







A Critical Discourse Analysis of Editorials of the Three English Newspapers on Hasina's Fall Using Norman Fairclough's Framework

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Abstract

This research aimed at examining a comparative critical discourse analysis of the representation of Sheikh Hasina's political decline in August 2024 as reflected in the editorials of three prominent English-language newspapers in South Asia: the DAWN (Pakistan), the New Age (Bangladesh), and the Hindustan Times (India). This research adopted a qualitative research design founded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically referencing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework: 1. Textual Analysis (Description), 2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation), and 3. Social Practice (Explanation). Applying this three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study examined the linguistic selections and discursive methods employed to portray Hasina's resignation and highlighted underlying power structures. The textual analysis indicated notable differences. For example, the DAWN revealed a critical stance cautioning against authoritarianism and military involvement; the New Age provided a respectful, biographical portrayal that highlighted Hasina's legacy; while the Hindustan Times represented her removal as a geopolitical crisis with implications for India in the region. The discursive and sociocultural analyses further illustrated how these texts were influenced by their national contexts, historical ties, and institutional ideologies. Each editorial reflected broader issues, ranging from the decline of democracy and civil-military interactions to national reputation and foreign policy concerns. This study concluded that editorial discourses serve as a potent tool for either reinforcing or challenging prevailing ideologies. By examining representations across borders, the research enhanced an understanding of how media framing affected political perceptions, public awareness, and cross-national narratives in South Asia. The findings emphasized the importance of CDA in deconstructing media rhetoric and provided insights into the intersection of language, ideology, and power in regional journalism.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, South Asian media, media discourse, language and power, Bangladesh and regional politics

1. Introduction

Language is a socially-embedded practice and language is characterized by ideology and can shape public perceptions, reinforce power relations, and influence political states of affairs. This is especially the case in the media debate, and especially apparent in its editorials, which tend to constitute "para-analysis based oversight" of (institutionalized) politics. In South Asia, where democracy is not much practiced, media narratives are critical in the formation of political personas and events, and consequently public perception and collective memory.

On August 5, 2024, after weeks of furious protests, the longest serving prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wajed resigned; an important development not just for Bangladesh but also the broader South Asian region. During Hasina's over fifteen straight year reign, infrastructure was notably improved but it was also a reign which saw increasingly tight politics (albeit through political centralization and fielding repression to opposition), decline of democratic institutions and corruption. The news of her sudden departure generated an onslaught of media responses, both domestically and abroad.

In the midst of these reactions, the editorials of major English-language newspapers in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India offered valuable insight into the reading of Hasina's fall within a variety of different political, cultural and ideological spaces. Opinion-editorials have a unique capacity for blending both fact-based reporting and evaluative judgment, all while expressing the ideological orientation of the paper and the larger nation. These editorials went beyond the recording of events – they constructed interpretations, assigned blame, celebrated resilience, and looked to the future.

This study employed the framework of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to critically examine three of these editorials: DAWN (Pakistan), New Age (Bangladesh), and Hindustan Times (India). Through a systematic analysis of discursive language choices, discourses, and sociopolitical conditions, the study sought to show how Sheikh Hasina's (de)politicization was discursively constructed by each text and what this told about national ideologies and political agenda, regional power dynamics, and political anxieties.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the powerful effects of media discourse on political narratives, there seems to have been a paucity of critical discourse studies which compare regional press discourses on the same political event in different manners. The sheikh had fallen, an event that drew enormous attention from the South Asian media, but where they each saw the world reflected in it, was shaped by widely different histories, cultures and ideologies. Nevertheless, these distinctions have not been investigating in detail.

Moreover, research on political discourse in South Asia has tended to concentrate on either national news reportage or political speeches, ignoring the ideological and rhetorical discursive functions of editorial journalism (Green, 1997b). their partition and continuous political hostility (Iqbal et al., 2022). In this region, media organizations commonly mediate with the political situation of surrounding countries, with discursive practices that are constructed in such a way which reflects the geopolitical concerns (Iqbal et al., 2022). The role of newspapers in shaping the political arena is a particularly important one in the South Asian setting (Saleem et al., 2024). Editorials are arguments, not news items, and as such they should not be judged by the same criteria of objectivity used to judge a news story. They are designed to interpret events, influence public opinion, and discretely (or nakedly) advocate for certain worldviews. However, these discursive operations – how editorials represent power, agency, legitimacy, and resistance – are still insufficiently studied, especially across national borders.

This is the gap that this research seeks to address how these three major newspapers from South Asia construct and frame political leave of Sheikh Hasina. Applying Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, it adopts to the purpose of revealing the radical political ideologies, as well as the regional interests, and the news organizational priorities indicated by the language and the discourse of the editorials. Furthermore, this research contributes to the general understanding of the way media discourse is involved in expressing democratic backsliding, public uprisings, and power transfers in the region.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate the linguistic and rhetorical elements employed in the editorials of DAWN, New Age, and Hindustan Times regarding Sheikh Hasina's political decline.
2. To analyze how discursive practices, such as production, distribution, and consumption, impact the portrayal of political authority and legitimacy.
3. To examine the wider socio-political ideologies that are reflected in and reinforced by the discourse found in editorials.
4. To compare and contrast how media narratives vary across national borders in their treatment of a shared regional political event.

