

**Department of Peace and Conflict Studies**

**Research Monograph**

***THE 2024 JULY-AUGUST UPRISING: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF POLICE AND THEIR RESPONSE TO THE STUDENT-LED PROTEST***

*Submitted by*

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# ****Certificate of Approval****

This is to certify that the thesis titled **“The 2024 July-August Uprising: Understanding the Role of Police and Their Response to the Student-Led Protest”** has been thoroughly reviewed and approved in accordance with the academic and research standards set by Md. Ziaur Rahman Bhuiyan.

This study has been assessed for its originality, methodological rigor, and contribution to understanding protest policing, civil movements, and law enforcement strategies. The research has adhered to ethical guidelines and maintained scholarly integrity in its data collection, analysis, and presentation of findings.

By granting this certificate of approval, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka recognizes the efforts and academic contributions of the researcher, in producing a well-researched and insightful study on the complexities of police response to the 2024 student-led uprising.

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**Declaration of Researcher**

I, solemnly declare that this research paper, titled **“The 2024 July-August Uprising: Understanding the Role of Police and Their Response to the Student-Led Protest,”** is the result of my independent work and academic dedication. This study has been conducted with integrity, adhering to ethical research standards, and ensuring that all sources of information are properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with APA guidelines.

I affirm that this research is free from plagiarism and that all data, analysis, and interpretations are based on credible sources, firsthand accounts, and scholarly perspectives. The findings, discussions, and recommendations presented reflect my own critical analysis, shaped by an objective review of events and existing literature.

This paper has been prepared with a commitment to academic honesty, and I take full responsibility for the authenticity of the content. Any limitations, biases, or potential areas for further study are acknowledged transparently. I also affirm that no part of this research has been previously submitted for academic credit or publication elsewhere.

By signing below, I confirm that this declaration is true and that I stand by the integrity of the work presented.

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# ****Abstract****

The 2024 July-August Uprising in Bangladesh marked a significant chapter in civil resistance, with passionate students rallying for educational reforms, democratic accountability, and government transparency. What started as peaceful demonstrations blossomed into a nationwide movement, capturing the attention of both national and international observers. At the center of this remarkable protest was the police response, which significantly influenced the movement’s direction. Reports of excessive force, mass arrests, and limits on digital communication raised important questions about finding the right balance between law enforcement and civil liberties.

This research delves into the role of the police during the 2024 student-led protests, examining their actions, motivations, and the wider implications of their responses. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study collects insights from media reports, government statements, eyewitness accounts, and social media content to create a detailed timeline of events. By comparing the Bangladesh uprising with other similar student movements around the world—like the 2019 Hong Kong Polytechnic University protests and the 2015 South African “Fees Must Fall” movement—this research offers a broader view on how law enforcement navigates large-scale demonstrations.

**Key Research Objectives and Questions**

The study aims to thoroughly analyze police actions during the uprising and their immediate and long-lasting implications. Specifically, tried to figure out:

1. What strategies did the police apply to the protesters?

2. Analyze the strategies. It is mindset, political agenda, or something else?

4. Recommendations for the future.

The study addresses these important research questions:

1. What tactics were applied by the police initially at the uprising stage?

2. Why was the action so deadly?

3. Find out the immediate and long run effects of Police responses?

4. A reform idea of Bangladesh police to manage the peaceful protests?

**Findings and Implications**

The research highlights a concerning trend in police actions, beginning with surveillance and escalating through forceful crackdowns, targeted arrests, and restrictions on internet communication. The use of baton charges, tear gas, rubber bullets, and mass detentions not only heightened tensions but also surprisingly created more public sympathy for the protesters. Moreover, political interference in police decisions has weakened trust in law enforcement and raised significant concerns about accountability within the system.

This study focuses on the reform of Bangladesh Police and other law enforcement agencies, both morally and physically.

1. Reforming the training and police law to transition from a colonial concept to an independent Bangladesh Police.
2. Focus on dialog strategies in place of force in the first stage.
3. The training should focus on human rights issues.
4. The Bangladesh Human Rights Commission should be empowered to hold law enforcement agencies accountable.
5. Community engagement is needed to build trust between law enforcement and the community.

The July-August Uprising in 2024 is a significant case study, emphasising the shifting dynamics between law enforcement, civil movements, and governance. Effectively managing protests peacefully and transparently is essential to prevent long-term confidence instability and uphold public trust. By adopting human rights-focused policing strategies, Bangladesh and other countries encountering similar challenges, can foster a more effective and democratic approach to managing protests.

Ultimately, this research highlights that policing protests involves much more than simply maintaining order; it concerns the protection of justice and fundamental human rights. Law enforcement must adeptly balance public safety with the safeguarding of democratic freedoms, establishing a governance system that is fairer, more inclusive, and accountable.

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***Chapter 1:***

**INTRODUCTION**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**1.1 Background of the Study**

The July-August 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh is one of the most significant student-led movements in recent history. Rising dissatisfaction with government policies, education reforms, and perceived systemic injustices quickly gained momentum, drawing millions of students and other political supporters into the streets. It is observed that student activism has historically played a crucial role in shaping Bangladesh’s socio-political landscape, notably during the Language Movement of 1952, the 1971 Liberation War, and the 1990 anti-autocracy movement, the 2024 protests introduced new complexities.

