

Peace Spoilers in Different Stages of The Peacebuilding Process In the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh

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Glossary

BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party)

Political party opposing the 1997 CHT Peace Accord, prioritizing national sovereignty.

CHT (Chattogram Hill Tracts)

Southeastern Bangladesh region (Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban), home to Indigenous peoples and site of ethnic conflict since 1972.

CHT Peace Accord (1997)

Agreement between Bangladesh and PCJSS addressing CHT self-governance, land rights, and demilitarization, criticized for incomplete implementation.

CHT Regulation of 1900

British colonial law granting CHT administrative autonomy, restricting non-Indigenous land acquisitions.

JSS-R (Jana Samhati Samiti-Reformist)

PCJSS splinter, opposing 1997 Accord inadequacies.

Jumma

Collective term for CHT Indigenous peoples (e.g., Chakma, Marma, Tripura)

Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam

1960s project displacing over 100,000 CHT Indigenous, igniting land conflicts.

KNF (Kuki-Chin National Front)

Post 1997 peace accord group.

Mog Party

Post 1997 peace accord group.

PCJSS (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti)

Main CHT Indigenous organization, 1997 Accord signatory.

Shanti Bahini

PCJSS armed wing.

UPDF (United People's Democratic Front)

Anti-Accord PCJSS splinter.

UPDF-Democratic

UPDF splinter in post-accord CHT area.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this to abbu, maa, my two favorite uncles and someone whose presence I carry in silence. Losing you before and during this journey made it unimaginably hard, but the memories also gave me the strength to keep going.

Abstract

This thesis examines the dynamics of peace spoilers in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) conflict in Bangladesh, analyzing their emergence, motivations, tactics, and impacts across the pre-accord (1972–1995), negotiation (1996–1997), and post-accord (1997–present) phases of the peacebuilding process. This study employs a secondary data analysis methodology and synthesizes historical documents, and incident-level media reports from national and the local CHT area from January 2020–July 2025 to provide an explorative understanding of spoiler behavior and their impact. Drawing on peacebuilding theories (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 1997) and spoiler typologies (Stedman, 1997; Zahar, 2006), the research identifies key spoilers, including the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF), the Bangladeshi government, and Bengali settlers, among others, whose actions were driven by structural marginalization, exclusion, and unmet grievances. This potentially has undermined the 1997 CHT Peace Accord. Findings reveal that incomplete implementation, particularly on land rights and demilitarization, has perpetuated violence, with Indigenous civilians disproportionately affected (85 per cent of victims in 54 recorded incidents). Bandarban has faced most violent impact (56 per cent) among three districts. This analysis also identified that all the actors had animosity among themselves even though they share similar goals (such as, to protect Indigenous rights). The study highlights the interplay of structural, relational, and political factors in sustaining dynamic spoiling behavior, emphasizing the need for inclusive dialogue, sequenced incentives, and trauma healing to foster sustainable peace. This study identifies a peacebuilding phase-specific framework for understanding spoilers and practical strategies for peacebuilding in complex ethnic conflicts. This study also reveals a shift in actor dynamics in the CHT, including new emerged actors in recent times.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

In the contemporary world, peacebuilding processes are riddled with challenges and setbacks. This study aims to conduct an analysis of peace spoilers in the Chattogram Hills Tracts (CHT) peacebuilding process in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's distinct socio-political and cultural background, along with its history of conflicts, provides a unique context for understanding the multifaceted nature of peace spoilers and their impact on peacebuilding efforts. This research seeks to elucidate the roles and impacts of peace spoilers throughout different phases of the peacebuilding process, encompassing negotiation, the creation of peace accords, and the implementation of these accords. According to Stedman, peace spoilers are individuals or groups who actively seek to undermine the success of a peacebuilding process to achieve their goals. These entities encompass a range of actors, including state actors, dissident groups, political factions, and external forces (Stedman, 1997; Newman & Richmond, 2006). To gain a deeper understanding of peace spoilers at various stages of the peacebuilding process, this study focuses on the nature, complexity, and identification of some actors in the Chattogram¹ Hill Tracts conflict of Bangladesh. To resolve this violent conflict, a peace accord was signed in 1997 between the government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) - a collective front for Indigenous peoples.

This study aims to enrich our current understanding of peace spoilers in the peacebuilding process through the content analysis of four Bangladeshi newspapers, such as Hillvoice, Kapaeeng Foundation, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, among others. It will highlight the significance and impacts of spoilers through a detailed analysis of one particular conflict, the Chattogram Hill

Tracts conflict, at three different stages of the peacebuilding process. The Bangladeshi peacebuilding processes reflects complex interactions between state policies and local dynamics. Past research has focused on how state actors and policies shape the experiences and responses of Indigenous people in a conflict area (Mohsin, 1997). Consequently, this study examines the effectiveness of treaties in conflict resolution to understand which elements of peacebuilding processes can create or influence peace spoilers.

Significance of the Study

Our world is increasingly fragmented by conflicts, divisions, and wars. The importance of understanding how to make peacebuilding effective cannot be overstated. Conflicts not only cause loss of lives and property; they also have long-lasting impacts on social cohesion, economic development, and political stability (Collier, Hoeffler, & Söderbom, 2008). This study directly contributes to addressing these challenges by examining one of the most critical obstacles in peacebuilding, namely peace spoilers. Understanding the dynamics of peace spoilers is vital not only for theoretical advancement but also for designing actionable strategies to achieve sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding has been a subject of research over the past thirty years, yet the role of peace spoilers during the process remains relatively unexplored. This study advances the existing literature by offering a detailed analysis of how peace spoilers emerge, operate, and impact peace processes at different stages (pre-accord, during the conflict resolution process, and post-accord). Peace spoilers can undermine effective peace processes by benefiting from ongoing prolonged conflict or opposing the terms of a peace accord (Stedman, 1997). Their actions can have a cascading effect by jeopardizing years of diplomatic efforts, disrupting ceasefires, and

destabilizing regions. By focusing specifically on these actors and their motivations, this research highlights an area that is critical yet understudied in peacebuilding discourse, contributing to both theory and practice.

This study is significant for multiple reasons. First, it examines a conflict marked by distinct stages of the peacebuilding process (pre-accord, during the conflict resolution process, and post-accord). Each stage presents unique challenges and opportunities, and this research offers new insights into how peace spoilers impact these phases. Second, this study contributes to theoretical frameworks on peace spoilers and helps policymakers and stakeholders develop more targeted and adaptive strategies to manage these challenges and promote sustainable peace. This is particularly significant given the complexity and challenges inherent in the international peacebuilding process (Autesserre, 2010).

Finally, this research aims to contribute to the existing literature on peace spoilers in the peacebuilding process by analyzing peace spoilers' role and influence. Literature on peace spoilers in conflict resolution identifies different types of spoilers and their management (Mac Ginty, 2011; Monferone, 2018,), which will guide this analysis. While the existing literatures offer valuable insights into peace spoilers, spoiler management techniques and challenges across multiple cases, it does not fully explore the mechanisms through which spoilers are created during distinct phases of the peacebuilding process. By focusing on Bangladesh's Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) conflict as a single case study, this research provides a more detailed, phase-specific analysis of spoiler emergence, offering both theoretical and practical insights into their management, complementing other existing literatures. By integrating these insights from theory and practice, the research contributes to a more robust understanding of how peacebuilding initiatives can be made more resilient to the challenges posed by peace spoilers.

Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used in the thesis research.

Research Aims and Questions

This study examines the critical role of peace spoilers in the peacebuilding process of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) conflict in Bangladesh, a region characterized by prolonged socio-political tensions, ethnic disputes, and intermittent violence between Indigenous communities and state or non-state actors. Peace spoilers, defined as individuals, groups, or entities that deliberately undermine peacebuilding efforts to preserve or advance interests such as political dominance, economic privileges, cultural or territorial control, or ideological agendas, are central to the analysis. The study aims to unravel the complexities of peacebuilding by addressing specific research questions that explore the emergence, behavior, and mitigation of spoilers. These questions and objectives provide a structured framework to understand the dynamics of the CHT conflict and contribute actionable insights to peacebuilding scholarship.

The research is guided by the following questions:

- **Primary Research Question:** What internal elements and actors create or influence peace spoilers during different phases of peacebuilding?
- **Secondary Research Questions:**

- How do peace spoilers methods, tactics, and approaches vary across different stages of the peacebuilding process, such as pre-negotiation, negotiation, implementation, and postaccord phases?
- What strategies can be implemented to minimize the effect of peace spoilers to secure a sustainable peacebuilding process?

To address these questions, the study pursues the following objectives:

- Identify and analyze peace spoiler's methods and approaches, examining key factors—political, economic, or identity-based—that contribute to their emergence and persistence across various peacebuilding stages.
- Assess the impact of peace spoilers on the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in undermining agreements like the 1997 CHT Peace Accord.
- Explore potential strategies for mitigating the influence of peace spoilers and strengthening the sustainability of peace processes.

By focusing on the CHT conflict, the study offers context-specific insights into spoiler dynamics while contributing to broader peacebuilding scholarship through evidence-based analysis and practical recommendations.

Research Design and Rationale

The study employs a secondary data analysis methodology, selected due to practical constraints on conducting primary fieldwork in the CHT, where security risks, logistical challenges, and government restricted access to remote areas pose significant barriers. The availability of extensive, high-quality secondary sources covering historical records, contemporary media,

community-generated content, and incident-specific data provide a strong foundation for addressing the research questions. This methodology integrates multiple data collection and analysis techniques, including explanatory case study analysis, historical document examination, media analysis, review of online community content, and analysis of conflict-related incident data. These approaches collectively enabled a multi-dimensional exploration of peace spoilers, capturing their motivations, tactics, and impacts across different phases of the peacebuilding process while grounding the findings in empirical evidence of conflict events.

The secondary data analysis approach was particularly well-suited to the CHT context, where decades of documentation from governmental, non-governmental, and local sources offer a wealth of insights into the conflict's evolution and peacebuilding efforts. By synthesizing these diverse sources, the study constructed a detailed narrative of how spoilers operated within the CHT's unique socio-political and historical context, from the signing of the 1997 Peace Accord to recent developments. The inclusion of incident data, detailing specific conflict events, further enriched the analysis by providing concrete examples of spoiler activities and their tangible effects on affected communities. This methodology balanced depth and breadth, combining longitudinal historical analysis with contemporary perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of spoiler behavior and its implications for sustainable peace.

Data Generation Methods

This section outlines the data generation methods that are used in the research.

Explanatory Case Study Analysis

The research design centers on an explanatory case study of the CHT conflict, chosen for its complexity and significance as a case of peacebuilding challenged by persistent spoiler activities. This approach facilitated a deep exploration of the socio-political and historical context, focusing on how different spoilers (e.g., political elites, armed factions, or external actors) operated during distinct phases of peacebuilding: pre-negotiation, negotiation, implementation, and post-accord stages. Grounded in Stedman's (1997) framework, which distinguishes spoilers based on their objectives (limited, total, or greedy), the case study analyzed the interplay of motivations, such as power asymmetry, economic gain, land dispossession, or identity-based grievances. It also analyzed spoilers' different tactics, including violence, narrative circulation, or negotiation processes. By examining the CHT conflict through this lens, the study uncovers the unique challenges and dynamics that shaped peacebuilding efforts. It provides insights into why certain initiatives, such as the 1997 Peace Accord, faced resistance and how spoilers exploited unresolved issues like land disputes or ethnic marginalization to disrupt the peace process in the post-accord phase.

Historical Document Examination

To establish a longitudinal perspective, the study conducted a meticulous examination of historical documents related to the CHT conflict and its peacebuilding efforts. A key focus was the 1997 CHT Peace Accord, a landmark agreement between the Government of Bangladesh and the PCJSS aimed at resolving tensions over land rights, autonomy, and ethnic representation. However, its partial implementation highlighted the role of spoilers in undermining progress. Additional sources included reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, and international NGOs, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as

well as government mandates, policy documents, and local organization reports. These materials, accessed through academic libraries, government archives, and that are publicly available in online repositories, provided critical insights into the historical evolution of the conflict, the negotiation processes, and the persistent challenges posed by spoilers. The analysis traced key milestones, such as the accord's signing and subsequent implementation hurdles, revealing how unresolved grievances fueled spoiler activities over decades.

Media Analysis

To capture contemporary perspectives and public perceptions, the study analyzed newspaper articles published between 2020 and 2025 from three leading Bangladeshi outlets: *Prothom Alo*, *The Daily Star*. The newspaper articles were organized using a thematic analysis approach. They were categorized by type of violence, time, location, affected communities, and alleged perpetrators. These newspapers were selected for their credibility, wide readership, and comprehensive coverage of socio-political issues in Bangladesh. Other online news outlets were consulted where sufficient data could not be found. Chapter five broadly discusses this issue. Local CHT news outlets also provided significant data in this scenario (e.g., Kapaeen Foundation, Hillvoice.net). The articles documented recent developments (January 2020-July 2025) in the CHT conflict, including instances of spoiler activities such as violence, political obstruction, type of violence, alleged perpetrators, most affected communities and supported the development of a conflict map of the area that highlighted temporal trends in violence, actor involvement, and the geographic spread of spoiler activities over time. The narrative analysis of two specific cases illustrate how major conflict events were framed in both mainstream and local CHT newspaper

and highlighted how peacebuilding efforts were perceived by the public and portrayed in the media, revealing shifts in political and societal attitudes.

Incident Data Analysis

To ground the analysis in empirical evidence, the study incorporated data on specific conflict-related incidents in the CHT, detailing the date, location, type of incident, number of people affected, and alleged perpetrators (Appendix A). These data, drawn from secondary sources such as national mainstream and CHT local media outlets, provided concrete examples of spoiler activities in post-accord CHT phase and their impact on communities. The data was manually taken from news websites that recorded 54 incidents from January 2020-July 2025. It is important to note, while the dataset is not exhaustive, the recorded incidents were sufficient to do a conflict mapping and reflect patterns of incidents, actors' behavior, and the state's involvement in the CHT conflict. Chapter five discusses more analysis from this data.

Data Analysis

The data generated from historical documents, media reports, online content, and incident records were synthesized through a manual thematic analysis process to address the research questions and objectives. The analysis is twofold. The first analysis in Chapter four began with a systematic organization of data based on each peacebuilding phase of the conflict: pre-accord, during negotiation/accord, and post-accord phase. It identified actor types, active time-period based on the research questions and theoretical framework. Themes were identified iteratively, focusing on the types of state and non-state actors (spoilers), their methods, motivations, and identifying the influencing elements of spoiler creation in CHT post-accord phase.

The second part of the analysis in Chapter five focused on analyzing the recorded incident-level data. The incident data were integrated into this analysis to provide specific examples of spoiler actions, such as identifying alleged perpetrators (e.g., armed groups, new factions, settlers, state actors) and assessing their impact on affected people. The affected number of people were thematically categorized into Indigenous civilians, Bengali settlers, armed groups, and state actors, to identify which group was most affected by this pattern of violence in CHT.

To ensure the robustness of findings, the study employed triangulation, cross-referencing data from multiple sources to mitigate biases and enhance validity. Historical documents were compared with media reports to verify accounts of spoiler activities. The synthesis of these findings allowed the study to draw evidence-based conclusions on the nature and impact of peace spoilers, and the potential strategies for minimizing their influence in post-accord peacebuilding process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were vital throughout the research process, given the sensitive nature of the CHT conflict and the involvement of marginalized Indigenous communities. The study relied exclusively on credible, verifiable sources, ensuring that all data were drawn from reputable outlets, like peer-reviewed reports, established newspapers, and public archives. Cultural sensitivity was prioritized, with careful attention to representing the perspectives of CHT communities accurately and respectfully, avoiding stereotypes or oversimplifications.

Positionality

In writing this thesis, I recognize my identity as a Bengali and that my own social location shapes how I understand and interpret the CHT conflict. Dorothy Smith (1974) explains that knowledge is never fully objective but is always produced from a person's standpoint. My standpoint commits me to uphold what is presented in the data, resisting any personal interpretation of the CHT conflict. My position carries both advantages and limitations. Being Bengali allowed me to draw on cultural, linguistic, and historical familiarity with the broader political context of Bangladesh. It helped me understand the complexities around the CHT conflict, navigating historical documents, and media analysis of newspaper articles. However, it also situated me within a majority identity that has historically been associated with policies of settlement, militarization, and cultural suppression of the people in CHT. I am conscious that my interpretation of the CHT peacebuilding process may unintentionally reflect perspectives of someone from the majority community, when Indigenous peoples' perspectives are often marginalized. I aimed to establish my standpoint as a neutral researcher. I have sought to approach the issue with humility, acknowledging the gaps in my knowledge, especially in the absence of primary interviews with CHT's Indigenous communities. I have consciously sought to acknowledge my knowledge limitations, cross-referencing multiple sources to balance perspectives and ground my research with empirical incidents of recent years. This reflexive approach ensures that my standpoint does not overshadow the research objectives, and it maintains my integrity in exploring the dynamics of peace spoilers in the CHT.

Limitations of the Study

The research methodology faced certain limitations. The reliance on secondary data, necessitated by fieldwork constraints, may have limited the depth of local perspectives, particularly from

remote CHT communities with limited digital presence. While primary interviews could not be conducted due to fieldwork constraints set by the Bangladeshi government, the use of local and national newspapers provided valuable community-level perspectives, adding depth and partial primary insight to the analysis. Media sources, despite their credibility and availability, had limited recorded incidents in their archives, especially for 2020 and 2021. In some instances, digital links were broken, pages could not be found, and changes in news tags proved to be challenging while recording incident data. They were addressed through triangulation and critical analysis wherever possible. The temporal focus on 2020 – July 2025 for media analysis may have overlooked earlier events that shaped the conflict's trajectory, though historical discussion and actor trajectories in chapter 4 mitigated the limitation. The incident data were while valuable but may not capture the full scope of spoiler activities due to underreporting or incomplete documentation (Davenport, 2007; Raleigh, et al., 2010; Weidmann, 2015).

In addition, the focus of this thesis research is the internal conflict dynamics and actors embroiled in the CHT conflict and does not include an analysis of the roles of regional actors like India and Myanmar as well as international actors like China who supply arms and work to destabilize the region or the U.N. working in support of the 1997 CHT peace accord. Future research must explore the roles of regional external guarantors and international actors as catalysts for violence or peacebuilding and mediation in protracted ethnopolitical conflicts like the CHT conflict (Byrne, 2017; Byrne & Senehi, 2012).

Contribution to Peacebuilding Scholarship

This research methodology provided a multi-faceted framework for analyzing peace spoilers in the CHT conflict and offered evidence-based insights into their motivations, tactics, and impacts

across different peacebuilding phases. By integrating historical records, contemporary media, community-level narratives (drawn from CHT newspaper reporting on this conflict), and incident-specific data, the study not only addressed the specific dynamics of the CHT but also contributed to broader peacebuilding scholarship. The findings illuminated strategies for minimizing spoiler impacts in CHT. The inclusion of incident data highlighted the human cost of spoiler activities and the urgency of effective peacebuilding strategies.

Background and Context of the Study

This section highlights the background and context of the study.

Overview of Peace Spoilers and Study Focus

This study explores the role of peace spoilers, e.g., individuals, groups, or entities that actively undermine peacebuilding efforts to protect interests (Stedman, 1997), such as political dominance, economic privileges, or ideological goals (Newman & Richmond, 2006) in the context of the CHT conflict in Bangladesh. Peace spoilers emerge across various stages of peacebuilding, from pre-accord to post-accord implementation, using tactics like violence or political obstruction to derail progress (Newman & Richmond, 2006; Stedman, 1997). By focusing on the CHT conflict, this study explores how spoilers influence peace processes across three distinct phases, offering insights into the effectiveness of peace accords and strategies to mitigate spoiler impacts.

The study analyzes the CHT conflict through the following phases:

- **Pre-Accord Phase (1972–1995):** Characterized by escalating tensions and armed conflict following Bangladesh's independence.

- Ongoing Peacebuilding Phase (1996–1997): Marked by negotiations leading to the 1997 CHT Peace Accord.
- Post-Accord Phase (1997–present): Focused on implementation challenges and persistent spoiler activities.

This single-case approach allows for a detailed exploration of spoiler dynamics within a specific socio-political and historical context, contributing to broader peacebuilding scholarship.

Context of the CHT Conflict

The CHT, located in southeastern Bangladesh, is a culturally distinct region covering 10 percent of the country's land with only 1 percent of its population, primarily inhabited by Indigenous groups such as the Chakma, Marma, and Tripura (Panday & Jamil, 2009). Historically, the CHT enjoyed administrative autonomy under British colonial rule, designated as an “excluded area” by the CHT Regulation of 1900 and the British-Indian Constitutional Act of 1935, which restricted non-indigenous immigration and land transfers (Panday & Jamil, 2009). However, after the 1947 partition, the CHT was integrated into Pakistan, losing its special status. Following Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the new constitution's emphasis on a singular Bengali identity sparked tensions by assimilating Indigenous groups under the label “Bengalis” (Mohsin, 1997).

The conflict intensified due to policies like the construction of the Kaptai hydroelectric dam in the 1960s, which displaced over 100,000 Indigenous people, and the repeal of the CHT Regulation, allowing Bengali settlers to influx the area, shifting the region's demographics significantly by 1991 (Dhamai, 2012; Chakma, 2016). The establishment of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and its armed wing, Shanti Bahini, in the 1970s marked a shift to armed resistance, driven by demands for autonomy and land rights (Dowlah, 2013). The

1997 CHT Peace Accord aimed to address these issues but faced resistance from groups like the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), who viewed it as inadequate (Levene, 1999). Persistent land disputes, ineffective resolution mechanisms, and exclusion of some Indigenous groups from the peace process have sustained spoiler activities, undermining sustainable peace (Chakma & D'Costa, 2012; Uddin, 2012).

