

## BANGLADESH

### Chittagong Hills People

Activity: 1972-2020

#### General notes

NA

#### Movement start and end dates

- Upon Bangladesh's independence, representatives of the Chittagong Hill Peoples presented their case for autonomy to the constitutional drafting committee. Their demands were turned down. In 1972, the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS or Chittagong Hill Tribal People's Coordination Association) was formed, an organization that initially was dedicated to the fight for autonomy (Minorities at Risk Project). Hence, 1972 is coded as the start date. In 1974, the Chittagong Hill peoples came under violent attack by the Bangladeshi army (e.g., large-scale massacres and even allegations of genocide) in its attempts to make way for the settlement of Muslim Bengalis in the Hill Tracts. Soon the tribal leaders began to make claims for outright secession: the establishment of a sovereign state to be called Kaderia or the Confederacy of Chittagong.
- Despite a peace agreement in 1997 (The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord) that provided for a degree of regional autonomy, separatist protests continued in 1998-99 by rebel factions opposed to the peace deal. PCJSS has kept claiming that the peace agreement has remained unimplemented since it was signed. Such lack of implementation has motivated Chittagong Hill people's self-determination movements (UNPO 2017; Minahan 2016).
- MAR protest scores are non-zero up until 2004, indicating that the movement was ongoing during those years. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations (UNPO) reports activity going beyond 2004. On this basis, we code movements as ongoing. [start date: 1972; end date: ongoing]

#### Dominant claim

- The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) and its military arm, the Shanti Bahini, are the main parties representing the claims of the indigenous peoples of the CHT. A large majority of the indigenous people support the PCJSS and the Shanti Bahini. The PCJSS to-be leaders presented a manifesto to the constitution drafting committee that demanded autonomy for the CHT and the creation of a legislative assembly (Minahan 2002). We thus code autonomy as the dominant claim in the early years of the movement's activity. [1972-1974: autonomy claim]
- There are many sources that see a radicalization of the party's claim once violence occurred. According to Minahan (2002: 848) "tribal leaders demanded secession and the establishment of a sovereign state". Minorities at Risk suggests a similar conclusion, given that it calls the PCJSS insurgency a "struggle for independence or at the very least widespread autonomy". Following the first of January rule, we code independence as the dominant claim from 1975 (violence started in 1974) until and including 1985. [1975-1985: independence claim]
- Negotiations between the government and the PCJSS started in 1985 (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). In these negotiations, the PCJSS put forward several demands, including in particular a degree of autonomy within the CHT (Minority Rights Group International). The PCJSS also supports the implementation of the 1997 agreement according to which the CHT should be granted autonomy. We can thus assume a moderation of the claim. This is confirmed by the second political party, the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), which was founded

in 1998 and which also advocates full autonomy for the CHT, despite rejecting the 1997 accords (Minorities at Risk Project). Following the first of January rule, we code autonomy as the dominant claim as of 1986. The PCSJSS has kept calling for increased autonomy and the devolving of powers to the CHT Regional Council, as well as land rights, ever since (PCJSS 2021; UNPO 2017). [1986-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independent claims**

- MAR and Minahan (2002: 848) suggest that independence claims were made in the mid-70s through to mid-80s by the PCJSS. In 1985, the PCJSS began negotiating with the government, and in those negotiations it demanded internal autonomy and not outright independence (see above). We find no evidence to suggest that PCJSS made claims for independence after 1985.
- Another separatist organization –UPDF – was formed in 1998. UPDF rejects the 1997 peace deal and mainly makes claims for full internal autonomy (The Financial Express 2022). That said, a June 30, 2011, declaration made by UPDF is worth mentioning since it asserted the “unity and solidarity of the Bangalee nation, which deriving its identity from its language and culture, attain sovereign [sic] and independence, shall be the basis of Bangalee nationalism” (BDNews 2011b). The declaration was allegedly “deplored” by the PCJSS Chief Jana Sanghati Samity, and UPDF later clarified that they are not seeking outright independence (BDNews 2011a). [start date: 1974; end date: 1985]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the PCJSS consists of the Bandaran Districts of the Chittagong Division in Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Minahan 1996: 259). We code this claim based on the detailed map in Roth (2015: 328).

