

# Reevaluating the Underlying Factors of 1990's Mass Uprising against Authoritarian Regime in Bangladesh: An Analysis in the Light of Causal Model of Internal Conflict

Md. Zarif Rahman

Research Assistant, Institute of Informatics and Development (IID), Bangladesh  
E-mail: [zarifrahman111@gmail.com](mailto:zarifrahman111@gmail.com)

(Received 29 Decemeber 2022; Accepted 29 January 2023; Available online 14 February 2023)

**Abstract** - From the early beginning of the authoritarian government of Ershad, there was widespread opposition to his autocratic authority, which persisted for eight years before the 1990 rebellion brought an end to it. Like the majority of movements in Bangladesh, this one was started by students who put in heroic effort to see it through to a victorious finish. This was an urban-centric movement. With the aid of an established academic model of internal conflict, this study aims to investigate the revolt and support its underlying causes - particularly its socioeconomic and cultural causes - as well as its political causes. This study has been conducted by qualitative method, in which the information has been collected from secondary sources. As the analytical framework, this study uses Michael E. Brown's internal conflict causal model. According to this analysis, the major structural causes that led to the uprising were communal violence, a weakened educational system, corruption, and paramilitary activity on the part of the government. In terms of political factors, this study points to the authority's use of torture or other oppressive measures against people's fundamental rights, the state's non-secular policy, the scope of political opportunity, public support and sympathy for the students, the authority's political error, and the coordinated actions of political elites as being important causes of the uprising. Economic and social factors contributing to the rebellion include the rising cost of living, the debt crisis, regular failure to meet growth targets, and a highly divisive and bourgeois-centric economic system. Once more, this study reveals that the government's actions against national culture through various policies, the extreme application of military culture, people's negative memories of the Pakistani era's authoritarian regime, and the positive perception of the student community in society are the cultural and perceptual factors that led to the uprising. The findings of the study will give relevant academicians, decision-makers, and the general public essential knowledge about Bangladeshi history as well as the fundamental causes of internal strife. They might contrast these conclusions with some important recent occurrences in Bangladesh. They may use it to address the fundamental issues in various facets of our society. As a result, the research may help them identify likely and long-lasting remedies for the advancement of our civilization.

**Keywords:** Mass Uprising, Authoritarian Regime/Ershad Government, Bangladesh, Underlying Factors of Mass Uprising, Causal Model of Internal Conflict, Structural Factors, Political Factors, Economic/Social Factors, Cultural/Perceptual Factors

## I. INTRODUCTION

The evidence of mass uprising against authoritarian regime is not an unfamiliar factor in the history of Bangladesh. At the Pakistan period, an anti-dictatorship struggle against Ayub Khan's rule took place in late 1969. An eleven-point program was formulated by the political and student leaders which initiated an anti-government movement. It sustained wide support including large-scale worker actions. So, the pattern of events in the unfolding of Bangladesh's democratization is familiar to its people (Katsiaficas, 2013). General Hussain Muhammad Ershad came to the power of Bangladesh in 1982 through a bloodless coup. Mass movement began against Ershad's authoritarian rule at the very beginning of his regime and sustained for eight years until the termination of his rule through the 1990 mass uprising (Maksud, 1991). This movement was started by students, as are the majority of movements in Bangladesh, and it was only made effective through their tremendous effort. It was actually a Dhaka-centric movement. There was little participation from rural class people. The ruling regime took different types of repressive and strategic actions to contract the movement. But continuous effort from the student community, unified activities by political elites (existing political parties) and continuous support from other elite groups of the society helped the movement to expand. The 1990 mass uprising in Bangladesh brought an end to the authoritarian regime after enormous student sacrifices, including the deaths of numerous student leaders, frequent arrests, and torture.

In light of this, the mass uprising represents a critical turning point in the history of Bangladesh. So, to understand the complex political history of the country, it is necessary to conduct some serious research on this uprising in order to determine the primary and secondary causes of the movement. Thus, the aim of this study is to analyze the uprising and to uphold the underlying factors (especially the socio-economic and cultural factors) as well as the political factors of this uprising with the help of existing scholarly model of internal conflict. This paper takes 1982 to 1990 as its study period thus it can analyze the underlying tensions. The key findings of the study will provide important knowledge about history of Bangladesh as well as the

fundamental factors of internal conflict to relevant academicians, policy makers and general people. They might contrast these views with some important recent occurrences in Bangladesh. They may utilize it to address the fundamental issues in various facets of our society. As a result, the research may help them identify plausible and long-lasting remedies for the advancement of the nation.

