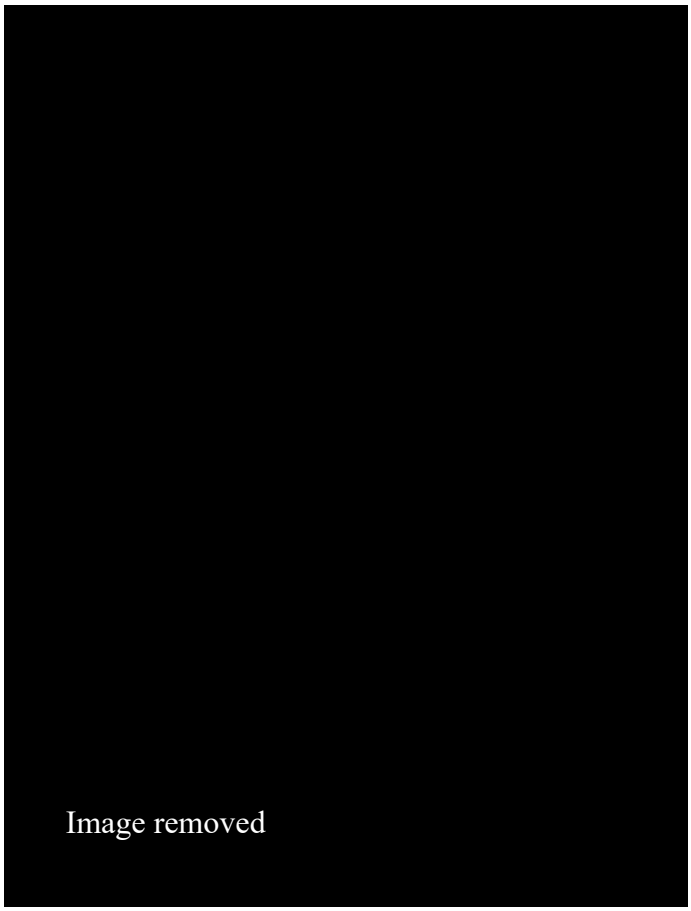
- inhumanity, barbarism, tragic, lair, den
- the monkeys are curled up like ... babies
- the poor lynx
- the animal rolled its eyes, its mouth fluttered as if crying and begging
- not for faint of heart
- smells of death
- the tragic truth at the bottom of the pot
- the blood of wild animals, from the cauldron of fire to the 'top of the sky'
- Ha's laughter screeched through her teeth, reminding me of wild animals baring their teeth
- it [the dead deer] lies with its teeth bared, its eyes wide as if lamenting
- dead animals still put their hands together and bow
- the mother bear dies, the cubs find their mother lying down waiting for food, caught, brought back to raise, they cry to death
- scabies peeling, looks like a black steel beast
- the animals cupped their hands in front of their eyes trembling begging
- decades of filthy captivity, being sucked for bile, the bears hand became a place to inject tens of thousands of injections and shoot anaesthetics 2 or 3 times a day

As this table of metaphors demonstrates, *Lao Dong* investigative journalists go further than short news reports in signifying the organised networks as ruthless when they describe them as evil. In a series of four investigative articles included in the sample, two *Lao Dong* investigative journalists use a range of cultural nuances and metaphors to emphasise the bad character of wildlife traders. The journalists went undercover acting as customers to meet wildlife trade dealers on both sides of the Lao border. Although the main trade of these people is in tigers and cooked, locally sourced wild animal parts, meat and bones that came across the border from Laos, the journalists reveal that the traders are also dealing in rhino horn as this statement from a trader indicates: 'I invite you to drink wine with tiger skeleton, rhino horn, all delicious dishes'. The series is entitled 'The blood

of wild animals, from the cauldron of fire to the "top of the sky"'. The title illustrates the use of cultural nuances as framing devices. The term, 'the blood of wild animals [or beasts]', is a term that Vietnamese journalists use to describe a man who has no self-control. The term is sometimes used in the Vietnamese press to describe rapists (Journalist 4). Hence there is a strong cultural influence on the Ruthless Criminals frame, with the journalists linking to existing rape metaphors to signify the character of the syndicates. The reference to a man who has no self-control could also be taken to mean that the wildlife traders are insane and in need of treatment rather than punishment. Nevertheless, this investigative journalism using undercover means only seems to investigate the wildlife trade on the Lao border, of which rhino horn is a part, rather than specifically targeting rhino horn. Investigations directly into the rhino horn trade seem to be lacking.

The *Lao Dong* investigative series is, however, rich in visual images that also activate the Ruthless Criminals frame. Photographs taken by undercover journalists with a hidden camera in the four *Lao Dong* investigative features focus on the evil character of IWT with photographs of dead, sick or caged animals. These included depressing images of dead wild animals hanging from snares and traps, animals soaked in alcohol in bottles and jars and sick animals and mangy starving tigers in cages, begging the question what kind of evil monster would do this (see, e.g., Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Cruelty to traded animals: photograph taken by undercover journalists on the Lao border (*Lao Dong* 9 February 2018)



Vietnamese journalists in three of the selected newspapers signify that rhino poachers are evil through the very descriptive language of the brutality they inflict on rhinos. Analysis of the news stories shows that *VnExpress* publishes videos with graphic images of rhinos that have had their horns brutally removed, whereas *CAND* provides descriptions of the cruel character of poachers. Such descriptions, as illustrated in the excerpt below, from an international source, Ansie Venter, a South African wildlife prosecutor, are potentially able to provoke emotional responses from the audience:

> Ansie Venter describes the ‘dirty’ [nature] of this type of crime. The giant rhinos were helpless and immobilised at the muzzle of a shotgun before their horns were sawed off while still alive and conscious. Then they bleed to death. (*CAND* 26 February 2019)

Nhan Dan did not delve into the syndicates nor their characters.

When discussing the Ruthless Criminals frame, analysis revealed that there are also important exceptions as to how the character of Organised Criminal Networks is depicted. In a *CAND* article, for instance, a kingpin is referred to as famous and stylish. In some *Lao Dong* articles, rich buyers and consumers of wild animal parts such as rhino horn are called ‘gentlemen’ with a playful character. These exceptions to the rule of portraying those involved in the rhino horn trade as evil, plausibly reflect cultural influence. This is because there is strong culture of status connected to rhino horn in Vietnam, and the consumption of rare and expensive wildlife parts, such as rhino horn, can be a display of status. Hence there is some duplicity in the framing of the rich buyers of rhino horn. It is possible that some buyers are government officials (Nguyen 2017), a point that will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The analysis of the Ruthless Criminal frame in the news stories revealed that a key aspect of the ruthless character of the organised criminal syndicates is how they exploit vulnerable people to act for them. The articles in the sample sometimes refer to Vietnamese couriers as vulnerable pawns in the rhino horn trade, who are exploited by those higher up in the gangs. This aligns with Massé et al.’s (2020, p. 38) observation that higher level syndicate actors prey on vulnerable people to take the ‘high-risk/low-reward’ jobs. For example, it was reported in *Lao Dong* (20 May 2020) that a courier who was arrested at the border was only paid ‘2 million dong’ or roughly Aus$128 (Xe Currency Converter, 6 July 2023) for attempting to smuggle rhino horns into Vietnam. The source of the journalist’s information was ‘a decision to prosecute the case’ by ‘Mong Cai City Police,

Quang Ninh' (*Lao Dong* 20 May 2020). In another example, both *Lao Dong* and *CAND* reported that a courier—who was only paid VND1.2 million, about Aus$76 (Xe Currency Converter, 6 July 2023), for trying to smuggle rhino horn into Vietnam from Angola—received five years jail. The news article described how the man, who was a Vietnamese migrant worker in Angola, told the court he took up the offer as he wanted to visit his son in Vietnam. 'The defendant said, it was "convenient" to return to Vietnam to visit his son, so he accepted' (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2020). The attribution of the source of the journalist's information in the story was 'the case file'. It is unclear from the report what type of case file this is. The use of such official files will be discussed further in subsection 6.3. Personal debt, as a motivating factor for recruits in the rhino horn trade, appears in two stories. Le and Gilding (2016) found that organised criminal networks exploit vulnerable Vietnamese people who are in debt, coercing them into acting as drug couriers.

CAND has a section in the online menu that relates closely to the Ruthless Criminal frame. It is worth mentioning because several stories about the rhino horn trade are under that menu item. This section, which in English is called 'Love, money, prison, crime', is known by Vietnamese readers to be about gangs, drugs, rape, violence and robbery (Journalist 4). Hence it may evoke pictures in people's minds of Ruthless Criminals.

Having demonstrated how the networks at both African and Vietnamese levels are portrayed as Ruthless Criminals in the sample, the data also highlights the theory on folk devils (Cohen 1972; Hayle 2013), which is discussed in section 2.3.2.

This section has described the Ruthless Criminal frame under the Organised Criminal Network frame of the Serious Crime frame. It has shown how the networks and members are portrayed by journalists as having bad character and that this is exemplified in the *Lao Dong* coverage of the

wildlife trade villages and in reports of how the syndicates exploit vulnerable people to take on the high-risk, low-profit jobs of trafficking. The sources behind these frames tend to be Vietnamese official sources, international sources and investigative journalists. The next section will examine the third level 3 frame with which journalists signified that rhino horn trafficking was carried out by organised criminal networks: the Sophisticated Concealment frame. This was activated when journalists described the sophisticated modus operandi and concealment methods of the syndicates.

4.1.3 Sophisticated Concealment

This section outlines the findings that show that Vietnamese journalists also frame the rhino horn networks in terms of the elaborate methods and strategies they employ to carry out their illegal activities to avoid detection by authorities. The Sophisticated Concealment frame has correlations with Massé et al.'s (2020) observations of how speakers at the 2018 London IWT conference framed IWT as a serious crime: speakers at the conference described the organised networks as 'sophisticated', as well as professional and coordinated 'rather than opportunistic' in how they operated.

It emerged from the framing analysis that a key way that Vietnamese journalists point to the professionalism of the networks is when they describe the methods of concealment of rhino horn in luggage and freight. The framing analysis revealed that this was done both textually and visually, with the source of both information and photographs being mostly Vietnamese official sources. In perhaps the most elaborate case of concealment that emerged in the analysis, a large amount of rhino horn (55 pieces, 125 kg) was hidden in heavy plaster blocks transported in air cargo to Noi Bai Airport in Hanoi (*CAND* 29 July 2019; *Lao Dong* 28 July 2019; *Lao Dong* 6 September 2020). The sources of the information used by journalists when the shipment was intercepted was the General Department of Customs (*CAND* 29 July 2019), with a 'decision to prosecute' issued by

the ‘Hanoi Police’ and approved by the ‘Hanoi People’s Protection Unit’ (*Lao Dong* 6 September 2020). Photographs issued by customs show customs officers breaking the plaster blocks open with steel bars. The analysis also revealed that, in the investigative stories discussed in the previous section, *Lao Dong* journalists used wildlife traders themselves as a source of information regarding the sophisticated ways they hide rhino horns and evade authorities.

In addition to reporting how the syndicates physically hide rhino horns, journalists refer to some of the ways that the networks conceal their identities, sell on the internet or darknet while keeping their identities secret, transport rhino horn in checked-in luggage that is undeclared and use their knowledge of flight and shipping routes and customs processes—such as ‘green channels’, which are an ‘exempt from inspection’ shipping freight category—to avoid detection (*CAND* 29 July 2019; *Lao Dong* 28 July 2019). Journalists for all four selected newspapers activated the Sophisticated Concealment frame in both episodic seizure stories and thematic stories, such as news features or investigative pieces. They used the Vietnamese words that translate into ‘sophisticated’, ‘complicated’, ‘elaborate’ or ‘trick’ to describe the concealment, trading and smuggling techniques. For example, ‘This sophisticated hidden object in personal luggage’ (*Lao Dong* 3 June 2020). They also specified that the purpose was to fool the customs officers, as attested by this statement from the Customs Department:

> According to the representative of the Customs Department at the door of Noi Bai International Airport, the subjects who trade and transport illegally wildlife products use all sophisticated transportation tricks to evade the control of officials. (*Lao Dong* 12 October 2018)

The concealment of rhino horns was often discussed when journalists reported seizures and arrests by customs or police. The journalists often reported on the clever discovery of ‘hidden’ or ‘disguised’ rhino horns by the officers. The Sophisticated Concealment frame displayed an

interplay with the Hero Officers level 2 frame, which is discussed in the following chapter on the Compliance frame. This interplay sets up a dynamic between the 'sophisticated' syndicates and the effectiveness of customs and police. This excerpt from *CAND* demonstrates the interplay between criminals and the law:

> The subjects had very sophisticatedly hidden the above rhino horns in their personal luggage such as cosmetic boxes, crockery, kettles, cookie boxes, etc. to avoid the eyes of the authorities. However, by professional methods of reconnaissance and information collection, the customs authority promptly detected and prevented the above incident. (*CAND* 14 June 2017)

News reports of seizures outlined numerous ways that rhino horn was concealed: being wrapped in aluminium foil, packed with onions, hidden in powdered milk cans or biscuit tins, transported with toys, in vases or plaster blocks. Some of these techniques are detailed in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Sophisticated Concealment framing devices (methods of concealing rhino horn mentioned in news stories)

Phrases
• hide small pieces in milk tins • stored with onions • hiding rhino horn in frozen salmon belly • in giant lobsters • rhino horn in milk powder • in children's toys • hidden in plaster blocks to blind the inspection force and the screening system
Images
Photographs and videos of rhino horns being removed from concealment from biscuit tins, teapots, food items or plaster blocks

However, it is a moot point whether hiding a rhino horn in a biscuit tin in luggage is sophisticated and whether customs need to be clever to find it. In some cases the professionalism of the syndicates appears to be exaggerated.

Journalists emphasise the sophistication of organised networks in headlines and by devoting entire thematic articles to the variety of clever methods networks use and their knowledge and exploitation of customs processes. Stories such as 'Unveiling the secrets of the "giants" of the high tigers' (*CAND* 30 January 2018) and 'Ways to hide ivory and rhino horn from Africa to Vietnam' (*VnExpress* 26 July 2017) portray the organised networks as taking advantage of the shortcomings in Vietnamese legislation and enforcement. However, journalists also present details about the authorities' efforts to identify the areas that need work. Thus, there is a balance of opposing forces and opposing frames in many stories. In the following excerpt from a VnExpress videoed interview, Le Tuan Binh, Deputy Director of the Tan Son Nhat Airport Customs Branch, states that the syndicates continually change strategies:

> They [syndicates] take an advantage of night time, night flight, sensitive period. It [rhino horn] is very seldom found in the whole piece for example. The rhino horn is very hard to hide in the whole piece so they cut it into pieces … and all attempts are different. All seized cases are different (VnExpress 26 July 2017).

Analysis of the news stories revealed that *Lao Dong* journalists go undercover in wildlife trading villages along the Lao border, posing as buyers and using hidden cameras. In the villages near Laos, the journalists uncover accounts of the screening process that wary dealers or kingpins put new customers through before meeting face to face (*Lao Dong* 2 June 2018). In the long news excerpt below, the journalist explores the tension between the secret and the blatant nature of the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in the online space where wildlife is traded in Vietnam:

> Many animals on the list of endangered and rare species such as golden mountain turtles, long-tailed monkeys or ivory parts, rhino horn, bear's claw, tiger skin … are blatantly bought and sold in secret groups. Spending a few million dong, you can own rare species on the endangered list.

> This wild animal is traded underground on websites without any control. (*Lao Dong* 20 November 2020)
>
> Just searching for the keyword ‘monkey love association’ on Facebook's social network, dozens of secret groups will quickly appear. Such groups all have from a few thousand to tens of thousands of active members every day.
>
> The superficial purpose of groups is to share experiences, understand and bring together wildlife-loving communities. However, the deeper you go inside, the easier it is to realise that the original purpose was just a cover. Most have been turned into disguised trading markets.

It should be noted, however, that the findings suggest that journalistic investigations by the Vietnamese digital newspapers do not go into the villages in the north, such as Nhi Khe, which have been made notorious for rhino horn and elephant ivory trade by undercover ENGO investigations (see, e.g., Wildlife Justice Commission 2017; Elephant Action League 2017). This may be an important distinction between the villages that are investigated by journalists and those not investigated. Groups involved in the overland transnational trade in forest animal parts between Laos and Vietnam, where the *Lao Dong* reports are based, may bear little relation to the networks involved in the transnational trade in rhino horns and ivory between Africa, Vietnam and China, which are based in Nhi Khe. The groups along the Lao border had connections that could source rhino horn; however, Vietnamese journalists do not appear to report on Nhi Khe nor do they report on the results of the ENGO investigations of Nhi Khe that were both published and supplied to the Vietnamese authorities and journalists for further investigation. The possible factors behind this distinction will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Visual images (e.g., photographs and videos) that activate the Sophisticated Concealment frame are common in three of the four selected newspapers. *Lao Dong* activated the frame with photographs, whereas *VnExpress* used a combination of photographs and videos. *CAND* had relatively fewer images of concealment methods and *Nhan Dan* had none. Images included photographs of rhino horns being chiselled out of plaster blocks, as well as photographs and videos of gloved customs hands removing rhino horns wrapped in aluminium foil from biscuit tins. It is notable that although Vietnamese news stories feature images of rhino horn being simply concealed in containers or food items in luggage, the stories still refer to the concealment as sophisticated. Figure 4.5 shows details of customs removing cut-up pieces of rhino horn from cake boxes and tea pots. As in the news text, the photographs show the interplay of the Sophisticated Concealment and Hero Officers frames.

Figure 4.5: Customs removal of cut-up pieces of rhino horn from cake boxes and tea pots (*CAND* 16 April 2019).



This section has shown how digital newspapers frame the rhino horn trade as a serious crime through depicting the organised criminal networks that carry it out as using professional sophisticated means to avoid detection. It has shown that the sources behind the Sophisticated

Concealment frame are Vietnamese official sources, such as customs and police. Although the journalists report a high level of professionalism in cases in general, this tends to be exaggerated.

4.1.4 Smugglers

This section, which continues to answer RQ1, follows on from the Gang Hierarchy, Ruthless Criminals and Sophisticated Concealment frames to describe the fourth frame under Organised Criminal Networks, the Smugglers frame. Journalists indicate the Organised Criminal Networks frame when they describe participants in the trade as smugglers. The Smugglers frame is signified when journalists report about rhino horn being smuggled into or out of Vietnam (by air, sea or road) and discuss the transnational nature of the crime. Journalists activate the frame in a multitude of ways by using words that signify the transnational nature of rhino horn trafficking—such as smuggling, trafficking, border, airport, customs, passenger, bill of lading—or through including details of the names of countries or flights along smuggling routes. Relevant words and images are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Smugglers framing devices

Words
Smuggle, smuggled, smuggling, smugglers, import, shipping route, trafficking, transport, ship, airport, customs, border, transit, contraband, transnational, by air, by land, by sea, airport, port, South Africa, Congo, Kenya, Doha, Angola, South Korea, Mozambique, Laos, Kampuchea, Singapore, Malaysia, China
Images
• Photographs of customs officers with airport interiors in the background • Video Graphic produced by *VnExpress* of rhino horns flying across a world map from Africa to Vietnam (*VnExpress* 28 July 2017)

It could be argued that the Smugglers frame is a category of crime, rather than a frame, because of the pervasiveness of smuggling as reported in the Vietnamese press. Despite its pervasiveness throughout the sample, this thesis argues that the Smugglers frame is a frame in its own right for

two reasons. First, its nature as a transnational crime is a large part of rhino horn trade being framed as a serious crime at international IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020). Second, smuggling is well established in the Vietnamese culture and media among Vietnamese audiences and journalists. This reflects Entman's (1993) point that frames occur in four sites: the text, the communicator, the audience and the culture. Hence the Smugglers frame helps journalists efficiently communicate the rhino horn trade to audiences in ways that Vietnamese audiences already understand.

According to the UNTOC, the transnational nature of IWT is the key aspect as to how the 2018 London IWT conference promoted IWT as being committed by organised crime networks and as a serious crime (Massé et al. 2020). Declarations attesting this were made during the series of global IWT conferences, including the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference (Massé et al. 2020, p. 28):

> The problem of the illegal wildlife trade [can be addressed] by adopting or amending legislation, as necessary, to criminalize poaching and wildlife trafficking, and related crimes including by ensuring such criminal offences are 'serious crimes' within the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2014 London IWT Declaration).

The series of conferences also built on smuggling's seriousness by tying IWT to threats to global security (see section 4.3). Hence the Smugglers frame is important for signifying that rhino horn trafficking is a serious crime.

As has been noted, smuggling is potentially already a part of the Vietnamese schemata, given that both smuggling in general and wildlife smuggling have a long history in Vietnam (Van Song 2008). Journalists report that the smuggling of wildlife into and out of Vietnam had been going on 'for many years' (*Lao Dong* 8 February 2018). *Lao Dong* shows that Vietnamese people and entire villages are involved in such smuggling along the borders with Laos. This *Lao Dong* excerpt shows

that it had been going on for generations: ‘Quy’s father spent many years doing business in Laos and got rich thanks to … wild animals’ (*Lao Dong* 8 February 2018).

Wild animal smuggling in Vietnam not only has a long history, it has increased with improved infrastructure (Elliott 2007; van Uhm, South & Wyatt 2021), sometimes using the same infrastructure of other serious TOCs, such as drug trafficking (van Uhm, South & Wyatt 2021). When journalists illustrate the rhino horn trade’s expanding transnational nature in their reporting, they frame it as being run by organised criminal networks, as illustrated in the excerpt below:

> Due to convenient transportation and convenient trans-Asia connection, criminal organisations can easily transit from South Africa, Congo, Kenya by sea, land and air to Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam, maybe Da Nang and Hai Phong. (*Lao Dong* 6 October 2019)

Journalists present the transnational aspect by describing Africa as the supply continent for the poaching or extraction of rhino horn and Vietnam as the end market, ‘hot market’ or the ‘trans-shipment’ point for the trade. Journalists report that the poaching and smuggling of rhino horns is one of Africa’s ‘most serious security challenges’ (*Lao Dong* 16 December 2019). Journalists often outline the transnational details of shipping from Africa to Vietnam, using customs or police sources and documents such as bills of lading. This is illustrated in the excerpt below:

> This shipment arrived at Cat Lai port on November 18, the bill of lading showed that wood products were imported from Africa to Vietnam; The consignee is Kim Thanh Import–Export Freight Forwarding Service Co., Ltd., located in District 2, Ho Chi Minh City. (*CAND* 26 November 2016)

In addition to episodic cases of reporting, there are more thematic reporting styles that provide Vietnamese readers with a better understanding of the issue. This is illustrated in this excerpt taken

from video subtitles that quote the Deputy Chief of Tan Son Nhat Airports Customs in Ho Chi Minh City:

> Mr Le Tuan Binh, Deputy Chief of Customs Sub-Division of TSN Airport said most endangered wildlife animals in the Red List of CITES Convention are from Africa so the objects are transported to some to European countries and Middle East before conveying to Tan Son Nhat Airport. (*VnExpress* 25 July 2017)

Images played a minor role in the Smugglers frame. Photographs of customs or airports suggested that rhino horns crossed borders. The most powerful image that acted as a Smugglers framing device was an animated graphic in a *VnExpress* video that illustrated how rhino horns crossed the globe from Africa to Vietnam (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Rhino horns fly from Africa to Vietnam (video graphic, *VnExpress* 28 July 2017)



This section has shown that Vietnamese journalists across the four newspapers presented rhino horn trafficking as a transnational crime, depicting smugglers as increasingly taking advantage of the supply in Africa and new transport connections operating across air, sea and land borders into

Vietnam, both a hot market and a ready point for trans-shipment. It showed that the Smuggler frame occurs throughout the news reporting, possibly supported by pre-existing frames related to Vietnam's long history and high level of smuggling in both the IWT and with regard to other contraband, such as drugs, trafficked humans, alcohol and tobacco. The journalists converged rhino horn trafficking with other serious transnational crimes in this frame. Thus, the frame supported the view of rhino horn trafficking as a serious crime and Vietnam as a place that has a long-established history of smuggling, making it a prime location for serious crime. The next section will focus on the next major aspect of the Serious Crime frame, the Corruption frame.

4.2 Corruption

Corruption is a key aspect of the Serious Crime frame (Massé et al. 2020). To answer RQ1, this section will describe the Corruption frame as it occurs in the Vietnamese digital newspapers, also referring to the sources of the information to answer RQ2. Corruption is viewed as endemic in Vietnam (Abuza 2015; Vian et al. 2012) and plays a role in the rhino horn trade (Milliken & Shaw 2012). Vietnam is rated as having significant corruption, although its corruption perceptions index score has improved slightly since 2015—from 32 to 36 in 2023 (Transparency.org 2023). Journalists activate this frame when they write about corruption as a factor involved in IWT and illegal rhino horn trading. *Lao Dong* has presented several reports on low-level official corruption in Vietnam. *CAND*, conversely, has only one report in the sample and period, and *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan* do not have any. This may be because *Lao Dong* has the strongest record of investigative journalism of the selection. Although, as shown, the frame was not prevalent throughout the 144 stories in the sample, corruption is a recognised problem in Vietnam (Abuza 2015; UNODC 2021; Vian et al. 2012). Indeed, corruption is strongly shared in the Vietnamese culture, which is a point highlighted as important in framing (Van Gorp 2007). This was a key factor in identifying

Corruption as a frame. In addition, corruption may be the most sensitive aspect of the rhino horn trade, given the potential involvement of high-level government members (Milliken & Shaw 2012).

Stories in the sample describe corrupt low-level officials and the various forms of corruption that occur at these levels, such as bribery, embezzlement and fraudulence. This section will describe how corrupt officials are framed, including their punishment and how the systems in which they operate are being rectified. The section will also demonstrate that journalists, especially *Lao Dong* journalists, employ cultural nuances and quotation marks in their writing about corruption to achieve emphasis. Although the analysis revealed that corruption is an aspect of the rhino horn trade that is little reported on in the sample, it is presented here as a frame because it is, nonetheless, recognised as an important issue that contributes to IWT (Massé et al. 2020).

In the case of rhino horn trafficking in Vietnam, the data from the analysis of the digital newspaper articles shows that the Corruption frame focuses on low-level customs officials, rather than government members. It was observed in the sample that only *Lao Dong* and *CAND* included reports where corruption was discussed regarding the rhino horn trade. The journalists do not criticise the CPV and sometimes imply corruption rather than state it. In a case where a high-level government leader sought to have a low-level customs official punished 'strictly' for embezzling rhino horns and ivory from the secure customs evidence store (*Lao Dong* 9 May 2017), the journalists use a high-level report as a source and conform with the government line that the government is being tough on corruption:

> Considering the report of the Standing Office of the National 389 Steering Committee on the case of officers of Hanoi Customs Department taking advantage of their positions and powers to swap, appropriate 156 kg of ivory [and 6 kg of rhino horn] stored in the storehouse, the Deputy Prime

> Minister assigned the Ministry of Public Security to direct the Hanoi Police Department to soon conclude the investigation to strictly handle violators according to the provisions of law.

Stories such as this one that source Vietnamese officials seem to indicate that Vietnam is tough on corruption, thus complying with its international commitments. However, international sources that are quoted suggest a tougher approach is needed. A story in *Lao Dong* on the UNODC Wildlife Crime Report 2020 is, for instance, one of only two times in the sample that a supranational organisation is attributed concerning problems of corruption. Specifically, the report is mentioned in the last paragraph in the *Lao Dong* story:

> The report urges governments to take even more robust measures to limit wildlife crime, not only focusing on seizing exhibits of smuggling, but also on tackling corruption and bribery. (*Lao Dong* 14 July 2020)

Not only is the report not emphasised—because of its placement—but no mention of this report appears in the other three newspapers. The second supranational organisation that is quoted in a story is the Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Crime (see *CAND* 26 February 2019). In both cases, these international sources frame corruption as a global issue without mentioning it in Vietnam.

Lao Dong investigative journalists report corruption but tend to skirt around the corruption issue. When they suspect low-level border customs officials are corrupt, they tend to use quotation marks around what the officials do to signify they are being dishonest. The use of cultural nuances in these *Lao Dong* stories indicates that culture influenced the Corruption frame. The findings show that Vietnamese journalists frame corrupt officials in interesting ways. ‘Defining IWT in terms of corruption demands consideration of the facilitating role of customs officials, police, the judiciary,

banks and politicians, amongst others' (Massé et al. 2020, p. 12). A key finding that emerged from the framing analysis is that the reporting of corruption in Vietnam in the period is limited to corrupt low-level customs or police officials, with one exception—a story about a possibly corrupt banker with connections in high places (*Lao Dong* 3 August 2017). In the reporting, corrupt customs officials are referred to as being at airports and along the border.

In an exclusive interview with a *Lao Dong* journalist, the Deputy Head of Customs at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi, Tran Luong Bac, discusses the issue of corruption by referring to how the syndicates have connections in customs whereby they 'shake hands' with a number of 'officers at the airport' and 'have a phenomenon of hooking up with a number of officials to evade taxes and smuggle' (*Lao Dong* 24 November 2017). *Lao Dong* and *CAND* both report on a high-profile case of a corrupt custom official who was prosecuted and strictly punished for embezzling rhino horn and ivory (*CAND* 8 September 2017; *Lao Dong* 5 September 2017) at the international Noi Bai airport in Hanoi. *Lao Dong*'s reporting of corrupt customs officials along the Lao border ventures further into the sensitive area of corruption than *CAND* does. *Lao Dong* journalists report how corruption works on the border with Laos: 'They [wildlife smugglers] often have to "report" to the corrupt control points, during the shift of that person, then freely pass' (*Lao Dong* 6 February 2018).

The *Lao Dong* journalists do, however, tend to skirt around the issue of corruption when naming certain dubious officials. For example, in a *Lao Dong* story about wildlife and rhino horn trading on the border with Laos, the journalists do not directly state that a police official is corrupt. Instead, they imply it, referring to corruption as a well-known fact:

> All of the giants who traded containers of wild animals were very clever. In dealings with us, they were blunt about how the container was checked by authorities. Temporarily we should not comment on this easy to understand 'public opinion'. (*Lao Dong* 6 February 2018)

In other examples of implying or skirting around issues, journalists use quotation marks to suggest something they do not seem to want to say directly. The following excerpts are from a story in the *Lao Dong* investigative series, 'The blood of wild animals', in which the illegal supply of rhino horn is discussed. Just as Blood, Putnis and Pirkis (2002) have noted that emphasis is achieved through placement of information and association with culturally familiar language or symbols, the exemplar of corruption in the excerpt below exhibits framing that extends to the rhino horn trade. The journalist may be suggesting the police officer knows about the smuggling and is not really 'stunned' to hear about the smugglers' tricks to conceal 'secret' bear hands on a bus:

> Colonel La Hong Phuc—Chief of Police of Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh Province—when he gave us an interview, was 'stunned' by the tricks of people smuggling rare wild animals from Laos to Vietnam. The subjects [smugglers] drove a 45-seat car to Laos, pretending to be a passenger car … The police checked every corner of the car and did not see the 'secret' of dozens of bear hands. (*Lao Dong* 9 February 2018)

In the *Lao Dong* excerpt below, the journalists question the integrity of the authorities in the southern Mekong Delta province of Tay Ninh by making an argument to the reader that if they, the journalists, can see the wildlife trade with 'the naked eye and a medium-sized smart phone', then the authorities must be able to see it too:

> In Tay Ninh, we also brought the Deputy Head of the Tay Ninh Environmental Police Department to the subject's [wildlife traders] home. But weeks have passed. When we contacted the Environmental Police comrades, it was known that an investigation was underway to catch the

> act. We—journalists, with only the naked eye and a medium-sized smart phone, can 'shake hands and face' this illegal trade anywhere. That shows that the involvement of the authorities has not been drastic, even indifferent to the active traders … Here, if not cover for wildlife traffickers, it is also a disregard for the law of the enforcers. (*Lao Dong* 27 October 2019)

The analysis showed that, as with the Organised Criminal Networks frame, *Lao Dong* journalists use metaphors and cultural nuances to signify corruption, often with the use of quotation marks. They use terms in quotation marks such as 'shake hands' (*Lao Dong* 24 November 2017; *Lao Dong* 27 October 2019) to represent the friendly connection between the syndicates and corrupt customs officials, as well as phrases such as 'road spreading' (*Lao Dong* 6 February 2018), 'pave the road' and 'porridge ladles of money given' (*Lao Dong* 7 February 2018) to describe how smugglers pay off certain officials along road, air and sea transport routes.

Lao Dong journalists also used a Vietnamese slang term for embezzlement, which literally means to 'pull the guts out' of an animal (as a metaphor for taking something out of government property), in the case discussed earlier where a corrupt customs warehouse storeman was prosecuted for embezzling rhino horn and ivory from a locked evidence store (*Lao Dong* 5 September 2017; *Lao Dong* 27 August 2018). In contrast, journalists did not use any slang in the only story about corruption in *CAND* (8 September 2017).

In the case of the banker reported in *Lao Dong*, journalists use a slang term to describe the corrupt actions of an official who fraudulently covers for a friend. The friend was a rich banker who was illegally in possession of a rhino horn without a license. The term the journalist uses for the official providing a license as a favour, was literally translated to 'holding fire in your hand'. According to the story, the Vietnamese banker, Tram Be, was caught in possession, without a license, of a full-

size stuffed rhino complete with horn. To avoid Tram Be facing charges, a well-connected contact of his allegedly covered for him by fraudulently supplying him with a license.

