

From Uprising to Uncertainty: Bangladesh's Fragile Transition to Stability

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Summary

With support from various sections of society, Bangladeshi youth successfully ousted a dictatorial regime. However, ongoing issues of law and order, misgovernance and political violence have cast doubt on the progress made since last year. The interim government appears increasingly unable to manage rising political expectations. Still, the announcement of parliamentary elections offers a path toward stability – provided no unforeseen developments derail the process.

The events of 5 August 2024 have become a defining moment in Bangladesh's history. On that day, Sheikh Hasina, the country's longest-serving prime minister, was flown from her official residence, *Ganabhaban*, to India amid mass public outrage. Just days later, on 8 August 2025, an interim government was installed, led by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus as the Chief Advisor, supported by a council of 16 advisors. Intended as a transitional arrangement until the [next elections](#), this government now faces mounting uncertainties. Although Yunus has pledged to hold elections in February 2026, questions remain over the country's political stability and future direction.

The past year has been a mixed experience of exaltation, rejoicing and heightened expectations as well as disappointments, dismay and setbacks. The interim government has had to grapple with challenges of governance, manage economic problems and establish social and political cohesion.

The previous regime left the country in dire economic straits, with severe banking and severe fiscal issues. Multilateral lending institutions have been supportive, and with the changed political conditions, official remittances have picked up and the interim government has been able to control the inflationary trends, especially during the last Eid celebrations. [Economic recovery](#), albeit slow, is visible. However, despite several measures being introduced, [employment rates](#) have yet to recover. Moreover, the local environment has not been conducive for any new investments or entrepreneurial activities.

Public Misgivings

While the initial jubilation over the removal of an authoritarian leader was palpable, the few days of the nation being without a government led to mobocracy and outbreak of violence which became difficult to rein in, even after the interim government took over. The situation is a worry for the nation, particularly as Islamist groups have suddenly surfaced with reports of periodic minority attacks.

Although the [Police Reform Commission](#) was set up in October 2024, its ability and capacity to impose order on the streets have been rather suspect. According to a human rights organisation, [Odhikar Report](#), following the July uprising, 254 people were killed in nine months of political violence. In the political vacuum, [extortions and an upsurge in political killings](#), especially in the districts and rural Bangladesh, have only pointed to limited authority. The indiscriminate arrests and media suppression – again mirroring the playbook of the past practices – did not elicit public confidence.

The quick changes in administrative and constituent bodies have been unsettling, and some even appeared to stem from a political vendetta. The public misgivings about the lack of judicial independence have also been attributed to the interference of the interim government and the fact that more than 20,000 cases remain pending against workers, while, in contrast, cases involving prominent personalities have been withdrawn, which has only reinforced the [partisan perception](#).

National Charter

The interim government unveiled the July Declaration, or the National Charter, in August 2025, committing to elections and [acknowledging the 2024 student-led uprising](#). Framed as a broad consultative roadmap for constitutional, electoral and administrative reform, the Charter ultimately stemmed from 166 recommendations by six reform committees, despite consultations with 30 political parties. Its selective historical narrative, however, drew criticism for mirroring the practices of the previous regime. Electoral reform remains the immediate priority, with the onus on the Election Commission (EC) to ensure free, fair and inclusive elections. Ironically, youth leaders – key voices of the uprising – have repeatedly criticised the EC's credibility. Civil society too has accused the [interim government of bias](#) and failing to align its economic policies with its stated commitment to non-discrimination.

While students were instrumental in ushering political change, concerns have emerged over their growing influence, with some suggesting a [“government within the government”](#). The formation of the Jatiyo Nagarik Party (NCP) marks a break from dynastic politics but the party is often seen as a [king's party](#) with limited experience. Its hard-line stances have yet to gain broad traction. Although its month-long July 2025 marches garnered local support, it remains unclear whether the NCP can secure a national mandate. Its centre-left manifesto seeks to fill the vacuum left by the Awami League but violence at a rally in Gopalganj (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birthplace) highlighted persistent tensions. With Sheikh Hasina's trial at the International Crimes Tribunal ongoing and the Awami League banned until its conclusion, questions around her possible extradition continue to cast uncertainty over Bangladesh's political future.

Yunus seems to have succeeded in reaching out to several big powers, including China, the United Kingdom and the United States – with which he was able to negotiate a 20 per cent tariff line. Although the interim government signed an energy agreement with Nepal and India, Yunus' inability to make much headway with neighbouring India has been more about the latter's reticence than the interim government's lack of interest.

While Bangladesh continues to grapple with numerous challenges, there is a crucial glimmer of optimism. The sacrifices made by hundreds of young people must not be in vain. As history has shown, it is Bangladesh's unwavering spirit and capacity to rise above adversity that truly define its strength and set it apart on the global stage.

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