1.3.1 Research Questions

Based upon the objectives of the study, these following research questions are formulated:

RQ1: How do linguistic and rhetorical choices in each editorial portray Sheikh Hasina's political decline?

RQ2: How do discursive practices (e.g. production, distribution, and consumption) influence the portrayal of political authority and legitimacy in these texts?

RQ3: What broader socio-political ideologies and contexts are reflected or reinforced by each editorial's discourse?

RQ4: How do the media narratives differ across the three national contexts in their framing of Hasina's fall?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The early 1980s witnessed the rise of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), with such scholars as Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak at the forefront of the movement. CDA examines social problems and inequalities regarding power relations and abuses of power, investigating how such issues are expressed, defended and challenged within written and spoken language in social and political contexts. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) emphasize some core dimensions of CDA's goals, devotion to facing social problems, discovering ideology, impacting social structure and culture and combining the interpretation with explanation.

Van Dijk (1993) differentiates between the micro-level of social interaction, where communication and language is situated, and the macro-level, which concerns power relations and group inequalities. CDA's ultimate objective is to understand social problems from a discourse point of view. In order to achieve this, we need to take a cross-disciplinary approach that values an understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding the relationships formed between language, thought, power, society, and culture. According to Wodak and Meyer (2008), CDA operates in a problem-solving perspective by employing heterogeneous and trans-disciplinary methods.

For that matter, CDA aims at uncovering hidden ideologies and power relations through systematic and reproducible analysis of semiotic forms – be it verbal, written, textual, iconic. This approach underscores the importance of work across the disciplines in order to understand in its entirety how language constructs, communicates, and authorizes knowledge, organizes social institutions, and enforces power. Halliday's understanding of language as a 'social act' is important to many CDA theorists, such as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1993, 1995a, 1995b), Fowler and Hodge (1979), Fowler (1991) and Hodge and Kress (1993).

2.2 Media Discourse

Van Dijk (1988) considers media discourse - particularly the news - to be a separate category of linguistic practice closely connected to sociocultural context. The influence of media on society now enjoins serious academic debate across many disciplines including linguistics, semiotics, pragmatics, discourse studies etc., as is discussed (Van Dijk 1993). He gives several definitions of news as: reports of the latest events or facts, report of things, such as news heard on the street, or news channel, and report of news etc. However, Fowler (1991) argues that news is not a mirror reflection of reality but is a product of political, cultural, and economic conditions. For Van Dijk, news is an example of public discourse. Current scholarship in journalism and mass communications investigates how economic systems, social dynamics, and cultural characteristics influence the production and content of news.

Newspapers have inordinate power over politics and the public mind. They are mediators of the people and their rulers, with a tendency to present issues in a manner which either supports or challenges the dominant ideologies. Studies have shown that media organizations tend to harbor subtle biases according to their ownership, political inclinations or target audience. According to Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model, news is produced using a series of filters, such as ownership, advertising, and political pressure, which can influence the selection and portrayal of news stories. In times of political crisis, the media narratives can be used as battle-grounds for struggles over legitimacy, with language acting itself as a tool for building up or destroying political identities. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a powerful tool to unmask these dynamics, it helps see how the media, subtly (or explicitly) influences our conceptions of politics (Abbas et al., 2023).

2.3 Language, Ideology, and Power

The relation of language to ideology and power has been a major focus of scholarly work. Ideology In thinking of ideologies as systems of beliefs of social categories, beliefs that resemble opinions as reflections of underlying ideological norms, Van Dijk (1988) Points out that ideologies are structured coherent belief systems of the social members. According to Fairclough (2003), ideologies are actualized through representational processes, which perpetuate or challenge power relations, authority and exploitation through identities and interaction. This is why a 'close reading' of the text is necessary for understanding how ideologies enter the language. As Van Dijk (1988, 1993, 2001) maintains, ideological discourse analysis aims to systematically relate linguistic features to ideological facts.

According to Rogers et al. (2005), language is considered a social practice and an analysis of language has to be a critical analysis. CDA's goal is to analyze, interpret, and explain how language employs and reproduces norms and social structures. Not only is language a reflection of social dynamics, it is also agency, interrogation, and power in enabling and constraining ways. Wodak et al. (2008) argue that power is necessarily linked with social order and realized, contested and resisted via language. Language is a very complex means through which power imbalances are established and contested in organized societies.

2.4 The Concept of Frame and the Framing Process

2.4.1 A Sociological Conception

Goffman (1974) introduces the concept of frame analysis and claims that when individuals experience something they actively define and organize the nature of that experience. These organizing concepts – what Goffman (1974, p. 21) refers to as “frames” – are the “interpretative schemata people rely on to interpret to treat them as meaningful, in need of interpretation, [and] as making sense.” Gitlin (1980) further develops this frame in his work on media and the New Left student movement. He announces the concept of frame as “a central organizing principle or systematic way of classifying a piece of reality” (p. 7), contending that frames guide news making. Frames help reporters to cope with large amounts of information and to make it ready for distribution to the public (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7).

Gamson et al., (1987, p. 143) expands on this notion by describing frames as dominant storylines, theme structures that make events clear. Frames are part of broader discursive packages that include not just the frame but also the policy positions and symbolic technologies. These tools such as metaphors, analogies, slogans and images constitute signs of framing and are used to shape public discourse (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Pan and Kosicki (1993) developed a constructionist perspective for the examination of news framing and how news articles are constructed. They advocate for a four-layer approach based on what they termed syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical aspects of news.