Unlike previous movements, the 2024 uprising was greatly influenced by digital mobilization, as students utilized social media platforms to organize, document police actions, and raise global awareness. Used Facebook, YouTube, Telegram, and many more secret apps. It started as peaceful demonstrations, which quickly escalated into clashes with law enforcement, resulting in a highly controversial police response. Reports of excessive force, mass detentions, block raid and mass arrest, and the use of tear gas and rubber bullets, live ammunition, complete crackdown, along with internet blackouts, raised urgent concerns about the balance between maintaining public order and protecting civil liberties.

This research investigates the complex dynamics between law enforcement and protesters during this critical period. By examining how and why the police responded brutally, this study aims to contribute to broader discussions on policing in times of civil unrest, the challenges of democratic governance, and the implications of state responses to youth-led movements.

**1.2 Problem Statement**

The role of law enforcement during the July-August Uprising of 2024 has emerged as a central topic in national and international discourse. Although law enforcement bodies proclaim that their actions were necessary to stop violence and maintain public safety, critics argue that the response was excessive and simple aggression over the fundamental human rights. The rapid escalation of tensions prompts critical queries:

• Were the police actions justified, or did they exacerbate the circumstances?

• What institutional and political factors shaped the police’s methodology?

• How did the public and protesters perceive the police's reaction?

• What enduring effects could this have on law enforcement practices and public trust?

Comprehending these queries is essential for assessing the events of 2024 and informing future law enforcement methodologies. In an era of increased public oversight facilitated by rapid digital documentation, how police manage civil unrest carries significant implications for governance, human rights, and international standing.

**1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Research**

This study investigates law enforcement's response to the 2024 student-led protests, determined to understand the motivations behind their actions and their broader impacts.

The following objectives guide the research:

1. To analyze the law enforcement response to the student-led protests, focusing on their strategies, use of force, and crowd management techniques.

2. To examine the factors influencing police actions, such as political directions, institutional training, historical examples, and public perception.

3. To evaluate the consequences of the police response, considering how it shaped the course of the protests, influenced public trust in law enforcement, and impacted Bangladesh’s human rights record.

4. To provide policy recommendations for improving police strategies in handling future protests, emphasizing the need to balance law enforcement with protecting civil liberties.

**1.4 Research Questions**

To fulfill the above-mentioned objectives, this study seeks to address the following key research questions:

1. What principal actions did the police undertake during the protests?
2. What internal and external factors influenced the police response?
3. How did the police response affect the progression and resolution of the protests?
4. What insights can this case study provide to improve future law enforcement strategies regarding civil unrest?

These questions will provide a structured framework for analyzing the events surrounding the uprising while shedding light on the broader socio-political implications.

**1.5 Research Methodology**

Given the complex and multifaceted nature of the July-August 2024 Uprising, this research adopts a qualitative case study approach, utilizing multiple data sources to ensure a comprehensive and balanced analysis. First-hand experience, active participation, and reviewing the contemporary narrative from various angles & sources, and own analysis played a significant role here to do this analysis.

**1.5.1 Data Collection Methods**

1. Mainstream and Social Media Reports and Official Statements & Comparative case studies
   * Understanding the protesters' experiences and motivations for active participation.
   * A review of local and international news reports covering the protests.
   * Analysis of government and law enforcement press releases, statements, etc.
   * Examining protest-related content on YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, and X- (Twitter) platforms. And first-hand experience with an informal interview with a participant and the police & military force.
   * Reviewing live videos, images, and discussions to assess real-time reactions and information dissemination.
   * Drawing parallels with similar global student protests, such as the 2019 Hong Kong Polytechnic University protests and the 2015 South African student demonstrations.

**1.5.2 Data Analysis Methods**

* **Thematic Coding:** Identifying recurring themes in media reports, reviewing the transcripts, and social media content.
* **Narrative Analysis:** Examining the sequence of events to understand the cause-and-effect relationship between the protester and police reactions.
* **Policy Evaluation:** Assessing existing police protocols and comparing them with international best practices.

This multi-layered methodology will provide a robust and nuanced understanding of the police’s role during the protests.

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

This research is significant on multiple levels.

**1.6.1 Academic Contributions**

This study analyzes the 2024 uprising through a theoretical framework of civil unrest and policing activities. It contributes to the growing body of literature on law enforcement responses to protests and will enhance understanding of the intersection between youth activism, digital mobilization, and state authority.

**1.6.2 Policy and Law Enforcement Implications**

The study’s findings will be valuable for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and human rights organizations seeking to improve protest management strategies. Recommendations will emphasize:

* The adoption of de-escalation techniques over aggressive crowd control measures.
* There is a need for increased training in human rights-based policing.
* The creation of independent oversight mechanisms to ensure police accountability.

**1.6.3 Societal Relevance**

Public trust in law enforcement is a keystone of democratic governance. By critically assessing police actions and their effects, this study encourages constructive dialogue on how Bangladesh can cultivate a more transparent and accountable approach to managing protests.

**1.7 Structure of the Research Paper**

To ensure a logical and comprehensive exploration of the topic, this paper is structured as follows:

* **Chapter 1: Introduction**– Outlines the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, and methodology.
* **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Analytical Framework** – Discusses relevant theories on law enforcement and civil unrest, along with case studies of similar protests.
* **Chapter 3: Research Findings** – Provides a detailed account of the 2024 uprising, the police response, and key influencing factors.
* **Chapter 4: Discussion and Recommendations** – Interprets the findings, compares them with global protest cases, and proposes policy reforms.
* **Chapter 5: Conclusion** – Summarizes the key insights and highlights the long-term implications of the uprising on law enforcement and governance.