### **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

### **Separatist armed conflict**

- Following Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019) we code 1974-1997 as HVIOLSD. Since we found no evidence of violent activity, 1972-1973 is coded as NVIOLSD. We find no evidence of violence after 1997 except for clashes over land-rights in 2010. Several people were killed but the deaths do not reach the threshold needed for an LVIOLSD coding (Amnesty International 2/27/2010). Based on this, we code the movement as NVIOLSD from 1998 onward. [1972-1973: NVIOLSD; 1974-1997: HVIOLSD; 1998-2020: NVIOLSD]

### **Historical context**

- Most of the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) indigenous peoples (also called Jummas; initially 16 tribes of which the Chakma are the largest), moved in the area from the south between the thirteenth and nineteenth century. In 1666, their territory came under the rule of the Bengali, who established treaty relations with the Chakma. These treaty relations were also maintained when

the territory was annexed by the British in 1760. The British established the Chittagong Hills Tract, a tribal preserve. Tribal resistance by the Chakma finally led to the imposition of direct British rule in 1787. The tribes, however, could maintain administrative autonomy. In 1860, the hill area of Chittagong was separated from Chittagong district and an independent district Parbatya Chittagong was created (Minahan 2002; Minorities at Risk Project; Minority Rights Group International).

- The British colonial period brought preferential treatment of the indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) and their small Christian minority in particular. Not only did the British grant them more autonomy, but when immigration from the overcrowded lowlands was increasingly seen as a problem by the local population, the British prohibited further Bengali settlement in 1900 and in 1935 declared the territory a “totally excluded area” where entry was forbidden (Minahan 2002; Minority Rights Group International).
- In return for tribal support against the advancing Japanese during the Second World War, the British promised the CHT indigenous peoples a separate state. However, the British reneged on their promise and the Hill Tracts were incorporated into Muslim Pakistan (East Bengal) in 1947, despite the fact that the CHT contained almost no Muslim population. Many Jummas would have preferred an independent confederation of northeast tribal states or the territory’s incorporation into India.
- Against rising protests, the Pakistani government granted limited autonomy to the Chittagong Hill Tract and prohibited further settlement from Bengali lowlanders. In 1955, however, the autonomy statute was violated when the Pakistani government took direct control of the district and lifted settlement restrictions. In 1962, tribal control was further reduced and in 1964 the region’s special autonomy status was abolished. [1962: autonomy restriction; 1964: autonomy restriction]

### **Concessions and restrictions**

- The indigenous people of the CHT supported the struggle for independence by East Pakistan. However, once the new state of Bangladesh was founded, they had to realize that discrimination continued also under the new government. Secularism and the equality of all citizens irrespective of religious identity was enshrined in the newly adopted constitution but at the same time, immigration of Bengalis to the region was encouraged and the cultural identity of the indigenous peoples of the CHT was constitutionally subsumed under the concept of the "Bengalee Nation". The 1972 constitution recognized only the Bengali culture and language and not the distinct identity of non-Bengali peoples. All citizens were designated as Bengalis and the government insisted that the ethnic groups of the Hill Tracts adopt the Bengali identity (Roy 2000; UNDP 2005). Since this did not change the status of the CHT indigenous peoples, who were equally discriminated under Pakistani rule, this act is not coded.
- In 1977, the principle of secularism was removed by Ziaur Rahman, the country's military ruler, as Bangladesh tightened political, economic, and cultural ties with the Middle East. Islamic symbolism was introduced in all spheres of national life. The CHT indigenous peoples are mainly animist or Buddhist. [1977: cultural rights restriction]
- A 1987 law made Bengali compulsory in education and administration (Minahan 2002). The Bengali Language Introduction Act not only declared Bengali the language for all records and correspondences, laws, proceedings in court and other legal actions but also declared the use of any other language in such institutions as illegal. In light of the fact that the majority of the CHT indigenous peoples do not speak Bengali (Minorities at Risk Project) this law is coded as cultural rights restrictions. [1987: cultural rights restriction]
- Already in 1977, the principle of secularism had been removed by Ziaur Rahman, the country's military ruler, as Bangladesh tightened political, economic, and cultural ties with the Middle East. Islamic symbolism was introduced in all spheres of national life. There was, however, no specific policy implementing the removal of secularism. This only came a decade later, in 1988, when Islam was declared as the state religion of Bangladesh under the Eighth Constitutional Amendment by General Ershad. The constitutional amendment was seen by many as a step towards the imposition of the sharia. The constitutional principle of non-discrimination remained and there were also certain provisions such as Article 41 that guaranteed the right to practice,