Increasing the punishment and enforcement efforts for corruption is a Vietnamese government initiative (Sharma, Singhal & Tarp 2021; Vian et al. 2012), with international agencies assisting in training and capacity building. The analysis revealed that although *Lao Dong* investigated several, seemingly blatant, cases of corrupt officials along the Lao border, as outlined in the previous section, punishment of corrupt officials involved in the rhino horn trade is only discussed in a single case reported in the selected newspapers in the sample period. In the prosecution of Pham Minh Hoang, *Lao Dong* and *CAND* journalists emphasise the high-level government directives to swiftly prosecute and 'strictly handle violators' when the offender, a low-level customs storeman, is caught embezzling ivory and rhino horn. The emphasis occurs in the headline, the lead paragraphs and quotations. The guilty official is prosecuted and tried within a year and is punished severely with a 16-year sentence. *Lao Dong* reports the severe sentence in the second last paragraph of the story. However, this seeming downplaying may have been a result of a Vietnamese journalistic tendency to write stories in chronological order. *Lao Dong* had run two previous stories leading up to the trial, which supports the view that corruption stories are important to journalists (Journalist 1). This point will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

In terms of the call for punishment, it is clear that the official's corrupt actions entailing embezzlement are more important to the story and the government than his involvement in the illegal rhino horn trade. This is highlighted in *CAND* (8 September 2017) when they report: 'On September 8, the Security Investigation Agency (ANDT) of Hanoi City Police said that it had prosecuted and arrested three subjects for property embezzlement; storing and trading in banned goods'. The importance to the government of the corruption rather than the rhino horn trade aspects

of the case are also highlighted by *Lao Dong*'s reporting that the civilian, who arranged the whole deal and sought to buy the large amount of embezzled rhino horn and ivory, only received a sentence of two years (*Lao Dong* 27 August 2018). Conversely, the customs official received a 16-year sentence. Thus, it was the corrupt official not the IWT that received attention by both the government and the news.

The framing of corruption also has indications that the Vietnamese government is dedicated to fixing corruption in the system:

> The Ministry of Finance shall direct the General Department of Customs to review and reorganise the management and supervision of material evidences, ensure tightness, safety and seriously carry out the work of inspection, examination of official duties and rotation of officials, set according to regulations. (*Lao Dong* 9 May 2017)

This excerpt, however, is the only mention of government directions to safeguard against corruption, suggesting a possible lack of media reporting on such efforts. One of the reasons given in this instance for the high-level attention—and for the severe punishment of the official—was that corruption damages the reputation of customs. *CAND* (8 September 2017), for instance, reported that it was a lesson for customs.

In the story above (*Lao Dong* 9 May 2017), *Lao Dong* journalists are vague about the source of the information concerning the high-level directive to prosecute the customs official for embezzlement: 'Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh—Head of the Steering Committee 389 has just given an opinion on the fraudulence of officials of the Hanoi Customs Department'. It is probably safe to assume that the Deputy Prime Minister or his office is the source of the information. *Lao Dong* attributes the General Department of Customs for other information

on the case. *CAND* also remains general, attributing the source of the corruption story to the 'Security Investigation Agency (ANDT) of Hanoi City Police'. *Lao Dong* attributed police indictments and court trial transcripts as sources for how the customs official switched the rhino horn and ivory for fakes and how he did it to pay off debt. Hence Vietnamese official sources that journalists use with regard to corruption do not tend to be attributed to an individual.

This section on the Corruption frame has answered RQ1 and RQ2. It has indicated that the Vietnamese digital newspapers report on corruption regarding the rhino horn trade sparingly and that, when they do they report it, reports either seem to be based on journalistic investigations into IWT along the border or the result of one case of a successful prosecution of a corrupt low-level customs official. It has shown that, out of all the selected newspapers, *Lao Dong*, as the newspaper with the strongest investigative journalism culture, is most responsible for letting the public know about corruption issues. It has also shown that when *Lao Dong* does report on corruption with IWT, reports are peppered with cultural nuances, metaphor and slang, as well as indirect inferences to officials being corrupt. As with the other frames, the factors that influence this frame will be discussed in Chapter 6. The next section will deal with the third and final level two frame under Serious Crime, Security Threats.

4.3 Security Threats

This section will focus on the third level 2 frame under Serious Crime—Security Threats. The analysis of Vietnamese news stories revealed that rhino horn trafficking and IWT is presented as a security threat in Vietnamese digital newspapers. Corruption, a constituent level 2 frame of the Serious Crime frame, is also viewed as an indicator of a security threat (Massé et al. 2020). However, the findings of this study revealed the two concepts were framed separately. For instance,

journalists activate the Security Threats frame when they discuss that rhino horn trafficking has grown into a national economic security issue worth billions of dollars, and that it is connected and convergent with other serious transnational organised crimes, including terrorism. Journalists also link to IWT's part in the COVID-19 pandemic, framing IWT as a global health security threat, although this connection is not made directly in the context of the rhino horn trade. The level three frames that comprise the Security Threats frame are shown in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: The two level 3 frames under Security Threats

// Security Threats

/// National and Economic Security

/// Zoonotic (COVID-19)

4.3.1 National and Economic Security

The first level 3 frame under the level 2 Security Threats frame is National and Economic Security. Along with other transnational environmental crimes, such as illegal logging and waste dumping, rhino horn trafficking has not had the security profile of other, much publicised multi-billion-dollar transnational crimes, such as human, drug and weapon trafficking (Elliott 2007). Elliott (2007) has argued that this is because security elites do not believe the problem of environmental transnational crime warrants serious attention. She argues for the need for securitisation, because environmental transnational crimes, such as rhino horn trafficking, pose serious threats. The literature shows that this has changed recently. For example, the series of four IWT conferences 'cemented' the environmental issue of IWT as an issue of 'crime and security' (Massé et al. 2020, p. 28). The data show that *Lao Dong* and *CAND* journalists—and the occasional international sources they use as sources—frame the rhino horn trade as a security threat. They do this by sometimes associating

rhino horn trafficking with, or as leveraging on, other higher profile transnational organised crimes or the high-profile global health issues of COVID-19.

It appears that Vietnamese journalists use framing devices for Security Threats along similar lines as promoted at the 2018 London conference (UK Govt. 2018). The journalists mostly quoted international sources on this frame, but also included Vietnamese officials, ENGOs and experts. Reports stated that the rhino horn trade 'negatively affects national security' in Vietnam (*CAND* 19 July 2018), has damaged Vietnam's 'economic stability, national credit rating and social security' (*Lao Dong* 3 February 2020) and has caused 'serious security challenges' in South Africa (*Lao Dong* 16 December 2019).

The analysis showed that photographs in both *CAND* (12 November 2016) and *VnExpress* (12 November 2016) depicted armed soldiers guarding and escorting cases of rhino horn at the Hanoi ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event, signifying securitisation and militarisation (see, e.g., Figure 4.8). *Lao Dong* also published photographs of armed guards guarding a rhino in Africa.

Figure 4.8: Soldiers with guns guarding cases of rhino horn at the Hanoi destruction event (photograph, *VnExpress* 12 November 2016)



Lao Dong and *CAND* both published feature articles that contain quotations that concern national security issues from a selection of primarily international sources, including the Ambassador to South Africa and Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam. The UN coordinator's quotation is strongly emphasised by its position at the top of the story and by being repeated in a subheading: 'Illegal wildlife trade is bringing species groups to the brink of extinction, while posing environmental, economic and development security [threats]' (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2016). A *CAND* article consults a selection of international security experts—including 'Tuesday Reitano, a global crime expert and Deputy Director of the Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Crime'—about the issue of rhino horn trade and how poaching teams and corresponding enforcement teams are becoming increasingly militarised. Using the global expert, Reitano, as a source highlights that source selection is a framing focal point (Das 2019; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Tankard 2001; Zhang 2021). The *CAND* journalist concludes the article with a statement linking IWT organised crime networks with a variety of security threats:

> There is now a growing consensus among security experts and law enforcement officials around the world that transnational organised crime groups represent one of the top threats to us—along with climate change, global pandemics and weapons of mass destruction. (*CAND* 26 February 2019)

Tankard (2001) has also argued that concluding statements are framing focal points, the journalist's positioning of the above statement supports the argument that IWT and the rhino horn trade are being interpreted as a security threat in the Vietnamese news media.

The analysis of articles has also shown that the Security Threats frame is signified when journalists associate the rhino horn trade with other crimes that pose a security threat. In this context, such associations point to the phenomenon of transnational organised crime networks' converging

interests in diverse types of serious crimes, including human and arms trafficking (van Uhm & Nijman 2022). Hence, discussing the rhino horn trade in the same story as these types of crimes (e.g., arms trafficking and terrorism) opens up security threat significations for the rhino horn trade.

Lao Dong and *CAND* journalists tend to group IWT with other serious transnational crimes, such as arms and human trafficking, prostitution, terrorism and money laundering. *CAND*, for instance, describes the high level of threat that IWT poses, saying that it is up there with the most serious transnational organised crimes in the world: 'It is known that the wildlife trade is a super-profitable black market, after drug trafficking, human trafficking and arms smuggling, with revenue of about $23 billion a year' (*CAND* 25 January 2018). *Lao Dong* (6 October 2019) quotes the South African Ambassador saying that IWT crime groups also have links to 'human trafficking, money laundering and terrorism'.

Lao Dong even connects the rhino horn trade with the spectre of terrorism through a popular culture reference. The news story is about a British actor and ENGO rhino horn demand reduction campaign ambassador, Paul Blackthorne, who acted the part of 'terrorist boss Stephen Saunders in the famous *24-Hour* criminal series currently on VTV1 that has come to Vietnam' (*Lao Dong* 20 May 2016). Such a specific reference to a US television show about national security, when Blackthorne plays roles in many other genres, could be argued to have the interpretive capacity of the Security Threats news frame. The level 2 Security Threats frame was further articulated through a second level 3 frame, the Zoonotic frame, which will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.2 Zoonotic

This research project concerning the news reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers and the sample period, 2016 to 2020, overlapped with the most severe year of the

COVID-19 global pandemic. COVID-19 may be zoonotic, which is a disease that can be transmitted to humans by other vertebrate animals. *Lao Dong* contained several stories dominated by how IWT poses a 'global risk to human health' (UNODC Wildlife Crime Report in *Lao Dong* 14 July 2020) because COVID-19 allegedly originated from wild animals sold in markets in China. The story originates from the 2020 UNODC Wildlife Crime Report. As demonstrated in the excerpt below, this *Lao Dong* article that discusses the rhino horn trade links the pandemic to the trade in wildlife:

> According to experts, about 70% of dangerous human diseases originate from wild animals. The consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic along with new scientific reports suggesting that the more likely that the epidemic was of wildlife origin is a warning that humanity must act immediately, stop the disease and illegal violations. (*Lao Dong* 26 May 2020)

China, which features throughout Vietnamese reporting as a country implicated in the rhino horn trade, is named as the country where the COVID-19 virus—which has caused a global economic threat and a 'significant and increasing risk to public health'—originated: 'Chinese health officials believe that the COVID-19 virus was likely to have emerged from a market in Wuhan city that mainly sells wildlife for human food' (*Lao Dong* 26 May 2020). Reporting is also in the context of China leading the world in preventing further global health security threats of outbreaks of zoonotic diseases by considering implementing total bans of wildlife consumption: 'China's top legislative committee on Monday began to consider a proposal to ban wildlife trade and consumption, believed to be the cause of the dangerous COVID-19 epidemic spreading across the country' (*Lao Dong* 24 February 2020). The journalist also used the exemplar of SARS virus to propose China's wildlife consumption as the source of global health threats.

Lao Dong and *CAND* were the only two newspapers that made the links between COVID-19, IWT and global health security in stories. *VnExpress* or *Nhan Dan* did not frame IWT as a threat to health security. The *Lao Dong* stories concerning the zoonotic disease threat were opinion pieces, arguing for stronger bans. They often had no balance insofar as they only quoted one source and provided little or no additional research done by the journalist. One of the *Lao Dong* reports featured an ENGO, the Centre for Wildlife Conservation, which sent a letter to the Standing Committee of the National Assembly and established a website for the public to support the banning of all consumption of wildlife, including rhino horn, in light of COVID-19 (*Lao Dong* 18 March 2020). This suggests that the issue of the global health security threat is treated as a strong argument to tighten laws on IWT and, hence, forms a part of the contested terrain concerning the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade.

Sources of information were international: UNODC; Mpetjane Kgaogelo Lekgoro, the South Africa Ambassador to Vietnam; Pratibha Mehta, the UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam; the 2020 UNODC Wildlife Crime Report; Annette Hübschle, a South African expert on the rhino horn trade; the IENGO WWF; the Chinese state-run newspaper, *Xinhua*; and two Vietnamese ENGOs. The security threat that IWT posed, featured as a thematic frame in some articles that seemed to be the result of significant journalistic initiative—something that is reputedly often missing in the journalistic culture in Vietnam. Overall, the frame seemed to have originated outside Vietnam but was taken up by local ENGOs and the media. The frame was used in tandem with calls for a complete ban on the consumption of wildlife, for international cooperation and the securitisation or militarisation of IWT enforcement. The militarisation of conservation and IWT enforcement, which is a controversial issue, will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 has addressed RQ1 and RQ2 by exploring the first of three Criminality level 1 frames, the Serious Crime frame, the breakdown of frames under it and the synergy of local and international sources behind it. Officially, Vietnam has adopted the serious crime definition of the rhino horn trade as written in the 2016 Hanoi Statement. This chapter builds on this, showing that the reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers tends to relate it to the Serious Crime frame promoted at global IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020). The chapter has shown that the Vietnamese journalists use three key level 2 frames under Serious Crime: the Organised Criminal Networks frame—which includes four level 3 frames under it: Gang Hierarchy, Ruthless Criminals, Sophisticated Concealment and Smugglers (transnational)—the Corruption frame and the Security Threats frame. The chapter has demonstrated through this framing breakdown—which echoes the four global IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020)—that, in an important media-and-crime sense, the rhino horn trade is framed as a serious crime in Vietnam. This chapter has shown that the rhino horn trade is being taken seriously by the Vietnamese media, government and enforcement agencies.

In particular, the chapter has demonstrated a pre-existence of aspects of the Serious Crime frame in Vietnam that may have helped to further project the frame into the news discourse. This pre-existence is exemplified by a well-established practice of smuggling in Vietnam (supporting the Smugglers frame) and articulations of wild animal traders along the border with Laos as ruthless and evil (supporting the Ruthless Criminal frame). Indeed, the Ruthless Criminal frame evokes the wildlife and rhino horn trader as a ‘folk devil’ (Cohen 1972) who are cruel to animals and exploitative of the vulnerable people they recruit for risky jobs. *Lao Dong*, known by ENGOs for

its strong coverage of IWT issues, used metaphor, catchphrases and visual images as framing devices (Gamson & Modigliani 1989) to highlight the cruelty of the traders.

The chapter has shown that the Gang Hierarchy frame—which was pervasive albeit piecemeal throughout the coverage—provides some detail to the operations of the rhino horn trade syndicates. With respect to the kingpins of the rhino horn trade, this frame is somewhat contradictory of the Ruthless Criminals frame because it portrays organised criminal network kingpins as 'giants', 'oligarchs' and 'mandarins', rather than as ruthless and evil. Rhino horn consumers are also framed in ways that indicate their power and possible wealth. Finally, the analysis showed that journalists sourced much information about the structures of the syndicates from primary sources (e.g., court transcripts and police reports), which suggests that some journalists displayed some initiative and agency regarding the Serious Crime frame and its constituent Gang Hierarchy frame.

Corruption and Security Threats frames are both frames that reinforce the Serious Crime frame. With regard to corruption, it is perhaps unsurprising that the news representation of this issue is focused on corrupt low-level officials and strict high-level responses. In addition, the analysis showed that corruption in Vietnam is not signified as a security threat in the way that international elites tend to promote. That is, the findings demonstrate international claims of a security threat posed by the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese media. There are also images of the presence of armed Vietnamese soldiers at the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event in 2016 in Hanoi, thus securitising the rhino horn trade with a deft image. A synergy of sources converged IWT with crimes that posed threats to the state, such as arms trafficking, and an ENGO source converged it symbolically with terrorism, using a popular culture reference. These associations reinforced the Security Threats frame. Chapter 4 has shown that one of the digital newspapers, *Lao Dong*, also framed IWT as a global security threat in terms of COVID-19. Having explored the first of the

Criminality frames, Serious Crime, the next chapter will investigate the Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames.

Chapter 5: The Compliance and Lack of Enforcement Frames

Given the reader is now familiar with the Serious Crime frame, it is time to introduce the Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames—the second and third level 1 frames under the Criminality meta-frame. The Compliance frame highlights what Massé et al. (2020, p. 27) found in the framing promoted at the global wildlife conference—'the increasing prominence of ideas and practices related to crime, policing and law enforcement in conservation policymaking spheres'. This study built on Massé et al. (2020) by finding that ideas of policing and law enforcement against the rhino horn trade were present in Vietnamese digital newspapers with an emphasis that, through such enforcement, Vietnam was complying with CITES. The Lack of Enforcement frame explores the reporting of practical limitations and shortcomings in enforcement concerning the rhino horn trade. The two frames—Compliance and Lack of Enforcement—have been grouped together in this chapter insofar as they both concern compliance. Compliance and non-compliance (lack of enforcement) may be at different ends of the spectrum, yet both frames concern Vietnam's compliance with CITES and Vietnam's enforcement agencies complying with their responsibilities. This chapter thus explores how Vietnam is enforcing laws against the rhino horn trade and complying with its commitments.

Focusing on RQ1, this chapter will begin by defining the Compliance frame. It will then discuss where the frame came from, define the constituent level 2 and 3 frames that sit under it and identify the key framing devices that emerged in the inductive coding, including words, phrases, news

photographs and videos. It also will explain the sources of quotations and information that promoted the Compliance frame in the news to answer RQ2.

The Compliance frame is important to understand because it is a dominant frame in news reporting. The analysis showed the Compliance frame portraying the Vietnamese government and its enforcement agencies as not just enforcing laws against the rhino horn trade, but complying with its CITES international IWT commitments to enforce laws and build its legal frameworks. The concept of compliance can be applied at several points in the process of enforcement: whether Vietnam is complying with its CITES commitments, whether law enforcement agencies are complying with the laws they are entrusted to enforce and whether individuals are complying with the laws. In this thesis, compliance refers to Vietnam properly following and implementing the enforcement and legal framework planned initiatives and programs in accordance with its CITES member state obligations. The frame, therefore, adds a political dimension to bare-fact stories about the seizures, prosecutions and political discussions associated with enforcing laws against rhino horn trafficking. The political dimension is clearly illustrated in this excerpt from the news stories in the sample: 'This activity is within the framework of compliance with the provisions of Resolution 9.14 on conservation and trade of Asian and African rhino specimens of CITES' (*Lao Dong* 16 December 2019) and, as this excerpt from *CAND* explains, 'showing the determination and commitment of the Government of Vietnam' (*CAND* 12 November 2016) to police the laws against the rhino horn trade. The Compliance frame promotes more than 'responses to IWT that are based on legal and judicial reform, criminal investigations, intelligence gathering and law enforcement technologies' (Massé et al. 2020, p. 23)—it promotes that Vietnam is complying.

In the lead-up to the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, *CAND* (17 September 2016) reported that the international community was losing patience with Vietnam's lack of compliance:

World calls on Vietnam to reduce consumption of rhino horn

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has just sent out a message calling on Vietnam to be more aggressive with the illegal rhino horn trade, which is still going strong, otherwise it will face serious threats and sanction orders.

Figure 5.1 presents the level 1 Compliance frame with its group of five level 2 frames and their respective level 3 frames, a grouping that emerged from analysis of the news stories.

Figure 5.1: The group of frames under Compliance

/ Compliance**:** how Vietnam is complying

// Demonstration of Commitment

/// Talking the Talk

/// Walking the Walk (Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions)

// War on Wildlife Crime

/// Declaring War

/// You're Busted

// Hero Officers

// Coordinated Local Investigation

// International Cooperation

As discussed in Chapter 3, the framing analysis of the news stories was inductive. Thus, once the Compliance frame was analysed, commonalities were identified in the literature. This was done in a similar way as the identification of commonalities between the Serious Crime frame that emerged inductively from the sample and the Serious Crime frame promoted at the global IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020). Commonalities between the Compliance frame that emerged from the

inductive framing analysis and Vietnam's official compliance status were found. Vietnam has a IWT 'compliance status' that is evaluated and reported annually by CITES. There are four pillars to Vietnam's IWT compliance status (WWF 2019): (i) eradicating the market for illegal wildlife, (ii) building an effective legal framework, (iii) strengthening law enforcement and (iv) sustainable livelihoods and economic development. The second and third of these are relevant here.

Each of the four pillars in Vietnam's CITES compliance status report encompasses several specific commitments. The way that the Vietnamese journalists frame the enforcement of laws against rhino horn trafficking crosses over with some of the specific commitments in the compliance status report. These commonalities are outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Aspects of Vietnam's CITES compliance status reports with commonalities to the Compliance frame

IWT commitments Vietnam has achieved in relation to law and enforcement (WWF 2019)	Corresponding Compliance level 2 frames
Strengthening legal frameworks Strengthening the judiciary Investing in capacity for specialised investigations	Demonstrating Commitment
Establishing national cross agency coordination and collaboration	Coordinated Local Investigations
Working with existing international agencies Strengthening regional and global enforcement networks	International Cooperation
Inventorying and destroying seized illegal products	War on Wildlife Crime Demonstrating Commitment

To answer RQ2, a content analysis of the news stories, as outlined in Chapter 3, was carried out to identify the sources behind the Compliance frame. The data show a synergy of sources, numbering 30 Vietnamese officials, 14 international sources, 12 ENGOs and two experts behind the Compliance frame. These sources are identified in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Sources by categories behind the Compliance frame

Vietnamese Official Sources (30)
• Mr Nguyen Truong Giang, Deputy Director of the Customs Department • Noi Bai Customs • Customs Department of Tan Son Nhat International • Can Tho Customs • Customs Sub-department at Tan Son Nhat International Airport • Gen. Tran Van Ve, Deputy Director General, General Department of Police, Ministry of Public Security • Colonel Hoang Van Ninh, Head of Traffic Police Department of Thai Nguyen Province • Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc • Hanoi People's Protection Institute, Hanoi Police • Thanh Hoa Provincial Police • CSDT Department of Public Security decision • Saigon Port Area 1 Customs Branch • Quang Ninh Police • Customs Branch of Can Tho Port, Can Tho City Customs Department • Can Tho City Police • The Institute of Tropical Biology • Customs Branch of Tan Son Nhat International Airport • Mr Nguyen Khanh Quang, Deputy Director of the Anti-Smuggling and Investigation Department (General Department of Hai official) • Mr Nguyen Truong Giang, Deputy Director of Hanoi Customs Department • Traffic Police Department, Ministry of Public Security • Ha Cong Tuan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Department • The Authorities • Lao Cai City Police • The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development • Mr Bui The Duc, Deputy Head of the Central Propaganda Department • Ha Cong Tuan, Permanent Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development • Mr Vuong Tien Manh (CITES Vietnam Agency) • Ha Thi Tuyet Nga, Director of Vietnam CITES • Vietnam Central Propaganda Department
International Sources (16)
• Mr Chris Batt, Regional Advisor on Anti Money Laundering, Manager of the UNODC Office in Vietnam • UN, in Green House meeting in Hanoi on World Environment Day • Ms Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam • Edna Molewa, South Africa's Natural Resources Minister (re opposes lifting ban) • Daniel Kritenbrink, US Ambassador to Vietnam • MK Lekgoro, Ambassador of South Africa • Mr Giles Lever, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in Vietnam • Steph Lysaght, British Deputy Ambassador

• Prince William • Craig Hart, USAID Wild Acting Director for Vietnam • Justin Mott, American photographer, the *Washington Post* • Tuesday Reitano, a global crime expert and deputy director of the Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Crime (www.globalinitiative.net) • Khristopher Carlson, a researcher on armed violence at the Small Arms Survey Institute • Mr John E. Scanlon, Secretary General of CITES
ENGO Sources (12)
• Diva Hong Nhung, ENV's Rhino Protection Ambassador • Bui Thi Ha, Deputy Director of ENV • Ms Nguyen Phuong Dung, Deputy Director of Vietnam Center for Nature Education (ENV) • Dr Philip Muruthi, Vice President of the African Wildlife Fund • Madelon Willemsen, Traffic's Chief Representative • The director of a rhino conservation fund in South Africa when he went to Vietnam • Website of the organisation 'Save the Rhino' • Teresa Telecky, Director of the Wildlife Division, Humane Society International • Neil D'Cruze, a representative of the World Organization for Animal Welfare • TRAFFIC • Susie Offord-Woolley, Deputy Director of SRI • Center for Education for Nature
Expert Sources (2)
• Quach Thanh Luc, Lawyer, Hanoi Bar Association) • Nguyen Van Danh, Lawyer, Nghe An Province Bar Association

Table 5.2 demonstrates that Vietnamese officials are more often quoted about compliance issues than the other key categories—International and ENGO sources—and slightly more than all the other categories combined. This suggests that a key message of the Vietnamese government is that they are complying (*Lao Dong* 9 November 2016). The table also shows that a synergy of Vietnamese officials, international sources and ENGOs are behind the frame. ENGOs are quoted on the Compliance frame more than the Serious Crime frame. The following statement from a Vietnamese official source illustrates the Compliance frame:

> According to customs, this is a commodity banned from import by the Government according to the list of wild animals and plants. The incident is being investigated extensively. (*VnExpress* 31 July 2016)

The following excerpt illustrates how ENGO sources convey compliance:

> Bui Thi Ha, deputy director of ENV, said that legalising the rhino horn trade goes against global efforts to conserve rare wildlife and accelerate the rate of rhino extinction. Vietnam's new Penal Code stipulates that any violation involving a small amount of rhino horn (50 grams or more) will be prosecuted. (*VnExpress* 2 March 2017)

International sources also enact the Compliance frame:

> 'The US government is committed to continuing to work with countries to fight wildlife crime and end the consumption of illegal wildlife products,' said Craig Hart, USAID Wild acting director for Vietnam. (*CAND* 28 August 2018)

Some quotations from experts were also present in the sample:

> [Under] Article 234 of the 2015 Penal Code, the subject can be prosecuted for criminal liability, the fine can be up to 7–12 years in prison for hunting, trading, transporting, raising, imprisoning. objects or parts, products of endangered and rare animals of group IIB – said lawyer Luc. (*Lao Dong* 23 November 2020)

The results suggest that a majority of Vietnamese official sources are customs and police officials. Other official sources include the Institute of Tropical Biology (whose role is to scientifically test if seized horns are rhino horn), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Vietnamese CITES Management Agency and the Central Propaganda Department. The analysis revealed that eight of the 12 ENGO sources are international ENGOs. Hence, as previously

demonstrated with the Serious Crime frame, international sources play a strong framing role with regard to the compliance issue. The chapter will now outline the level 2 and 3 frames under Compliance.

5.1 Demonstrating Commitment

The first level 2 frame under Compliance—Demonstrating Commitment—is enacted when journalists signify Vietnam's political will and commitment to comply with and enforce laws against the illegal rhino horn trade to make good on its international commitments. Thus, the frame serves to demonstrate Vietnam's commitment to comply with CITES, with news articles further acting as possible deterrents to rhino horn traffickers or anyone thinking about becoming involved in the trade. This frame, along with the other level 2 frames under Compliance, serve to build legitimacy and trust in the Vietnamese government and law enforcement agencies.

In particular, this frame is enacted when journalists provide accounts that highlight:

1. Vietnam being committed or determined to implement its international agreements and CITES obligations, further quoting relevant Vietnamese laws, penal codes and law reforms
2. Customs, police or courts making seizures, arrests, prosecutions and sentences.

Hence, as depicted in Figure 5.2, Vietnamese journalists enact the Demonstrating Commitment frame through two level 3 frames.

Figure 5.2: The level 2 Demonstrating Commitment frame incorporating two level 3 frames

// Demonstrating Commitment

/// Talking the Talk

/// Walking the Walk (Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions)

The framing analysis revealed that Vietnamese journalists use a mix of words and images to enact the Demonstrating Commitment frame. These framing devices differ from those of other frames—such as Organised Crime Networks and Corruption—which rely on cultural nuances. In contrast, the language for the Demonstrating Commitment frame seems more formal and direct. This may be because the frame is promoted by Vietnamese official sources, potentially with compliance in mind, and international and ENGO sources with compliance in mind.

Some of the most obvious and common framing devices used in this frame literally spell out that the Vietnamese government is committed and determined to act in accordance with CITES. Reports of seizures of rhino horns by the number or weight contain key nouns and verbs that describe the actions of customs and police. Reports also contain images of seized rhino horns that show that Vietnam is acting. All of these words and images act as framing devices that also express compliance. These framing devices are outlined in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Level 2 Demonstrating Commitment framing devices

Talking the Talk
Words, phrases CITES, CITES Convention, member of CITES, in accordance with CITES, implement this convention, implement drastically, implement responsibly, drastically implement effectively, annex, commitment, determination, the will, great efforts, international commitment, signed, signatory, agree, member, decisive attitude, great efforts, framework of compliance, trustworthy, following, demonstrate, resolutions, directives, made some progress, changing its image illegal, nationally forbidden, Vietnam's law stipulates, international conventions clearly state, penal Code, criminal code, prohibit law, ban, provisions, regulations, provisions, violations, penalties, procedures, provisions of Resolution 9.14 on conservation, Vietnam's criminal justice system, revised legal documents related to wildlife crimes, increasing the imprisonment and fines, amending the Penal Code to increase penalties, the regulations of the Criminal Code 2015 related to the crime of trafficking in wild animals and plants. **Images** Photographs of Vietnamese senior customs and police officials, photographs of Vietnamese government officials, photograph of Vietnamese official with CITES officials, photographs of Vietnamese government officials with Prince William
Walking the Walk (Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions)
Words, phrases Customs officers, customs branch, police, police force, authorities, inspection, detect, discover, investigate, detention, fines, seize, arrest, prosecute, the accused, exhibits, prison, jail, years, sentence, fine, billions, kilograms, numbers of horns. **Images** Photographs of seized rhino horns

5.1.1 Talking the Talk

In the level 3 frame, Talking the Talk, Vietnamese journalists report about the Vietnamese government's commitment and 'decisive attitude' (*Lao Dong* 29 November 2016). They explain that Vietnam is committed and determined to implement CITES and its associated plans—such as Vietnam's 2018–2020 National Ivory and Rhino Horn Action Plan (NIRAP)—to improve Vietnam's 'image' (see MARD 2018). The use of words such as 'reputation' and 'image' (*Lao Dong* 29 November 2016) further suggests that Vietnam is on a stage and wants to be seen to be performing well regarding compliance. When the destruction of Vietnam's stocks of seized rhino horn was publicised in news reports, the news compared Vietnam's commitment and determination to that of other countries that have destroyed their stocks. The analysis revealed that journalists

also outline the relevant laws in the articles. All of the selected newspapers display this level 3 frame. This frame is also clearly backed by official sources—through the use of quotations and photographs or talking heads (as in the case of video interviews in *VnExpress*) of officials—serving to demonstrate Vietnam's commitment and building their legitimacy in the IWT area. International sources and ENGOs also are quoted with this frame.

The headline of a *Lao Dong* article—'Viet Nam has a strong commitment to combating illegal wildlife trade' (*Lao Dong* 29 November 2016), published at the time of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference—perhaps best exemplifies this frame, its timing and purpose. The following excerpt is one of many in the sample where the journalist literally describes how Vietnam is complying with CITES:

> CITES Management Authority of Vietnam has cooperated with international and non-governmental organisations to organise training on wildlife crime, raising awareness for transport companies on the illegal wildlife trade, develop a communication strategy to minimise illegal wildlife trade, and update the provisions of the Penal Code 2017. (*Lao Dong* 31 May 2018)

Similar to the *Lao Dong* excerpt above, a *VnExpress* video grab illustrates that Vietnam could be trusted to do the right thing by their international CITES counterparts. The grab, which forms part of a video story about the 2016 Hanoi ivory and rhino horn destruction event, features Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ha Cong Tuan, saying, 'We are a CITES member since 1994 and could be regarded as a trustworthy country' (*VnExpress* 12 November 2016). This quotation seems to establish Vietnam's sense of legitimacy or trustworthiness on the world stage. News reports before and after the destruction event in the four newspapers all state that Vietnam has joined an important group of countries that have destroyed their stocks of rhino horn or ivory.

In this excerpt from *CAND*, journalists describe how Vietnam is doing the right thing in the same way as other CITES members:

> It is known that the destruction of ivory and rhino horn specimens has been carried out by many countries in recent years such as Kenya, the United States, France, Italy, Czech Republic, Philippines, Singapore … (*CAND* 10 November 2016)

It could be argued that, to provide more credibility and legitimacy to this symbolic event, the four newspapers outline how this event is witnessed by international stakeholders, including 'foreign embassies in Hanoi and some international organisations on environmental protection' (*VnExpress* 9 November 2016). In demonstrating Vietnam's commitment, journalists often adhere to the formal language of the agreements, such as Vietnam acting 'within the framework of compliance with the provisions of Resolution 9.14 on conservation and trade of Asian and African rhino specimens of CITES' (*Lao Dong* 16 December 2019).