Theoretical Background

Peacebuilding involves transforming conflict dynamics to achieve sustainable peace through inclusivity, mutual recognition of rights, and human rights promotion (Moshe, 2001). However, spoilers pose significant challenges by opposing peace agreements that threaten their interests (Aggestam, 2006; Stedman, 1997). Spoilers may include political elites, armed groups, or external actors who employ violent or non-violent tactics to maintain the status quo or derail negotiations (Harris, 2010; Wanis-St. John, 2006;). The psychological and relational aspects of peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997; Schilling, 2012), such as justice and reconciliation, are often underexplored, yet critical for long-term success (Lambourne, 2004). Effective peacebuilding requires inclusive dialogue, grassroots involvement, and addressing underlying issues like land disputes to prevent spoiler-driven conflict recurrence (Lederach, 1997; Manning, 2003). Chapter three of this study further explores broader theories on the peacebuilding process, spoilers, and spoiler management. Based on theoretical analysis, this study also develops an analytical template identifying a relational approach between three phases of peacebuilding process and spoilers.

Spoiler Management

Managing peace spoilers is crucial for successful peacebuilding. Stedman (1997) categorizes spoilers as limited, greedy, or total, based on their objectives, emphasizing the need to identify and address their motivations. Strategies include co-optation, coercion, or inclusive dialogue to mitigate their impact (Mac Ginty, 2011). Third-party interventions, such as those by international organizations, can play a pivotal role in containing spoilers by leveraging resources and mandates to support peace processes (Nilsson & Kovacs, 2023). This study examines these strategies within the CHT context, focusing on how spoilers' tactics vary across phases and how effective management can enhance peacebuilding outcomes.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the foundation for examining peace spoilers in the CHT peacebuilding process to understand the trajectory of conflict resolution. Introducing the research aims, methodology, and theoretical framework, it established a roadmap for analyzing the emergence, behavior, and management of peace spoilers across the pre-accord negotiation as well as during the accord and post-accord phases of the CHT conflict. The study aims to contribute to both theoretical and practical advancements in peacebuilding by addressing the understudied dynamics of spoilers in the CHT socio-political context. The following chapter discusses the historical and contextual background of the CHT, its conflict with the Bangladeshi government and other spoilers, and the socio-political dynamics that shaped the region's peace process.

Chapter 2 : Background and Context

Introduction

Chapter two provides a comprehensive background and context for the CHT conflict by highlighting its geographical and historical context as well as the 1997 peace accord provisions, and administrative factors that shaped the peace process. This chapter explores the geography of CHT, the historical background of CHT conflict until 1996 leading up to the CHT peace accord in 1997, and the administrative measures that the Bangladeshi government followed during the pre-accord phase to address the insurgency. This chapter also highlights the details of the provisions and objectives of the 1997 CHT peace accord and describes the significance of the accord. Through the analysis of historical records and scholarly sources, the context is laid out for analyzing peace spoilers in subsequent chapters.

The Geography of the Chattogram Hill Tracts

The CHT are comprised of three hill districts – Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachari. The region is in the southeastern part of Bangladesh consisting of 5,093 square miles constituting 10 percent of the total land area of Bangladesh. It is surrounded by the Indian state of Tripura on the north and Mizoram on the east, by Myanmar on the south and east and the Chittagong district on the west. The territory in the CHT is part of the great hill mass which is an offshoot of the Himalayan range occupying parts of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The hills rise up to a maximum of 4000 feet with the ranges running generally northwest to southeast and dividing the area into a number of large valleys. The valleys are covered for the most part with dense virgin forest, interspersed with small waterways. The CHT is a unique territory of Bangladesh with mountains and beautiful landscapes (shaded in green).

Figure 1 Map of CHT Area



Historical Background of the CHT Conflict

The difficulty in CHT (1972-1997) between the PCJSS armed wing *Shanti Bahini* and the government of Bangladesh at times because of the state's policy of imposing an encompassing 'Bengali' identity on a culturally minor tribal people (Mohsin, 1997). The conflict initially started in 1976 as the leaders of the ethnic groups demanded full autonomy of the region and the right to see its distinct cultural life through constitutional means. Successive governments had denied the demand considering it as a way of sabotaging the state building process and required them to renounce their identity (Chakma, 2016; Mohsin, 1997). Since that time the conflict persisted for around 25 years until the signing of the peace agreement in 1997. Now the signatories are not satisfied with the progress of the peace accord implementation. A number of anti-accord ethnic and Bengali groups are posing challenges to the implementation of the agreement (Haque, 2015). However, the government claims that most of the provisions of the treaty have been implemented.

During the British colonial period and during the time when Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan, there were many conflicts with the inhabitants of the area. As this thesis focuses on the postaccord situation of this region, it only covers the background history of the signing of the 1997 peace accord which means the conflicting period of 1972 to 1996 is discussed in brief.

During the constitution making process the demand of the hill peoples delegation under the leadership of Manabendra Narayan Larma who was the representative of the CHT in the parliament in Dhaka (Mohsin, 1997), were rejected by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the then Prime Minister of the state. Rather Sheikh Mujibur Rahmann urged them to become Bengalis and reportedly threatened to turn them into minorities in the CHT by sending Bengalis to move there (Mohsin, 1997). However, Larma kept refusing the endorsement of the constitution since it did not recognize the existence of other national communities or sub-national identities (Chowdhury, 2002). He rejected Bengali nationalism and with the failure of the state to recognize the identity of the hill people and their political and economic marginalization, he formed the PCJSS—the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples’ Solidarity Association in March 1972. Subsequently, a military wing called *Shanti Bahini* was added to it (Mohsin, 1997). The CHT region later was placed under the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Twenty-fourth Division of the Bangladesh Army. The Bangladesh military began counterinsurgency operations. Thus, an opportunity for accommodation and co-existence was lost and the nation was faced with what amounted to an armed insurgency movement. Following the army coup of mid-1975, protests became more aggressive with India serving as a safe haven for these actors (Chowdhury, 2002).

The crisis during the Zia regime and the Ershad regime (1976-1985) soon escalated into a military crisis when the *Shanti Bahini* guerillas began an armed insurgency in the CHT. The military regime took this tribal tension as secessionist activity and quickly securitized the CHT

issue as a national threat to the sovereignty of Bangladesh (Haque, 2015). Both Zia and Ershad undertook a militarization policy in the CHT and patronized a massive influx of Bengali settlers there. From 1978 to 1985, around 400,000 Bengalis (mainly poor people) were brought to the area for settlement in the CHT (the CHT Commission 1994). The crisis between the *Shanti Bahini* and the settlers increased with time. In June 1984, there were guerilla attacks on two Bengali settlement hills, which killed 80 settlers, wounded 800 and set many houses on fire. Later, the army distributed weapons to the Bengali settlers so that they could defend themselves against guerilla activities and to establish a buffer between the army and the armed groups (Mey, 1984).

Ershad tried to undertake some pacification and confidence building measures to facilitate dialogue between the PCJSS and the government. He tried to form a Tribal convention holding four rounds of informal dialogue but failed to negotiate the conflict. *Shanti Bahini* saw the convention leaders as political lightweights co-opted by the military regime to manipulate tribal people (Haque, 2015). The dynamics of the ethnic conflict in the CHT did not remain confined to purely military targets consisting of the ‘armed’ forces on both sides. On the contrary, armed attacks inexorable spread to the respective non-combatant civilian populations, irrespective of whether they had been responsible for any violence. Between 1980 to the 1990s, there were at least 11 major massacres of the Hill peoples by Bengali forces which were reported (Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, 2000). In addition, the security forces were also responsible for widespread raping of ethnic women, which was systematically used as an instrument of humaliating and devaluing the ethnic identity and nationalism of the Hill peoples (Adnan, 2008). Thus giving the justification to their counter-violence as the Bengali settlers became a ‘soft target’ compared to the ‘hard’ military ones (Adnan, 2008). However, the *Shanti Bahini* did not seem to attain all the support from the Hill peoples, especially from the Marma group. The Marma tribe felt that if the

CHT secedes from the Chakma elite leadership then they would be exploited and dominated by the Chakma (Islam, 1981).

Later the government led by Khaleda Zia, declared a general amnesty for the armed individuals with an offer of cash rewards for surrendering their arms. During July 1992, the government appointed a nine-member committee to look into this CHT conflict issue with a directive to submit recommendations to the Bangladeshi government. On August 10, 1992 the insurgency situation began to improve with the PCJSS declaring a unilateral ceasefire. The Parliamentary Committee headed by Ret. Col. Oli Ahmed conducted negotiations with the PCJSS and held seven dialogues, and a sub-committee headed by Rashed Khan Menon, Member of the Parliament, held six dialogues. However, the process stopped by mid-1994, while refugee repatriation ceased by the beginning of 1995, perhaps owing to the increasing preoccupation of the ruling party with instability in the political arena (Chowdhury, 2002).

After a year long negotiation between the National Committee on the CHT and the PCJSS on December 2, 1997, the Hasina government signed a treaty known as the CHT Peace Accord. Thus the 25 year long insurgency came to an end. However, to this day the treaty has not been fully implemented (Haque, 2015). Moreover, the accord itself became a source of contention among many factions.

The Administration of Bangladesh During the Pre-Peace Accord Stage in CHT

Having been deprived of their expected recognition and administrative freedom, the PCJSS resorted to violence with the formation of the *Shanti Bahini* in the CHT as it aiming to fight for its ethnic group members. To contain violent assaults by the *Shanti Bahini*, the Bangladeshi government implemented different mechanisms such as deploying the military in the neighborhoods and establishing other types of authority figures with an aim to bring people from

the mainland to settle in the CHT region with the purpose of curbing the insurgency in the region (Ashrafuzzaman, 2014). However, the government attached utmost importance to the land ownership and the decisions on the issues had to be preceded by a cadastral survey, which was very expensive and time consuming. The local administration was entrusted with the responsibilities for relief and rehabilitation of the families who were affected by the insurgencies under different programs such as rehabilitation of non-tribal families, rehabilitation of tribal families and rehabilitation of returnees from India (Chakma, 2016). The insurgency situation appeared to improve, with the PCJSS declaring a unilateral ceasefire on August 10, 1992. Consequently, the process stopped by mid-1994, while refugee repatriation ceased by the beginning of 1995, perhaps owing to the increasing preoccupation of the ruling party with instability in the political arena (Chowdhury, 2002). On September 30, 1996, the prime minister announced the formation of an eleven-member national committee under the chairmanship of Abul Hasnat Abdullah, chief party whip. The single objective for the committee was to suggest a way to find a “permanent political solution within the framework of the state sovereignty of Bangladesh.” During December 21-24, the first meeting took place between this committee and the PCJSS, represented by Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, also known as Shantu Larma (Chowdhury, 2002). However, enduring peace appears to be elusive, and there were rumblings of dissatisfaction over the implementation of the accord. As hard it was to reach to a stage for developing the peace accord over 25 years to deescalate and transform the CHT conflict, it is rather hard to implement the accord completely to satisfy every party.

1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord

The section provides an overview of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord signed between the parties in 1997.

Overview and Objectives

The 1997 CHT Peace Accord, signed between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, represented by the National Committee, and the PCJSS, representing the CHT's Indigenous population, aimed to resolve decades of conflict in the CHT region. The accord recognized the CHT as a tribal-populated² area, emphasizing the need to protect its cultural character and promote comprehensive development. It sought to uphold Bangladesh's sovereignty while addressing Indigenous demands for autonomy, land rights, and socio-economic progress through a structured framework of governance reforms, rehabilitation measures, and amnesty provisions.

General Provisions of the Accord

The accord established the CHT's status as a tribal region, necessitating protective measures and development initiatives. Both parties committed to amending relevant laws and procedures to implement the agreement, with an Implementation Committee formed to oversee progress. The accord took effect upon signing and remains in force until all stipulated measures are fulfilled, ensuring a legal framework for sustained peacebuilding efforts.

Hill District Local Government Councils

To enhance local governance, the accord mandated amendments to the 1989 Hill District Local Government Council Acts for Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachari. Key changes included retaining the term “*Upajati*” (tribal) to affirm Indigenous identity and defining non-tribal permanent residents as those legally owning land and residing in the CHT. The accord introduced three reserved seats for women in each Hill District Council, with one-third allocated for non-tribal women, and added provisions for determining electoral constituencies to ensure fair representation. These reforms aimed to empower local councils and address Indigenous peoples demands for self-governance.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council

A significant provision was the establishment of a Regional Council to coordinate the three Hill District Councils, strengthening their authority through amendments to the 1989 Acts. The council, led by a chairman with the status of a state minister, must be an Indigenous (*Jumma*) individual elected indirectly by Hill District Council members. Comprising 22 members, including the chairman, the council ensures two-thirds tribal representation: 12 tribal men (allocated across Chakma, Marma, Tripura, and other tribes), two tribal women (one *Chakma*, one from other tribes), six non-tribal men (two per district), and one non-tribal woman. Three seats are reserved for women, with one-third for non-tribals. The council determines its operational procedures, fostering regional autonomy and inclusive governance.

Rehabilitation, Amnesty, and Other Measures

The accord addressed rehabilitation and amnesty to reintegrate displaced populations and former combatants. A prior agreement on March 9, 1997, facilitated the repatriation of tribal refugees from India's Tripura State under a 20-Point Facilities Package, with repatriation ongoing since March 28, 1997, supported by PCJSS cooperation. Internally displaced tribal evacuees were to be rehabilitated by a Task Force. Post-accord, the government committed to conducting a land survey to record and ensure ownership, providing two acres of land (or grove land if unavailable) to landless families or those with less than two acres (Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, 2000). General amnesty was granted to PCJSS members and permanent residents involved in their activities upon surrendering arms and returning to normal life, with exemptions from legal cases, arrests, and punishments. Each rehabilitated PCJSS family received a lump sum of Taka 50,000, and members were offered reinstatement in government jobs, educational opportunities for their children, and access to bank loans for self-employment ventures like cottage industries and horticulture (Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, 2000). These measures aimed to restore stability and support socio-economic reintegration.

Significance of the Accord

The 1997 CHT Peace Accord represents a critical effort to address the CHT conflict by balancing Indigenous people's autonomy with national sovereignty. Its provisions for local governance, regional coordination, land rights, and rehabilitation sought to mitigate the root causes of conflict, such as land disputes and marginalization. However, challenges in implementation, including resistance from groups like the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), highlight the role of

peace spoilers in undermining the accord's effectiveness, underscoring the need for robust spoiler management strategies to achieve sustainable peace.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed overview of CHT's geography, the conflict's historical dynamics, administrative responses from the government, the 1997 peace accord's framework and the persistent challenges posed by peace spoilers. By tracing the conflict's evolution from 1972, it highlights the interplay of socio-political, cultural, and administrative factors that have shaped peacebuilding efforts in the CHT. The partial implementation of the accord and resistance from different groups illustrates the complexities of achieving sustainable peace. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework that explores theories of peacebuilding and spoilers to provide a deeper perspective to analyze the CHT conflict and the role of spoilers in escalating tensions.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Understanding peace spoilers and their impact on peacebuilding process requires a profound theoretical foundation. The persistence of violent incidents or political instability in a post-conflict context is not rare, even after the parties sign a peace agreement. This reflects how peace is perceived, implemented, and sustained, after the peace agreement has been signed. Bangladesh's CHT continue to experience violent conflicts, grievances, and political instability, twenty-eight years after signing the peace agreement, suggesting an ineffective peacebuilding process in CHT area. This chapter builds the theoretical framework to examine this conflict and its peacebuilding process.

Peacebuilding theory provides a broad analytical framework to understand the effectiveness of the peace agreement, its implementation, and long-term processes of conflict transformation. Scholars like Galtung (1969), Lederach (1997), Schilling (2004), and Autesserre (2014) have emphasized what peace should look like and what peace agreements must focus on to build a sustainable peacebuilding process. Peace is more than just an absence of war, it should involve reconciliation, local ownership, respect the needs of every party involved in that conflict. These theories are relevant to shed light on different phases of the peacebuilding process, the implementation process, and attainability of the agreement.

Spoiler theories provide a complimentary lens of peacebuilding processes. They shed light on when a spoiler may occur, why, their types, and strategic gains. Importantly, it also helps to understand the management of peace spoilers. Stedman, Mac Ginty, Newman and Richmond have provided different theoretical frameworks to understand these causes, challenges, and management.

By bringing these two theoretical frameworks together, this chapter offers an analytical lens of the CHT peace process, conceptual tools to classify and interpret spoiler behavior, and understand any structural, relational, and political contexts. This framework can be used to understand spoiler behavior as a function of failed or partial peacebuilding.

Conceptualizing Peace and Peacebuilding

Peace is related to human interactions, their interests and needs, struggle for power, recognition, and ensuring justice. This is not simply just the absence of war (Galtung, 1969). Peace exists where people interact non-violently, transform relationships, and manage their conflict positively with respectful attention to the legitimate needs and interest of all concerned (Lederach, 1997). Without a sustainable peacebuilding process, the disparities can emerge, and developments can be destroyed (Schilling, 2012). In other words, peace means a balanced, fair, just and calm situation, where all concerned parties know and enjoy their due rights and protection.

Peacebuilding has emerged as a foundation for understanding the process of how societies or conflicting parties recover from violent conflict. Boutros Boutros-Ghali formerly defined peacebuilding in 1992 in the *Agenda for Peace* as a post-conflict strategy to prevent the recurrence of violence through institutions reconstruction, law, and economic development. It is often considered as a phase of a peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding is an umbrella term and can encompass long term transformative efforts, such as, early warnings and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military intervention, ceasefire agreements, and peace zones (Schilling, 2012). Peacebuilding can be multifaceted and adapted to each conflict. The ultimate objective of peacebuilding is to reduce and eliminate the frequency and severity of violent conflict. This approach also consists of capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation. Peacebuilding is a long-term process which

helps to facilitate the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation (Lederach, 1997). These are all part of the post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation process (de Coning, 2013 cited in Egbe, 2024).

Within this model, peace was understood as a state-building exercise led by external actors, often involving democracy, market liberalism, and centralized government (Chandler, 2010; Paris, 2004). However, this process can often be a top-down approach and has been critiqued for its orientation and failure to address deeper structural and relational drivers of conflict (Lederach, 1997; Schilling, 2012). Galtung (1969) introduced the idea of negative and positive peace, where negative peace is the absence of direct violence, and positive peace is the presence of social justice, equality, and harmony. This distinction provided the basis for rethinking peacebuilding not just as an institutional approach but also as a transformative approach that must include equality, inclusion, reconciliation, and justice (Galtung, 1996).

Lederach (1997) further contributed to this discussion by proposing a peacebuilding pyramid, which distinguished between top-level political elites, middle range societal leaders, and grassroots actors. According to Lederach, sustainable peace can only be achieved through multi-level engagement through reconciliation, healing, and relationship-building across all levels of society. This is a three-dimensional model of peacebuilding, that includes – structural, relational, and personal dimension to assess the quality and depth of post-conflict recovery (Lederach, 1997; Ryan, 2007; Schilling, 2012).

Lederach (1997) noted that the structural dimension of peacebuilding is focused on the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions that foster violent conflicts. Some of these root causes are typically complex including unfair land distribution, environmental degradation or

unequal political representation. If these issues are not addressed during the peacebuilding process, then it is hard to achieve sustainable peace. Relational peacebuilding focuses on intergroup trust, dialogue, and coexistence. This dimension centers on the process of reconciliation, forgiveness, trust building and future vision. Through this dimension the negative effects of conflicts like violence or war are transformed into positive relationships. It is important to focus on effective communication as well. Through dialogue on all levels, parties can increase their awareness of their own role in conflict transformation and develop a more accurate perception of their own identity and the other group's identity leading to better understanding. Supportive and effective communication can help establish a safe space to improve relationships and create an interdependent relationship in the process. The personal dimension of this peace process addresses trauma, psychological healing, and inclusion. These desired changes happen on the individual level. If individuals do not go through the healing process, then there will always be a possibility of social, political, and economic repercussions. The social structure that has been damaged must address the individual dimension to ensure that the trauma has been dealt with. This dimension refers to the fact that peacebuilding should also focus on the psychological and emotional layers of the conflict. After a violent conflict, individuals are likely to feel vulnerable, helpless and out of reach. If these needs are not met, then people are susceptible to future conflicts. In the conflict transformation process, where these dimensions remain underdeveloped, peace processes may produce only a fragile or temporary stability. This leaves space for grievance, resistance, and spoiler behavior.

Strategic Peacebuilding and Just Peace

To understand spoilers in a peacebuilding process, it is essential to conceptualize peace as a long-term, multi-dimensional, and intergeneration process, not just a checklist of post-peace accord

reconstruction. Strategic peacebuilding and just peace are two approaches that help to understand peacebuilding beyond the minimalist understandings of peace, it focuses on deep structural change, healing, and moral legitimacy (Galtung, 1996; Philpott, 2012). These concepts serve to deepen the peacebuilding framework to explain spoiling behavior in a conflict transformation, where peace agreement has been signed, and sustainable peace has not been achieved yet.

Strategic peacebuilding helps to interconnect the efforts made to address structural, relational, and institutional root causes of a conflict (Schilling, 2012). This is a long-term process involving a comprehensive and coordinated framework by including multiple actors (e.g., state, civil society, religious leaders, international agencies, etc.) and a commitment to social and political transformation (Egbe, 2024; Lederach, 1997; Riak & Bill, 2022).