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework

Norman Fairclough is one of the most prominent CDA figures along with Ruth Wodak, Gunther Kress, and Teun van Dijk. Fairclough began his work in the early 1980s, developing a theoretical model that has been highly influential in subsequent discourse studies. Drawing on the sociology and linguistics, he argues that language does not merely reflect society but plays a fundamental role in it. Fairclough argues that language is a form of social practice which is not only influenced by, but influences social structures.

In his 1995 model, Fairclough does this by considering communicative events in terms of three related aspects, which cut across one another and are known as Text, Discourse Practice and Sociocultural Practice. These aspects function synergistically, in order to form a comprehensive framework for discourse analysis. The three aspects are shown in the figure below.

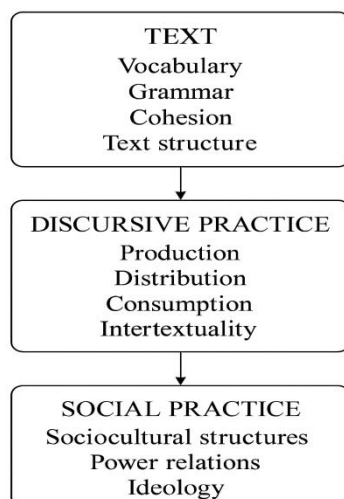


Figure 1. A Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis of 'Communicative Event' (Fairclough, 1995)

2.5.1 Text

As Fairclough (1995) states, text refers to all spoken and written discourse, along with certain multimodal genres such as television. An analysis of a text also needs to take into consideration linguistic aspects such as word choice, meaning, sentence structure and coherence. This second step also crosses over with the practice of discourse itself in that it involves examining how texts are produced and read.

2.5.2 Discourse Practice

Discursive practice constitutes the activities of text production, dissemination and interpretation (Fairclough, 1995). The author encodes meaning and ideology in the text during production and the reader decodes these meanings during consumption, drawing upon knowledge structures, belief systems and past experience. That engagement has impact on how audiences receive and are influenced by those texts.

2.5.3 Sociocultural Practice

The final dimension represents the social and cultural context within which communication occurs. It studies how discourse is affected by power relations, social norms, and institutional structures. To make sense of socio culture practices, insights from both the text and discursive practice levels must be combined (Fairclough, 1995). Fairclough (1989), in addition, discerns three dimensions of discourse analysis: description, in which the formal features of the text are approximated; interpretation, which accounts for how meaning is constituted in interaction; and explanation, which places discourse in its social context and through this framework assesses its social effects.

In sum, Fairclough's model presents a solid theoretical foundation: it combines linguistic and sociological investigation of texts. By focusing on the multiple layers of evolved discourse, it provides crucial insights into the way language is used and put to work in the construction and reproduction of social worlds.

2.6 Some Researches on CDA of Newspapers' Editorials

2.6.1 Some Researches on CDA of Newspapers' Editorial

The impact of language on public opinion: an EM-comparative analysis of editorials American Journal of Sociological Research 2014, 4(2B): 76-80 Ahmadian, M., Farahani, R. Their study, informed by van Dijk's positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, found opposing representations of Iran's nuclear program that reflected ideological mirrors. Of particular interest were discursive devices (e.g. wordings, presuppositions, rhetoric) that formed separate discourses.

Anaya and Pablos (2011) investigated the depiction of Iran's nuclear program in Spanish press, while Atai and Mozaheb (2013) examined the framing of this issue in the British press. Building on van Dijk's methodology of CDA they analyzed editorial opinion pieces, headlines, and particular syntactical features, such as diction, nominalization, passivization, over specificity, and voice. Their findings revealed an obvious media bias infused with "us" (the West) against "them" (Iran).

Tahir's (2013) study was a CDA study of an Arabic-English text from The Washington Post about Muslim demonstrations against offending Prophet Mohamed cartoons (PBUH). Drawing on van Dijk's "us-versus-them" ideologies aforementioned, the study found that the article reinforced dichotomized in-group (West) and out-group (Muslims) representation with the use of lexis and discourse and, as a result, portrayed Muslims negatively and as others.

One related study was carried out by Costelloe (2014) on the reporting of 'the way the urban riots of 2005 in France were reported by the French press'. The study highlighted the ways in which nationalism and French national identity were constructs in and through exclusive discourse strategies: "us" versus "them", member of the majority group versus immigrant/foreigner considered as other.

Poorebrahim and Reza (2012) further explored the language-ideology interaction by examining media headlines of *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, *The Herald Tribune*, and *The Times* on how Islam and Muslims are portrayed. Based on the ideological square by van Dijk—emphasis of oneself and others in positive and negative terms—they found at the same time that negative stereotyping still exists, as it was revealed through specific language use.

Rahman, M. M., & Arefin (2024) undertook comparative CDA of news reports of the Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing published in BBC News and Hindustan Times. Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA approach, they identified that BBC News had maintained a neutral and objective editorial line, by contrast, Hindustan Times had employed a nationalistic language, representing Nijjar as a "Khalistani terrorist". The researchers showed how language used reflected media's ideological biases while also influenced public opinion.