## **II. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: THE MASS UPRISING of 1990 in BANGLADESH**

In 1982, Hussain Muhammad Ershad took control of the government through a coup. Needless to say, it was authoritarian in nature. Mass protests against Ershad's authoritarian leadership began as soon as his regime took office and continued for eight years until his overthrow in 1990. Political parties, the student communities, lawyers, workers' committees, doctors, professors, poets, and writers, to name a few, all made significant contributions to the movement. The majority of the movement's root-level actors were active in the movement's last phase, which was centered in Dhaka. Like the majority of movements in Bangladesh, this one was started by students who put in a heroic effort to see it through to a victorious finish. The "Mojid Khan Education Policy," put forth by the Ershad government on September 23, 1982, was the first issue that faced intense protest from the student leaders (Maksud, 1991). The contentious educational strategy mandated that pupils begin learning Arabic and English in the first grade. The strategy also called for raising the price of higher education. The plan was met with tremendous opposition from the student body. On November 8, 1982, the police stormed a student gathering near the University of Dhaka. The police's intervention enflamed the movement. On November 21st, 1982, the students established a platform called the "Organization of Student Movement" and made three points of demand. Thousands of students stormed the Ministry of Education on February 14, 1983, and at least four individuals were killed when police and paramilitary troops opened fire. The public's morale was shaken by this incident.

Following the brave sacrifice of students, 19 political parties released a joint statement endorsing them, and Bangladesh saw the beginning of coordinated anti-regime movements. The movement's progress in the middle of the 1980s was severely hampered by divisions among the demonstrators and the supporting elite. Following the contentious election in 1986, the political establishment began to come together once more, which gave the students more political room to amplify their campaign. On October 10, 1990, with well-known people being targeted, some 22 student organizations came together to form the All Party Students' Unity (APSU), a coalition that would be in charge of organizing daily participatory meetings and protests. The killing of student leader Jihad on the same day that police attacked a group of students set off this incident.

Tens of thousands of students stood in a circle around a platform where his body lay, raising their right hands in a pledge not to go home until Ershad was made to quit. Student and police clashes persisted throughout the entire month of October. On university campuses, the All Party Students' Unity (APSU) frequently displayed a variety of activities. Political elites issued a united statement on November 19, 1990, calling for Ershad's resignation and the formation of a new democratic administration. The movement's contraction in favor of the students was mandated by this declaration. However, the regime continued to suppress the demonstrators, which fanned the flames of the movement. The government had imposed emergency laws nationwide on November 27, but people kept up their protest. Dr. Milan, a crucial APSU leader in 1982, was shot and killed while protesting as he crossed a street. This incident was the final blow to Ershad's government. Even a portion of the military seemed to support the students. Ershad agreed to resign from his position on December 4, 1990, in response to the ongoing protest (Katisficas, 2013).

## **III. CONCEPTUALIZING UNDERLYING FACTORS OF MASS UPRISING**

Mass uprising against regime or anti-regime movement is one of major dimensions of internal conflict (Wiberg and Scherrer, 1999). So, it is feasible to analyze the underlying factors of 1990s mass uprising in the light of a causal model of internal conflict which also upholds the underlying factors of internal conflict. The underlying factors of internal conflict are examined by not only concerned scholars but also many policymakers and journalists. Although in the context of policymakers and journalists, most of them believe that the causes or factors of internal conflicts are simple and straightforward. The driving forces behind these violent conflicts, it is said, are the "ancient hatreds" that many ethnic and religious groups have for each other. However, most of the concerned scholars reject this over simplified explanation. Gurr (1993) emphasized on several factors as grievances, political calculation, group history, extent of collective disadvantages, the salience of group identity, repressive control by dominant groups, opportunities for political actions etc., as the causes of conflictual action. Levine (1996) on the other hand, uphold some factors as the causes of internal conflict (more specifically secessionist violence) which are demographic conditions, political conditions, economic conditions, institutional changes and external intervention.

However, this study adopts the model developed by Michel E. Brown (1996) for analyzing the underlying factors of internal conflict. Brown summarized the collected wisdom from the scholarly literature on internal into four main clusters of factors which are structural factors, economic/social factors, political factors and cultural/perceptual factors. After identifying the clusters Brown then specified each of them by drawing some variables under them.

TABLE I UNDERLYING CAUSES/CAUSAL MODEL OF INTERNAL CONFLICT (BROWN, 1996)

Structural Factors	Economical/Social Factors
Weak states	Economic problems
Intra-state security concerns	Discriminatory economic systems
Ethnic geography	Modernization
Political Factors	Cultural/Perceptual Factors
Discriminatory political institution	Patterns of cultural discrimination
Exclusionary national ideologies	Group histories and perceptions
Inter-group politics	
Elite Politics	

In the next portions, this study organizes its analysis based on these variables to identify the underlying factors of internal unrests during Ershad regime which ultimately led to the 1990 Mass uprising in Bangladesh.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study has been conducted by qualitative method, in which the information has been collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, and relevant reports. The systematic data collecting from these sources for this study uses “directed content analysis.” This article attempts to compare and contrast the 1982-1990 mass uprising in Bangladesh against an authoritarian government with the pre-existing ideas of internal conflict. The collected information regarding the revolt is categorized in this study under the main theories’ variables. Later, same facts were examined (compare and contrast) via the prism of theoretical justifications.

