36th July: The 2024 Student-Led People's Uprising and the Fall of an Authoritarian Regime in Bangladesh

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis is dedicated to exploring how and why the student-led mass uprising in Bangladesh in July 2024 was able to overthrow a powerful authoritarian regime. What began as a technocratic movement to correct discriminatory government job quotas gradually transformed into a nationwide moral protest for justice and accountability.

A qualitative single-case design was used, and causal reconstruction was implemented by process tracing. Data were collected from triangulated collections of international and national news, human rights fact-finding reports, and interviews with key actors and witnesses. The analytical framework was informed by political process theory, social movement theory, and authoritarian regime theory.

Five interconnected processes were identified. First, protective umbrellas, including legal helplines and volunteer medical posts, were brought together to reduce existential risks and reframe collective disobedience as an act of civic virtue. Second, the reconstruction of justice was facilitated by the proliferation of legal idioms such as due process and equality before the law, through which the legitimacy of the uprising was discursively consolidated. Third, when teachers, lawyers, doctors, and journalists joined student organizations to transform an academic protest into a multifaceted civil uprising, student-citizen relations materialized. Fourth, accounts of repression reveal that coercive enforcement operated according to a conditional logic: indiscriminate violence in public appearances elicited moral responses, whereas covert repression achieved only temporary resistance. Fifth, hybrid organizations—a fragmented structure of personal coordination and public narrative—were created to ensure stability amid surveillance, internet blackouts, and intimidation.

Through this coordinated dynamic, the authoritarian palace was decayed from within. When coercive forces faced a movement protected by moral legitimacy and institutional protection, elite solidarity collapsed and the regime collapsed. Theoretically, the study contributes to the refinement of political process theory by advancing the concept of opportunity activation and to authoritarian regime theory by explaining the failure of calibrated coercion in situations of legitimacy fulfillment. Empirically, it is demonstrated that democratic renewal in Bangladesh did not emerge from a sudden rupture but rather through the patient construction of moral order, protective infrastructure, and hybrid civic architecture.

List of Abbreviations

ADSM	Anti-Discrimination Students' Movement
AL	Awami League (Bangladesh)
BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BGB	Border Guard Bangladesh
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BSS	Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PM	Prime Minister
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion (premier counterterrorism unit)

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1 Introduction

36th July, a significant historic day for Bangladesh and its people. Anyone can be confused as 36th July doesn't exist in the Gregorian calendar, but in Bangladesh, the month of July 2024 is symbolically counted as having 36 days. The movement to reform the job quota system began on 1st July, and the demonstrators announced that July would continue until their demands were fulfilled as a form of resistance. As their protests and struggles also persisted from 1st August to 5th August, they considered those days as part of the extended "July month (Desh Rupantor, 2024)." The long 36 days of July 2024 finally ended on 5th August when the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left the country and fled to India (Shuvra, 2024). The whole nation started breathing freely after she left the country. People observed the day as their Victory Day, and it remains a lifetime experience for all. People broke the chain of 16 and a half years of extreme autocratic rule of Sheikh Hasina (Hossain, 2024).

This research will examine that extended version of the July month. This study will show how a public employment quota system-related student-led movement turned into an anti-government uprising. How that initially technocratic and small protest converted into a nationwide moral claim for accountability and justice, which spread across different university students and different occupational people. How the repressive decision of the government affected not only the lower and middle classes but also the elite class of society. The government was so powerful that the opposition party could not remove them from power for 16 years, but confronted by Generation Z people, professional groups, and victims' families, the government suddenly toppled down like a house of cards (Arafat & Fahmida, 2025).

This study has significance both theoretically and comparatively. From the international relations perspective, these incidents show how a state's foreign legitimacy was affected by the state's internal contention. It also helps to understand how international media coverage works during the information blackout that occurred within the state and how international scrutiny impacts the state's security-related behavior and gradually leads to regime stability. OHCHR's published reports in February 2025 showed the chronology of escalation and the pattern of force. It also includes almost complete connectivity shutdowns on various important dates (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025).

In 2024 the movements started in early June when the High Court gave a verdict about the government job quota system (Shimul, 2025). Earlier this job quota system was changed by the government as the students demanded, but when the High Court gave the rule to bring back the old system, students found it as a government's tactic to reinstall the old excessive and discriminatory system, and they again activated the connection of networks in every campus and started mobilizing (Shimul, 2025). In Dhaka University and other university campuses, confrontation started between the government law enforcement agencies and students in the middle of July. When it became a deadly confrontation, then it shifted from quota reform to the demand for justice, and the movement spread among other sectors of society (Tabassum, 2025).

In the final part, the March to Dhaka event was taken by the students, which created panic among the law enforcement agencies and the armed forces. The fragmentation among the security forces and the loss of control of the government accelerated the collapse of the regime, and government chiefs fled the country (Bhattacharjee & Islam, 2025).

At various times, student-led protests or movements have been seen in many South Asian countries. Many of these protests were about specific demands or were campus-oriented. A campus-oriented organized movement becoming a mass uprising and toppling down a government is not so common. Existing comparative literature and IR theories narrate framing, diffusion, mobilization, and political opportunity structures. This research explores the mechanisms through which a job quota reform movement changed into a statewide mass uprising in Bangladesh.

This research has some specific goals to follow. This study looks at the main events and turning points throughout the full movement, from the High Court verdict to the march on Dhaka on 5th August. It analyzes how a specific objective movement framing evolved and expanded towards the audience as a justice-centric moral claim. The study also looks at how the government and its followers dealt with this change through their counter-narratives. During several days of curfews, internet shutdowns, and targeted arrests, the movement spread among the occupational groups and urban people of the country. This study aims to trace the state's active mechanisms, such as information control and other measures, which backfired upon them, created a moral shock among the people, and unintentionally increased the number of participants in this movement.

Expectations about accountability, youth politics, and civil-military relations were reconstructed through the July movements. Though it took many lives, including child casualties and thousands

of people injured, as reported by UN agencies and local media. This study helps to strengthen democracy and also recognizes the complex aftermath.

1.1.1 Research Question

Why and how did the student-led people's uprising in Bangladesh in 2024 succeed in overthrowing an authoritarian regime?

1.1.2 Historical Context

1.2.1 Systemic Democratic Backsliding

Through the general election in 2008, the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) came to power with a landslide victory. From the very beginning, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tried to change the governing style, where the electoral process was present but institutional power became more centralized in the Prime Minister's Office. Opposition positions and criticism against the government kept decreasing day by day. Some research showed that the election process was alive, but a level playing field was not ensured; rather, systematic and controlled elections were attempted (Kuttig, Bangladesh 1991-Present: From Democracy's Third Wave to the Third Wave of Autocratization, 2021).

The non-party caretaker government during general elections was a decisive institutional turn in the political history of Bangladesh. In 2011, through the Fifteenth Amendment to the constitution, this system was removed as the Awami League held the majority of seats in parliament. After that, in 2014, the general election was held under the AL government, which was boycotted by the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and its allies. As a result, 154 seats among the 300 parliamentary seats were uncontested, and the AL gained a larger majority in parliament. In this process, the representative character of the system became weaker and weaker (Riaz, 2014).

The 2013 Shahbagh movement and the anti-Shahbagh movement of Hefazat-e-Islam created a more tightened situation, and heavy policing destroyed the environment for rallies, assemblies, and speeches (Riaz, 2014).

After the attack on the Holey Artisan restaurant in 2016, the government adopted a much more security-first posture. They expanded counterterrorism operations and started excessive use of

lethal weapons and extrajudicial killings. Opposition parties claimed that the government was using counterterrorism tools not against terrorists but rather against opposition party supporters. The media became more skeptical on this topic as they started to impose self-censorship, though some newsrooms still tried to publish major issues (Mohaiemen, 2025).

The Digital Security Act of 2018, followed by the Cyber Security Act of 2023, became weapons to stop online criticism against the government (Rayhan, 2024). Many human rights organizations criticized these acts, arguing that freedom of expression was criminalized, and many general people, activists and journalist were arrested for sharing opinions on online platforms (Amnesty International, 2025).

Opposition parties claimed that in 2018, again in the general election, allegations of manipulation and intimidation by the government increased further. Civil society and media houses experienced greater economic and legal pressure to work in favor of the government (Rayhan, 2024).

The major opposition party became weaker as an organization, suffering from a leadership crisis, with the majority of leaders and supporters in jail and burdened with cases. Another opposition party, Jamaat-e-Islami, was indirectly removed from the election process through the deregistration of their party by the Election Commission. All of these incidents narrowed down the opposition's voice against the government (Rayhan, 2024).

International media published several reports of allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and pervasive surveillance by elite security forces, which indicated a declining human rights situation and weakening media freedom (Rayhan, 2024).

1.2.2 Job quota system in Bangladesh

Bangladesh got independence from Pakistan after a nine-month war in 1971. After independence, during the first civil service recruitment, a quota system was introduced by the executive order of the government. Through this process, the government tried to recognize wartime sacrifices and create a regional balance. At that time, the majority of job positions were reserved for freedom fighters, war-affected women, and various district categories. Only a small portion of the jobs was kept for the open merit system (Hushen, 2024).

Through the years, the government revised the quota system a few times. In the mid-1970s, the open merit system received a much larger portion of the total job vacancies, but the freedom fighter

quota and women's quota were retained (Hushen, 2024). In the mid-1980s, the system was revised again, and the ethnic minority quota was introduced. The government also redistributed the proportions. At that time, 45% of jobs were merit-based, and the remaining 55% were reserved for quotas. Among that, 30% was for freedom fighters, 10% for women, 10% for districts, and 5% for tribal groups (Tasnim, 2024).

In the late 1990s, the government introduced a quota system for the children of freedom fighters. This clause was applicable if suitable primary category candidates were unavailable. In 2002, the rules changed again, and a circular stated that if reserved seats for freedom fighters were not fulfilled, then they would be filled from the merit list. However, in 2009, the Awami League government canceled this rule (Hushen, 2024).

By the late 2000s, the job vacancy proportions had become the most complex quota system in the region. Again, 1% was introduced for persons with disabilities. In total, 56% of seats were reserved for various quotas, and 44% were for merit-based candidates (Ahmad, 2025).

As many years passed, students and job candidates grew frustrated as the merit-based portion was low. They felt that they were missing opportunities to get jobs as most of the seats were reserved for quota holders. Students became angry and started to protest to reform the job quota system in 2018 (Tasnim, 2024). Primarily, some of the students organized awareness campaigns on campuses and social media. They organized petitions and sit-ins. Gradually, they developed a moral claim to make civil service job exams fair and provide equal access for all (Hushen, 2024).

In early April, in major university campuses and in district towns, coordinated demonstrations were arranged. Human chains, processions, rallies, and road blockades were held on different days. Demonstrators also confronted law enforcement agencies, and several students were arrested and injured in Dhaka city. At that moment, guardians and professionals also expressed solidarity with the demonstrating students (Tasnim, 2024).