Karm (2024) analyzed the framing of obesity in Bangladeshi newspapers, and his study found that the governable discourse influenced the construction of obesity that was personal responsibility rather than public health implications. It also found frames associated with legitimization, blame and stereotyping, suggesting an individual rather than systemic focus.

In Nigeria, Okpala et al. (2023) analyzed newspaper editorials on national insecurity. Based on Halliday's Systemic Functionalism Linguistics and van Dijk's CDA, the study found that appraisal language and rhetorical devices indicate editorial attitudes and can affect public opinions.

Khan, F., et al. (2023) studied the headline text by the Dawn and the News International on Pakistan's 2022 No-Confidence Movement. Their results displayed political bias where The News International portrayed PTI government in a negative line and Dawn imaged in a positive line they demonstrate editorial language of political position.

Badshah, I., et al. (2023) did a comparative analysis of editorial narratives of English newspapers with respect to and from Pakistan and India about terrorism. Via van Dijk's Ideological Square Model, the study demonstrated how processes of constructing 'us vs. them' resulted in the reinforcement of nationalistic ideological viewpoints.

Bakuuro, J., et al. (2020) examined the use of linguistic strategies (e.g. modality, evaluative language) in Ghanaian newspaper editorials. What it showed was how such journalistic language can lead to critical thought and shape public opinion.

This case study by Jeyaseelan (2020) used Fairclough-style CDA to unpack how an editorial constructs consumer attitudes and legitimizes insurance through promotional lexis, modality and argumentation structures. It complemented existing examples by showing how editorial language can operate not only in political nationalism/identity debates but also in commercial persuasion and policy legitimating.

Alyahya (2023) provided a micro-level CDA of online news items (lexis, transitivity, modality) to show how lexical choices and syntactic patterns construct threat and responsibility. This is useful alongside your Iran/West and terrorism studies because it demonstrates CDA methods applied to online editorial/news formats and to event-driven reporting.

According to Mai (2023) applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model to show cross-national differences in framing pandemic responsibility, modality and image-text relations. It added to a corpus of comparative CDA studies (e.g., BBC vs Hindustan Times) by emphasizing multimodality (images + captions + layout) in editorial/newspaper discourse.

Hart (2023) integrated a cognitive framing research with CDA methods and explains mechanisms (schema activation, framing devices) that linked linguistic choices in editorials to audience interpretation. This bridged several empirical cases (e.g., "us vs them", responsibility frames) by offering an explicit cognitive mechanism for how editorial discourse influenced public opinions.

Finally, a quantitative-qualitative frame analysis of editorial and news texts by Jin (2025) traced how different national newspapers attributed responsibility, constructed crisis frames, and used evaluative lexis, reinforcing the cross-national and comparative approaches. The study added a good modern supplement that combined CDA with content analysis.

3. Research Design

This research adopted a qualitative design founded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically referencing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. Fairclough's model encompasses 1. Textual Analysis (Description), 2. Discursive Practice (Interpretation), and 3. Social Practice (Explanation). This methodology is particularly effective for examining media discourse, as it allows the researcher to analyze the linguistic characteristics of texts while placing them within their wider socio-political and ideological frameworks. Fairclough's approach facilitates a thorough investigation.

3.1 Rationale for Selection of Newspapers

The selection of the DAWN, the New Age, and the Hindustan Times for this study was characterized by several considerations. First, all three newspapers are leading English-language dailies in their respective countries, which were widely recognized for their influence in shaping public opinion and political discourse. The DAWN, which is Pakistan's oldest and most respected English newspaper, is known for its critical and analytical approach to regional politics, making it a suitable source for understanding a Pakistani perspective on Bangladesh's political developments. The New Age, which is a prominent Bangladeshi daily, offers a credible perspective and has extensive coverage of national politics, providing an authentic account of domestic interpretations of Sheikh Hasina's resignation. The Hindustan Times, that is one of India's major English-language newspapers with a strong reputation in political reporting and analysis, reflects the Indian readership's perspective and regional geopolitical concerns.

Second, these newspapers were selected for a **comparative cross-national analysis**. Each editorial represents a distinct national context and ideological stance: Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian. By examining these three sources, the study captures the diversity of discursive framing of the same political event across South Asia. Finally, their widespread accessibility and archival availability ensured that the editorials could be retrieved reliably, making them practical choices for systematic analysis using Fairclough's CDA framework.

3.2 Data Collection

The data for this research consisted of three editorials published in leading English-language newspapers in South Asia, following Sheikh Hasina's resignation on August 5, 2024. The editorials included were: 1. "Hasina's Fall" from the DAWN (Pakistan), published on August 6th, 2024, 2. "Rise, Fall of Sheikh Hasina" from the New Age (Bangladesh), published on August 6th, 2024, and 3. "Lessons from Hasina's Debacle" from the Hindustan Times (India), published on August 5th, 2024.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

This study utilized purposive sampling, a technique appropriate for qualitative research and Critical Discourse Analysis, to selectively gather data sources that are rich in discursive and ideological significance related to the research aims. The three editorials were chosen from influential English-language newspapers in South Asia: 1. the DAWN (Pakistan), 2. the New Age (Bangladesh), and 3. the Hindustan Times (India) regarding Sheikh Hasina's fall on August 5, 2024. These newspapers were selected for their regional impact, editorial reliability, and their contribution to shaping national discourse.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted in three stages, with each stage corresponding to one of Fairclough's dimensions: 1. Textual Analysis, 2. Discourse Practice Analysis and, 3. Sociocultural Practice Analysis. AI tools, like ChatGPT was used to structure contents and make tables and figures in the texts.