***Chapter 2:***

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

# ****Chapter 2: Literature Review and Analytical Framework****

## ****2.1 Introduction****

Understanding the role of police in managing protests requires a multidimensional approach. Law enforcement agencies often operate under immense pressure to maintain public order, yet their responses can significantly influence a movement's trajectory, public perception, and long-term governance. The July-August Uprising in Bangladesh in 2024 aligns with a broader global pattern in which student-led movements challenge existing power structures and, in return, forceful police interventions from the government side.

This chapter explores key theories regarding policing during protests, examines both historical and contemporary case studies of student uprisings worldwide, and outlines the analytical framework used to assess the Bangladesh police's response in 2024. This review establishes a foundation for evaluating law enforcement’s role, actions, and consequences in managing protests by comparing past events and theoretical perspectives.

## ****2.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Policing and Protests****

Like elsewhere, the recurrent sight of protests and police clashes in Bangladesh begs for theoretical analysis. Social Control Theory.

Hirschi (1969) explained that police work to strengthen societal bonds, their presence serving as a visible reminder of what is considered normal. However, protests often indicate that these bonds are fraying.

Marx's conflict theory posits that police act as defenders of the existing power structure, influencing their actions by power imbalances.

Tarrow's research highlights how the political climate in Bangladesh affects police responses, often suppressing dissenting voices.

Mead's theory of Symbolic Interactionism demonstrates the nuanced process of meaning-making. A raised police baton or a protest slogan are each imbued with interpretations that can either heighten or lessen tension.

Della Porta's studies reveal the diverse ways in which police strategies adapt to the political climate over time.

Additionally, it is crucial to consider research examining how police actions during protests impact public trust in law enforcement in Bangladesh. These various theoretical perspectives illuminate different facets of the complex interaction, illustrating that policing protests is a domain of power, meaning, and societal negotiation in our context.

(Hirschi, T., Tarrow, S., Mead, G.H., Della Porta, D.)

Bangladesh’s response to the 2024 uprising must be assessed within this tension: did the police uphold order, or did they overstep their bounds by suppressing legitimate dissent?

### ****2.2.1 Escalation and De-Escalation Strategies****

Another key perspective comes from studies on “**escalation vs. de-escalation policing”:**

**The Escalation Model (Della Porta & Reiter, 1998) indicates that aggressive police tactics often provoke increased resistance, leading to more violent protests.**

**The de-escalation Model (Waddington, 2013) recommends dialogue-based approaches, negotiation, and restraint** to prevent escalation.

This research will analyze the 2024 uprising and assess whether Bangladeshi law enforcement employed escalation tactics that intensified tensions or if alternative strategies could have led to a more peaceful resolution.

### ****2.2.2 The Role of Media in Protest Policing****

Media, especially social media, significantly influences modern protest dynamics. McCarthy and McPhail’s (1998) "Protest Paradigm" emphasizes how media coverage often frames protests as chaotic, justifying police crackdowns. However, in the digital age, protesters have platforms to document and broadcast police actions in real time.

In Bangladesh, videos, live streams, and social media posts were crucial in shaping public discourse regarding police actions. To some extent, this media presence alters police behavior, and the authorities attempt to control the narrative through internet restrictions.

## ****2.3 Case Studies of Police Responses to Student Protests****

Examining comparable incidents globally helps to justify the police response to the July-August 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. This section analyzes three significant student movements that provide essential insights.

### ****2.3.1 The 2019 Hong Kong Polytechnic University Protest****

The pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong saw a high-intensity police response, including the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and mass arrests. The siege of Polytechnic University was a turning point, with students barricading themselves inside the campus while police cut off supplies and attempted forced evacuations.

Use of force against student demonstrators. Government justification of police actions as “necessary for stability.” Social media documentation exposing police misconduct.

Using excessive force can lead to international backlash. Historically, heavy-handed policing has been linked to increased radicalization rather than its suppression.

### ****2.3.2 The 2011 UC Davis Pepper Spray Incident****

In the United States, the peaceful "Occupy" protests saw police deploying excessive force, with one of the most infamous incidents involving UC Davis officers pepper-spraying seated student demonstrators.

* **Key Observations:**
  + The police’s initial justification was to maintain campus security. The response was rapid, resulting in public outrage and policy reforms. Video footage went viral, influencing public perception of law enforcement.
* **Relevance to Bangladesh:**
  + Police responses must consider long-term reputational damage. Tactical responses should prioritize crowd control without excessive force.

### ****2.3.3 The 2015 South African Student Protests ("Fees Must Fall")****

South African students mobilized against university tuition hikes, leading to widespread demonstrations. The government’s response involved both negotiations and police crackdowns, with clashes between protesters and law enforcement escalating over time.

Governments should prioritize early dialogue to prevent escalations. Combining negotiation with non-violent policing can prevent mass unrest.

These case studies highlight both the dangers of aggressive policing and the potential benefits of alternative approaches.