As the situation escalated quickly, on 11 April 2018, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced in parliament that there would be no quotas in the higher-grade posts, which are also called first-class and second-class jobs (Tasnim, 2024). Though students did not want to abolish all the quotas, they wanted a logical reformation. Soon after the announcement, tensions escalated, along with different administrative steps for implementing this new policy (Hushen, 2024).

On October 3, 2018, the government officially published a circular where it was formalized to abolish the quota system, though in third- and fourth-class jobs the quota system remained unchanged (Ahmad, 2025).

1.2.3 The 2024 Job Quota Reform Movement

From 2018 to 2024, all first-class and second-class civil service exams were held on a merit basis. But in 2021, a few children of freedom fighters filed a writ petition challenging the quota abolishment decision of 2018. On 5th June 2024, the High Court gave a verdict on the writ petition. The Court ordered the return of the quota system again in first-class and second-class civil service jobs (Shimul, 2025). Student networks found this decision excessive and discriminatory. This time they created a platform named the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM) (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025). They started conducting awareness campaigns about their demands. They did not seek the total abolishment of the quota system. Their demand was that quotas should be limited to the lowest-level jobs and only available for minority groups and persons with disabilities (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025).

At the very beginning, they started the movement from the frame of equal access and merit for all. But after seeing casualties from counter-mobilization and coercion, they rapidly incorporated accountability and justice into their demonstrations. In articles and op-eds, moral vocabulary centered on dignity and impunity took space alongside quota arithmetic (Chandan, 2025).

From early July to mid-July, protests remained peaceful and campus-centric. They were heavily organized at Dhaka University and other major regional universities. There were provocations, yet students held human chains, sit-ins, and circulated lists of demands non-violently (Shimul, 2025).

The situation changed on 14th July, when at a press conference, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina compared students with the Razakars, collaborators of the Pakistani army during the Liberation War of 1971. That night, Dhaka University dormitories burst into anger against this labeling. Students overcome their fear and started rallies, shouting slogans, and calling Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a dictator (Chandan, 2025). Tension escalated, and on 15th July, at a peaceful protest in Dhaka University, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the ruling party Awami League, attacked the protesters, including female students. The BCL attacked the unarmed students with iron rods and sticks, and over 300 people were injured in that incident. In

the evening, the BCL attacked the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where injured protesters had gone for treatment. The same thing happened in protests in other cities (Sajen, 2025).

From 16th July to 18th July, the situation escalated very quickly. On 16th July, demonstrations spread all over the country. Government supporters and the BCL attacked protesters in many places. Several clashes occurred between government supporters and student protesters (Chandan, 2025). On that day, 6 protesters were killed. Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed was killed by a police gunshot, and the video footage went viral on social media across the whole nation. From this day, not only students but also many people from different social classes started to join the protest (Alo, 2024).

On 17th July, general students of Dhaka University united against the BCL and expelled them from the dormitories and campus. Protests continued in many districts, and clashes also continued in many places. Students blocked many important roads and highways throughout the country. Police stormed the Dhaka University campus with tear gas and sound grenades. Several chases and clashes happened between students and police (Alo, 2024). In her address to the nation, then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured of an "investigation into the untoward incidents including the murders" and said, "I believe that our student community will get justice from the Supreme Court. They need not be disappointed (Shuvra, 2024)."

By 18th July, 29 people had been killed so far. The ADSM announced a complete shutdown program across the country on 18th July to protest the killings and attacks (Shuvra, 2024). The entire country, including the capital Dhaka, was almost at a standstill due to the all-out blockade program by the students. Throughout the day, fights between students and police or government supporters occurred in around 47 districts (Alo, 2024). As the days went on, more and more students and general people became involved in the protests and clashes. Law Minister Anisul Haque said that the government was willing to hold talks with the protesters in the emerging situation, but the students' platform, ADSM, rejected the offer of talks (Shuvra, 2024). The government started to lose control, so they decided to deploy the army and announce a curfew to regain control (Chandan, 2025). Mobile internet connectivity was not available in various parts of the country. At one-point, mobile internet was completely shut down. Broadband internet was also shut down at night (Shuvra, 2024).

On Friday, 19th July, widespread protests and clashes continued in various parts of the country, including Dhaka. The situation in the towns became tense. In Dhaka, various government establishments, including the Metrorail station, the toll plaza of the Elevated Expressway, and the Mirpur Indoor Stadium, were vandalized and set on fire. More than 800 prisoners escaped after an attack and fire at a prison in Narsingdi district (Rashid, 2025). At least 56 people were confirmed dead in clashes across the country on that day. The number of people injured by gunshots was also several times higher. As the situation got out of control, a curfew was imposed from midnight (Alo, 2024).

1.2.4 The Boiling Point of Public Discontent

Despite the curfew, on 20th July, protesters clashed with law enforcement in various places, including Dhaka, Savar, Gazipur, and Mymensingh. Many protesters were injured (Alo, 2024). According to BBC Bangla, the death toll had risen to 208 in the last few days. Of these, the number of deaths reported from hospitals in Dhaka alone had increased to 165 (Shuvra, 2024).

On 21st July, the Appellate Division overturned the High Court's verdict on reinstating the quota. The court ordered a 93 percent merit quota, a 5 percent freedom fighter quota, a 1 percent minority ethnic quota, and a 1 percent quota for the disabled and third gender (Tanvi, 2024). On 22nd July, Nahid Islam, one of the coordinators of the quota movement, announced a 48-hour suspension of the complete shutdown. Although the violence had subsided due to the curfew, anxiety and tension continued (Amin, 2025). The movement also led to an increase in the number of arrests and cases in various parts of the country, including Dhaka (Shuvra, 2024).

On 26th July, after allegations arose that the three coordinators of ADSM—Asif Mahmud, Nahid Islam, and Abu Baker Majumder—were taken into custody from the hospital where they were receiving treatment, the Detective Branch announced that night that they had been taken into custody for "security reasons." Over the next few days, several more coordinators were taken to the DB office (BBC News বাংলা, 2024).

These three had been picked up once before. Nahid Islam was picked up from Khilgaon, Dhaka, at midnight on 19th July. He was dumped in the Purbachal area of Dhaka in the early hours of 21st July. Nahid had injury marks on various parts of his body. Since then, he had been undergoing treatment at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital. The other two coordinators, Asif and Baker, were

also picked up on 19th July. Five days later, on 24th July, Asif was dropped off in Hatirjheel and Baker in the Dhanmondi area. Since then, Asif had also been undergoing treatment at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital, where Baker was staying with him (Alo, 2024).

On 28th July, while in the custody of the intelligence police, Nahid Islam, the coordinator of ADSM, gave a video message calling for the withdrawal of the program. However, other coordinators alleged that the statement was made under torture while being held hostage (BBC News বাংলা, 2024). At midnight, a few remaining coordinators announced a nationwide protest program to "forcibly obtain a statement from the coordinators to withdraw the movement, and protest against extrajudicial killings, disappearances, false cases, and mass arrests across the country" (Alo, 2024).

On 30th July, ADSM announced a March for Justice program. The program was to be held in all courts, campuses, and streets of the country to achieve their 9-point demands.

On 1st August, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a notification banning the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir. The notification stated that by virtue of the powers conferred by Section 18(1) of the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir, along with all their affiliated organisations, were banned as political parties (BBC News বাংলা, 2024).

On 2nd August, several thousand people joined the Droha Yatra (Journey of Rebellion) program of teachers and civil society. They marched from the National Press Club to Doel Chattar in the TSC area of Dhaka University and then to the Central Shaheed Minar (Central Martyrs' Monument) (Deutsche Welle, 2024).

On 3rd August, a huge rally was held at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka and the New Market area of Chittagong, where thousands of people participated under the call of ADSM. In addition, processions and rallies were held in many places including Rangpur, Sylhet, Faridpur, Rajshahi, Bogra, Barisal, Narayanganj, Barguna, Sirajganj, and Comilla (BBC News বাংলা, 2024). One point was announced from the Dhaka rally demanding the resignation of the government. Coordinator Nahid Islam said, "This government has no right to remain in power for another minute. Not only Sheikh Hasina should resign, but also the murders, looting, and corruption that have taken place in this country must be judged. We do not want to give her a path to freedom by

resigning. She must resign and face justice". At that point, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed interest in talks, but they rejected it (Shuvra, 2024).

From 4th August, the complete non-cooperation movement began, demanding the "one-step" overthrow of the government. On the first day of the program, 4th August, a horrific situation arose across the country. At least 104 people lost their lives, and thousands were injured. An indefinite curfew was imposed across the country. In addition, the government declared a three-day general holiday. Court activities were closed indefinitely (Bela, 2024). Although it was initially announced for 6th August, ADSM called for a long march in Dhaka a day earlier, on 5th August, demanding the fall of the government (Shuvra, 2024).

The discontent that had built up around the reinstatement of the quota system on 5th June, just two months later, completely shook the foundation of the government. After rumors of her fleeing the country spread in the third week of July, Sheikh Hasina boldly said, "Sheikh Hasina does not flee." However, two weeks later, she left power and fled to India (Shuvra, 2024).

To prevent anti-government protests on 4th and 5th August, the ruling political party, the Awami League, announced gatherings and guarding in wards of Dhaka. However, they could not maintain a face-to-face position with the anti-government protesters (Shuvra, 2024).

Although the entrances to Dhaka were under the control of security forces in the morning, protesters began entering the city through several areas as the afternoon progressed (Apu, 2024). Meanwhile, protesters were shot at indiscriminately in various places. Eighty-eight people were reported killed that day (Bela, 2024). By noon, the streets of Dhaka were virtually under the control of protesters. Millions of people were seen taking positions and marching on the main roads of Dhaka (Apu, 2024).

Around 1 pm, news came that Sheikh Hasina had left Bangladesh after resigning from the post of Prime Minister. Her sister Sheikh Rehana was with her. By then, the protesters had entered the Prime Minister's residence, Ganabhaban, and the Prime Minister's Office. Many people entered and vandalized Ganabhaban (Zishan, 2025).

At around 4 pm, Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman addressed the nation from the Army Headquarters. He said, "The Prime Minister has resigned. Now we will form an interim government and all the activities of this country will continue through this government." Earlier,

he had held a meeting with leaders of various political parties and representatives of civil society. Through this, Bangladesh witnessed the unprecedented incident of the head of government fleeing (Shuvra, 2024).

There was virtually no government in Bangladesh for three days from 5th August. This led to a kind of deadlock in the administration due to a leadership crisis, which resulted in a major deterioration in the law and order situation in the country (Shuvra, 2024).