3.3.1 Textual Analysis

Each editorial underwent a detailed examination to uncover trends in word selection, tone, modality, metaphor usage, syntactic structures, and rhetorical techniques. The focus was on how language is utilized to frame the occurrence of Hasina's fall, assign blame, and construct political interpretations. Additionally, attention was directed toward whether the editorial adopted a critical, supportive, or alarmist tone.

3.3.2 Discourse Practice Analysis

This phase consisted of examining the editorials' submission and response to other texts and discourses. The analysis considered the intertextuality features (references to other events, documents, or discourses), the intended reader of the publication, the publication's editorial line, and the ideological base of the publishing institution. What also formed part of the analysis was how the constitution and the content within each editorial correspond to both the journalistic norms as well as the political context of both of countries.

3.3.3 Sociocultural Practice Analysis

The final phase analyzed the editorials within their wider sociopolitical and cultural environments. This included examining national political histories, media landscapes, and geopolitical issues. For instance, DAWN's critique of military involvement was understood in the context of Pakistan's own experiences with military governance, while the Hindustan Times' focus on regional instability was tied to India's concerns regarding foreign policy. This stage aimed to reveal the ideological influences that shape each editorial's narrative and viewpoint.

3.4 Validity and Reflexivity

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, all interpretations were grounded in direct textual evidence, and triangulated by comparing across the three case studies. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the study to account for the researcher's interpretive role and the subjectivity inherent in discourse analysis.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Textual Analysis (Description)

In the first face of critical discourse analysis (CDA) by Fairclough, that is 'textual analysis' the focus was on lexical choices, metaphors, sentence structure and rhetorical devices evident in Table 1. These elements signaled the ideologies encoded in the text. Here is an analysis based on this first dimension, 'textual analysis'.

The editorial in the DAWN was very harsh and political in nature. Words such as 'unceremonious end', 'volcanic eruption from public anger' and 'repressive acts, misrule and subsequent unpopularity' dramatized not merely Hasina's fall from power, but disapproval of autocratic rule itself. The "volcanic eruption" metaphor installed an aura of inevitability and natural response around her death, suggesting that she had paid the price for continued repression and popular unhappiness. The text mixed active with passive voice: "she had resigned — or possibly even been pushed out." Such an amalgamation imparted obscurity and evaded definite ascription, tending to imply that either all action was problematic or that it was untrue which strategies were followed.

The New Age was more biographical and almost admiring in its editorial, on the other hand. The language was more balanced and historical, casting Hasina's life as a continuum of battles and triumphs. She emerged as a sympathetic, even heroic character in words like "resilience" and "perseverance" and "political journey" that most commonly sought to cast her in a flattering light, despite acknowledging the violence and protests that led to her resignation. Unlike DAWN, New Age refrained from overt criticism or endorsement. New Age

explained her rise in student politics, the 1975 calamity then her slow rise, so there was an air of legacy and survival, rather than of failure.

In contrast, the editorial in the Hindustan Times took an alarmist, and geopolitical, view. It called Hasina “bundled out of the country”, and her rule “tarnished by the blood of hundreds of student protesters”, depicting her rule in a significantly negative light. The language was passionate and morally condemnatory, replete with such phrases as “subversion of the democratic process,” “crippling anxiety” and “mushrooming intolerant regimes.” These phrases created a sense of urgency, a wicked warning that reinforced the impression that her fall was not just a national calamity, but a global alarm. In addition, the editorial utilized categorical speech and evaluative expression to state its position more decidedly, suggesting a stark contrast with the descriptive neutrality of the New Age and the cautious but pointed critique of the DAWN.

Each newspaper’s portrayal was shaped by its own national circumstances and political sensitivities. DAWN’s reading of events drew on Pakistan’s long-standing fear of authoritarian relapse, which made it more alert to signs of concentrated power and public backlash. New Age approached the moment through Bangladesh’s layered political memory, presenting Hasina as part of a broader national story rather than a figure to praise or condemn outright. Hindustan Times, reflecting India’s strategic worldview, interpreted the crisis through concerns about shifting alliances and the potential disruption of regional balance.

Table 1. Textual Analysis of Newspapers

Feature	DAWN (Pakistan)	New Age (Bangladesh)	Hindustan Times (India)
Tone & Lexical choices	Critical, cautionary; “unceremonious end,” “volcanic eruption,” “misgovernance,” “ensuing unpopularity”	Biographical, respectful; “struggle,” “perseverance,” “resilience,” “political journey”	Alarmist, moralistic; “tarnished,” “blood of protesters,” “mushrooming regimes”
Metaphors, imagery & Narrative stance	Volcanic, military overtones; against authoritarianism and military rule	Historical struggle, personal legacy; neutral, commemorative	Crisis narrative, geopolitical shifts; judgmental toward Hasina, focused on India’s role
Voice & structure	Passive-active mix; analytical structure	Chronological, factual	Active voice; evaluative, declarative statements

4.2 Discursive Practice (Interpretation)

Fairclough’s second dimension, ‘discursive practice’, focused on the production, distribution, and consumption of the text as well as the intertextuality present within it (Table 2). I, herewith, report an analysis based on this second dimension, ‘discursive practice’.