teach and promote a religious or to refuse to practice a religion (Minority Rights Group International; Minorities at Risk Project; Udin 2006). Nevertheless, overall this can be seen as a clear restriction of the animist and Buddhist CHT indigenous peoples. [1988: cultural rights restriction]

- In order to devolve powers and responsibilities to the indigenous peoples, the government created three councils in 1989, one to govern each of the three semi-autonomous districts in the CHT (Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban). The District Council Act (which was amended after the 1997 peace accord) devolved competencies in 33 policy areas, including health and education. In the same year, elections were held. Two-thirds of the seats in the councils and the three chairpersons were reserved for the indigenous people. The Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), the main party associated with the movement, protested against the measures since it sought full, genuine autonomy and the resettlement of Bengalis outside the CHT (Minorities at Risk Project; Peace Accords; UNPO 2014). Nonetheless, the 1989 measures increased the autonomy status of the Chittagong Hill Peoples, if only slightly. [1989: autonomy concession]
- After two decades of rebellion, the PCJSS and the government signed a peace agreement (Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord) in December 1997. The agreement promised limited autonomy through the establishment of a Regional Council consisting of the local government councils of the three CHT districts. The council was given the authority to maintain public administration, law and order and promote development. It furthermore recognized the distinct ethnicity of the CHT indigenous groups and set up the Ministry of Chittagong Hilltracts which is headed by a person of indigenous ethnicity and administers the affairs concerning the CHT. The agreement also made plans to return land to displaced natives via the establishment of a Land Disputes Commission (Hewitt and Cheetham 2000; Minorities at Risk Project; Minority Rights Group International). According to a 2013 report by Amnesty International, the 1997 agreement has not been fully implemented. Nonetheless, the autonomy status of the CHT Peoples has improved, if only slightly. [1997: autonomy concession]
  - o The peace agreement ended the 1974-1997 civil war (Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl 2019).
- In 2001, the government of Bangladesh enacted the CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission Act. The act legally gave power to the Land Disputes Commission to make decisions about CHT land disputes. The act states that the Commission's decisions would be deemed as a decree of a civil court which cannot be challenged (The Daily Star 2019). Despite this, we do not code a concession because it remains unclear whether the CHT peoples' level of self-rule actually increased. On one hand, the establishment of the Act and Commission provided the CHT peoples with a means to legally make land rights claims. On the other hand, though, the Commission's chairperson was a non-indigenous government appointee with the power to override other members, especially indigenous ones. Therefore, the Commission was not welcomed by indigenous leaders and protesters (Uddin 2019). Furthermore, there have been twenty-two thousand dispute cases pending with the commission by 2019 (The Daily Star 2019). In other words, the Commission may exist in name only and the Act rarely worked. In 2013 and 2016, the Commission's powers were notably reduced (Uddin 2019; New Age 2017).

### **Regional autonomy**

- The limited concessions noted above are insufficient to constitute meaningful regional autonomy.

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

- Bangladesh attained independence in 1971, implying a host change for the Chittagong Hill People. However, the movement only started in 1972 and this change is thus not coded.