At times, when referring to Vietnam's declarations of commitment, the newspapers acknowledge that this is a change from Vietnam's past record of not being committed to enforcing such laws. For example, the *Lao Dong* headlines, 'Going to prison for smuggling rare animals will no longer be "rare"' (*Lao Dong* 6 October 2019) and 'Changing its image to a leading country in the fight against trafficking and illegal consumption of wild animals, instead of an image as the country that consumes the largest amount of rhino horn' (*Lao Dong* 29 November 2016), neatly express a commitment for change.

Journalists signify Vietnam's national credibility and legitimacy with the Talking the Talk frame by reporting on meetings between Vietnamese officials and international government officials. The analysis showed that such reporting is more pronounced in *Lao Dong* than the other three

newspapers. Of these meetings, perhaps none report foreign approval of Vietnam's commitment more than the Vietnamese Prime Minister's meeting with the English Prince William during the Prince's visit to the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. As a symbolic figure and a popular celebrity, Prince William represents the legitimacy of the UK government, a 'global leader' in tackling IWT (Massé 2020, p. 24). The report of the meeting, along with photographs, provide another media opportunity for Vietnam to directly express their compliance, as the following lengthy excerpt demonstrates. The length of the excerpt illustrates the emphasis the journalist puts on the Prince's recognition of Vietnam's commitment:

> During his meeting with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the British Prince spoke about the relationship between the UK and Vietnam and would like to hear what the Vietnamese government is doing to address the challenges of wildlife trade.
>
> Prince William highly appreciated Vietnam's achievements in this work, especially welcoming the recent directive of the Prime Minister of Vietnam on a number of urgent measures to prevent and combat abuse of illegal wildlife species.
>
> This represents a major step forward in strengthening laws and sanctions, which is a testament that Vietnam is actively combating the illegal trade in wildlife and can become a model for study for other countries.
>
> Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc affirmed that the Government of Vietnam has a strong determination in the prevention of illegal wildlife trade and in fact, this work has always been implemented synchronously in both construction and completion of institutions and in the application of legal regulations. (*Lao Dong* 17 November 2016)

This excerpt from the news report of the meeting between Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prince William in a Hanoi alley is a strong expression of Vietnam 'talking the talk'. Through the reporting of positive validating feedback from Prince William as a source and photographs of the Prime Minister with Prince William it could be argued that talking about commitment also functions to build Vietnam's legitimacy with a world leader in IWT enforcement.

Photographs of senior officials taken in a formal context also signify the Talking the Talk frame. As frames suggest their communicators (Hertog & McLeod 2001), it follows that communicators suggest their frames. Including the face of a government official in a news story about the rhino horn trade suggests both the Talking the Talk and Demonstrating Commitment frames. Including a high-ranking official's face with the quotations in the story also gives more credibility to the quotations and more legitimacy to Vietnam's claims and actions. One such photograph was of the Deputy Director of Hanoi City Customs Department, Nguyen Truong Giang, which was included in a *Lao Dong* (3 September 2019) story that inventories customs busts, including rhino horn. It could be argued that his face adds extra weight to the claims he makes. It is, however, not only the Vietnamese officials who highlight Vietnam's compliance. International sources, including international ENGOs, tend to as well, in what seems to be a form of encouragement and diplomacy.

Another aspect of the Talking the Talk frame that journalists use to articulate commitment, which was observed in all four newspapers, was formal descriptions of the relevant Vietnamese laws, law reforms and penal codes relevant to IWT. These demonstrate Vietnam's commitment, because building better legal frameworks is a central pillar of the CITES requirements. In addition to demonstrating commitment, the publication of the laws is expressive and serves to inform and raise awareness. Goyes and Sollund (2016, p. 90) argue that 'the rules governing the trade should, ideally, also be conveyed to those who partake in trade at the bottom level; that is, ordinary

citizens', as well as to enforcement officers and government members, especially in cases where the laws are hard to understand because the enforcement agencies do not enforce them.

Pham, Di Gregorio and Brockhaus' (2017) research on the media coverage of a different international environmental agreement, REDD+, shows that newspapers may be required to show propaganda on policy achievements, showing the positive effects of government policies. This may be also true for news coverage of the Revised 2015 Penal Code. That is, it may be 'highlighted' in the news so it 'received public support' (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017, p. 74). The *CAND* excerpt below demonstrates that the news was promoting the Revised 2015 Penal Code to the public:

> The fact that the revised Penal Code 2015 took effect from 2018 with new provisions on crimes of violating regulations on the management and protection of wild animals and rare wild animals is a big change. It helped shape the penalty frame, at the same time increase the severity of criminal penalties, increase deterrence. (*CAND* 19 July 2018)

Such descriptions of laws are in formal language, particularly with *Lao Dong*, such as 'violation of regulations on the protection of endangered, precious and rare animals, Article 244, Clause 3, Point D, Penal Code 2015' (*Lao Dong* 6 September 2020). *VnExpress*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan* language was briefer and less formal than *Lao Dong*. For example, the following two paragraphs appear in *Nhan Dan* as background:

> In Vietnam, the Penal Code (amended and supplemented in 2017) has been applied since 2018 with stricter penalties for wildlife crimes in general and rhinos in particular.

> Accordingly, a subject can be punished with a maximum penalty of up to 15 years in prison for violations related to rhinoceros and rhino horn, more than double the previous regulations. (*Nhan Dan* 21 September 2021)

Journalists also activate this frame when noting when customs or police officers follow the correct procedures and regulations 'in the process of entry procedures' (*Lao Dong* 21 March 2020).

The placement of rhino horn stories in the Law Section of the newspaper also tends to demonstrate commitment. Rhino horn stories also commonly appear in the Society section and, oddly, sometimes in the Entertainment section. It was observed during the framing analysis that the four selected newspapers place the majority of reports about seizures, prosecutions and court sentencings in their law sections.

5.1.2 Walking the Walk (Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions)

The news stories that feature the Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions frame provide evidence in the media of Vietnam both talking the talk and walking the walk of commitment. It is plausible these stories are welcomed by CITES as evidence of Vietnam's compliance, given that CITES and other international IWT stakeholders rely on media reports rather than official reports (WCS 2021) for data on enforcement. This is because they say the Vietnamese government has a poor record of reporting these events to CITES (WCS 2021; WWF 2019). These types of stories demonstrate and promote to both local and international readers that the Vietnamese government is making efforts to make good on their commitment.

Journalists present stories of seizures and prosecutions by including the basic facts of the crime. Typically, the details contained in these stories includes the names and details of the offenders, the customs or police agencies involved, the name of the airport or seaport, the relevant laws and

criminal charge, one or more of descriptors of amount of the rhino horns seized—the value, weight or number of horns—and, if relevant, the prison sentence or fine. Sometimes details about the suspect confessing are also included. The journalists sometimes state that seizures are a demonstration of commitment, as this excerpt from a *CAND* seizure story clearly shows: 'Through this arrest, it once again shows Vietnam's determination in its commitment to protecting rare, endangered and wild animals' (*CAND* 8 May 2017).

This level 3 frame may help deter people from getting involved in the rhino horn trade by highlighting the real-life risks of being caught and punished. This is because the perception of being caught and punished that real-life arrests and court cases signify provides a deterrent effect (Nagin 2013). These stories progress beyond the government promises and the law reforms that comprise the Talking the Talk frame by making getting caught and punished a reality.

Although the analysis revealed that the Vietnamese digital newspapers tend to report more on seizures than court trials and sentencings, several trials were reported. Prior to 2016, jail sentences had been virtually non-existent in Vietnam for rhino horn smugglers (EIA 2013), especially for high-level syndicate members. This was because, in the early days of rhino horn smuggling into Vietnam, wildlife trafficking was still being overlooked by successive governments (Elliott 2007; Wellsmith 2011; Wyatt 2014), giving rise to the perception by criminal syndicates that IWT was a high-profit, low-risk criminal activity—especially when compared with serious transnational organised crimes like drug trafficking where there are very stringent customs procedures, such as drug sniffer dogs, and heavy consequences for being caught. Hence, there were repeated recommendations for all countries to ensure penalties are commensurate with the crime and act as a deterrent. It is plausible that Vietnam is keen to demonstrate and promote, via state-owned media, that it is sentencing rhino horn smugglers to jail as a response to pressure from CITES. For example,

CAND states in story called '30 months of action against the ivory, rhino horn trade' that '37 defendants were sentenced to less than 3 years in prison and 3 defendants were sentenced to between 3 and 7 years in prison for trade in ivory and rhino horn' (*CAND* 19 July 2018).

As discussed earlier, the international conservation community is interested in seeing prosecutions and sentencings, particularly for high-level syndicate members in the illegal rhino horn trade. Hence in the quotation below from the assistant director of the local Vietnamese IWT ENGO, ENV, the journalist presents some of the rare successes in prosecuting a kingpin:

> Ms. Nguyen Phuong Dung [of ENV] said that Vietnam's great success in 2018 is the first time that two imprisonment sentences have been declared to the two leaders of major transnational wildlife trade lines … The second subject is Nguyen Mau Chien, the leader of a large wildlife smuggling line in Vietnam, who also received 16 months of imprisonment for the illegal possession and transport of rhino horn and other products. (*Lao Dong* 6 October 2019)

The analysis showed that *Lao Dong* journalists also report in considerable statistical detail when customs or police make half yearly or yearly inventories of seizures, arrests and prosecutions. Among the contraband listed in the statistics in such *Lao Dong* articles is rhino horn. This inclusion could be seen as the newspaper putting a spotlight on Vietnam's general commitment to stop smuggling, including the smuggling of rhino horn. These *Lao Dong* articles feature very dry bureaucratic language that seems to have been copied directly from a press release that was not interpreted simply for the public. *CAND*, *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan* do not carry these inventory-style stories.

Whereas journalists use a pared-down, factual style of reporting when reporting on seizures, court stories and sentencings were reported by *Lao Dong* and *CAND* journalists with a more narrative

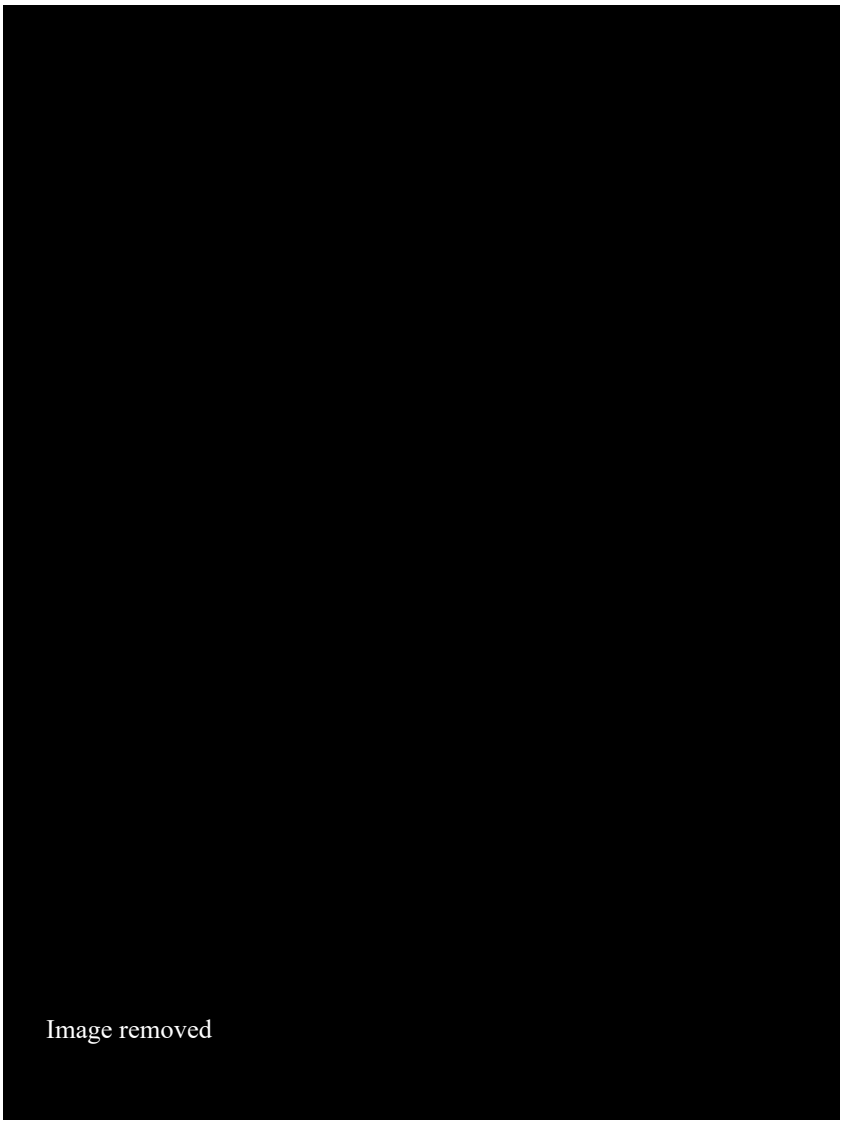
style—possibly because the narrative information is taken from court transcripts, which may be very narrative in structure. Unlike in the framing of Organised Criminal Networks under Serious Crime, journalists do not use cultural nuances or metaphors with regard to Demonstrating Commitment or other Compliance frames.

Visual images (e.g., photograph and videos) showing seized rhino horns or Vietnam government officials are another important framing device for the Demonstrating Commitment frame. In terms of visual impact, rhino horn lends itself to being an effective framing device. Photographs of rhino horn seized by customs or police show that the relevant agency is doing its job, making such photographs important signifiers of Vietnam's compliance. Some IWT stakeholders, such as Julian Newman, EIA Campaigns Director (see EIA 2017), have argued that the photographs of the seizures are a routine feature of customs press conferences to announce their success. Newman claimed the seizures presented at press conference are purely for publicity. He said that the horns in the images rarely go to prosecution. This is debatable, however, as a representative of the Department of Public Security (WCS 2021) claimed, almost all rhino horn seizures have been prosecuted. In support of the Department of Public Security's claim, it is possible that the cases did go to trial, but that the trials were under-reported in the media. In framing theory, the exclusion of information is as important as the selection of information when creating salience. Hence, if rhino horn traffickers are being prosecuted, then any under-reporting of trials influences the framing.

With seizure reports showing couriers being caught, trial and sentencing information may provide an increased perception of punishment. Although both story types may deter would-be couriers, photographs of seized rhino horns potentially act as a deterrent through creating the perception of an increased certainty of being caught (Nagin 2013). Such photographs routinely display 'provided

by the police' or customs in their captions. Figure 5.3 exemplifies one such photograph provided by police.

Figure 5.3: Rhino horns intercepted and seized at Vietnam's borders (photograph, *Lao Dong* 29 September 2019)



Note: The captions of such images often indicate that police or customs provided the photograph to journalists.

There is a strong connection between the Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions frame and the sources and quotations that journalists use, correlating mostly with customs and police sources. Other sources included Vietnam's Supreme People's Procuracy, WCS and a local ENGO, ENV.

This section on Demonstrating Commitment has shown that the Vietnamese press demonstrates Vietnam's commitment to enforcing laws against rhino trafficking using quite literal language and photographs. The frame represents that the rhino horn trade is a criminal issue and suggests that the reporting is for both the Vietnamese public and a third party, which seems to be CITES and international stakeholders. It has argued that rhino horns are inherently strong visually, making effective visual framing devices for this frame, and that many of the photographs that are published are supplied by customs. Sources behind the frame tend to be Vietnamese officials. International sources seem to use a diplomatic approach, by saying that Vietnam is doing well but needs to keep working on compliance.

5.2 War on Wildlife Crime

The second level 2 frame under the level 1 frame Compliance, explored here to answer RQ1 and RQ2, is the War on Wildlife Crime frame. The framing analysis of the text and images showed that this frame is enacted when journalists signify through words or visual images that the Vietnamese authorities are cracking down hard on the illegal trade in rhino horn. Such actions are expected to deter rhino horn traffickers or anyone thinking about becoming involved in the trade, thus complying strongly with the CITES commitments. This frame, along with the other level 2 frames, builds legitimacy and trust in the Vietnamese government and law enforcement agencies. Although both the Demonstrating Commitment and the War on Wildlife Crime frames demonstrate Vietnam's commitment to comply with CITES, it is the scale or severity by which laws are enforced and offenders punished that differentiates the two frames. The War on Wildlife Crime frame communicates a more exceptional enforcement response to the rhino horn trade than the Demonstrating Commitment frame.

Vietnamese journalists enact the frame textually or visually by referring to such tropes as Vietnam declaring a war or having zero tolerance with regard to wildlife crime and cracking down hard on criminals for trafficking rhino horn (see, e.g., Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4: The second level 2 Compliance frame, War on Wildlife Crime, incorporates two level 3 frames

// War on Wildlife Crime

/// Declaring War

/// You're Busted

The data show that the War on Wildlife Crime frame appears in the Vietnamese digital newspapers. The level 2 War on Wildlife Crime frame is present in all four newspapers in the sample—more so in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* than *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan*. Vietnamese journalists refer to two level 3 frames to signify the War on Wildlife Crime frame: Declaring War and You're Busted.

The War on Wildlife Crime frame supports the idea that Vietnam is complying with its CITES commitments in a similar way to the Demonstrating Commitment frame does: talking the talk and walking the walk. The analysis shows that the digital newspapers incorporate words and images that signify both of the level 3 frames under War on Wildlife Crime, Declaring War and You're Busted—specifically signifying when a tough justice approach is put into action. Notably, the Vietnamese government has tended to show a tough approach to crime in general, especially for crimes like drugs and prostitution, which are defined as 'social evils' (Vijeyarasa 2010).

Because the War on Wildlife Crime frame suggests that Vietnam is taking the rhino horn trade more seriously—as a serious crime—it is important to point out the nuanced differences between the Serious Crime and Compliance frames. Whereas Serious Crime concerns the nature of the

crime and criminals, Compliance concerns the Vietnamese government's enforcement response. That is, there is a point of connection and interplay between the Serious Crime and Compliance frames. The UNTOC, which was promulgated by the UNODC, states that '"Serious crime" shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty' (UNODC 2020, p. 5). Blurring may occur between these frames, particularly at the extremes of each frames' continuum, such as with reference to the extraordinary measures taken by governments, security threats and war. However, the frames are differentiated by which side they represent.

5.2.1 Declaring War

The level 3 Declaring War frame includes words and images about getting tough on and having zero tolerance to wildlife crime. Words that activate the Declaring War frame are 'war', militarised', 'weapons', 'zero tolerance', 'blood', 'burn' and 'destroy'. Other words such as 'fight' and 'combat'—which are also routinely used in news reports about crimes in general—activate the frame. A clever framing device that appears in the news of this issue is the name of one of the anti-IWT ENGOs that was very active in Vietnam, Wildlife at Risk (WAR) (CAND 11 December 2016).

The level 3 Declaring War frame appeared in all four newspapers' coverage of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference and accompanying rhino horn and ivory destruction event. At this conference, supranational IWT stakeholders gathered together with relevant Vietnamese officials in Hanoi. The four selected newspapers all provided a visual coverage of the Hanoi destruction event: *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan* all used a photographic essay-style report, and *VnExpress* published a video. All four newspapers refer to the same statement by a top Vietnamese government official for MARD, Ha Cong Tuan, when he was at the destruction event on the eve of the 2016 Hanoi IWT

conference. Adding to the credibility of this quotation and the legitimacy of the destruction event, in all of the newspapers' coverage the Deputy Minister for MARD, Ha Cong Tuan, is shown posed with the rhino horns being destroyed (Lao Dong 12 November 2016; CAND 12 November 2016; VnExpress 12 November 2016; Nhan Dan 12 November 2016). This was one of the few times a Vietnamese government official referred directly to the War on Wildlife Crime frame in the sample:

> Speaking at the event, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Ha Cong Tuan affirmed: 'Destruction of ivory and rhino horn specimens is the final treatment for specimens of wild species trafficked or sold illegally. [It] demonstrates Vietnam's determination to prevent and combat illegal trade in ivory, rhino horn and other wildlife products, as well as a message of war [in a] campaign to raise public awareness about not using illegal wildlife products'. (*Lao Dong* 12 November 2016)

Several sources from supranational organisations or international governments complemented the powerful message of Vietnam declaring war on wildlife crime. An African representative attending the conference, Dr Philip Muruthi, Vice President of the African Wildlife Fund, responded to a journalist's question about Vietnam's move to hold the conference by calling it a message of war: 'The recent move by the Vietnamese side is a very brave, very strong step forwarding the message of war on illegal wildlife traders and consumers, requiring immediate destruction of these products' (*Lao Dong* 29 November 2016).

Destroying seized rhino horns signifies a commitment that Vietnam made under CITES, as well as symbolising a no tolerance approach. As fire is symbolic of destruction and war, photographs published by *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan* and videos published by *VnExpress* of fires engulfing rhino horn and ivory at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference—or file photographs of similar

such fires in other countries—and written descriptions of how the rhino horn is destroyed signify compliance through the War on Wildlife Crime frame. Figure 5.5 presents the photograph of an unknown ivory burn (source unattributed) that was used in a *Lao Dong* report in the lead-up to the ivory burn and rhino horn crush event in Hanoi.

Figure 5.5: Fire engulfing ivory in an unidentified event, possibly in Kenya, signifying the War on Wildlife Crime frame (photograph, *Lao Dong* 9 November 2016)



Because guns and soldiers are also symbolic of war, words and images about them enact the Declaring War frame. Photographs in three newspapers—*Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *VnExpress*—show armed soldiers standing guard at the Hanoi rhino horn and ivory destruction event (see, e.g., Figure 5.6). The analysis revealed that the 2016 Hanoi destruction event, an event organised by the UK, may have played a key role in establishing the Declaring War frame.

It must be pointed out here that these same photographs were previously discussed in the Security Threats frame section in Chapter 4 (section 4.3). In this instance, both frames draw on similar features, although they are interpreted with nuanced differences. In the Security Threats frame, for instance, the armed soldiers visually signify that the rhino horn trade is a security threat. Conversely, in the War on Wildlife Crime frame the armed soldiers are literally the enforcement response. Hence the two frames are related. This will be discussed in Chapter 7 in terms of securitisation.

Figure 5.6: Armed guards protect cases of rhino horn, suggesting a militarisation of efforts to stop the trade in Vietnam (photograph, *Lao Dong* 12 November 2016)



The framing analysis of the news articles showed that the Declaring War frame—possibly established in 2016—continues to be present in the coverage of the rhino horn trade. *Lao Dong*,

for instance, published a translated photograph essay by Justin Mott of the *Washington Post* of a militarised anti-poaching team in Africa (*Lao Dong* 7 October 2019). The armed soldiers guarding a rhino echoes the common militarised way that conservation is presented in Africa (Mott & Nurnberg 2019). *VnExpress* (28 July 2017) published a video story of an African poacher, his face wrapped in a cloth, reminiscent of a cliched image of a terrorist; the poacher talks about poaching and guns. *CAND* published a story with photographs about African conservation groups injecting rhino horns with dye and poison, calling it a necessary measure of the 'rhino war', because 'blood has been spilled everywhere' (*CAND* 7 August 2019). The journalist identified the war was between Africa and the West versus the illegal rhino horn syndicates. A *CAND* thematic feature article (*CAND* 26 February 2019) contains statements from two supranational sources, Tuesday Reitano of the Global Initiative to Combat Transnational Crime and Kristopher Carlson of the Small Arms Survey Institute, whose very names suggest combat.

These sources present a militarised approach to stem IWT and rhino horn trafficking. using words such as 'militarised', 'armed' and 'weapons' when referring to enforcement efforts. Indeed, images suggestive of war are spread throughout the Vietnamese reporting of rhino horn trafficking. It has been established that, whether it is crime, drugs, poverty or rhino horn, the 'war' framing does not actually address the root causes of these issues, often just resulting in increased crime rates. 'The language of war, militarization and securitization should be used with caution as it risks constructing an image of wildlife crime that is misleading—and one that prevents responses that are effective in the long term' (Runhovde 2017, p. 1).

There is a potential blurring between the Serious Crime and Compliance frames at particular points in the news articles. One such point is the new practice in Vietnam to impose very long jail sentences for rhino horn trade offences. The reporting of these sentences in the news texts could

be interpreted as reflective of the definition of serious crime (i.e., serious crimes are defined as those receiving sentences of four years or more) or as a framing device for the War on Wildlife Crime frame. It could be argued that the issue of tough sentences is, on balance, more reflective of the enforcement response than the crime or the criminal, and hence should be included in the War on Crime frame. Long jail sentences published in the digital newspapers are indicative of sentences increasing, possibly because of Vietnam's determination to comply and adopt a tough approach. As has been noted, prior to 2016, rhino horn trade offenders were rarely or never jailed; however, subsequent stories in 2020 in the sample tell of offenders receiving jail terms of ten years and more.

Following the updated legal framework in 2018, newspapers reported that a new maximum sentence of 15 years had come into legislation, such as stated in this excerpt from *Lao Dong*:

> US Ambassador to Vietnam Daniel Kritenbrink welcomed the amendment of the criminal code by Vietnam, which imposes a prison term of up to 15 years and a fine of up to VND 1.5 billion for illegal wildlife trafficking. (*Lao Dong* 6 October 2019)

These changes to the laws, in line with CITES requirements, were announced in 2016 around the time of the Hanoi conference, suggesting a connection between the conference and compliance. Journalists reported on several cases of rhino horn traffickers being sentenced for more than ten years. The issue of this increasing tendency for long sentences will be discussed in Chapter 7.

This section has shown that the term 'war' is used for rhetorical effect in the Vietnamese digital newspapers to describe a crackdown on the rhino horn trade. It has been noted that 'war' has a history of use as a rhetorical and political framing device in countries such as the US, resulting in longer sentences. To answer RQ1 and RQ2, it has shown that, in the news texts, war is signified through words and images. It was noted as early as 2016, specifically in the coverage of the 2016

ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event on the fringe of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, which were both co-organised by the UK. The data, in combination with previous research on the War on Crime frame, suggests that this frame originated from overseas sources and was picked up by Vietnamese official sources. The next section draws on the photographic data that emerged from the framing analysis and posits that photographs of offenders caught with rhino horn signify Vietnam's tough approach and, hence, the War on Wildlife Crime frame.

5.2.2 You're Busted

This section will discuss the second level 3 frame, You're Busted. The You're Busted frame is activated more by photographs than words. Indeed, images of one or more handcuffed offenders posing with seized rhino horns, sometimes with police holding them, are relatively common in the news about the enforcement of laws against the illegal trade in rhino horn. This style of photograph (see, e.g., Figure 5.7), showing dejected offenders in police custody, is relatively common in arrest stories in the Vietnamese press.

Figure 5.7: Two subjects caught by Lao Cai City Police near the Chinese border with seized rhino horns (photograph, *Nhan Dan* 25 May 2018)



Although photographs that signify the You're Busted frame, such as Figure 5.7, identify the alleged offenders to the public, it could be argued that they also provide the viewer with a sense of what the alleged offenders experience when they are caught. Photographs commonly show offenders handcuffed and often in prison garb being paraded in front of cameras, which is potentially a quite degrading experience. As well as photographs taken at the time of arrest, photographs of offenders taken in court or being led into court also signify this frame. It could be argued that such photographs signify a tough approach and act as a deterrent.

Such photographs occur more often in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* than in *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan*. *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan* published only one You're Busted image each—in either video or photograph format—but the images are typical of this type (see *VnExpress* 26 May 2018; *Nhan Dan* 25 May 2018).

Photographs and videos of offenders in custody that signify the You're Busted frame are effective at putting a human face to the War on Wildlife Crime frame. Orsini (2017) has argued that images of offenders used as part of 'war on crime' campaigns tend to create stigmatising representations of offenders, including a punitive tone that influences public perceptions. Such photographs plausibly act to deter (Nagin 2013) people from committing environmental crimes (Sidebottom & Wortley 2015). As the Vietnamese news media often publish photographs of people held in custody, it may be that this pre-established tendency has helped further the use of this frame.

In a war, killing an enemy officer or a general has more value than just a private. By this logic in the War on Wildlife Crime, catching and punishing a kingpin has more value than busting a courier. Figures 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10 refer to the capture and sentencing of rhino horn kingpin, Nguyen Mau Chien. Figure 5.8 depicts the rhino horns seized at the kingpin's arrest, and Figures 5.9 and 5.10

depict his trial and outside the courthouse. These photographs signify the You're Busted frame through their subject and punitive tone.

Figure 5.8: Rhino horns found by police at the home of Vietnamese rhino horn kingpin, Nguyen Mau Chien (photograph, *CAND* 30 January 2018)



The caption in the newspaper story associated with Figure 5.8 reads: 'The number of rhino horns seized by the police from the line [gang] of Nguyen Mau Chien'.

Figure 5.9: The early court appearance of Nguyen Mau Chien and two of his accomplices (photograph, *CAND* 30 January 2018)



Figure 5.10: Rhino horn kingpin Nguyen Mau Chien being led handcuffed into the court room (photograph, *Lao Dong* 22 March 2018)



The photograph presented in Figure 5.10 accompanies a story about Nguyen Mau Chien's 13-month sentencing in court.

The analysis of the news articles revealed that some photographs that enact the You're Busted frame are credited to customs or police in the caption, whereas others seem to be taken by journalists. Photographs may stem from customs and police providing photograph opportunities for journalists or from journalists' own initiative. Figure 5.7, the *Nhan Dan* photograph of two offenders in Lao Cai City, is an example of a photograph opportunity, because the caption contains the names of two journalists. Because most of the photographs in the sample are not credited it is hard to know the source. However, because the analysis has shown that the same photographs sometimes appeared in different newspapers, it could be assumed that either the photograph or the opportunity is provided by customs or police.

Section 5.2 has shown that Vietnamese digital newspapers use terms such as 'war' and associated images and symbols to declare that Vietnam has declared a War on Wildlife Crime. It has shown that Vietnamese officials, international sources and ENGOs promote this frame with a mix of

words and images, suggesting that the frame originated internationally. Images seem powerfully rhetorical in that they juxtapose criminals with rhino horns.

5.3 International Cooperation

This section will describe the third level 2 frame under Compliance that emerged from the framing analysis—International Cooperation—with the aim of answering RQ1 and will identify the sources behind the frame to answer RQ2. The International Cooperation frame is activated by journalists when they discuss Vietnam cooperating internationally in line with Vietnam's commitments to fight rhino horn trafficking. A synergy of sources is behind the frame: Vietnamese officials, international sources and ENGOs. As discussed earlier, international cooperation is an IWT commitment under CITES that Vietnam has achieved to some extent in relation to law and enforcement (WWF 2019). In addition, there are other global cooperation agreements that Vietnam is signatory to that are reported in the news that this section will discuss.

Because rhino horn trafficking is a transnational crime, it is well established that criminal investigations benefit from Vietnamese and international agencies sharing information, such as DNA. That is, the fight against TEC needs cooperation across borders (Spapens, White & Kluin 2016). International cooperation may also be a result of the international community's discursive push to have IWT recognised as a serious crime (Massé et al. 2020).

The news framing shows compliance with 'the provisions of Resolution 9.14' (*Lao Dong* 6 December 2019) of CITES and aligns with official compliance reports prepared for CITES by the Vietnam CITES Management Authority, thereby demonstrating international cooperation. In much the same way as shown in the Demonstrating Commitment frame, the news framing of International Cooperation tends to use formal language and refer to official processes. The

following excerpt from a news story is a clear representation of how international cooperation is presented in the digital newspapers as Vietnam. The story is accompanied by a photograph of respective officials shaking hands, signifying Vietnam complying with CITES regarding a large seizure in Vietnam of 55 pieces of rhino horn:

> The handover of this specimen demonstrates Vietnam's strong commitment to seriously and fully implementing the international commitments to which Vietnam is a signatory; at the same time, showing the good cooperation between the two countries [Vietnam and South Africa] in the prevention and combat of wildlife crimes. (*Lao Dong* 6 December 2019)

Lao Dong reporting spells out clearly that there are standing agreements between the two countries:

> Vietnam and South Africa signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation for biodiversity conservation and protection in 2012, which took effect from 2012–2017 and signed an Action Plan for biodiversity conservation and protection for the period of 2012–2017 in 2013. (*Lao Dong* 16 December 2019)

Lao Dong and *CAND* present international cooperation as a reasonably common occurrence in Vietnamese investigations, as this *CAND* excerpt—taken from the lead paragraph of the story on the handover of 55 pieces of rhino horn—illustrates:

> This is the fourth time that Vietnam has handed over rhino horn samples from seizures and confiscations to South Africa to conduct assessment, determine the origin, and serve criminal investigation of an offence. (*CAND* 6 December 2019)

Journalists quote a mix of sources in the relatively little (compared with other frames) coverage of International Cooperation. Quotations tend to refer to the willingness, benefits, need and offers of cooperation. Sources include high-level Vietnamese government officials: Ha Cong Tuan, Deputy

Minister of Agriculture and Rural Developments; Pham Van Dien, Deputy Director General of Forestry Department and Vietnam CITES management. Vietnamese officials tend to display their willingness and interest in cooperating with international partners, as illustrated in the example below:

> Mr Ha Cong Tuan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Department said: We are increasing the investigation measures. We are a CITES member since 1994 and could be regarded as a trustworthy country, interested in international allies and we are willing to co-operate with international organisations. (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2016)

International sources, such as South African, British and US representatives; USAID; UNODC; and the Washington University, express their wish to help, as illustrated in the following statement by the US Ambassador:

> US Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink said … From the beginning of 2020, the US Embassy will have an attaché on wildlife trade [in Vietnam]. In addition, the US has cooperated with Vietnam in this war through the Saving Species program with the aim of improving the legal framework, supporting law enforcement forces such as the police, ranger, and customs. capacity building. (*Lao Dong* 6 October 2019)

Forensic wildlife scientists are key to validating whether seized horns are rhino horns and where they are from (de Vries 2021). Mention of international cooperation between scientists—such as the local Vietnamese Institute of Tropical Biology, DNA scientists in the US and DNA databases in South Africa—in Vietnamese newspaper reports signify the International Cooperation frame. The international DNA scientists are sometimes quoted in news reports of two key events, demonstrating Vietnam's international cooperation: the 2019 rhino horn handover of 55 pieces of rhino horn seized at Hanoi's Noi Bai Airport and the 2016 conference and associated ivory and

rhino horn destruction event. The coverage of these two key events, including statements from sources from a range of categories, suggests that these events were used as publicity events to demonstrate a consensus on Vietnam's commitment to international cooperation. The Vietnamese Institute of Tropical Biology—mentioned widely and often quoted in all the newspapers except for *Nhan Dan* in stories about rhino horn seizures—plays a local role using forensic technology, according to CITES commitments, in identifying whether the seized horns are rhino horns. The international DNA databases discussed in the Vietnamese news are also key to developing intelligence to assist in joint international investigations.