The DAWN’s editorial belonged to the history of Pakistan in authoritarianism and military intervention. The important position on both Hasina’s government and the other role of the Bangladesh army reflected DAWN’s overall ideological commitment to democratic rule. The intertextuality with Pakistan’s own political history was apparent in the use of military regime in both Pakistan and Bangladesh in the editorial. Its audience being interested citizens and members of the policy class, who would take the editorial as a cautionary tale about the dangers of untrammelled civil and martial authority.

The New Age, on the contrary being a Bangladeshi publication was operating in an infinitely trickier discursive space. Its editorial felt aimed squarely at a domestic audience which was very well aware of Sheikh Hasina’s legacy. The piece struck a sensitive balance between acknowledging the public anger and violence while maintaining Hasina’s historical and political stature. This could be seen in how in the representing her personal sacrifices and early fights for the democracy, made here resignation much less sad than otherwise. The intertextual references to incidents such as the assassination and the 2006–08 political crisis only emphasized her durability, and created an alternative narrative to the one that had dominated the international perception of her as a dictator, which has often been influenced by conditioning.

On the other hand, the Hindustan Times were conceived with a wider global vista and targeted readers interested in the foreign policy. Its discursive practice was to look at Hasina’s exit not just as a domestic happening in Bangladesh but a geopolitical reverse for India and a possible victory for China and Pakistan. The text was dense with geopolitical intertextuality, with lines like “fishing in troubled waters,” “regional dynamics” and “few friends left in the neighborhood” referring to India’s strategic preoccupations. Hence, the editorial depicted Hasina’s slide as indicative of larger regional fragilities and realignment of forces in a region, emphasizing the vulnerability of India and the critical requirement of a recalibration of Indian diplomacy.

These interpretive choices were also influenced by how each society makes sense of political change. DAWN echoed Pakistan’s recurring debate on civilian authority and democratic safeguards. New Age’s framing resonated with Bangladesh’s habit of viewing political upheaval through historical parallels and personal trajectories. Hindustan Times, meanwhile, adopted the language of strategic assessment, portraying Hasina’s departure less as an internal Bangladeshi matter and more as an event with implications for India’s regional posture.

Table 2. Discursive Practice of Newspapers

Element	DAWN (Pakistan)	New Age (Bangladesh)	Hindustan Times (India)
Target audience, Purpose, Genre	Pakistani intelligentsia, civil society; cautionary tale on authoritarianism; political commentary	Domestic readers, historically aware citizens; preserving Hasina's legacy; political obituary/retrospective	Policymakers, strategic thinkers, regional analysts; strategic warning and foreign policy signal; editorial with geopolitical lens
Intertextual references	Pakistan's coups, Bangladesh protests	1975 assassination, 2006–08 crisis	Regional alliances, Indo-China-Pak dynamics
Production style	Analytical, indirectly critical	Chronological, reverent	Direct, emotive, cause-effect logic

4.3 Sociocultural Practice Analysis (Explanation)

The third aspect of Fairclough's model, 'sociocultural practice,' explored the broader social, political, and ideological environment that the text was situated within, as illustrated in Table 3. Here is the analysis, based on the third dimension, 'sociocultural practice,'.

The DAWN's editorial supported liberal democratic ideals and expressed concern about the recurring cycle of authoritarian governance in South Asia. It subtly criticized Hasina's authoritarian inclinations and depicted her downfall as an expected result of shutting down democratic pathways. The disapproval of military involvement mirrored a societal apprehension regarding the weakening of civil institutions and the precarious state of democratic principles. The editorial engaged in a discourse aimed at undermining both autocracy and militarism, indicating an ideological commitment to democratic plurality and political responsibility.

Conversely, the New Age's social stance was more reflective and rooted in the country's history. By emphasizing Hasina's early challenges and situating her political journey within a context of upheaval, the editorial resists oversimplified interpretations of success or failure. This demonstrated a wider societal inclination in Bangladesh to view political leaders as multifaceted representations of the nation's historical path. The editorial acted as a means for shared contemplation and national continuity, even during crises, implying a wish to uphold institutional memory and political legacy.

The Hindustan Times editorial was grounded in a pragmatic and strategic perspective, emphasizing national interest and regional stability. The characterization of Hasina's downfall as a geopolitical challenge indicated an ideological preference for sustaining amicable regimes that align with India's regional objectives. The editorial perpetuated a discourse that connected internal governance in neighboring nations with India's security and foreign policy interests. Additionally, its criticism of the rise of "mushrooming intolerant regimes" demonstrated alignment with a global liberal discourse cautioning against the ascent of authoritarianism. Its critique also safeguarded India's dominant position in South Asia.

Broader sociocultural and ideological aspects further shaped these narratives. Pakistan's editorial environment favored skepticism toward centralized power, Bangladesh's public discourse often merges personal legacy with national struggle, and India's media frequently evaluated neighboring political shifts through security and diplomatic lenses. These differing orientations explained why the same political moment was interpreted in markedly distinct ways across the three newspapers.