#### V. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Structural Factors of the Uprising

According to Brown (1996) three main structural factors of internal unrest/conflict have drawn scholarly attention: weak states; intra-state security concern; and ethnic geography. However, in the context of 1990's mass uprising, ethnic geography is not as much as it was an urban-centric movement (Mohiuddin, 2007). Although CHT was always one of the major concerns during the period, it had littler role to play in the uprising. Thus, the following sections stresses the other two factors: weak state and intra-state security concern.

##### 1. Weak State

According to Tyagi (2012) the term “weak state” is a contentious one. It is generally used to define a state that is weak in its core functions of providing security to its citizens (security gap), providing basic services to its citizens (capacity gap), and having legitimacy among its people (legitimacy gap). So, when the authority is drowning into disorders, it loses its ‘legitimacy’ to the people of the state

and after a certain time the people turn against the authority. In the context of Ershad regime, the boundless corruption practiced by authority created disorder in almost every sector of the country gradually built a structural strain within the country. Many properties of the state took under the palms of Ershad through corruption. Description of special fund of president, relief fund, personal fund, Jakat fund never revealed in front of general public. During Ershad regime, the interest of authoritarian state bureaucracy and the interest of corrupted bourgeois worked in a parallel way. This created a plunder class who captured the economy, administration and lastly the whole state mechanism (Mohiuddin, 2007).

TABLE II EMBEZZLEMENT OF MONEY FROM DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS (1982-1990)

Institutions	Amount Embezzled Money
From Chattogram Urea fertilizer Factory	600 Crore
From Ghorashal fertilized factory	210 Crore
From Jamuna fertilizer factory	214 Crore
From Chattogram Medical Complex	100 Crore
On purpose of buying Radar for Air force	80 Crore
T & T Board Khulna Microwave	52 Crore
On the purpose of exportin Rice from Bulgaria	24 Crore
From PDB Bagabari Center for Electricity Department	105 Crore
From Ashuganj 150 Megawatt (3 <sup>rd</sup> unit)	70 Crore
On the purpose buying Ship from China	34 Crore
On the purpose of buying 5 ferries	56 Crore
On the purpose of buying DC 10 Aeroplan	140 Crore
On the purpose of buying Sugar from Malaysia	12 Crore
On the purpose of buying sugar from Brazil	98 Crore
On the purpose of buying Fisheries development corporation boat	161 Crore
On the purpose of buying ATP Aeroplan	75 Crore

(Source: MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

The diffusion of corruption affected society greatly. The annexation of money from different institutions were regular incidents at that time. Table II shows some evidences of money embezzlement during Ershad's regime. Again, the fragile education system during Ershad regime can be considered as another instance of weak state. The education system is associated with the capacity of the state. If the state fails to ensure an effective and affordable system of education, then gradually it may become weak. The education sector during 1982-90 was full of anarchy, terror and unscheduled off-days (Mohiuddin, 2007).

Table III shows the number of unscheduled off-days and its causes. As it shows, in most cases authority was directly connected with factors. The system in which the authority itself become the main obstacle, then fundamentally it will become weak system.

TABLE III REGISTER OF UNSCHEDULED OFF DAYS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (1982-1987)

Session	Total Off-days	Causes of off-days
1982-83	94 days	Government Interference
1983-84	33 days	Government Interference
1984-85	11 days	Strikes and Hartals called by Students and Political parties
	122 days	Government Interference
	11 days	Hartal
1985-86	22 days	Government Interference
	15 days	Jagannath Hall tragedy
1986-87	55 days	Strike by teachers
	Total 363 days	

(Source: MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

The controversial Mojid Khan education policy showed the intent of authority to destroy the education system to keep their control over the state. However, this policy was the first

TABLE IV POSITION OF EDUCATION IN NATIONAL PLANNING (IN CRORE)

Plan	Total Allocation	Education Sector	Percentages
1 <sup>st</sup> Five-year Plan and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Five-year Plan (Jointly)	5438.00	258.86	4.76%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Five-year Plan	6075.00	192.57	3.17%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Five-year Plan	3868.00	118.00	3.05%

(Source: MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

Table IV shows the decreasing trend of educational budget in every five-year plan during the Ershad regime. So, it can be concluded that Ershad regime consciously tried to break the education sector, which eventually made the country weak. Thus, both corruption and fragile education system during Ershad regime can be considered as the underlying factors of the mass uprising.

## 2. Intra-State Security Concern

When states become weak, fundamentally they become weak also in its core functions of providing security to its citizens (security gap) as mentioned in previous section. Security dilemma within different groups of the state then takes place. That's why individual groups within the state feel compelled to provide for their own defense and independent military preparation is growing day by day (Brown, 1996). However, in the context of Ershad regime, the case was different. During the period, extremely high militarization became the prime concern of intra-state security of Bangladesh.