Although international cooperation appears straightforward in the instances where it is reported, it is difficult to achieve in practice. Important aspects of international cooperation, such as mutual legal assistance, which is the formal sharing of evidence between enforcement and judicial agencies in countries and jurisdictions—an important part of compliance—are excluded from the reporting on the rhino horn trade in Vietnam. International cooperation is very procedurally complicated, time consuming and sometimes completely impossible (WCS Workshop 23–24 September 2021). For instance, even in international mutual legal assistance relationships it might take years to receive one reply to an email. This is because other countries are not a priority in a country's daily national affairs (WCS Workshop, 23–24 September 2021). The difficulties and impracticalities of formal international cooperation are, however, excluded from the news. Instead they are potentially made to appear routine. Handovers of rhino horn for their DNA evidence are reported to have occurred 'four times' (*Lao Dong* 6 December 2019). Such events as the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, which was reported with photographs of smiling faces and handshakes, may be used as publicity events and possibly skew perceptions of the success of international cooperation in a

publicity sense. There is very little research into international cooperation regarding enforcement of IWT crimes (de Vries 2021) and little to no research on the news media aspect.

International cooperation is important to successfully investigate and prosecute rhino horn trafficking (de Vries 2021) and disrupt the transnational syndicates. The framing data from the news stories shows that such cooperation is occurring in Vietnam, particularly in the form of scientific exchanges with Africa and the US for DNA analysis. The data also shows that international cooperation is given positive media attention through media events and feature articles with publicity-style photographs (see, e.g., Figures 5.11 and 5.12) in state-run media. Such articles and photographs provide focus on the topic, suggesting the government aims to promote its success in this area, which is a tendency of the Vietnamese government (Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). Forms of cooperation with foreign police, customs or international agencies (e.g., Interpol) and independent investigations into rhino horn trafficking syndicates with direct action ENGOs are, however, excluded from media coverage, if they exist.

Figure 5.11: Vietnamese, US and African officials at the 2016 ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event holding rhino horns to be destroyed (photograph, *Lao Dong* 12 November 2016)



Figure 5.12: Rhino horn handover featuring a Vietnamese official shaking hands with a South African official (photograph, *Lao Dong* 6 November 2019)



The International Cooperation frame is enacted in news stories through words, images and quoted statements that signify cooperation (see Table 5.4 below). These stories are typically about agreements, handovers and publicity events.

Table 5.4: Level 2 International Cooperation framing devices

Words and phrases
The handover, good cooperation between the two countries, international allies, willing to co-operate, synchronous cooperation, information sharing, technical assistance, joint investigation, partners in Africa, work with countries, cross-border cooperation, regional and international cooperation, coordinated with international organisations, Let's work harder together, increasing exchange of information. a chain information system, Bilateral and multilateral cooperation, memorandum of understanding, MoU, NIRAP
Images
• Photographs of international officials in Vietnam • Photograph of Vietnamese Prime Minister with Prince William

- Photograph of Vietnamese official with CITES official
- A Vietnamese official shaking hands with South African CITES official and with a banner with the word 'Handover' at a rhino horn handover event for DNA testing
- A Vietnamese official standing with a group of international officials witnessing rhino horns being destroyed. They all hold large rhino horns.

The International Cooperation frame is also signified when journalists discuss international agreements. The journalists focus on the strength and benefits of international cooperation as illustrated in the excerpt below about the NIRAP:

> In addition, the NIRAP Plan also contributes to strengthening cross-border cooperation, regional and international cooperation; focus on solving the problem of domestic market demand for ivory and rhino horn products; towards the establishment of a chain information system on seizures of ivory, rhino horn, etc. (*CAND* 19 July 2018)

There are other instances of agreements and alliances, some of which are excluded from the framing. These include the Association of South East Asian Nations – Wildlife Enforcement Network and other international organisations that Vietnam cooperates with, such as the ICCWC. The focus tends to be on cooperation with South Africa, the US (e.g., USAID's Wildlife Asia Program) and CITES.

There are differences in the reporting of this frame between the four newspapers in the sample. *Lao Dong* presents more information about international cooperation than *CAND*, *VnExpress* and *Nhan Dan*. For instance, *Lao Dong*, *CAND* and *Nhan Dan* all ran stories about a 2019 rhino horn evidence handover between the respective Vietnam and South Africa's CITES management authorities. *Lao Dong*, however, is the only newspaper that included information about how the horn would be analysed for DNA and how this would be compared with South Africa's DNA database. *CAND*

and *Nhan Dan* did not mention the DNA databases. *VnExpress* did not run the story at all. Hence *Lao Dong* seems more thematic in its approach.

This section has shown that the Vietnamese news tends to frame international cooperation in terms of Vietnam complying with its international commitments, particularly with regard to the exchange of rhino horns for DNA databases. It was, however, observed during the framing analysis that the International Cooperation frame featured in relatively few news stories compared with other frames. Nonetheless, as with the other frames, there was a synergy of sources behind it. This suggests that all categories of sources acknowledge a small but important role for international cooperation in enforcing the laws against the rhino horn trade. Whereas Vietnamese official sources tend to discuss international cooperation in terms of compliance, international sources—who are often global elites, such as US, UK or South African ambassadors to Vietnam, UN representatives or intergovernmental organisation representatives—tend to express their desire to help, making the news a site of transnational public deliberation. The frame tends to be signified by framing devices. As will be seen in the next section, cooperation between Vietnamese agencies—as signified by the Coordinated Local Investigation frame—features more in the news than international cooperation.

5.4 Coordinated Local Investigation

In contrast to the International Cooperation frame, the fourth level 2 frame under Compliance—Coordinated Local Investigation—is about local cooperation between Vietnamese agencies. The analysis of the news articles to answer RQ1 and RQ2 showed that the Vietnamese press reports that coordination between local investigation agencies—such as customs and police—is standard practice when enforcing the laws against rhino horn trafficking. The data showed that this frame is emphasised by often being in a paragraph near the top of the story, with the source of the

information usually Vietnamese customs or police. The journalists seem to have a standard way they do this: devoting a paragraph high up in the story to show which local agencies are coordinating and attributing the information to one of the enforcement or investigating agencies involved (see paragraph examples in Table 5.5).

Coordinating local investigations is one of the obligations that Vietnam has made internationally. Through CITES membership, Vietnam agreed to 'formal national interagency cooperation' (see CITES n.d., p. 12). Coordinated local investigations could involve agencies such as CITES agencies, customs, police, forest protection and border guards (CITES n.d.). Massé et al. (2020) has observed that the 2018 London IWT conference promoted more local coordination of enforcement agencies as an effective response to IWT. Conference stakeholders pointed out that 'The UN … mobilises countries to coordinate and allocate resources to tackling IWT in accordance with UN priorities' (Massé et al. 2020, p. 35). Hence, when discussing coordination between Vietnamese agencies, journalists do also signify the Compliance frame (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Paragraphs that act as framing devices for Coordinated Local Investigation

'Today, Saigon Port Area 1 Customs Branch said that it has just coordinated with the Customs Control Team—Ho Chi Minh City Customs Department, C74–Ministry of Public Security, PC46—Police of Ho Chi Minh City and Don Bien Nha Rong Port to examine two suspicious containers and discovered hundreds of ivory pieces disguised in asphalt containers' (*Lao Dong* 6 September 2017)
'The Can Tho Port Border Gate Customs Sub-department shall make a record of violations and temporarily seize the exhibits to transfer to the Can Tho City Police Department's investigation agency for investigation according to its competence' (*CAND* 20 March 2020)
'Since the beginning of the year, Tan Son Nhat Airport Customs Branch in coordination with the Ministry of Public Security and Ho Chi Minh City Police have arrested three similar cases, seizing more than 6 kg of rhino horn and 10 kg of ivory' (*VnExpress* 14 June 2017)
'These animal horns were discovered by the Environmental Crime Prevention Police Department (C05, Ministry of Public Security) in coordination with the Ho Chi Minh City Police Department on December 22' (*VnExpress* 22 December 2020)
'Mr Bui The Duc, Deputy Head of the Central Propaganda Department, responded to propaganda and asked the Ministry of Transport to direct the aviation industry to coordinate with relevant agencies to actively participate in preventing and not transporting passengers [involved in the] illegal wildlife trade' (*Nhan Dan* 3 February 2016)

Vietnamese journalists for all the selected newspapers enacted the Coordinated Local Investigation frame when they discussed multiple Vietnamese enforcement agencies cooperating. This is done through paragraphs that tend to list the agencies. Generally, a paragraph near the top of the story is devoted to coordination and journalists use a wordy bureaucratic style of writing. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

> On 6.3, Customs Branch at Tan Son Nhat International Airport – Ho Chi Minh City Customs Department said that this unit had just coordinated with the Anti-Smuggling and Investigation Department – General Department of Customs; Customs Enforcement Team – Ho Chi Minh City Customs Department and Ho Chi Minh City Police. (*CAND* 6 March 2020)

The transfer of a rhino horn case from the customs to the police is a key point in the local coordination process. As the *CAND* (20 March 2020) paragraph in Table 5.5 demonstrates, journalists sometimes report when customs transfer the case to police (Public Security) and when ministries or departments direct agencies to coordinate.

The common appearance of the style of paragraphs that exhibit the Coordinated Local Investigation frame suggests that such paragraph writing is routine for journalists. Further to this, it seems that it is routine for Vietnamese officials to convey this information to journalists given that they appear to be the only category of sources behind this frame (see, e.g., Table 5.5). International sources or ENGOs are not behind it. In addition, sometimes the journalists include no attribution, possibly because the paragraphs are commonplace. As more than one agency is usually involved, Vietnamese journalists sometimes use collective terms to depict the range of agencies coordinating. These include interdisciplinary forces, functional agencies, functional forces, competent forces, authorities. Collective terms may be a device that journalists use to frame coordination efficiently. A former Vietnamese journalist said that this style of paragraph is a ‘tradition’ in Vietnam news

writing because ‘every authority has to show their name to show they are doing something’ (Journalist 6). This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

This section has shown that journalists report that numerous local agencies coordinate to investigate rhino horn trafficking cases, thus signifying Vietnam’s compliance. It is a common journalistic practice in Vietnam to promote the work of multiple enforcement agencies coordinating to the public and for customs and police to promote a number of agencies by providing information to journalists. This section has shown that in addition to single words or terms (no images signify the frame), entire paragraphs act as framing devices. It has also shown that, unlike the previous three level 2 frames, in addition to including the obligatory list, journalists do not explicitly state that Vietnam is committed to implementing its commitments to coordinate local investigations. Instead, these paragraphs may consciously intend to show that the various agencies are doing their job. This tendency is further illustrated in the next and last level 2 frame under Compliance—Hero Officers.

5.5 Hero Officers

The fifth and final level 2 frame under Compliance focuses on the dedicated work of customs and police officers enforcing laws against the rhino horn trade. Journalists enact the Hero Officer frame when they report about the investigative skills, good character and hard work of the officers responsible for enforcing laws again the illegal trade in rhino horn. The analysis of the news reports shows that the customs and police officers in Vietnam are reported to have excellent characters and investigative skills, making them adept at uncovering rhino horn that has been cleverly concealed by smugglers. There are numerous ways journalists enact the frame. These include reports about hardworking, dedicated Vietnamese customs or police officers, officers who win awards for their

work, the heroic actions of African anti-poaching teams, South African police sniffer dogs fighting rhino horn trafficking and a popular culture reference to a famous courageous television detective in relation to stopping the rhino horn trade. Photographs of customs officers and their rubber-gloved hands removing rhino horn from concealment can also be interpreted as signifying heroes who are cleverly combating the rhino horn trade and protecting rhinos.

The framing analysis of the news stories revealed that customs officers are portrayed as dedicated men and women who detect rhino horn cleverly concealed in luggage or freight. The *CAND* excerpt below suggests the officers are determined not be put off by an uncooperative passenger that they suspect:

> After more than 3 hours of working, convincingly, in the presence of the authorities, the Can Tho port border gate customs Branch conducted a physical inspection and discovered 11 samples of animal horn, suspected to be rhino horn, with a total weight of more than 28.7 kg. (*CAND* 3 March 2020)

In another example, this from *Lao Dong*, the customs officers are shown to be clever at collecting information, then shown using scanning technology to reveal smuggled rhino horn: 'Through the task of collecting information and through the system of scanners, the customs authorities questioned the shipment from abroad' (*Lao Dong* 28 July 2018).

Journalists also activate the Hero Officers frame when they report that airport customs departments or customs officials win awards for the important work they do protecting or 'defending' Vietnam's borders. These stories are often accompanied by photographs of the award recipients. It could be argued that award winners are presented as being heroes by being described as 'contributing to the cause of building socialism and defending the country' (*Lao Dong* 18 January 2018). The extended

excerpt below describes how such awards are granted for outstanding work and prevention of smuggling in general, including rhino horn seizures:

> The Deputy Minister of Finance Vu Thi Mai was authorised to award the Labor Medal to the State President for the customs Branch at Tan Son Nhat International Airport for his outstanding achievements in his work contributing to the cause of building socialism and defending the country …
>
> In the fight against smuggling and trade fraud, the unit also checked and discovered 2,594 violations, worth more than 762 billion VND. In which, there were outstanding cases such as: Arresting 25 cases of illegally transporting wildlife products with more than 584 kg of ivory and 32 rhino horns. (*Lao Dong* 18 January 2018)

Journalists also activate the level 2 frame through a popular culture reference to a hero television detective (*Lao Dong* 20 May 2016). A *Lao Dong* story on British actor and ENGO rhino horn campaign ambassador, Paul Blackthorne, refers to two characters that Blackthorne plays: one a terrorist (as discussed in section 4.3 on the Security Threats frame), the other a detective. It is significant that, of all the television characters that Blackthorne has played, the news highlighted these two. By referring to the detective, Quentin Lance of the *Arrow* television show, the story associates the fight against the rhino horn trade with the work of a famous fictional detective. The popular culture reference to Detective Quentin Lance plausibly adds to the impression that customs and police officers are heroes fighting to protect rhinos.

The depiction in the Vietnamese news media of officers fighting the rhino horn trade as heroes is not limited to officers in Vietnam. A story about an anti-poaching team in Africa that protects rhinos and a story about clever police dogs that discover rhino horn traffickers in South Africa also

help to create an interpretation that the officers (human or animal) are skilled and dedicated heroes fighting rhino poachers and smugglers. Hence these stories also tend to activate the Hero Officers frame. See Table 5.6 below for the range of framing devices, including words and images, that journalists use in activating this frame.

Table 5.6: Hero Officers framing devices

Words, phrases and sentences
Work very hard, controlled, defended, prevented, solving, exposed, successfully produced, chiselled high blocks, collecting information, system of scanners, detective Quentin Lance of Green Arrow, risk their lives, worked in the reserve for 20 years, work 20 days a month and get 6 days off, proud of their work by means of professional reconnaissance and information collection, customs authorities have promptly detected and prevented the incident [rhino horn smuggling] they risk their lives to protect rhinos from poachers who want to kill them for a valuable horn
Images
• Photographs of enforcement agents revealing rhino horn concealed or with large consignments of seized horns or with large horns that they have discovered • Photographs of customs officers' gloved hands removing rhino horn from concealment • Photographs of officers receiving awards • Photographs of anti-poaching officers or rhino guards in Kenya

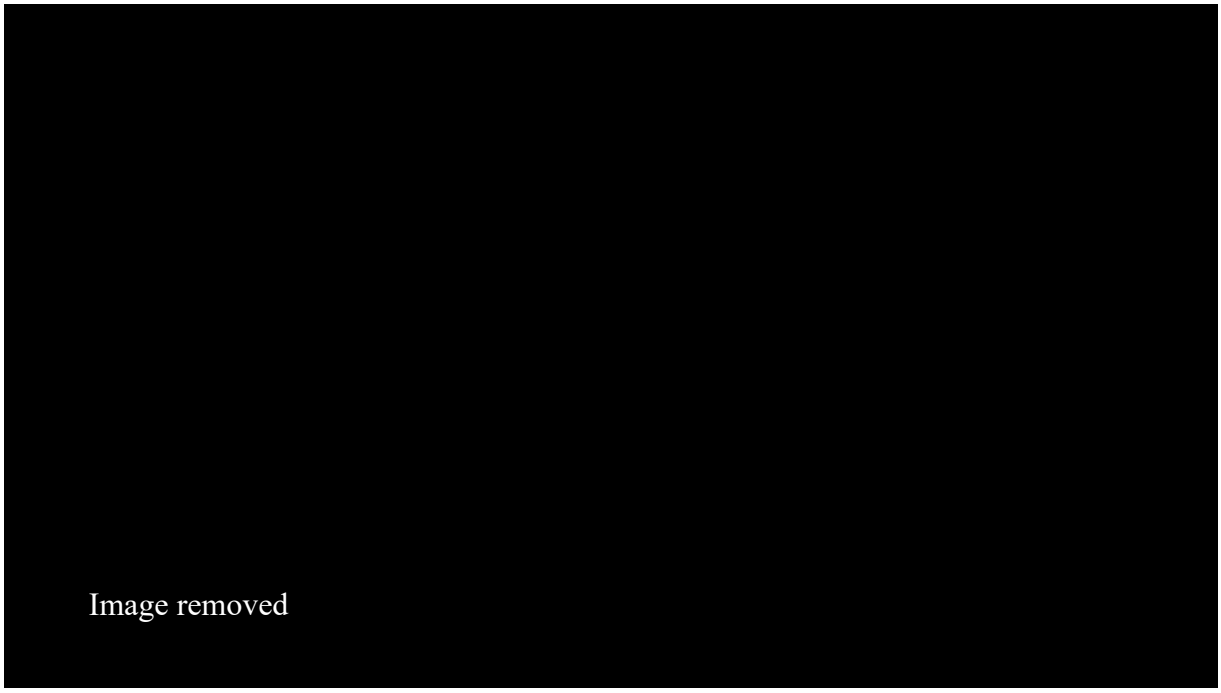
Images are important framing devices for the Hero Officers frame. *Lao Dong* (28 July 2019) presents four photographs and captions—supplied to the journalists by the customs department—of Vietnamese customs officers carrying out a major bust of 125 kg of rhino horns. The images—for example, Figure 5.13—show the officers working hard at chiselling large plaster blocks that conceal the rhino horn inside. The story, which has only three paragraphs of text, is mainly told by several photographs and captions. One of the captions signifies Hero Officers, reading, 'The functional forces had to work very hard to chisel plaster. Photo HQ' (*Lao Dong* 28 July 2019). HQ stands for Hai Quan (Customs).

Figure 5.13: Customs officials extracting hidden rhino horns from concealment in plaster blocks (photograph, *Lao Dong* 28 July 2019)



VnExpress (12 October 2018) presents a video of customs officers in action discovering 50 kg of rhino horn in cardboard boxes (see Figure 5.14). The video contains subtitles and an indecipherable audio of the officers talking as they remove the rhino horns from the boxes. The multimedia quality of video presents a nuanced depiction of the customs officers that print newspapers could not. The video with sound lets the audience really see the hardworking team-oriented character of the officers.

Figure 5.14: Customs officers working together to uncover rhino horns from boxes (still image from video, *VnExpress* 12 October 2018)



In an example of heroes fighting the rhino horn trade outside Vietnam, *Lao Dong* has a photograph essay-style story written by photojournalist Justin Mott. Mott's original story, which was part of a series called *Kindred Guardians* (Mott n. d.), presents armed rhino guards in Kenya as heroes. The photographs show the men, who *Lao Dong* describe as dedicated, brave, proud and passionate:

> Security guards on the payroll of the National Reserve Police Force (NPR) risk their lives to protect rhinos from poachers who want to kill them for a valuable horn. Three poachers were killed last year during gun battles with NPR. (*Lao Dong* 25 August 2019)

As can be seen from the photograph of the customs opening the plaster blocks (i.e., Figure 5.13), there is an interplay between the Hero Officers and the Sophisticated Concealment frames under Serious Crime. The two frames interact in text and image to show the elaborate skills officers need to work out the 'sophisticated' concealment methods that the rhino horn syndicates use.

The Hero Officers frame is communicated by two categories of sources, Vietnamese officials and international sources. The frame is communicated mostly through photographs and captions. The sources that communicate this frame are not always reported clearly; however, several are attributed to customs, with several of the photographs supplied by 'HQ' (*Hai Quan*, i.e., Customs). A photograph published by *Lao Dong* of customs unwrapping concealed rhino horn is attributed to Getty Images, and the newspaper also published a photograph essay (Mott n.d.). Mainly unattributed photographs and videos with subtitles and voiceovers, rather than text, provide the reader with accounts of customs doing their work effectively. It appears that several of the photographs and videos are taken by the journalists. Both *VnExpress* and *Lao Dong* use video content in their stories that signifies this frame. Videos feature strongly in *VnExpress* reports. There appears to be a tendency for this frame to be enacted through photographs and images that are likely from the customs presenting journalists with photographs or photograph opportunities.

This section, which has described the fifth and final frame under Compliance, has shown that the Hero Officers frame is presented mostly in visual form. It has shown that journalists in Vietnam tend to depict people fighting the rhino horn trade as heroes who are brave, hardworking and clever. The source of the frame seems to be Vietnamese customs, who either provide photographs or photograph opportunities to journalists and international sources who then depict those who guard rhinos from poachers as heroes. This may be an accepted narrative. As with the Sophisticated Concealment frame, it is debatable as to how clever a customs officer must be to find a rhino horn in a cake tin in a passenger's luggage. Hence the frame may be slightly skewed.

This chapter has so far outlined the group of frames under the Compliance frame and the sources behind them that emerged from the framing analysis of the news stories. It could be concluded that, through depicting Vietnam's commitment, its war on the rhino horn trade, its international

cooperation, the coordination of its local agencies to fight the trade and the heroes at home and abroad who are personally fighting it, the Compliance frame serves to build legitimacy for the Vietnamese government with the international conservation community. The next section will describe several instances where the Vietnamese online newspapers depict a situation in which Vietnam is not complying, descriptions that activate the level 1 Lack of Enforcement frame.

5.6 Lack of Enforcement

Having discussed the first two level 1 frames under the Criminality meta-frame, Serious Crime in Chapter 4 and Compliance in this chapter, this section will describe the Lack of Enforcement frame, which is the third and final level 1 frame under Criminality. This section is the final data section of this chapter that addresses RQ1 and RQ2. Although it is a separate frame and is reliably distinguishable (Cappella & Jamieson 1997) from Compliance, explication of the Lack of Enforcement frame has been placed in this chapter because of its converse relations to Compliance. That is, Compliance signifies the presence of law and enforcement and Lack of Enforcement signifies its absence. This section presents the data on law and enforcement shortcomings regarding the rhino horn trade that emerged from the framing analysis of the Vietnamese digital newspaper articles. This data enables address of RQ1 and RQ2; Chapter 6 presents the data from the interviews with journalists to address RQ3 as to the factors that influence the frames.

The Lack of Enforcement frame is signified when journalists frame the Vietnamese government, police, customs or courts and international actors as failing to enforce laws against the illegal trade in rhino horn. A version of this frame was first identified between 2014 and 2016, when both local and international ENGOs in Vietnam were critical in their media outputs of Vietnam's lack of enforcement concerning the rhino horn trade (Smith 2018). In the current sample, the data show a

Lack of Enforcement frame competing in news articles with dominant Serious Crime and Compliance frames, signifying an aspect of Vietnam failing to fight the trade adequately.

A range of framing devices—including words and phrases such as ‘criticise’, ‘urge’, ‘fail’, ‘no response’, ‘not appropriate’, ‘blatant’ and ‘buzzing’—signify criticism of a trade that is so rampant it is clearly not being enforced. Such devices occur in news reports of ENGOs that appeal lenient sentences of rhino horn kingpins, descriptions of the wildlife trade as rampant and blatant, and portrayals of customs and police officers along the Lao border sitting back and letting an obvious cross-border wildlife trade that includes rhino horn continue.

The newspapers also report several events that are relevant to this frame. For example, South Africa’s 2017 decision to legalise the domestic rhino horn trade is reported in all the newspapers in the sample except for *Lao Dong.* The reports suggest that there is strong sentiment in Vietnam against any general weakening of laws against the rhino horn trade, as ‘This is said to be the premise for the country to continue proposing to legalise the international trade in rhino horn’ (*Nhan Dan* 4 March 2016). Several *Lao Dong* reports of a former supermodel who bought rhino horn to cure her gay boyfriend’s homosexuality contain no mention of the illegality of rhino horn: ‘The former supermodel also believes homosexuality is a “disease” and scours to buy rhino horn, then makes her lover drink it because she believes that “rhino horn can cure all”’ (*Lao Dong* 11 October 2017). The exclusion of the serious inherent legal issue, with no mention of the trade’s illegality, is suggestive of a lack of enforcement. The scandal of homosexuality may be more serious than the diva’s foray into the illegal rhino horn trade. In addition, it may create the view that if a diva can buy rhino horn, then the public should be able to buy it too.

A strong example of the Lack of Enforcement frame is a *Lao Dong* story of a court appeal. In 2017, a well-known IWT kingpin, Nguyen Mau Chien, was arrested in Vietnam for possession of a large number of rhino horns. In 2018, he was tried and sentenced to 16-months (and was instantly released because the 16-month sentence was already served in lieu), despite a potential maximum sentence of 15 years under the amended penal code for the rhino horn trade. A *Lao Dong* story, headlined 'Proposal to appeal first instance verdict for "oligarchs" smuggling rhino horn' (22 March 2018), frames the sentence as a failure of the Vietnamese justice system, calling the sentence 'unreasonable' and 'not appropriate'. The following lengthy excerpt from the *Lao Dong* news story appears to be wholly taken from an ENV media output, a direct action IWT ENGO in Vietnam. The excerpt outlines the key grounds of ENV's appeal: that Chien was not charged or convicted of the appropriate offences and that he misled the court (*Lao Dong* 22 March 2018). The article is quite critical of the court:

> In ENV's opinion, the decision of the Trial Panel to decide [that the] accused Nguyen Mau Chien was guilty of committing two criminal offenses: 'transporting prohibited goods' and 'storing banned goods' a crime, despite the fact that Chien was the protagonist who [led] his accomplices and commanded the whole process, are unreasonable. The crime committed by defendant Chien, has constituted two independent crimes as provided for in Article 155 of the 1999 Penal Code [specifically regarding the rhino horn trade].
>
> Secondly, the fact that the Panel has applied extenuating circumstances such as 'sincere declaration', 'difficult family circumstances', 'subjects with good personal identities who never had a criminal record' is not appropriate in reality. Specifically, in two public hearings on the case on November 27, 2017 and on March 20, 2018, the defendant answered in a roundabout, dishonest way a number of questions of the Panel and was repeatedly asked by the Judge to honestly answer.

A second signifying way that Lack of Enforcement is framed is via the agency of journalists. The journalists state that the trade is rampant and blatant but that nothing is being done. This is most apparent in the *Lao Dong* investigative stories of IWT along the Lao border. Phrases like 'hot industry', 'almost everywhere we can find', 'a busy situation of traffickers and buyers' and 'sold almost publicly', along with metaphors like 'sold as vegetables in the market' and 'sells wild animals like selling pigs and chickens', create a story of a rampant and blatant trade. These framing devices are juxtaposed with statements like 'Where are the authorities?', 'the authorities are indifferent or seem helpless', 'most of them have no response' and 'why so blatant? Where are the authorities standing?'. Because these statements are very critical of authorities, they could not have come from press releases issued by the authorities, which suggests that they are observations by the journalists. With phrases and metaphors such as these signifying the Lack of Enforcement frame (also see Table 5.7 below), it is clear that the journalists are critically questioning what they are witnessing. Table 5.7 details a rich assortment of framing devices. It must, however, be noted that these are concentrated in relatively few stories.

Table 5.7: Framing devices for Lack of Enforcement

Words, phrases and sentences
Criticise, protest, appeal, question, urge, fail, failed, failure, indifferent, indifference, helpless, no response, not really acting, light sanctions, open policies, unreasonable, not appropriate, low risk, blatant, rampant, hot, hot industry, hot market, active, buzz, buzzing, anywhere, everywhere, anything, publicly, increased alarmingly, flooded, increasingly booming, no sign of decreasing, on the rise, a record year
International assessments that Vietnam has failed to protect wildlife
Vietnam was 'criticised' by the international community for failing to combat wildlife trafficking?
The report urges governments to take more robust measures to limit wildlife crime
Have they properly implemented their responsibilities?
it still just stops at 'knowing' but not really 'acting'
Proposing to protest the first instance judgement
protested in the direction of increasing the punishment
Still too light

Why do Vietnamese people have to go to jail abroad for ivory bracelets?
Sanctions have a set level, all are light. Sometime later they go to Laos again and trade again and may be arrested again.
Where are the authorities?
authorities are indifferent or seem helpless
most of them have no response
EIA warns about our country's failure to fight wildlife trade.
protested in the direction of increasing the punishment
no meaning to deter and prevent crimes on wildlife.
the involvement of the authorities has not been drastic, even indifferent to the active traders
disregard for the law of the enforcers
Vietnam is considered a hot market for the trans-shipment and consumption of rhino horn.
The lines from Laos from Cambodia are active
Wildlife crime is increasing every day, every hour
Sore wildlife smuggling
data from a number of large-scale seizures of ivory and rhino horn in 2019 suggests 2019 is temporarily a record year for smuggling of these two product groups
Wild animals 'buzz' in the middle of Lao market
The district and provincial markets are all buzzing in the corner of wild animal
If you place an order, you can have anything, any amount
the wildlife trade network has increased rapidly, accelerating the global illegal wildlife trade
Almost everywhere we can find
a busy situation of traffickers and buyers
Why so blatant, where are the authorities standing?
Sold almost publicly
sold as vegetables in the market
sells wild animals like selling pigs and chickens
can buy it as easily as buying vegetables
can 'shake hands and face' this illegal trade anywhere
lifted a ban on the domestic trade in rhino horn
legalise the international trade in rhino horn
One of the poachers explained, 'In South Africa, the security situation is quite lax …'

The Lack of Enforcement frame is mainly the work of *Lao Dong* and *VnExpress* journalists, with few appearances in the other newspapers. To answer RQ2, and as shown in Table 5.8, the frame stems from mostly ENGOs (5) and International sources (3). When compared with the source

numbers for the Serious Crime and Compliance frames, the total number of nine sources for the Lack of Enforcement frame demonstrates that this frame is competing with the other two dominant frames in the sample of reporting. The agency of the journalists themselves is a key factor in this frame. This agency of the journalists in terms of investigation, analysis and comment—as seen in the phrases and framing devices outlined above—is more strongly apparent in the Lack of Enforcement frame than the other frames.

Table 5.8: Sources behind the Lack of Enforcement frame

Vietnamese officials (1)
• Mr Le Nguyen Linh Deputy Director of Sai Gon KV Port Branch
International sources (3)
• Mr Chris Batt, Regional Advisor on Anti Money Laundering, Manager of the UNODC Office in Vietnam • Mr Giles Lever, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in Vietnam
ENGOs (5)
• The Center for Education for Nature (ENV) campaign, 'We don't want your rhino horn' • Ms Nguyen Huong, Communications Director of the WCS • EIA • TS. Philip Muruthi, Executive Vice President of the African Wildlife Fund • WildAid John Baker

The following excerpt is from an international source. It is not specifically accusatory of Vietnam's lack of enforcement against the rhino horn trade, but states generally that, globally, the laws against IWT need to be better enforced.

> Mr Chris Batt, Regional Advisor on Anti Money Laundering, Manager of the UNODC Office in Vietnam affirmed 'Crime of violating the wildlife protection law is a serious transnational crime and this kind of crime needs a more urgent response in terms of law enforcement'. (*Lao Dong* 1 June 2016)

The absence of direct criticism of the Vietnamese government in this statement, which is a typical example, suggests there may be a tendency for international criticism to be carefully and diplomatically framed to not offend Vietnam.