Three days later, an interim government was formed with Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus as the Chief Advisor. Initially, the advisory council had 17 members. Later, it increased to 24 members. Muhammad Yunus received support and congratulations from the Western world soon after forming the government (Shuvra, 2024).

As demanded by ADSM, the Chief Justice and other judges of the Appellate Division resigned. The Chief Election Commissioner and other commissioners also resigned. A major reshuffle was carried out in the administration across the country. There were changes in various positions, from secretary to deputy commissioner, police superintendent, and UNO. Many opposition politicians who had been in prison for a long time were released (Shuvra, 2024).

1.2.5 State Violence in the 2024 Uprising

In the July 2024 uprising, the role of law enforcement agencies, especially the police, was highly aggressive and based on a lethal-weapon-oriented public order management system. In an investigation by Al Jazeera, it was shown that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave orders to the lower command to use lethal weapons and even instructed them use helicopters to suppress the protesters (Al Jazeera Investigative Unit & Thorne, 2025). According to the OHCHR report, police used military rifles and metal pellet-loaded shotguns alongside tear gas and sound grenades (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025). Media reports show that around 95% of the people died from gunshot wounds. Many of the shots were to the head, chest, or torso (The Daily Star Staff Correspondent, 2024).

Mass arrests occurred as part of the repression. From 15th July to 5th August, 11,702 people were arrested, and around 85% of them were students or general citizens, meaning they did not belong to any political party. During curfew nights, regular block raids took place in many areas of Dhaka. Police and RAB jointly surrounded houses, forcefully entered homes, vandalized property, and

carried out arbitrary arrests. Army units provided security around the perimeter (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025).

The OHCHR estimated in its fact-finding report that around 1,400 people may have died between 15th July and 5th August. They made this estimate by collecting lists from different sources, including the Ministry of Health. However, according to the Ministry of Health's records, 841 people died and 12,272 were injured. The OHCHR assumed that political pressure and threats kept hospital reports incomplete (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025). Many dead bodies were taken directly to their families and buried without post-mortem examinations. Many families did not file any complaints or cases because of fear of further harassment from the government. According to Bangladesh Police, from 1st July to 15th August, 44 police died and 2,308 were injured. Among the BGB, 3 were killed and 129 were injured. Among the RAB, 2 died and 307 were injured (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025).

2 Literature Review

The literature on Bangladesh's student and youth uprising in July 2024 and its subsequent events is divided into four interrelated sections. These are: 1. The concepts of regime and political system explain the amalgamation of power, the rise of calibrated coercion, and the erosion of external control. 2. An accumulation of research on student and youth mobilization has been used to explain why universities act as centers of protest, how campus-based movements extend into cities, and how movements continue even under repression. 3. Social movement theory, particularly the concepts of repertoires, political opportunities, and WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment), has been used as a framework for analyzing performances, coalitioning, and patterns of escalation or de-escalation. 4. Studies on the agenda-setting, structuring, and dissemination functions of digital media have connected online coordination to ground-level rhythms. Collectively, these strands have been used to examine how a digitally networked, campus-based, cross-class coalition emerged quickly, expanded through urban areas, and overcame initial repression (Suykens, 2017; Dahlum & Wig, 2021; Tilly, Castañeda, & Wood, 2019; Nath & Rahman, 2025).

2.1.1 Bangladesh's Party–State and the Political Settlement

A historical analysis of Bangladesh's party state shows how executive power was restructured through electoral cycles and the interweaving of party, constitutional engineering, security organs, and bureaucracy. The time frame and timeline presented there have been broadly used to initiate the recent debate. Particular focus is placed on showing how leadership changes, how the government controls everything, and how authorities increased power and influenced people's decisions about whether protesting is risky or beneficial (Suykens, 2017).

A political-settlement lens shows how violence in Bangladesh is internally produced by elite agreements and, when those agreements are challenged, how controlled force begins. This means that the oppressors do not act arbitrarily; rather, they carefully use force along with controlling the narrative to maintain stability without losing too much reputational standing (Hassan & Nazneen, 2017). Other analyses have shown that executive power gradually shifted away due to deinstitutionalization and became more absolutist. Throughout this process, formal checks and balances have narrowed, and leaders have gained more authoritarian power to act as they wish. Civilians have fewer spaces to express their thoughts and make demands (Sobhan, 2025).

In 2023–2024, a wider cross-country and yearly analysis has portrayed democratic regression reaching its peak at an inflection point, when student-led coordination and indicators of rising conflict merged with governance weakness to produce a crisis of authority. This course of events has included the judicial reframing of fairness, and the quota controversy, street violence, and partisanship worked as fuel to expand the act (Tieri & Hossain, 2024). Public opinion has described the period as a struggle between freedom from oppression and freedom to construct an inclusive political system (Huda, 2024). Further explicative writing argues that the performance and symbolism have demolished the sacred myth of authority. On the other hand, a temporary "return of politics" during the transition has reopened the discursive space (Mostofa, 2024; Chowdhury, 2025). Therefore, a background logic has been established linking the scholarship of this regime to controversial activities. When formal channels are constricted and strategic enforcement prevails, the risk-reward structure of protest is transformed, and success depends on the influence of its narrative, discipline, and organization (Riaz, 2014; Ashru & Ottman, 2025).

2.1.2 Students, Universities, and the Propensity for Protest

Why student or youth coalitions challenge the regime so frequently has been described by comparative political science. 62 countries have been used. Geocoded evidence from 1991 to 2016 has shown that protests are significantly more common at universities. Under less democratic rules, relations become stronger. The framework has three areas, such as: 1. Socialization of values elevates rights-based grievances when institutions fail, 2. Organizational density reduces coordination costs, and 3. Campus spatiality provides focal points for assembly. Theoretical explanations and processes are clearly presented, and the core findings are reliable according to identification strategies (Dahlum & Wig, 2021).

With this general pattern, Bangladesh-centric work converges while adding important nuances. The inclusion of student wings has been well documented within patronage networks and disciplinary control of campus space. However, non-partisan student rallies have restored pre-existing networks, event management practices, and media skills which have helped form broader coalitions (Kuttig, Suykens, & Islam, 2020). During periods of regime fatigue, symbolic crisis, or policy impasse, a related strand argues that student movements routinely re-emerge as a threat to authoritarian consolidation. At this moment, specialized committees like program, graphics, media, ground, traffic, etc., have been organized on an institutional basis so that the work can be done more professionally while preserving horizontal identity (Jackman, 2021).

Analytical study in 2024 has indicated that the organizational framework of committees in Bangladesh suggests that it reflects these patterns: program teams choreographing sequences across campuses, graphics teams standardizing symbols, media teams negotiating with journalists and synchronizing livestreams, and ground or traffic teams plotting routes, stewarding crowds, and engaging with volunteer first aid and legal aid tents. The collective effect has become a database that can rapidly measure a necessary property without having to discipline it under specific strategic forces (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025). Based on evidence, the logic of this committee structure has also been found in neighboring South Asian student uprisings and in contemporary European student-organized conflicts (Beširević, 2025).

2.1.3 Social Movements: Repertoires, WUNC, and Political Opportunities

Charles Tilly and his associates, who studied social movements, are largely related to the work of the theoretical vocabulary used in the chapter. A movement has been described as a sustained public campaign that synthesizes (1) a repertoire of recognizable performances such as rallies, petitions, media statements, marches, strikes, (2) public WUNC displays (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment), and (3) collective claim-making on authorities (Tilly, Castañeda, & Wood, 2019). Repertoires are historic but locally adapted. WUNC signals are calibrated to audience expectations: volunteer care work, orderly formations, and cross-class mixing may signal worthiness and unity, while transparent coordination, massed ranks, and staying power under pressure signal numbers and commitment (Tilly, Castañeda, & Wood, 2019).

The July cycle was explained using these insights. It has been observed that volunteer clinics and legal aid tents, disciplined marches, and committee-based provision have repeatedly come to the foreground. Such optics have enhanced the reputational cost of arbitrary repression by expressing discipline, care, and civic virtue. Although crackdowns were taken in the early stages, their spread seemed to be limited due to the prevalence of images portraying care and discipline. Consequently, the focus has shifted from widespread repression to the targeted or planned use of force and control of narratives (Tilly, Castañeda, & Wood, 2019; Chowdhury, 2025). Therefore, the theory supports the expectation that when institutional protection is weak, committee organization, coalition formation, and entrepreneurial coordination are relied upon.

2.1.4 Digital Media: Agenda-Setting, Strategic/Emotional Framing, and Diffusion

In July 2024, digital platforms were used to coordinate strategies, set agendas, and reach the campus message to the wider public. A study in the *Journal of Governance, Security & Development* has argued that social media has played an agenda-setting role, raising core demands and influencing news coverage. Though gains of coordination and risks of misinformation have both been documented (Nath & Rahman, 2025). A qualitative content analysis of activists' Facebook posts found that strategic frameworks such as policy, democratic restoration, legal justification, and emotional frameworks such as solidarity, outrage, and hope were jointly

deployed, which made it possible to maintain commitment at the peak of the crisis and spread participation beyond campus (Rahman, Billah, Begum, & Oishe, 2025).

Two other characteristics are pointed out. The first one is connective leadership, meaning leaders who build bridges between clusters rather than controlling hierarchies seem to have repertoires and messages that are consistent across campuses, professions, and neighborhoods (Ahmed & Ashraf, 2025). The second one is that the limitations on press freedom and the concentration of ownership in the media system have likely created an incentive for digital amplification and a reliance on hybrid online-offline storage (Sire & Rahman, 2025). Computational preprints further indicate that online influence cycles co-vary with street growth and focal events, consistent with an information diffusion model in which digital signals lower the threshold for participation (Hossen, Saiduzzaman, & Shaha, 2025).

2.1.5 Comparative Perspectives: Sri Lanka and Serbia

To distinguish portable mechanisms from context-bound triggers, comparisons have been used. In 2022 Sri Lanka's Aragalaya, occupation of public space, youth-led coordination, and media practices were similar to the cycle in Bangladesh. But economic decline and elite fragmentation in Sri Lanka acted as the primary driving forces. Bangladesh's case for 2024 seems to be based more on political regression and campus-to-city spread than on macroeconomic collapse, although inflation and unemployment were part of the complaint framework (Imtiyaz, 2025). A comparison with Serbia (2024-25) points to daily meetings, direct democratic methods, and universities under repression serving as "safe spaces." Committee structure and ritualized WUNC signals emerge again as a feature of enhanced portability (Beširević, 2025).

2.1.6 Stakeholders, Governance Capacity, and Societal Wellbeing

The July movement is described as extending beyond students to professionals, neighborhood groups, and diaspora segments, united by connective leaders and symbols of discourse. Stakeholder mapping has highlighted the committee systems and alliance nodes that create bridges between social layers and professional networks (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025). An administrative perspective described the crisis management of the anti-quota movement as a manifestation of informational deficits and coordination failures within the state. This also contributed to a reliance on inconsistent signals and a repeated reliance on significant power (Mahmud, 2025). Anxiety,

mental health burdens, grief, and post-event stress were recorded at the societal level. Alongside protective factors including peer solidarity and community care, this suggests that psychological support should be integrated into transitional justice and higher education policies (Arman, et al., 2025).

