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Ascribed Identity Versus Achieved Identity: Case Study of Regime Change in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

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Bangladesh have maintained their identity on the grounds of nationalistic fervor. However, a clash in the realm of Bangladeshi identity regarding rewards -such as attaining a government job - caused the regime change in 2024. The clash can be encapsulated by the achieved identity and ascribed identity. Reinstatement of 30% quota for Freedom Fighters of 1971 in the civil service is a reflection of ascribed identity whereas the youth rebelling against this reinstatement, contesting that civil service recruitment should be on the basis of meritocracy rather lineage, illustrates achieved identity. These events resulted in the resignation of former PM Sheikh Hasina (after use of a pejorative term in her comments). Hence, this paper aims to inquire how identity formation brought upon a downfall of a long standing regime within the socio-political plane of Bangladesh. It assesses the impact of government's use of identity labelling through Social Identity Theory and Status Theory. Using Jank's Critical Discourse Analysis, it will analyze identity-mapping from a discursive angle. This research is significant to understand Gen-Z movements and their critical insights on identity while utilizing the regime change in Bangladesh as case study.

1. Introduction

The history of political stability is based on how a nation distributes its rewards; whether they are

achieved by birthright or by effort. When a nation sets a threshold of merit to be based upon familial heritage, it pushes the narrative towards "*ascribed identity*". Ascribed identity is a social positioning



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of a person through characteristics that are not in his control. Conversely, an antagonistic concept is “*achieved identity*” which places a person’s social standing by assessing the factors he is responsible for, such as personal action, effort or choice. Acquisition of this identity transforms into group formation. State-mandated quotas evoke the formation of dichotomous group: lineage of Freedom Fighters labelled as “*in-group*” and the non-lineage of Freedom Fighters labelled as “*out-group*”. Both concepts are psychological traits became the basis of identity correction under the cladder of regime change in Bangladesh, 2024. Leadership transition was not just an isolated political shift, but it was coupled with a political and sociological change which was accounted by the youth who rejected the inherited narratives and norms.

Reinstatement of 30% quota in 2024 for the descendants of 1971 Freedom Fighters in civil services sparked a surge of protests across Dhaka, the capital. The aforementioned quota was abolished in 2018, but the High Court reinstated it in 2024. Rationale behind these protests by students revolved around the lack of meritocracy reflected by the reinstated quota. Majority of the protesters belonged to Generation Z who advocated for a reformation in the system. The protests turned violent after the government’s use of shelling and tear gas on the protesters. However, what aggravated the protesters more was the comment made by Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her statement was, “If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don’t get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of *Razakars* get the benefit?” Usage of the term “*Razakar*” is considered pejorative term in Bangladesh. They were the people who were against the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

This term indicates how identity labelling can open a Pandora’s Box for a government that lead to an entire regime change in Bangladesh. Many protesters, who once feared the use of this term, used it on social media platforms without any fear. This illustrated a transition in normative structure of Bangladeshi societies. Gen-Z students had no fear of the label anymore as they resented the in-groups for the undue benefits they got. They demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister under the One-Point Demand in July. In August 2024, the students were successful as PM Hasina

resigned and a long-standing government faced a massive disruption. This entire transition can be viewed from political psychology theories of Status Theory and Social Identity Theory.

The student protesters (through a Social Identity Theory) were labelled as out-groups, aforementioned as well. They were viewed as “*others*” by the use of terms such as *Razakar*. Use of tear gas and shelling by the government indicated that these students were victims of discrimination as their voices remained unheard. Conversely, the government and the descendants of the freedom fighters were labelled as in-groups. They presented themselves as nationalists who wanted to uphold the traditionalist system who viewed the out-groups as a threat. Henceforth, it is noteworthy how a political shift was coupled with a sociological identity correction of the youth. A system of meritocracy was based on historical lineage alone. The students were not in awe of the norms anymore. They wanted a reform and this urge for systemic reformation was brewing since the past. Leadership transition is just a tip of a socio-political change.