Militarization is a fundamental component of every authoritarian regime (Uddin, 2006). Ershad regime was also no exceptional. Ershad built up the army, putting retired top commanders in positions of power and wealth, doubling officers' pay, and swelling the number of troops, he positioned the country increasingly closer to the United States. Again, to keep the army under control, Ershad raised the security expenditure higher to higher over the year.

issue which triggered the students to get mobilized against the authority (Katisficas, 2013). The government enacted the education policy bringing a comprehensive reform in the education system in order to strengthen power. Its aim was to regulate the universities and commercialize education. To abolish the autonomy of the university, it recommended abolishing the Ordinance of the autonomy of the Bangabandhu government.

At the same time, those who are able to spend 50 percent of the education are given the opportunity for higher education despite bad results. The policy also suggested making the Arabic language compulsory from the primary level which completely conflicting the basics of 1952's language movement (Banglainsider, 2018). Again, the budget allocated to education was significantly discriminatory. Allocation to the education sector in every five-years planning was less than security allocation (Mohiuddin, 2007).

Table V shows the unnatural expenditure on security sector. This kind of approach affect the structure in many ways. First of all, higher expenditure on security sector put pressure on the other sectors of the country like industry, education, agriculture etc.

TABLE V SECURITY EXPENDITURE (1980-1990)

Year	Security Expenditure (in Crores)
1980-81	256.1
1981-82	322.4
1982-83	478.6
1983-84	570.0
1984-85	511.8
1985-86	668.8
1986-87	814.9
1987-88	933.7
1988-89	1139.3
1989-90	1148.92
1990-91	1625.52

(Source: MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

Another fact is during this time, General Ershad utilized the process of militarization for a further inflicting of blows on the nation's body politic. He broke up the High Court into seven pieces (which act was later ruled illegal by the Supreme Court). The idea of the military in politics was then utilized to widen the influence and reach of communal forces. Ershad

decreed Islam as the religion of the state, and that one blow destroyed whatever little had remained of secularism as practiced by the state since the tragedy of 1975 (Ahsan, 2006). In a cynical attempt to remain in power, Ershad's forces organized attacks on Hindu businesses - hoping to fan the flames of ethnic conflict. These initiatives affected the security concern of other communal groups.

Again, as grassroots activists continued to pressure Ershad, the regime developed a new tactic, similar to one used in Burma: a host of hardened criminals was released from prisons and sent to attack protesters in the streets. On November 20, government-empowered paramilitary forces nearly killed student leader Nazmul Haq, and the next day, they injured dozens more students. Emboldened by the free hand granted them by the regime, on November 22, they launched an armed attack on the Dhaka University campus. In response, the APSU organized a huge demonstration on November 25, and when the paramilitary attacked as expected, students were ready for them - a few carried arms to counter those of the paramilitary forces. In a campus battle that lasted for hours, paramilitary was soundly defeated and fled in government vehicles (Katsiaficas, 2013).

So, from the above analysis militarization of society, authority induced communal violence and action of government paramilitary were prime factors of intra-state security concern. Here, the significant fact is that the government directly engaged with every factor, where Brown's analysis showed less relevance of government in the context of intra-state security concern. It is because in Brown's analysis, different ethnic groups within the country got the prime concern as the parties of internal conflict. However, in the present case, the authority itself is a party of the conflict, thus the patterns and factors of conflict have got different dimension in this context.

### *B. Political Factors of the Uprising*

Four main political factors have attracted attention in the scholarly literature on internal conflict: discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics and elite politics (Brown, 1996). All of these factors are more or less relevant for this study.

#### *1. Discriminatory Political Institutions*

Many argue that the prospects for conflict in a country depend to a significant degree on the type and fairness of its political system. Closed, authoritarian systems are likely to generate considerable resentment over time. Even in more democratic settings, resentment can build if some groups are inadequately represented in the government, the courts, the military, the police, political parties and other state and political institutions (Brown, 1996). In the context of Ershad regime, there were obvious lack of representativeness as the regime favored the military officials more in administrative and political sectors. Again, the discriminatory political institutions of Ershad regime tried to impose some policies

forcefully on the people of Bangladesh. And whenever people protested against them the authority took repressive actions. Some of these repressive actions actually worked as the precipitating or triggering factors of the uprising. Katsiaficas (2013) identified some specific precipitating factors, which are:

- a. A new education policy, known as the "Mojid Khan education policy," was being proposed (September 23, 1982).
- b. Police attacked students who were demonstrating, and at least four of them were killed. (14 February 1982)
- c. Creation of a puppet student organization supported by the regime (29 August 1983)
- d. Controversial elections that brought the major political parties together and led to the creation of the "Three Alliance," which enhanced the political opportunity for students because the political elites were working together (1986-1990).
- e. Death of Jihad (10 October 1990)
- f. An agreement between the political parties (19 November 1990)
- g. Dr. Shamsul Alam Milon passed away on November 27, 1990.