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Chittagong Hills People
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Tribal-Buddhists
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	77103000

## Power access

- We follow EPR. [1972-2020: discriminated]

## Group size

- We follow EPR. [0.01]

## Regional concentration

- In the CHT, the Chittagong Hills People make up 51% of the population (Minahan 2002: 845). This amounts to around 640,000 people (in 2002), which is more than 50% of the around 810,000 Chittagong Hills People in the whole country in that same year. We thus code the Chittagong Hills People as regionally concentrated. [regionally concentrated]

## Kin

- According to EPR (Tribal-Buddhists, scenario 1:1) there are kin groups in several countries. These are the Adibasi Janajati in Nepal, the Buddhist Arakanese in Myanmar and the Buddhist Arakanese in India. The presence of ethnic kin groups is confirmed by the Minorities at Risk data which states that “the group has close kindred in more than one country”, listing India and Myanmar as the countries with the largest kin groups. The same two countries are also listed in Minahan (2002: 845). [kin in neighboring country]

## Sources

Ahmed, Ishtiaq (1998). *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Amnesty Australia. “Bangladesh: Investigate Army’s Alleged Involvement in Human Rights Abuses in Chittagong Hill Tracts.” <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/22626/> [December 10, 2013].

Amnesty International (2013). “Pushed to the Edge: Indigenous Rights denied in Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hill Tracts.” London: Amnesty International.

BDNews (2011a). “UPDF denies opposing peace accord”. *BD News* 24. November 18. <https://bdnews24.com/politics/updf-denies-opposing-peace-accord> [February 15, 2023].

BDNews (2011b). “UPDF announces protest programmes”. *BD News* 24. July 18. <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/updf-announces-protest-programmes> [February 15, 2023].

- Bengali Language Introduction Act (1987). <http://www.sai.uni-heidelberg.de/workgroups/bdlaw/1987-a02.htm> [November 14, 2014]
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min (2010). "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel: New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62(1): 87-119.
- Hewitt, Christopher, and Tom Cheetham (2000). *Encyclopedia of Modern Separatist Movements*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, pp. 68-69.
- Keesing's Record of World Events. <http://www.keesings.com> [April 17, 2002].
- Khan, Abdul R. (1997). "Crisis in the Chittagong Hill Tracts – Bangladesh." <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/1997/03/crisis-in-the-chittagong-hill-tracts---bangladesh.html> [November 14, 2014]
- Marshall, Monty G., and Ted R. Gurr (2003). *Peace and Conflict 2003: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements and Democracy*. College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, p. 58.
- Minahan, James (1996). *Nations without States*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 259-261.
- Minahan, James (2002). *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 845-850.
- Minahan, James (2016). *Encyclopedia of Stateless Nations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 192-193.
- Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. "Governance of CHT." [http://www.mochta.gov.bd/index.php/index/othercontent/CHT-Institutions\\_\\_15/13/0/12https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/matrix/accord/8](http://www.mochta.gov.bd/index.php/index/othercontent/CHT-Institutions__15/13/0/12https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/matrix/accord/8) [November 14, 2014].
- Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs. "Ministry Background." [http://www.mochta.gov.bd/index.php/index/othercontent/MoCHTA-Background\\_\\_5/1/0/2](http://www.mochta.gov.bd/index.php/index/othercontent/MoCHTA-Background__5/1/0/2) [November 14, 2014].
- Minorities at Risk Project (MAR) (2009). College Park, MD: University of Maryland.
- Minority Rights Group International. *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*. <http://www.minorityrights.org/5636/bangladesh/adivasis.html> [November 14, 2014].
- New Age (2017). "CHT land commission still ineffective." <https://www.newagebd.net/article/29688/cht-land-commission-still-ineffective> [July 10, 2022].
- Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (2021). "Supplementary of PCJSS on 24th Anniversary of CHT Accord." <https://www.pcjss.org/supplementary-copy-of-pcjss-on-24th-anniversary-of-cht-accord/> [July 10, 2022].
- Roth, Christopher F. (2015). *Let's Split! A Complete Guide to Separatist Movements and Aspirant Nations, from Abkhazia to Zanzibar*. Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books.
- Roy, Rajkumari. C. K. (2000). *Land rights of the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*. Skive: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs IWGIA.
- The Daily Star (2019). "Land Disputes in Cht: 22,000 complaints gather dust." <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/land-disputes-cht-22000-complaints-gather-dust-1781815> [July 10, 2022].
- The Daily Star (2019). "On the settlement of land disputes in the CHT." <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/law-vision/news/the-settlement-land-disputes-the-cht-1841356> [July 10, 2022].
- The Financial Express (2022). "UPDF floats new proposal for peace in strife-torn Chattogram hills". *The Financial Express*. June 16. <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/national/updf-floats-new-proposal-for-peace-in-strife-torn-chattogram-hills-1655358935> [February 15, 2023].
- Tracking Terrorism. [http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/parbatya-chattagram-jana-sanghati-samity-pcjss?ip\\_login\\_no\\_cache=bb90ecd945c8d1462a1164843a79b020](http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/parbatya-chattagram-jana-sanghati-samity-pcjss?ip_login_no_cache=bb90ecd945c8d1462a1164843a79b020) [November 18, 2014].
- UCANews (2022). "Mixed response to Bangladeshi rebel group's peace talks offer". *UCA News*. June 15. <https://www.ucanews.com/news/mixed-response-to-bangladeshi-rebel-groups-peace-talks-offer/97652> [February 15, 2023].