## ****2.4 Analytical Framework for the 2024 Uprising****

To evaluate the police response to the 2024 uprising in Bangladesh, a three-pronged analytical framework utilized, concentrating on the following aspects:

1. **Force Utilization and Human Rights Compliance**: This aspect investigates whether the police followed national legislation and international human rights norms regarding their use of force. Reports suggest that security forces employed excessive force against protesters, including live ammunition, leading to considerable casualties. Amnesty International confirmed instances where both lethal and less-lethal weapons were unlawfully used against demonstrators. ([amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/bangladesh-further-video-and-photographic-analysis-confirm-police-unlawfully-used-lethal-and-less-lethal-weapons-against-protesters/?utm_source=chatgpt.com))
2. **Accountability and Oversight Mechanisms:** This section assesses the existence and efficacy of systems designed to ensure police accountability for misconduct. Reports indicate that the police's organizational structure deteriorated due to excessive political influence, prompting demands for significant reforms and the creation of a Police Complaints Commission to probe crimes committed by police personnel. ([dhakaopinion.com](https://www.dhakaopinion.com/2024/09/police-in-disarray-needs-massive-reforms.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com))
3. **Community Engagement and Public Trust:** This aspect evaluates how the police interact with the communities they serve. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes the significance of community policing in promoting safety and establishing trust, particularly in combating violent extremism and terrorism. Improving community policing strategies is essential for cooperation between law enforcement and local communities. ([unodc.org](https://www.unodc.org/southasia/frontpage/2024/October/bangladesh_-unodc-advances-community-policing-responses-to-counter-violent-extremism-and-terrorism.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com))
4. Analyzing three dimensions, the use of force, accountability, and community engagement, can help comprehensively understand the police response during the 2024 uprising in Bangladesh. This will help identify areas needing reform and improvement.

## ****2.5 2024 July Facts****

The police response to the 2024 July-August Uprising in Bangladesh must be understood within a broader historical and theoretical framework. By reviewing existing literature on protest policing, comparing similar movements worldwide, and applying a structured analytical model, this study aiming to provide a comprehensive evaluation of law enforcement’s role. This chapter emphasizes that how authorities handle civil unrest not only for the immediate protest outcomes but also for the legitimacy of the state’s governance and the public’s trust in law enforcement in a long run. Through this research, policymakers and law enforcement agencies can gain valuable insights to developing more effective, rights-based strategies to handling future demonstrations.

***Chapter 3:***

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

# ****Chapter 3: Research Findings****

The 2024 July-August Uprising in Bangladesh was a defining moment in the country's recent history, highlighting student activism's power and law enforcement's challenges in handling mass protests. The movement, was started for quota system reform and gradually turn to campus based political reform, education system reforms and in greater sense government accountability, and very quickly escalated into a nationwide demonstration marked by peaceful protests and violent confrontations.

This chapter presents a detailed account of the key events, police actions, and underlying factors that shaped the course of the uprising. It draws from media reports, interviews, official statements, and social media analysis to comprehensively understand the police response. Furthermore, it examines the impact of law enforcement strategies on the movement’s progression and public perception.

## ****3.1 Chronological Account of the 2024 July-August Uprising****

The uprising began in early July 2024, driven by frustration over education policies, economic instability, and allegations of government corruption. University student groups organized rallies nationwide, demanding policy changes and government accountability.

At first, the protests were largely peaceful, with students holding sit-ins, forming human chains, and chanting slogans. Social media was crucial in spreading awareness, with videos and live streams drawing nationwide attention. However, as participation grew, so did tensions between protesters and authorities.

By mid-July, the government, perceiving the protests as a potential threat to national stability, authorized a more assertive police response. Riot police and special units were deployed across major protest sites equipped with batons, tear gas, rubber bullets, shotguns, or pallet guns, etc. To dismantle the crowds, pressure applied and the reports said that law enforcement used force, leading to injuries and death to the protesters. Many students were detained, some allegedly without formal charges.

Crowd control involved tools such as baton charges, tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, pellet guns, APCs, AK-56 rifles, and numerous other lethal and non-lethal weapons. Millions of videos on both mainstream and social media clearly show police, law enforcement, and security forces using excessive force against crowds from both ground and aerial perspectives.

Authorities imposed temporary internet shutdowns and restricted access to specific social media platforms to limit the protest's coordination and demonstration. This move was widely criticized for suppressing freedom of speech.

### ****3.1.3 Turning Point: Public Backlash and Government Response****

Starting on July 18th, public opinion began to change. Although some citizens initially backed law enforcement's efforts to restore order, incidents of police brutality led to widespread outrage. Videos showing officers using force against unarmed students spread rapidly, provoking condemnation from human rights groups and international observers. Under increasing pressure, the government sought to manage the situation by:

* **Announcing Dialogue:** Officials offered to meet with student representatives, though many protesters viewed this as a negative tactic. The reason for not having trust in the government.
* **Releasing Some Detainees:** To de-escalate tensions, some arresting student coordinators were released, but this did little to calm frustrations.
* **Deploying More Security Forces:** Despite calls for restraint, additional police, paramilitary & and security forces were deployed. The Army appeared on the street and in some places, they opened fire on the public gathering, which has further intensified the situation.

By early August, the movement began losing momentum due to exhaustion, strategic police interventions, and government concessions. Law enforcement focused on key organizers, disrupting coordination efforts. Enhanced Campus Security: Universities implemented stricter regulations to prevent further mobilization. The government verbally pledged to address some student demands, though tangible actions remained limited.

While the protests eventually subsided, the movement left a lasting impact on public discourse, emphasizing concerns over police conduct and civil liberties.

## ****3.2 Police Actions and Strategies****

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) investigated the events surrounding the July-August 2024 uprising in Bangladesh and released a comprehensive report on February 12, 2025. The findings highlight significant human rights violations perpetrated by security forces….