Peace must be built on multiple levels of a society. Lederach (1997) argued in his peacebuilding pyramid that sustainable peace depends on middle-range and grassroots agencies along with elite level political agreements. Second, strategic peacebuilding helps to interconnect different governance, justice, education, and the economy. Failure of achieving this interconnectedness may result in failure or partial success of the peace process. Third, this peacebuilding process as a temporal continuum, not just a post-conflict phase, involves engagement before, during, and after conflict (Lederach, 1997; Paris, 2004). The United Nations Security Council has noted that peacebuilding should begin before violence starts, continue during conflict, and intensify after agreements are signed (UNSGPC, 2007).

On the other hand, just peace brings relational, cultural, and ethical dimensions of peace in the peacebuilding process. Lederach (1995) argued that the formal peace process sometimes ignores cultural violence, symbolic exclusion, psychosocial trauma while implementing peacebuilding strategies. This creates a vacuum for future conflicts. Just peace (Schirch, 2005)

emphasizes inclusion, moral legitimacy, dignity, and healing, especially for historically marginalized communities. Just peace strategies recognize that different types of conflicts, for example, direct, structural, and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990) and builds on this by creating an inclusionary society with different ideologies, narratives, and cultural practices. Reconciliation and sustainable peace require not just political agreements but also transformation in relationships and identities as well as structures. Egbe (2024) and Schirch (2005) discussed that a just peace involved dialogical processes, reconstruction of narratives, and healing rituals. All these strategies help communities to process trauma and move beyond past grievances. This theoretical perspective is particularly useful to analyze post-accord peacebuilding process. By integrating just peace into the framework, this thesis affirms that peace cannot be produced at the institutional level only.

Phases of Peacebuilding and Their Implications for Spoiler Emergence

Peacebuilding is often thought of as the beginning stage after hostilities have ceased with the signing of an agreement. However, it is argued that peacebuilding efforts occur before, during, and after violent conflicts (AFP). Peacebuilding processes are interconnected and have iterative phases. Each phase has specific objectives, actors, and vulnerabilities. Successful peacebuilding progresses through three broad and sometimes overlapping phases. These phases are not rigid. They can always revert to previous phase if situation deteriorate (Accord, 2005; Lederach, 1997). This section follows a three-phase model of peacebuilding – pre-accord, during-accord, post-accord to analyze conflict transformation. Each phase is explored by identifying its objectives, institutional forms, actor dynamics, and implementation challenges. This serves as the foundation for understanding how peacebuilding unfolds and later, helps to understand spoiling behavior in different phases of peacebuilding.

The Pre-accord Phase

The pre-accord phase of peacebuilding is the period before the formal negotiation and signing of a peace agreement. This stage is critical not only to deescalate violence but also to shift focus on social, political, and institutional needs. This lays the foundation for a meaningful peace agreement to be constructed. It is often mentioned that the success of peacebuilding depends on what happens in the pre-accord phase (Darby & MacGinty, 2003; Paris, 2004).

Primary goals of the pre-accord phase include negotiation, mitigating violence, fostering a peaceful environment where every party and community can begin to engage in dialogue (Barnett et al., 2007). This requires both security de-escalation and active work on structural grievances, for example, land rights, exclusionary grievances, and socio-economic marginalization (Barnett et al., 2007). According to Paffenholz (2014), early peacebuilding efforts that do not address these issues may generate fragile peace agreements. An important and central dynamic condition of this phase is to identify and recognize all legitimate stakeholders that participate in exploratory dialogue, who will be contributing to frame the conflict narrative and whose voices are going to have long-term consequences in the peacebuilding process (Darby & MacGinty, 2003). Sometimes groups are excluded from these early conversations as illegitimate radicals, which can result in an underrepresented peace agreement (Zahar, 2006). Often such exclusions are political and determines who later becomes aligned with or opposed to the peace process.

Emerging peacebuilding scholarships highlight the significance of community engagement (e.g., grassroot actors, civil society networks, identity-based communities, etc.) even though elite-led dialogue dominates the pre-accord phase (Wanis-St. John, 2008; Paffenholz, 2014). Community engagement is community consultation, and also refers to the inclusion of non-elite actors in shaping conflict narratives, agenda priorities, and desired outcomes. Lederach (1997)

stressed that building peace requires input from all actors in the relational infrastructure and excluding them in early peace talks leads to resistance, withdrawal, or passive disengagement during the implementation phase of the peacebuilding process (Nilsson, 2012). However, there are several challenges. The pre-negotiation process can often be informal or secretive formats, dominated by military or political elites (Wanis-St. John, 2008). Second, donor-driven frameworks focus on quick impact over deeper engagement, excluding the community groups (Barnett et al., 2007). Third, power asymmetries in fragile states frequently marginalize Indigenous, minority groups, or armed groups when the state authorities set the terms of the peace process (Paffenholz, 2014). It is important to note that actors (e.g., spoilers) excluded during this phase may later resist the peacebuilding process not out of ideological opposition to peace itself, but to protest the terms under which the peace agreement was created (Zahar, 2006). The pre-accord phase is not only preparatory but also formative.

The Negotiation and Agreement Phase

This phase of peacebuilding represents the formalization of intent to end hostilities and transition toward a negotiated socio-political order. During this phase, peace agreements are drafted and signed that may include ceasefires, governance structures, disarmaments, and broader institutional reforms (Darby & MacGinty, 2003). Lederach (1997) argues that this phase should be considered as a linking phase in a long-term process, instead of the apex of the peace process.

The primary goal of this phase is to create a framework which is capable of ceasing organized violence, and providing institutional reformation framework, justice mechanism, and power-sharing goals (Paris, 2004). This phase should be inclusive, and all actors who are critically influencing the agreement should be identified and the agreement should be seen as fair and inclusive (Barnes, 2002; Paffenholz, 2014). During this phase, negotiations are often done between

the ruling regimes and armed groups. While this process may help to draft an agreement in a timely manner, it marginalizes nonviolent groups, for example, women's group, Indigenous communities, youth, the elderly, ex-combatants, disabled people, LGBTQ people, minority groups, and civil societies who also have endured the conflict (Paffenholz, 2014). This may undermine the entire peacebuilding process and create a dilemma of whether the agreement should be inclusive or efficient. Including all participants may complicate the negotiation dynamics and lengthens the timelines (Nilsson, 2012) yet it is important to note that many agreements or settlements fail due to procedurally fragile negotiations instead of faulty institutional content. Peace agreements often contain vague commitments on disarmament, transitional justice, and decentralization of power. Such vague terms may help to secure a short-term peace agreement, and it creates an interpretive conflict later, especially when timelines are delayed or not enforced (Nilsson, 2008). Lederach (1997) emphasizes that the signing of the peace agreement is only the beginning of a peacebuilding process, it is not the end. The procedural choices made during the negotiation phase create the environment for the post-accord phase. Understanding this phase in detail is essential to analyze how peace agreements succeed or unravel in the implementation phase.

The Post-accord Phase

The post-accord phase begins after signing the peace agreement. It represents a stage where negotiated commitments must be implemented. It can be political, legal, or social engagements. Signing the peace agreement often means that it signals the cessation of violence, the institutionalization of peace, rebuilding trust, and administrative restructure in the post-peace accord peacebuilding process.

According to Stedman (2002), the institutional priorities of this phase are diverse. The first step is disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants to prevent

militarization and use of force. These DDR programs are often faced with substantial difficulties, for example, insufficient funding, lack of community reintegration capacity, and the failure to provide sustainable livelihoods of ex-combatants (Stedman, 2002). All these issues can threaten the security and destabilize the implementation phase (Stedman, 2002). It is also important to focus on security sector reform (SSR). It is intended to restructure and rebuild policing, the military and broader institutions so that they are both professionalized and politically neutral. In conflicts where security forces were actively involved in the conflict, SSR requires the reintegration of former adversaries with demands for justice and non-recurrence of violent conflict (Barnette et al., 2007). Paris (2004) notes that failure to create legitimate and accountable security agencies may undermine the credibility of the state and will weaken the peacebuilding process. Another important step is institutional and legal reformation that includes efforts to draft new constitutions, establish transitional or hybrid governance mechanisms, and reorganize administrative structures such as local government and judicial institutions. The key focus is on decentralization and autonomy arrangements at this stage to accommodate identity-based grievances or regional power dynamics. However, implementation is frequently delayed to due to political resistance (MacGinty, 2008).

Post-accord peacebuilding also encompasses transitional justice and reconciliation processes that can include justice tribunals, truth commissions to address grassroots issues and to begin restitution programs in some cases (Zahar, 2006). Zahar (2006) continues to describe that transitional justice can often be challenging in this stage because it is politically sensitive and contested, especially if the former perpetrators are part of the ruling elite. Reconciliation in a post-accord context is not only a legal or institutional process but also a relational one that should include engagement with narrative of harm, acknowledgement, and forgiveness (Lederach, 1997).

In this stage, socio-economic reconstruction efforts are significant as well. Rebuilding infrastructure, restoring livelihoods, and repatriating a displaced population are part of this development. Even though these developments are central at this stage, they are often underfunded or externally driven (Pouligny, 2005). Further, when these goals are not attained then marginalized groups may perceive the postaccord stage as a continuation of structural violence (Mac Ginty, 2008). The postaccord phase is prone to fatigue because political will sometimes decline sharply after the initial euphoria of an agreement (Barnett et al., 2007). This mismatch between long-term needs and short-term commitments can create implementation gaps. This can result in lack of public trust and confidence in the newly formed institutions. Many of these structural conditions can introduce spoiling behavior from different actors.

Spoiler Theories and Typologies

Peacebuilding processes can be challenging when it comes to dealing with spoilers. This issue has become an integral part of contemporary peacebuilding processes. The major contribution to the spoiler concept was made by Steven Stedman in 1997. Peace spoilers can be defined as some leaders or parties believing that peace emerging from negotiations would result in a loss of their power and in a threat to their interests. For that reason, sometimes they are ready to use violence to undermine attempts to achieve that peace (Stedman, 1997).

Although the concept of peace spoilers is comparatively new, there are numbers of definitions of spoilers. According to Aggestam (2006), and like Stedman, peace spoilers can be leaders or factions who view peace as a threat to their interests or power and are willing to resort to violence to prevent it from happening. This perspective of the definition of spoilers indicates that factions in a conflicted area may try to undermine the peacebuilding processes for unmet

reasons or other interests, even if some powerful leaders engage in the conflict resolution processes.

There can be many other reasons. For example, Wanis-St. John-St. John (2006) defines spoilers as parties who can challenge each side in the dispute and may have an interest in maintaining the status quo. The status quo might be a situation before the peace agreement has been implemented, and the spoilers might be able to derail the negotiation. Possible peace spoilers are civil society groups that could have a significant role in undermining an accord or causing instability in the peacebuilding phase (Harris, 2010).

One of the important purposes of the peace accord is to ensure that there are no reasons for future conflicts. The post accord environment reflects the success of the treaty and peacebuilding process. Sometimes the peace process remains incomplete or unfulfilled because of many reasons. One of the reasons are peace spoilers. Newman and Richmond (2006) state that peace spoilers are groups that actively seek to hinder, delay or undermine conflict settlement through a variety of means and for various reasons. Although there is no accepting definition of peace spoilers the term can be understood as simply as possible with a view, that is those who are in favor of a peace accord or peace makers and those who are against this peace process (Newman & Richmond, 2006). This cannot be overlooked that accords can address all the problems or issues to resolve. There might be unresolved issues that might make future parties who are against this peace process or it may be that the post peace accord environment is not suitable for sustainable peace which can lead to making more peace spoiler groups. All these definitions may not provide a definitive concept of spoilers, and it might be hard to identify spoilers in a negotiation process at the first place.

Moreover, spoilers are also related to politics. This is because one of their main components is subjectivity, and they demand legitimacy of being one party and yet to others they might be considered as spoilers (Monferone, 2018). They are related to peacemaking processes. Newman and Richmond (2006) emphasize that peace processes often take place in a liberal peace process framework, a framework first posed by Immanuel Kant that refers to democratic states and include, among others, traditional Western values such as democratization, the rule of law and the free market. Liberal peacemaking is considered as the basis of the implementation of democracy and functions for global peace. Along with Newman and Richmond (2006), Mac Ginty (2008) admonishes that this framework may not always fit and it creates a premature judgement based on specific liberal values. In some contexts, applying these values may make it vague rather than clarify the identification of spoilers, since democratic principles do not always align with local political realities (Mac Ginty, 2008).

Another aspect of the concept of spoilers is that these spoilers are an indication of a systematic malfunction within the concept of nation-state and the secular constructs of historicism. The process of conflict resolution and diplomacy participate in constructing enemies, concluding that features of typical liberal peace, such as social justice, diplomacy and conflict resolution which might contribute to the creation of spoilers (Byrne & Thiessen, 2019; Dalsheim, 2014).

What seems apparent in these definitions of spoilers is that there are groups that act as spoilers. However, later it was described that not only groups but also individuals (that are not leaders) can also act as spoilers. In fact, it seems that anyone with the means to spoil can be spoilers, whether they are inside or outside the conflict or peace negotiations. Spoilers can only exist when there is an ongoing peace negotiation or at least one existing party which formally

proclaimed to enter a peace accord. Without a possible peace accord to spoil, the spoilers cannot exist (Ostendorf, 2013).

While many traditional spoiler theories have framed spoilers as actors who undermine peace processes, the recent scholarship challenges this binary concept. Mac Ginty (2008) argues that rejecting a peace process that fails to serve community interests does not automatically make the actor a spoiler. In fact, this kind of resistance may work as a form of peacebuilding. For example, Richmond and Newman (2006) emphasize that spoilers are dynamic actors whose behavior may reflect strategic engagement rather than total rejection of a peace process. Autesserre (2010) noted that while international peacebuilders and/or the state may label local parties as spoilers sometimes these opposition parties were created from exclusion and marginalization by the government. Darby (2003) adds that resistance to a certain peace process questions its legitimacy and whether the communities were included meaningfully in the peacebuilding process. Consequently, there are a myriad of spoiler types, and spoilers can be a catalyst to a more inclusive and just peacebuilding process.

Different theoretical approaches have different implications of how to identify spoilers and how to manage them. So, having a workable definition of spoilers is necessary. Given the complexity of conflicts and peace processes, there are many factors that can influence the process of peacebuilding and peacemaking. There is a need of spoiler management for the best result of peacebuilding. To find that solution, there is a need to understand what kind of spoilers that they are along with their motivations, approaches and actions.

Identifying Peace Spoilers

In many cases, peace accords or settlements saw a successive return of violence that destroyed many previous efforts for peace. The presence of actors undermining the peace processes with

violence are usually characterized as spoilers as we discussed earlier (Stedman 1997). There are many ongoing concepts of spoilers, and it is important because the spoiling issue has a great relevance both on the political and practical fields. Many international institutions are also focusing on the matter of spoilers like the United Nations that is putting so much effort in planning strategies to encounter spoilers, particularly after some tragic events in Haiti, Iraq, Rwanda, East Timor, and Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Monferone, 2018).

These concepts of spoilers raise some issues of identifying them. How can spoilers be identified before they engage in spoiling behavior? The identification of spoilers can be done through a discussion of violence, probable spoiling behavior or activities, or simply wanting peace in another form. A thorough discussion of these limited arenas might help to identify spoilers in a certain case.

Means of Violence

The use of violence is necessary for a person or group to be labelled as a spoiler as we can see from the definition of Stedman (1997) and Aggestam (2006). They both noted that a person or group is only spoiler when they use violence. If this definition is considered, then persons or groups who try to obstruct peace using any other means cannot be seen as spoilers. However, in a later discussion, Stedman expressed that spoilers could use “strategies of stealth”, and thus not necessary obstruct peace with violence (Stedman, 1997).

In the study of peace processes, the focus is often on violent behaviors. Violence is among the most severe and measurable acts, with its impacts quantifiable in terms of casualties, injuries, and destruction. However, several scholars argue that spoilers, actors who undermine peace efforts, may employ both violent and nonviolent tactics (Newman & Richmond, 2006; Nilsson & Kovacs, 2011; Stedman, 1997). This dual approach is significant for understanding spoilers' strategies,

though the relationship between their violent and nonviolent actions remains poorly understood (Nilsson & Kovacs, 2011). There is discussion on nonviolent strategies of spoilers. For example, not wanting to negotiate at all or entering negotiations but not fulfilling their side of the agreement. If parties ‘drag their feet’ regarding demobilization or disarmament, this should be defined as spoiler behavior as well (Zahar, 2003). Other nonviolent acts of spoilers can be considered as parties who join a peace process but are not willing to compromise on any of their demands. In these instances, parties are using negotiation processes to gain attention or legitimacy along with time, materials, weaponry or to evade international sanctions. There can be many reasons behind this. These are called devious objectives (Ostendorf, 2013).

Spoiling Behavior and Activities

Identifying spoilers from the definitions mentioned above may sometimes pose a dilemma to encounter spoiling behavior. In many cases, we only identify a certain action as a spoiling activity. For instance, when a party enters into a peace agreement or negotiation, it is not possible to understand or know that the party is entering into the agreement because it wants peace or to pursue devious objectives. So, identifying spoiling behavior is only possible when an action has taken place. So, calling a party a spoiler before it has spoiled the peace would be wrong to some extent (Nilsson & Kovacs, 2011).

For this reason, the term ‘possible spoiler’ should be preferable because this includes all parties that have the possibility or probability to spoil but does not mean that they are spoilers. This raises another issue. In this case, all parties involved in a conflict or agreement should be considered as possible peace spoilers. However, it is debated that “only the powerful ones tend to become manifest threat” (Greenhill & Major, 2007, p. 37). In a more common acknowledgment, it is not necessary to recognize that only the powerful parties are the potential peace spoilers, rather

it very much depends on their relationship with other parties, shifting power balances and the agreement that is currently on the table between them. The term ‘spoiler’ should be used carefully because it has much sensitivity within it and mislabelling it might hamper the relationship between the enacting parties. The term is also misleading in a sense that the behavior of one party can be considered as spoiling behavior to another party’s perception, yet the other party is thinking of this as a legal politics. So, the difference between the spoiling behavior and legal politics must be made, especially the third party or neutral party should be aware of this situation. According to Newman and Richmond (2006) when terms and conditions are perceived as unjust, parties have the right to object to those terms and conditions. In that case, the objection is called politics since there is unjustifiable means to them. However, when the terms and conditions are fair and just, but still one party is debating the issue or acting against it, then it can be called spoiling behavior.

Spoiling behavior has normative underpinnings. According to Heaven (2010) the spoiler concept has meaning in relation to the core assumption of the “Liberal Peace Framework” (LPF). So, actors who behave consequently with this paradigm will be labelled as behaving in a fair and legitimate way whereas others that do not behave accordingly to the LPF will be considered as spoilers. This in turn will determine how the key custodians respond to various actors in the peace process. However, the LPF was developed by western researchers and may hold norms and values that are not legitimate in the whole world (Newman & Richmond, 2006). The normative dimensions mainly shape the spoiler concept. However, it is argued by Newman and Richmond that the difference in spoiling lies in the behavior of the opposing party. When actions of a party do not call into question the integrity of the peace framework or use violence then this may be considered as acceptable. Groups that spoil often do so because they feel that the peace process undermines their rights or it limits their privileges or access to resources. Another possibility is

that they rejected the LPF, so a party may try to change it by violent and nonviolent means as with their necessity.

Peace in Another Form

If all the concepts of peace spoilers are considered then it can be said that sometimes spoilers are not only just preventing peace, but it might be also possible that a group does not agree to the current agreement (Zahar, 2008). They may only wish to alter the negotiations so that they have their own interest in that or so that they are included in the negotiations. It is possible that they might want peace in a different form where they have more power or certain promises are made regarding their future endeavors.

Peace spoiling can have two effects depending on the spoilers' intention. First, the intention can be to completely derail the peace process and second, when a party wants peace yet does not agree with the current peace process then it might want to change the peace agreement. In the first case, if the peace agreement fails then the spoiling parties win and in the second case, if the marginalized community gets a voice, if questions about the agreement are being raised to illustrate the need to include other actors in the process, then there is a possibility that the revised peace agreement might work (Newman & Richmond, 2006). So, in some cases spoiling does not spread only negativity yet in some cases, it is the inclusion of new ideas, and the better commitment of certain parties. Spoiling can be mentioned as balancing the threat of the end of a peace process with a desire to reach peace with a new set of interests. In this way, spoiling can be considered as the normal part of the peace process where there is a presence of recalcitrance and opposition. Thus, it is not necessary to think that spoiling is there to hinder peace processes rather they it might be a sign that the peace process is not supported by all parties. As sometimes, the marginalized groups want to be a part of it because they see the chances of the peace succeeding as very large.

Although the consideration of spoiling behavior is justifiable sometimes it still is risky. No peace process can absorb an equal amount of spoiling before it collapses. Newman and Richmond (2006) tried to link this directly to the willingness of groups to cooperate. In general, peace process cannot sustain a high level of violence. So, when the violence becomes inevitable this needs to be understood that the groups cannot be reconciled to compromise. From another perspective, a party's willingness alone is not sufficient. If a peace process fails because of the spoiling behavior then there might be other reasons, such as – maybe they were not ready to be reconciled at that moment, the third party did not explore all the possible options for both the groups or they do not know how to reach their interest in any other way.

Types of Spoilers

The primary categorization of peace spoilers depends on the fact of whether they are a party to the existing agreement or not. Based on this, the categories of spoiler formation can be of two types: the 'Inside' spoilers and 'Outside' spoilers (Zahar, 2003).