All of these events were the exercise of discriminatory political institutions against the freedom of rights, speech and movement. However, for the uprising these events produce some positives vibes for the movement. So, authority's torture or repressive action against the fundamental rights of people created some triggering events for the mass uprising.

#### *2. Exclusionary National Ideologies*

The prevailing national ideology also plays a significant role in the conflict within the country in question. In some places nationalism and citizenship are based on ethnic distinction rather than on the idea that everyone who lives in a country is entitled to the same rights and privileges (Brown, 1996). As it has already in this study for several times that the Ershad regime moved away from the secularists pillar of the constitution and made Islam as the state religion (Azad, 2006). This action to some extent exclusionary for the people from different faith and people didn't have any faith. Even, as mentioned already Ershad took violence measures against the Hindu community just for keeping his power through divide and rule policy. So, the non-secular state policy became the tool of cultural discrimination against minorities.

#### *3. Inter-Group Politics*

Many scholars argue that the prospects for violence in a country depend to a significant degree on the dynamics of domestic, inter-group politics. The prospects for violence are great if groups objectives are incompatible, groups are strong and determined, action is feasible, success is possible, and if inter-group comparisons lead to competition, anxiety and fears of being dominated (Brown, 1996). The more complex interactions between the group of student demonstrators and

the authorities can be seen in the context of the rebellion in the 1990s. It is clear that the students had a favorable opportunity structure from the start of the movement. Students in universities, notably those at Dhaka University, were primarily responsible for organizing the campaign. The campus setting proved advantageous to the student. For the student to organize and start a movement, the university served as a safe haven. Likewise, in a broader sense, the nation's society supported students, largely due to their heroic past service to the government (Katsiaficas, 2013). By creating a phony student organization of them, the dictatorship used a counter-mobilization strategy (Maksud, 1991). But more importantly, the opportunity structure was significantly impacted by societal repressive actions.

Although there was significant lack of elite support, the students were well committed to their platform for bringing the end of the regime. By analyzing the history, it can be seen that authoritarian regime often took the strategy of repression for contracting the movement, but according to Koopmans this act of repression often backfires (Koopmans, 2004). Thousands of students stormed the Ministry of Education on February 14, 1983, and at least four individuals were killed when police and paramilitary troops opened fire. The public's morality was shaken by this incident (Maksud, 1991). Students made a brave sacrifice, 19 political parties came together to support them, and Bangladesh saw the beginning of coordinated anti-regime operations. Alongside students, lawyers, doctors and cultural personalities activated in response to regime repression. This phenomenon eventually expand the movement again and transform the movement into upper level. As Zolberg termed the time of movement as "Moment of Madness", anticipation of parties often failed. Koopmans termed this kind of situation as punctuated equilibrium as mentioned above (Koopmans, 2004). In this case, Ershad regime falsely anticipated using repression as the tool to deal with the protest, but the trajectory of the movement transformed in the favor of the students. The student movement received support from the political establishment as well as compassion and credibility. So, the scope of political opportunity, society-wide support and sympathy for the students and political miscalculation of the authority were the key factors of the intra-group politics during the time.

#### 4. Elite Politics

Some scholars have emphasized elite politics and, more specifically, the tactics employed by desperate and opportunistic politicians in times of political and economic turmoil (Brown, 1996). During Ershad regime, the political elites more specifically two major political parties Awami League and BNP could not be unified because of their ego and lack of prudence (Mohiuddin, 2007). Breakage within the supportive elite and the protesters themselves greatly interrupted the flow of the movement in the mid-80s. The authority adopted a 'divide and rule' strategy to slow down the movement.

Ershad's seizure of power in 1982 had effectively caused the BNP to lose control of the government but it also provided an opportunity for the Awami league to enter into a coalition with him. When Awami league broke their promise to oppose election in 1986, almost all other parties including the BNP boycotted them (Rahman, 2015). This distance between supporting elites affected the flow of the movement. Moreover, some student leaders changed their stance and joined with the authority by falling in the greed of different facilities offered by the government. The strong censorship on the media and newspaper as well as continuous repression also hampered the flow of the movement. However, after the controversial election in 1986, the political elite started to get united again, which further opened up the political opportunity for the students to gear up the movement. The political elites worked together till the end of the uprising and successfully restored the democracy of Bangladesh. So, unified political elites was a key factor for the successful uprising.

#### C. Economic/Social Factors of the Uprising

According to Brown (1996) three broad economic and social factors have been identified as potential sources of internal conflict: economic problems, discriminatory economic systems and the trials and tribulation of economic development and modernization. For this study the third factor which is associated with modernization, is not an essential variable for analysis, as from previous sectors it can be observed that there were a lot of example of backwardness in terms of social, economic, political etc. all most every sector. That's why in the next sections this study draws analysis based on other two sectors: economic problems and discriminatory economic systems.