Therefore, this paper aims to inquire how achieved identity supersedes ascribed identity in traditional political affiliations of Bangladesh. Secondly, the paper also inquires the impact of government’s use of identity labelling on group’s cohesion. This case in point can be analyzed through Social Identity Theory which uses group identity (in-group/out-group) as basis. Under this theoretical framework, in-group would be the youth and out-group will be the government of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The methodology employed will be qualitative in nature, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It will use thematic coding (themes such as “patriotism” and “betrayal”) and identity mapping (premise of social identity) under discourse analysis. This research is significant to understand Gen-Z movements and their critical insights on identity while utilizing the regime change in Bangladesh as case study.

2. Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology has been employed in this paper. The nature of this paper focuses on identity norms as Bangladesh faces a transition in leadership; thus, qualitative research methodology has proven apt and best.

Furthermore, thematic and analytical research methods have been utilized to understand the two way forces sociological shift and political shift in the regime change in Bangladesh) working in the case study. Hilary Jank's Three-Dimensional Model (Critical Discourse Analysis) has been used to infer and to analyze the relationship between language, power, and context of norm formation. Description, interpretation, and explanation of the themes developed through narratives have been conducted on these three levels of text analysis, discourse practice, and social practice. Use of thematic coding (themes such as "patriotism" and "betrayal") and identity mapping (premise of social identity according to groups) under discourse analysis. Data collection has been done using primary documents such as official government gazettes regarding the transcripts of comments in speeches by the former Prime Minister to understand the ascribed narrative. Similarly, official government gazettes regarding the quotas will be used. Social media posts from student protestors (Mostly on Reddit) will be assessed to represent the achieved narrative. Media reports from international news outlets (Al Jazeera and Reuters) and national news outlets (Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha) will be used to narrate the chronological events of the regime change. Academic neutrality and objectivity will be ensured while analyzing the emotional side of the identity.

3. Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical concepts have been used to view the socio-political change in the Bangladeshi leadership transition. This leadership transition indicates a disruption in the nation's post-colonial social contract. To delve deeper into a purely political narrative, this article makes use of Status Theory by Ralph Linton (1936)¹ and Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979)². These are dual-layered theoretical framework that bridge the macro-sociological structures with micro-psychological mobilization in a society. Status Theory posits the idea of achieved and ascribed identity, whereas Social Identity Theory

posits the notion of in-groups and out-groups. Components of these two frameworks deconstructs the regime change as a systematic rejection of state-prescribed "ascribed identity" in the favor of meritocratic "achieved identity" through division and stratification into dichotomous groups.

Many politically inclined sociologists have also extended their expertise on the subject which goes in lieu with the theoretical framework. The work of Anne Foner deems worthy in this regard. Anne Foner iterates in her work "Ascribed and Achieved Bases of Stratification", the parallels between the stratification systems of allocation of social roles³. She emphasizes how there is a dichotomy between the choice of social roles being open to people to decide. All of these aspects are impacted by class stratification and inequality within class structures. Linton's notion of identity gives weight to this structural analysis. Ascribed and achieved status provides foundation to the Bangladeshi narrative of identity correction because there was already a visible class stratification and inequality within the Bangladeshi narratives. The economic figures did predict a good outlook as "Bangladeshi economy" was growing, but the social standing was steeped into divide, owing to the quota implementation⁴.

The impact of stratification, as discussed by Egerton in Age Stratification and Class Formation, goes a long way to create resentment between groups in a society⁵. Young people who belong to lower class structures (on a comparative) are possessors of resentment. This resentment transforms into visceral hate which is what was visible in the Gen-Z protesters. These scholars posit the idea how unfair systems evoke emotional sentiments against the government. The Bangladeshi youth highlighted on social media platforms that the quota system introduced a stratification they were not able to break.

According to Linton, ascribed status is assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities. Achieved states, on the other hand, is left to be filled through competition

¹ Ralph Linton, *The Study of a Man*, (Appleton Century Crofts, Inc. 1936), 195.

² Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, *An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict* (Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33-47.

³ Anne Foner, *Ascribed and Achieved Bases of Stratification*, *Annual Review of Sociology* (1989):220.

⁴ Aparna Ghosh, "Bangladesh: Identity and Class Conflict," *Alternative Viewpoint*, July 18, 2025, <https://altviewpoint.in/bangladesh-identity-and-class-conflict/>.

⁵ Muriel Egerton and Mike Savage, *Age of stratification and Class Formation, 1971-1991*, *Work, Employment & Society*, (2000):25.

and individual effort. Aforementioned articles also delve deeper into the idea of how these two notions, whilst discussed in the Bangladeshi context, the thirty percent civil service quota of the descendants of freedom fighters transitioned the “Spirit of 1971” from a national patriotic norm into a hereditary ascribed asset. The government subscribes value to the lineage of Freedom Fighter as if one their lineage is born with innate abilities. Conversely, other students are actually provoked to feel like “others” because they have to go through an entire system of examination and scrutiny. The previous regime attempted to run the civil services exams using ascribed rules. Whereas, the students felt that their achieved hard work was overlooked due to someone’s lineage.

The institutionalization of ascribed identity created a strain within the structural fabric of the Bangladeshi society. This concept is seconded by Talcott Parsons who described a society’s reward system that overlooked the functional achievements of its members⁶. A similar phenomenon is witnessed in the regime change. In fact, this sociological phenomenon triggered the transition in the state of Bangladesh. This is the essence of Status theory; the tussle between ascribed and achieved identity. In the case study of Bangladesh’s leadership transition, the theory deems worthy as it highlights the structural flaw present, thereby paving the path towards sociological identity correction through a political leadership transition.

Social Identity Theory provides a framework regarding mobilization and self-worth. It posts how individuals define their self-worth through their affiliations. These affiliations also pave the path towards subsequent mobilization. The theory

has also been applied and developed to explain the mobilization and protests displayed by collective behavior and deindividuation⁷. Marginalized groups, often identified as “outgroups”, suffer through discrimination which often becomes the driving source of what is often renamed as “defiance” in narratives. Furthermore, the privileged class, often identified as “in-groups”, have a strong sense of worth and individual value. The intergroup conflict translates itself into a battleground of narrative constructions against the other. The battleground revolves around social structure, and it links social structure, categorization and identity processes. Individual representations become a base of biases and group processes⁸.

Individuals mobilize based on their self-worth which is reflected by the in-group affiliations. Whenever a state creates an impermeable social boundary which ostracizes the out-group, the social contract dissolves. The social boundary is institutionalized by the state after it has been internalized and converted into norms by the groups⁹. These notions and institutionalization legitimize itself into a quota system. This paper argues that the July 2024 protest was the moment when the out-group let go of the individual competition to engage in a collective action, effectively redefining the national identity from one of lineage from one of lineage to one of competence. This allows a holistic analysis of Bangladeshi transition. Status Theory identifies the institutionalized ascription that catalyzed the protests and Social Identity Theory explains the collective identity formation the uprising until the regime’s collapse.

⁶ Talcott Parsons, *the Evolution of Societies*, Prentice Hall, 1977:269.

⁷ Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, Comments on the Motivational Status of Self-Esteem in Societal Identity and Intergroup Discrimination, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18, no. 4 (1988): 320.

⁸ Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, *Social Identity and Self-Categorization*, SAGE *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*, 2010, 185.