Outside Spoilers

Many scholars and policymakers have discussed outside spoilers. The excluded actors frequently resort to violence following peace agreements, and the risk of renewed conflict increases when more groups are left out from an agreement (Reiter, 2016). Outside spoilers are typically more open with their intentions and behavior (Stedman, 1997) and their objective is nearly always to bring the agreement down. They are more likely to engage in the kinds of behaviors which is focused on violent attacks on civilian targets (Reiter, 2016).

Outside spoilers exist for two reasons mainly. First, actors may refrain from signing a peace agreement, despite being offered the opportunity to do so. In many cases, actors refuse to enter a peace agreement with any government party. They may simply be unwilling to pursue peace if it

would compromise their ideologies. There may be other armed actors who benefit financially from the conflict, so they wish to continue the conflict as a means of providing cover for their lucrative means (Zahar, 2003). Some groups are willing to enter into a peace agreement with the government yet extremists within the group may not. Later, these extremists may split off forming a new group in opposition to the agreement (Licklider, 2001).

A second source of outside spoiling is those actors that the government and other negotiating non-state groups make no effort to include in the peace process. Governments may choose to engage only the strongest rebels, treating others as criminal groups to engage through police action rather than major political actors with which to negotiate. Three key types of outside spoilers can be determined from this discussion: rebel groups, rebel factions and domestic opposition forces (Reiter, 2016).

Outside Rebel Groups. In many cases, there are many groups with different ideologies to engage in a conflict. However, in most of the cases the government try to settle the peace agreement with the stronger parties who need to lay down their arms to prevent more chaos from ensuing. Thus, selecting a more amenable peace accord group leaves the relatively small and weak groups with less capability to be successful in spoiling that may result into chaos in the post accord peacebuilding process. However, inclusion of the smaller rebel groups in the agreement is another resort for diverting the focus of the greater rebel groups.

Outside Rebel Factions. It is possible that rebel groups are not homogenous rather they consist of different views and ideologies and struggle for power internally. It is rare for all members of a rebel group to come to a unified decision of a peace settlement over the same negotiated settlement with the government. Even if it is possible for them to come to any peaceful solution, in many cases, later powerful groups whose objectives were not achieved by the agreement may

go against their former allies. In fact, competitive divisions between groups typically grow after violence ends, as factions who were united under a common grudge against the government, later become more aware of their differences and conflicting interests. It is thus expected for rebel factions to form in the aftermath of any peace agreement.

Domestic Opposition Forces. Like the rebel groups, the state too consists of many different actors who may or may not agree with the decision of the political leadership to sign a peace accord and thus later these anti-settlement elites who vie for public support create a spoiling environment after the peace agreement.

Inside Spoilers

Inside spoilers are those who sign a peace agreement and later use violent or other means to disrupt the peace agreement. Most of the time, the inside spoiling gets less attention as it is typically considered as less dangerous (Reiter, 2016). This type of behavior is intended to merely alter an agreement rather than bring it down completely thus making the spoiler less of a threat. Despite the high costs, those who create a spoiling environment in the post-peace accord environment, may have two primary reasons. First, the capabilities may have changed and thus the agreement, as signed, no longer appeals to the group. Second, actors may be disappointed at the pace or the way in which an agreement is being implemented. In many cases, the parties continue to pursue the conflict track along with the peace agreement track as an insurance if the agreement does not get implemented in the right way. Inside spoiling can take the form of repeated efforts over the time, each followed by concessions from the other side, or it can be short lived, where the main issue is resolved or the spoiler defects from the agreement when it is not. Both the government and inside rebels can act as spoilers.

The Government. Government spoiling is defined as spoiling directed by the political leaders of a state, which presents a significant threat to the existing peace accord. The government is in fact the only party who is legitimate to use any force after an agreement is signed. When the rebels disarm and demobilize, the government may find itself with a newfound monopoly in the use of violence. Following the peace agreement, therefore, it is possible for the government to use any force.

Inside Rebel Groups. Rebel groups are often reluctant signatories to peace agreements and stand to lose significant prestige and status following peace agreements. Rebel leaders are thus quick to resort to violence when they feel as though they are not being granted enough power or say in the post-agreement government. If the rebel groups find that the government is not intending to implement the agreement to the full scale, then they try to abandon the treaty and resort to violence before they are further weakened. Inside rebel groups may also use spoiling as a strategy to gain additional concessions in the post-accord period. Another case can be that the rebel groups never wanted the peace rather they used this time to rearm and regroup against the government (Reiter, 2016).

Spoiler Management

If there are any possibilities for spoilers to emerge in a peacebuilding process, then the success of the peace process depends on the management of the peace spoilers. Identifying spoilers is as much as important as to work on the spoiler management. Stedman (1997) argued that the identity of a spoiler is the key for the success of spoiler management. Understanding why some parties try to undermine the peace processes is crucial when trying to find measures to counterattack their activities, thus Stedman proposed three types of spoilers: limited, greedy and total based on their needs and activities (Monferone, 2018).

Limited spoilers have limited goals, for instance, they might want only recognition, basic security or more representation in the negotiations. However, this does not necessarily mean that their commitment level is low. In many cases, limited spoiler's objective may be non-negotiable and difficult for mediators to concede. Still, their goals can usually be accommodated, and they can be involved in negotiations in certain cases.

Total spoilers are actors who seek total power and exclusive authority. Their goals in most of the cases do not change during the negotiations and their leaders often think that they should get all or nothing at all. These kinds of spoilers are also often linked with radical ideologies in which the use of violence to seek total power is a mean to transform the society according to their aspirations. These characteristics usually make them too complicated to reconcile with the peace process.

Greedy spoilers are located between limited and total spoilers: their goals expand or contract depending on costs and risks; a greedy spoiler may have either limited goals that expand if costs and risks to achieve them are low or total goals that contract when costs and risks to achieve them are too high. They can be accommodated if their goals are limited and expanding them would be a too risky move.

However, there are criticisms about spoiler management issues of the Stedman framework like analysts must know a great deal about the actors themselves, and this involves knowledge of language, interviews of leaders and leadership analysis which goes into a great deal of in-depth field work (Elman, 2012). Critics though say that it is enough to assess the context in which the potential spoilers are operating, such as the constraints and opportunities they face (Elman, 2012).

The success of the spoiler management largely depends on the strategies of the mediator. If the mediator's strategy is weak then the possibility of being overtaken by spoilers is very high

(Chalanda-Kumwenda, 2015). In the 2009 UN report the then Secretary-General Ban Ki-mon provided insights into the strategies that mediators should use to prevent spoilers from derailing the peace process. The report indicates that it is necessary to determine whether the spoiler is located within the leadership or the constituents and to assess what motivates spoiler behavior by leaders, because often leaders avoid implementing a peace agreement for fear of reprisal from followers.

According to Stedman (1997), there are three main strategies for dealing with spoilers, and these are inducement, socialization, and coercion. By being conceptualized with the specific type of spoiler, the usage of these strategies at the practical level is more complicated and is likely to acquire different configurations depending on each case. In some cases, more than one strategy can be used simultaneously (Stedman, 1997).

Inducement

Inducement is usually linked with limited spoilers and consists in taking positive measures to address their limited goals. In some cases, spoilers may not seek power but recognition, fairness, justice or simply more benefits. These are considered as limited goals which can be satisfied by inducing the spoilers in the negotiations or accommodating their costly demands. This approach offers the spoilers a role in the process by meeting its non-negotiable demands and is particularly useful in situations where the use of military power or any other form of intimidation may lead to a radicalization of a previously moderate spoiler (Stedman, 1997).

Socialization

Socialization implies the establishment of a set of specific norms and rules to whom spoilers must commit to join the peace process. These rules are thus the basis for a spoiler to be accepted by the other parties and represent the normative aspects through which spoiler's demands are judged.

Such standards can consist of values like the acceptance of democratic principles or the protection of basic human rights. In most of the cases, socialization is linked with the greedy spoilers. Through its normative regulation it allows to differentiate which requests and behaviors are acceptable or not and consequently to determine its possible costs and consequences. As Stedman (1997) argues, this approach can be directed both at the elites and citizens in each case the primary goal is to inculcate appropriate values and to educate the actors into norms of good governance, democratic competition and accountability. This is called the “intellectual component” of socialization where he suggested to add “material component” also.

Coercion

Coercion is a strategy based on the use or threat of punishment to discourage a spoiler to undertake actions or behaviors that could endanger the regular advancement of the peace process. This strategy has a few variations such as coercive diplomacy, or the use of threat and demand has been employed in different cases. Another is the application of force to defeat the spoiler has been attempted to be implemented in few cases. These are the two coercion methods that are used less frequently. There are two more common variations of the coercion strategy which are called the “departing train” strategy and the “withdrawal strategy” (Stedman, 1997). The departing train strategy refers to a judgement where the demands and behavior of the spoilers are considered illegitimate with the image that the peace process will continue to move forward whether the spoilers join or not. The withdrawal variation of the coercive strategy assumes that the spoiler wants an international presence during the peace processes. The strategy aims to punish the spoiler by threatening to withdraw any international support and peacekeepers from the peace processes.

Conclusion

There remains complexity surrounding the appropriate timing of identifying spoilers and implementing the most effective conflict management strategies. If there is a situation where insiders resort to violence or by any other means to derail peace, then there are three strategies to deal with the situation. (1) Forcing the actors to comply, (2) engaging them in a political process that offers some kind of security guarantees, and (3) helping them rebuild relations of trust (Zahar, 2010).

In international negotiations, “spoilers” are one kind of a particular sophisticated audience that can have a significant impact on peace processes. Spoilers act as stakeholders who in many cases are not present in the negotiation process yet still have an interest in undermining the principal parties’ abilities to reach and implement agreement. They can pose threats in both international and intrastate conflicts (John, 2006).

It is safe to say that during any spoiler management situation it is important to understand both the spoilers and the situations that can have effects on the mediation or negotiation process.

Chapter 4: Spoiler Dynamics in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Process

Introduction

Understanding peace spoilers is critical for comprehending the success or failure of a peacebuilding process. The spoiler behavior in the peacebuilding process of CHT, Bangladesh has played a significant role in shaping the outcomes and limitations of the peace accord. Chapter four begins with an evaluation of the 1997 CHT peace accord to provide a foundation for analyzing spoiler actions and to identify the elements that created or influenced spoiler behavior in CHT. Later it explores the spoiler dynamics that emerged before, during, and after signing the peace accord in 1997. The analytical framework of this chapter includes both a temporal dimension and a categorical dimension based on the theories reviewed in the previous chapters. This dual framework allows an actor-specific and contextualized analysis to understand the complexities with the peacebuilding process by comprehending the group dimensions, who interrupted the peace process, when, why, and how.

This chapter directly responds to the research question of “Which elements are creating or influencing peace spoilers during different phases of peacebuilding? And how do methods, tactics, and approaches of peace spoilers vary across different stages of a peacebuilding process?” It aligns with the objectives of the study by identifying peace spoiler strategies and analyzing how spoiler behavior emerges and evolves in different stages of a peacebuilding process. This analysis is based on secondary data from historical documents, policy papers, NGO and INGO reports, and academic literature to reflect the collective efforts in resolving the conflict and peace efforts in CHT.

This chapter outlines the analytical framework, including how the three peacebuilding phases and Stedman’s typology (1997) are applied in this context. It then traces spoiler behavior

in each phase of the peacebuilding process to understand their methods, tactics, motivations, and evolution across peacebuilding phases.

Evaluation of CHT Peace Accord

The signatory parties for the 1997 peace accord were the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh represented by the National Committee and the people of the CHT, represented PCJSS. The treaty extensively expressed the integrated sovereignty of Bangladesh. The main objective of the treaty was to comprehensively cover a set of rights and the promotion of all-around development of the citizens of the CHT region.

The CHT peace accord of 1997 is an example of an effort to resolve a protracted ethnopolitical conflict. The accord reflects that both parties, the PCJSS on behalf of the tribal people and the government of Bangladesh cooperated to reach to a conclusion for this long term fueled over national integrity. The structural component of this accord shows an extensive analysis of the government system in the CHT region (e.g. hill district local government council, CHT regional council). In addition to the formation of these, it also suggested its governance system and constitutions for operating in the CHT. This states that even if this region does not have full autonomy, there is still a chance for their own governance system to thrive so that they can have a legal system where they have majority representation. This attempt to address political representation and land rights aligns with Lederach's structural dimension of peacebuilding, which aim to mitigate root causes of the conflict (Lederach, 1997). However, failure to fully implement these provisions has led to structural violence as Galtung (1996) pointed.

This accord also tried to address the rehabilitation program for the refugees in the Tripura region. Also it tried to make sure that people who are surrendering and giving up their arms were

properly rehabilitated. Nevertheless the accord has both beneficial aspects and a few argumental aspects.

The CHT peace accord has been widely critiqued by both scholars and the ethnic communities of CHT. To begin with, the people for whom the accord was created have criticized the accord from two standpoints. The first is the lack of implementation. Since the signing of the treaty, it has not been implemented completely (Panday & Jamil, 2009). Insecurity in the CHT is considered by the PCJSS and its supporters to be a consequence of the lack of implementation of the treaty. This non-implementation undermines Galtung's (1996) concept of positive peace because it fails to establish equality and justice as it left structural grievances (e.g., land disputes) unresolved.

The second criticism is the accord itself. The PCJSS reformist group and the UPDF both oppose the accord. Members of the UPDF call the treaty a 'surrender' and claim that the PCJSS leadership is not representative of the 'downtrodden masses' (UPDF manifesto, CHT Commission, 2000; Wilkinson, 2015). The PCJSS reformists are critical about both the unimplementation of the agreement and also express that the reason behind the emergence of new organizations is due to its nonimplementation (Rahman, 2011). Whether opposed to its lacklustre implementation or to the whole negotiation process with the government of Bangladesh, the criticism of the accord is a key factor in the resurgence of violence in the CHT area. The accord has become a polarized issue among the local political groups, as well as pro-accord and anti-accord groups giving rise to small scale armed race groups threatening to destabilize the region (Wilkinson, 2015).

It has been pointed out that the accord is being considered as a bilateral contract between the government and some dominant ethnic groups since the state had not included local people in the process of conflict management and peacebuilding beyond some local political elites (Jamil &

Panday, 2008). This is another reason why the accord has become a matter of contention as it excluded a substantial number of ethnic groups living in the CHT. Also the accord was unable to address the major conflicting issue between the tribal people and the Bengali settlers (Sajib & Sohad, 2018). This exclusion and failure to resolve intercommunal tensions shows a lack of Lederach's relational dimension, and this accord is missing steps to encourage the trust-building and dialogue necessary for coexistence (Lederach, 1997).

After the signing of the accord, there has been different kinds of governance system such as military, civil, local government, the regional council and the tribal customary administration which were involved in a struggle for power, legitimacy, authority and state-affairs. This struggle paved the way to a new form of strife and mistrust. The behaviour of the civilian government, law enforcement agencies, military personnel and Bengali settlers was always humiliating, authoritarian, exploitative and insulting for the tribal people (Uddin, 2017). Not having a proper relational approach to the peace accord can be considered as flawed. This ongoing mistrust and lack of reconciliation hinder the "relational peacebuilding for sustainable peace" (Lederach, 1997). Although the accord disarmed the *Shanti Bahini* movement, the dissatisfaction of different stakeholders has escalated with conflict distributed in multiple layers. To be specific, the conflict between the UPDF and the PCJSS effected the region seriously. In addition, in the accord, there is no reference to accountability for the human rights abuses. The UPDF has argued that without the fulfillment of their basic demands and accountability for human rights abuses, a genuine and permanent peace cannot be established in the CHT region (Partha, 2016). Lack of a mechanism to address personal trauma healing and accountability may continue this intercommunal or intra-Indigenous tension for a long time. Leaving these psychological issues unaddressed are leaving the groups vulnerable for future conflict (Lederach, 1997).

Analytical Framework

This chapter applies an analytical framework that synthesizes insights from spoiler theory and critical peacebuilding theories. This gives the scope to analyze how and why peace spoilers emerged and evolved in the CHT peacebuilding process. This framework has two principal dimensions, namely a temporal phase-based approach to peacebuilding and a typological spoiler classification. This combination will allow to identify and interpret spoiler dynamics in relation to any political shifts, institutional design, and actor motivations.

The framework's temporal component is based on peacebuilding literature that conceptualizes peace as a process that unfolds over time, so it is not a single event. Lederach (1997) and Paris (2004) emphasize the need for sustainable engagement from the beginning of the peace process to the end, mainly pre-accord, negotiation/accord phase, and post-accord phase. Each of these phases shows distinct structural and relational conditions (Schilling, 2012) that influence actor's behavior. For instance, the pre-accord phase often shows acute violence, mistrust, and competitive narratives for legitimacy (Lederach, 1997). The negotiation phase includes institutional bargaining and drafting the formal peace accords (Zartman, 2008). Post-accord period is often presented as stable, yet this phase is fraught with implementation challenges, legitimacy crisis, and renewed tensions (Mac Ginty, 2010).

In applying this temporal dimension, CHT peacebuilding process is divided into three phases: pre-accord (prior to 1996), negotiation and agreement (1996-1997), and post-accord (1998 and onwards). These phases provide a historical and political structure which will help to assess the evolution of peace spoilers. It should be noted that while these categories are theoretically distinct, they often overlap and influence one another. Spoilers originating in the pre accord phase

may shift tactics or have different motivations over time, and new spoilers may emerge in later phases.

Stedman's (1997) theory has identified three types of spoilers: total, limited, and greedy spoilers based on goals, commitments, and influence on the peace process. Spoilers are defined as individuals or groups that believe the emerging peace will threaten their power or interest (Stedman, 1997). They can use violence or other means to undermine the peace process. Limited spoilers have finite objectives and are generally amenable to negotiation. Greedy spoiler's work on expanding their goals when they see an opportunity, and total spoilers, in contrast to other spoilers, are fundamentally opposed to the peace process and they refuse to accept the legitimacy of the peace process altogether (Stedman, 1997). This typology now includes nonviolent actors, bureaucrats, political elites, or civil society who can undermine the peace through other means (Newman & Richmond, 2006; Zahar, 2008).

The CHT context requires further adaptation of the spoiler theory. Literature explained that spoilers may not only include militant actors but government institutions, administrative delay, protest mobilization, settler groups, or NGOs depending on their behavior of delegitimizing or complicating the peace process (Murshed & Tadjoeeddin, 2009; Stedman, 1997). This approach reflects from critical peacebuilding theories that peacebuilding is inherently political, contested, and rooted in asymmetrical power relations (Mac Ginty, 2011; Paffenholz, 2014). Thus, spoiling behavior in CHT can be analyzed as an actor agency and/or institutional design. Galtung's (1969) structural violence and Schirch's (2005) framework of relational peacebuilding further reflects on this perspective. For instance, exclusionary process, lack of local ownership, poor legal or political arrangements often creates grievances, which can later manifest as spoiling. These elements are particularly present in CHT peacebuilding process. According to Mohsin (2003), the accord failed

to fully decentralize authority or integrate Indigenous perspectives into the framework. This created structural violence which led to the creation of more groups.

The analysis of CHT peace process is not linear actor centric. This framework also needed to adopt a relational dimension. Darby and Mac Ginty (2003) noted that the actor's characters and identities may shift over time. Spoilers are not static entities rather they respond to changes in the peace system over time. A limited spoiler may evolve into a total spoiler, or a total spoiler may evolve into limited spoiler based on recognition and political role. This dynamic shift plays a crucial role in both understanding the spoiler behavior and their management. This is why it is central to the CHT case, for example, the PCJSS group has undergone a significant change in both strategically and their alignment to their peace accord.

This framework also includes inside, and outside spoilers as proposed by Zahar (2006). Inside spoilers are those who were formally included in the peace process but later acted against it, while outside spoilers are those who were excluded from the peace process entirely (Zahar, 2006). It is important to note that, in the CHT where state actors were central to the peace process, they have at times acted in a way that stalled or undermined the post-accord peacebuilding process. External actors like the UPDF (created after 1997 peace accord) continue to challenge the legitimacy of the peace process and organize opposition through protests (Roy, 2021).

This analytical framework is designed to be a tool to understand all the actors, their motives, types, and creation phase in the hope to identify the most efficient way to manage the spoiling behaviors, which will be analyzed in Chapter five. The goal is to provide an interpretive lens to trace and categorize spoiler behavior over time. To operationalize the framework, the following Table 1 below outlines a simplified template for mapping spoiler types, motivations, methods across three peacebuilding phases and it will be applied in the subsequent sections to the

CHT case of this Chapter. It helps to systematize the findings and find patterns of spoiler transformation and persistence (if any).

Table 1: Spoiler Typology Across Peacebuilding Phases (analytical template)

Peacebuilding phases	Spoiler type	Motivations	Spoiling methods
Pre-accord	Limited/total	Identity, autonomy, recognition	Armed resistance, boycott, rejection, etc.
Negotiation and during accord	Greedy	Power-sharing, legitimacy	Delay tactics, conditional participation, etc.
Post-accord	Mixed/shifts in spoiling behavior	Unmet demands, failure of peace accord, exclusion from peace process	Protest, direct violence, renewed violence, bureaucracy, etc.

Developed from Greenhill & Major (2007), Lederach (1997), Newman & Richmond (2006), Reiter (2016), Schilling (2012), Stedman (1997), and Zahar (2003).

This analytical framework guides the interpretation of findings in CHT case by identifying when the spoiler emerged, possible reasons of emerging, shifts in their strategies (if any) and dynamics related to the CHT peace process. This phase-based approach also reflects that, many cases, including CHT, peacebuilding process is not a linear or uniformly paced process.