**Key Findings:**

**Crowd Control Measures**

Law enforcement may utilize tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons, batons, and barricades to disperse large gatherings. In dire situations, live ammunition could be deployed, resulting in potential fatalities.

The application of force should correspond to the threat level presented by protesters. Excessive measures may escalate conflicts and cause human rights infringements.

Successful policing typically involves dialogue and negotiations with protest leaders to resolve issues and avoid violence. (facts finishing report. UNHCR)

**Intelligence and Surveillance**

Authorities may track protest organizers, social media platforms, and communication channels to foresee and avert violence.

Key figures or activists might be apprehended before protests to hinder mobilization efforts.

Bangladesh’s Digital Security Act frequently targets activists, aiming to suppress dissent online. (facts finishing report. UNHCR)

**Legal and Administrative Measures**

Mass arrests are prevalent during uprisings, often conducted under vague or oppressive laws.

Protesters might face charges such as "rioting," "sedition," or "terrorism," which carry harsh penalties.

Delays in judicial proceedings and denial of bail are frequently used to keep activists incarcerated for prolonged durations. (facts finishing report. UNHCR)

**Excessive Use of Force:**

The report estimates that approximately 1,400 individuals, including around 180 children, were killed during the crackdown on protests. Security forces employed disproportionate measures, such as live ammunition, against demonstrators, leading to numerous casualties. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/951dc40f60d6a798eb5af5ed1d11bbad?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

**Extrajudicial Killings and Torture:**

Evidence indicates that security and intelligence services engaged in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and instances of torture. These actions were reportedly conducted with the knowledge and direction of top officials, potentially amounting to crimes against humanity. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/951dc40f60d6a798eb5af5ed1d11bbad?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

**Targeting of Specific Groups:**

The report documents that women and children were subjected to violence, including sexual harassment and assault. Journalists, human rights defenders, and activists also faced threats, harassment, and violence during the protests. ([benarnews.org](https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/bengali/ohchr-protests-hasina-yunus-02122025152623.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

**3.3 Factors Influencing Police Response**

**Several internal and external factors shaped law enforcement’s actions during the protests:**

**3.3.1 Internal Factors**

**Police followed government directives and adhered to established crowd control protocols. Despite officers undergoing riot control training, their approach to the protests indicated shortcomings in de-escalation techniques.**

**3.3.2 External Factors**

**Government officials pushed for a quick resolution, which impacted police behavior. Public scrutiny on social media influenced officers' decisions, sometimes prompting changes in tactics. Additionally, criticism from foreign governments and human rights organizations pressured authorities to defend their actions.**

**3.4 Impact of Police Response on the Protests**

**Law enforcement's actions significantly affected both the short-term and long-term dynamics of the uprising:**

**3.4.1 Short-Term Consequences**

**Police crackdowns heightened anger, resulting in more intense protests. Aggressive police tactics shifted public sentiment in favor of the demonstrators. Roadblocks and security measures disrupted businesses, transportation, and everyday life.**

**3.4.2 Long-Term Consequences**

**Many citizens began to question police accountability and transparency. Human rights advocates pushed for enhanced police training in de-escalation techniques. The government suggested revisiting laws related to protests, although actual reforms remained uncertain.**

**The July-August 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh highlighted the difficulties in balancing law enforcement with civil rights. Although police actions intended to uphold order, their methods frequently escalated public anger and extended the unrest.**

**This chapter offered an in-depth look at the uprising, the role of police, and the broader implications of their response. The subsequent chapter will assess these findings within the context of global protest policing trends and propose policy recommendations to enhance law enforcement strategies for managing future demonstrations.**

***Chapter 4:***

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

# ****Chapter 4: Discussion and Recommendations****

The 2024 July-August Uprising was more than just a protest. It was a moment of reckoning for Bangladesh’s law enforcement, governance, and civil society. As students took to the streets to voice their grievances, the police found themselves at the center of a rapidly escalating conflict. Their response, characterized by a mix of forceful tactics and attempts at negotiation, shaped the trajectory of the movement and left lasting implications for public trust in law enforcement.

This chapter critically examines the police response and compares it with worldwide best practices in protest management. It also offers policy recommendations to improve law enforcement’s handling of mass movements while upholding democratic values and human rights.

## ****4.1 Interpretation of Findings****

### ****4.1.1 Patterns in the Police Response****

The findings from Chapter 3 revealed a predictable pattern in how law enforcement engaged with protesters. The initial phase was marked by surveillance and passive monitoring. Still, as the protests grew in intensity, authorities escalated their response, deploying riot police, imposing internet restrictions, and making mass arrests. This approach follows a **traditional "force-first" policing model,** where control and suppression take priority over dialogue and de-escalation.

However, this strategy often backfires. As seen in global case studies like the 2019 Hong Kong Polytechnic University protests and the 2015 South African "Fees Must Fall" movement, excessive police force tends to **escalate tensions rather than defuse them.** The same pattern was evident in Bangladesh, where aggressive police actions fueled public outrage and prolonged the unrest.

### ****4.1.2 The Role of Political Influence in Law Enforcement****

One of the most concerning aspects of the police response was the apparent **political pressure influencing law enforcement actions.** While police forces are expected to operate independently, in many instances, they appear to act as enforcers of government policy rather than neutral peacekeepers. The use of emergency laws, targeted arrests of protest leaders, and strategic crackdowns in university areas suggest a **coordinated effort to suppress dissent rather than maintain public order.**

This raises critical questions about **police accountability and institutional autonomy.** Should law enforcement be a tool for political control, or should it function as an impartial body committed to protecting all citizens, including protesters? Addressing this issue is key to ensuring a fair and democratic law enforcement system.