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Introduction

This study is based on a wide range of social movement theories, though as the main analytical lens, it uses political process theory. This theory helps to explain how movements spread within society, how debates emerge in the wider sphere, and how they ultimately lead to specific outcomes. Political process theory is chosen because it can integrate three different domains that are repeatedly emphasized in modern literature: the mobilizing system, which transforms discontent into organized action; the arrangement of political opportunities and threats within the environment; and the identification or framing process, which creates participation urgency, meaningfulness, and normative justification (Della Porta, 2013). Political process theory is an open system of variables. It is a comparative and process-oriented approach. It views the state as both an arena and a target simultaneously. This approach expects that both regime challengers and authorities will adopt different strategies over time. Such familiarization aligns well with the topic. It reveals the authoritarian context, where institutions exist formally but a level playing field is not ensured; where repression becomes a tool to avoid delegitimization; and where elite defections can occur quickly, reconfiguring the opportunity structure (Tarrow, 2011; Della Porta, 2013).

Framing and identity, resource mobilization, and network-based diffusion — which explain mobilization — can be understood through social movement theory. Political process theory fits here as the primary framework. Mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and meaning-making processes can be analyzed through this theory. However, from structure alone, contentious trajectories cannot be fully understood. To integrate mechanisms and processes — such as diffusion, certification and decertification, radicalization, and moderation — the theory extends to further analytical steps. Authoritarian regime theory then contextualizes the framework. It helps identify control problems and the power-sharing dynamics of autocratic survival. It explains how regime types shape cooptation, coercion, and micro-openings for challengers. Eventually, this

chapter develops a continuous analytical narrative that guides the empirical analysis (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001).

3.1.2 Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory diverts research toward strategic, organized, and relational understandings of collective action, moving away from the idea of spontaneous crowds. Resource mobilization theory shows that grievances exist everywhere, but the capacity to organize, gather resources, synchronize tactics, and sustain engagement under risk are the main reasons for the rise and fall of any movement. It does not treat protest as an irrational outburst; rather, leadership, selective incentives, organizational entrepreneurship, and coalition building are the main determinants of durable campaigns. The major differences among movements lie in skills, legitimacy, time, financial resources, communication infrastructures, and commitment (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

On the other hand, later it was emphasized that before motivating action, grievances require interpretation. Diagnostic, prognostic, motivational, and traditional dimensions are identified within framing processes. Framing works through amplification, bridging, transformation, and extension with the audience. When authorities install counter-frames to increase reputational costs and delegitimize their challengers, resonance depends on salience, narrative fidelity, and credibility. Interpretive work can be understood in this way: it mediates perceptions of risks and opportunities and converts signals into scripts for action (Benford & Snow, 2000).

With the notion of collective identity, a further contribution is made. It is not a fixed attribute; rather, it is conceptualized as a relational and dynamic process. Even under repression, sustained participation is produced by moral obligation, shared “we-ness,” rituals, mutual recognition, symbolic practices, and networks. Identity can be seen as both a product and a precondition of mobilization. It operates through interpersonal and organizational ties, which provide trust and meaning (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

In this perspective, the meso level is maintained as a common analytical level. Here, meanings are embedded in concrete practices, individuals are connected with organizations, and resources are pooled. This level is well maintained in this framework, through which variations in overlapping

memberships, brokerage positions, and organizational density can be traced. It determines scale shift, diffusion, and tactical innovation (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

3.1.3 Political Process Theory: Core Concepts

Political process theory harmonizes insights from social movement theory into an interactional model. Through this model, the strategies of movements and the state co-evolve within an interrelationship of structural coordination, political opportunities, and framing processes. Movements can thus be understood as dynamic interactions between challengers and authorities. The state is considered both a participant and a context, where its legal instruments, symbolic gestures, and policing patterns are treated as variables influencing collective action (Tarrow, 2011).

Political opportunities are defined as features of the environment that increase or reduce the expected costs of action, alter the perceived legitimacy of protest, and shape expectations of success. Classical dimensions include divisions and alignments among elites, the closure or openness of institutional channels, the availability of influential allies, and the strategic position and power of the state. However, opportunities cannot be seen as simple structural "givens." Activists actively articulate, notice, and emphasize them as open positions (Della Porta, 2013).

For instance, a court decision may expand formal access, but it only generates movements if activists interpret it not as a trap but as a credible invitation. When an organization can transform elite-level conflicts into synchronized action at the grassroots, elite division becomes visible and politically consequential. Hence, opportunity is rational—it relies heavily on organizational preparation, particularly the institutional environment and interpretive work that enable actors to recognize and act upon openings (Della Porta, 2013).

Mobilizing structures include both formal organizations and informal networks. Professional bodies, civic associations, student unions, trade unions, and NGOs can be seen as formal organizations. On the other hand, kinship, friendships, neighborhoods, workplaces, and online platforms can be seen as informal networks. Informal relationships come with flexible communication, trust, and access to otherwise inaccessible constituencies. Formal organizations come with accountability, legal defense, continuity, and a division of labor across media work, logistics, and security. Some actors and organizations work as connective tissue. They connect

different clusters across social boundaries, translate the vocabulary, and deliver resources where they are most needed. Where brokerage is present, local demands are elevated to intersectoral alliances, diffusion accelerates, and when leaders are targeted, movements gain resilience (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Identity and framing, organization, and scope are involved. Motivational frames give justification for why action needs to be taken at the present time and normalize risk. Diagnostic frames clearly show what is wrong and who is responsible for it. Predictive frames provide possible remedies and specify reserves. In authoritarian environments, the framework often uses rule of law principles, professional ethics, and public interest narratives that are hard to criminalize. Sometimes, to maintain rationality, they rely on coded language (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Identity places these narratives within various kinds of practice communities – professionals, student hood, and neighborhoods. In that scenario, participation becomes a moral expectation rather than simply a strategic gamble. Thus, identity and framing mediate opportunity. The same police posture may be seen as tolerable or intolerable, and the same institutional environment can be read as closed or open, depending on previous actions that make the risk reckless or legitimate (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Since debates emerge through interactions over time, political process theory is associated here with a process-and-process approach. Rather than pinning the results on fixed variables, the analysis identifies recurring processes – diffusion, brokerage, opportunity or threat imposition, decertification and certification by influential allies or authorities, and radicalization or moderation – showing how these elements are chained into processes that decrease or increase public safety. Early steps alter subsequent possibilities. State responses feed back into expectations. Diffusion carries not only strategy but also moral vocabulary and risk cues (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001).

The digital environment is not considered a competing theory but rather an extension of manual and networked theories. Digital channels expand frames, compress coordination time, and enable weak-tie recruitment. On the other hand, they increase the ability to be exposed to surveillance and traceability. So, effective movements adopt hybrid organizing. They engage in public platforms for visibility and narrative, encrypted groups for logistics, and face-to-face nodes for redundancy

and trust. The net effect depends less on the technology itself and more on the risk environment and the organizational embedding in which the tools are used (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010).

A final micro-foundation bothers choice, fraud, and thresholds. Individuals often keep dissent secret until their personal boundaries are crossed by visible opposition. Elite defection or pushback can increase expected effectiveness and reduce perceived costs, resulting in dramatic change. Threshold dynamics intersect with policing (which can be preventive or counterproductive depending on the narrative of visibility, selectivity, and legitimacy), frames (which reframe risks as moral obligations), and networks (which transmit credible signals). These interactions explain why sometimes mobilizations emerge suddenly, despite long periods of transmission between identity and organization (Kuran, 1991).

3.1.4 Authoritarian Regime Theory: The Political Context

Where liberal pluralism does not apply, political process theory needs to be contextualized. In authoritarian politics, rulers face two interconnected complications: control over the elite and the masses, and power sharing among the elite. Institutions such as the legislature, ruling party, and security services operate less as democratic safeguards but rather as tools for the exercise and coordination of power, succession management, and patronage distribution. The stability of the regime depends on electoral bargaining, the unity of the elite, and the positioning of coercive instruments, each of which directly determines the opportunities, risks, and outcomes of the movement. When elites are divided, opportunities arise; when repressive systems are compliant and unified, concessions are more likely to be made; when cooperation becomes costly, domination is more likely to be decisive; and when bargaining conflicts arise, instability may follow (Tilly & Tarrow, Contentious politics, 2015).

Different types of authoritarianism are important because they use different mixes of cooperation and control and break down in different ways. Individualist regimes centralize power and rely on loyal security forces and patronage. They can be fragile at the top and prone to succession crises. One-party rule institutionalizes cooperation and careers, creating opportunities for professional or sector-based bargaining with stability. Corporate norms are constrained in military regimes. Their compulsion may be strong, but their exit is possible through further negotiation. For rivals, these differences clearly signal risk and danger: individualist rulers may respond unexpectedly and

violently; party states may tolerate narrow-field protests that do not threaten central power; military rulers may alternate between tough resistance and sudden bargaining (Geddes, Wright, & Frantz, 2014).

A particularly relevant form of competitive authoritarianism is one in which formal democratic institutions are present, but the level playing field remains unbalanced through administrative resources, media capture, and law and order. In such situations, opportunities are usually small and time-bound, tied to scandals, electoral calendars, or international inspection cycles. Repression is often computed to increase spending, which is not entirely illegal. Movements that understand these small signals well, are embedded within protective institutions, and articulate the framework of public interest are more likely to transform narrow openings into meaningful concessions (Levitsky & Way, 2020).

Authoritarian research explains the relationship between dissent and repression. As dissent is expressed, authorities often escalate the use of force—the "law of coercive response"—but the marginal effect of repression is conditional. Ideologically non-transparent or selectively consistent power can deter and fragment rivals. Ideologically transgressive, visible, or inconsistent power can have the opposite effect, expanding alliances, narrowing boundaries, and signaling weakness. Direction depends on selectivity, visibility, narratives of legitimacy, and the organizational redundancy of rivals—whether alternative leadership, safe channels, and nodes exist to continue even after detention (Davenport, 2007).

3.1.5 An Integrated Analytical Narrative

The integrated structure is best presented as a continuous story. It starts with signals that are not yet opportunities: bureaucratic hesitation, a dissenting court opinion, a public quarrel among elites, an unexpected international spotlight, or a controversial policy rollout. These events spread through social and professional networks, where brokers—individuals who connect different groups, or groups that are usually separated from each other—transform rumors into plans and uncertainty into preparation. Organizations that have patiently mastered the art of tolerance, such as student unions, professional associations, and humanitarian initiatives, are quick to provide protective umbrellas. They provide legal assistance, documentation capacity, credible spokespeople, and rules for disciplined action. The frameworks then reframe what might be

considered narrowly focused grievances into public interest narratives—like rule of law rather than factional interests, professional ethics rather than bias—thereby preserving legitimacy by reducing the threshold for participation (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Benford & Snow, 2000).