Pre-Accord Phase: Resistance and Repression

The period preceding the 1996 peace negotiations in the CHT had intense conflict, human rights abuses, and profound grievances among the Indigenous peoples. During this time, complex spoiler dynamics emerged. The roots of the CHT conflict have a long history of state-driven

marginalization. This progressively dismantled Indigenous autonomy and land rights. British colonial rule initially protected Indigenous land ownership and limited Bengali settlement under the 1900 CHT Regulation (Adnan & Dastidar, 2011). However, in 1947 during the India and Pakistan partition, and Bangladesh's incorporation into East Pakistan, this protection descended to the systemic marginalization of Indigenous population (Mohsin, 1997). Following the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Bengali assimilation policy promoted by the state excluded non-Bengali languages and cultures, (Chakma, 2010). In the 1980s, state-sponsored Bengali settlement programs were described as the region's reshaping tactic of ethnic composition, often using military enforcement. This led to widespread loss of Indigenous land (Adnan & Dastidar, 2011). In the postaccord period, peacebuilding in the CHT has also been criticized for being externally directed, where local ownership and agencies were excluded from the peace process by donor driven agencies (Chakma, 2017).

Emergence of Indigenous Resistance: Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and Shanti Bahini (peace force)

The continuous denial of Indigenous demands for autonomy and constitutional recognition led to PCJSS formation in 1973 by M. N. Larma. Shanti Bahini (peace force) was created to be its armed wing between 1975 and 1977 (Zahed, 2013). M. N. Larma presented a four-point manifesto to demand autonomy, protection of the 1900 regulation, recognition of traditional leadership and prohibition of Bengali settlement (Zahed, 2013). Rejection of these demands coupled with the Bengali assimilation notion was key to understanding the armed conflicts at that time.

In 1977, Shanti Bahini launched an insurgency attack against Bangladesh army convoys, police, Bengali settlers, and government offices (Zahed, 2013). Primary objectives were to secure

autonomy, to protect their land rights, and to preserve their ethnic culture and identity. This evolved into a broader resistance against economic marginalization and dispossession (Hasan, 2014). It was reported that the groups also targeted Indigenous individuals who did not support the cause (Banglapedia, 2021). It shows an internal mechanism to achieve their political agenda (Banglapedia, 2021). Their primary tactic was armed struggle, guerilla warfare, and protests against state and settlers (Zahed, 2013). PCJSS also engaged in political boycotts or rejection of state sponsored processes or proposals that did not meet their core demands or expectations (Zahed, 2013).

State Actors: The Bangladeshi Government and Its Security Forces

The Bangladeshi government and its security forces played a central role in the conflict. They deployed a military counterinsurgency offensive. Their motivations were to assert national sovereignty, integrating CHT into the national economy to control its resources and these were broadly driven by a homogenizing “Bengali” ideal (Hasan, 2014). To control the insurgency attacks, Bangladesh deployed nearly one-third of its army in the CHT area and established a heavily militarized zone (IWGIA, 2013). These military operations involved not only counter attacks but the establishment of military camps in villages, the imposition of a curfew, strict movement restrictions, and extensive surveillance (IWGIA, 2013). Multiple human rights abuses were reported included forcible displacement of 70,000 Indigenous people, torture, sexual violence against Indigenous women, and extrajudicial killings (IWGIA, 2013). The military often had impunity which led CHT to become a “military zone”. As a tactic, the Bangladeshi government used extensive military operations, land policies, human rights abuses, and arbitrary arrests that further derailed the peace process.

Bengali Settler Migrants

Bengali settler groups in CHT were significantly facilitated by the government. These settlers were often poor, landless Bengali speaking individuals from THE plains who were relocated in CHT, particularly between 1979 to 1987 (Hossain, 2015). They were provided with incentives, for example, rations, land, money, and shelter by the government (Hossain, 2015). Their motivation was primarily access to land and other economic opportunities. The presence of Bengali settlers in CHT fueled the already existing tension between the government and Indigenous peoples and potential spoiling through land grabbing, encroachment on Indigenous lands, involvement in communal violence with or without military backing (Hasan, 2014).

Assessed Spoiler Typology Based on Motivation and Activities

This section discusses a spoiler typology based on recalcitrant spoilers motivations to escalate conflict as well as their violent and nonviolent behaviour.

Total Spoiler

Total spoilers are those who opposes a peace process or possible power arrangement with their adversaries entirely (Stedman, 1997). They are unwilling to compromise and motivated by ideological, religious, nationalistic or ethnic beliefs, often tied to militarization or violent conflicts.

PCJSS/Shanti Bahini. In the pre-accord phase, PCJSS and its armed wing adopted methods that could position them as total spoilers. They sought total autonomy, challenging armed struggle with the government, and tried to secure territorial integrity. Their motivations were

rooted in deep-seated grievances related to undeniable Indigenous identity, land deprivation, lack of self-determination, and a struggle against cultural and economic displacement.

State as Spoiler. In the pre-accord phase, state policies (assimilation policy 1972) and actions (removal of the 1900 regulation, establishing the Kaptai dam, forced displacement, Bengali resettlement, militarization) fundamentally opposed the Indigenous peoples' existence as a distinct group and their undeniable claim against their identity and land. The state's motivations were driven by a homogenous nationalist identity, to assert complete sovereignty, to integrate CHT into the national economy, and to assert control over its resources. These actions can be viewed as fundamental opposition to possible power-sharing or undermining any possibility of peaceful coexistence.

Outside Spoiler

Outside or external spoilers are those actors who are excluded from the negotiation or who refuse to participate. They can turn to direct violent actions to derails peace if the peace process threatens their existential or strategic interests (Stedman, 1997). Bengali settlers' position can be viewed as an outside spoiler. During the pre-accord phase, they were broadly a product of state policies and functioned as an outside group to the Indigenous community. While they did not directly contribute to the conflict in the beginning, this group had been an influencing factor on inside spoiler groups. Their motivations were mostly economic and access to land. Later, their presence and actions, including land grabbing and communal violence contributed significantly to the already existing tension between Indigenous community and government.

Relational Dynamics

The relational dynamic of the peacebuilding process in CHT during the pre-accord phase is filled with conflicts, violent activities, animosity among groups, competitive narratives and fundamental difference between ideologies. The repressive actions created a strong feeling of alienation or exclusion and injustice. The pre-accord phase presents that it was dominated by a clash of central objectives, structural violence, direct repression, armed resistance, and influence of external groups. It created profound mistrust among the groups which created a path for fragile movement towards reconciliation.

Drawing on the analysis of the CHT peace accord, the group dynamics during the pre-accord phase, and both temporal categorical assessment of peace spoilers, the following factors in Table 2 below have been identified as influencing elements on spoiling behavior during the pre-accord phase:

Table 2: Why Spoilers Emerged in the Pre-accord Phase?

Element Categories	Creation/Influence on Spoiler Behavior
Structural Marginalization	Land loss, weakened autonomy which fueled identity-driven mobilization
Cultural Suppression	Forced assimilation eroded trust and created relational divides
Economic Dispossession	Displacement and loss drove demand for restitution
Military Repression	Perceived existential threat catalyzed armed opposition
Political exclusion	Settler deployment without consultation or representation

Negotiation Phase: A Fragile Agreement

After almost two decades of armed conflict, in 1997 the CHT peace accord was signed by the Bangladeshi government at that time and PCJSS. Significant casualties from the armed conflict and wide displacement made it evident that military repression was not going to bring a peaceful solution to this conflict (Islam, 2023; Patwary, 2023). Additionally, pressure from international donors and human rights organizations played an important role in pushing the Bangladeshi government towards a negotiated settlement (Islam, 2023). The primary negotiating actors were the Bangladeshi government and PCJSS, acting as the political representative of Indigenous peoples in CHT. The negotiations tried to achieve a solution that would meet the demands and needs of Indigenous peoples and to create a centralized political system to keep Bangladesh's integrity. Based on previous analysis of the accord, we have seen that the peace accord was not able to identify all the relevant actors and could not meet the structural or relational dimension of the peacebuilding process.

Emergence of New or Transformed Spoilers

New transformed spoilers emerged in the conflict. The following sections discuss their actions.

Protestors and Internal Division in PCJSS

During the negotiation phase, internal opposition to the PCJSS emerged within the Indigenous groups. They did not want to agree to the terms of the accord. One faction of Indigenous groups actively protested the signing of the 1997 peace accord. The division among the local actors proved that there was a significant gap in achieving a sustainable peace process. It created implementation risks from the very first moment of the negotiation process. Both elite parties failed to acknowledge

the gap during the negotiation process, and it created the ground for spoiling behavior. PCJSS was no longer representing the expectations or needs of all ethnic and Indigenous groups in the CHT area and the emergence of internal conflicts in PCJSS contributed to creating new spoilers in the subsequent phases.

Settler Opposition and Mainstream Political Opposition Parties

Bengali settlers in the CHT area and the main opposition party at that time, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), were actively protesting the signing of 1997 peace accord. They proactively rejected the accord (Islam, 2023). They argued that the accord did not abide by the constitution, was a threat to Bangladesh's sovereignty, and failed to safeguard the rights of Bengali settlers at that time (Islam, 2023).

Assessed Spoiler Typology Based on Motivation and Activities

This section assesses the spoiler typology based on these actors' activities and motivations to escalate conflict.

Inside and Limited Spoilers

The internal factions within PCJSS functioned as limited/greedy spoilers. Their motivations appeared to be stemming from the expectation of autonomy, robust land rights, and full constitutional recognition (Bala, 2018). They felt that the accord terms were not adequately addressing their fundamental demands (Bala, 2018). Based on their motivations, they exhibited limited spoiler behavior built on non-negotiable terms of autonomy, power sharing, and

recognition. Their spoiling tactics included conditional participation during the negotiation period and protests against the peace process.

Outside and Total Spoilers

Settler group and mainstream political opposition parties exhibited total spoiler behavior. They were outside of the negotiation process, and they were not formal signatories of the peace accord, even though they were impacted by the accord. They were not engaged during this phase. Their motivations included protecting their perceived rights and residency in CHT, maintaining political influence, and upholding nationalist ideology. Based on their motivations, they exhibited outside and total spoilers' behavior. Their tactics included public protests, political lobbying, or creating narratives on how the entire peace process is unconstitutional.

Relational and Structural Challenges

The lack of inclusivity of the negotiation process created power asymmetries and vague commitments on land rights. This accord created vulnerabilities for future spoiling behavior as the negotiations were elite led, marginalized nonviolent groups, and lacked proper ethnic representation. The accord itself acted as a catalyst for future spoilers in the peacebuilding process.

Drawing on the analysis of the CHT peace accord, the group dynamics during the pre-accord phase, and both temporal categorical assessment of peace spoilers, the following factors in Table 3 below have been identified as influencing elements on spoiling behavior during the pre-accord phase:

Table 3 : Why Spoilers Emerged During the Negotiation/accord Phase?

Element Categories	Creation/Influence on Spoiler Behavior
Elite-led Negotiations	Excluded key grassroots and dissenting Indigenous voices
Inadequate Autonomy	Failure to guarantee meaningful self-governance fueled dissatisfaction among Indigenous groups
Lack of Recognition	Absence of adequate legal recognition and protection of Indigenous identity and rights
Settler Exclusion	Bengali settlers, excluded from peace talks, perceived the accord as a threat to their rights and residence status
Political Resistance	Exclusion of other political parties' views and concerns
Power Asymmetry	State-dominated negotiation limited Indigenous leverage
Unaddressed Land Rights	Vague or absent commitments on land restitution
Relational Fragmentation	Growing distrust between and within communities escalated protests and emergence of new spoilers
Lack of reconciliation	Lack of reconciliation among the long-standing conflicting parties left them open to new vulnerabilities and threats

Post Accord Phase: Fragmentation and Fatigue

The post accord phase of the 1997 CHT peace accord was perceived as an implementation phase of the agreement. However, this phase has been largely facing challenges since the beginning. It led to fragmentation among groups and renewed tensions during a critical period. Despite the official signing of the peace accord, it has been severely limited, and many crucial provisions remained unfulfilled (Dhamai, 2014; Kakon, 2024). Lack of implementation and exclusion of

many local groups during the negotiation phase led to the creation of new factions and groups. The land commission in CHT did not settle any dispute in over two decades even though it was mandated by the peace accord to do so. It lacked formulated rules, funding, and adequate people power (Dhamai, 2014). The land commission act was amended in 2016, and rules were formulated yet it still got delayed for another five years (Dhamai, 2014). Furthermore, the government officials continued to provide permanent residency to Bengalis, regardless of their land ownership, which in turn undermined the accord's mandate to have an Indigenous people majority in voting elections in CHT (Joshi et. al., 2015). This was an evident instance of bureaucratic obstruction (Joshi et. al., 2015).

Emergence of Key New or Transformed Spoilers

Key new spoilers emerged in the CHT conflict milieu. This section discusses who they are and their impact in souring intercommunal relations.

United People's Democratic Front (UPDF)

UPDF was formally created on December 26, 1998. It was a direct reaction to the 1997 peace accord. UPDF was founded by members who split from PCJSS with other allied groups, for e.g., the Hill People's Council, the Hill Women's Federation and the Hill Student's Council. They formed an anti-accord political party (Haque, 2015). The representative of the Indigenous peoples in CHT, Shantu Larma was not elected, rather he succeeded to the PCJSS leadership after the assassination of M. N. Larma. He lacked the undisputed authority to control the UPDF (Haque, 2015). UPDF explicitly rejected the accord and accused PCJSS of being "politically bankrupt" and

added that they were favoring the government's term by comprising Indigenous peoples' interests (Almamun, 2019).

UPDF's manifesto had key demands included constitutional recognition of ethnic nationalities, reserved seats in the national parliament, an end to military rule and demilitarization in CHT, and customary land rights (Almamun, 2019). The group operates as an armed movement but also has a political front (Roy, et. al., 2010). It has been allegedly involved with political killings, abductions, and extortions, with reports of 278 UPDF leaders killed and over 1,200 wounded from 1998 to 2018 and it has also been accused of targeting other Indigenous organizations like PCJSS in a competitive power struggle (Almamun, 2019). According to Alamamun (2019) even though UPDF is an antiaccord organization, it politically participated in local government elections and secured three chairman positions in 2009, five chairman and vice chairman seats in 2014, which demonstrates its engagement with the existing political system.

However, UPDF finally split in 2017 when UPDF Democratic formed. This faction claimed that UPDF no longer was democratic, it became corrupt, was involved in extortions, abductions, and murders (Almamun, 2019). This creation of two factions further complicated the antiaccord movement.

Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF)

The Kuki-Chin National Front, also known as the Bawm Party was first established in 2008 by Nathan Bom when he accused PCJSS of discrimination (Wilkinson, 2015). In 2008, the party was known as the Kuki-Chin National Development Organization (KNDO), was renamed in 2016 as the Kuki-Chin National Volunteers (KNV) and then it adopted its current form as KNF in 2017 although there is some debate on the date being 2020 (Wilkinson, 2015). After its emergence from

2022, there has been an increase in insurgency in CHT (discussed broadly in Chapter five). KNF's central objective was to establish a separate autonomous or independent state for the Bawm, Pangkhua, Lushai, Khumi, Mru, and Kiang peoples within nine subdistricts of Rangamati and Bandarban (Wilkinson, 2015). This indicates an anti-position to major ethnic communities (e.g., the Chakma, Marma, Tripura), highlighting inter-ethnic tensions among the Indigenous population in CHT.

KNF operates an armed wing known as the Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA) and it has engaged in significant violent activities including attacks on PCJSS camps (2022), notable bank robberies (2024), and direct clashes with the Bangladesh Army and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) (Wilkinson, 2015). There have been allegations that they have been training other militant groups and reportedly receiving arms and training from Myanmar and India (Wilkinson, 2015). There has been a significant shift of the KNF from 2008 to 2025. From being a development organization to an armed militant group, shows a radical shift in demands, and represents a new layer of intra-Indigenous conflict (Wilkinson, 2015). This has posed a new political challenge.

JSS Reformist Group

This postaccord stage of the CHT conflict has shown a high amount of intra-Indigenous conflicts and the emergence of faction politics among different Indigenous groups (Bhattacharjee, 2022). Jana Samhiti Samiti Reformist (JSS) is a faction created from PCJSS that formed in 2007 (Bhattacharjee, 2022). The reformist group claims that it is a continuation of M. N. Larma's legacy and emphasizes full autonomy for the CHT and full implementation of the 1997 peace accord (PCJSS, 2021). The PCJSS's annual report acknowledged the JSS Reformist Group as a part of a broader mechanism of fragmentation and expressed that it commenced with the UPDF's formation

(PCJSS, 2021). There is limited information on the JSS-R's mandates and objectives. However, their existence points to an internal disagreement within the proaccord group and it's challenging the leadership of the mainstream PCJSS (Bhattacharjee, 2022).

State Actors: The Bangladeshi Government and Its Security Forces

The government's strategy continues to rely on heavy military intervention and counterinsurgency operations, for e.g., "Operation Uttaran" (Operation Upliftment) (Chakma & D'Costa, 2012). Critics argue that this approach addresses symptoms rather than root causes of the conflict violating human rights (Panday, 2024). It also goes against the 1997 peace accord where it stated the importance of the demilitarization of the area. Despite the accord's provision on demilitarization, the progress has been slow. Only thirty-two camps have been withdrawn out of five hundred camps in three years after the agreement with reports of new military camps emerging in the region (Feeny, 2001). The government's policy on Bengali settlers in CHT continues to drastically change the demographics in CHT and it continues to fuel the deep seated intercommunal tension (Roy, 1998; Roy, et. al. 2000).

Assessed Spoiler Typology Based on Key Group's Motivation and Activities

This section discusses a spoiler typology based on the various groups activities and motivations to escalate conflict.

Total Spoiler

The KNF. KNF was created because it thought other minor ethnic groups were dominated by the major ethnic groups. They were not fairly represented in the peace accord. They rejected the peace

accord framework entirely and demanded a new autonomous state for selected ethnic minorities. Their spoiling tactics include violent insurgency, bank robberies, armed extortion, kidnappings, alleged foreign linkages, and increased intra-ethnic tensions.

Bangladeshi Government and Its Security Forces. The Bangladeshi government and its security forces are best classified as total spoiler in the post-accord phase. Their actions regarding continued militarization, slow implementation, settler policies, show a fundamental opposition to the accord's powersharing and autonomy provisions. These actions have derailed peacebuilding, created new spoilers and catalyzed the intercommunal tension. They are total and inside spoilers. Even though they are a signatory party of the accord, they did not adhere to the accord's key provisions.

Greedy Spoiler

United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) was created as an anti-accord group from PCJSS. The party explicitly rejected the accord and sought a different settlement. Based on their initial motivation, the UPDF showed total spoiling behavior. However, later the party participated in the local elections and showed partial engagement with the political system. UPDF expanded and contracted its goals based on risk and opportunity. The party's tactics include anti-accord movement, armed resistance, selective electoral participation, and promoting narratives of PCJSS's disloyalty in the peace accord.

Limited Spoiler

Jana Samhiti Samiti-Reformist (JSS-R) was created because members felt that PCJSS was not under the right leadership and M. N. Larma's legacy was not being carried out properly. JSS-R

wanted proper implementation of the peace accord but was dissatisfied with the peace process. The party formed parallel political structures that contested PCJSS's legitimacy as the only representative of the Indigenous communities. JSS-R's tactics included engaging in violent clashes with both PCJSS and UPDF, armed extortion, and internal divisions. The party neither rejected the peace accord nor trusted the peace process.

Relational and Personal Dimensions

There were continued grievances, unaddressed traumas, and lack of reconciliation during the entire peace process, especially during the post-accord phase. This contributed to the persistent spoiling behavior, and it prevented all interested parties from achieving positive peace. The government's bureaucratic obstruction and non-implementation not only derailed the peace process but to some extent, it made it worse. This actively catalyzed the fragmented Indigenous groups and kept creating new non-state spoilers. It created a vacuum of unmet demands and new spoiling behaviors as outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4 : Why Spoilers Emerged During the Post-accord Phase?

Element Categories	Creation/Influence on Spoiler Behavior
Non-implementation of accord	Failure to implement all provisions on time
Non-compliance	State did not comply with important provisions, e.g., demilitarization, ensuring land rights, and settler control
Intra-Indigenous factionalism	Exclusion from accord created internal divisions. Lack of representation of minority ethnic groups created disputes
Leadership disputes	Succession instead of selection/election of leader

Unresolved grievances and trauma	Trauma and grievances were never addressed after a protracted conflict. It left the groups vulnerable
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Conclusion

Chapter four analyzed and identified peace spoilers in the CHT peacebuilding process, throughout all three phases, namely pre-accord, negotiation/accord, post-accord. The analysis reveals key elements influencing or creating peace spoilers, for e.g., exclusion of minority groups, divisions among Indigenous communities, structural marginalization, political exclusion, militarization, land disputes, lack of implementation of the 1997 peace accord, and non-compliance of the signing parties of the accord. The CHT case demonstrates that peacebuilding is an inherently political process, and the quality of peace is intertwined with addressing the underlying injustices, grievance, and trauma. Real progress of the accord never occurred because of lack of reconciliation.

It is important to note that while this chapter outlines spoiler types based on their evolution, motivations, and methods from the immediate post-accord time, spoiler behavior is not static. Spoiler behavior is (Golan & Sher, 2019) and there are shifts in their behavior based on risks and opportunities. Chapter five will demonstrate these spoilers' behavior for more recent times (2020-2025) based on key incidents, adaptations in strategies, actors, and socio-political context.

Chapter 5: Mapping Conflict and Minimizing Spoiler Behavior in Post-Accord CHT

Introduction

Chapter five highlights an analysis of 54 violent incidents in the CHT area spanning from 2020 to July 2025. The dynamics of incident types, roles of key actors, and type of conflict patterns in the geographic location. Additionally, this analysis shows the most affected people in the CHT region because of this violence allegedly perpetrated by different actors. This relationship shows a shift in spoiling behavior in the post-accord CHT peace process.