##### 1. Economic Problems

Most countries experience economic problems of one kind or another sooner or later, and these problems can contribute to intra-state tensions. Economic problems can be associated with unemployment, the high price of daily commodities, inflation, lower growth etc. Economic slowdowns, stagnation, deterioration and collapse can be deeply destabilizing. Economic reforms in this context do not always help and can contribute to the problem in the short term, especially if economic shocks are severe and state subsidies for food and other basic goods, services and social welfare are cut (Brown, 1996). During Ershad's period almost all of these problems were present. At that the economic sector of Bangladesh became a free field of consumption for plunders, touts and petty-bourgeois (Mohiuddin, 2007)). This extreme disorder affected the lives of general people.

The expense of living had been sharply increasing. The cost of living climbed 11.33 times in the 16 years following independence (1970–1986), according to a ministry of finance poll conducted in 1986, with the authoritarian system contributing more to this rise. Table VI gives the defense of the argument mentioned above. It shows how the primary

production system was affected by economic mismanagement. The consequence of these kind disorders played an important to get mobilize against the authority.

TABLE VI RATE OF GOODS' PRICE RISE (1985-86)

Name of products	Rate of price rise in percentage
Rice	10% to 37.5%
Garlic	126.67%
Raw Curry	35% to 75%
House rent	10% to 15%
Price of WASA's water	25.3%
Gas	10%

(Source: Consumer's Association of Bangladesh, 1986)

Inflation was another major factor of economic problem of that time. For example, in the first nine months of 1989-90 economic year the inflation rate was 9.82% compared to the first nine months of 1988-89. In the previous year the inflation rate was 7.14%. Again, there was always a foreign debt crisis throughout the period. The bad governance of Ershad made most of the sectors of country foreign debt dependent and it increased several times at the end of 90s. In 1988-89 the total percentages of foreign debt in the developing sector was 126.3%. This extreme debt dependency made owes a just born child 3200 taka. These mismanagements gradually broke the economic structure as well as people's trust in the authority (Mohiuddin, 2007).

TABLE VII RATE OF NATIONAL GROWTH (MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

Economic Year	Growth Target	Attained Growth
1981-82	5.4	0.94
1982-83	6.4	3.69
1983-84	6.0	4.20
1984-85	6.20	3.93
1985-86	5.5	4.01
1986-87	5.2	4.00
1987-88	5.2	2.95
1988-89	6.0	2.9

Table VII upholds the frequent failure of government to reach the growth target in every economic year, which actually proves that the progress of economy was no way nowhere near to the social demand. And as already mentioned above, according to Brown, when economic growth fails to meet social demands, social unrest is the obvious consequence, and consequences played roles as the catalyzers of the uprising. So, from above discussion, it can be identified that the rising cost of livelihood, inflation and debt crisis and frequent failure to reach growth are factors which play major role in the upsurge.

## 2. Discriminatory Economic Systems

Discriminatory economic system, whether they discriminate on the basis of class or ethnicity, can generate feelings of

resentment and levels of frustration prone to the generation of violence. During the Ershad regime, economic sectors became highly polarized and bourgeois-centric. Controlling the economy through unequal international trade and imperialism, rising class difference, poverty, crisis of capital, downwardness of economic growth, decreasing per capita income etc. were features of economy. Not only bulging of facilitated class, all the sectors of export-import, collaborative loan were captured by the facilitated neo-merchants. Till 30 June 1989 the amount of unrealized expired loan was about 700 crore Taka (Mohiuddin, 2007).

Table VIII shows the huge deficiencies between import and export sector. But these huge deficiencies did not increase the production or consumption level of country at all because all of these facilities were consumed by the plunder bourgeois class. At the same time, subsidies provided for selected assistants of authoritarian regime, state noncooperation to any kind industrial and exportable products, brought all kinds of production at the lowest level. This highly polarized and bourgeois-centric economic system caused society-wide frustration, which played role as the pre-condition of the mass uprising.

TABLE VIII DEFICIENCIES BETWEEN IMPORTS AND EXPORTS (1987-90: IN CRORE) (MOHIUDDIN, 2007)

Years	Exports	Imports	Deficiencies
1987-88	3808	9329	5521
1988-89	4097	10848	5751
1989-90	4950	12663	7713

## D. Cultural/Perceptual Factors of the Uprising

Two cultural and perceptual factors have been identified in scholarly literature as sources of internal conflict. The first is cultural discrimination against minorities and the second factor refers to the group histories and group perceptions. Both of these factors are more or less relevant for our cases.

### 1. Cultural Discrimination

As already mentioned above, Ershad made Islam as the state religion and he conscious practiced organized crime against the Hindu minority. The first issue which triggered the people to get mobilized was "Mojid Khan Education Policy" proposed by the Ershad government on 23 September 1982 (Maksud, 1991). The controversial education policy made learning Arabic and English from class one compulsory for students. This initiative fundamentally posed a threat to the people of other religions. This discriminatory education policy also made higher education highly commercial rather than talent-oriented, where most of the families of the country then were not able to bear the expense.