The state responds at this stage. In authoritarian contexts, the response is frequently calculated in selectively legalistic measures including permit denials, regulatory pressure on allied organizations, and arrests targeted at leaders. All are designed to increase costs without visible overreach. Such measures may be deterrent, but they can also shift conflict from the streets to professional and workplace settings through strikes, consumer boycotts, legal appeals, and recessions where the movement imposes costs as well as blame. When the legal basis is weak, when repression is inconsistent or rule-breaking, when peaceful participants or respected 'professionals' are targeted, or when force is excessive, the results can be counterproductive, widening alliances across social boundaries and reducing the threshold for previously hesitant groups (Davenport, 2007).

As conflict diminishes, the digital environment is reducing coordination time, enabling faster signaling and recruitment via weak links. Though digital traces increase exposure to surveillance, effective campaigns hybridize their organization: using public platforms for narrative and visibility, encrypted channels for distribution, and direct-contact nodes for trust and redundancy. Diffusion carries not only strategy but also a hint of risk. A successful nonviolent strategy with a polished exterior in one city can be adopted elsewhere because it reduces estimated risk while maintaining legitimacy. Threshold dynamics then interact with structuring and policing. After visible participation passes a limit, new participants conclude that the risk is tolerable and participation is morally expected within their reference group, leading to a clear leap in scale without organizational centralization (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010; Kuran, 1991).

In such situations, the outcome is often partial and negotiated, as in procedural concessions, policy changes on specific issues, or symbolic recognition, rather than wholesale transformation. Exceptions usually occur when elites withdraw their support, or when international pressure combines with mass mobilization, increasing the costs of holding the same position. This is especially common in competitive authoritarian regimes. Even then, sustainability depends on whether structures remain responsive as risks change, whether organizational infrastructure

remains intact after the peak phase, and whether authorities learn to implement more consistent strategies. The main point is not that structure determines destiny, but rather that organizational ecology, interactive sequences, and interpretive work together create the observed trajectory (Levitsky & Way, 2020; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

3.1.6 Operationalization and Analytical Strategy

Political opportunities are treated as changing over time rather than as fixed levels. Event timelines and document analysis are used to identify visible elite segments like resignations, public opinion, and party leaks; and institutional permeability such as administrative hesitations or dissenting judicial opinions and the initial stance of security forces towards protests. Such indicators are not goals in themselves; they are read as signals and features within the interpretive framework of the actor, which is consistent with a relational understanding of opportunity structures (Della Porta, 2013; Tarrow, 2011).

The organizational structure is observed by mapping organizations and alliances, identifying the brokers that connect student, citizen, professional, and expatriate clusters, and describing the rules of the alliance including division of labor, conflict resolution, and coordination protocols. Particular attention is paid to the layered structure of media cells, logistics committees, and legal support teams. Because this layered structure reduces the impact of targeted repression, ensuring that the campaign is not slowed down by the beheading of leadership. Predictive, diagnostic, and motivational elements are captured by coding the content of public statements, announcements, and interviews. Indications of inclusion, such as expansion from departmental to public interest vocabulary; and framing and identity are captured through counter-frame mapping deployed by authorities (Benford & Snow, 2000; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

Repression and backfire are tracked by recording arrests, injuries, and bans, noting selectivity by leaders versus rank-and-file and the public legibility of events that are recorded, witnessed, or reliably reported; and monitoring audience responses such as professional solidarity statements, cross-sectoral support, and elite defections. The focus still remains on interactive sequences: whether repression hindered participation or produced responses that broadened alliances or shifted it to alternative repertoires. Digital repositories are monitored for shutdown and throttling

events, documenting channel usage, evidence of hybrid online-offline integration, and propagation velocity (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010; Davenport, 2007).

Methodologically, the study used process tracing to reconstruct the sequence of phases such as pre-mobilization, take-off, peak, and resolution so that mechanisms such as diffusion, brokerage, attribution, and backfire can be identified and processes weighed. In domestic cases, the comparison of turning points emphasizes timing, for example, whether structures moved beyond the initial constituency while risks were tolerable, whether opportunities were exploited before closure, and whether organizational resilience proved sufficient after targeted suppression began. This approach is appropriate where causality is interactive and outcomes depend on connections and disconnections across informational, organizational, and coercive subsystems (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tarrow, 2011).

3.1.7 Scope Conditions and Concluding Remarks

This framework is limited to the scope of civilian (unarmed) conflict in hybrid or authoritarian regimes where remaining institutional spheres—such as professions, courts, and media subfields—remain active. It assumes baseline organizational units and digital penetration; where these are absent, clandestine or insurgent literature might be more appropriate. It also assumes that grievances are multiple and interconnected, so that frameworks can link sectoral concerns to public interest narratives. These scope conditions limit additional propagation, as the model does not claim to explain civil wars or completely failed states, nor does it consider authoritarian contexts as homogeneous. Rather, it provides a disciplined, mechanism-centered narrative that traces how structures make risk morally acceptable, how opportunities are put into action, how repression is either prevented or reversed, how organizations and brokers build resilience, and how, when boundaries are crossed, diffusion and scale change occur (Tarrow, 2011; Della Porta, 2013).

In this theoretical framework, Political Process Theory is positioned as the main theoretical lens within the Social Movement Theory group, contextualized by Authoritarian Regime Theory, and updated by the literature on digital repertoires and threshold dynamics. It articulates a coherent analytical narrative from signals and attribution, through framing and identity, through brokerage and preparation, cascades of participation, and regime responses, to partial and negotiated outcomes conditioned by regime type and elite coherence. The subsequent empirical chapters will

follow this sequence, identifying processes using the functional indicators mentioned above and adjudicating between competing explanations based on the evidence (Levitsky & Way, 2020; Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

4 Methodology

4.1.1 Research design

A qualitative single-case design was adopted to explain how the student-led movement succeeded in overthrowing an authoritarian regime in the 2024 Bangladesh uprising. The processual and interpretive character of the event—the risk calculations, sequence of debates, moral claims, and institutional remedies—were reconstructed as processes situated in context rather than measured as variable connections. This motivated the choice of a qualitative, case-centered design. In the case study model, it is argued that how and why these kinds of questions can be addressed through context-sensitive inquiry, where the chain of evidence is made traceable and the case is treated as a bounded system (Yin, 2018).

Within this structure, explanation-result process tracing was selected as the main inferential logic. The design focused on creating a single, fruitful outcome—a minimally adequate explanation for the end of the regime—through the reconstruction of a connected chain of mechanistic steps (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). This design allows the analysis to go beyond co-variation and identify intermediate causal processes—for example, brokerage within protective umbrellas, opportunity activation, frame building, and the cumulative breakdown of governance control.

To create a heterogeneous and large text collection that was analytically manageable while maintaining interpretive acuity, manual qualitative content analysis was combined with reflexive thematic analysis. Qualitative content analysis provided a rule-based lowering of categories from the text, whereas thematic analysis allowed the discovery and refinement of patterned meanings across the source (Krippendorf, 2004; Schreier, 2012). Thematic analysis was implemented in line with Braun and Clarke's six-stage model, where inductive thematization was adjusted through theoretically guided questions in a way that incorporated testable expectations within the perspective of the political process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.1.2 Choice of Data

The 2024 Bangladesh July uprising—where students were the main focus of stakeholders—was chosen as a paradigmatic single case. This choice was influenced by a combination of the following factors: (a) an unusually heavy textual footprint of international and national media; (b) a rare consequence of regime collapse; and (c) the availability of rights-monitoring documentation triangulating allegations of repression and legal or administrative strategies. For outcome-focused interpretation, such events are considered suitable for explanation-outcome process tracing aimed at a slightly adequate process (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

4.2.1 News Media

In news media selection, I tried to ensure diversity. I took two national media and two international media. For national news media, I selected one of the most prominent Bengali-language newspapers in Bangladesh, *Prothom Alo*. I also selected another most prominent English-language newspaper, *The Daily Star* (Bonik Barta, 2020). Both of these newspapers thoroughly covered the entire July uprising.

For international media, I selected *BBC News Bangla*, which is based on the Bengali language. *BBC News Bangla* also thoroughly covered the entire job quota movement and the fall of Sheikh Hasina. Another reason for choosing this media outlet was that during the total internet shutdown throughout the country, Bangladesh was completely disconnected from the rest of the world. At that time, *BBC News Bangla* remained operational and published news on their website in a special arrangement (BBC News বাংলা, 2025). Many important reports from those days are unavailable on the internet, but through this media, I could access news from those specific days. *BBC News Bangla* was used to maintain a full timeline of the movement. To avoid depending on a single international source, I also chose *Al Jazeera*. During this uprising, *Al Jazeera* had a special focus on Bangladesh and published various investigative reports throughout the year.

4.2.2 Human Rights Reports

As part of collecting data from various sources, I did not rely solely on news media. I also used human rights reports. The OHCHR report was chosen as it was produced under the United Nations, making it more acceptable in terms of neutrality and freedom of investigation. The fact-finding team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

analyzed atrocities and crimes against humanity committed in Bangladesh from July 1 to August 15, 2024, and prepared this report based on more than 230 interviews with victims and eyewitnesses of the uprising. The 114-page report was published in February 2025 (Ejaz, 2025).

I also used two 2024 human rights reports related to Bangladesh from human rights-based NGOs. Amnesty International was chosen as an international human rights organization. For a national perspective, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) was chosen, as it is a prominent human rights organization in Bangladesh (Correspondent, 2023).

In all of these reports, casualties, violations, detentions, and institutional responses are listed, thereby providing triangulated evidence to cross-check newspaper claims and adding legal vocabulary to the analysis.

4.2.3 Interviews

I also collected July uprising-related interviews from *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS)*, the national and official news agency of Bangladesh. It is an autonomous organization under the Government of Bangladesh. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the July uprising, BSS published exclusive interviews with student leaders at the forefront of the mass uprising in July and August 2025. In addition, it published interviews with students who participated in the movement in various universities across the regions and the country (Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, 2025).

In these interviews, the participants recounted the events of the movement. Details were given on organizing the movement, strategies, and programs. Although various interviews appeared in other newspapers, the BSS interviews were easily accessible as they were all in one place. Therefore, the interviews were collected only from BSS. Emotional phrases and empirical granularity were included to provide context; these helped to test whether the explanatory interpretations derived from the media text were consistent with participants' own causal idioms.