⁹ Morgana Lizzio-Wilson, *Who We Are and Who We Choose to Help (Or Not): An Introduction to Social Identity Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Table 1: *Application of the theoretical framework on the Bangladeshi Leadership Transmission*

Feature	Status Theory	Social Identity Theory
Focus	The Rules of the State (Quota)	The Psychology of the Crowd
Focal Point	Family lineage versus Merit Ascribed Identity versus Achieved Identity	Government versus Students In-group versus Out-group
Impact	Reformed system after a strain in the structure	<i>Razakar</i> comment intensified the protests Collective Identity is formed and protests are turned into a revolution

Source: *Author formulated this using inferences from Status Theory and Social Identity Theory*

4. Literature Review and Discussion

Majority of the literature on Bangladesh regime change orbits around the notion of social media and its use in the generation of protests. The uniqueness of this article is that it views the leadership transition through lens of sociological identity correction. For the purpose to ensure draw inferences, Critical Discourse Analysis will deem necessary. This paper draws inferences from articles which revolve around the notion of importance of social media or political leadership on three levels:

1. Text Analysis: focusing on vocabulary
2. Discursive Practice: focusing on the production, distribution, and consumption of the text
3. Social Practice: focusing on the broader social and cultural power dynamics¹⁰

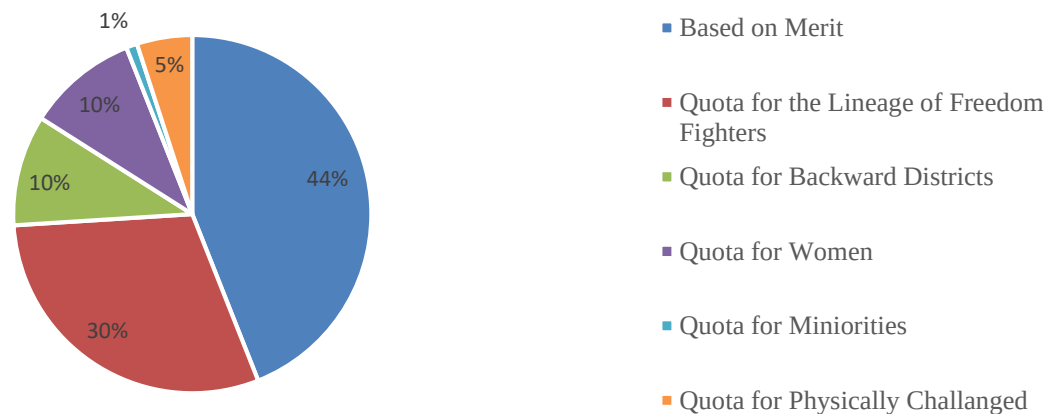
The use of this research tool will indicate the formation of norms, identity and role of the power in the entire narrative of Bangladesh. Coupled with Ralph Linton's theory and Tajfel and Turner's framework, the article uses a dual-layered theoretical framework to understand the nuances of this phenomenon of leadership change. The exploration focuses on the transition from individual competition to collective mobilization which demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister. The argument that 2024 uprising was the consequence of "status rebellion", where a marginalized out-group reclaimed its identity through an act of defiance in a state-mandated objectification.

4.1. Bangladesh Civil Services as a Symbol of Achieved Identity

The Bangladeshi state has built a national identity on the foundation of "Spirit of 1971". This has been a result of an attempt that has been a unifying metric. It was viewed as element of pride. Moreover, it was viewed as meritocratic rewards for those who fought for liberation. This meritocratic reward was institutionalization of a 30% civil service quota for the descendants. It transformed the historical merit into an ascribed asset. Below lies a chart that illustrates the division of this quota.

¹⁰ Hlary Janks, "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no.3 (1997):332.

Figure1: Bangladesh's job quota system



Source: *Aljazeera*¹¹

The last decade, Sheikh Hasina's regime has been viewed as de-facto one-party authoritarian state. It has been discussed by Shuva Das in his article, "The Tandem of state and non-state coercion sustaining the Hasina regime in Bangladesh." The alliance formation (informal alliance) between the state security agencies and the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Hasina's political party, Awami League Party¹². This alliance was often reported to have misused the quota, often undermined electoral integrity, repressed public protests, and domineered public university campuses.