Moreover, the policy made foreign language learning (Arabic and English) compulsory from class two, which was contradictory to the culture of the country whose people gave blood for their mother-language. So, this study argues that

the authoritarian regime conducted cultural discrimination not just against the minority but against the mass people. This discriminatory culture of governance made people frustrated time to time.

Again, the military culture practiced in every sector of the government was not compatible with the people of Bangladesh who are fundamentally democratic. There were several consequences of this forced induced military culture. First, the military cultural aggression destroyed the institution of the military itself being disloyal and betraying their own professional rules and regulations, and norms and values of a conventional army outlined in the constitution. Second, the military autocracy discarded the constitutional provision for a change of state power, which threw the peaceful political culture into uncertainty and disrupted the continuation of a civilian rule in politics. Third, the action of General Ershad damaged mostly the social soul of political institution of the country. So, it can be said the frequent undermine of national culture and extreme practice of military culture made people mobilize for the upsurge to restore not only democracy but also the culture of the nation (Uddin, 2006).

2. Group Histories and Perceptions

The second aspect that falls under cultural/perceptual factors involves group histories and group perceptions of themselves and others. As people in Bangladesh had a dreadful memory of an authoritarian regime from the Pakistan period, conscious people started to feel the strain of the return of the

same kind of regime. Again, frequent repressive actions, famine throughout the country, controversial education policy, ignorance of cultural aspect of Bangladesh in the national policy etc. provided strains from different dimensions. Indeed, sometimes the movement itself actively produced some strains throughout society especially in the context of the student part of the movement. For example, in the early part of the movement, students changed their motive and perception of the movement from anti-education policy movement to anti-regime movement because frequent torture from the regime force and mostly the death of four students during the protest (Maksud, 1991). These repressive actions from the government had been developing strains within the student community. The demonstrators made repeated attempts to link their campaign to the language movement of 1952, the mass uprising of 1969, and the liberation war of 1971. These incidents stoked societal anti-regime sentiment. The protester may attempt to awaken such dormant emotion in order to mobilize the populace against the authorities.

Furthermore, the students were in charge of the movement. In the context of Bangladesh, students have a long history of advancing the country. The student body matures into a distinctive and significant class in Bangladeshi society. Their assistance in a number of national crises elevates their social standing. The citizens of this nation have seen firsthand how their movements throughout the Pakistan era contributed. As a result, Bangladesh’s population is familiar with the sequence of events as Bangladesh’s democratization takes place (Katsiaficas, 2013). So, the key players in Bangladesh’s sociopolitical situation are primarily students.

TABLE IX REEVALUATION OF THE UNDERLYING FACTORS OF 1990’S MASS UPRISING

Structural Factors		Economic/Social Factors	
Weak states	Corruption	Economic problems	Rising cost of livelihood
	Militarization		
	Fragile education system		Inflation and foreign debt crisis Frequent failure of achieving the yearly growth target
Intra-state security concerns	Authority induced communal violence	Discriminatory economic systems	Highly polarized economic sector
	Violent action of government paramilitary		Bourgeois-centric economic system
Political Factors		Cultural/Perceptual Factors	
Discriminatory political institution	Repressive action of authority against the fundamental rights of people	Patterns of cultural discrimination	Frequently undermined of national culture through the national policy
			Extreme practice of military culture
Exclusionary national ideologies	Non-secular state policy	Group histories and group perception	Bad memory within people’s mind about authoritarian regime from the Pakistan period
Inter-group politics	Political opportunity for Protesters (specially students)		The positive perception about student community in the society
	Society-wide support and sympathy for the students		
	Political miscalculation of the authority		
Elite Politics	Unified activities of elite political parties (Awami League and BNP)		



Chowdhury (2008) emphasizes that historically low matriculation rates and the high poverty rate in the nation made students particularly privileged and destined to join the political elite, and they responded with heroic leadership grounded in the national good. Students took the lead in the anti-dictatorship resistance movements against Ayub Khan's reign while the area was still known as East Pakistan. They created an eleven-point agenda and launched an anti-government movement in late 1969. This movement gained widespread support and included significant worker protests. When they organized Bengalis for independence in March 1971, they also organized a sizable noncooperation movement that even Gandhi would have been impressed with.