4.1.3 Data collection

Data collection was purposive and followed theoretical sampling: materials were selected if (a) they contained clear references to frames, student actors, elite or institutional responses, and repertoire; (b) they were temporally proximal or anterior but based on contemporary evidence; and (c) they varied in type and location of outlets to reduce single-source bias. This strategy is based

on established guidelines for using convergent, multiple sources and maintaining a chain of evidence suitable for audit (Yin, 2018; Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008).

To understand the full job quota movement timeline, we collected *BBC News Bangla* reports from 4th July to 10th August. Though *BBC News Bangla* published many daily and descriptive news articles, I collected a total of 40 articles from them. Only timeline-tracking and in-depth analytical articles relevant to the research question were selected.

I also took 5 news articles from *Al Jazeera*. These articles were investigative pieces from *Al Jazeera's I-Unit*, where they reported on the corruption of individuals close to the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. I also selected investigative reports related to the Prime Minister's order to shoot directly at students and her final days in office. These helped to understand the view of the head of government.

I collected 15 news articles from *The Daily Star* and 15 from *Prothom Alo*. During the article selection process, priority was given to those that were more detailed and related to campus blockades, quotes, police tactics, legal interventions, and different movement events.

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) published many interviews with participants of the July movement. From among them, we chose 20 interviews for this research. During selection, I prioritized both relevance and diversity. I included the top 6 student leader interviews. I selected 4 participants who were leaders from the two major political parties—BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami—whose student wing leaders directed their workers and supporters during the July uprising. We also included regional and other local leaders of the protest from various universities across the country. In addition, I ensured women's voices were represented in the movement. Four women were selected based on their leadership roles, participation, political views, and as general students. This variety of participants provided the opportunity to view the movement from different perspectives.

Data were collected under a documented case protocol. A digital case database was created with subfolders based on chronology and source type. Each item was assigned a title, date and time, organization, author, and website link. This organization facilitated cross-source triangulation and subsequent traceability (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008; Yin, 2018).

4.1.4 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted through a combined qualitative framework in which thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis, and process tracing were systematically integrated to ensure methodological compatibility and interpretive exactness. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterned meanings. Qualitative content analysis was used to create a hierarchical and transparent coding structure. Process tracing was applied to connect thematic patterns to mechanistic, causal sequences that explain regime change.

Following Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis (TA) was implemented in six continuous steps. Among the key themes that emerged provocatively were the judicial reconstruction of fairness, risk reduction through protective umbrellas, student-people connections, and media amplification and counter-preparedness. The prognosis-diagnosis-motivational frame trio was used to explain causal attribution, proposed remedies, and motivational appeals (Benford & Snow, 2000).

These themes were later translated into causal processes through process tracing in the explanation-outcome tradition (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). This was empirically verified using in-case tests, such as elite fission, credible attribution by student representatives, risk mitigation through professional shields, solidarity, and governance erosion. Competing hypotheses, including exogenous shocks and elite-engineered transformations, were tested equally.

A manual coding method was adopted, following the practice outlined by Saldaña (2016). In the first cycle, four primary code families were applied. Descriptive codes were employed to list prominent events and actions. In vivo codes were created to conserve the expression of emic meanings. Process codes were applied to capture dynamic actions important for process reformation. To denote explicit or implicit features, causal codes were used. The second cycle included condensing the first-cycle codes into higher-order analytical categories through focused, pattern, and axial coding methods (Saldaña, 2013). Analytical memos were kept throughout the procedure to identify interpretive evolutions, competing arguments, and deviant phenomena.

According to Schreier's (2012) guidelines for qualitative content analysis, the coding frame was developed and refined. To refine the category definitions, trial coding was conducted on a small data subset. Mutual exclusivity and macro-level completeness were ensured. Through mnemonic

decision rules, stable category descriptions, and repeated coding passes rather than numerical coefficients, reliability was achieved (Schreier, 2012).

4.1.5 Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) was used in this research in various ways. During the initial stages of the research, it was used to generate and polish the research topic. It was used for brainstorming to determine which angle to focus on in the July uprising. ChatGPT was used to find previous research articles related to Bangladesh's social movements, the July uprising, South Asian social movements, and worldwide student movements. AI was used to create a list of previous research articles based on topic, date, and year. ChatGPT helped to find suitable theories in the initial period. It suggested some theories relevant to the research and helped to locate relevant books and research articles related to theory from the internet. ChatGPT also suggested some keywords that could be used to find previous research articles and books related to the theory and research topic.

4.1.6 Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. The presumption is tied to the quality and allocation of textual traces. Not every step in a factual process leaves an equally rich mark. Authoritarian environments often create opacity and may contain character bias in subsequent narratives.

Generalization is not statistical; rather, it is analytical. This description provides mechanical advice that applies in contexts similar to the situation described. It does not claim to be representative of the population.

Reflection and positioning are still important. Explanatory imprinting is essential in qualitative inference, despite the clear codebook and memo trail. For mitigation, the analysis is based on triangulation, competitive testing, and dense description. Yet, what is being proposed is a well-qualified interpretation rather than algorithmic extraction (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The influence of language and translation exists. Some initial problems arose in the Bengali language. Although the translation has been tested in various ways, semantic drift cannot be completely ruled out.

Time-limited mobility was imposed. The best materials available during the period of analysis are reflected in the archive. As Krippendorff emphasizes, conclusions drawn from the content are

dependent on the available valid evidence. Subsequent publications may emphasize subtle points without invalidating the original mechanistic claims (Krippendorf, 2004).

5 Analysis

The analytical stance taken in this chapter is deliberately incremental and cautious. The explanation of why and how student-led people's uprising in Bangladesh in 2024 were able to overthrow an authoritarian regime was addressed by reconstructing a sequence of active and catalytic processes by various texts, line-annotated, and coded. The underlying conviction is that temporal order is required before interpreting the results of mechanical discussions in contentious situations. Therefore, rather than looking back with confidence at past events, it was considered essential to identify what happened before, during, and after the archive. Decisions are made through the cross-family triangle—news reports, rights-monitoring reports, and interview memories—so that no claim relies on a single medium or a single witness. Where it was silent or thin, restraint was exercised and negative events were preserved for balance. Where the corpus was liberal, strong methods were permitted.

Attention was given not only to what was said in the texts, but also to how it was said: the narrative architecture of the lead and nut-graphs, the vocabulary imported from the court, and the camera frames that placed specific objects in the same visual field. The analysis has been doubly analytical: reconstructive about the events and reflective of how the events have been stabilized in public meaning. The decision of manual coding helps to keep the subtle nuances, phonetic cues, and contextual cues of the Bengali language visible to the analyst. This approach apparently has the cost of replicability at scale, but it creates a textured understanding of the mechanistic elements that can go back and forth between the empirical and theoretical artifice outlined in the research.

5.1.1 Corpus Overview, Unitization, and the Code System

The corpus was preserved before analysis. Press materials included national broadsheets, mixed-format daily, and international reports, each stored in a document file labeled by outlet and week. Rights-monitoring documents such as injury registers, legal observations, event logs, and proportionality language were preserved separately, as they have a distinct narrative policy and often demonstrate a cautious evidentiary pace.

The unitization was fixed in sentences or short paragraphs; occasionally, there were sub-sentential units where a clause carried an in-vivo token or a determinative temporal marker. In the margin, there was SourceID–page–paragraph and, where available, a date and locale tag. The protocol required that each page have its own margin coding—even where near-duplicates existed across outlets—so that convergence could be measured through iteration rather than estimation.

The first-cycle codes were intentionally less speculative. Descriptive codes (CLASH, ARREST, HELPLINE, MARCH, GOVT_STATEMENT, MEDICAL_POST, COURT_SIGNAL, UNIVERSITY_ACTION, ALLY_ENDORSE, CROWD_MIX) captured what/who/where. In-vivo codes used repeated tokens in English and Bengali, with the [BN] bracketed gloss used to limit the flow of translation (e.g., "শান্তিপূর্ণ মিছিল [peaceful procession]"). Process codes (ESCALATING, BROKERING, COUNTER_FRAMING, DOCUMENTING, COORDINATING, DE-, DIFFUSING, SHIELDING) captured how items were created or transferred. Causal markers (BACKFIRE_REPRESS, RISK_LOWERED_UMBRELLA, SIGNAL_WINDOW, DUE_ELITE_SPLIT) were preserved for events where the text allowed for inference beyond mere description. Frame codes—FR_PRO (predictive), FR_DIA (diagnostic), FR_MOT (motivational)—were applied only where a claim specified what was wrong, why action was needed, and what should be done.

The refinement was iterative. Two problematic clashes were detected in a pilot batch. DOCUMENTING was merged with MEDIA_COVER. This resolution reserved MEDIA_COVER for documentation and newsroom details for movement-created or rights-created evidence. The Codebook v2 was written on a single sheet with definitions and "In/Out of Scope" columns. Examples of pilot pages were added below each code to reinforce consistency.

Each coding session ended with a short memo that regularly captured information inconsistencies that disrupted a pattern, seemed crystal clear, and competing explanations that appeared strong or weak in that day's reading. These memos became the skeletal narratives upon which later parts were elaborated.

5.1.2 Chronology and actor mapping

Chronology was not assigned; it was extracted by aligning date-stamped items from the collection across folders and rereading them if discrepancies were found. A recurring pattern was unfolded:

campus-centered coordination, initial marches, legal and medical patronage support, and editorials that infiltrated judicial vocabulary and were later published directly through the news. There were several arrests over the weeks; writings and photographs showed a variety of crowds, with occasional high-visibility clashes following professional approval and administrative reassessment.

On an actor map, student committees were placed at the center, and the edges were marked by parent groups, lawyers, journalists' guilds, teacher forums, alumni groups, doctors, rights organizations, and neighborhood stewards. At each end were small hash marks indicating the number of separate references to that linkage in the corpus. Doctors appeared as triage and optical ballast; lawyers emerged as both advocates and symbolic umbrellas; journalist guilds as narrative standard setters; teachers and alumni as internal translators; rights monitors as credibility protectors; and neighborhood watchmen as logistical substrates. This prevented the map from becoming an overly student-centered story and kept the coupling architecture visible as an ongoing system rather than a list of sympathizers.

Temporal-spatial coordination played a crucial role: high-risk days were often preceded by visible presenters (doctors/lawyers) and public scripts (peaceful/justice), while on private channels the paths and times were kept discreet and narrow. This was not an afterthought but a layer on which the emergence of counter-mobility and legitimacy was later rationalized.

5.1.3 Theme 1: Risk Reduction through Protective Umbrellas

Analysis of the 2024 Bangladesh uprising shows that one of the earliest and most eventual steps in risk management was the formation of protective umbrellas—a twin system of legal helplines and medical posts that simultaneously changed the understanding of danger into a sense of organized security.