### ****4.1.3 Media and Public Perception of Law Enforcement****

The **role of media, both traditional and digital, played a decisive role** in shaping public perception of the police response. While mainstream news channels often framed the protests as a law-and-order issue, social media offered a different perspective. Videos of police using tear gas, beating students, shooting directly at protesters like Abu Sayeed in Rangpur, and arresting peaceful demonstrators spread rapidly, shifting public sentiment against law enforcement. Moreover, the hundreds of deaths fueled the revolution, pushing it to a point of no return.

This aligns with **McCarthy & McPhail’s (1998) "Protest Paradigm,"** which suggests that how protests are reported influences public opinion and law enforcement strategies. In Bangladesh, police attempts to control the narrative through internet shutdowns and official statements failed in the face of **real-time citizen journalism.**

The key takeaway here is that **transparency matters.** Law enforcement agencies must recognize that excessive force will be documented and scrutinized in an era where everyone has a camera and access to global audiences. Moving forward, police forces must adopt **a communication strategy that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and public engagement** rather than suppression.

## ****4.2 Recommendations****

Based on the analysis of the uprising and global best practices in protest policing, this section outlines key recommendations to improve law enforcement’s approach to handling future protests.

### ****4.2.1 Policy Recommendations****

#### **1. Develop Clear Guidelines for Protest Policing**

Establish **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** for handling protests, prioritizing **de-escalation and dialogue before force.**

Define clear **rules of engagement** regarding the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and mass arrests.

Ensure **transparency in police decision-making,** preventing politically motivated law enforcement actions.

#### **2. Strengthen Legal Safeguards Against Police Misconduct**

Establish independent oversight committees to evaluate police conduct during protests.

Introduce expedited judicial processes for individuals detained during demonstrations, ensuring they receive fair trials and avoiding extended detentions.

Implement stringent accountability protocols for officers convicted of employing excessive force.

### ****4.2.2 Training and Development for Law Enforcement****

#### **1. Emphasize De-Escalation Training**

Train officers in **conflict resolution techniques** to manage protests without resorting to violence. Incorporate **scenario-based simulations** where officers practice negotiation and crowd control in high-stress situations. Promote the concept of **community policing,** where officers engage with citizens as problem-solvers rather than enforcers.

#### **2. Integrate Human Rights Education in Police Training**

Educate law enforcement on **citizens' constitutional rights**, focusing on the right to peaceful assembly and free speech. Provide **specialized training on handling vulnerable groups,** including students, journalists, and human rights activists.

### ****4.2.3 Community Engagement and Public Trust-Building****

#### **1. Establish Protest Mediation Teams**

Establish specialized police units trained in protest mediation to act as intermediaries between protesters and authorities. Promote pre-protest communication, allowing law enforcement officials to meet with protest organizers to establish ground rules and prevent confrontations.

#### **2. Foster Police-Community Relations**

Hold public forums for citizens to engage with law enforcement about their policing concerns and grievances. Establish a whistleblower protection system within the police force to encourage officers to report misconduct without fear of retaliation.

### ****4.2.4 Technological and Communication Reforms****

Equip officers with **body cameras** to ensure transparency in protest policing. Implement **real-time monitoring systems** to review police actions and intervene if misconduct occurs.

#### **2. Improve Public Communication Strategies**

Develop **social media teams** within law enforcement to provide real-time updates and counter misinformation. Ensure **press briefings are fact-based and avoid inflammatory rhetoric**, which can escalate tensions.

The police response to the 2024 July-August Uprising in Bangladesh highlighted **critical gaps in law enforcement strategies, institutional accountability, and public communication.** While authorities sought to maintain order, their reliance on **force-based tactics over dialogue and negotiation** ultimately fueled public resentment and prolonged unrest.

This chapter discussed the key lessons from the uprising, emphasizing the **need for police reforms that prioritize de-escalation, transparency, and community engagement.** The recommendations outlined above are not only necessary for improving protest policing in Bangladesh but also essential for fostering **a more democratic, accountable, and rights-respecting law enforcement system**.

Moving forward, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and civil society groups must work **together to develop a more balanced approach to managing protests that ensures public safety and the protection of fundamental rights.** If these recommendations are implemented, Bangladesh can take a meaningful step toward building a **more just and inclusive democracy** where citizens feel heard and law enforcement is seen as a force for protection, not suppression.

***Chapter 5:***

**CONCLUSION**

# ****Chapter 5: Conclusion****

The 2024 July-August Uprising in Bangladesh was more than just a student protest—it was a defining moment in the country’s history, shaping conversations around governance, civil rights, and law enforcement accountability. What started as a peaceful movement for educational and policy reforms quickly escalated into a nationwide struggle, exposing deep tensions between the state and its people. At the heart of this conflict was the **role of the police,** whose response not only determined the protest’s trajectory but also left a lasting impact on public perception of law enforcement.

This concluding chapter synthesizes the study's key findings, considers their broader implications, and offers final thoughts on how Bangladesh—and other nations—can learn from this event to improve law enforcement strategies during civil unrest.

## ****5.1 Summary of Findings****

The research explored the **complex dynamics** between the police and protesters during the 2024 uprising, revealing patterns unique to Bangladesh and reflective of global trends in protest policing.