The anti-discrimination movement in Bangladesh started as a student led demand to reform the country's job quota system but quickly escalated to a nationwide uprising that led to the downfall of an increasingly anti-democratic regime in 2024. Zaibuddin, Islam and, Arif discuss this in their article, "From Quota Reform to Regime Collapse: Understanding the Anti-Discrimination Movement in Bangladesh," the role of three key mechanisms (frame alignment, moral shock and scale shift) in moving the movement from a policy-oriented protest to a mass mobilization for regime change¹³. With digital activism and decentralized leadership that kept the movement going and fought the state repression, the

protesters rocked the political core, exposing the fragility of an autocratic regime founded on fear and control. Movements draw on structural grievances, moral catalysts, and tactical changes to challenge even the most calcified autocratic rule with crucial lessons for scholars of social movements and activists fighting authoritarian governments elsewhere in the world.

It created a "hereditary elite" within the bureaucracy which became a causation of "structural strain" in the social fabric of the society. The youth that had spent plethora of years gaining "achieved status" by preparing the Bangladeshi Civil Services felt their path was blocked by "ascribed" social barrier. It was a glass ceiling for them. It was a form of mechanism of social stratification¹⁴. The last phase of this mobilization was that of "Social Creativity" to "Social Competition". This is the most dangerous stage in any regime. The students were no longer asking for a 5% quota, they were demanding a complete re-ordering of the state. The reports from Al Jazeera on July 21-22 reveal that the mobilization did not cease even when the Supreme Court cut the quotas. This is due to the fact that the "Achieved Identity" had mobilized fully against the "Ascribed System."

The students had realized that this was not a mere percentage in a job circular, it was the government

¹¹ Abid Hussain, "What's next for Bangladesh after its Top Court Slashed Job Quotas?" *Al Jazeera*, July 22, 2024, <https://aje.io/14o7vg>.

¹² Zunaid Almamun, "Political Violence in Bangladesh: Explaining the Role of State" (master's thesis, Illinois State University, 2020), 45.

¹³ Mohammad Zainuddin, Emadul Islam, and Ishtiaque Arif, "From Quota Reform to Regime Collapse: Understanding the Anti-Discrimination Movement in Bangladesh," *Social Movement Studies* (May 2025):4

¹⁴ Foner, "Ascribed and Achieved Bases," 222.

that did not respect their identity as merit based citizens. As reflected by Aparna Ghosh (2025) the movement became a "Class Conflict" between those who possessed power through ancestry and those who fought for power through achievement¹⁵. The "Mobilization of Achieved Identity" was in effect the birth of a new social contract in Bangladesh. This new Social contract reflected the right to lead is won in the classroom and the examination hall and not handed down through the bloodlines of the past.

4.2. Mobilization of Achieved Identity in Bangladesh

The contemporary Bangladeshi youth believed that identity is not inherited, but it is rather constructed through hard work and educational merit. In a state that is faced with high competitive merit and limited formal education employment, student identity has to be defined by merit. It is an "achieved" identity that requires the individual agency and measurable success. The thirty percent civil service quota reserved for the Freedom Fighters is the pivot of this massive regime change. Bangladesh has effectively mandated ascription as the primary currency by transforming a historical merit into a hereditary asset. The historical merit presented itself as a structural barrier¹⁶.

The mobilization was galvanized when the sense of achieved worth was mocked in public. The regime's usage of historical slurs was a pivotal moment in the mobilization process. The term "**Razakar**" was used by the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the protesters. The statement is as followed;

"If the children of freedom fighters don't receive [quota] benefits, who will? The children of Razakar?"