Table 3. Sociocultural Practice

Dimension	DAWN (Pakistan)	New Age (Bangladesh)	Hindustan Times (India)
Dominant ideology	democratic pluralism, anti-militarism	national continuity, legacy preservation	strategic realism, foreign policy vigilance
Power relations	opposition to authoritarian and military rule	balanced view of legacy vs public dissent	concern over India's waning regional influence
Socio-political concern	democratic erosion, public anger	historical trajectory, public memory	geopolitical instability, regime shifts
Position on Hasina	critically viewed, but not demonized	respected figure whose end is softened	blamed for repression, her fall seen as a lesson
Implication	warning for fragile democracies	call for reflection amid change	urges recalibration of Indian diplomacy

5. Conclusion

This CDA, carried out by Fairclough's three-dimensional models of CDA, was characterized by the ways in which newspaper editorials functioned as distinct texts that were different from each other in terms of ideologies, political realities, tones, and regional identities. Editorials in the DAWN (Pakistan), the New Age (Bangladesh) and the Hindustan Times (India) portrayed the political decline of Sheikh Hasina in very different ways, reflecting the local market conditions, the nature of the newspapers' ideological sensibilities and the anticipated receivership profile of the messages. the DAWN's editorial was critical, metaphorical, and at times prodded with a mix of passive and active voice of subtly criticizing a heavy hand of authoritarian ruling and military interventions, evidence of Pakistan's endemic fears of undemocratic governance. In contrast, the New Age developed a biographical and respectful narrative which serves to highlight sheikh Hasina's remarkable survivability and her political odyssey, highlighting continuity on the nation plane and the immortalization of political heritage. This editorial struck the right balance between acknowledging public anger and offering an empathetic portrayal of Hasina, boosting a sense of national solidarity. In contrast, the Hindustan Times provided an alarmist, geopolitical account portraying her

departure as a setback for India in the region and an opening for rival forces, with emotive, declaratory language expressing the fatalism of an epochal crisis. These differences signaled each editorial's stance. And they reflected deeper ideological leanings: the DAWN leaned towards democratic pluralism, the New Age was in favor of national soul-searching, the Hindustan Times emphasized the need to be constantly mindful of foreign policy. Finally, the study shed light on how media editorials' linguistic and discursive choices played an active role in constructing representations of political events by presenting them through culturally particular and politically biased perspectives.

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Authors' contributions

Dr. Prof. Md. Momtazur Rahman contributed to the overall research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing. **Mr. Sultanul Arefin** and **Mr. Md. Jashim Uddin** played key roles in developing the research idea and formulating the research questions, provided proofreading, academic guidance, and constructive feedback, and assisted with formatting and final preparation of the manuscript. **Firoz Akanda** and **HM Nazmul Alam** led the literature review. **Ms. Marzana Binte Khan** contributed to data validation and editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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Appendix 1

DAWN's Editorial

Hasina's fall

AFTER several weeks of deadly anti-government protests, Sheikh Hasina Wajed's fifth stint as Bangladesh prime minister came to an unceremonious end on Monday. Following news that she had resigned — or quite possibly been ousted — and left the country, there were celebrations on Dhaka's streets.

Since last month, there had been growing unrest in Bangladesh, with a student-led protest movement demanding an end to quotas in government jobs for descendants of 'freedom fighters' who had participated in the creation of Bangladesh. However, the protests went beyond job quotas.

Sheikh Hasina, during her back-to-back 15-year rule, had decimated the opposition and shut all safety valves, resulting in a volcanic eruption of public anger. Her opponents claimed her government had indulged in corruption, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. In addition, over the past several weeks, the administration, along with supporters of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, had fought pitched battles with demonstrators. At least 300 people were reportedly killed. This was the build-up to her eventual departure, which was followed by the Bangladesh army chief announcing an interim set-up.

This paper has consistently opposed military intervention in political affairs. Pakistan has gone through several cycles of military rule — direct and otherwise; Bangladesh, too, is no stranger to power grabs by the generals. In both states, these interventions have only hurt the democratic process. And while it can be argued that Sheikh Hasina's repressive actions, misgovernance and ensuing unpopularity created a golden opportunity for the army to assert itself, the generals in Bangladesh must be condemned roundly for their interference and for further damaging the democratic process. Indeed, the disastrous consequences of such meddling can last over generations.

In Sheikh Hasina's Bangladesh, the unrelenting throttling of the opposition meant that, instead of political battles being fought in parliament or at the ballot box, the struggle to secure power played out on the streets. But again, it was not the army's place to intervene. Power, through credible elections, should return to civilian hands as soon as possible and the army should go back to the barracks without further ado. If the troops do not make their exit soon, given the charged political environment, Bangladesh will enter a new phase of instability.

In Sheikh Hasina's fall lie lessons for all developing states, particularly those in South Asia, which share many sociopolitical traits with Bangladesh. Political repression, mixed with economic frailty, is a recipe for public unrest. Along with crackdowns on the opposition, Bangladesh's economic progress had slowed, with the country turning to the IMF last year. When all avenues for dissent are closed off, and

authoritarian tactics are used to clamp down on political opponents, the stage is set for either violent upheaval, or the entry of unelected forces moving in to 'save the day.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1850409/hasinas-fall>

Appendix 2

Editorial by New Age Rise, fall of Sheikh Hasina

The political journey of Sheikh Hasina, one of Bangladesh's most prominent leaders, has been marked by significant highs and dramatic lows.