The analysis is grounded in national and international news report coverage, local news reports, social media platforms (Facebook), and other human rights reports on CHT (Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari). The primary objective of this chapter is to identify, interpret, and visualize patterns of different incidents in the post-accord CHT (2020-2025), analyze temporal trends, geographic spread, alleged perpetrator dynamics, victim profiles, actor relationships, and the relationship between trigger events and most influential alleged perpetrators (if any). However, it is important to note that this conflict mapping does not intend to establish any causality or identify any causal relationship due to its limited number of recorded incidents. The explorative analysis is limited to identifying patterns, trends, any correlations, without making any claims of causation.

Two pivotal case studies have been included in this analysis, the September 2024 Khagrachari communal violence and the April 2024 armed bank robberies carried out by the KNF. These case studies aim to examine how different media outlets portrayed the events and to explore whether there were any heightened tensions created by media narratives at national or local scale. Based on the trends and patterns of violence, this chapter explores potential methods and tactics to minimize spoiler behavior in the post-accord CHT area.

Conflict Mapping in Post-accord CHT (2020-2025)

The conflict mapping provides an examination of conflict dynamics in the CHT area of Bangladesh, spanning the period from 2020 to July 2025. The dataset of 54 recorded incidents of violence, as presented in Appendix A. The dataset was manually compiled using web scraping tools from credible sources, including *The Daily Star*, HillVoice.net, *Dhaka Tribune*, Al Jazeera, New Age, *Daily Prothom Alo*, BSS News, and the Kapaeeng Foundation. Initially sources were only limited to Hillvoice.net, *Daily Prothom Alo*, *the Daily Star*, *Daily Inqilub* but it yielded little data in the earlier years, as the archival search was difficult (e.g., broken links, different tags, no direct links to specific articles). Keeping these in mind, the search was expanded to other newspapers.

These sources document a range of incident types, such as killings, gunfights, rapes/sexual assault/attempted rape, abductions, displacements, land grabs, armed robberies, arson, killing, violent clashes, extortion, and obstruction of the CHT Land Commission meetings. The dataset also details alleged perpetrators, including the KNF, Bengali settlers, Bangladeshi army, Mog Party, Lama Rubber Industries Ltd., and others, alongside geographic distributions across Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari. Affected peoples' profiles highlight the violent conflict's impacts on Indigenous communities and different actors.

The scope of this analysis is to descriptively map the patterns of violence, alleged perpetrator dynamics, geographic spread, affected profiles, and actor relationships. The influence of trigger events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2024 Bangladeshi political turmoil, and violence in Myanmar and Northeast India (Manipur and Mizoram) was excluded from this conflict mapping because the dataset is not disaggregated and comprehensive to determine any causal relationship or to identify how trigger events contribute to conflict dynamics (Cederman &

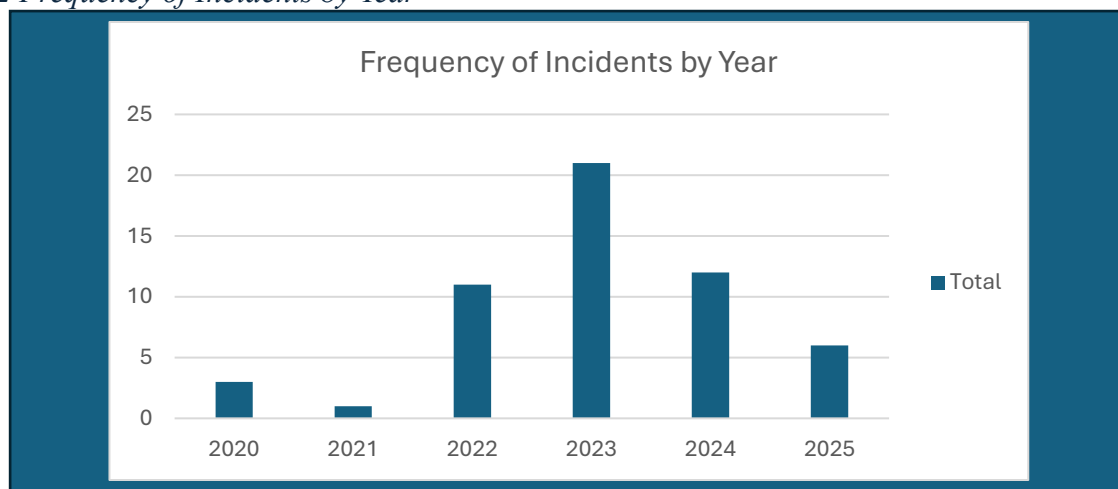
Glenditsch, 2009). This is a descriptive and exploratory analysis to identify trends and relationships within the data, providing a foundation for understanding the postaccord conflict landscape in CHT. The analysis employs quantitative summaries, such as frequency counts by year, district, and perpetrator, and qualitative interpretations to highlight patterns and dynamics.

A key limitation of the dataset is its non-comprehensive nature. Incidents were compiled from publicly available online sources, which may have excluded unreported or underreported events, particularly those not visible through internet searches or not covered by the browsed outlets. While efforts were made to include all major incidents related to the CHT within the 2020–2025 timeframe, some events may have been missed due to reporting biases, limited media access in remote areas, or suppression of information (Davenport, 2007; Raleigh, et al., 2010; Weidmann, 2015). Despite these constraints, the dataset in Appendix A offers a snapshot of violence in the CHT, capturing the diversity of incident types, perpetrators, and geographic patterns.

Temporal Trends

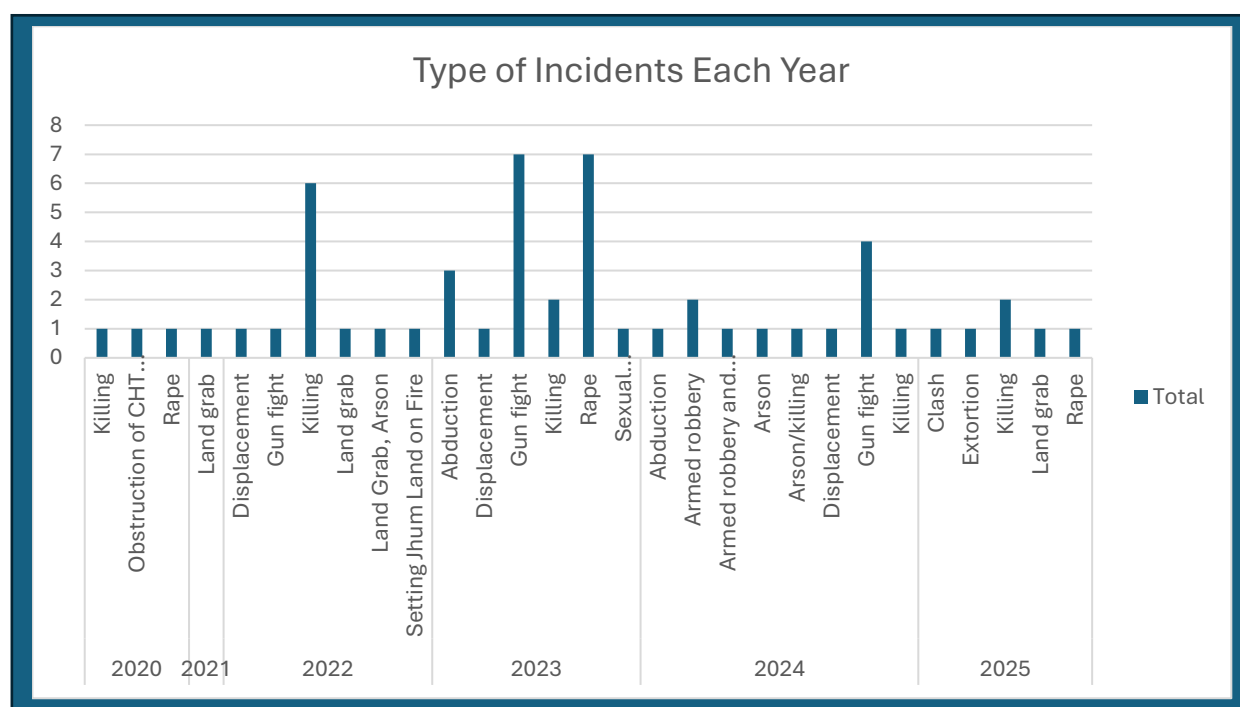
This section explores the descriptive temporal patterns of violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) from 2020 to July 2025 (Appendix A). There were 54 unique incidents of violence by years: 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and until July 2025. The data in Figure 2 below is organized by year and incident type to identify patterns in frequency and categorization over time.

Figure 2 Frequency of Incidents by Year



The pattern in Figure 2 shows the highest intensity of incidents in 2023 (21 incidents), followed by 2024 (12 incidents), 2022 (11 incidents) and partial data until July 2025 reveal seven incidents so far. In 2020 and 2021, the number of incidents was relatively low, with approximately three and one, respectively events recorded. These fluctuations highlight periods of intensified activity as well as relative de-escalation, although no interpretation is made regarding the underlying causes.

Figure 3 Types of Incidents Over Time



As evidenced from Figure 3 above, the nature of conflict incidents evolved over the years. Early incidents in 2020 and 2021 were few, involving cases of killing, rape, and obstruction of CHT land commission meetings. In 2022, more diverse types of incidents were recorded, including displacement, gun fights, and arson. Notably, 2023 experienced a broad range of conflict categories, with a concentration of violent incidents such as gun fights (seven cases), abductions (three), and rape (seven). Also, there were cases of sexual assault and displacement, reflecting an intensification of both armed and gender-based violence.

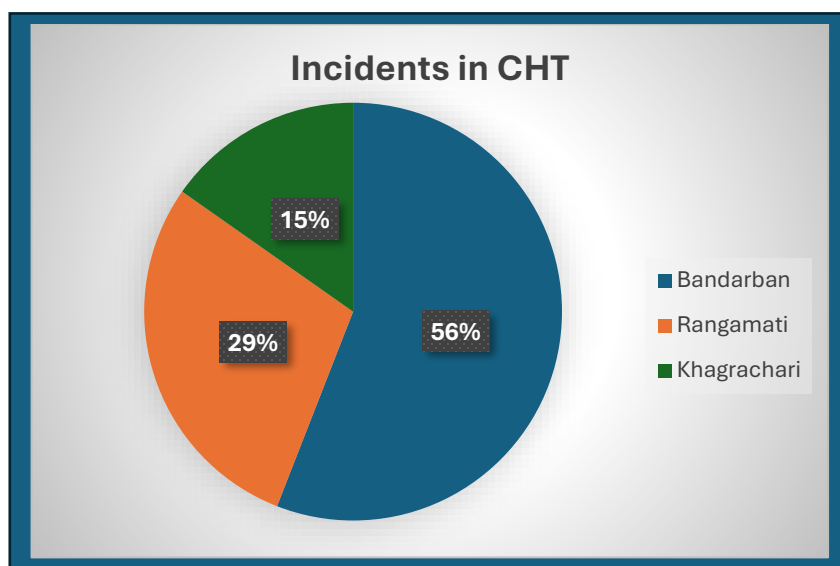
In 2024, while the number of incidents decreased, new categories emerged such as armed robbery and arson/killing. The decline continued into 2025, with seven incidents limited to violent clashes, extortion, land grab, and isolated cases of rape and killing. By July 2025, seven incidents were recorded and while it is too early to determine whether this indicates an upward trend or not, the current figures suggest continued conflict activity in the region.

The data shows a clear concentration of incidents in 2022 and 2023. Incident types also became more diverse during this period, including killings, gun fights, abductions, and sexual violence. The number declined slightly in 2024 but remained notably high.

Geographic Spread

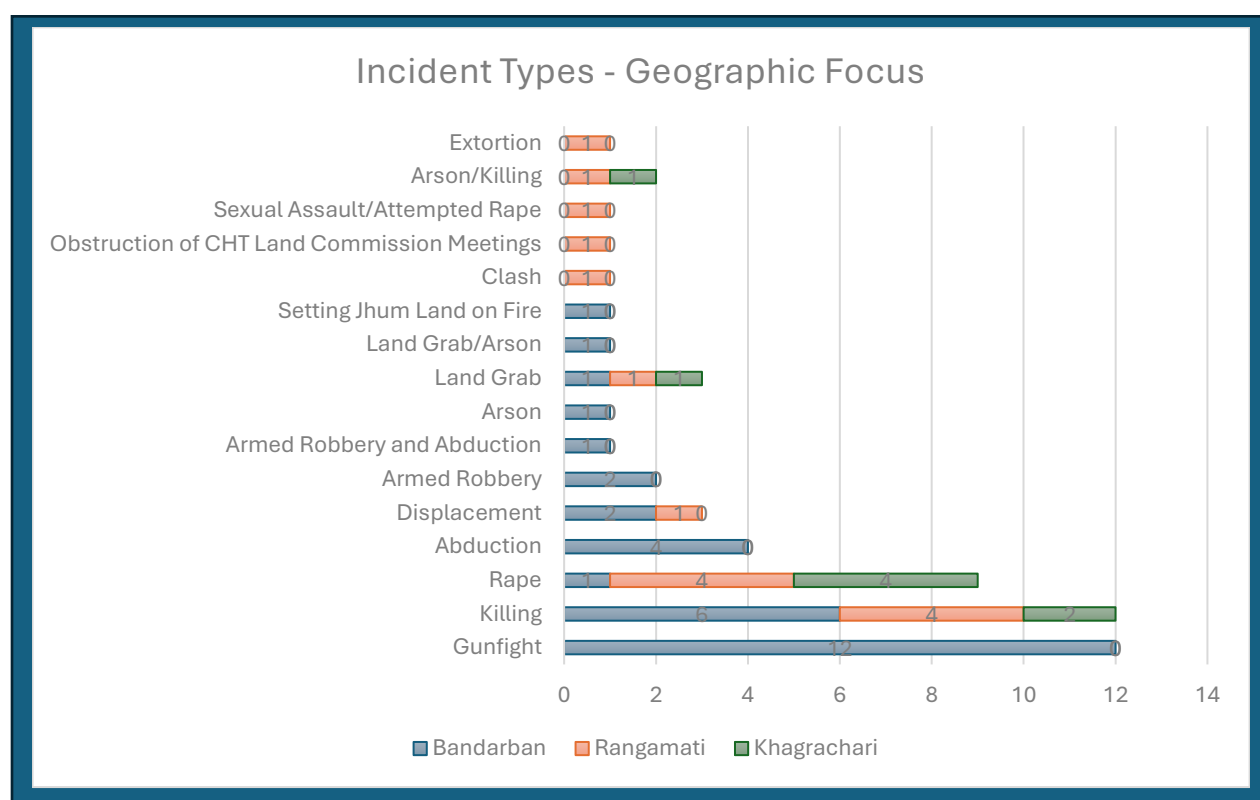
This section explores the geographic distribution of violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) from 2020 to 2025, as documented in the dataset in Appendix A, which records 54 distributed incidents across Bandarban (33 incidents), Rangamati (15), Khagrachari (eight), Rajasthali (one), and a combined Khagrachari-Rangamati event (one). This section investigates how violence varies by district, with a focus on Bandarban's dominance as a conflict hotspot, the distinct patterns in Rangamati and Khagrachari.

Figure 4 Number of Incidents in Geographic Location



As illustrated in Figure 4 above, most incidents were concentrated in Bandarban, which accounted for approximately 59 percent. Rangamati followed with 15 incidents (around 27 percent), while Khagrachari reported the fewest, with 8 incidents (about 14 percent). This uneven distribution highlights Bandarban as the most frequently affected district within the CHT during the reporting period. The significantly higher number of incidents in Bandarban may reflect a combination of factors such as armed fights, militarization, land disputes, which is analysed next.

Figure 5 Type of Incidents With Geographic Focus



This graph in Figure 5 above breaks down the type of incidents reported in each district, showing both the diversity and nature of conflict across the region. Bandarban experienced the widest range of conflict types, including 12 gunfights, six killings, four abductions, two displacements, and incidents involving armed robbery, arson, and land-related violence. It was also the only district where armed robbery and abduction occurred together. Rangamati reported four killings and four

cases of rape, along with isolated incidents such as displacement, sexual assault, arson/killing, extortion, and obstruction of CHT Land Commission meetings. Despite having fewer total incidents than Bandarban, Rangamati's conflict events were relatively diverse and included gender-based violence and institutional interference. Khagrachari, with the fewest incidents overall, reported two killings, four cases of rape, and one incident each of land grab and arson/killing. Although the number of incidents was low, the presence of sexual violence and land-related disputes suggests ongoing tensions.

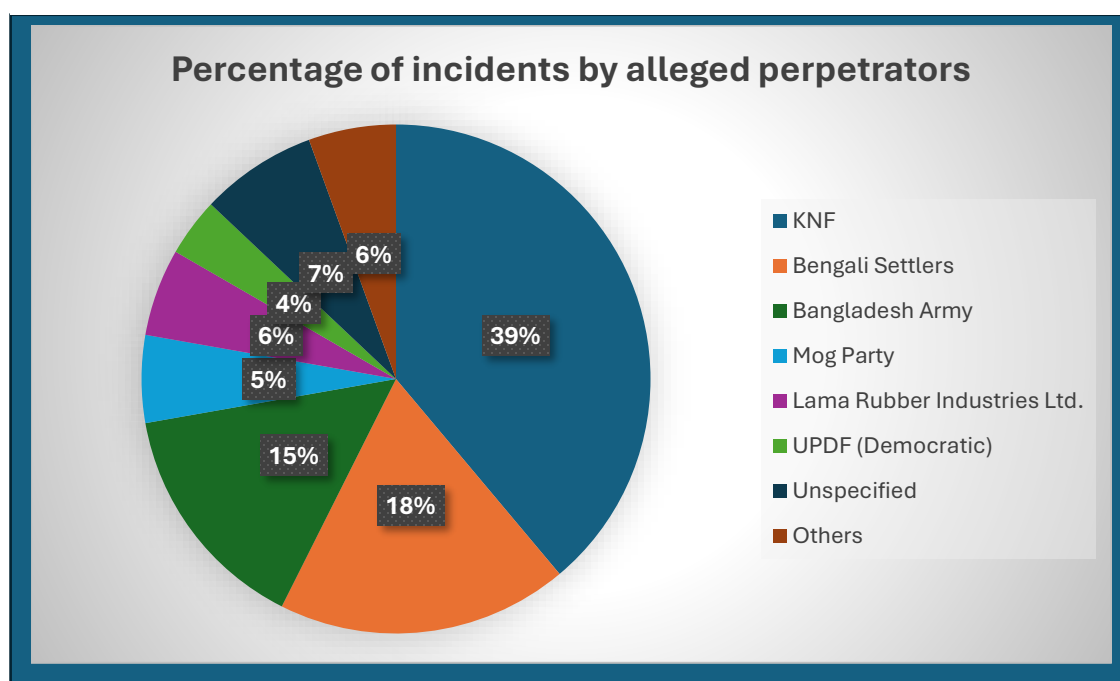
These variations not only demonstrate the spatial unevenness of conflict but also show how certain types of violence, such as, gun fights and abductions are concentrated in Bandarban. According to the 2022 Bangladesh Population and Housing Census, the Indigenous population constitutes a majority in both Bandarban (58.85 percent) and Rangamati (57.58 percent), whereas Khagrachari has a slight Bengali majority (51.07 percent).

When the incident data is considered alongside this demographic context, it becomes apparent that districts with a higher Indigenous population (e.g., Bandarban) experienced more frequent and more varied forms of conflict. Bandarban's 33 incidents nearly double the combined total of the other two districts, and it includes the highest number of violent confrontations, abductions, and land-related disputes. Even though Rangamati was less affected than Bandarban, experienced serious incidents including killings and rape as well. While this analysis does not attempt to establish causation, the demography of population and incident frequency suggests that Indigenous majority areas continue to face a disproportionate share of conflict related harms in CHT.