Her comments sparked protests immediately as

the students felt her remarks unfairly dismissed their efforts to address the "unfair" quota system in the civil services¹⁷. The students protested in front of the Prime Minister's abode. The students and their sentiments have been reported as followed;

"Razakar, Razakar! Who are you? Who am I? Razakar, Razakar! Asker for rights and became a Razakar!"¹⁸,

Another interview from BSS reports;

"We've seen this before: whenever there's a just and rational movement, the government tries to delegitimize it by calling protesters Razakars. Our protest that day was a direct challenge to that toxic narrative – we were determined to break that taboo."¹⁹

Similarly, a famous post from Reddit also reported;

"But these peaceful protests were soon met with a horrible backlash. The Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina labeled these students as *Razakars*, which is a pejorative term that is given to those who did not support Bangladesh's independence movement back in 1971. In other words, they are being called "traitors" to the country. How is asking for fair job opportunity considered traitorous? What crime is being done here? Nobody ever said freedom fighters are bad and they don't deserve anything. Nobody said that. It's not just getting insulted."²⁰

The role of social media to catalyze the movement cannot have taken for granted. Ali and Hoque's article, "Impact of Social Media on July 2024 Revolution in Bangladesh: A Cross-sectional Study among University Students", reflects the importance of social media in the narrative of regime change²¹. The leadership transition of a long-standing administration under the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina occurred on August

¹⁵ Ghosh, "Bangladesh: Identity and Class Conflict."

¹⁶ Md Ali Ashraf, Muhammad Mahmudur Rehman, and Md Basirulla, "From Protest to Political Transition: International Responses to Bangladesh's 2024 Movement in the Context of Emergency Constitutional Law," *Journal of Indonesian Constitutional Law*, no.3 (2025):460.

¹⁷ Faisal Mahmud, "The Autocrat has resigned: Is this a New Dawn for Bangladesh?" *Al Jazeera*, August 5, 2024, <https://aje.io/abhzbz>.

¹⁸ Mohammad Afzal Hossen Tanvir, "The Spirit of July Uprising: A Call for Reforms", *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, July 14, 2025.

¹⁹ Obaidur Rahman, "'Student Protests were Getting Broader Shape to Topple Fascist Hasina' says Nazm," *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, July 04, 2025, <https://www.bssnews.net/july-uprising/289109>.

²⁰ https://www.reddit.com/r/bangladesh/comments/1e6k5z4/foreigner_here_i_wrote_this_and_i_want_to_share

²¹ Md. Idris Ali, Ziaul Hoque. Impact of Social Media on July 2024 Revolution in Bangladesh: A Cross-sectional Study among University Students, 03 March 2026, PREPRINT (Version 1) available at Research Square [<https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-8980403/v1>]

5, 2024. This highlighted the disruption of traditional political categorizations by the culmination of student-led uprising. This was known as the “July Revolution” which was a rebellion against ascribed privilege. This privilege was the state-mandated quota system. At the behest of the conflict, lies a violent friction between a government anchored in revolutionary lineage and a generation defined by competitive merit.

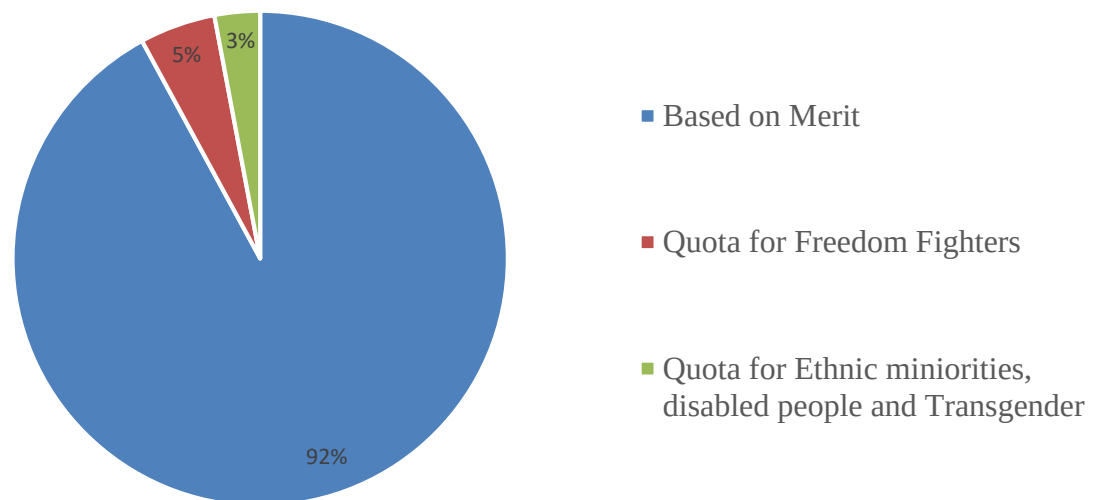
The highlight of narrative construction in the two months of regime change is important to note. The momentum of the mobilization can be viewed through the lens of group cohesion as the state increase the use of force. The internal differences of class, age and political leaning vanished as they assumed a monolithic identity: meritocratic reward. As discussed by Islam and Faizal in their article, “The July Revolution: Fatalities and narratives in Bangladesh’s 2024 anti-discrimination movement,” unity in the students was present²². The Monsoon Revolution marked a turning point in public contention over inequality and access to public-sector opportunities. The students did not wait for opposition leadership, but they mobilized through decentralized networks.