- Uddin, Mohammad Moin (2019). Settlement of Indigenous Land Disputes by the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission of Bangladesh: Challenges and Possible Solutions. *The Indian Yearbook of Comparative Law* 2018. Singapore: Springer, pp, 251-278.
- UNDP (2005). "Bangladesh: A Critical Review of the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) Peace Accord." *Working Paper No. 2 'The Role of Parliaments in Conflict & Post-Conflict in Asia'*.
- Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) (2014). "Chittagong Hill Tracts: No Polls To District Councils In 21 Years." <http://unpo.org/article/16846> [November 14, 2014].
- Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). "News Related to Chittagong Hill Tracts." <http://www.unpo.org/related/news/7867> [December 10, 2013].
- Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations (UNPO) (2017). "Chittagong Hill Tracts: PCJSS Statement on 20th Anniversary of CHT Accord." <https://unpo.org/article/20495> [July 8, 2022].
- Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). *Conflict Encyclopedia*. <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/> [July 21, 2014].
- Vogt, Manuel, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin (2015). "Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7): 1327-1342.

## **Hindus**

Activity: 1985-2017

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- As Hindus made up a large percentage of the population in Bengal before Bangladesh separated from Pakistan, a portion of the Hindus were partitioned into Bangladesh after Bangladesh separated from Pakistan. The Hindu population remains the largest religious minority in Bangladesh, but its population has fallen from around 20 percent in the 1970s to only eight percent in 2013 (Minority Rights Group International; Amnesty International 2013). The Hindus are mainly engaged in fighting for political rights but have also organized against religious discrimination. When Bangladesh was first founded, leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the country to be secular. However, in 1977, leader Ziaur Rahman changed the policy and instated Islamism as the national religion. In 1988, the Bangladeshi government formalized the move towards Islamism by passing the Eighth Constitutional Amendment, which overturned the Bangladeshi constitution's declaration of secularism. Despite this, Minority Rights Group International reports that "Article 41 of the constitution recognizes other religions and gives citizens the right to practice and promote their religious beliefs". Though Article 41 allows religious minorities to practice and teach their own religion to their own communities, the Hindus of Bangladesh have complained of behavior ranging from implicit discrimination to direct persecution of the Hindu religion. The Hindus thus aim to change the Bangladeshi constitution and reinstate a policy of secularism.
- However, the Bengal Army (Banga Sana) also made claim for a separate Hindu homeland within Bangladesh. Discrimination against Hindus is most starkly demonstrated by the Vest Property Act, which allows the government to repossess land belonging to Hindus – and also demanded the rebuilding of temples that had been destroyed in 1971 (Minorities at Risk Project). Minority Rights Group International claims that the Vest Property Act, which was originally meant to seize enemy property during the seventeen-day war between India and Pakistan in 1965, continues to be implemented even though the war has long ended. In 2001, the Awami League party passed a bill requiring the government to return property to rightful owners within 100 days, but in 2002, the BNP government amended this bill to allow the government an unlimited grace period for returning the property. Subsequent confiscations of land have continued, not only of Hindu land but also those belong to other minorities in Bangladesh (Minority Rights Group International). In In 2001, the Servajanin Puja Udjapar Committee Conference, a Hindu organization, has called for the government end repeal the Vested Property Act, the desecration of Hindu temples and the restoration of a secular constitution (Minorities at Risk Project 2006).