In a similarly gentle style that seems directed at enforcement agencies, rather than the Vietnam government, the following statement was given by the leader of an international ENGO, WildAid, John Baker: 'Because there is not enough law enforcement, they are not enforcing the law strongly enough, a lot of smuggling is still going on, you can smuggle in, you can smuggle out, pretty easily' (*VnExpress* 27 July 2017). It is important to note the subtle wording of the statement, which is phrased to not directly be critical of the Vietnam government, rather targeting law enforcement. The restrictions faced by Vietnamese journalists, which differ concerning criticism of the national government versus criticism of local enforcement agencies, will be outlined in the findings in Chapter 6. Examples of such quotations from ENGOs represent a departure from the statements on compliance discussed earlier in this chapter. However, an excerpt published from an EIA report, 'Running out of time', could be interpreted as being directly critical of the Vietnamese government: 'Vietnam's failure to fight wildlife trade' (*Lao Dong* 27 October 2019).

Unsurprisingly, except for isolated instances, Vietnamese official sources are seldom reported being critical of Vietnam's enforcement efforts. A *VnExpress* article contains one such rare and candid comment from a Vietnamese official in the subtitles of a video. It appears that *VnExpres*s, which potentially is the most independent and objective voice among Vietnam's digital newspaper environment, conducted an exclusive video interview with a mid-level customs department official, Le Nguyen Linh, Deputy Director of Sai Gon KV Port Branch. In the video subtitles, the customs officer is quoted: 'Thanks to the favourable terrain and the open policies, Vietnam has become the chosen place to trans ship banned goods to surrounding countries' (*VnExpress* 26 July 2017). This

mention of Vietnam's less than tight policies at customs is a rare official admission of a shortfall, amid a solid government line of commitment, determination and compliance (see, e.g., section 5.1).

This section has shown that journalists in Vietnam report shortcomings in compliance and enforcement through the Lack of Enforcement frame. The data from the framing analysis showed that a narrative in the Vietnamese newspapers that sometimes occurs is that the trade is so blatant the authorities should be able to stop it but are not. *Lao Dong*, which has a reputation for investigative reporting, possibly tests the limits with this reporting. *VnExpress*, which has a reputation for objective reporting and interviewing, less so, and *CAND* and *Nhan Dan*, which are the media arms of the police and CPV respectively, do not test the limits regarding this frame. Criticism by international sources and ENGOs does not tend to be directed at the Vietnamese government, being rather directed at customs and police officers or the courts. Although the police and customs are agencies of the Vietnamese government, there are differences in the restrictions faced by journalists—issues that will be discussed in the next chapter. There does seem to be significant agency and initiative shown by the journalists in terms of the Lack of Enforcement frame, possibly similar to the journalistic agency at work with the Organised Criminal Networks and Corruption frames under Serious Crime. These findings suggest that Vietnamese journalists sometimes report underlying narratives that stray from the government line and facts that 'also make sense in terms of the system of frames' (Lakoff 2010, p. 73).

5.7 Chapter Summary

With the conclusion of this chapter, this thesis has thus far presented the data from the first phase of the methods—the analysis on the framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers—to answer RQ1 and RQ2. As outlined in Chapter 2, this study has built on a small

body of previous studies relevant to the framing of IWT or the rhino horn trade (e.g., Massé et al. 2020; Nguyen 2017; Nguyen, Bui & Dao 2018) and has helped address an important gap in the literature concerning a key IWT nation, Vietnam, at a key time.

Since 2016, the Compliance frame has signified that Vietnam is not only enforcing laws against the rhino horn trade, but is, in doing so, also complying with its commitments under CITES. The Compliance frame tends to draw parallels with those commitments and capacity building. Hence, it is signified largely by five level 2 frames: Demonstrating Commitment, War on Wildlife Crime; International Cooperation, Coordinated Local Investigation and Hero Officers. There is scant, if any, mention in the reporting of other key commitments, including fighting money laundering and financial crimes and sustainable economic development. The timing of the news frame, alongside actual seizures and prosecutions, tends to coincide with the international pressure that culminated in Vietnam hosting the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference.

As has been demonstrated, the Compliance frame is signified by a large range of framing devices, including words, phrases, cultural nuances and metaphors, entire paragraphs and images. The news stories contain images of Vietnamese officials shaking hands with foreign officials, armed soldiers guarding cases of rhino horns and rhinos, and customs officers uncovering concealed rhino horns, all of which are powerful visual framing devices. The visual component of the Compliance frame is further exemplified by photographic essay reportage in all four selected newspapers of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event held on the side lines of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. This event was held by the Vietnamese government as a symbol of its commitment and determination to fight the rhino horn trade. This strong imagery effectively conveys the War on Wildlife Crime and International Cooperation level 2 frames.

The chapter has also shown that Vietnamese news reports sometimes stray from the government line and frame the fight against the rhino horn trade as lacking appropriate enforcement. The rhino horn trade is sometimes associated in investigative stories with a trade in wild animals that is rampant and blatant, involving customs officers along the border with Laos who seem to be turning a blind eye. ENGOs are also sources of this frame.

There is a synergy of sources behind the most aspects of the Serious Crime and Compliance frames. These sources include Vietnamese officials, international sources and ENGOs. In the case of the War on Wildlife Crime frame, the journalists quote a few Vietnamese lawyers as expert sources about the tough amended penal code with 15-year maximum sentences. For Coordinated Local Investigation, the sources behind the frame—which appear in a standard paragraph form to include the sundry list of agencies—are Vietnamese officials. For the Hero Officer frame, the framing devices tend to be photographs and captions of customs officers at work.

With a picture of the system of framing that emerged from the analysis of the news stories now complete to answer RQ1 and RQ2, Chapter 6 will describe the factors that influence the framing in the Vietnamese digital newspapers on the reporting of the rhino horn trade to answer RQ3.

Chapter 6: Influencing Factors

This chapter will describe the key influencing factors of the frames that emerged from the second phase of the methods: semi-structured interviews. The previous two chapters (4 and 5) have described the frames and the sources behind them that emerged from the framing analysis of the news articles from four selected digital newspapers, focusing on the Criminality meta-frame. This chapter builds on this work by setting out to answer RQ3, What are the factors that influenced the

frames? In doing so, this chapter will also shed more light on RQ1 and RQ2 with regard to the frames and the sources connected to them.

This study examines news framing from a constructionist perspective. By answering RQ3, this chapter looks at framing as a dependent variable rather than studying its role as an independent variable, as the case in media effects studies (Scheufele 1999). In studies that investigate the effect that news framing has, frames are treated as the independent variable. Such media effects studies may analyse government policy or public opinion to examine the possible effect of news framing. In studies such as this one, where frames are the dependent variable, interviews with journalists explore how and why journalists frame issues and events the way they have. There are various factors that influence news framing (see, e.g., De Vreese 2005; Hanggli 2012; Hertog & MacLeod 2001; Rodelo & Muñiz 2019; Scheufele 1999; Tankard 2001). This chapter explores the multiple influencing factors that define and shape the framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers.

Using a method of semi-structured interviews to study the factors that influence news framing, this thesis has demonstrated that frames have flowed from Vietnamese officials, international sources, ENGOs, experts and other sources into the Vietnamese digital newspapers. This chapter sheds light on the work practices and influences of journalists in Vietnam with regard to identifying the internal and external influences on the criminality framing common in the news articles about the rhino horn trade.

The qualitative findings of this chapter address an important gap in the literature. Although there is burgeoning research into IWT in Vietnam (e.g., Ngoc & Wyatt 2013), behavioural change interventions for conservation (e.g., Balmford et al. 2021) and into social marketing efforts to

mitigate IWT in Vietnam (e.g., Burgess 2016; Offord-Woolley 2017; Truong, Dang & Hall 2016; Wallen & Daut 2018), there is limited research into news framing of IWT in the Vietnamese press. In cognate crime reporting, Huong (2012) has conducted research into how certain crimes are framed in the Vietnamese press. She has explored the way rape is framed in Vietnam through some interviews with Vietnamese journalists to explore the possible reasons, thereby establishing a precedence for this approach.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis drew on Scheufele's (1999) five influences of frames: journalists routines, organisational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, social norms and values, and the ideological or political orientations of journalists. Findings are presented in this chapter with excerpts from interview transcripts and field notes. The people interviewed are all anonymised, as was optional in the Ethics Approval GU Ref No: 2020/447. There was a temptation to provide more relevant details about the interviewees; however, because the majority of interviewees requested to remain anonymous, all of interviewees have been identified only as journalists, ENGO personnel or experts.

The interviews with nine journalists, three ENGO personnel and an expert revealed a plethora of factors that influence the framing of the rhino horn trade. The key influencing factors revealed in the data suggest three of Scheufele's (1999) categories are dominant in influencing frames in Vietnam on this topic: journalist routines, organisational pressures and constraints and the pressures of interest groups. Although the interviews reveal that there are other factors at play—specifically, social norms and values and journalists' ideological orientations (Scheufele 1999)—these play relatively smaller roles. Therefore, this chapter will first summarise these two smaller categories, then focus on the three key categories: journalist routines, the pressures of interest groups and organisational pressures and constraints.

De Vreese (2005) posited another factor—elite discourse—as influencing frames and the frame building process. As with the pressures of interest groups, information subsidies from the government and international sources are a key influencing factor on framing (Rodelo & Muñiz 2019). The context of the rhino horn trade being framed as a serious crime at high level global events is already well established (Massé et al. 2020), as is the key role of Vietnamese officials as sources of information for journalists (Huong 2012; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017). Hence, it is useful to look at Vietnamese journalists' engagement with elite discourse in the context of journalist routines.

6.1 Social Norms and Values

The interviews did not reveal that traditional social norms and values play a large role in how the rhino horn trade is framed in the news. There may be a small influence, given that people in Vietnam do trust in traditional medicine and may value the consumption of rare and expensive wildlife as a symbol of status (Drury 2011). However, it emerged from the interviews that the younger generation in Vietnam, including many journalists, do not share the traditional beliefs of the older generation: 'They [young people] have understood that rhino horn is something that is not good for your health as it was previously perceived' (Journalist 8). The interview data tended to show that many people in Vietnam hold more modern conservation values that oppose the rhino horn trade. This is illustrated in the interview with Journalist 6:

> Vietnam's last rhino died so many years ago, so that's a good lesson to learn. And I think many people in Vietnam, they remember well about some untrue stories about rhino horn, about medical value, other things. So, I think that's an important issue.

6.2 Ideological or Political Orientations of Journalists

There are two main ideologies of journalists that potentially influence the framing of the rhino horn trade that came out of the interviews: conservation ideologies and journalistic ideologies. First, the data revealed that journalists tend to have adopted a conservation-based ideology common in Vietnamese modern values—they believe that rhinos should be protected. Furthermore, the journalists interviewed say that their view on conservation is why they think the rhino horn trade is an important issue to report, even if they are not told to report on it by their editors (Journalist 6). 'I hoped my articles can improve people's awareness of rhino [horn] smuggling and consumption' (Journalist 9). Moreover, the interviews revealed that journalists tend to support the Serious Crime definition of the rhino horn trade, and that 'long jail [sentences] are appropriate' (Journalist 9) for the people involved 'because they affect the environment seriously' (Journalist 6). The interviews suggest that, for journalists, rhino conservation provides justification for a tough enforcement approach.

Second, the journalists interviewed often say they consider audience interest as the most important factor in selecting what to report on. Hence, they consider the journalistic ideology of news values given that 'they have to prioritise those subjects that are of more interest to the public' (Journalist 4). The interviews suggest that Vietnamese journalists believe their audiences are interested in stories with human interest or unusual news values; however, not in the rhino horns themselves. 'I'm not sure if the audience care that much about the horns themselves. At the end of the day, they have nothing to do with the horns. Only rich people can buy them' (Journalist 4). For an example of a story concerning rhino horn and deemed interesting to the public, *Lao Dong* reported on how Prince William 'caused storms' in Hanoi' when, with 'Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, [he] visited Hanoi's old town and drank coffee on the sidewalk' (*Lao Dong* 17 November 2016). Prince

William's visit to Vietnam, which was in the leadup to him attending the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, was considered newsworthy enough to be covered by *Lao Dong*, as Journalist 8 attests:

> [Prince William] meets the demand of curiosity of the public, because we do not normally access the royal family with that close distance and also the British Royal family is the most popular royal family in the world.

The coverage of the 2016 Hanoi ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event, which was extensive in all four selected newspapers, also suggests common journalistic ideologies. The journalists interviewed say that many journalists attended and photographed the event, because the rhino horn and ivory was destroyed. Journalist 4 said it was newsworthy because it was the 'destruction of valuable things'. This is evidenced in the reportage, which has a strong visual emphasis on the modes of destruction—crushing, sawing and burning—of the rhino horn and ivory. Also supporting Journalist 4's view, during the collection and analysis of the *VnExpress* stories, it was observed and noted in my field notes that under the *VnExpress* article, in the comment section, several members of the public commented that the destruction of the rhino horn and ivory was a shocking waste. Comments tend to support Journalist 4's view about the interest in its value. '[Rhino horn] should not be incinerated because it is very wasteful, please publicise the price to raise money for environmental protection' and another shared '[Instead of destroying] auction [the rhino horn] for money to build houses, build bridges, build schools for the poor' (*VnExpress* 12 November 2016). These comments suggest that the event succeeded in bringing public attention to the issue because it is interesting and newsworthy.

Hence, journalists' bias for conservation and the environment, their support of tough sentences and their news values ideologies are journalist ideologies that influence frames. Having outlined the

two factors which seem to have the least influence on the frames, the next sections will discuss the three key factors.

6.3 Key Journalistic Routines

To address RQ3 in more detail, this section describes the journalistic routines that influence the frames of the rhino horn trade. Significant routines include news writing styles, the use of press releases and press conferences from ENGOs and official sources, and the attendance of publicity events. Other routines and practices of Vietnamese journalists are also important: doing their own research, using international sources, using police reports and court transcript documents and the practice of translating news from international newspapers. Other journalist routines include the use of personal contacts, concealing identities—including their own—and adopting common international frames such as Sophisticated Concealment and War on Crime.

The findings also suggest that there is a small group of journalists in Vietnam doing their own work, seeking interviews and conducting their own research (Journalist 6; Journalist 8) and that there are some journalists who are passionate about reporting on the rhino horn trade (ENGO Personnel 2).

6.3.1 Writing Styles

As has been described previously, journalists in Vietnam may write in a different style to standard Western news writing styles (Expert 1; Journalist 6). Vietnamese journalists often do not follow the inverted pyramid style, in which the newest and most important news is reported first and sources are always clearly attributed.

Inverted pyramid style is arranged in order of setting out the newest and most important facts first. However, in Vietnam, often the newest part of a news story is last. This is because Vietnamese journalists tend to place the facts in chronological order, with the background facts first and the newest facts last (Journalist 6). Expert 1 says the drama curve is reversed in Vietnamese news reporting: 'The drama curve of their storytelling is background first and then ending up with the news' (Expert 1). This has the potential to influence framing, insofar as framing is affected by what is emphasised (Gitlin 1980). Inverted pyramid news stories are arranged in a specific order to ensure that the reader will see the most important information even if they do not read the whole article. For example, in a court story in the sample, the sentencing information is at the end of the story while the details of the arrest and seizure are at the beginning. The reader who reads only the beginning may not learn of the sentence. This would potentially affect how the reader understands the application of the law, thus affecting the Compliance frame. It may be, however, that some Vietnamese newspaper readers skim the article and go to the bottom for the newest information, presenting another anomaly to Western framing theory. For the purpose of this study, the articles were analysed according to Western conventions regarding emphasis, with consideration of the Vietnamese reading of articles. The placement of information in the articles did not affect the data, because frames were just assessed as either being there or not. They were not assessed whether they were dominant or competing in the articles.

Another writing style that is different to Western inverted pyramid style is attribution. In traditional Western journalism inverted pyramid style, sources are clearly attributed in every quotation or paraphrase in a story. In fact, attribution is a required standard of journalism in the West because it presents the reader with information in a way that can be tested and independently corroborated. However, it appears in the analysis of Vietnamese news stories that information is not always

attributed or is vaguely attributed and there are not many direct quotations. ‘Quoting people is a weak point, I would say, in general [in Vietnamese news]’ (Expert 1). In several stories in the sample, particularly seizure stories, a source is only mentioned once at the top of the story or the source is given as a department rather than an individual. ‘The reason why they cite the whole department/ministry, etc. is that they use press releases’ (Journalist 4). In such cases, where the only mention of a source is at the top of the story, the rest of the information can only be assumed to be from the source at the top, meaning that the source of subsequent quotations is ambiguous. This has the potential to influence frames given that they are generally associated with certain sources and sources are suggestive of frames (Hertog & McLeod 2001). That is, a frame may not be signified strongly if the source is not named.

The practice of not attributing seems to be caused by several factors. First, press releases from police and customs may be structured with only one attribution at the top (Journalist 4). Hence, when journalists copy and paste press releases into their stories word for word (Journalist 1), there is only a general attribution at the top and attributions are missing in the body of the story (Journalist 4). Another reason that sources are not always attributed is because journalists may have personal contacts that give them information and they want to keep them to themselves. A third reason is that sources may not want to be named: ‘The informants do not want to be cited personally’ (Journalist 4). This may be because sources do not want to risk getting in trouble for something they said.

A lack of balance often occurs in Vietnamese news reporting. Journalist 4 says it is a key weakness for Vietnamese journalists. ‘Especially the weakest point is actually to give two sides. If there is a conflict, sometimes very often they settle with the official way of doing it, what the officials are

saying' (Journalist 4). As with a lack of attribution, this may occur because the journalists may rely on official press releases for information, which do not contain balance (Journalist 4).

Another routine of the journalists in Vietnam that emerged from the interviews concerns the translating of news stories of 'events of the world especially hot events' (Journalist 2) from international newspapers for readers of the international section. There is a section in the newsroom for journalists working for Vietnamese language newspapers, where journalists scan international newspapers by region for stories that concern Vietnam. They then translate these stories into Vietnamese if they are selected for the newspapers' international section. 'Every day I have to look for news and choose and then report to my boss, and then they will rule or not, and then I will translate' (Journalist 2). Stories about rhino horns, such as seizures in other countries, are sometimes translated, suggesting they are news worthy. The original stories are not translated word for word, but rather translated and restructured to suit Vietnamese news writing style: 'general things first' (Journalist 6). Sometimes the journalists take information from more than one international newspaper and bring it together to report a 'complete picture of what happened' (Journalist 6).

6.3.2 Using Media Releases and Press Conferences

With reference to RQ3, it is the information from media outputs—via press releases and press conferences—that Vietnamese journalists rely on that influences the framing of the trade in rhino horn. Numerous studies have shown how journalists in the West increasingly rely strongly on press releases and other 'information subsidies' (Gandy 1980; Rodelo & Muñiz 2019; Turk 1986; Waller & Hess 2008), with Waller and Hess (2008) having found a tendency for journalists to use such materials verbatim. Wyatt (2014) has argued that news stories on IWT come from two places: press releases and journalists' own research. The interview data revealed that the information for

Vietnamese news stories on the rhino horn trade came mainly from the Vietnamese official sources. Moreover, Vietnamese journalists often base stories on the rhino horn trade on press releases and press conferences, a tendency that is also supported by the analysis of the news articles. In Chapter 4, it was revealed there was a total of 40 Vietnamese official sources, 28 international sources and 28 ENGO sources in the complete sample of articles framing the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue. The interview data suggests that although journalists gained the majority of information from these sources via media releases, some was gained from publicity events attended by Vietnamese and international stakeholders, and some was garnered by interviews.

6.3.2.1 Using media releases from ENGOs

Interviews with journalists, ENGO personnel and an expert suggest that ENGO press releases have been one of key sources of information for Vietnamese journalists that influence frames. When referring to Western media research, Scheufele (1999) has argued that the pressures of interest groups are a key influencing factor of frames in the news media. In the list of ENGO sources used by journalists there are both international ENGOs and local ENGOs represented. Nguyen's (2007) master's research suggests that, at least in the Vietnamese press, the pressures of interest groups have been a key factor that have helped put and keep rhino horn trade on the news agenda and influence framing. In addition, it forms a part of journalist routines. The interview data supports that finding, showing that journalists are accustomed to receiving information concerning the rhino horn trade via emails from ENGOs or 'the organization, they often talk about rhino' (Journalist 5). It has emerged from the interview data that the press releases from various ENGOs (ENGO Personnel 1), have had considerable influence (Journalist 5) on the framing of the rhino horn trade as a criminality issue. Furthermore, the journalists are familiar with these groups and their work (Journalist 5) via the emails they send and their messages to counter demand: 'Many people believe

that when they have some disease, they do the rhino horn as medicine to cure their disease … But in Vietnam some organization they said that it's not true' (Journalist 5). Journalists also tend to use their press releases verbatim. They 'rarely' call personal ENGO contacts for stories or for comment (Journalist 1) and, if they do, they do not investigate much deeper into the issue (Journalist 4).

The interview data supports previous research (Nguyen 2017), suggesting that ENGOs may have been the original or very early source of Vietnamese journalists' general knowledge and understanding of the rhino horn trade issue and that ENGOs continue to be an influence. 'I think [E]NGOs are so important advising the profile of this crime and getting newspaper to report' (Journalist 8). The data also shows ENGOs were active in advocating for better enforcement in their campaigns (ENGO Personnel 1). They may have reduced their efforts and influence in recent years because of COVID-19 leading to the restriction of flights and smuggling into the country. 'COVID closed the border, so not many travellers come here. So, that's why we stopped [the rhino horn enforcement campaign projects]' (ENGO Personnel 1). However, one local ENGO, ENV, which has continued to be proactive, is evidenced through the analysis of the news stories. Their media efforts regard the promotion of the rhino horn trade as a serious crime that needs tougher penalties. ENV is a direct enforcement organisation that 'intervenes directly to halt (purportedly) illegal practices by state and private actors' (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Bondaroff 2014, p. 348).

ENGO Personnel 1 said that their ENGO would send 500 invitations to journalists to attend press conferences regarding the rhino horn trade, but that only 10 or 15 journalists would turn up. The ENGO personnel said very few journalists are motivated to report on the rhino horn trade issue. Other media efforts and pressures that ENGOs conduct include journalist training, funding for journalism projects and inviting journalists to events. However, ENGO Personnel 1 said that very few Vietnamese journalists are interested in training or funding for journalism projects on the rhino

horn trade and that, in general, newspaper organisations are not willing to pay for journalists to do independent reporting.

ENGO Personnel 1 revealed that press releases are the most successful form of media relations with journalists in Vietnam, saying it was best to feed information directly to them. The ENGO personnel also said that events were useful ways to meet journalists who they can build a rapport with (Journalist 5). The personnel said journalists tend to be 'lazy' and copy directly from press releases without trying to get additional information. Journalists, such as Journalist 4, said this is true in many cases. Although some journalists sometimes make a few phone calls to their contacts for some balance, the effort was minimal (Journalist 4):

> All these things are just covered from the NGO's release or from official's release. So no, no deep investigation … They [journalists] would pick up the phone and interview a few more [sources] for the article, but it doesn't mean that they spend a lot of time to investigate the issue.

The qualitative analysis of the interview data triangulated with the data from the framing analysis of the news stories, showing that local ENGOs have influenced the criminality framing of rhino horn trade stories through their work with media. ENGOs had projects regarding enforcement of the laws against the rhino horn trade but shifted focus in 2019. The data from the news stories suggests that the local ENGO, ENV, works with the media to promote criminality messages concerning major rhino horn court cases (see, e.g., *Lao Dong* 22 March 2018). In this story, the journalist appears to be reporting directly from the actual appeal document that ENV provided to the court. Journalist 4 said that without ENGOs or officials feeding journalists information about court cases, rhino horn court cases would tend to not be covered by court reporters or the news media. 'All these things are just, uh, covered from the [E]NGO's release or, or from officials' release' (Journalist 4). Hence it is plausible that ENV supplied an actual court appeal document or

information about it to the newspaper, thus influencing framing. The story lists the main points of ENV's appeal. These include that the jail sentence is inadequate on the grounds that Nguyen Mau Chien is a known leader of a crime syndicate with a history of IWT convictions, who falsely testified and is not of good character. Hence, in the appeal and consequent news story, the Lack of Enforcement frame and the Organised Criminal Networks frame are signified. The data from the news analysis correlates with the interview data about how significant ENGOs have been to the reporting. 'Definitely they [ENGOs] are very active … and they succeed in getting newspaper[s] to report on court case[s]' (Journalist 8). As stated above, ENV is a direct enforcement group that 'plays an important role in enhancing the compliance pull of international laws in an area—the global environment—where states often lack capacity and political will to enforce international agreements' (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Bondaroff 2014, p. 348).

Another example of an ENGO influencing the criminality crime framing is a *Lao Dong* story that reports on an EIA report entitled 'Running out of time'. The news article says that the EIA report aims 'to warn of Vietnam's failure to fight wildlife trade'. According to EIA's investigation, Vietnam has quickly become a global hotspot for IWT involving growing criminal networks. Hence, like ENV, EIA influences framing, namely with reference to the Lack of Enforcement and Organised Criminal Networks frames. This correlates with Journalist 8 stating that ENGOs have been crucial in getting media attention for rhino horn trade enforcement.

There are some situations where ENGO press releases are excluded from the digital newspapers and do not seem to influence framing. A key example is the lack of coverage of several international ENGO investigation reports into the rhino horn trade in Vietnam. One ENGO investigated the operations of organised criminal networks in a notorious Vietnamese IWT village called Nhi Khe in the north of Vietnam. The Wildlife Justice Commission passed extensive findings of an

undercover operation into the rhino horn trade in this village, including names of the key culprits, to the Vietnamese public security police and provided a press release with a link to the report to the international media, including the Vietnamese media (Wildlife Justice Commission 2017). The Wildlife Justice Commission's (2017) 'Operation Phoenix' does not seem to be mentioned in the Vietnamese language digital newspapers (ENGO Personnel 2). ENGO Personnel 2 said that such investigations would not interest the Vietnamese people because it is almost common knowledge that there are villages around Hanoi where that kind of trade occurs: 'It's almost a bit of a boring story to them because they're like, "Yeah, I know there's trade in rhino horns". So, I don't think that sells papers'. Hence, such villages may have little or no news value in Vietnam.

6.3.2.2 Using press releases from the state and its agencies

The data from the interviews showed that MARD, the Vietnam CITES Management, which is under MARD, customs and police are all routine sources of information for journalists who report on rhino horn enforcement activities. Correlating the framing analysis of the news stories, the content analysis of sources and the interview data showed that journalists rely on information from customs and police press releases and MARD publicity events, such as rhino horn handovers to South Africa and rhino horn destruction events. The analysis of the data from the interviews supports the data from the framing analysis and the content analysis outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 that customs, police and MARD supply information, photographs and photograph opportunities to journalists. Thus, the interaction between journalists and the media efforts of Vietnamese customs, police and MARD is a journalist routine that strongly influences the framing of the rhino horn trade. The rhino horn destruction event organised by MARD will be discussed further in subsection 6.3.3.

ENGO Personnel 1 said that journalists go to the customs website to find information and copy it for the news: ‘In the customs, they have the website, and they release it first, and then the other one [the journalist] comes to the customs’ website and copy/paste, and they take it from the customs’. Customs is very active in promoting seizures of rhino horn via press releases (ENGO Personnel 2): ‘Customs love to put them [press releases] out. Yeah, customs do a lot. Police do them. All the districts, and the provinces have their journalists that they’ll just call’. Journalists tend to publish a police or customs press release without questioning it (Expert 1). The Public Security (police) departments around Vietnam also hold regular press meetings: ‘So they [police and customs] are the main source of information for reporters’ (Journalist 3). The aim of much of the media activity carried out by police and customs is for ‘positive publicity’ (Journalist 4).

According to the data, a common routine among Vietnamese journalists is that when a story appears in one newspaper, a journalist from another newspaper will go to the same source and, if it is a press release, copy it word for word. This accounts for a lot of the crossovers in the Vietnamese press—same words and same photo. This practice is one of the reasons that some Vietnamese journalists do not sometimes refer to their source in their stories. Journalist 1 confirmed that journalists tend to copy material directly. The journalist said that many journalists from different newspapers routinely copy from the same source: ‘They get the information, [from] the same source. They write exactly the same. They give the same sentence, paragraph, the same photo. Yes. So very boring’. However, the journalist said that he hoped that Vietnamese journalists nowadays are improving on this poor journalistic practice.

The common practice of journalists copying and pasting press releases into their stories in the context of customs press releases often results in journalists including full paragraphs outlining all the Vietnamese agencies that have cooperated to arrest a rhino horn seizure. These paragraphs are

common in the stories that signify the level 2 Coordinated Local Investigation frame under Compliance. As discussed in Chapter 5, these paragraphs are often attributed to customs and often come from customs press releases. Journalist 6 said that the listing of various agencies that coordinate in a rhino horn seizure occurs because 'that's the information' the journalists get from the agencies in the press releases. Such paragraphs listing three or more local agencies are often emphasised in the second or third paragraphs of a story. Whatever the agency in Vietnam, they seem to be keen to get credit for what they have done (Journalist 4; ENGO Personnel 2), hence they emphasise that they are involved in the press releases. This results in an emphasis on local coordination in the press coverage, a factor that has a significant influence on that frame.

The journalist routine of copying and pasting customs press releases also possibly results in news claims that rhino horn is cleverly hidden when it is smuggled. There is some debate about whether it is appropriate for customs authorities to say that the methods of concealment used by organised criminal networks are sophisticated. ENGO Personnel 2 said that the Vietnamese customs overuse that term and that, in general, there is nothing sophisticated about it, meaning that such terms misrepresent the problem:

> They [Vietnamese customs] love that term. Very sophisticated? They wrapped it [rhino horn] in foil? Fuck … Excuse my language … That's not just in Vietnamese media though, that's a global issue. It's not just Vietnamese media, that is NGOs, everybody … They say how clever they [organised criminal networks] are, how difficult and challenging this thing [policing the rhino horn smuggling problem] is. It's a complete mis-framing of the problem. (ENGO Personnel 2)

Hence it appears that the frame that appears in the customs press releases influences the framing in the news. Moreover, the level 2 Sophisticated Concealment frame under Serious Crime is a quite dominant frame around the world. For example, the ENGO Personnel 2 also said the US customs

and immigration misuse the term, ‘sophisticated’, when they talk about the techniques of people smuggling at the Mexican border. The ENGO Personnel said it appears to be used as a justification by authorities for the amount of contraband coming through borders.

The interview data suggests that customs and police either supply journalists with the majority of photographs of rhino horn seizures (Journalist 3) or provide them with the chance to photograph the seized horns or with similar photograph opportunities. The data from the framing analysis of the news stories supports this given that photographs are often attributed to the police or customs. The analysis of the news articles shows that photographs can act as effective framing devices in the news coverage of the rhino horn trade, especially if they are eye-catchingly positioned at the top of stories. Hence this aspect of the journalistic routine of using photographs from the media outputs of customs influences framing—particularly because, as for Western newspapers, photographs are ‘very important’ for a good story in Vietnamese newspapers (Journalist 4).

The photographs that journalists get from customs and police follow a common theme, depicting seized rhino horns, rhino horns with officers and rhino horns with the alleged offender, who is sometimes handcuffed and sometimes held by police. In Chapters 4 and 5, it was established that photographs of rhino horn are key framing devices for both the Compliance and Serious Crime frames. The photographs of rhino horns also show that rhino horn smuggling is being intercepted (Demonstrating Commitment). When officers are included in the image the photographs show the officers are doing a good job (Hero officers); when the alleged offender is also shown, often looking dejected, it signifies that the authorities are cracking down on offenders (War on Wildlife Crime). Often images show officers removing rhino horns from packaging. This signifies Sophisticated Concealment—a level 2 frame under Serious Crime. Nearly all such photographs are supplied by police and customs, with very few being taken by reporters (Journalist 3). Hence the supply of

photographs from the customs and police to journalists is an influence on both Compliance and Serious Crime framing.

This section has described the large influence of the journalist routine of using customs and police press releases on the framing of the rhino horn trade. The next section will discuss the potential journalist routines behind the 'media buzz' around the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event held in 2016 on the sidelines of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference.

6.3.3 **Publicity Events of the State and Its Agencies**

The criminality framing that stemmed from key events related to the rhino horn trade has already been established in Chapters 4 and 5 in addressing RQ1 and RQ2. Two key frames that emerged from the coverage of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event were Compliance level 2 frames, War on Wildlife Crime and International Cooperation. The events discussed in this section are distinguishable from official press conferences because of the attendance of prominent international stakeholders, as well as representatives of Vietnamese agencies or departments. Journalistic ideologies, such as news values, were identified earlier in this chapter as an influencing factor on the framing regarding some key official events. It also emerged from the analysis of the interviews that this coverage of events was a journalistic routine. At least three significant events in Vietnam regarding the rhino horn trade were organised by CITES Management Authority of Vietnam under MARD: the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event, the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference and the handover of rhino horns from Vietnam to South Africa for investigation.