4.3. Breaking Point of Bengali Youth: Ascribed Identity versus Achieved Identity

The final phase of this discussion is the regime transition. Mobilization rarely leads to the leadership transition, but the students mobilized around their identity, and goalpost moved. The transition from a “Quota Reforms Movement” to a “One-Point Demand” was only because identity. Achieved Identity was the ultimate expression transformed into a state that reflect the merit of its people. The Monsoon Revolution proved a large demography feels their achieved identity is erased by ascribed privileges, the resulting mobilization is capable of dismantling even the most the entrenched political structures.

However, it is imperative to note that the quota system was reformed entirely in July 2024 as given below.

Figure2: Bangladesh’s revised job quota system in 2024



Source: Al Jazeera²³

²² M.S. Islam and M.M. Faisal, “The July Revolution: Fatalities and Narratives in Bangladesh’s 2024 Anti-Discrimination Movement,” *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* (2026): 5.

²³ Alia Chughtai and Marium Ali, “How Bangladesh’s ‘Gen-Z’ Protests Brought Down PM Sheikh Hasina,” *Al Jazeera*, August 7, 2024, <https://aje.io/jcn1jf>.

Chughtai and Ali focus on Generation Z with a microscopic lens. Their article reflects that a generation born long after 1971 was able to detach its worth from the ascribed pattern of revolutionary history. They formulated their identity on digital literacy, global connectivity, and meritocratic expectations. The protests were decentralized and were conducted through avid use of social media. Alluding to achieved identity, the out-groups used unconventional tools to bypass a state that relied on conventional methods of control such as ascribed identity. Ascription in form of the Spirit of 1971 and achievement in the form of justice and jobs became point of confliction.

Furthermore, Hasina's response to thaw the protests was violence by inviting the police and BCL. Her party's student wing, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) attempted to quell the protests using ammunitions. As per the report of UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) titled as 'Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh' around 1,400 people were killed. Women and children were also subjected to gender-based violence perpetrated by Awami League supporters^{24,25}. The application for Social Identity theory comes in handy as high-intensity external threats increase the internal cohesion of the group. Similarly, in Bangladesh, the out-group felt that the student movement was no longer about the jobs, it became a national movement for a quest for identity and right to life. Therefore, the students decided to transform their protests into a demand for the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The day when Sheikh Hasina resigned as the Prime Minister (August 5, 2025), the day was met with approximately 100 deaths alone. A shot on sight curfew mandated by the government. Students were still vigorously protesting for the One Point Demand i.e. resignation of Prime Minister. The students' demand was sufficed as the Army Chief General Waker-uz-Zaman

announced that she had resigned. Her resignation ended a 15 year period of what is now recalled as "authoritarian"²⁶. Following her resignation, Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus was appointed to lead an interim government²⁷.