5.3.1 Legal Helpline — Procedural Protection and Family Assurance

Early newspapers recorded the circulation of counsel rosters and telephone numbers distributed through alumni–bar association connections. It is learned that these numbers were posted at campus gates and on digital forums before the scheduled rallies (Preetha, 2025). Human rights reports confirm that legal interventions were often implemented quickly; anticipatory bail was

granted within hours of detention, and access to lawyers was ensured (Amnesty International, 2025; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2025).

During interviews, the helpline network was described as being staffed in phases: junior advocates were designated to receive the first calls, while senior lawyers coordinated the chamber-to-court relay, which reduced procedural delays. Parents reportedly contacted counseling numbers in advance to confirm arrest regulations, transforming their concern into a predictable process. As a result, families who would otherwise have avoided participation were encouraged to allow it. Thus, the dissemination of these numbers served as a tool of family persuasion, through which uncertainty became insurable and fear was domesticated (Bhuiya, 2025).

Where helpline campaigns were lacking, detentions continued at night, and assemblies were limited (Deen, 2025). Therefore, helplines can be characterized as procedural umbrellas—a device through which legitimacy was domesticated and civic participation became a matter of social discourse.

5.3.2 Medical Facility — Physical Safety and Policy Optometry

Parallel arrangements were made through volunteer medical posts located near sites of confrontation. Initial scenes were observed in hospital-adjacent corridors and main gates, where students and young doctors were reported to have stocked saline, antiseptics, and painkillers (Bhuiya, 2025). Volunteers, identified by armbands or colored tape, provided first aid, recorded the injured, and contacted ambulance drivers who were notified in advance of accessible lanes. In some cases, hospitals were informed beforehand to prepare for protest-related casualties (Preetha, 2025; Hasan, 2024).

The presence of physicians had two simultaneous effects. Immediate treatment reduced physical weakness, made it possible for participants to maintain endurance for longer periods, and strengthened moral outlooks, as the presence of healers in the crowd signaled order and civic restraint. Footage of such actions was widely circulated and later used by rights observers as evidence of proportionality (Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024; Amnesty International, 2025).

On the other hand, when medical facilities were absent or distant, panic attacks and premature dispersals were recorded (Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024). Therefore, the medical facility served as

both a physical shield and an ethical layer, within which the non-violence of the movement was effectively sustained.

5.3.3 Coordination and Conditional Effectiveness

Events in which lawyers and doctors were visible at the same time showed the strongest results. On such "two-pillar days," attendance was widespread, diversity was high, and a justification vocabulary based on professional credibility was used in subsequent reports (Preetha, 2025). The co-presence of lawyers and doctors not only provided immediate protection but also created a rhetorical hinge for the press. Editorials called on visible professionals to argue for proportionality and due process. This rhetoric was later echoed by citizen support, demonstrating that the umbrellas served both as material protection and symbolic legitimacy.

Overall, the protective umbrella system changed the calculus of participation. It reduced individuals' costs of protest, gave moral reassurance to families, and provided symbolic resources for the reconstruction of justice. Through this dual infrastructure, risk was reduced, participation was expanded, and the ruling class's monopoly on security and legitimacy was silently but effectively undermined.

5.1.4 Theme 2: Judicial Restructuring and the Spread of Fairness

The proliferation of discourses of justification created a crucial linguistic conversion through which the 2024 student-led people's uprising in Bangladesh gained civic legitimacy. The process of shifting judicial vocabulary into public narratives reconstructed the moral and interpretive framework of the uprising, making participation legal, rational, and socially inclusive.

5.4.1 Early Vocabulary and Judicial Reflection

Before the judicial proceedings, reports relied on eventful descriptions—rallies, marches, clashes, and quota disputes. Moral designations were rare and vague. At this stage, the image of departmental, campus-based conflict was preserved (Hasan, 2024). It began to spread after the courts intervened and their language found its way into the press. Judicial review introduced expressions like due process, equality before the law, legal remedies, and competence, which editors quickly began to cite or explain (Preetha, 2025). Within days, these phrases were used to reinterpret the unrest as a question of systemic justice rather than a sectional claim.

5.4.2 Editorial Consolidation and Standardization

As editorials internalized the judicial register, their rhetoric became an ideological backbone. Headlines began to run on the lines of fairness— "The rule of law must be upheld," "Justice must prevail." The newsroom gradually reflected this editorial tone, signaling that fairness, rather than opinion, had become the primary criterion for judgment. As a result, the civil dimension of the law replaced the biased narrative of order and disruption (Preetha, 2025).

5.4.3 Transfer to Reportorial and Movement Language

The next step was the emergence of the term fairness in news reports. Journalists described the events as "formed by equality before the law." Even logistical stories ended with quotes calling for procedural fairness. After newspaper leadership unified its tone, fairness no longer appeared as a separate idea but instead served as context—the conceptual foundation of public argument. As a result, placards and slogans began to quote newspaper and judicial phrases such as "equal treatment is not a privilege" and "the rule of law for all citizens." Interview notes revealed that after newspapers cited court opinions, professionals and families found it easier to participate, considering the movement constitutionally legitimate (Bhuiya, 2025).

Counter-frames were created—protests were portrayed as "disruption" or "politically motivated chaos"—but they quickly lost authority once fairness became the main editorial motto. Challenging the framework of fairness required judicial opposition, which was an ideologically costly step and thereby reduced resistance (Afrin, 2024).

5.4.4 Participation and Process Outcomes

Once fairness was established as the basis for reporting, three consistent outcomes were observed. Professionals and parents could be seen as guardians of the law, not as partisans. Families viewed activism as a legitimate civic duty, which complemented legal-helpline reassurance. When public repression occurred, the vocabulary of fairness provided an explanatory framework for the injustice, leading to increased support the next day (Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024; Amnesty International, 2025).

Therefore, within the larger process, the campaign played a translational role—it transformed a sectional grievance into a civic-ideal demand, lowered reputational barriers, and gave the public a

moral grammar to interpret the use of force. By incorporating a lexicon of justification into daily reporting and civic discourse, the movement achieved discursive sovereignty.

5.1.5 Theme 3: Student–Citizen Connection

This student-centered gathering was transformed into a civic event through a complex process of student–citizen connection. Connection here refers to the effective engagement of student-citizens—parents, lawyers, teachers, rights defenders, doctors, journalists, and neighborhood stewards—with the student community, producing increased numbers, changed perspectives, and enhanced moral authority. Under authoritarian constraints, such connections served as a compensative mechanism. While students provided initiative and energy, professionals provided protection and legitimacy. Each broker family-built bridges between distinct assets, enabling the dynamic to survive and expand.

5.5.1 Alumni–Lawyer Channel

The first visible connection was made by alumni who were employed in the Bar Association. Lists of lawyers were circulated through encrypted channels, helpline numbers were printed and posted, and bail applications were drafted in advance. These measures reframed detention from disaster to process. As administrative risk became negotiable, parental consent increased. Editorials soon reflected this procedural reassurance, viewing detention as a violation of due process rather than a necessity for law enforcement (Hawladar, 2024)

5.5.2 Teacher–Parent Mediation

Teachers and senior lecturers acted as internal translators. Briefings and meetings were arranged close to campuses where parents were informed about first-aid arrangements and legal helplines. As a result, personal vetoes were transformed into conditional approvals. Parents were allowed to attend, subject to agreed-upon safety rules. Family elders were often present at the scene as silent witnesses, symbolically presenting youth protest as disciplined civic education. In areas where teacher attendance was low, this mediation lagged behind and participation remained limited (Deen, 2025).

5.5.3 Medical Volunteering and Physical Witnessing

Volunteer doctors, interns, residents, and paramedics blended physical safety with ethical considerations. Triage tables were set up near the barriers; ambulance routes were coordinated in advance; and injuries were recorded for later rights verification. Their presence reduced panic, ensured patience, and reinforced the nonviolent nature of the rallies. While their presence occasionally invited repression, documentation transformed injuries into evidence, which further amplified the counterproductive effects of state violence (Mostafa, 2024).

5.5.4 Journalists' Guild and Rights Defenders

Rights organizations and professional journalists together built the infrastructure of legitimacy for this uprising. Journalist guilds shifted the vocabulary of fairness from op-eds to hard-news leads. Rights groups legitimized these narratives by issuing fact-based proportionality statements and reports that provided measurable frameworks for evaluating repression. This mutual circulation gave the movement a moral credibility with which the state could not easily compete (Chandan, 2025).

5.5.5 Neighborhood Steward and Logistics Sponsor

Local caretakers, van-pool managers, shopkeepers, and mosque elders acted as necessary but often overlooked intermediaries. They provided shaded areas, water points, and secret shelters. Narrow alleyways were kept open for retreat and regrouping. This logistical proximity allowed for rapid recovery after processions dispersed and ensured continuity without visible coordination. Where these stewards were missing, "shatter zones" appeared and momentum declined (Mostafa, 2024).

5.5.6 Optical and Threshold Effects

The visual juxtaposition of stethoscopes, lawyers' gowns, teacher badges, and guardians' clothing in the same frame redefined the look of protest. The crowd was no longer seen as young or unruly but as an orderly interclass gathering. From this perspective, indiscriminate repression became a reputational threat to the regime. At the same time, family boundaries were reduced—families that had once feared repression recalculated their risks as protections and justifications became explicitly institutionalized (Islam, 2025).

In this way, the field of connections became newly dense. Where agents were united, the effectiveness of repression was reduced, and the resilience of citizens deepened. Where they were

absent, resistance faltered. Therefore, student–citizen connections served as a deliberately constructed social architecture of patience and legitimacy, which was ultimately essential for the collapse of the regime.

5.1.6 Theme 4: The Repression Ledger

A running narrative of coercive episodes was maintained so that distinct scenes could be presented without resorting to excessive rhetoric. Each entry was dated, summarized in margin prose, double-sourced, and then scored on two axes: selectivity (targeted actors vs. undivided masses) and visibility (multi-outlet testimony, images, medical or rights coverage. Selectivity was inferred from textual precision and the functional posture of force; visibility was determined not merely by the abundance of images but also by the convergence of narratives. This approach acted as an epistemological barrier, preventing premature or exaggerated claims when documentation was weak (Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024).

5.6.1 Classification of Incidents

The matrix was applied as entries were submitted. High-visibility or indiscriminate incidents were defined as those in which the potential for injury or spread was not limited to a single group and where medics, cameras, and multiple reporters were present; editorials then echoed leadership justifications. Low-visibility or selective episodes included nightly detentions of named conveners or station-level intimidation with minimal coverage. Mixed quadrants—visible or selective and low-visibility or indiscriminate—were held for reassessment until the next cycle clarified their effects.

5.6.2 Micro-case 1 — Gate front Afternoon under Umbrellas

Helpline sheets and first-aid tables were already visible; teachers interacted with parents, and a visibly mixed crowd formed. The impact of the blockade extended beyond a single unit; doctors treated the injured in public view; images circulated widely that evening; proportionality was cited in a right note the next day, followed by a professional statement; attendance subsequently increased. The register was marked high visibility/low selectivity, and backfire repress was entered only after confirmatory approval (Hosen M. , 2025).