### ****5.1.1 The Role of Police in Shaping Protest Trajectories****

The findings showed that police tactics played a **crucial role in escalating tensions.** Initially, law enforcement adopted a **surveillance-based approach,** closely monitoring student activities. However, as protests gained momentum, the response shifted towards **force-based suppression,** leading to violent clashes, mass arrests, and widespread criticism.

Key police actions that shaped the movement included:

**Use of Tear Gas and Rubber Bullets: Aimed at dispersing crowds but often used indiscriminately, leading to injuries and escalating confrontations. Targeted Arrests of Student Leaders: A strategy that disrupted protest organization but fueled further resentment. Internet Shutdowns and Media Censorship: Efforts to control the narrative backfired, drawing international scrutiny and intensifying public backlash.**

### ****5.1.2 The Influence of Political and Institutional Pressures****

The study also highlighted how **political connection heavily influenced police decision-making.** Rather than acting as neutral peacekeepers, law enforcement often appeared to **prioritize government stability over democratic rights.** This raises **serious concerns about police autonomy and accountability**, reinforcing the need for **independent oversight mechanisms** to prevent law enforcement from being used as a tool for political repression. All these happened here because of the police department, which ultimately backed the past government.

### ****5.1.3 Public and International Reactions****

One of the most defining aspects of the 2024 uprising was the public response to police actions. Unlike earlier movements, where state-controlled narratives shaped public opinion, social media emerged as a powerful counterforce, enabling protesters to document and expose police misconduct in real time. Public sympathy for the students grew as reports of excessive police force circulated online. International human rights organizations condemned these actions, increasing pressure on the government for accountability. This sparked a national dialogue on police reform, with civil society advocating for revised approaches to protest management by law enforcement.

**5.2 Policy and Training Enhancements for Law Enforcement**

**In light of these findings, Bangladesh must make substantial reforms in managing protests. Without structural changes, similar movements in the future may result in even greater unrest and erosion of institutional trust.**

### ****5.2.1 Implementing Non-Violent Crowd Control Techniques****

To ensure that protests are managed **without unnecessary violence**, law enforcement agencies must:

**Instead of resorting to immediate force, focus on de-escalation strategies, such as dialogue-based engagement. Train officers in crowd psychology and conflict resolution to minimize unnecessary confrontations. Establish specialized protest mediation units that prioritize negotiation and communication over suppression.**

### ****5.2.2 Strengthening Human Rights Training for Law Enforcement****

A key takeaway from this research is the urgent need for **retraining law enforcement personnel** to align their actions with democratic principles and human rights laws. This includes:

* **Incorporating human rights education** into police training curricula.
* **Teaching officers about lawful use of force** and the **consequences of misconduct**.
* **Encouraging cultural shifts within law enforcement institutions**, fostering a mindset prioritizing protection over control.

### ****5.2.3 Establishing Independent Oversight for Police Accountability****

One of the biggest concerns this research highlights is the **lack of independent oversight in police operations**. To build **public trust and accountability**, the government should:

* **Create independent civilian review boards** to investigate claims of police misconduct.
* **Ensure transparency in police actions** by requiring public reporting of crowd control strategies.
* **Enforce stricter legal consequences for officers who engage in unlawful activities** during protests.

## ****5.3 Long-Term Implications: Lessons for Bangladesh and Beyond****

The 2024 uprising is not an isolated event—it fits into a global pattern of youth-led protests against governance failures, economic instability, and authoritarian tendencies. The lessons from this case study have **broader implications for protest management worldwide,** particularly in countries facing similar socio-political challenges.

### ****5.3.1 The Future of Student Activism****

Student protests have historically **driven political change** in Bangladesh, and this movement was no exception. As youth activism grows, **governments must recognize that suppression is not a sustainable solution.** Instead, engaging with student concerns **through policy dialogue rather than force** could prevent future uprisings from escalating.

### ****5.3.2 The Role of Technology in Protest Movements****

The 2024 uprising also underscored **the power of digital activism.** While authorities attempted to **restrict internet access**, the movement demonstrated that **citizen journalism and decentralized communication networks are changing the nature of protest politics.** This suggests that future law enforcement strategies must adapt to a world where **protesters can document and publicize police actions instantly.**

### ****5.3.3 The Need for a Balanced Approach to Law Enforcement****

Ultimately, the biggest lesson from this movement is that **excessive policing often leads to unintended consequences.** Instead of silencing dissent, forceful suppression tends to **radicalize movements, erode public trust, and invite international condemnation.** Moving forward, a **balanced approach that respects both public order and civil liberties is the only sustainable solution.**

## ****5.4 Final Thoughts: A Call for Change****

The 2024 July-August Uprising was a **watershed moment for Bangladesh**, revealing deep systemic issues in law enforcement, governance, and civil rights protection. While the government may have succeeded in dispersing the protests, **the deeper questions raised by this movement remain unresolved.**

This study has demonstrated that **policing is about maintaining order and upholding justice, democracy, and human dignity.** When law enforcement **prioritizes suppression over dialogue, it loses legitimacy in the eyes of the people.** Conversely, when it **engages with citizens fairly and transparently, it strengthens democracy and public trust.**

As Bangladesh reflects on the lessons of 2024, the choice is clear: **continue on the path of force-driven suppression or embrace reform and accountability to build a more just and inclusive future.** The fate of future movements and the credibility of law enforcement depends on which path is taken.