5. Findings

Findings of this paper indicate a discursive shift in the socio-political semantics of leadership transition after the Monsoon Revolution. Application of Critical Discourse Analysis is useful in this section as it will analyze the path pf achieved identity. It caused momentum in the student-led movement which challenges and toppled down the ascribed status mandated and maintained by the state. This section of the paper will explore three questions in particular which revolve around the socio-political identity correction. How were the identity labels reclaimed? How was the historical privilege delegitimized? How was achieved status institutionalized?

A significant finding pivots around the state's use of abjectifying comments to suppress mobilization. They striped away the dignity attached to their efforts by calling the outgroup traitors. It was a discursive move which intended to imply ascribed historical value. The previous government did not realize that this move would lead to social creativity where the students de-naturalized the slur. They adopted the slogan and neutralized the state's linguistic weaponization. Illustrating symbolic power through CDA, the movement turned the focus towards their achieved identity as they adopted the slogan of *Razakar*.

Another finding revolves around the shift from the demand of Quota Reformation towards One-Point Demand. Transition in the discourse of the movement was a move towards out-group defying the ascription by highlighting the discrimination. Protesters were aware of the authoritarian narratives around Hasina's government. They effectively protested against the semantics of global rights violation when the government used structural violence. This transition of demand of

²⁴Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Human Rights Violations and Abuses Related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh* (Geneva: United Nations, 2025)

²⁵ "1,400 People Killed in July Uprising: UN Fact-Finding Report," *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, February 12, 2025, <https://www.bssnews.net/news-flash/245979>.

²⁶ "Bangladesh Freed from Hasina's Autocracy in Stiff Mass Resistance Aug 5," *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, August 4, 2025, <https://www.bssnews.net/july-uprising/298717>.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Bangladesh: Prime Minister Hasina Resigns Amid Mass Protests," August 6, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/06/bangladesh-prime-minister-hasina-resigns-amid-mass-protests>.

the movement was against the social boundary which allowed students to mobilize against the reform, then the government itself. To synthesize

aforementioned findings, the following table has been constructed to reflect the discursive trajectory of in-groups and out-groups.

Table 2: *Discursive Trajectory of In-Groups and Out-Groups According to CDA*

Discursive Features	Narrative of in-groups	Narrative of out-groups	Socio-political consequences
Labels	• <i>Razakar</i> • Terrorists	• Gen-Z • Merit-seekers	Pejorative term became a symbol of social creativity and unity
Basis of Identity	• Ascription • 1971 Spirit of Freedom	• Achievement • Academic Merit	Ascription was met with resentment when labels were brought forth.
Key Slogan	“Spirit of Liberation”	“Justice ” transitioned “One-Point Demand”	Policy reformation was not enough.
Media Framing	Authoritarianism reflected by the government	Mass Resistance and martyrdom	Use of violent means by the government destroyed the in-groups’ status and basis of identity.

Source: *Author constructed this table by drawing inferences from discourse from Al Jazeera, BSS, and Reddit posts.*

6. Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the regime change in Bangladesh from a sociopolitical discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis of the narratives of the state and student also provide a critical juncture for understanding the regime change. Achieved identity of the out-groups effectively toppled the delegitimized the state’s reliance on ascribed identity. Out-groups were not aligned with ascribed values and did not subdue to the derogatory labels. Research also contributes to the understanding of how social creativity and boundaries can be used by marginalized groups to neutralize the government’s abjectionification.

Transition of the achieved identity’s demands

reflected the need of reformation of a collective social identity. The resignation of Hasina highlighted that meritocracy was institutionalized as a primary source of political legitimacy. It highlights how Gen-Z protests do not adhere to the ascribed values. Their focus is on achieved identity which focuses on transparency and merit-based access to jobs. This research, however, is limited in its focus of rural student-led narratives. Longitudinal studies are important to assess if institutionalized meritocracy remains withheld in the face of re-emergence of ascribed identity. Conclusively, the paper remains an important contribution towards the socio-political landscape of an identity transformation in the regime change of Bangladesh, 2024.

Conflict of Interest

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