5.6.3 Micro-case 2 — Peripheral Night Detentions

Two organizers were arrested later in the evening; coverage was minimal; no umbrellas were reported; “stay-at-home” messages appeared in interviews; the next day’s rally size decreased. The register recorded low visibility/high selectivity, with no fair response or civic rebound (Hosen A. , 2024).

5.6.4 Micro-case 3 — Downtown Oscillation

Initial reports indicated targeting of the barricade team; later evidence showed force applied to bystanders; medics were visible; a statement from the bar association followed; editorials justified the action the next morning. The entry was revised from visible/selective to visible/indiscriminate, and backfire repress was added after review, with a memo noting reclassification (Mahi, 2025).

5.6.5 Micro-case 4 — Rumor Night, Evidence Scarce

Social media claimed widespread beatings; rights groups confirmed only two arrests and one injury; no major media outlets published photos; editorials called for calm without justification. The initial “indiscriminate” mark on the ledger was removed, leaving the cell empty as a record of orderly uncertainty (Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024).

5.6.6 Interpretive Pattern and Spatial Contingency

Spatial distinctions suggested contingency: where justification was already stable in headlines and protective umbrellas were visible, high-visibility arbitrary force was metabolized as injustice; elsewhere, similar force produced silence rather than resonance (Shuvra, 2024).

5.6.7 Contribution to the Process

This ledger revealed when suppression was inhibitory and when it was counterproductive in reconstructed ecosystems. Counterproductive responses occurred under high visibility + low selectivity + seeded justification + visible protective umbrellas; deterrent responses appeared under low visibility + high selectivity + weak brokerage. Because each claim was tied to dated entries and page-anchored documentation, the process remained both meticulous and auditable (Ejaz, 2025).

5.1.7 Theme 5: Hybrid Organizing

Hybrid organizing was practiced as a dual architecture that separated the semi-private distribution system from the public-facing narrative. Secret coordination—where, who, and when—was transmitted through closed channels, while public legitimacy—how, why, and under what policy—was announced in visible formats such as statements, placards, and editorials. The collected corpus revealed this division as a consistent pattern: paths were narrow and perishable, while the rules were wide and durable.

5.7.1 Two-Step Invitation and Choreography

Most rallies followed a two-step rhythm. The morning announcement declared a day of peaceful and lawful action but avoided mentioning exact locations or times. Later, restricted networks spread details of meeting points and staggered routes. Stewards—often teachers or alumni—controlled arrivals and guided participants to pre-agreed suffocation-safe areas. This sequencing allowed families to support participation while maintaining a sense of procedural discipline. During internet throttling, notifications were delivered through analog means such as phone calls and text messages (Tanvir, 2025).

Legal and medical centers often served as anchor points during dispersals—law chambers near courthouses, and medical posts near campus gates—which became both departure and return sites. Participants were instructed not to move too far away, ensuring regrouping and witness presence in case of forcible attacks. Where these anchors were visible, the reputation of arbitrary repression intensified; where absent, resistance weakened (Mostafa, 2024).

5.7.2 Braided Networks and Neighborhood Meshes

Multiple semi-autonomous nodes—campuses, transit hubs, parks, courthouses—operated in staggered circles, producing simultaneous uprisings across urban spaces. Neighborhood caretakers-maintained alleyways, water points, and informal shelters, allowing quick regrouping after dispersal. Their cooperation reduced clashes and preserved minimal economic continuity during mobilization.

5.7.3 Contribution to the Mechanism

Hybrid organizing contributed to the uprising's tempo, resilience, and transparency. Tempo emerged from synchronized public and private signaling; resilience shifted from reactive pivots to

stable anchor points; transparency arose from fairness-based scripts that professionals could safely repeat. When properly tuned, uniform coercive tactics appeared costly because the narrative of testimony and justification was already in place. When tuning failed, the same tactics became effective—creating silence and fragmentation. Thus, beneath the visible surge of the movement, hybrid organizing functioned as a silent architecture of patience, transforming fragile openings within restricted civic spaces into viable opportunities for coordinated action.

6 Conclusion

This thesis is designed to describe why and how student-led people's mobilization in the 2024 uprising in Bangladesh was successful in overthrowing an authoritarian regime. The aim of this research was to reconstruct, from a solid collection of press reports, rights-monitoring documents, and interviews of movement-related individuals, the process through which opportunity, structure, protection, and legitimacy were brought together. The process model was based on political process theory, authoritarian regime theory, and social movement theory, which was explained through process tracing logic (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

6.1.1 Summary of Key Findings

The analysis identifies five interrelated dynamics that together explain how student mobilization in the 2024 Bangladesh uprising gradually broke down the authority of an authoritarian regime. Each emerging pattern resulted from the triangulation of human rights documentation, press reports, and interview.

The foundation of collective security mainly worked through protective infrastructure, legal helplines, and volunteer medical posts. Helplines were promoted through the alumni-law network, ensuring rapid legal assistance and transforming detention from an existential risk into a manageable process. Medical posts at the protest site provided visible care and moral credibility while highlighting civic order. When lawyers and doctors worked side by side, repression lost its deterrent power: the service to the public and the presence of legal counsel transformed the act of protest into a morally protective exercise of rights. This "protective umbrella" simultaneously reduced personal risk and improved the moral justification of participation (Hawladar, 2024).

A fairness-based language spread from the judiciary to mainstream communication. Terms like due process, equality before the law, and fairness of opportunity moved from court statements to editorials, then finally to news leads and protest banners. This verbal alteration reframed the movement from a youth uprising to a civic demand for justice. The presence of legal vocabulary made protests legitimate and reasonable, allowing teachers, parents, and professionals to identify the cause of protest without political stereotype. Cases where justification became the main explanatory framework experienced widespread public support and rapid normalization of participation (Bhuiya, 2025; Chandan, 2025).

Creation of sustainable linkage between student and non-student actors that could be called "student-citizen connections." Teachers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, and rights groups acted as brokers to express the movement's goals in socially acceptable language. Their participation reshaped both the size and appearance of the protests, as the crowds became visibly intergenerational and professionally diverse. From this perspective, arbitrary repression became morally and politically costly, while selective coercion lost legitimacy. Thus, a campus protest transformed into a public civic platform through these connections.

Repression was not driven by a uniform cause-and-effect logic but by a conditional logic. Its outcome depended on the interaction between selectivity and visibility. Low-visibility, targeted detentions produced short-term resistance, while high-visibility, indiscriminate violence in front of medics, cameras, and narratives of justice had the opposite effect. Once the use of force was seen to violate the standards of justice recognized by the public, it created outrage rather than consent. The repression account confirmed that the response required the co-presence of three factors—visibility, non-selective targeting, and an existing justification framework (Amnesty International, 2025; Ain o Salish Kendra, 2024).

Coordination relied on hybrid organizing—a careful blend of public ethics and private logistics. Activists publicly issued peaceful declarations but disseminated information regarding routes and times through closed channels. This dual approach preserved both transparency and unpredictability. Anchors such as lawyers' chambers and medical tents allowed for regrouping after dispersal, maintaining continuity across waves of protest. When excessive publicity or poor

timing disrupted this balance, fragmentation occurred. In this way, hybrid organizations served as an adaptive mechanism for the movement, maintaining momentum and preserving legitimacy.

Together, these dynamics form a single causal sequence: the meaning of the framework of justice depends on judicial cues that open up opportunities; protective umbrellas reduce risk; visible, arbitrary repression creates moral backlash; elite solidarity erodes under public scrutiny; and student-citizen connections broaden scope and legitimacy.

This process—for example, characteristics, opportunity, risk reduction, conditional adverse reaction, scale change, elite decline, and security infrastructure—captures how moral vocabulary and adaptive coordination together transformed vulnerability into civic strength.

6.1.2 Theoretical Discussion and Contribution

The results of this study speak directly to the three pillars of the theoretical framework of the thesis: Social Movement Theory, Political Process Theory, and Authoritarian Regime Theory.

Within social movement theory, this case refines the understanding of structural formation and structural processes. Legal and medical umbrellas worked to create infrastructures that were both material and discursive—they reduced costs and communicated that costs had been reduced. This duality complicates a simple reading of wealth accumulation because security was not an implicit reserve but a universal signal that reorganized family and individual marginal values. Frame analysis was also sharpened, as the register of justifications not only included claims but also re-typed the conflict from a campus-sectoral dispute to a civic-constitutional question, which enabled interclass allegiances. Therefore, when their source of authority (the judiciary) is universally recognized and when agents ensure their acceptance, the structures are shown to act as legitimacy multipliers (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Saldaña, 2013).

In political process theory, the case highlights the nuances of opportunity structure. Rather than treating opportunities as external, the analysis shows that endogenous architecture—particularly protective umbrellas and hybrid coordination—enhances and stabilizes open spaces. Judicial signals create discursive opportunities, whereas umbrella and hybrid organizations transform them into actionable opportunities. This research thus explains what can be called opportunity activation: a process by which activists construct the real conditions under which formal beginnings are important (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; Della Porta, 2013).

In regard to authoritarian regime theory, the paper shows that coercion is not exclusive. Its impact depends on selectivity and visibility, both of which are jointly shaped by state choice and movement architecture. Indiscriminate use of force under conditions of high testimony and fair description causes reputational bleeding and accelerates discord among elites. Selective and low-visibility control, often nocturnal as well as organizer-centric, tends to be effective locally. The analysis thus contributes a textured account of calibrated control and its failure mechanisms under legitimacy-saturated crises.

6.1.3 Closing Reflection

Findings indicate that the end of an authoritarian regime in Bangladesh in 2024 came not through a dramatic breakup but through consistent, disciplined effort. Small care and counseling institutions set up at the gate, neighbors keeping the streets open and the water cold, banners carrying phrases of the law from benches, editors consciously or not agreeing on the issue of fairness—all of these elements contributed to the collapse. When force was used, as it often is in such stories, it came against a field that was already prepared—where structures of authority had been normalized, confrontation with witnesses was visible, and unnecessary routes were rehearsed.

In that prepared case, repression was not always powerful; sometimes it backfired by undermining a moral order carefully constructed in public life. The analytical language of this thesis—for instance, hybrid moral provision, umbrella infrastructure, visibility, and selective ecology—remains modest compared to the realities they aim to describe. Yet, when democratic aspirations reject proposals for erasure, some names are needed to learn from them.

If the chapter makes a final claim, it is that democratic possibility does not solely emerge from structural openings. It is the child of persistence—of those who learn to transform grievance into justification, transform opportunity into action, invite others under protection, and answer power in public. The case was special; its proposed vocabulary may have broader applicability. Whether it will do so depends on whether other publics can be persuaded, as it did—to do the silent work that makes the right thoughtful, talk able, and visible.

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