The first event in the sample period was the rhino horn and ivory destruction event in 2016 that occurred on the sidelines of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. This event was extensively covered by all four newspapers in the selection, with the focus on images from the event being used in

photographic essays or videos. There was no coverage of the IWT conference itself because, as Journalist 4 says, ‘How are conferences interesting’ (Journalist 4). The images from the destruction event show the security surrounding the event, the destruction of rhino horn and ivory, and local and international officials and celebrities together in a spirit of cooperation.

Interview data from the journalists suggest that newspapers were not likely directed by the government to cover these events, although the Vietnamese government has the capacity to do so (ENGO Personnel 2). It appears more likely that the CITES Management Authority of Vietnam ‘want[ed] to get media attention’ because they want credit (ENGO Personnel 2) and that, as a result, ‘media houses are invited or can actively register to cover’ (Journalist 8). The CITES Management Authority would have sent out invitations or press releases to journalists to attend. ‘If they have high-level officials there, they probably want to promote it. So they [MARD] would send press release to everyone’ (Journalist 4). As discussed earlier in the chapter, the data suggest that journalists attended mostly because they are motivated to cover what they think is interesting or newsworthy to their audiences (Journalist 2). In addition, newspapers and journalists may feel some organisational pressure (Scheufele 1999) to ‘have to’ cover government propaganda-style stories (Journalist 4), such as those above. Hence foreign dignitaries, Vietnamese officials and propaganda seem to play a part in Vietnamese journalists’ news values, organisational pressures and, consequently, their routines, thus influencing frames. It is unclear from the interview data which frames were influenced by this routine; however, the analysis of the news articles suggests that the three level 2 frames under Compliance—Demonstrating Commitment, War on Wildlife Crime and International Cooperation—were influenced. The destruction event was also an important influence on the Security Threats frame.

It appears from the interviews that the destruction event and the occasion of Prince William having coffee with the Vietnamese prime minister functioned to gain media coverage to support the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. ENGO Personnel 2 outlined how the conference was vitally significant in influencing the Compliance frame:

> Wildlife trafficking wasn't on the political agenda in 2010. What's happened over the last decade or so, is that while the trafficking has increased globally, how much interest there is at the highest levels, and that came about. The Hanoi conference was the second conference or the third conference … the third conference, Prince William and Harry and the whole Royal foundation got involved, Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, Obama … There was just a growing … Xi Jinping, and the ivory ban, it was much more at the political level. And Vietnam was caught up in that, being labelled as a country of concern in that regard at CITES [2016], that conference … a lot about that Hanoi conference, because at that time and since, [The Vietnamese government] often say, 'Well, we hosted it, that's our demonstration of political commitment.' And the Vice President spoke at the conference and opened it.

6.3.4 **Journalists Conducting Their Own Research and Using International Sources**

The rhino horn trade can be influenced directly by the state, its agencies and ENGOs because there is a tendency for journalists to use their press releases verbatim as well as the photographs they provide. However, the interview data also revealed that interviewing and having contacts, both locally and internationally, are considered an important part of journalism work in Vietnam (Journalist 8) and can influence frames. This is in line with global tendencies in reporting IWT, as journalists' own research is one of the key ways that journalists around the world put together stories on IWT (Wyatt 2014). Some of the interviewees noted that there are some good feature writers and investigative journalists who work on the rhino horn trade in Vietnam (Journalist 5;

Journalist 7; ENGO Personnel 2). However, investigative journalists are mostly based in the north (ENGO Personnel 1) around Hanoi: 'They [investigative journalists] are usually in the North, not in South'. In addition to this, sometimes ENGOs fund investigative journalists to write investigative pieces: 'We pay the money for them to do the investigation series' (ENGO Personnel 1). The ENGO Personnel said that this is usually in the north.

The framing analysis of the news articles showed that some investigative journalism is done on the trade of wild animals along the Lao border by *Lao Dong* journalists, with a good deal of questioning of the integrity of the customs officers there. The interview data suggested that these Laos border investigations are routinely carried out every few years and are relatively easy for the journalists to do. In contrast, investigating the rhino horn trade is more difficult and potentially dangerous (ENGO Personnel 2). The interview data also suggest that customs is a critical point in the trade chain—customs being where the rhino horn trade converges with other transnational crimes—but one that is little investigated by journalists. Many transnational crimes converge at the borders and a lot of money is being made by the people who control those borders:

> The point of convergence is primarily along the borders … Wildlife trafficking converges with many of other types of crimes that would be classed as serious transnational crimes … primarily on the border areas … The thing is that the guys that are running those borders, aren't wildlife traffickers, they control the border. (ENGO Personnel 2)

However, it may be difficult for journalists report on this issue at borders:

> It [customs] is very closed. It's a closed system. It's difficult to … The custom is the, one of the most corrupted, corrupting. How do you call it corrupted sections of the government … So it is really high profit there. You have to pay a lot in order to get some position in … the [customs]

> authority. So, so of course they would not want to have all the cooperation with everyone else. (Journalist 4)

The analysis of the news articles reflects that some journalists are exploring the rhino horn trade by interviewing a range of perspectives or combining information and statements from press releases and sources. This is supported in the interview data that show some journalists may have personal contacts in customs and police who invite them to come in when a seizure has been made to report and take photographs. 'When the customs … discover the rhino horn, they might contact [a journalist] who they know' (ENGO Personnel 1). Conversely, the journalist might contact them if they hear of a seizure (Journalist 1). The data suggest that customs and police prefer to work with journalists they know and trust (Journalist 1).

In order to conduct their own research, Vietnamese journalists routinely use the press releases of international sources and contact them for statements (Journalist 8). The content analysis of the news stories show that numerous different international sources are quoted in the Vietnamese digital newspapers on the rhino horn trade. The content analysis shows international sources are behind both the Conservation and Criminality meta-frames. However, the content analysis indicates international sources tend to focus on issues of International Cooperation, the War on Wildlife Crime and the Security Threats posed by IWT.

Another form of journalistic research involves collecting information from English language news media on the rhino horn trade. The interviews with journalists revealed that journalists working in the international sections of Vietnamese newspapers translate news from English language news media. Rather than strict translations, they tend to rework the stories to suit Vietnamese interests and may supplement their content with other information.

6.3.5 **Using Publicly Available Documents**

Vietnamese journalists reporting the rhino horn trade sometimes use police investigation reports and court transcripts that are publicly available on the internet (Journalist 1). This important journalistic routine represents a higher level of journalistic agency than when journalists use press releases. Furthermore, it results in a narrative with a greater level of detail as to the organised criminal syndicates. It is not clear if the documents used are specifically intended for journalists or if they are just publicly available. Johnston and McGovern (2013) found that although police have been active in Australia in utilising the media, the courts have been more tentative. This may explain why there are only brief mentions in the interview data of journalists using official court documents, whereas official documents and press releases seem to be the source of much information from police and customs. In addition to the routine of predominantly drawing from press releases from customs and, to a lesser extent, police to report seizures, there are several news stories in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* where journalists refer to court reports, police investigation reports or case files. Some newspapers have specialised court reporters, who sometimes attend court and sometimes use the reports and transcripts made available to report on the rhino horn trade (Journalist 4). Such journalists tend to have contacts in the courts who supply documents to them as well (Journalist 4). Journalists are also provided information on court cases by ENGOs (Journalist 8), who can succeed in 'getting newspapers to report on the case' (Journalist 8). Through using the information in these official documents, these stories outline the role of organised criminal networks in the rhino horn trade in much more detail than the stories of seizures that may have come from press releases.

This journalistic routine of using police and court documents influences the framing of the rhino horn trade, particularly as concerns the Organised Criminal Networks frame. Seizures stories

derived from customs press releases tend to identify one of the lowly roles in the networks, the mule, and show that the rhino horn is hidden somehow. Through the reporting of trials and investigations, particularly of higher ups in the networks, the journalists frame Vietnam's compliance much better than do seizures and arrests (Expert 2). The international community fighting the rhino horn trade is, after all, more interested in kingpins being sentenced in Vietnam than just arrested. Reports taken from police investigation reports tend to outline investigative procedures more than police or customs press releases. The news articles about investigations and sentencings derived from such reports may be something the international community want to see invested in as an indication of Vietnam's compliance (ENGO Personnel 2). Duldig and Easton (2020), speaking at the Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network and the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement conference on an IWT case in the Northern Territory, said that police investigations can benefit from media if the media is used the right way.

The interview data suggest that the Vietnamese journalist practice of using court or police investigation transcripts is a journalistic routine that provides an additional level of detail that influences frames of the rhino horn trade. The detail in the news reports may be of use to a range of stakeholders fighting the rhino horn trade, making this an area worthy of further research.

6.4 Pressures From Interest Groups

The last of the three key influences that emerged from the interviews is the pressure of interest groups (Scheufele 1999). This section expands on previous discussion concerning the journalistic routine of using ENGO press releases (see subsection 6.3.2.1) and explores further what influence ENGOs have had on the framing of the rhino horn trade. Chapters 4 and 5 have shown that ENGOs

have been quoted on issues of criminality, specifically enacting frames of Organised Criminal Networks, Security Threats, Vietnam Demonstrating Commitment, War on Wildlife Crime, International Cooperation and Lack of Enforcement. This section also builds on my previous research that examined the framing of the media outputs of ENGOs (Smith 2017) with the aim of exploring ENGOs' more recent influence on the framing of the rhino horn trade.

The interview data with journalists show that journalists are familiar with ENGOs' media work on the rhino horn trade issue. Journalists may have learned about the rhino horn trade issue mostly through ENGO practices of emailing press releases to hundreds of reporters at a time, as the following statement demonstrates: 'They [Vietnamese journalists and editors] get information [on the rhino horn trade] from the [E]NGOs mostly' (Journalist 4). The interviews with journalists also revealed that Vietnamese journalists tend to agree with ENGO demand reduction and conservation messages. According to these messages, Vietnam is responsible for the poaching crisis facing rhinos in South Africa, the poaching of rhinos could lead to their extinction, the belief that rhino horn has any medical efficacy is a myth and laws against the rhino horn trade should be better enforced.

The interview data with ENGO personnel show that ENGOs consider the rhino horn trade to be both a conservation and criminal issue. 'I think that it's both. Criminal issue and also conservation issue' (ENGO Personnel 1). Up until 2019, when COVID-19 closed Vietnam's borders, ENGOs were working with media to promote better enforcement of the rhino horn trade in their media outputs: 'We did that [better enforcement campaigning] before … When COVID start, we don't do work on the rhino … with COVID closed the border, so not many travellers come here. So, that's why we stopped' (ENGO Personnel 1). ENGO Personnel 2 says that the media is one of

many ways that ENGOs have put pressure on the Vietnamese government to improve their response to the rhino horn trade.

ENGOs have had an influence on the framing of the rhino horn trade by alerting journalists of court cases and providing the details. In addition, Journalist 4 said that there are court reporters in Vietnam who attend court. Rhino horn court cases and appeals are not of huge interest to the public, therefore ENGOs need to 'put food [information] into the journalist's mouth':

> That is the NGOs that have more expertise and have more concern. I mean, that's the interest of such organisations. So, they would have to put food into the journalist mouth, you know, they have to provide them with the releases or documents or whatever. And then it's up to the editorial rooms to, to decide whether they take up that job or not. (Journalist 4)

Hence ENGOs have been able to influence frames in the digital newspapers.

The interview data also suggest that ENGOs had not predicted that the pressure on the Vietnamese government to better enforce the rhino horn trade would end up with rhino horn mules receiving very long sentences. Although ENGOs were pushing for IWT to be seen as a serious crime like 'other big crime types' such as 'drugs, human trafficking, weapons, counterfeit goods' (ENGO Personnel 2), and for more arrests to lead to sentences, they were hoping that the Vietnamese government would put more resources into international cooperation and 'dedicated' IWT investigative units and courts. Instead the outcome was bumped up jail terms, which is 'often not the best solution but that's how the message is being taken' (ENGO Personnel 2). ENGO Personnel 2 also said that the conservation sector sees behaviour change as the way forward rather than law enforcement:

> And for our sector, we're a group of conservationists who simply want to reduce the poaching of these animals, and we're trying to figure out, well, very practically, how do you do that? We saw no law enforce enforcement response, we wanted to push for a law enforcement response, we're now looking at, as there is now, finally people being arrested and prosecuted and convicted and put in jail, for many cases, that hasn't had the desired impact. So to me, it's an evolution of thinking, this is all a behaviour change thing to me, how do you actually change the behaviours of these folks?

Chapters 4 and 5 discussed news stories in the Vietnamese media featuring heavy sentences of up to 15 years and armed security guards protecting rhinos and rhino horns. As the statement above illustrates, however, some ENGOs believe the main solution is behaviour change. The tough sentences and militarisation that is happening may not be what the ENGOs wanted. Securitisation is widespread over multiple issues globally, not only IWT. ENGO Personnel 2 said that tougher prison sentences may not be the solution even though the securitisation of IWT overlaps with current widespread thinking about national security:

> This as wider than just wildlife trafficking in all honesty. The criminal justice systems and how we respond to things are under a period of huge reform, if you talk to anybody in the drug trafficking sector or human trafficking, they're having the same discussions. Our world has gone through this very black and white view of how you change people's criminal behaviour, being; put them in jail, driven largely by the US, right? Put everybody in jail. And there's this reflection now of, and more research around this, that shows that actually increases crime and that increased crime rates come about by putting people in jail for long periods of time. Because this idea of it being militarised and securitised, there is an overlap for a government, in terms of looking at political commitment, there is an overlap of wildlife trafficking and national security border security, livelihood security, food security, health security.

This suggests that broader thinking about securitisation is having an effect on the enforcement and legal frameworks regarding the rhino horn trade. The interview data suggest that ENGOs may have unwittingly played a part in the Vietnamese government focusing on tougher sentences for rhino horn traffickers and securitisation, rather than behaviour change campaigns. There is a now a worldwide trend in the securitisation of IWT that the conservation sector had not foreseen or wanted (ENGO Personnel 2), with the US and other high level global actors having helped frame IWT and other criminal activity this way.

6.5 Organisational Pressures and Constraints

For Vietnamese journalists, it emerged from the interview data that there are several organisational pressures and constraints that may influence framing. These include pressures and constraints placed on them by the government, limited access to official sources, lack of resources and low pay. In addition, operating in the Vietnamese news media in general is constraining in ways that can negatively affect journalists' skill levels and journalistic capacity (Expert 1). Other than organisational pressures and constraints there are other constraints, such as language, that can hamper Vietnamese journalists without skills in foreign languages, such as English. Some interviewees mentioned that it can be dangerous when reporting on organised criminal activities. That is, there may be danger facing the undercover journalists who reported on the wild animal trade in villages along the Laos border, which would limit the number and depth of news reports. This section will first outline the organisational pressures and constraints on journalists and then outline the other pressures and constraints that also influence framing.

6.5.1 **State-run Media Constraints**

As discussed in Chapter 2, in soviet communist media models—as opposed to libertarian media models of free speech—the media is the mouthpiece of the government, is government owned and controlled and a tool to achieve state objectives and should not be critical of the government (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm 1956). Although dated, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's (1956) theory is relevant in the case of the socialist/communist government of Vietnam wherein journalists face many restrictions. Vietnam's news media, including *VnExpress* which is semi-privately owned, is owned and controlled by the government. Although the media enjoys more freedom than being purely a government mouthpiece, propaganda stories are still a part of the role that journalists understand and accept (Journalist 4). Journalist 4 says that Vietnamese journalists know that when high-level officials present a media conference they need to attend. This is especially the case for journalists who work for the Vietnam News Agency, the official government news service (Journalist 4), which was not one of the digital newspapers selected for this study. This is less so for *VnExpress*, which has a policy not to cover propaganda pieces—a policy that is reflected in their digital newspaper.

The measure of journalistic freedom in Vietnam constantly shifts according to the time, place and topic and some journalists tend to test the limits of reporting (Expert 1). Reporting on the environment is a relatively free area (ENGO Personnel 2). Rather than an extremely centralised point of power, the extent of the boundaries that Vietnamese journalists operate in depends on several factors. Locality possibly matters, given the Vietnamese government places some importance on local initiatives (Expert 1). Timing has also been shown to matter, with a consensus among researchers of the Vietnamese media that media freedom and censorship occurs in waves.

The level of government influence also depends on the leader of the media outlet: 'You have to be a party member in order to sit in the leadership of a media outlet' (Expert 1). Whereas some leaders and editors of media houses are 'old fashioned … hardline' types, others are 'really modern' (Expert 1). Some are progressive young editors who share similar views with young journalists (Journalist 3) who 'are much broader' (Expert 1) in their reporting. For instance, although the leader of *VnExpres*s is quite young, the leader of *Lao Dong* was a famous investigative journalist (Journalist 3). It follows that the former has younger views and the latter supports investigative journalism. The new channels, such as social media, are freer for people to speak their minds but are under government surveillance. Journalists in Vietnam have groups on social media where they talk about the latest issues and journalism (Journalist 4). Nevertheless, there is a 'red line' in social media—if you cross it 'you are gone … you go to jail' (Expert 1).

Editors meet weekly with the Propaganda Committee to discuss what can be published (ENGO Personnel 2) in the news. It appears that journalists are not told what they can or cannot report (Journalist 6; Journalist 7), nor are their articles censored before they get published (Journalist 4). Rather, the news is screened after it gets published. It is then that the journalist responsible may be contacted and possibly disciplined (Journalist 4). To avoid trouble, the journalists practise self-censorship, indicating that journalists have a working understanding of the limits of reporting (Expert 1). Another possible result of this pressure is the journalists' use of pseudonyms.

Journalists use pseudonyms (Journalist 6) and sometimes a by-line may give a group of fictitious journalists (Journalist 7). The interview data suggests that journalists do this for a range of reasons, including to protect themselves. One journalist said that they do not use their own name because another journalist of that name had 'bad luck' and was imprisoned. However, journalists may use pseudonyms simply because they prefer them to their own name (Journalist 6).

Vietnamese journalists agree that the rhino horn trade is neither high on the agenda of the Vietnamese government nor a sensitive issue (Journalist 4). The very small number of stories, only seven, over a five-year period about the rhino horn trade in *Nhan Dan*, which is the media mouthpiece of the CPV, supports the view that the rhino horn trade is not high on the government agenda. Nonetheless, there is significant reporting of the trade in other newspapers. This may be for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter linked to the conservation-based ideologies of journalists and the routine of using press releases from Vietnamese official sources, international sources and ENGOs that appear to be active in this area.

6.5.2 **Reporting Corruption and Constraints**

The blanket constraining rule for all journalists in Vietnam that emerged from the interview data is that journalists cannot criticise the top-level government officials or the party state (Expert 1). This includes criticising policy, because criticising policy is seen to be criticising the policy makers (ENGO Personnel 2). Doing this could land journalists in jail (Expert 1). Journalists get around this by criticising the implementation of policy, because this is seen as criticism of lower-level agencies (ENGO Personnel 2). There appear to be certain ways that journalists can report corruption (Expert 1), such as indirect inference and the use of slang.

Despite being one of the most important issues in Vietnam, little is reported on corruption (Journalist 1, pers. comm.). Corruption is a sensitive issue (Journalist 1), which places constraints on its reporting. Because of the blanket rule about not criticising the party or reporting corruption of top officials, if there is any high-level corruption involved in the rhino horn trade or any high-level officials using rhino horn—which is plausible because wealthy men are the largest user group—this would be excluded from the Vietnamese news, thus influencing how corruption is framed regarding the rhino horn trade. However, legitimacy is important to the CPV, meaning that

they must be seen internationally and by the Vietnamese public to be fighting corruption. Consequently, the CPV sometimes conducts major operations that can target high level officials (Expert 1). For example, Expert 1 discussed the case reported in the news of a recent anticorruption operation that exposed some high-level military officials for selling military-owned land for personal profit.

In a low-level corruption case that journalists reported, *Lao Dong* journalists reported corruption that was already being prosecuted or proven, the case of a low-level customs official, Pham Minh Hoang, 'warehouse keeper' for Hanoi customs. This warehouse keeper had embezzled 6kg of rhino horn and 239kg of ivory. *Lao Dong* reported the Vietnam government's tough approach 'to strictly handle violators according to the provisions of law' and 'to review and reorganise the management and supervision of material evidences' (*Lao Dong* 9 May 2017). thereby enacting the corruption frame. The warehouse keeper was sentenced to 16 years in prison (*Lao Dong* 27 August 2018). The interview data suggests that reporting corruption in customs—if it is not already being prosecuted as above—is very difficult for journalists. This is because customs is a 'closed system' that does not cooperate with outsiders (Journalist 4) and where many transnational crimes 'converge' (ENGO Personnel 2).

Unless it is proven, journalists in Vietnam tend to report corruption in indirect ways. The way such reports are worded is important. Criticism of official practices at low levels can occur; however, journalists need to formulate such criticism carefully (ENGO Personnel 2). Because official corruption is a well-known fact among the Vietnamese public, when a journalist states that there is something wrong happening under the nose of an official, it emerged from the interviews that the Vietnamese readers may understand that the journalist is implying or inferring that the official has been bribed (Expert 1). Such corruption may be considered by the Vietnamese public to be

commonplace (Journalist 4; ENGO Personnel 2): 'It's not open to the public … but everyone knows about it' (Journalist 4). To answer RQ3, this style of indirect reporting influences the way that corruption is framed. The following excerpt from *Lao Dong* is an example of how journalists may have implied that a certain official is corrupt. Although the excerpt is not about the rhino horn trade, the trade is discussed in the article, suggesting that there is an association:

> In Tay Ninh, we also brought a deputy head of the Tay Ninh Environmental Police Department to the subject's [wildlife trader's] home. But weeks have passed, when we contacted the Environmental Police comrades, it was known that an investigation was underway to catch the act. We—journalists, with only the naked eye and a medium-sized smart phone, can 'shake hands and face' this illegal trade anywhere. That shows that the involvement of the authorities has not been drastic, even indifferent to the active traders, who have temporarily stopped displaying [the illegal wildlife parts]. Here, if not covering for wildlife traffickers, it is a disregard for the law of the enforcers. (*Lao Dong* 27 October 2019)

In this instance, the *Lao Dong* journalist describes that the illegal trade is blatantly happening right under the police official's nose and that the so-called investigation in place is not finding anything. The journalist then states that the police have not taken action and seem indifferent. The journalist then becomes a bit bolder when they say the police may also cover up the trade. Thus, in this excerpt, the journalist may be indirectly implying that the police officer is corrupt:

6.5.3 Other Pressures and Constraints

There are numerous other organisational pressures and constraints. A key constraint is that Vietnamese journalists are generally under-resourced and their payment system does little to incentivise good journalism. Newspapers, which were once all funded by the state, now tend to rely on their own profits from advertising to pay journalists (Huong 2012). Journalists receive a

salary and are sometimes paid extra according to the number of stories and words that they write (Journalist 4) and the clicks their stories receive online (Journalist 8). Journalist 4 says this provides no incentive to 'dig deeper'. Journalists can supplement their income when they attend press conferences. Although this could be considered envelope journalism—an unethical practice where journalists receive a small stipend from the organisation or government ministries holding a press conference they attend—the money is usually intended to be just enough to pay for their travel expenses and buy some lunch (Journalist 4) rather than a payoff to write the story with a positive bias.

The newspaper sector moving from print to online readerships has contributed to the strain on resources for journalists—an issue facing news organisations worldwide. In Vietnam, the news media is struggling financially to compete with social media (Journalist 5) for their audience's attention. These financial problems may have negatively affected investigative journalism, which is less common now than it was before (Journalist 5), particularly in South Vietnam (ENGO Personnel 1). There is also an increased amount of tabloid-style journalism as journalists vie for clicks (Journalist 4). To counter this, journalists can sometimes receive funding and training from ENGOs to investigate the rhino horn trade (ENGO Personnel 1, 2). However, the uptake and interest in these opportunities seems to be minimal (ENGO Personnel 1).

Vietnamese journalists are sometimes sponsored by ENGOs to go to Africa to report on issues on the supply side of the rhino horn trade. However, Vietnamese journalists generally do not have the resources and investigative journalistic capacity to investigate the complex trade and tight-knit Vietnamese community associated with the organised criminal networks in Africa (ENGO Personnel 2). Although some Vietnamese journalists with the skills are willing to go undercover to investigate the wild animal trade on the border between Vietnam and Laos, investigating the Asian

crime syndicates in South Africa is more difficult and, potentially, much more dangerous. The issue of danger as a factor that influences frames will be discussed later in this section.

Journalists can, but often do not, develop expertise in a specialty area (Journalist 4). Although some journalists specialise in areas such as business, crime, court reporting, international news and entertainment, specialising in the environment is rare (Journalist 4). As a result, there are very few journalists in Vietnam who have specialty knowledge of the rhino horn trade or IWT (ENGO Personnel 2; Journalist 7). Most rhino horn trade stories are written by journalists who have little background understanding of the issue (Journalist 4) and most stories are copied from press releases (Journalist 7). However, since the rhino horn trade escalated less than ten years ago, more passion is evident among journalists about the rhino horn trade issue and significant improvements to reporting have occurred (ENGO Personnel 2).

The restrictions placed on Vietnamese journalists have hindered their development in general. Expert 1 said that with all the constraints that Vietnamese journalists work under it is difficult for them to advance their journalistic skills. Vietnamese journalists are often considered lazy and sloppy in their reporting (ENGO Personnel 1) because they rely on one source of information, such as a press release, and copy it into their news story. They are criticised for not verifying or corroborating information or seeking alternative perspectives (Journalist 4). This may not be their fault, however, given that they are not able to develop and practise their skills (Expert 1).

Journalists' development can be hindered by limited access to sources, declining investigative journalism practices and limitations on reporting new developments. Journalists only sometimes make a call to get a comment from another source for balance (Journalist 6) and 'rarely' have a contact in the police, because it is 'very difficult' (Journalist 6) to develop such contacts. Customs

is a closed shop that is also hard to get access to (Journalist 4) unless the journalist has personal connections. In these conditions, it is understandable that a journalist may not gain confidence in skills like soliciting or cold calling a source, gaining rapport with a source or interviewing and asking hard questions. Interviewees did say that Vietnamese journalists do sometimes make a few calls to relevant contacts for additional statements for their stories, but tend to expend minimal effort. However, there are caveats. Journalist 1 said that journalists' access to government officials has improved in the past years, allowing opportunities for capacity building. The financial realities facing a declining newspaper industry suggest investigative reporting and feature writing is declining (Journalist 5), meaning that the opportunities to develop these skills are declining too. In addition, there can be a tightening up of restrictions on journalists at times. Then a focus on journalistic freedoms and the consequent reporting on things may 'bubble up' (ENGO Personnel 2) again and 'they're [journalists] pushing the boundaries' (Expert 1). However, this is 'not always and not in all areas' (Expert 1). These appearing and disappearing opportunities, combined with uncertainty, also limit journalists' development.

Although some pressure may come from government agencies, the interview data suggests that sometimes this is a form of self-interest. As discussed in the Coordinated Local Investigation level 2 frame under Compliance, when there is more than one agency involved in an investigation, the data from the news articles shows that journalists tend to report them all. ENGO Personnel 2 says that agencies want acknowledgement for any involvement and try to ensure that that they are acknowledged in the news.

Global framing of the trade has plausibly had an influence on the framing of the rhino horn trade by the Vietnamese digital media. Regarding the journalistic routine of customs press releases, Expert 1 said that the term Sophisticated Concealment that is used in customs press releases is

bandied around the world in relation to all types of smuggling, whether the techniques are sophisticated or not. Expert 1 said that the Vietnamese customs saying that hiding rhino horn in a cake tin in carry-on luggage is not sophisticated, just as smuggling people across the US Mexico border in trucks is not sophisticated. Yet news media use the word 'sophisticated' to describe these methods of organised criminal networks. Other pieces of rhetoric that originate outside Vietnam are the War on Crime, War on Drugs, War on Wildlife Crime frames, the latter of which appears in the Vietnamese digital newspapers. Hence global framing and other such politically expedient rhetorical devices seem to be a pressure that influences the framing of the rhino horn trade.

Another outside pressure and constraint is the risk of danger that Vietnamese journalists may face when reporting on IWT and the rhino horn trade (Journalist 7). The rhino horn syndicates are very cautious and there is more money involved with rhino horn syndicates than with other forms of wild animal trading (ENGO Personnel 2). The syndicates are known to intimidate with violence. 'They're criminals and criminals are dangerous' (Journalist 7). Some interviewees suggest that the risk of danger and level of difficulty may explain why there are no undercover investigations in the newspapers into the rhino horn trade syndicates or stories about undercover ENGO investigations into the syndicates (ENGO Personnel 2). However, there is a series of *Lao Dong* stories from an undercover investigation into the wild animal trade along the Vietnam and Laos border. These stories, which also mention that the wildlife traders can supply rhino horn, are rich in the way they frame the Organised Criminal Networks. Hence the data suggests that despite some journalists being willing to face the risk of undercover reporting on some forms of IWT, the risk of undercover reporting of the rhino horn trade may be deemed too high.

With reference to RQ3, this section has discussed how organisational pressures and constraints can influence the framing of the rhino horn trade. Influences encompass (i) restrictions regarding state

owned media, (ii) restrictions in reporting corruption and (iii) a lack of resources and journalistic capacity, in part from the former constraints that can restrict journalist development.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter, which has addressed RQ3, has explored the five main factors that influence the framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, focusing on three key factors: journalists' routines, organisational pressures and constraints and pressure from interest groups. Interviewing Vietnamese journalists, ENGO personnel and an expert on journalism in Vietnam was the method used to gain insight into these factors. More specifically, the semi-structured interview method helped uncover the influencing factors of the frames in the Vietnamese digital newspapers that were explicated in Chapters 4 and 5. These factors are important to understand because news framing can have an effect on public opinion and policy. Thus, better knowledge of the journalists' situation may help address the challenges facing rhino conservation caused by the large demand for rhino horn in Vietnam, the illegal syndicates smuggling it over from Africa and the problems of inadequate enforcement of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam.

This chapter has presented the results of a deductive analysis of the interview data using Scheufele's (1999) five factors that influence framing to answer RQ3. The analysis shows some parallels between influencing factors of framing in Vietnam and in the West, as well as some differences. These common factors include journalistic routines, organisational pressures and constraints and pressures by interest groups (Scheufele 1999). To a lesser extent, the ideological or political orientations of journalists are a factor, especially in regard to news values and what journalists consider would interest the public. Social norms and values seem to play a very minimal part.

A range of common journalistic routines have also influenced frames and the reframing of the rhino horn trade since 2016. These include copying and pasting press releases with little or no editing and attempt at balance, using photographs and photograph opportunities provided by the state and its agencies, such as police and customs, and attendance and 'media buzz' at state organised publicity events with foreign officials present, such as the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event. Vietnamese journalists also approach government officials. Such routines tend to be in line with the Western journalistic practice of relying on information subsidies (Gandy 1980; Lewis, Williams & Franklin 2008; Rodelo & Muñiz 2019; Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis 2017; Turk 1986; Waller & Hess 2008). There are some indications that the Hanoi IWT conference—which the destruction event was on the side lines of—was where Compliance frames and Serious Crime frames were established in the Vietnamese digital newspapers. The triangulation of the framing analysis data with the interview data suggests that the frames most influenced by these common routines are level 2 frames under the Compliance frame, such as Demonstrating Commitment, War on Wildlife Crime, Coordinated Local Investigation, Hero Officers and International Cooperation, and the level 2 frames under Serious Crime. It is also possible that Vietnam has followed broad world framing practices with globally common rhetoric in politics in the use of the War on (Wildlife) Crime and Sophisticated Concealment frames.

Although the influence of organisational pressures and constraints on the framing of the rhino horn trade can be considerable in the Vietnamese state-owned media, it seems minimal on this topic, reflecting the autonomy of journalists in the West noted by Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). This does not include the restrictions that journalists face on reporting corruption at a high level and a perhaps well-grounded fear of investigating rhino horn criminal syndicates. With regard to these issues, not all newspapers report even low level corruption and journalists who do report on

corruption tend to avoid directly impugning customs and police, tending to rather imply corruption indirectly and use slang. Moreover, there is no specialisation in the rhino horn trade in the newspapers. The constraints caused by limited pay and resources and the subsequent hampering of journalistic skills seem to have an influence on the framing; however, some journalists do well to get a balance of sources and interviews and go as far as they feel safe when doing investigative reporting.

The pressure of interest groups has had considerable influence on the framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam. It emerged from the data that perhaps one influence that ENGOs, who campaigned for better enforcement, did not foresee or want was the way that the Vietnamese government took a tougher stance on the rhino horn trade—with longer jail sentences. The tougher approach and the framing by the government influenced the frame War on Wildlife Crime. An influence that does not fit easily into the five Scheufele (1999) factors concerns the global increase of securitisation. Some journalists are aware of global securitisation increasing through the translation of international news stories. Hence it resonates with journalistic routines; however, international framing of issues may also be broadly influential of society and government.