- Latif (2013: 35) reports a number of Hindu organizations claiming increased self-determination: Banga Sena, Bir Banga Hindu Prajatantra, the Bangladesh Udbastu Unnayan Parishad, the Bangladesh Udbastu Mancha, and the Bir Banga Sena. According to Latif (2013: 35), the idea of a Hindu Republic of Bir Banga first "floated in 1973 in protest against the Pakistani army's brutal targeting of Hindus in Bengal's eastern wing." Bangabhumi movement allegedly represented this claim, but the evidence for movement activity in the 1970s and early 1980s is very thin, and one of alleged leaders of Bangabhumi denied supporting the creation of a new nation (BBC 2001). According to the BBC (2001), "there was never any concrete evidence that it existed." Thus, we only code the start date in 1985, the year when MAR begins to code non-zero protest scores. This start date is ambiguous.
- MAR continues to code non-zero protest scores until 2002. There are reports of insurgent activities by Banga Sena and Bir Banga "carrying out terrorist and secessionist activities [...] from bases in West Bengal" in 1998 (The Daily Star 2004a). The movement may not have been



active, or active at low intensity, between 1999 and 2001 (DBpedia). In 2004, the group was reported to be active and conducting militant activities alongside Bir Banga (The Daily Star 2004b). A statement by the group [Banga Sena] in September 2007 included the demand for an independent “Bangabhumi” to be “carved out” [through secession] (One India 2007). This is the last evidence of a separatist claim we could find. There are several other Hindu organizations that remained active after 2007, including Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bajrang Dal (BD) (Dasgupta 2014: 64), but they do not appear to have made separatist demands (Wiki; Brekke 2011: 124). [start date: 1985; end date: 2017]

### **Dominant claims**

- According to Latif (2013: 35), the organizations representing the Hindu claim for self-determination are “separatist” (here used in the sense of secessionist). He names the Banga Sena, Bir Banga Hindu Prajatantra, the Bangladesh Udbastu Unnayan Parishad, the Bangladesh Udbastu Mancha, and the Bir Banga Sena. Banga Sena (Bengal Army), the most prominent of these, is also considered secessionist by van Schendel (2005: 105), who quotes the organization’s leader: “We want that six districts of the country [...] be announced as an independent country”. The secessionist claim is confirmed by several sources, such as The Telegraph (2004), the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1992) and most evidently by the 2003 declaration of the Hindu Republic of Bangabhumi. [1985-2017: independence claim]

### **Independence claims**

- See above. [start date: 1985; end date: 2017]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- Descriptions of the claimed territory vary. Some Banga Sana leaders have made specific claims for the independence of the Khulna, Faridpur, Jessore, Kushtia, Barisal and Potuakhali districts in the south-west of Bangladesh (van Schendel 2005). Other claims include everything south-west of the Ganges river region (including the six districts) as well as parts of the Chittagong Hill region (Roth 2015: 336; Lewis 2011). We code the latter, larger territory, the Global Administrative Areas database for polygon definition.

### **Sovereignty declarations**

- In 2003 the Hindu Republic of Bangabhumi/Bir Banga declared its independence with a capital in Shaktigarh. The envisaged republic comprised almost the entire southern half of Bangladesh. The provision government wrote a letter to the governments of 17 countries including the USA and India in order to draw attention to the situation of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh (Times of India 2003). [2003: independence declaration]
  - o Minahan (2016: 482) suggests that there was a declaration in 2013; we could not confirm this and it is possible that Minahan is referring to the 2003 declaration.