Born on September 28, 1947, Sheikh Hasina began her political journey as a student leader. She was elected vice-president of the Students Union at Eden College between 1966 and 1967 and later became the general secretary of the women's unit at Dhaka University's Rokeya Hall. These early experiences laid the foundation for her future political career.

On August 15, 1975, tragedy struck when her father, the founding president of the country Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and other family members were assassinated. At the time, she and her sister Sheikh Rehana were in West Germany. They accepted political asylum in India, offered by then-prime minister Indira Gandhi, and lived in New Delhi for six years.

After being elected president of the Awami League on February 16, 1981, Sheikh Hasina returned to Bangladesh on May 17, 1981. Her return marked the beginning of a new chapter in her political career, characterised by both struggle and perseverance.

Throughout the 1980s, Sheikh Hasina faced repeated detentions under martial law. She was placed under house arrest in February and November 1984, and again in March 1985 for another three months. Despite these challenges, she continued to fight for democracy and justice.

In 1986, Hasina and the Awami League participated in the general election under President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, where she served as the leader of the parliamentary opposition. She led an eight-party alliance against Ershad's regime, demanding fair elections and democratic reforms.

As the political landscape of Bangladesh became increasingly volatile, Hasina's leadership was put to the test. In December 1987, Ershad dissolved parliament, prompting mass uprisings in Dhaka. The protests resulted in several deaths, including that of Awami League activist Noor Hossain.

Sheikh Hasina's resilience paid off when she became prime minister in 1996 after winning the general election. Her tenure lasted until 2001.

During the 2006–2008 political crisis, Hasina was detained on extortion charges, a move seen by many as politically motivated. Despite these challenges, she won the 2008 election, solidifying her position as a key political figure.

In 2014, Hasina was re-elected for a third term in an election boycotted by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, raising questions about the legitimacy of her government. Nevertheless, she continued to lead the country and won her fourth term after the 2018 election.

In 2024, Sheikh Hasina secured her fifth term as prime minister, making her the world's longest-serving female head of government. However, her final term was marred by controversy and violence.

More than 300 people lost their lives in Bangladesh due to violent protests stemming from the controversial quota system for government jobs. Anti-government demonstrators marched into Dhaka on Monday following a weekend of intense violence that claimed over 100 lives.

Protesters were demanding the resignation of Sheikh Hasina and justice for those killed during the clashes. The protests escalated on July 16 when clashes between security forces and pro-government activists and students turned violent. The Supreme Court intervened to roll back the quota decision, but the unrest continued.

A renewed wave of anti-government demonstrations over the weekend saw violent clashes reignite, drawing hundreds of thousands of protesters and further destabilizing the nation.

Sheikh Hasina resigned from her position on August 5, 2024. Shortly after her resignation, Hasina, accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana, left Dhaka via helicopter, landing in Agartala, the capital of the Indian state of Tripura, according to Indian media reports.

After Hasina's resignation, Bangladesh army chief general Waker-Uz-Zaman announced plans to form an interim government.

Source: <https://www.newagebd.net/post/politics/241793/rise-fall-of-sheikh-hasina>

Appendix 3

Lessons from Hasina's debacle

By HT Editorial

Aug 05, 2024 09:04 PM IST

After a 15-year rule marred by controversy, Bangladesh's Sheikh Hasina was ousted amidst protests. India faces challenges as the region's dynamics shift.

The end came swiftly. Five decades years after her father, the founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was assassinated in his own home, the curtain fell on Sheikh Hasina's uninterrupted but controversial 15-year-long rule over Bangladesh. She was unceremoniously bundled out of the country in a helicopter, her legacy irrevocably tarnished by the blood of the hundreds of student protesters shot dead over the past three weeks by government forces and ruling party workers. The immediate trigger for the stir may have been a lopsided reservation policy that set aside a third of government jobs for descendants of freedom fighters — a contested category with ample room for corruption — but anger was building over an election widely seen as a sham, the subversion of the democratic process, sweeping suppression of dissent and crippling anxiety among young people over quality jobs and the possibility that they might lead a life worse than the previous generation.

Hasina's fall presents a challenge for India, which is now surrounded by a string of regimes that are either diffident or downright unfriendly in the neighborhood. The 76-year-old leader had deep ties with India and was considered New Delhi's staunchest friend even as she tried to strike a balance with China. With the country in turmoil, expect Beijing to turn more aggressive in its attempts to fish in troubled waters alongside its old ally, Pakistan. Moreover, the sentiment on the street is currently against New Delhi, seen as an ally of Hasina. When an interim government is created and new elections are called, if at all, it will be key to gauge the foreign policy outlook of the new regime. In sum, even as New Delhi looks to become a global fulcrum between the Great Powers, it will need to carefully evaluate its options in a tricky neighborhood where it has few friends left and portents of instability cropping up — from Dhaka to Kathmandu.

But there are bigger takeaways at a time when intolerant regimes are mushrooming across the world. Bangladesh's street uprising — among the first such political action by Gen Z anywhere — was presaged by years of slow erosion of civil liberties, accompanied by sputtering growth amid a downturn in every sector except exports. Hasina refused to heed the warnings, believing that repression could quell genuine anger and a popular homegrown protest could be spun as foreign conspiracy. She was wrong and had to flee. The world should take note.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/lessons-from-hasina-s-debacle-101722872066209.html>