In this chapter, the interview data has also shown that journalist reliance on political communication from a broad range of players, including environmental agencies, played a strong influence in the news framing of the rhino horn trade—particularly with regard to three key issues: Serious Crime, Compliance and Lack of Enforcement. This parallels the point that sources can have more control over how the news is framed than journalists (Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1989). The strong role of political communication from local officials, international actors and ENGOs may be complemented by journalist agency in consulting sources, police reports and court transcripts, as well as carrying out investigations into IWT. These practices can help make the

framing more thematic and issue-based than basic reports on seizures, which are often copied from press releases. This practice of using press releases may be exacerbated by a lack of journalist pay and resources and resulting lacks in skills and capacity. Overall, corruption is a key constraint for journalists who generally avoid investigating government members and customs officials, although there are established areas where such investigations occur periodically. The following chapter will provide a theoretical discussion of these findings.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

Now that the data from the two phases of research—the analysis of both the news stories to answer RQ1 and RQ2 and the semi-structured interviews to answer RQ3—has been explained in the previous three chapters, Chapter 7 will build upon what has been covered, discussing the findings and concluding the analysis. It is important to note, again, that this study coincides with an important time when Vietnam began to actively respond to international pressure from global IWT conferences and CITES and take more action to combat the rhino horn trade. As has been explained, 2016 was a significant year to start the sample period because it marked, in the words of the CITES Secretary General, John E. Scanlon, a shift from a situation that was 'low risk, high profit to high risk, low profit' for the criminal syndicates. The year 2016 was significant because it marked 'a game changing [CITES] CoP17' (Scanlon 2016) and, a month later, the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference was held and raised 'local, national and global awareness' of 'the growing determination of Viet Nam' (Scanlon 2016) to fight the rhino horn trade.

In addition to the points about news reporting examined in this chapter, the analysis of the entire of body of the reporting in the sample has provided a reasonable understanding, bolstered with examples, of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam as a serious crime, a TOC and the need for a tough enforcement approach to combat it. The analysis has provided an understanding of Vietnam's stated commitment to fight the trade, and given insight into the pertinent international agreements, the strictness of the laws, who the law enforcers and ministries responsible are, where and how law enforcement is occurring and who the international stakeholders are with an understanding of the nature of deliberations. This suggests that Vietnamese journalists have succeeded in reporting the rhino horn trade in considerable detail overall.

In answer to RQ1, the study has shown how the Criminality meta-frame breaks down into a series of level 1 and 2 frames that describe how the rhino horn trade is constructed as a crime in the Vietnamese media. This is demonstrated by (i) the Serious Crime frame in which the rhino horn trade is described in terms of the level two frames of Organised Criminal Networks, Corruption and Security Threats; (ii) the Compliance frame that is signified by the level 2 frames of Demonstrating Commitment (to its CITES responsibilities), declaring a War on Wildlife Crime and engaging in International Cooperation and Coordinated Local Investigation aided by Hero Officers and (iii) pointing out areas where Vietnam's enforcement agencies fall short of tackling the rhino horn trade, signifying the Lack of Enforcement frame. The body of reporting in the Vietnamese media tells a complex and intertwining story of the trade in rhino horn from Africa to Vietnam and the actions of the authoritarian state of communist socialist Vietnam, which is being closely watched and critiqued by governments and intergovernmental actors at the highest levels internationally. When compared with Western crime reporting, the framing devices that the journalists use are quintessentially Vietnamese. Perhaps the clearest contrast is that, in the West, journalists and their police sources tend to demand more resources for police and distort the extent of the crime situation to increase punitive measures (Baranauskas & Drakulich 2018; Blood, Putnis & Pirkis 2002; Hall et al. 1978; Orsini 2017; Schindeler & Ewart 2014). Conversely, in the reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, the accent is on the authorities being in command of the situation.

In answer to RQ2, the study has shown that there are five key categories of sources behind the framing of the rhino horn trade: Vietnamese officials, international sources, ENGOs, experts and other sources. The strongest array of sources used by journalists was Vietnamese officials, at both government and agency level. However, the selection of international sources and ENGOs in the

body of reporting was also significant. Although the sample was too small to quantitatively delve deeper than the level one Criminality frames, content analysis revealed a synergy of sources behind the Serious Crime and Compliance frames. This suggests a sense of consensus and compliance between political sources, the Vietnamese government, international stakeholders and ENGO actors, in both the definition of the rhino horn trade as a serious crime and in the observance that Vietnam was cracking down on the trade. Hence Vietnam seemed to no longer be a noncompliant member state of CITES. There were caveats, however, as ENGOs, international stakeholders and a few investigative journalists were carefully critical of a lack enforcement and corruption at low levels.

Finally, in answer to RQ3, the interviews revealed that the use of press releases—a dominant mode for sourcing content—was a strong influence on framing. More specifically, Vietnamese journalists' routine of relying on official press releases and, to a large but lesser extent, on ENGO press releases for information was an influence on the framing of the trade. These results suggest that the proactive media work of the police and customs in Vietnam on rhino horn seizures and the journalistic reliance on these agencies for information bear a resemblance to the Western situation where police carry out effective media relations activities (Johnston & McGovern 2013; Mawby 2010; Rantatalo 2016) and there is an over-reliance on criminal justice sources (Pizarro, Chermak & Gruenewald 2007), who tend to be the primary definers of issues. In this instance, Vietnamese journalists may only be straying outside of the government narrative sparingly and cautiously within the politico-cultural confines of an authoritarian media system.

The interviews with journalists demonstrate that some journalists carefully navigate the eddies of the Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames with politico-cultural dexterity borne through professional experience in navigating Vietnam's authoritarian media system. There is some

evidence that journalists are sometimes aided in this by ENGOs providing information on court cases (*Lao Dong* 22 March 2018). The investigative journalism into the blatant IWT along the border with Laos highlights Hawley, Clifford and Konkes' (2018) finding that journalists can emerge as new primary definers of issues. Beginning with an analysis of the dominance of the Criminality meta-frame, this chapter will discuss the overarching themes and observations that have been identified in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

7.1 International Influences and the Rhino Horn Trade as a Criminal Issue in Vietnam

By drawing on the findings and previous literature (Massé et al. 2020), this study has revealed that the way the rhino horn trade is framed as a Serious Crime in the Vietnamese news media has crossovers with how it was framed at the 2018 London IWT conference and the other three conferences in the series, including Hanoi 2016. Furthermore, Vietnam is framed as being compliant with CITES.

Comparisons can be drawn between the various ways Massé et al. (2020) have observed global elite voices framing IWT as a Serious Crime and the Criminality meta-frame of the rhino horn trade discovered in the Vietnamese digital newspapers. Massé et al. (2020) observed at the 2018 conference that there was emphasis on IWT being treated as a 'serious organised crime' perpetrated by 'criminal ruthless gangs' or 'networks' who are 'sophisticated', 'ruthless' and 'evil'. The frames that emerged from the news analysis somewhat mirror this, as can be seen by the level 1 Serious Crime frame and the level 2 and 3 frames beneath it (see, e.g., Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: The breakdown of level 2 and level 3 frames under Serious Crime

/ Serious Crime: framing rhino horn trafficking as a serious crime

// Organised Crime Networks

/// Gang Hierarchy

/// Ruthless Criminals

/// Sophisticated Concealment

/// Smugglers

// Corruption

// Security Threats

/// National or Economic Security

/// Zoonotic (COVID-19)

Comparisons can also be drawn between the tough 'responses mediated through a law enforcement-first approach' to IWT promoted at the 2018 London conference that Massé et al. (2020) observed and the Compliance meta-frame that emerged from the Vietnamese digital newspapers. Moreover, the findings demonstrated there is a strong crossover between the Compliance frame and its constituent level 2 frames and Vietnam's CITES compliance status. Massé et al. (2020) observed, for example, that the conferences emphasised 'stronger harsher laws', with more focus on international cooperation, intelligence-led investigations, international protocols, securitisation and the war on the wildlife trade. Massé et al.'s (2020) observations at the 2018 London conference can clearly be cross-referenced in the Vietnamese digital newspapers' Compliance framing of the rhino horn trade (see Figure 7.2) and in the interview data.

Figure 7.2: The breakdown of level 2 and level 3 frames under Compliance

/ Compliance*:* how Vietnam is complying with CITES

// Demonstration of Commitment

/// Talking the Talk

/// Walking the Walk (Seizures, Arrests and Prosecutions)

// War on Wildlife Crime

/// Declaring War

/// You're Busted

// Hero Officers

// Coordinated Local Investigation

// International Cooperation

The rich breakdown of frames under the Serious Crime frame seen in Figure 7.2 pertains to a commendable level of detail on the rhino horn trade in news reports by Vietnamese journalists. These frames were outlined in Chapter 5 and encompass diverse events, such as rhino horn seizures, court cases and journalistic investigations.

The Criminality framing of the trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers may be a factor in the Vietnamese government claiming legitimacy on the international stage in the case of enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade. This highlights the point that focusing on environmental issues is an important way to claim legitimacy (Hansen 1993; Kraft & Wolf 2018). It also suggests that Vietnam has gained legitimacy through its official press releases and conferences because government accountability and efficiency in communicating relationships in environmental conflicts are key factors in claiming legitimacy (Kraft & Wolf 2018).

Massé et al. (2020) have argued that framing IWT as a serious crime may cause problems for wildlife conservation. It follows that the criminality framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese news also comes with concerns. Massé et al. (2020) argued that the interests of conservation will not be best served if enforcement actors take over the stewardship of mitigating IWT from conservation groups. In particular, it is feared that evidence-based strategies developed through conservation research—such as behaviour change campaigns and sustainable livelihood strategies—will be overlooked. As Massé et al. (2020) have warned, 'This conservation-crime convergence, we argue, is characteristic of a conservation policy landscape that increasingly promotes and privileges responses such as legal and judicial reform, criminal investigations, intelligence gathering, law enforcement technologies, and informant networks' over conservation-based responses.

It is important to point out that just because a government criminalises the rhino horn trade or is harsh on it, this does not necessarily mean that they have an animal-based rights approach, as would be advocated within green criminology (Spapens, White & Kluin 2016). The approach could still be human-centric. Further, the approach could still be rooted within conventional criminological concerns with the illegality of certain types of conduct as opposed to foregrounding the rights of the victims who are being harmed (in this case, rhinos). In this instance, although the expansion of 'traditional' transnational crimes (e.g., drug trafficking) to include IWT would, at a cursory glance, appear as a win for green criminologists, the actual focus remains human-centric. As argued by Ngoc and Wyatt (2013, p. 139), a green criminology approach to wildlife harms 'means challenging notions that the environment and other species are only valuable because of their instrumental use for humans'. This has implications for further research from a green

criminological perspective to gauge the presence of frames in the Vietnamese media that value rhinos' inherent rights.

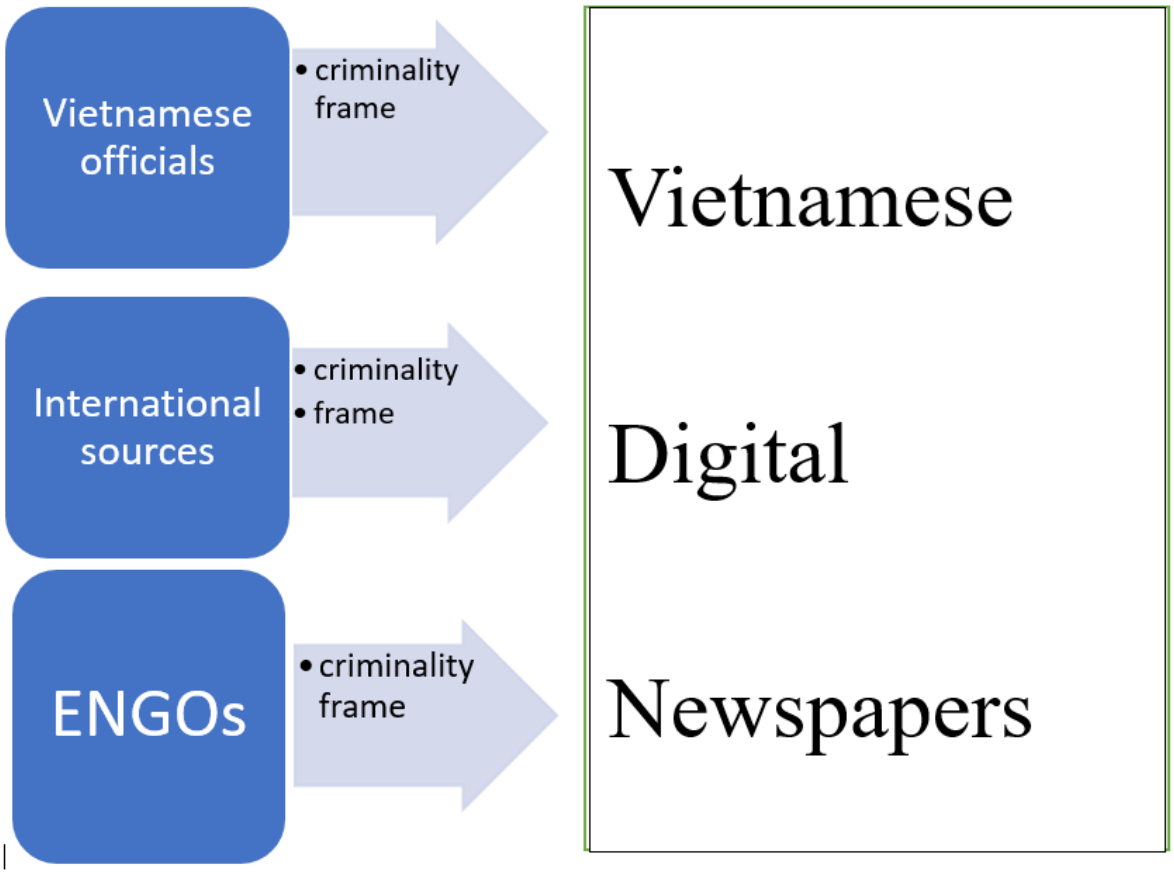
7.1.1 The Ivory and Rhino Horn Crush and Burn Event as a Key Instigating Factor Establishing the Criminality Meta-frame

Having demonstrated the strong presence of the Criminality meta-frame during the sample period, this thesis contends that this frame and its constituent frames were established in the Vietnamese media during widespread news coverage of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event. A total of 13 stories out of the total 144 stories in the sample, representing almost ten percent, were on the destruction event. The destruction event was organised by MARD and the Vietnam CITES Management Authority on the sidelines of the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, which was optimal timing for having global stakeholders in attendance (Braczkowski et al. 2018). Hence the spectacle of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event attended by high-level officials appears to be created as a publicity event that was symbolic of the framing promoted at the conference. Gitlin (1980) has offered an explanation for the increase in Criminality framing, noting that media framing is linked with social forces utilised by dominant institutions. Ivory and rhino horn destruction is intended to send a strong message against consumption, both in promoting a taboo on its use and catalysing policy change (Braczkowski et al. 2018).

Environmental news stories are often event focused (Anderson 2022). Important events can be central to the establishment of frames in the media (Gitlin 1980; Krebs 2015; Tulis 1987), especially in conjunction with dominant institutions (Gitlin 1980). Figure 7.3 shows that the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event in 2016 was where the three key categories of sources converged in a concentration of framing. This may have additional significance given that the UK was the key organiser of the series of IWT conferences (Massé et al. 2020), and because

international conferences promote important media and global attention onto environmental issues (Mitchell 2003).

Figure 7.3: The sources behind the Criminality meta-frame in the reporting of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event



It is not possible to categorically state that the establishment of the framing of the rhino horn trade as a serious crime in the Vietnamese news was a direct result of the 2016 conference and the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event in Hanoi. However, according to the theories of Gitlin (1980), Mitchell (2003) and Braczkowski et al. (2018) about the framing power of key events and dominant forces, it is plausible. The substantial written and visual coverage of the ivory and rhino horn crush

and burn event—13 stories in total in the four selected newspapers, nearly ten percent of the sample articles—in the sample of news articles supports this view.

Two of the four digital newspapers in the sample published more than one story on the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event. For example, *CAND* published three similar but separate stories. In addition to this, three of the four digital newspapers in the sample contained a major photographic essay of the event, with photographs and captions signifying that the rhino horn trade is a serious crime and a security threat and that Vietnam is committed to strong laws and enforcement. The fourth digital newspaper, *VnExpress*, published a video that contained similar images as the photographic essays in the other digital newspapers.

As the conference was symbolic of Vietnam's commitment, it is logical that the conference and destruction event were in response to the international criticism of Vietnam's inaction on the rhino horn trade by ENGOs (Smith 2021) and international pressure at a string of CITES CoPs, including in 2016 at CITES CoP17. ENGO Personnel 2's comments attest to this. The ENGO Personnel said that being singled out on the global stage helped motivate Vietnam to hold the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference to symbolise its determination and commitment to fight IWT. Hence, where there was pressure, Vietnam and its news media appear to have reciprocated with Compliance.

The newsworthy spectacle of the destruction event and the attendance of high-level Vietnamese officials, ENGOs and global elites in seeming agreement and cooperation with a synergy of messaging provided perfect subject matter and photograph opportunities for key Criminality frames. It was particularly effective with the Compliance frame and its constituent frames. The theorising about Vietnam using this newsworthy spectacle to declare a strong message of its fight against the rhino horn trade is significant for better understanding conservation efforts. Destruction

events of ivory and rhino horn are a prominent part of conservation efforts that need to be more evidence-based, particularly with regard to evaluating and monitoring the media coverage and its effects (Braczkowski et al. 2018). Some believe, for example, that destroying rhino horn stockpiles makes them rarer, thus increasing demand (Braczkowski et al. 2018). It was observed that the reporting on the event in the Vietnamese digital newspapers was completely positive across the sample. However, the *VnExpress* news video of the event attracted both positive and negative comments in the comment section.

7.1.2 Compliance and the Art of Saying What the Government and CITES Wants to Hear

The framing of Vietnam's compliance with CITES reflects a contrast to a common frame in crime reporting in the West. Hall et al. (1978), Cohen (1972), Orsini (2017) and Schindeler and Ewart (2014) have found, for instance, that Western journalists and their police and government sources tend to skew the severity of crime and bemoan the shortage of policing and resources in calls to bolster enforcement. The analysis of the news articles on the rhino horn trade in Vietnam suggest a different and almost opposite situation.

The background of Vietnam's previous lack of compliance to CITES is important to reiterate. This could be explained as a 'displacement of issues', something that transnational environmental issues are prone to (White 2013, p. 53). However, this study has demonstrated via news framing in the Vietnamese media that the issue is no longer displaced, instead being reportedly well resourced and dealt with effectively. For instance, in the study period between 2016 and 2020, the Compliance frame was a dominant frame in news reporting. Unlike situations where police resourcing and laws are claimed to be inadequate (Hall et al. 1978; Schindeler & Ewart 2014; Orsini 2017; Cohen 1972), where the war on crime is failing (Orsini 2017) or transnational environmental issues are displaced (White 2013), the findings for the news reporting of the rhino

horn trade showed enforcement agencies in Vietnam claiming they are coordinated, committed and cooperating.

The War on Wildlife Crime frame in Vietnam has similarities with the larger tough-on-crime communication and policy approach by governments internationally. For example, the British royal family has called for a war on poaching (Harvey 2013), and the UK used the #EndWildlifeCrime hashtag for the four global IWT conferences. Promoting a tough approach in the news has much earlier origins. Hall et al. (1978) saw the English authorities crack down on what was, allegedly, a rising level of mugging in the country. In discussing Hall et al.'s book on the matter called 'Policing the crisis', Cohen (2011) described this crackdown as an effort by the government and the media for the crime to be taken more seriously through creating a moral panic. Cohen (2011) has called such interpretations of crimes in the media as the politicization of crime. The Compliance and Serious Crime frames in the Vietnamese news media reflect this, showing a politicisation of the rhino horn trade in that country.

The tough-on-crime approach, found in the Vietnamese digital newspapers in stories about IWT and the rhino horn trade, is entrenched in the US (Orsini 2017). It can be traced back to the 'war on crime' rhetoric started by the US Nixon administration between 1969 and 1974. This transformed into 'war on drugs' rhetoric under Ronald Reagan and George Bush. By the time Bill Clinton ran for US office, campaign policy platforms had to include a tough-on-crime stance to have even a chance of winning (Pilkington 2015). Nixon activated the frame when he said, 'This is a nation of laws … If there is one area where the word war is appropriate it is the war against crime'. Under Reagan's administration, the message of a war on drugs was reinforced with a mandatory life sentence for certain quantities of drugs. As Reagan said, 'We need total war in the United States against the evils that we see in our cities … We must wage what I have called total

war against public enemy number one in the United States, the problem of dangerous drugs' (see documentary film *13th)* (Du Vernay 2016). Both of the US-led 'war on crime' and 'war on drugs' campaigns involved very heavy sentences and there is little argument that they both led to more repression and increased rates of incarceration for black Americans (see *13th* 2016). The War on Crime news frame has persisted in the US to this day (Orsini 2017) in various forms, including the 'war on gangs' with a zero tolerance policing policy (Duran 2009). In Vietnam, the war on the rhino horn trade that was declared at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference resembles the War on Crime frame entrenched in the US.

In Vietnam, the government has historically been tough on crimes defined as 'social evils', such as heroin traffickers and sex workers (Vijeyarasa 2010). There are very tough penalties for such crimes, including the death sentence for heroin traffickers. As can be seen in the news, the tough approach and tough jail sentences, such as for five years (see *Lao Dong* 1 June 2020) or 12.5 years (see *CAND* 29 December 2020) are now also the case for rhino horn traffickers. Such sentences reflect points made by scholars in green criminology who largely agree that, on the international stage, IWT is now presented in terms of war (Duffy 2014, 2016a; Guynup, Shepherd & Shepherd 2020; Humphreys 2012; McClanahan & Wall 2016) in similar ways to drugs, crime and terrorism. For governments, ENGOs and news media, at the international policy level the approach to wildlife crime continues to harden (Rundhovde 2017). For Vietnam, the already tough approach to social evils may have served as a point of resonance in the public, media and government ideology, that has furthered the advance of the War on Wildlife Crime frame. This may have implications for further studies by green cultural criminologists striving to recast the criminological gaze with reference to nonhuman life.

This description of Vietnam strongly tackling the rhino horn trade and strengthening compliance regarding enforcement of the laws in the news may be the result of journalists reproducing crime stories (Fishman 1980). It may also result from journalists taking the news from the same sources (Zuckerman et al. 2019) or from churnalism (Saridou, Spyridou & Veglis 2017) via a strong journalistic reliance on press releases (Lewis, Williams & Franklin 2008) from criminal justice sources (Johnston & McGovern 2013; Mawby 2010). Thus, journalistic practices in Vietnam have some similarities with Western practices. Alongside constraints on reporting and on the development of journalistic skills, these journalistic practices in Vietnam have played a role in making War on Wildlife Crime a dominant frame in the news media.

There is pressure from international agreements (e.g., CITES) on the Vietnamese government to comply (ENGO Personnel 2). Regarding enforcement requirements for noncompliant states, international bodies such as CITES may 'turn up the pressure, making compliance an increasingly attractive option for member states' (Tallberg 2002, p. 617). Furthermore 'increasing attention of the global media and the public to environmental problems'—a process supported by ENGOs and intergovernmental organisations—interplays with agreements and can lead governments to act (Mitchell 2003). In addition, governments apply internal mechanisms to ensure environmental regulations are effectively enforced (Gunningham 2011). Indeed, the listing in the news stories of the numerous agencies that coordinate in local investigations suggests that every agency in Vietnam wants recognition for fighting the rhino horn trade. The interviews supported this. For instance, when the Vietnam CITES Management Authority organises an IWT event—such as a conference or a rhino horn handover to South Africa—they make certain that they are accredited for their efforts in the news (ENGO Personnel 2). The Personnel said that because the agencies want to keep their role, they ensure it is noted in the news in a positive light. Vu's (2022) findings

lend understanding to this tendency, given his findings that there is strong competition between agencies in Vietnam investigating IWT, including CITES, MARD and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment. In an authoritative government, it could be argued that there is a kind of 'dictator trap' where the agencies are more than usually concerned about being seen to be doing what they ought to be doing. Hence the self-interest of Vietnamese government officials and agencies seems to influence the framing in concert with the issue of complying with CITES and other pressures.

Thus, there seems to be little noting in the news of any areas of concern by the Vietnamese authorities regarding the rhino horn trade, in strong contrast to the situation portrayed by Hall et al. (1978), Cohen (1972), Schindeler and Ewart (2014) and Orsini (2017). Instead, the Compliance and constituent War on Wildlife Crime frames that are churned out by journalists in Vietnam may invite a focus on Vietnam's progress, 'relentless efforts' and the bettering of 'the nation's image internationally' (MARD 2018, p. 1) in the context of international pressure.

7.1.3 ENGOs as Accredited Sources on the Issue of the Rhino Horn Trade

Vietnamese journalists tend to attribute their first learning about the rhino horn trade to ENGO press releases and emails. They tend to trust in both conservation and criminality information that the ENGOs provide them and often use their press releases for stories. Hence, the ENGOs, who have continued as journalist sources in this space since Vietnam's last rhino was poached in 2010, are what Hall et al. (1978, p. 58) would call 'accredited sources', meaning they are commonly accessed by journalists and have their views reproduced faithfully and impartially. 'These "spokesmen" [sic] become what are called *primary definers* of topics' (Hall et al. 1978, p. 58) who will be systematically accessed by journalists and have their definitions accepted. Primary definers can be officials, interest groups or experts. The interview data suggests that the ENGOs in Vietnam

have been the primary definers of the rhino horn trade topic, meaning they were able ‘to establish the initial definition or *primary interpretation* of the topic in question’ (Hall et al. 1978, p. 58). Hall et al. (1978) has posited that such primary interpretations are tied in with ideas of institutional power and dominant ideology. The interview data, supported by the literature, suggests this primary interpretation concerned rhino conservation, but that ENGOs have also promoted the Criminality frame and a push for better enforcement as primary interpretations.

Journalists can have a role in ENGOs making campaigns successful. Hence it could be argued that the rhino horn trade ENGOs in Vietnam formed a movement. Conversely, Vu (2023) has argued that claims by ENGOs that their conservation messages had created a movement were false, with other studies having argued that ENGO demand reduction and behaviour change campaigns have not worked (Vu & Nielsen 2021). Nonetheless, it appears that through ENGOs’ work as primary definers of the rhino horn trade they have assisted the synergy of global elite and Vietnamese official sources to frame the rhino horn trade as a serious crime issue.

7.2 Preaching Security

The textual and visual Criminality meta-framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnamese digital news newspapers has possible links to a growing global increase in securitisation generally, as well as specifically in conservation and IWT. The international promotion of the rhino horn trade as a serious crime to Vietnam could be described as a global community talk-down to the Southeast Asian country, involving the UK, the UN, the US and an international collective of nations under the banner of CITES directing the government of a small developing country. Vietnamese journalists and the sources they quote use strong language about IWT’s threat to national and global health security, the evil acts perpetrated on innocent animals by ruthless wild animal traders and

the Vietnamese government's determination to fight a war on IWT. The framing highlights IWT as a security issue (Massé & Lundstrum 2016) and an 'existential threat' (McDonald 2008, p. 566). The findings concerning the Security Threats frame in the Vietnamese media are significant because they may address some concerns that policy elites and security actors have been under-securitising TEC (Gore et al. 2019) and IWT in the Asia Pacific (Elliott 2007). Some Asian Pacific nations did not consider IWT as threatening or as serious as other transnational crimes (Elliott 2007); however, the finding of securitisation in the Vietnamese digital newspapers indicates that this may be changing in Vietnam.

The appearance of the Security Threats frame in the news stories about the enforcement of laws against the rhino horn trade also suggests that global elites' efforts to promote IWT as a criminal and security issue have had some success in Vietnam. This seems likely to be the result of the efforts of the global IWT conferences—including that in Hanoi in 2016—to promote these frames (Massé et al. 2020). Indeed, the way that the Vietnamese journalists link the rhino horn trade and IWT with other serious TOCs suggests convergence and 'implications for security' (Massé et al. 2020, p. 31). It is also important to consider, however, that the appearance of the securitisation of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers may not be conducive to conservation (Duffy 2022) of rhinos.

The framing of rhino horn trafficking as a security threat in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* may be a part of the decade-long 'trajectory of securitization and criminalization' of IWT (Massé et al. 2020, p. 35). Photographs of armed guards guarding cases of rhino horn also suggest that the militarisation of conservation (Asiyanbi 2016; Dunlap & Fairhead 2014; Lunstrum & Ybarra 2018; Marijnen & Verweijen 2016; Massé & Lunstrum 2016) may be occurring in Vietnam in relation to IWT.

The Security Threats frame was used in some articles in tandem with calls for a complete ban on the consumption of wildlife, the need for international cooperation and a tougher approach to IWT. This echoes the view that IWT 'threatens security' that was promoted at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference (Hanoi Statement on the Illegal Wildlife Trade 2016), suggesting the role that supranational organisations may have played in the appearance of the frame in the Vietnamese news media in the sampling period of 2016 to 2020. It could also be argued that by the Vietnamese government and digital newspapers following global elite voices down the rhino horn trade serious organised crime track, that the issue is being positioned as a security threat, either consciously or unconsciously. Although the level of organisation of the criminal networks is a matter of debate, terms such as 'criminal network' and 'serious organized crime' are 'amorphous' and 'used interchangeably' (Wyatt et al. 2020).

The tendency, not just in Vietnam but worldwide, for journalists and government agencies alike to skew the level of sophistication of TOC networks, as suggested by ENGO Personnel 2, may contribute to this positioning. Vietnamese news reports across the four selected newspapers on the clever methods of concealment used by smugglers to avoid the customs eye is a common way that the rhino horn trade is framed as a Serious Crime. In addition, *Lao Dong* journalists use colourful language and metaphors to depict evil 'folk devils' trading wild animals, tigers and rhino horn to willing Vietnamese customers along the Lao border. Folk devils are created by media when certain groups are stripped of all positive attributes to be left only with negative ones thus creating an evil persona who pose a threat to society (Cohen 1972; Hayle 2013). In this case, the folk devils were the wild animal traders described in *Lao Dong* (see, e.g., Table 4.5 and Figure 4.4). *Lao Dong* reports throughout the sample also portray the syndicates exploiting vulnerable people when they recruit both couriers and poachers. Cohen's theory of folk devils is part of how he has demonstrated

that journalists can exaggerate crime to cause a ‘moral panic’; however, this is not the case with the rhino horn trade given it has already been established as a crime. Hayle (2013) supports the concept that folk devils are not always connected to moral panics.

Culture and references to culture are an integral part of framing (Entman 1993), meaning that slang can be a powerful framing device. In this case, this is evidenced in Chapter 4 with regard to framing traders as ruthless and evil. In *Lao Dong*, it appears that slang terms are used for extra emphasis and, perhaps, to make articles more sensationalist to sell (more) newspapers. Moreover, instances of framing the rhino horn trade as a security threat in the digital newspapers occur in relation to better known national security threats, such as arms and human trafficking or terrorism, and health security threats, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The security framing described in Chapter 4 is enhanced by occasional articles that quote actors on the world stage who emphasise security, such as the South African Ambassador and the UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam. Such actors may have vested interests in securitising IWT. Furthermore, frames that declare war on certain crimes and thereby promote extraordinary enforcement measures have origins in the UK and US. Such frames as the war on drugs from the Reagan era have been widely criticised as not conducive and, perhaps, counterproductive to solving crime and the issues that cause it. Framing scholars have identified a variety of commonly recognised crime frames in their media case studies in the US that tend to promote securitisation that are relevant in the current context. For example, from 2000 to 2009, stories of drug busts carried the Ongoing Fight, Dangerous Use or Violent Traffickers frames in American news stories on heroin and cocaine (Orsini 2017). Beckett (1994) identified the Get Tough, More Resources and War Fails frames used by state actors in news on American drug use between 1982 and 1991.

Hence it is possible that IWT is an avenue through which Vietnam is on the receiving end of security framing from global actors with vested interests in security.

It is plausible that international actors and global conferences framing the rhino horn trade as a serious organised crime and security threat issue to the Vietnamese media has resulted in a confused policy agenda. Democratic 'free' nation members, who usually advocate democracy and freedom, were promoting the rhino horn trade as a security threat to Vietnam, an authoritarian state whose tough security and enforcement measures are considered human rights violations (US Department of State 2019). Furthermore, emerging research suggests that strict laws and tough approaches may fail to stop IWT (Hu, Lee & Shi 2022; Kubo et al. 2022), leading to calls for a policy evaluation to prevent further species loss (Kubo et al. 2022).

7.2.1 Securitisation of the Rhino Horn Trade: Images Speak Louder than Words

If there is any question that Vietnam is getting tough on the rhino horn trade, seeing may be believing. Adding to—and possibly overshadowing—the text-based reporting of the Hanoi destruction event—the 2016 ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event—the framing analysis revealed that photographic images played a major role in establishing a strong commitment to the tougher approach that Vietnam is taking with regard to the rhino horn trade. The similarities between the photographic essay and video reports of the destruction event in the four different digital newspapers suggest that the journalists were provided with photograph opportunities by the event organisers, who were MARD, Vietnam CITES Management Authority and the UK. The photographs and photograph opportunities that customs and police provide to journalists reporting on rhino horn seizures at air and sea ports also play a significant role in sending a war on the rhino horn trade message.

Every photograph of the destruction event signified the Criminality meta-frame. A number of photographs in the news articles also signified War on Wildlife Crime and Security Threats frames. Photographs in *Lao Dong* and *CAND* of armed soldiers guarding locked cases of rhino horn and a photographic essay in *Lao Dong* of the new lengths required to protect rhinos in Africa exemplify images that signify securitisation of the rhino horn trade. For instance, the photographic essay shows armed soldiers guarding a single rhino 24 hours a day seven days a week. Hence the securitisation of the rhino horn trade that is increasingly being seen around the world is present in the Vietnamese media.