Nature of Spoiling Behavior: Incidents by Alleged Perpetrators, Actor Relationships, and Affected Communities

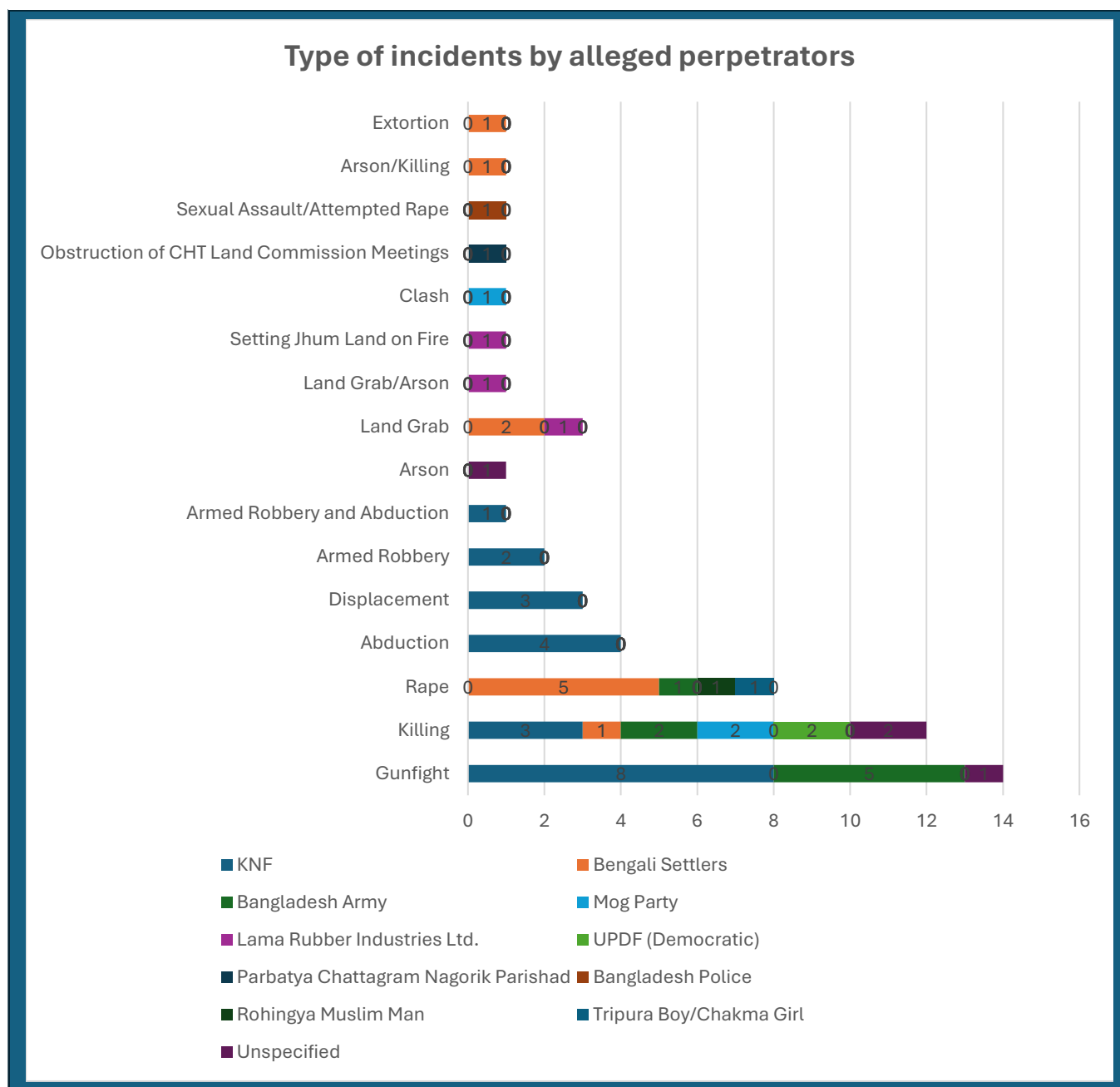
The data analysis on incidents in the CHT reveals that the highest number of violent incidents in the reported period were allegedly attributed to the KNF. They were responsible for a total of 21 separate incidents. The Bangladesh army follows closely with eight incidents, and Bengali settlers were allegedly involved in 11. Other actors such as the Mog Party, UPDF (Democratic), and Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. (commercial) were implicated in fewer cases, usually ranging between one to three incidents each. There were four incidents with unspecified actors which shows reporting gaps and needs further investigation. The analysis shows a relatively high number of allegations against KNF and state forces such as the army. It highlights the presence of both non-state and state actors as central actors in the region's instability.

Figure 6 Percentage of Incidents by Alleged Perpetrators



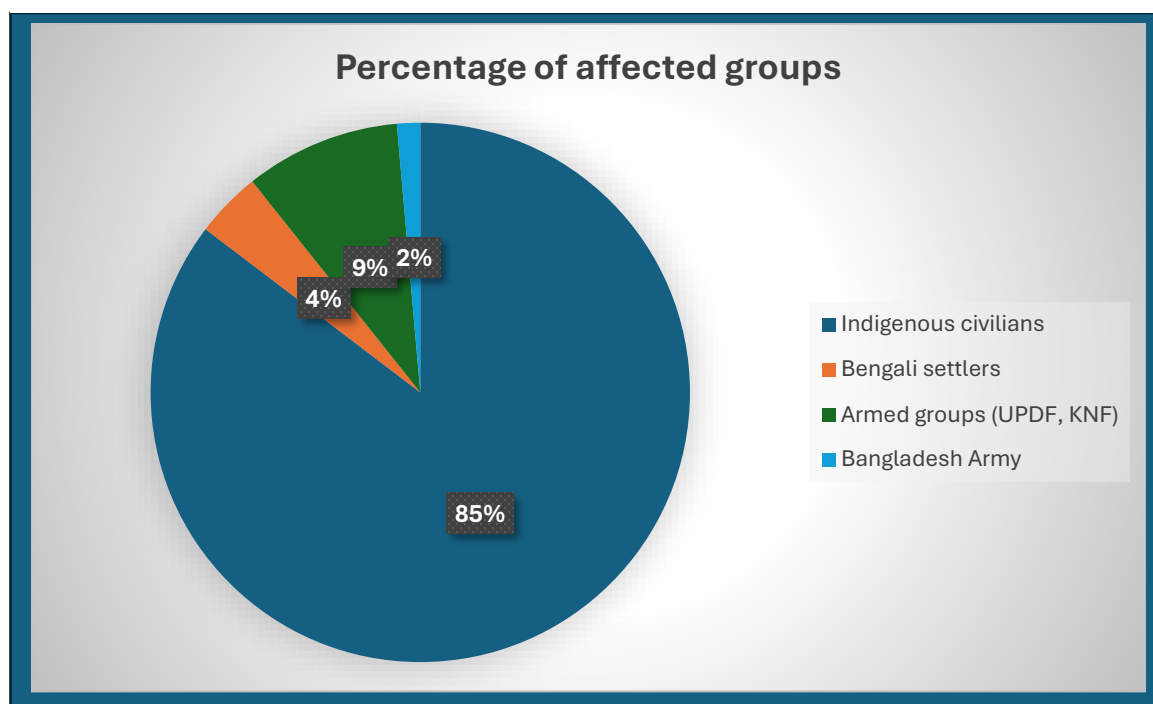
The typology of violent incidents in Figure 7 above varies depending on the alleged perpetrators here. KNF was involved in different activities including eight gunfights, three killings, four abductions, and three displacements of Indigenous communities (Appendix A). The group was also responsible for two armed robberies and one case that involved both robbery and abduction. In contrast, the Bangladesh army was linked primarily to gunfights (five incidents), killings (two), and one instance of rape. Bengali settlers were allegedly responsible for five incidents of rape, two land grabs, and several other incidents including sexual assault, arson, and extortion. Meanwhile, Lama Rubber Industries Ltd. was involved in land-related violence including land grabs, arson, and setting jhum land on fire. The commercial institution's impact was larger in terms. For example, one land grab displaced 40 families (October 19, 2022, Appendix A), one land grab and arson displaced 200 villagers (August 23, 2022, Appendix A), and one Jhum land burning (August 5, 2022, Appendix A), all incidents occurred in Bandarban. These actors' patterns in Figure 7 below suggest that non-state armed groups like the KNF employed militarized tactics, while Bengali settlers and corporate actors were more frequently involved in structural and gender-based violence.

Figure 7 Type of Incidents by Alleged Perpetrators



Approximately 450 people were identified as directly affected in the dataset (Appendix A). They were affected either through death, injury, displacement, or trauma. The data was later disaggregated into these categories: Indigenous civilians, armed groups, state security personnel, and Bengali settlers.

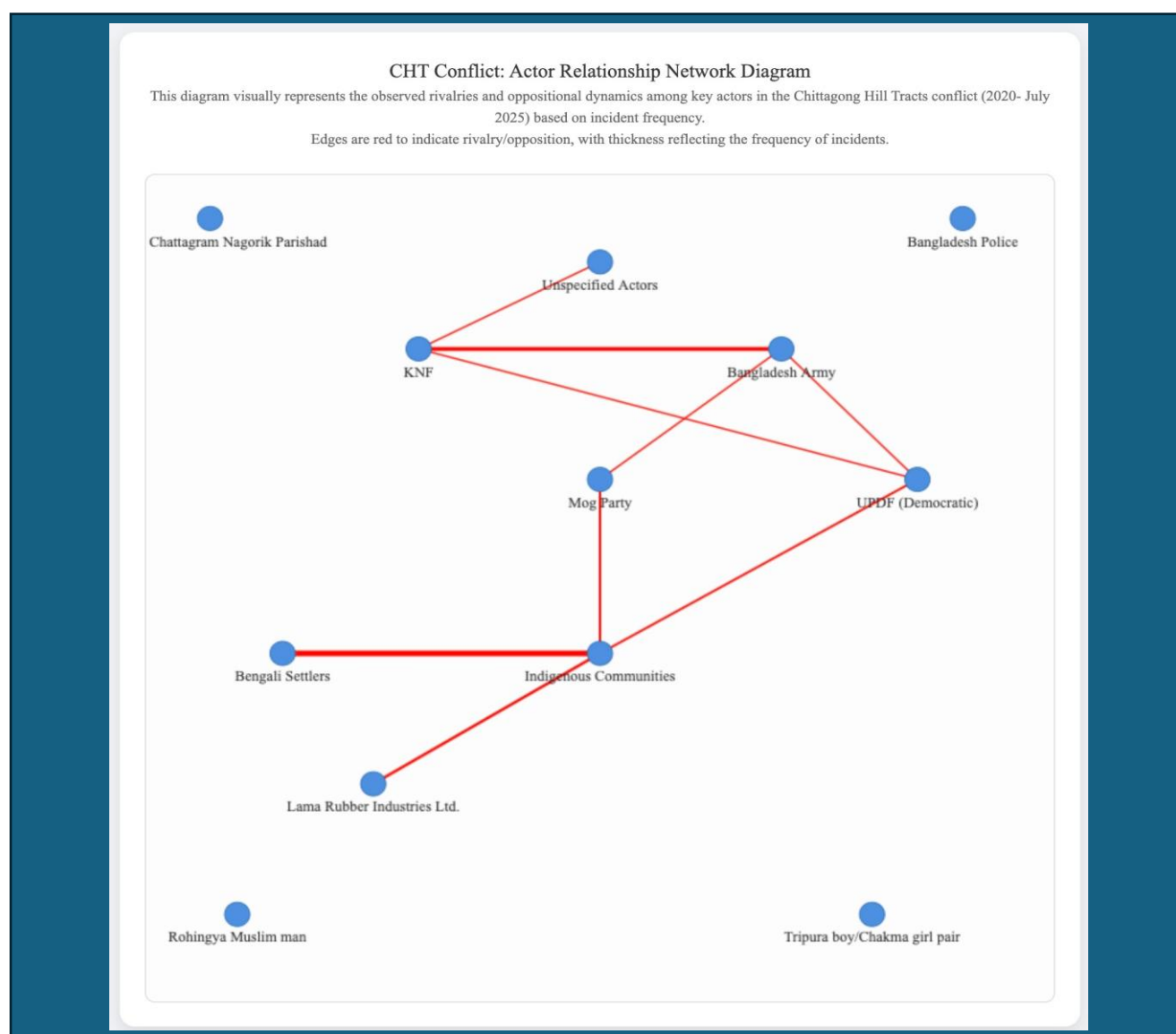
Figure 8 Percentage of Affected Groups



The data in Figure 8 above shows an overwhelming majority of Indigenous civilians among all the affected communities and groups. They accounted for 85 percent of all survivors of violent behaviour. This disproportionate impact reflects a broader pattern of marginalization and vulnerability. Indigenous communities were frequently subjected to displacement, arson, sexual violence, and loss of livelihood. In contrast, members of armed groups such as the UPDF, UPDF (Democratic) and KNF comprised nine percent of the affected population, mostly due to clashes with state forces and rival groups. Bengali settlers represented four percent followed by state

security personnel, including the Bangladesh army, one percent of those affected communities. This reflects the asymmetric nature of the violence against Indigenous communities where they were subjected to both militarized and structural forms of harm.

Figure 9 Actors Relationship Based On Recorded Incidents (2020-July 2025)



Based solely on the recorded dataset of 54 incidents (Appendix A) from 2020 to July 2025, the conflict landscape in CHT shows a deeply fragmented relationships, with no clear alliances or cooperative relationship among any of the actors. The data in Figure 9 above reveal a pattern of

rivalries, isolated incidents, and oppositional dynamics, especially involving key actors like KNF, the Bangladeshi army, and Bengali settlers. In the recent postaccord CHT phase, KNF emerges as a central and frequent actor, who was involved in 21 incidents, primarily through gunfights, abductions, and displacements of Indigenous communities. So far it showed that the engagements are entirely oppositional targeting other active groups. This conflict trajectory can be defined by territorial control and military assertion.

All other parties, such as, the Bangladeshi army, the Mog Party, UPDF, UPDF (Democratic), commercial actors also operated independently with no clear signs of any relationship with each other, other than oppositional (see Figure 9 above). This shows a highly fragmented conflict space, where violence is perpetrated separately. Actors function without collaboration or coordination, even when their original mandates are similar (e.g., Indigenous resistance, territorial control, self-determination, Indigenous needs and recognition). This CHT conflict mapping shows CHT as fragmented, competitive, and unstable.

The patterns observed here in this analysis align closely with theoretical understandings of “spoilers” in peace processes. KNF’s activities including armed confrontation, abductions, and extortion can be interpreted as examples of spoilers seeking to maximize political leverage or territorial control (Greenhill & Major, 2007; Stedman, 1997). Their sustained aggression postaccord positions them in the “total spoilers” category, unwilling to compromise on their goals. Bengali settlers were not among the formal parties to the peace process. Their spoiling behavior demonstrates less overtly militaristic but includes disruption of local stability through settler colonial tactics, like land grabbing, sexual violence. Their actions align with structurally violent forms of spoiling that ended Indigenous trust in state institutions and created intercommunal tension (Lederach, 1997).

The role of the Bangladesh army is more complex. Their spoiling behavior reflects actors who justify the use of force under the guise of enforcing order (Zahar, 2010) but by doing so they increase communal tensions and provoke retaliatory violence (as seen in Appendix A).

Finally, the multiplicity of actors and fragmentation among Indigenous armed groups such as UPDF (Democratic) and the Mog Party points to the problem of newly created spoilers because their needs were not addressed during the peace process, as largely discussed by spoiler scholars (Stedman, 1997; Newman & Richmond, 2006; Zahar, 2010).

In summary, the CHT conflict space reflects a layered spoiling environment. State and non-state actors, corporate entities, and settler civilians all engage in behaviors that collectively undermine trust, escalate violence, and challenge the sustainability of any peace process, even though they have spoiling forms and motivations.

Case Study Analysis

This section discusses the findings from the case study analysis.

First Case Analysis

The first case study is regarding serial armed bank robberies and abductions by KNF. On April 2-3, 2024, KNF perpetrated a targeted attack on Sonali Bank and Krishi Bank in Ruma and Thanci upazila (administrative subsection of a district) in Bandarban. It involved looting of approximately BDT 1.6 crore (147,168 USD), liberating 14 firearms, and the abduction of Sonali Bank Ruma upazila branch manager Nizam Uddin (Hillvoice.net, 2024; The Daily Star, 2024). This incident reflects KNF's violent activities in CHT, escalating from a land rights movement (2008) to orchestrating coordinated attacks. This comparative analysis identifies how mainstream media (The Daily Star, 2024) and local media (Hillvoice.net) explore KNF's methods, reporting

language, and whether they view it as one of an isolated incident or it is directly connected to the post-accord peace process.

The Daily Star (2024) frames the incident as a series of “daring” bank heists by KNF. It emphasized its criminality and tactical execution of the operation. It reports that on April 2, 2024, over 100 armed men in uniforms with camouflage face paint attacked the Sonali Bank in Ruma at 8:30 p.m., taking 14 weapons (two light machine guns, eight rifles, four shotguns) and 415 rounds of ammunition but failing to loot money due to an inaccessible vault. The attackers abducted manager Nizam Uddin after vandalizing bank computers. On April 3, around 12:30 p.m., 25–30 armed men in tactical gear stormed the Sonali and Krishi Banks in Thanchi, looted the banks within 20 minutes and fired shots to create panic. The article quotes Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal stating that, “Kuki Chin was involved in the bank robbery and firearms looting. They also hit police constables, bank guards and ansar members,” labeling KNF as an “armed group in the Hill Tracts.” The focus of this article was on immediate tactics like disrupting power, taking hostages, and seizing weapons. This aligns with Stedman’s (1997) total spoiler typology, where KNF rejects the peace process. This article notes security responses from the police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and bank closures but does not connect it to broader CHT issues like ethnic tensions, and the peace accord’s non-implementation. It solely focused on logistics and criminality. Local media Hillvoice.net (2024) frames KNF as an “army-created KNF terrorists” in the title, alleging the KNF gets support from the army and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and that this development organization changed to KNF in 2019 to oppose the 1997 accord and PCJSS. They described the incident like the mainstream media as it happened. However, the article goes into details asking questions about how KNF knew the cash transfer timings, suggesting others were complicit in the operation, noting post-robbery army harassment in areas

like Munnoam Para, causing locals to flee. It linked the incident to systemic CHT issues, alleging other patronage to destabilize CHT, and to undermine the accord's peace process. This positions KNF as a total spoiler (Zahar, 2006), driven by external support from state security forces and anti-accord motives, showing structural violence (Galtung, 1996).

The comparative analysis of both cases indicates that both sources confirm KNF's involvement in armed robbery and abduction. They describe similar tactics (e.g., exploiting power outages, firing shots to create panic, taking hostages, and seizing weapons). Both note the proximity of security forces when it happened and highlights KNF's ability to operate in populated areas. This expresses state security failures in CHT.

However, there is a significant difference between how the article was framed overall by both media outlets. Local media is significantly harsher to KNF labelling them as "army created terrorists" and accusing them of deliberate destabilization. The mainstream media uses milder language, calling KNF an "armed group" focusing on criminality without alleging other actor's complicity. The mainstream media does not relate this incident to any inherent CHT problems, focusing on immediate events yet the local media connected it to CHT's structural problem, alleging internal support, and highlighted post-robbery harassment as part of the state's structural violence. Mainstream media's portrayal aligns with Mac Ginty's (2011) critique of top-down peace processes that focuses on security over structural issues. This shows KNF as a criminal threat rather than a by-product of CHT's unresolved grievances. Local media's focus on structural violence and relating this incident to structural violence aligns with Lederach's (1997) relational peacebuilding dimension, where it is emphasized the need for reconciliation, trust-building and trauma healing. The discrepancy of framing KNF's motives (criminal vs. structural violence)

shapes their spoiler typology differently and shows an inherent difference between mainstream and local media narrative.

Second Case Analysis

This second case study analysis is based on an incident which occurred on September 18-19, 2024, in Khagrachari, CHT. This resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, and significant property damages. The incident involved clashes between Bangali settlers and Indigenous (Jumma) communities, triggered by the death of a Bangali man accused of theft. This analysis examines how mainstream media (The Daily Star, 2024) and Indigenous-focused media (Kapaeeng Foundation, 2024) that both reported the incident.

The violence began on September 18, 2024, in Khagrachhari Sadar, following the death of Md Mamun, a Bangali settler, who was beaten by a mob for allegedly stealing a motorbike and died after hitting an electric pole during his escape. This incident sparked retaliatory attacks by Bangali settlers on Indigenous communities, escalating on September 19 in Dighinala and Khagrachhari Sadar. The clashes resulted in three or four deaths, at least 12 injuries, and the torching of over 100 Indigenous homes and businesses. Reports also allege army firing on civilians during the protests, contributing to casualties. This incident reflects ongoing ethnic tensions in CHT and raises concern about state responses and the overall peace process.

The *Daily Star* (2024) reported the violence as a communal clash which was triggered by a Bengali man's death, which began when he was caught stealing a motor bike in Khagrachari. This led to Bengali settler retaliation against Indigenous communities in Khagrachari. It also added that the incident was fueled by provocative speeches and a mosque announcement claiming Indigenous people attacked settlers. The next day, a clash erupted and resulted in three Chakma man's deaths with several admitted to the hospital with bullet injuries. The article describes

property damages and the state's response as it occurred. It quotes officials like Deputy Inspector General Ahsan Habib Palash and Deputy Commissioner Md Sahiduzzaman, focusing on immediate events and security measures. It frames the incident as an isolated communal clash, emphasizing the trigger (theft and mob violence) and the law enforcement response, without linking it to broader ethnic tensions or the CHT peace process.

The Kapaeeng Foundation (2024) framed the incident as an attack on Indigenous (Jumma) communities as part of ongoing ethnic conflicts in CHT. It provides a detailed similar timeline and description of the incident as mainstream media. It mentions the state's response and points out that no arrests were made at that time, raising concerns about accountability.

While the Kapaeeng Foundation uses a sympathetic language towards Indigenous communities, it described settlers as aggressors with alleged army complicity. It connects the incident to systemic ethnic and intercommunal tensions, implying the state's role in the overall CHT peace process. This aligns more with Galtung's (1996) concept of structural violence where systemic inequality leads to violent conflict.

While both the mainstream media provided a similar description of the incident, it should be noted that the mainstream media used neutral language like 'Bengali Settlers' and 'Indigenous people' and the local media in contrast used terms like 'Jumma'. The mainstream media viewed it as a violent incident rather than structural violence.

Both case studies demonstrate how incidents in the CHT area are framed differently in mainstream and local media outlets. While both sources provide factual consistency in reporting events, mainstream media narrative tend to align with 'one of/separate' incident and local media narratives tend to align with ongoing CHT ethnic tensions, the peace process, and it raises questions about complicity, accountability, and the state's response. It is to be noted that to

maintain analytical clarity and consistency, only incident-based news reports were selected, deliberately excluding opinions or editorial sources, especially from the mainstream media. This approach ensured that the focus was on an incident level, how actors and events are represented in public through factual reporting.