According to Uddin (2006), "The Dhaka University Central Student Union" was regarded by Bangladesh's sociopolitical and intellectual sectors as the nation's second parliament. The University of Dhaka and its student body played a crucial role in all movements from the post-British politics of the Pakistan Period to the creation of an independent Bangladesh. This university hosted a large number of student organizations, including socialists and capitalists with progressive ideologies and practices, which helped to create a large intellectual community throughout the areas. So, from the above discussion, it can be observed that there was already a bad memory within people's mind about authoritarian regime from the Pakistan period, which made people aware about the situation more easily. Again, the positive perception about student community in the society gave the movement credibility as the movement was led by the students mainly.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study tries to analysis the underlying factors of 1990s mass uprising from four point of views, which are: Structural factors, Political factors, Economic/Social factors and Cultural/Perceptual factors, following the model of Michael E. Brown about factors/causes of internal conflict. In the context of structural factors, this study finds corruption and fragile education as the underlying factors which fundamentally made the state weak and triggered the mass uprising. Again, this study identifies that the authority induced communal violence and action of government paramilitary were prime factors of intra-state security concern, which further affected the structure of country and fueled the mass uprising. In the context of political factors, this study adopts all the four variables proposed by Brown, which are: discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary political ideologies, inter-group politics and elite politics. By analyzing the discriminatory practice of political institution, this study identifies that the authority's torture or repressive action against the fundamental rights of people created some triggering events for the mass uprising. In the context of exclusionary political ideologies this study argues the non-secular state policy tried to exclude minorities of state from the mainstream. On the other hand, this paper show that the

scope of political opportunity, society-wide support and sympathy for the students and political miscalculation of the authority were the key factors of the intra-group politics during the time. It also stresses that the unified political elites was a key factor for the successful upsurge. One the other hand, in the context of economic factors, this study conducts its analysis under two variables, which are: economic problems and discriminatory economic system. By analyzing the economic problems, this study stresses that the rising cost of livelihood, inflation and debt crisis and frequent failure to achieve the growth target are factors which play major role in the uprising. Again, in the context of discriminatory economic system this study argues that the highly polarized and bourgeois-centric economic system caused society-wide frustration, which played role as the pre-condition of the mass uprising. For the final cluster which is the cultural/perceptual factor, this study adopts two lenses, which are cultural discrimination and group history and perception. In the context of cultural discrimination, the study finds that the government action which frequently undermined of national culture through the national policy and extreme practice of military culture made people mobilize for the uprising to restore not only democracy but also the culture of the nation. By analysis through the group history and perception lens it identifies that there was already a bad memory within people's mind about authoritarian regime from the Pakistan period, which made people aware about the situation more easily. Again, the positive perception of the student community in society provided credibility to the movement, which was led primarily by students. Table IX presents the summary of the findings of this study. The underlying factors of 1990s mass movement are multifaceted, and it cannot be unfolded in just one study. This study, however, tries to identify the factors from a generalized point of view. If the whole package of the underlying factors of this significant event is compared to an iceberg, this study may just be able to uphold some of the portions of the surface. However, the implication of this study is that the findings of the study can be used as a framework for analyzing other cases of internal conflicts especially which are related with authoritarian regime. Moreover, this study may provide important insights for policy makers about the public sentiment and society's pulse in the context of state-crafting or policy making, thus, they may run the state for the public well-being.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Ahsan, S. (2006). The militarization of Bangladeshi politics. Retrieved from <https://archive.thedailystar.net/forum/2006/november/militarization.htm>.
- [2] Brown, M. (1996). *The international dimensions of internal conflict*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- [3] Banglainsider (2018). Historic day of resistance against autocracy today. Retrieved from <https://en.banglainsider.com/bangladesh/1470/Historic-day-of-resistance-against-autocracy-today>.
- [4] Chowdhury, B. (2008). *Class and Social Structure of Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Ankur Prakashani, 2008), 66.
- [5] Gurr, T. R. (1993). *Minorities At Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- [6] Katsiaficas, G. (2013). *Asia's Unknown Uprisings, 2, 1947-2009*. Michigan: PM Press

- [7] Koopmans, R. (2004). 'Protest in Time and Space: The Evolution of Waves of Contention', in Snow D. A.; Soule S. A. and Kriesi H. (eds) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- [8] Levine, A. (1996). Political Accommodation and the Prevention of Secessionist Violence. In M. Brown, *The international dimensions of internal conflict*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- [9] Maksud, S. A. (1991). *গণআন্দোলন ১৯৮২-৯০* (in Bengali) 1st Edition. Dhaka: MUKTADHARA.
- [10] Mohiuddin, H. (2007). *নব্বইয়ের গণঅভ্যুত্থানের রাজনৈতিক সমাজতত্ত্ব*. Dhaka: Center for Applied Social Studies.
- [11] Rahman, M. H. (2015). *Bangladesher Rajnoitik Ghotonaponji বাংলাদেশের রাজনৈতিক ঘটনাপঞ্জি ১৯৭১-২০১১* (in Bengali). Prothoma.
- [12] Tyagi, J. (2012). Weak States. *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*. DOI: 10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog809
- [13] Wiberg, H., & Scherrer, C. (1999). *Ethnicity and Intra-state Conflict - Types, Causes and Peace Strategies*. Singapore: Ashgate.
- [14] Uddin, A. (2006). *The movement for the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh, 1982-1990: A study of political sociology* (Doctoral thesis). The University of Leeds: School of Sociology and Social Policy.