With regard to the range of images of militarisation and securitisation across the four selected newspapers, Massé et al. (2020) have argued that, through the 2018 London IWT meeting, a new securitised approach to IWT has emerged:

> Dynamics of neoliberal conservation shape the political economy of poaching, anti-poaching and responses to IWT, and thus cannot be ignored in the context of conservation's securitization in response to IWT (Asiyanbi 2016; Dunlap and Fairhead 2014; Lunstrum & Ybarra 2018; Marijnen and Verweijen 2016; Massé and Lunstrum 2016) … The 2018 London IWT Conference signifies the increasing prominence of ideas and practices related to crime, policing and law enforcement in conservation policymaking spheres. (Massé et al. 2020, p. 27)

These results suggest that the Vietnamese media is one of the avenues of the spread of the securitisation of conservation and IWT, contributing to the growing area of scholarship on this increasingly important and controversial area (see, e.g., Bocarejo & Ojeda 2015; Duffy 2021, 2022; Duffy & Brockington 2022; Massé & Margulies 2020; Massé & Lundstrum 2016; Runhovde 2017). The appearance of such rhetoric on war and security concerning the rhino horn trade in a

key market country may have implications for government policy, responses to TECs and ENGO demand reduction campaigns concerned with the survival of this and other species.

7.3 Corruption, Courts and Customs: Framing Something Nobody Can Say but Everyone Knows

It has been shown that although Vietnamese journalists from certain newspapers sometimes report on corruption regarding the rhino horn trade, journalists from other newspapers seem not to. The reporting of corruption by journalists in the authoritarian state of Vietnam can be difficult and risky (Expert 1); however, journalists sometimes report it if there is enough evidence (Cain 2014; Journalist 4) or if the situation is deemed safe enough to test government limits.

This case study has found that corruption has been reported mainly in only one of the four selected newspapers—*Lao Dong*. Whereas there is only report about corruption in *CAND*, *Lao Dong* reported (i) when corrupt low-level customs officials were prosecuted or before the court, (ii) when top levels of government want to be seen as being tough on corruption, highlighting Cain's (2014) findings about the Vietnamese government needing to maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the Vietnamese public, (iii) in investigative articles in vague and sometimes slang terms and (iv) in 2018, suggesting that 2018—the year when new laws against the rhino horn trade came into effect—presented a reasonably safe opportunity for journalists to report on this sensitive topic, while other years possibly did not.

Although Vietnamese customs are portrayed as exemplary in their work in the Hero Officers frame, some corruption in their ranks has been reported. Journalists for *Lao Dong*, who provided an alternative definition of the issue to government and official sources, could thus be considered new primary definers (Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018; Marinescu & Balica 2021; Schindeler & Ewart

2014). A level of criticism that avoids running 'against political forces in an authoritarian state' and is tolerated in China may be also tolerated in Vietnam—especially when balanced with praise in the reporting—thus eliciting an increased likelihood of a better enforcement response (Rooij et al. 2013, p. 341). This highlights Tilt and Xiao's (2010) finding that in China—amid ENGO activism and increasing public concern—the media will play a growing part in addressing environmental issues.

This case study has demonstrated agreement with other researchers of the Vietnamese media (see, e.g., Cain 2014; Eek & Ellstrom 2007; Huong 2012; McKinley 2007, 2013; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Pham & Nash 2017; Sidel 1998; Vaagan 2011) that Vietnamese journalists have a strong reliance on official sources for information. In Western contexts, journalists rely on police sources and their media outputs (Johnston & McGovern 2013; Mawby 2010; Rantatalo 2016), criminal justice sources (Hawley, Clifford & Konkes 2018; Pizarro, Chermak & Gruenewald 2007) and other official government sources (Conway 2022; Hall et al. 1978). As indicated in the tables of sources outlined in this thesis, a large amount of reporting of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam reflects this reliance.

The findings have also demonstrated that the corruption aspect of IWT and rhino horn trafficking has not been given the emphasis in the Vietnamese digital newspapers that Massé et al. (2020) observed at IWT conferences. Overall, corruption formed a small part of how IWT is framed as a serious crime. Indeed, it appeared in the analysis that the government's tough official line on corruption was followed in news reports of court cases. Only official Vietnamese sources were quoted by *Lao Dong* and *CAND* when a customs official was prosecuted for embezzlement. The point from the analysis that only certain newspapers report on corruption is highlighted by Chen and Zhang (2016), who have argued that, in China, some news organisations report that the

government was fixing the corruption problem and punishing offenders, whereas others are more critical (Zhou & Moy 2007). *Lao Dong* investigative journalists report corruption at low levels but tend to skirt around the corruption issue. When they suspect low-level border customs officials are corrupt, they tend to use quotation marks around what the officials do to signify they are being dishonest. Hence *Lao Dong* appears to report both the tough government approach while also being critical. Overall, it appears that corruption is given some attention in some digital newspapers, but there is a discrepancy with the emphasis that the global IWT conferences place on it.

The Corruption frame sometimes appeared in the sample via subtle inferences. For example, international sources are occasionally quoted in the digital newspapers with regard to corruption being an issue in IWT globally, but nothing is specifically said about Vietnam. This could be interpreted as international sources indirectly inferring that corruption in Vietnam is a factor in the rhino horn trade. Moreover, some *Lao Dong* articles draw subtle inferences that skirt around direct accusations of corruption. The use of cultural nuances in *Lao Dong* was a key observation with regard to this issue. Rather than referring to the official charge of embezzlement, which is standard in Western court reporting that tends to report only bare facts, the articles use the slang term for embezzlement, *rut ruot*, literally meaning to pull the guts out of an animal. Several *Lao Dong* articles suggest that corrupt customs or police are the reasons why the trade is rampant and blatant with nothing being done. This undercover method of journalism with an associated casual style of writing rich in metaphor and slang seems to be routine for *Lao Dong* investigative journalists making imputations of corruption against customs officials in villages along the Laos border. The cultural aspect of the framing devices used in these stories highlights the importance of recognising cultural frames (D'Angelo et al. 2019; Entman 1993; Van Gorp 2007).

The news story analysis and interview data suggest that the villages are a safe target for journalists. The series of wild animal smuggling and restaurant trade stories in which such imputations are made—for example, the 'Blood of Wild Animals in the Cauldron at the top of the Sky' series in *Lao Dong* (see *Lao Dong* 8 February 2018)—may cover a typical story topic that is rolled out every few years, according to ENGO Personnel 2. The two clusters of reporting on corruption that occurred in the sample discussed above were both in 2018. Importantly, 2018 was the year that the penal codes against the rhino horn trade and IWT were updated in compliance with CITES, representing a significant turning point. Hence, stories on corruption regarding the rhino horn trade and IWT may be safe for journalists to roll out at certain times, using certain writing styles and in certain instances and localities. This highlights numerous earlier studies that have shown that government restrictions on reporting in Vietnam have an ebb and flow and may vary between localities and that some in the Vietnamese journalism field tend to test the limits of reporting. Belakova's (2013) argument that investigative journalism is key to democratisation suggests that *Lao Dong* is democratised to some degree—perhaps more so on corruption than *Nhan Dan*, *CAND* or *VnExpress.*

The 'Blood of Wild Animals' series of stories in *Lao Dong* uses powerful framing devices in the form of slang, metaphors, tropes and other cultural nuances that paint the wildlife traders as organised criminal networks that are evil (see, e.g., Table 4.5), linked to the rhino horn trade and with connections in customs. Furthermore, the use of cultural nuances and subtle inferences may be a journalistic routine for investigative journalists to avoid official or unofficial reprisals while conveying a wrong doing to experienced news readers, who can read between the lines. It is a style employed in much reporting in this area.

Finally, the findings suggest that there are areas of exclusion from the corruption frame. The results from the framing analysis of the articles suggest that Vietnamese journalists do not seem to make imputations of corruption against customs at airports or seaports. Customs at airports tend, rather, to be signified by the Hero Officers frame. In addition, Vietnamese journalists use the term 'giant' for wealthy or powerful people involved in IWT or the rhino horn trade. These people are also referred to as 'oligarchs' and 'mandarins' in the stories, and are either wildlife crime kingpins or wealthy rhino horn consumers. The term 'giant' is used interchangeably for these two player types in the rhino horn trade. It is also clear from the digital newspaper data that the term 'giants' is used in a general sense and individuals are rarely named. This obfuscation of the identities of giants may be because it can be dangerous for journalists to investigate IWT (Journalist 7; *Lao Dong* 6 October 2019).

In terms of journalists reporting on rhino horn consumers, the use of vague terms like 'giants' may also be a useful and careful technique, insofar as the identity of rhino horn consumers may be a sensitive topic. This is supported by previous research: 'The journalists seemed to write their articles in a highly careful manner due to the political sensitivity of the consumption of rhino horn, which is often the practice of high-earning, high social-status and influential people' (Nguyen 2017, p. 39). In line with Nguyen (2017), the analysis of the digital news articles shows that key stakeholders in the trade, rhino horn consumers, are all but absent in the reporting in digital newspapers. Furthermore, the articles that are suggestive of corrupt customs and police along the border also seem to be written in a highly careful manner and are possibly politically sensitive. Thus, some journalists in Vietnam appear to test the limits in some areas.

7.4 Global Elite Voices, the Transnational Public Sphere and Contested Cultural Ideologies

This chapter has so far discussed the synergy of Vietnamese official, international and ENGO sources behind the Criminality framing for the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital newspapers as illustrating a 'same same but different' version. There has been an international influence, driven by global elites with regard to fighting IWT, on the activation of the Criminality framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese media. Just as Gitlin (1980) described the process of media framing linked with social forces utilised by dominant institutions, the process in this case seems to have occurred between dominant forces across borders. By Vietnam framing IWT as a serious crime, it is communicating an intention to take IWT more seriously and facilitate access to more resources and partner organisations to combat IWT, including under the UN umbrella. These partner organisations included the ICCWC. Massé et al. (2020) have also argued that this framing phenomenon represents a concerted push for security and enforcement agencies to take control of issues formerly considered conservation issues and, thereby, promote the security response over responses such as rhino horn demand reduction and sustainable economic community strategies that would fall under the purview of a conservation-focused approach.

This highlights Knupfer and Entman's (2018) theories on how nation states and international diplomacy, such as via the UN, can frame issues and thereby influence foreign positions, policies and institutional contexts. The creep of securitisation and the Serious Crime framing (akin to the international definition) in Vietnamese digital newspapers displays a reciprocation of the framing of IWT at global IWT conferences. It has been shown that international sources and the associated frames promoting the global strategies to mitigate IWT were quoted by Vietnamese journalists covering international events in Vietnam. Journalists used press releases and translated and adapted

international news for the international pages of the Vietnamese digital newspapers. This highlights that whereas international conferences can deeply affect government narratives (Merilainen & Vos 2015), increasing the media and public attention to environmental problems can lead countries to adopt international agreements (Mitchell 2003). It has been shown that, through a confluence of influencing factors, there has been an international impact on the Serious Crime, Compliance and Lack of Enforcement framing of the rhino horn trade in the Vietnamese digital media.

The significance of this relates to Nancy Fraser's (2007) questions on what effects the involvement of international actors have on a nationally bound public sphere. She has argued, for instance, that discursive arenas these days 'overflow the bounds of both nations and states' (Fraser 2007, p. 7). This is an important consideration for the news framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam, given that Habermas' (1962) original public sphere theory 'assumed a national communications infrastructure, contained by a Westaphalian state' (Fraser 2007, p. 10). The findings of this research project into Vietnam's media has shown that the public sphere in the rhino horn trade has certainly overflowed Vietnam's boundaries, making it an interesting case study of, as Fraser puts it, 'transnationalising the public sphere' (p. 7) across borders and across languages, envisioning 'transnational public powers' and 'transnational circuits of public opinion' (p. 24). Lester (2014) and Papastergiadis (2000) have further argued that supranational distant actors join in via the media with local actors in national environmental conflicts. Through their participation in the Vietnamese local media, such supranational organisations may have functioned to enact an enforced change to a cultural practice that is causing serious environmental damage. Papastergiadis has offered an explanation that supranational organisations undermine certain countries' cultural authority through their media activities. In this case, a strange synergy of environmental, authoritarian,

democratic and security cultural ideologies has created a synergic mix of frames that has had both cultural and policy effects.

7.5 Conclusion

This thesis has answered three RQs to explore the news framing of the rhino horn trade in Vietnam when Vietnam, a major trafficking hub and market country since 2008, began to respond to international pressure from global IWT conferences, particularly the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference, and CITES to take more action to combat the trade. The beginning of the sample period, 2016, marked a critical point for rhino conservation according to the then head of CITES, John Scanlon. He described the CITES CoP17 meeting in 2016 as 'game changing' with regard to the rhino horn trade in Vietnam (Scanlon 2016) and the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference—occurring only a few months after the CITES meeting—as raising 'local, national and global awareness about the devastating impacts of illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn and of the growing determination of Viet Nam and the commitment of the global community to put an end to it' (Scanlon 2016).

Having discussed the findings, this section will provide a concluding analysis, reiterate how this study has contributed to knowledge by answering the RQs, describe the significance of the study, and suggest recommendations and implications for further research. In summary, this chapter has discussed the results of the news analysis and interviews (described in Chapter 4, 5 and 6) in terms of broader theories. It has argued that the criminality framing in the Vietnamese digital media bears a relationship with a shift in framing of the rhino horn trade globally from a conservation issue to criminal issue. Press releases from enforcement agencies such as customs and police, publicity events organised by the CITES Authority of Vietnam and MARD, international sources and

ENGOs promoting the Criminality meta-frame have all contributed to the news media signifying that the rhino horn trade is a criminal issue. Moreover, the findings showed that ENGOs—as primary definers of the rhino horn trade issue—have influenced not only the framing but the ideologies of journalists regarding rhino conservation and the rhino horn trade. Furthermore, the thesis has demonstrated that influence from outside Vietnam has come in the form of pressure from CITES, international calls to declare war on the rhino horn trade, international claims of a security threat in terms of understanding the trade as a serious organised crime and as associated with COVID-19. Even the most mundane attempts of concealment are framed as the work of sophisticated criminals, facilitating the gradual building of an ideology of security around the rhino horn trade, IWT and conservation in Vietnam. The thesis has also argued that there are some in the journalism field who test the limits of reporting on sensitive topics such as corruption.

This research has returned to the genesis of journalism scholarship when researchers were using the news media as a method to explore crime and other issues in societies, which are bound by national borders—and has applied this method to a case study that exemplifies a transnationalising public sphere. To that end, this chapter has discussed how the news on the rhino horn trade shows that pressure from CITES, global elites and the conservation sector has influenced Vietnamese policy on the rhino horn trade and how it is implemented. It shows how the Vietnamese government has joined with global elites to define the rhino horn trade as a serious organised crime, with Vietnam positioning itself as a compliant member state of CITES. Vietnam has made some examples of some caught in the rhino horn trade by being extremely tough with sentencing. The interviews suggest that a key challenge in fighting the rhino horn trade in Vietnam is corruption, particularly among those that control the borders, although journalists are fearful and hesitant to report corruption except for certain newspapers and only in certain situations. The data also

suggests that the syndicates that trade in rhino horn may pose an unacceptable risk of danger to journalists who are otherwise willing to go undercover to report on the groups trading wild animals and the possible involvement of customs officers based along the land border between Vietnam and Laos. Indeed, the lack, in the body of reporting, of undercover journalists directly investigating known rhino horn trading villages and airport and seaport customs is suggestive of the potential risk and danger to journalists and the seriousness of this specific TOC, the rhino horn trade.

This study has made important original contributions to knowledge with regard to news framing and environmental communication in the context of transnational environmental problems and crimes. Using news framing theory as a tool it has built on the body of research about the news framing of environmental and crime issues in Vietnam (see, e.g., Huong 2012; Knupfer & Entman 2018; Nash & Bacon 2006; Pham, Di Gregorio & Brockhaus 2017; Pham & Nash 2017) and news room practices in the Southeast Asian country (see, e.g., Cain 2014; Eek & Ellstrom 2007; Huong 2012; McKinley 2007, 2013; Sidel 1998). It has made a contribution about the news framing of transnational environmental problems in the context of transnationalising public spheres (see, e.g., Fraser 2007; Lester 2014, Papastergiadis 2000), the growing green public sphere in Vietnam (see, e.g., Smith 2018; Yang & Calhoun 2013) that is transnationalising and the news framing of global environmental governance (see, e.g., Schmidt, Ivanova & Schäfer 2013). It has linked the current case study in Vietnam back to the origins of media research about cultural ideologies and folk devils (Cohen 1972; Hall et al. 1978)—albeit, however, in a situation that is not contained by national borders. The thesis has specifically explored the news reporting of the issue of IWT not being taken seriously (Massé et al. 2020; Wellsmith 2011; Wyatt 2014) and factors that influence news framing (Rodelo & Muñiz 2019; Scheufele 1999), specifically in authoritarian states such as Vietnam (Pham & Nash 2017).

The results of this study indicate there has been a global community talk-down on Vietnam, in which global elite stakeholders have directed the government of a small developing country. The talk-down appeared to achieve the sought after outcome, bolstering both Vietnam's enforcement actions and the framing of the rhino horn trade as a criminal issue. The establishment of this framing arguably coincides with the holding of the 2016 global IWT conference in Vietnam's capital Hanoi. The yielding of Vietnam to international pressure to take the rhino horn trade seriously has been expressed in the overarching synergy of criminality framing between sources—Vietnamese officials, international sources and ENGOs. The framing also presented the Vietnamese government in a positive light as a country that cooperates internationally and complies with international agreements. The establishment of the new criminality framing regime was assisted by strong visuals across all the selected digital newspapers, particularly with regard to the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event held at the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference. This event emphasised Vietnam' sworn international cooperation and declaration of war on the rhino horn trade in chorus with international and ENGO stakeholders.

The prevalence of the Serious Crime and Compliance frames, and the dearth of Lack of Enforcement frames observed in the news—coupled with the Vietnamese journalists' strong reliance on press releases and press conferences, particularly from Vietnamese official sources—suggest that journalists may only be straying outside of the government narrative sparingly and cautiously, given the politico-cultural confines of an authoritarian media system. The interviews with journalists suggest that, rather than the news being a place where opposing frames openly collide, journalists carefully navigate the eddies of the Compliance and Lack of Enforcement frames with politico-cultural dexterity borne through professional experience in navigating Vietnam's authoritarian media system.

Harking back to Hall et al.'s (1978) research into the media's role in perpetuating dominant cultural ideology, this research has aimed to bring those ideas that dominate internationally into the transnationalising public sphere of today. Showing some similarities with Hall et al.'s (1978) project, this study reveals how, within framing, select aspects of a crime—such as the evil, ruthless, exploitative character of wildlife traders—and words that may skew perceptions (such as 'sophisticated') are emphasised, and may seem, thereby, to elicit government enforcement responses. For Hall et al. (1978), the powerful framing device was the word picked up by the British press but that originated in the US: 'mugging'. This is a powerful word, provoking certain ideologies still prevalent today that promote a need for tougher law and order. This research, in its turn, foregrounds the Vietnamese journalists' use of words and language such as 'sophisticated' and 'war'. From being bandied around the world indiscriminately to describe IWT (ENGO Personnel 2, pers. comm.), the English term 'sophisticated' has become a common framing device in the Vietnamese digital newspapers to describe the rhino horn trade as a serious crime operated by sophisticated criminal networks. Like 'mugging' in the UK (Hall et al. 1978), 'sophisticated' and 'war'—along with a collection of other framing devices explicated in this study—seem to be promoting a tougher enforcement approach, a war on the rhino horn trade.

Other salient terms revealed in the translation of the digital newspapers that act as framing devices include 'giant', 'determined' and 'coordinated'. Photographs of the cruel fates of animals caught in the 'lair' of evil wildlife traders further reinforce the negative character of the networks, with images of the hammer of the law and security falling on handcuffed offenders sending a message of war on the trade. The translation of the Vietnamese digital news shows that Vietnam has its own way of joining global elites in the way that they frame the rhino horn trade. The translations and

their analysis have helped reveal synergy, reciprocation and compliance of sources present in the reporting.

7.5.1 Implications and Recommendations

Now that Vietnam has taken the rhino horn trade more seriously, as evidenced by the news reporting of its compliance with CITES, it may be time for all players to cautiously reassess the Criminality framing of the trade. This would have implications for further research. For instance, using the Criminality frames identified in this study and the Conservation and Demand Reduction frames identified in my previous study (Smith 2018), a quantitative deductive framing study of a larger sample of Vietnamese news articles concerning rhinos could investigate the relationship between the Criminality and Conservation frames. This would serve to build on Massé et al.'s (2020) findings of a conservation and crime convergence at the global IWT conferences to investigate if there is such a convergence in the Vietnamese news media. A quantitative study of frames and sources that focuses on war rhetoric and securitisation could determine the level of securitisation in Vietnam on this issue. This may be important from a green cultural criminology perspective to gauge the prevalence of the rhino horn trade as a security issue in Vietnam. It may also be valuable to carry out a time-based trend analysis of the framing in the Vietnamese media to show if there has been a shift over time of framing from conservation to criminality. In addition, studying the framing effects of the ivory and rhino horn crush and burn event in Hanoi might help evaluate its conservation value. The observation that the *VnExpress* news video of the event attracted both positive and negative comments in the comment section suggests a subject of related research to gauge the public's reaction to news of such events to evaluate their conservation value.

The Vietnamese journalistic practice of using court or police investigation transcripts is a journalistic routine that provides more detail of the crimes than many other journalistic routines on

this issue. The detail in the news reports may be of use to a range of stakeholders fighting the rhino horn trade, making this an area worthy of further research. Johnston and McGovern (2013) identified a paucity of research into the relationship between the courts and the news media. This would make this area worthy of exploring in Vietnam, particularly with regard to the use of official transcripts and documents from courts and police in mitigating IWT.

The politically advantageous global news framing that declares war on crime is being felt in Vietnam with a war on the rhino horn trade emerging in the framing of the trade in Vietnamese digital newspapers. Furthermore, there is some evidence of the securitisation of the rhino horn trade appearing in the Vietnamese news, fuelling concern that a global securitisation of conservation and IWT (see, e.g., Bocarejo & Ojeda 2015; Duffy 2021, 2022; Duffy & Brockington 2022; Duffy et al. 2019; Massé & Margulies 2020; Runhovde 2017) is making inroads in Vietnam. It may be that the securitisation of non-traditional security issues, such as the rhino horn trade, may bring along its own problems, especially in a country such as Vietnam that already has stringent security measures. Conversely, it may be that strict measures are conducive to reducing the demand for rhino horn.

Considering the openings and opportunities for ENGOs in Vietnam, the majority of recommendations are relevant to the work that ENGOs do in providing information to journalists in a situation where journalists may not have the resources to gather the information themselves. There are four recommendations that have emerged from the research. The first of these concerns the training of journalists in Vietnam, by both ENGOs and journalism NGOs, in court reporting and carrying out the customs and police rounds, specifically regarding rhino horn trade cases. The second recommendation is for ENGOs to continue supplying information to journalists and carrying out initiatives regarding the rhino horn trade as both criminality and conservation issues.

Third, in addition to training journalists, ENGOs should attend and write up press releases on court cases pertaining to the rhino horn trade and access police reports to supply information in press releases to journalists. Fourth, ENGOs in Vietnam and South Africa should work together on researching stories regarding transnational rhino horn trade cases to provide to journalists in the form of press releases and train journalists in this area. Finally, ENGOs should continue to provide funding and training to Vietnamese journalists to report on the rhino horn trade in South Africa, possibly including training in the use of MT and interpreting software to aid in information gathering.

Some limitations to this project were caused by COVID-19. For example, it would have been useful for anthropocentric research to attend with a journalist a customs' press conference on a rhino horn seizure and to attend a trial for a rhino horn case. This was not possible because of COVID-19 restrictions. Another limitation refers to when the total sample was analysed—there was only a small number of stories in the sample where two key framing issues were reported, specifically Corruption and Security Threats. Hence it may be valuable to research the framing of both issues with a wider term of reference—perhaps smuggling in general or a broader search including other major forms of TOC.

There may be a policy implication regarding conservation and the five pillars to mitigate IWT. The findings have shown that poverty and disadvantage play a role in IWT. Poor wild animal trading villages along the Laos border rely on IWT economically. Disadvantaged Vietnamese migrant workers in Africa may be exploited by syndicates to become mules. This may present an opportunity to reduce IWT via the pillar of sustainable livelihoods that is employed in rhino range states. In rhino range states, this conservation pillar aims to discourage poaching through the economic empowerment of poor villages on the border of national parks. The same pillar may be

useful in Vietnam to empower areas of disadvantage and prevent people from being exploited by rhino horn syndicates.

Furthermore, it seems paradoxical to encourage an authoritarian country like Vietnam to take a security approach to an issue. Given that the US was successful at prompting Vietnam to take action into IWT, it would be fair to ask how it could crack down on IWT within its own borders. Hence, a similar study of the news framing of IWT may be valuable in the US.

This thesis contends that its news framing results are different and more nuanced than would be found in an analysis of English language news of the issue either in Vietnam or internationally. The findings provide an insight into the tensions and contradictions in a public sphere that has overflowed its borders. The well-known narratives of good guy versus bad guy, dedicated detective versus villain versus corrupt cop are revealed in news depictions of the Vietnamese authorities and the criminals they have caught—or, conversely, turned a blind eye to—and the global elites that have spurred Vietnam into compliance. From the kingpin, to the monsters on the mountain selling wild animal parts, to the hapless migrant worker recruited to be a rhino horn mule and now facing a long jail sentence … the digital newspapers provide an account of Vietnam's struggle to comply with what it is being told to do, but that previous research suggests would probably never do unless it was forced and cajoled—potentially because such action is somewhat contradictory to its culture.

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Appendix

Question Guide for Semi-structured Interviews

Questions for journalists

How long have you been working as a journalist? Where have you worked. Do you know many other journalists from other papers or news media? Do you talk about your work together?

What section of the paper do you usually work in? What type of stories do you usually write? Can you remember some examples of stories on the rhino horn trade?

How are journalists paid in Vietnam and does this impact the quality of their work. Please comment. For example: Are they paid by the word for example?

In general are Vietnamese journalists passionate and motivated about reporting truthfully and accurately?

Does anyone at your paper specialise in reporting crime?

How does a usual day at work look for you?

How do you select the stories you do?

Do you get assigned stories by your editor or do you choose your own stories?

To find stories do you call people, check your email, use press releases, check social media. How?

How do you usually work on stories? Do you stay in the office, use the phone, go out and meet people?

Do journalists in Vietnam do many of their own interviews? What's your experience?

How often do you report on environment or crime stories? Describe a few examples?

Do you ever interview politicians or police? How?—In person or do you go to the government offices or the police station? Describe a few examples? Do you report arrests and court trials?

How important is crime reporting in Vietnamese news?—are there specialised crime reporters?

When reporting on police and crime, do journalists rely on police reports?

OR Do journalists have access to police for interviews? If so do they contact them for comment usually? Please comment?

When you work as a journalist do you try to cover the story from all the different angles by talking to a balance of sources?

Do you cover any smuggling stories? Do you talk to customs officials at the airports or shipping ports? Do you have contacts?

As a journalist do you have access to airports, shipping ports, arrest scenes, police stations, courts?

As a journalist do you push for extra police and more police power in your stories? Does the media?

As a journalist do you push for stronger penalties for convicted criminals? Does the media?

Are newspapers sometimes critical of the lack of policing of certain crimes?

What are the best newspapers in Vietnam for rhino horn crime stories? Best journalists? Best sources? Best NGOs?

Would you say that people in Vietnam care about wild animals? Is conservation and the environment an important topic in the Vietnamese newspapers? Comment.

Do you or does anyone at your newspaper specialise on stories on this topic?

What makes you choose to do a story about the rhino horn trade?

Do journalists interview police or customs about rhino horn seizures? Do journalists go to press conferences or get sent press releases by police or customs to do stories on rhino horn trade?

Where do you get the information about the rhino horn trade?

Do you get much information from ENGOs about the rhino horn trade?

Do you or other journalists take photographs? How do you get photographs about rhino horn seizures? Are they provided by police or customs?

Do you or other journalists do your own research when reporting on the rhino horn trade

Do you copy and paste information from press releases or other stories or other newspapers

The photographs of the accused with police in front of the evidence table – do you take them? How do you get them? Do the police organize the photo opportunity or do they provide the photo to you?

There are very few stories about the court cases– why is this? Do journalists cover court cases by going to the courts?

If a journalist reports on a seizure by customs do they follow up to see if it was passed to the police for prosecution and follow it to court?

Are there specialised court reporters in Vietnam. Do they generally use court transcripts and documents?

Court reporting on this issue is very rare—do you have any idea why that would be?

How do you hear about rhino horn seizures? Do you hear about them sometimes but not report them?

Do you ever follow stories from the arrest to the trial? Is it possible?

Describe journalists working relationship with police, government officials, NGOs, court officials? Who do you use the most for information?

How important do you think NGOs are at raising the profile of this crime and getting newspapers to report on court cases?

Do you or other journalists get information off the record?

Do you speak with local, provincial or national government officials?

What's it like talking with police, customs, government officials?

Are the laws against the rhino horn trade adequate in your opinion? Do you think rhino horn trafficking is a serious crime? Do you think traffickers should get long jail sentences?

Does media push for stronger penalties for rhino horn criminals?

Is media critical of police, customs, courts or any aspect of the law and order system?

Do you write positive stories about the good job that the police are doing about this issue?

Do you think the authorities are doing enough?

For rhino horn crime stories, what sources do you contact?

Do you normally attribute sources of information?

Are any sources difficult to get information from?

Who contacts you regularly to give you stories about rhino horn? Do you do stories based on the information they send?

Do you rely on press releases? Who from?

Do you rely on police statements? Who from? How do you get the police statements? Do you get press releases from ENGOs. Are they very active in this area?

Do you use direct quotes from police at rhino horn seizures?

When there is an arrest or seizure, how do you find out?

Do you have any good contacts in the police?

Do the police discuss investigations with you? Do you ask?

Do the Vietnamese police ever talk about cooperation with other agencies including international enforcement agencies?

Do you ever report on the international cooperation between law enforcement in Vietnam and Africa

Have you used international sources? How do you get information from international sources?

Do you contact any international sources when there is a rhino horn seizure?

Should international stakeholders be part of the debate in the media about government policy and policing. Do you think it is fair for countries to put pressure? What do you think about international pressure - should it be reported in the news?

Do you think the rhino horn trade is an important issue? Do you think it is a serious crime? And should be published severely?

Do journalists often seek foreign sources for comment on local issues that have international impacts?

Are newspapers sometimes critical of the lack of policing of certain crimes?

Have journalists got access to court trials?

If there is a court case following a rhino horn seizure that you reported does your editor send you to the court to report it?

Are court case schedules available for you to organize reporting a rhino horn trial?

Do judges make statements to sum up when sentencing rhino horn criminals?

Do you contact ENGOs or look at their website, press releases or social media for a comment?

Do ENGOs contact you? Which ENGOs?

How do ENGOs talk about the rhino horn trade? What do they emphasise?

Do you ever cooperate with ENGOs to do stories or investigations? Discuss.

What investigations or stories have you done? Discuss.

Is the rhino horn trade a sensitive topic? Are there government guidelines about journalists reporting rhino horn? Are you restricted in any way? Can you report on corruption?

Do you use your own name when you put a by-line on your story? Discuss.

What do the readers think – do rhino horn trade stories get a lot of readers/hits?

What do you think about ENGOs pushing the rhino horn stories?

Do you think rhino horn is an effective medicine?

Do you think the police are doing enough?

Describe your working relationship with police, government officials, NGOs, court officials. Do you or journalists in general have contacts with any of these?

Do journalists get told to report on events by their editor. Which type of events do journalist generally report on?

Questions for ENGOs

Describe your relationships and interactions with journalists in Vietnam?

Describe the level of interaction you have with the media in Vietnam?

What are the best news media to work with on the rhino horn issue? Why?

Was the 2016 Hanoi IWT conference a watershed event for enforcement against the rhino horn trade in Vietnam?

Do your campaigns deal mainly with demand reduction or enforcement?

Describe how the journalists work with you?

Is there anything that frustrates or pleases you about the coverage of this rhino horn issue in the media?

What type of information do you include and emphasise about rhino horn crime in your communications with journalists?

Do you ever get asked for a comment after a seizure or court case by journalists?

Do journalists add things themselves?

When you are critical of Vietnam for not enforcing their laws properly do journalists write stories about this or do they leave it out?

Do they focus on different aspects of the rhino horn crime stories? Explain?

Do you think that increasing the punishment for rhino horn trafficking will help stop the rhino horn trade?

When you say how many billions of dong the rhino horns are worth, what do you think the audience will think?

Does saying that large amounts in Kilos or money has been seized does that make the story more interesting for readers?

Questions for experts

What does a normal day look like for a Vietnamese journalist?

How do they structure their stories?

Are there restrictions placed on them?

Is the illegal wildlife trade an important story for journalists

How do journalists report on corruption when they do?

Is the environment given much attention in the news. Are there specialist reporters.