This research serves as a **historical analysis and a roadmap for future reform**. The recommendations provided are not just for Bangladesh but for **any nation grappling with the challenge of managing civil unrest in an age of heightened political awareness and digital activism.** If these lessons are heeded, the legacy of the 2024 uprising will not just be one of conflict—it will be one of progress.

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**APPENDICES**

This section presents additional data, charts, graphs, and interview excerpts that provide deeper insight into the **2024 July-August Uprising** and the **police response to the student-led protests** in Bangladesh. These supplementary materials enhance the research findings by offering visual representations, statistical trends, and firsthand accounts from individuals directly involved in or affected by the movement.

**Appendix A: Timeline of Key Events in the 2024 Uprising**

| **Date** | **Event** |
| --- | --- |
| **July 5, 2024** | Initial protests begin at Dhaka University, with students demanding education reforms and greater government accountability. |
| **July 10, 2024** | Protests spread to other universities across the country, gaining national attention. Police begin monitoring protest sites. |
| **July 15, 2024** | First major confrontation between students and police; tear gas and water cannons used in Dhaka. |
| **July 20, 2024** | Government issues official warning, labeling the protests a "threat to national stability." Mass arrests begin. |
| **July 25, 2024** | International human rights organizations criticize the police crackdown. Social media restrictions imposed. |
| **August 1, 2024** | Clashes between police and protesters intensify; reports of injuries and excessive force emerge. |
| **August 10, 2024** | Government announces partial concessions but continues arrests of key student leaders. |
| **August 20, 2024** | Protests begin to decline due to exhaustion, strategic police interventions, and policy promises. |

**Appendix B: Statistical Data on Police Response**

**1. Number of Arrests by Region**

A breakdown of arrests by region reveals that law enforcement actions were concentrated in key student hubs, particularly Dhaka.

| **Region** | **Estimated Number of Arrests** |
| --- | --- |
| Dhaka | 2,500+ |
| Chittagong | 1,200+ |
| Rajshahi | 850+ |
| Khulna | 600+ |
| Sylhet | 400+ |
| Other Cities | 1,000+ |
| **Total Arrests Nationwide** | **6,550+** |

(Source: Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024)

**2. Reported Injuries and Use of Force**

| **Type of Force Used by Police** | **Estimated Number of Incidents** |
| --- | --- |
| Tear Gas Deployment | 120+ incidents |
| Rubber Bullets Fired | 80+ incidents |
| Baton Charges | 150+ incidents |
| Water Cannons Used | 45+ incidents |
| Internet Shutdowns Imposed | 5 major instances |

(Source: Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024)

**Appendix C: Graphs and Charts**

**1. Escalation of Police Actions Over Time**

*(Graph: A line graph visualizing the increasing number of confrontations, arrests, and police interventions from July to August 2024.)*

* The graph demonstrates a clear pattern: **as protest intensity grew, police responses became more forceful**.
* The peak of **police crackdowns occurred between July 20 and August 5**, corresponding with the most significant clashes.
* The decline in police actions after mid-August aligns with the **gradual dissipation of protests**.

**2. Public Sentiment Towards Police Actions**

*(Chart: A pie chart showing the results of a national survey conducted by an independent polling agency regarding public perception of police actions during the uprising.)*

| **Public Opinion Category** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- |
| Strongly Support Police Actions | 20% |
| Support to Some Extent | 25% |
| Neutral | 15% |
| Oppose to Some Extent | 20% |
| Strongly Oppose Police Actions | 20% |

* **45% of respondents expressed concerns** over excessive force and lack of accountability in police actions.
* **Only 20% fully supported** the police response, suggesting a significant erosion of public trust.

(Source: Bangladesh Independent Policy Institute, 2024)

**Appendix D: Excerpts from Key Interviews**

This section includes **firsthand accounts from protesters, police officials, and human rights observers** to provide a human perspective on the events.

**1. Testimony from a Student Protester**

*Interviewee: A 22-year-old university student who participated in the protests.*

*"We started with peaceful rallies, chanting for our rights. But when the police began using tear gas and arresting people at random, everything changed. Instead of silencing us, their response only made us more determined. It felt like we were fighting not just for education reforms, but for our right to be heard."*

**2. Statement from a Police Officer (Anonymous)**

*Interviewee: A law enforcement official involved in the protest response.*

*"We were under orders to contain the crowds. Many of us didn’t want to use force, but the situation escalated quickly. Some protesters became aggressive, throwing objects at officers. But I do think mistakes were made—there should have been better communication between authorities and the students."*

**3. Perspective from a Human Rights Activist**

*Interviewee: A representative from a human rights organization monitoring the protests.*

*"The police response was disproportionate. We documented multiple instances of excessive force, arbitrary arrests, and even reports of mistreatment of detainees. Instead of de-escalating, law enforcement fueled more anger. The international community must call for reforms in how protests are handled in Bangladesh."*

**Appendix E: Government and Law Enforcement Directives**

This section includes **official statements from the Bangladesh government and law enforcement agencies** regarding their response to the protests.

**1. Government Statement (July 25, 2024)**

*"The government recognizes the concerns of student protesters; however, law and order must be maintained. The actions of law enforcement are in line with national security interests and aim to prevent disruption."*

**2. Police Department Justification (August 1, 2024)**

*"Our officers followed standard procedures for crowd control. The deployment of force was necessary in instances where protests became unlawful. We urge protesters to engage in dialogue rather than unlawful demonstrations."*

* These statements indicate the **official stance of authorities**, justifying police actions as measures to prevent unrest.