Minimizing Spoiler Behavior in Post-accord CHT Peace Process

The findings in Chapters four and five demonstrate that spoiler behavior in the CHT emerges not simply from ideological opposition but from deep-rooted structural, relational, and institutional grievances (Lederach, 1997). Although PCJSS was not excluded from the 1997 Accord, the exclusion of other Indigenous minority communities and the limited engagement of Bengali settlers created an uneven field of participation. It ultimately contributed to internal fragmentation and new spoilers, as shown in Chapter 4. The reasons identified in the pre-accord phase, such as land dispossession, weakened traditional leadership, militarized control, and the denial of Indigenous identity, created the conditions under which spoilers emerged and sustained their behavior in recent post-accord CHT. However, the actors' spoiling behavior based on Chapter 5's analysis show that their motivation may have shifted. Indigenous civilians remain the most affected group (85.35 percent) still. It is pointing to the enduring legacy of structural violence that began from the British colonial period. Spoiler theory (Stedman, 1997) helps explain how these conditions have enabled both total and limited spoilers to operate across different phases. The KNF case illustrates this evolution, namely in March 2024, the group entered peace talks and promised to refrain from violence (Dhaka Tribune, 2024), yet within a month, they were involved in a high-profile armed robbery and abductions, after the incident it was publicly announced that peace talks with the KNF were put on hold (Dhaka Tribune, 2024). This reversal reflects how spoilers are

hesitant to peace process and recalculate their strategies in response to perceived incentives and risks, rather than remaining ideologically static, as shown in conflict mapping in this chapter.

To minimize spoiler behavior in such a dynamic and fragile context, peacebuilding must be structurally inclusive, not only in formal agreements but in sustained post-accord mechanisms (e.g., trauma healing, reconciliation, mediation).

PCJSS signed the 1997 Peace Accord, yet the exclusion of other groups reflected that implementation was perceived as favoring one actor (or major groups of ethnic communities rather than all inclusive), reinforcing distrust among non-signatory Indigenous actors and Bengali settlers. Peacebuilding efforts should prioritize transparent representation and multi-level dialogue to reduce competitive dynamics and legitimacy crises. Lederach (1997), Zahar (2006, 2010), Galtung (1996), Schilling (2012), Golan and Sher (2019) and Newman and Richmond's (2006) emphasize inclusive peacebuilding to minimize the impact of spoiling behavior in a peacebuilding process which can be meaningful in CHT's spoiler situation. This means the meaningful participation of marginalized sub-groups including minority Indigenous communities, women, and settlers in decision-making must be ensured, starting with trauma healing and meaningful conversation about reconciliation.

Further, given the KNF's shift in behavior after entering talks, peace processes should incorporate sequenced incentives, including community-led demilitarization and local development guarantees, linked to behavioral milestones. This creates a more predictable and rewarding path for moderate spoilers to transition toward constructive engagement (Stedman, 1997; Zahar, 2008; Zahar, 2010; also see Chapter 4).

Finally, the absence of reconciliation processes that address historic (1972-1997) trauma and mistrust continues to enable spoiler narratives to this date. Relational repair grounded in

cultural and ethnic recognition, accountability, and dignity is needed alongside acknowledging the fact that harm has been done and it needs to be reconciled among state and non-state actors (Lederach, 1997). It is also important to uphold the already promised provisions by the state in the 1997 peace accord. After around 27 years of signing the peace accord, the implementation progress is significantly low (Chapter 4). Integrating relational peacebuilding alongside institutional reform, including mechanisms for acknowledging past harms and creating community-level accountability platforms, is essential to preventing the recurrence of spoiler violence.

Conclusion

This chapter's analysis of 54 violent incidents in CHT from 2020 to July 2025, reveals a complex conflict landscape where spoiling behavior by actors like the KNF, Bengali settlers, and Bangladeshi state actors created instability in the region, and this conflict disproportionately affects the Indigenous communities (85 percent). The case studies of the 2024 KNF bank robberies and Khacgrachari communal clashes highlight how the media's framing shapes spoiler perceptions, often obscuring structural and relational grievances tied to the non-implemented 1997 peace accord (Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, 2000; Panday & Jamil, 2009).

The resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, followed by a mass student protests marked a turning point in Bangladesh's political history. This political incident created an interim government and increased the tension over the power vacuum in the society, and the increased uncertainty and potential for policy realignment. This transition can have dual implications for CHT. For example, it may complicate the ongoing peacebuilding process by creating policy discontinuities or provide cover for some of the actors to exploit the instability and power vacuum in Bangladesh. Alternatively, it could open up space for a renewed national

dialogue on unresolved issues of self-governance, land, and Indigenous rights. It is important to create two Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Commissions. A TRC may repair the Bangladeshi's people's trust in their government while a TRC for Chittagong Hills Tract can create the space for the Indigenous people to heal and to build reconciliation between CHT and the rest of the country. Grounded in spoiler theories (Greenhill & Major, 2007; Stedman, 1997), these findings illustrate the need for inclusive peacebuilding to address the conflict's root causes and to manage resulting spoiling behavior. The concluding chapter synthesizes the key insights from this study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

This study has examined the dynamics of peace spoilers in the CHT conflict in Bangladesh, analyzing their emergence, motivations, and impacts across the pre-accord, during negotiation/accord, and post-accord phases of the peacebuilding process. By employing a secondary data analysis methodology, the research has drawn on historical documents, media reports, local content, and incident level data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how spoilers undermine peace efforts. This concluding chapter reflects on the overall key findings of the study, discusses their implications for peacebuilding scholarship and practice, identifies potentials for future research, and synthesizes the study's contributions to understanding peace spoilers in the CHT context.

Reflection on the Overall Key Findings

The analysis reveals that peace spoilers in the CHT conflict are driven by a complex interplay of structural, relational, and political factors that persist across all phases of the peacebuilding process. In the pre-accord phase (1972–1995), spoilers such as the PCJSS and its armed wing, *Shanti Bahini*, emerged as total spoilers, motivated by demands for autonomy, land rights, and cultural recognition in response to state-driven marginalization and Bengali assimilation policies (Adnan & Dastidar, 2011; Hasan, 2014). The Bangladeshi government and its security forces also acted as total spoilers through militarization, forced displacement, and human rights abuses, prioritizing national sovereignty over Indigenous rights (IWGIA, 2013). Bengali settlers, functioning as outside spoilers, exacerbated tensions through land grabs and communal violence, further complicating the conflict landscape (Hossain, 2015).

During the negotiation phase (1996–1997), the 1997 CHT Peace Accord aimed to address these grievances but was undermined by limited inclusivity and vague commitments, particularly on land rights and autonomy (Bala, 2018). Internal divisions within PCJSS (Haque, 2015) and opposition from Bengali settlers and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (Haque, 2015) emerged as limited and total spoilers (Stedman, 1997), respectively, highlighting the fragility of elite-led negotiations (Islam, 2023; Patwary, 2023). The exclusion of minority Indigenous groups and settlers from the process created relational and structural vulnerabilities that fueled further spoiling behavior (Mohsin, 2003).

In the post-accord phase (1997–present), the incomplete implementation of the accord, particularly on demilitarization and land dispute resolution, catalyzed the emergence of new spoilers, such as the UPDF, UPDF-Democratic, KNF, and JSS-R (Almamun, 2019; Bhattacharjee, 2022; Wilkinson, 2015). The incident level data analysis identified a new group the ‘Mog Party’ in CHT (see Chapter 5). Even though their spoiling behavior intensity is not as severe as other actors, they still should be included in the discussion, so that their needs do not go unnoticed and lead to intensified spoiling behavior in future.

This analysis also identified a key change in major actors. As evident by all historic records on CHT, PCJSS was a major actor in the CHT conflict and the 1997 peace accord. However, the incident level data showed zero presence of PCJSS during 2020-July 2025. The recorded incidents in this study did not find PCJSS as either an affected group or as an alleged perpetrator (see Chapter 5; Appendix A).

The KNF, classified as a total spoiler (Stedman, 1997), engaged in violent acts like armed robberies and abductions (see Chapter 5), reflecting a rejection of the accord’s framework and a demand for a separate entity (Wilkinson, 2015). The government’s continued militarization and

settler policies further acted as total spoiling behavior, undermining the accord's provisions and perpetuating structural violence (Chakma & D'Costa, 2012; Joshi et. al, 2007).

Incident data from 2020–July 2025, analyzed in Chapter 5, confirmed the persistence of violence, with 54 recorded incidents disproportionately affecting Indigenous civilians (85 percent), particularly in Bandarban (56 percent), and involved diverse actors like KNF, the Bangladesh army, and Bengali settlers among others (Appendix A).

The study's theoretical framework, integrating peacebuilding theories (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 1997) and spoiler typologies (Stedman, 1997; Zahar, 2006), highlights that spoiler behavior is not static but evolves in response to unmet grievances, exclusion, and power asymmetries, which can be supported by Chapter five's analysis of when spoiler actors and their behavior changed in recent times in CHT. The CHT case underscores the importance of addressing structural marginalization, cultural suppression, and relational divides to prevent spoiler emergence. The lack of reconciliation and trauma healing, as emphasized by Lederach (1997), has sustained distrust and fragmentation, enabling spoilers to exploit unresolved issues like land disputes and ethnic tensions.

Strategies to minimize spoiler behavior, as discussed in Chapter 5, include fostering inclusive dialogue, ensuring transparent representation, and implementing sequenced incentives tied to behavioral milestones (Stedman, 1997; Zahar, 2010). Relational peacebuilding, emphasizing trauma healing and cultural recognition, is critical to addressing the historical grievances that fuel spoiling behavior (Lederach, 1997). The failure to fully implement the 1997 Peace Accord, particularly on demilitarization and land rights, has perpetuated a cycle of violence and distrust, underscoring the need for sustained structural and relational reforms.

Future Research Potential

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research. First, the reliance on secondary data highlights the need for primary research, such as interviews with Indigenous communities, other actors like PCJSS, UPDF, and KNF members, civil organizations, remote communities to capture grassroots perspectives and validate secondary findings. Security and logistical constraints limited such efforts in this study, yet future research could bridge this gap to provide deeper insights into spoiler motivations and community perceptions.

Second, a comparative analysis of the CHT with other post-peace accord regions, such as those in South Asia or Southeast Asia, or East-Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa could highlight whether the identified spoiler dynamics are context-specific, geographical, or generalizable.

Third, exploring the role of external actors, such as international arms suppliers as well as donors (Chakma, 2016) or neighboring regional states, in shaping spoiler behavior could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the CHT conflict, given allegations of foreign support for groups like KNF (Wilkinson, 2015).

Finally, studies focusing on the post-2025 period could assess whether proposed strategies, such as inclusive dialogue and trauma healing, effectively reduce spoiler activities, offer practical insights for policymakers.

Conclusion

This study has provided a detailed examination of peace spoilers in the CHT conflict, revealing their emergence and impact across the pre-accord, negotiation, and post-accord phases. The findings demonstrate that spoilers, ranging from total (KNF, government) to limited (JSS-R) and greedy (UPDF), are driven by structural marginalization, exclusion, and unresolved grievances, perpetuating a cycle of violence and instability (Lederach, 1997; Stedman, 1997;). The 1997 CHT

Peace Accord, while a significant step, failed to address these root causes due to limited inclusivity and incomplete implementation, creating fertile ground for new spoilers (Bala, 2018; Dhamai, 2014). The disproportionate impact on Indigenous civilians, as evidenced by incident data, underscores the urgency of addressing structural and relational dimensions of peacebuilding (Appendix A; Galtung, 1996).

By integrating peacebuilding and spoiler theories, this research contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of sustainable peace. It emphasizes the need for inclusive governance, trauma healing, and robust implementation of peace accords to mitigate spoiler behavior. The CHT case highlights that peacebuilding is an inherently political and relational process, requiring sustained efforts to address historical injustices and foster trust. Future research can build on these insights to refine spoiler management strategies and promote durable peace in the CHT and similar conflict-affected regions.

Notes

¹ The name "Chittagong" was officially changed to "Chattogram" in 2018 as part of the government's efforts to align English spellings with Bangla pronunciations. However, "Chittagong" is still used in many historical and academic contexts, particularly in reference to past events or in legal and political public documents.

² The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord uses the term "Tribal" instead of "Indigenous." This study uses "Tribe/Tribal" when referring to the terminology found in the Accord, to reflect the language used in the original document.

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Appendix A

Date	Location	Type of Incident	People Affected	Alleged Perpetrators	Source	URL
February 19, 2020	Naniarchar, Rangamati	Killing	2 UPDF members	Unspecified	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/tags/chittagong-hill-tracts-based-political-group-updf
February 3, 2020	Rangamati, Bandarban	Obstruction	Meetings affected	Parbatya Chattagram Nagorik Parishad	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/views/opinion/news/why-peace-still-missing-the-cht-2907676
September 25, 2020	Rangamati	Rape	1 Jumma schoolgirl	Bengali headmaster	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/jumma-school-girl-rape-case-convicted-head-teacher-reinstated-in-service/

May 31, 2021	Khagrachari	Land Grab	1 person	2 Bengali workers	Al Jazeera	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/30/bangladesh-indigenous-groups-chakma-khasi-santal-land-grab
August 9, 2021	Lama, Bandarban	Arson	Mro, Tripura communities	Unspecified	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/arrest-those-who-set-jhum-garden-fire-speakers-3014851
January 31, 2022	Khagrachari	Killing	1 monk	Unspecified	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/a-buddhist-monk-killed-in-khagrachari/

March 5, 2022	Bandarban	Killing	1 Jumma man	Mog Party	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ innocent-jumma- shot-dead-by-mog- party-while-4- terrorists-killed-in- rowangchari/
March 15, 2022	Bandarban	Killing	1 UPDF member	Mog Party	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ an-army-backed- terrorist-shot-dead- by-the-opponent- in-bandarban/
March 22, 2022	Bandarban	Gunfight	3 ALP, Mog Party members	Unspecified	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ 3-alp-and-mog- party-terrorists- killed-in- opponents-shots-in- bandarban/

April 26, 2022	Soroi, Lama, Bandarban	Land Grab, Arson	200 villagers	Lama Rubber Industries	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/environmental-and-livelihood-crisis-bandarbans-lama-3164656
May 12, 2022	Rangamati	Killing	1 Jumma man	UPDF (Democratic)	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/a-jumma-shot-dead-by-army-backed-terrorists-in-subalong/
May 17, 2022	Bandarban	Land Grab	40 families	Lama Rubber Industries	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/land-right-under-attack-in-lama-relief-or-compensation-cannot-be-remedy/

June 22, 2022	Rangamati	Killing	4 Tripura villagers	KNF	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ names-of-4- innocent-killed- and-2-injured- villagers-in-the- firing-of-bawm- party-found/
July 1, 2022	Bandarban	Displaceme nt	Tanchangya, Tripura village	KNF	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ kuki-chin-party- starts-operation-to- evict-tanchangya- and-tripura- villages/
July 5, 2022	Rangamati	Killing	3 Tripura members	KNF	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ case-filed-after-12- days-since-murder- in-bilaichari/

January 10, 2023	Bandarban	Rape	1 Tanchangya woman	Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ tanchangya- housewife-raped- after-forcibly- picking-up-by-a- settler-in- bandarban/
January 30, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	1 KNF member	Bangladesh Army	New Age	https://www.newag ebd.net/article/1930 60/kuki-chin- member-killed-in- bandarban-gunfight
February 8, 2023	Thanchi, Bandarban	Gunfight	17 militants, 8 RAB injured	KNF, Jama'atul Ansar	The Daily Star	https://www.thedail ystar.net/news/bang ladesh/crime- justice/news/bandar bans-thanchi-rab- arrests-17- militants-after- daylong-gunfight- 3241821

February 23, 2023	Khagrachari	Rape	1 Chakma woman	1 Bengali	Kapaeeng Foundatio n	https://kapaeengnet.org/rape-of-an-indigenous-school-teacher-in-khagrachari/
March 3, 2023	Khagrachari	Rape	1 Jumma schoolgirl	1 Tripura, 1 Chakma	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/rape-and-attempt-to-smuggle-of-a-jumma-schoolgirl-in-panchari/
March 10, 2023	Rangamati	Displaceme nt	220 people	KNF	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/331456/knf-conflict-11-families-return-home-after-8

March 11, 2023	Bandarban	Abduction	12 workers	KNF	Daily Sun	https://www.daily-sun.com/post/676374/12-construction-workers-abducted-in-bandarban
March 12, 2023	Rowangchhari, Bandarban	Killing	1 killed, 2 injured	KNF	Daily Observer	https://www.observerbd.com/news/411086
March 26, 2023	Khagrachari	Rape	1 Jumma schoolgirl	2 Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/a-7-grade-jumma-schoolgirl-raped-in-ramgarh/
April 7, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	8 people	KNF, UPDF	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/8-killed-bandarban-clashes-3298761

April 7, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	Unspecified	KNF, UPDF (Democratic)	Daily Prothom Alo	https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/chc7n61w38
April 17, 2023	Bandarban	Abduction	2 Marma villagers	KNF	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/3-more-bawm-villagers-shot-dead-in-rowangchari-many-left-their-homes-in-fear/
April 25, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	Unspecified	KNF, UPDF (Democratic)	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/346935/3-knf-members-killed-in-army-operation-in

May 10, 2023	Bandarban	Killing	3 Bawm villagers	UPDF (Democratic)	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ 3-more-bawm- villagers-shot-dead- in-rowangchari- many-left-their- homes-in-fear/
May 17, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	2 Army men killed, 2 injured	KNF	The Daily Star	https://www.thedail ystar.net/news/bang ladesh/crime- justice/news/2- army-men-killed- kuki-chin-natl- army-attack- bandarban-ispr- 3322356

May 19, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	3 KNF members	Bangladesh Army	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/346935/3-knf-members-killed-in-army-operation-in
May 27, 2023	Rangamati	Rape	1 Tanchangya girl	Rohingya man	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/rape-of-jumma-girl-with-speech-disability-by-rohingya-muslim-in-bilaichari-hwf-and-pcp-demand-punishment-of-the-rapist/

May 29, 2023	Rangamati	Sexual Assault	1 Jumma schoolgirl	Bangladesh Police	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ jumma-school-girl- attempted-to-rape- by-a-policeman-in- jurachari/
June 1, 2023	Bandarban	Gunfight	1 Army man	KNF	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakat ribune.com/banglad esh/militancy/3126 28/one-soldier- killed-as-army- captures-knf
June 10, 2023	Bandarban	Abduction	8 workers	KNF	Parbattan ews	https://en.parbattan ews.com/eight- construction- workers-abducted- by-knf-terrorists-in- bandarban/

June 29, 2023	Rangamati	Rape	1 Jumma woman	2 Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ a-jumma-woman- raped-by-bengali- settlers-in-longadu/
September 4, 2023	Rangamati	Rape	1 Marma girl	Bangladesh Army	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ a-marma-girl-gang- raped-by-6-army- men-in-kaptai/
February 7, 2024	Bandarban	Abduction	5 villagers	KNF	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/banglad esh/nation/338857/ knf-allegedly- abducts-5-people- from-ruma

April 3, 2024	Bandarban	Armed Robbery	Unspecified	KNF	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/343327/knf-men-attack-sonali-bank-krishi-bank-in
April 4, 2024	Bandarban	Armed Robbery	Unspecified	KNF	The Daily Star	https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/bank-heists-rock-hills-3581531
April 5, 2024	Bandarban	Armed Robbery, Abduction	Unspecified	KNF	Daily Prothom Alo	https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/local-news/mcvgndiu8h

April 19, 2024	Bandarban	Gunfight	1 Army man, several injured	KNF	New Age	https://www.newagebd.net/post/Country/233038/army-man-killed-in-knf-ambush
April 28, 2024	Bandarban	Gunfight	2 KNF members	Bangladesh Army	BSS News	https://www.bssnews.net/news-flash/186140
May 19, 2024	Bandarban	Gunfight	3 KNF members	Bangladesh Army	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/346935/3-knf-members-killed-in-army-operation-in
May 23, 2024	Bandarban	Displacement	65 Bawm villagers	KNF	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/more-65-bawm-refugees-take-refuge-in-mizoram/

September 23, 2024	Khagrachari, Rangamati	Arson, Killing	3 killed, 63 injured	Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ 4-killed-several- injured-in-the- attack-on- indigenous- peoples-in-cht- says-kf/
October 2, 2024	Khagrachari	Killing	5 men	Bengali settlers	The Business Standard	https://www.tbsnew s.net/bangladesh/4- deaths-cht-44- citizens-rights- activists-demand- immediate-arrest- culprits-956471
December 26, 2024	Bandarban	Arson	17 family houses	Unspecified	The Daily Star	https://www.thedail ystar.net/news/bang ladesh/news/17- houses-tripura- community- torched-3784371

April 1, 2025	Rajasthali	Extortion	Local villagers	Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ clash-between- mog-party-and- army-personnel-in- bangalhalia-two- soldiers-injured/
July 3, 2025	Bandarban	Killing	3 KNF members	Bangladesh Army	Dhaka Tribune	https://www.dhakat ribune.com/banglad esh/nation/385446/ 2-kna-operatives- killed-in- bandarban-army
July 4, 2025	Bandarban	Killing	2 KNF members	Bangladesh Army	The Daily Star	https://images.theda ilystar.net/news/ban gladesh/news/2- kna-men-killed- army-raid-3931386

July 16, 2025	Rangamati	Clash	2 Army men injured	Mog Party	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ clash-between- mog-party-and- army-personnel-in- bangalhalia-two- soldiers-injured/
July 17, 2025	Rangamati	Land Grab	4 Jumma villagers	Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ land-of-jumma- villagers-under- attempt-to-grab-by- bengali-settlers-in- longadu/
July 17, 2025	Khagrachari	Rape	1 Tripura girl	6 Bengali settlers	HillVoice	https://hillvoice.net/ a-tripura-girl-gang- raped-by-settlers- in-bhaibonchara-a- case-filed-with-the- police-station/