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- No violence was found, hence a NVIOLSD coding. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- When the British Indian Empire was partitioned in 1947, the Hindus, who had resided in present-day Bangladesh already before the 1800s, made up around 30 percent of East Pakistan. In Muslim Pakistan, Hindus faced both linguistic (Urdu was made the sole official language in 1948) and religious discrimination. Their number dropped continually as many Hindus moved to India's West Bengal province. During the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, Hindus were the primary targets of the Pakistani army and suffered disproportionately. Further Hindu migration and displacement occurred and as many as 70% of the Hindu population fled the country. In 2013, only eight percent of the population of Bangladesh was Hindu (Minority Rights Group International; Minorities at Risk Project).
- The Enemy Property Ordinance of 1965 was passed following the seventeen-day war between India and Pakistan. It stated that any companies, buildings and landed properties belonging to Indian nationals residing in Pakistan or Pakistan citizens residing in India, who were identified as “enemies of Pakistan”, are to be nationalized. Since the state of war was not lifted until Bangladesh independence in 1971, the properties were never returned to their rightful owners but instead were gifted to loyalists of the government (Minority Rights Group International; Samad 2009).
- Instead of revoking the Enemy Property Ordinance of 1965, the new Bangladesh government reinforced its provisions by passing the Vested and Non-Resident Property Act (Administration) in 1974. As the Enemy Property Ordinance, the new law “allowed the government to confiscate the property of residents who have left the country [and] has also been used to take over the land of Hindus who still reside in the country” (Minorities at Risk Project). Although the act has a deeply discriminative effect and is viewed as “the most explicit and officially tolerated means of depriving Hindus” (Minority Rights Group International), it is to a very large part a continuation of the 1965 act.
- After independence, the founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, enshrined secularism and the equality of all citizens irrespective of religious identity in the newly adopted constitution (Ahmed 1998; Minorities at Risk Project). The constitutional principle of non-discrimination, however, was not implemented and there continued to be discrimination against Hindus as well as direct persecution of them (Minority Rights Group International). Thus, we do not code a concession.
- In 1977, the principle of secularism was removed by Ziaur Rahman, the country's military ruler, as Bangladesh tightened political, economic, and cultural ties with the Middle East. Islamic symbolism was introduced in all spheres of national life. [1977: cultural rights restriction]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- Bangladesh imposed further restrictions upon its Hindu minority in 1988, when Islam was declared the state religion of Bangladesh under the Eighth Constitutional Amendment by General Ershad. The constitutional amendment was seen by many as a step towards the imposition of the sharia. The constitutional principle of non-discrimination remained and there were also certain provisions such as Article 41 that guaranteed the right to practice, teach and promote a religious or to refuse to practice a religion (Minority Rights Group International; Minorities at Risk Project; Udin 2006). Nevertheless, overall this can be seen as a clear restriction of the Hindu population. [1988: cultural rights restriction]
- In 2001 the Awami League passed the Vested Property Return Bill. The legislation would have required the return of some of the property that was confiscated under the Vested Property Act to the rightful owners or their heirs within 100 days. In 2002, however, the BNP government amended the bill to allow the government an unlimited period for returning the property. Not only

has the process of returning so far failed but confiscations of Hindu land and land of other minorities have continued. Thus, we do not code a concession.

- In 2011, the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Bangladesh Parliament, and the Bangladesh government published a list of the properties that should be returned in mid-2012 (Panday 2016). The Bill was amended again in 2013. However, there was little to no implementation. By 2020, not a single property had been returned (Feldman 2016; Current Trigger 2020).
- In 2012, the Hindu Marriage Registration Act was passed. The act mainly increased the protection of Hindu women (Zahur 2014), which is not a concession as defined here.

### **Regional autonomy**

NA

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

- Bangladesh attained independence in 1971, implying a host change. However, the movement only started in 1985 and thus this change is not coded.

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Hindus
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Bengali Hindus
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	77101000

### **Power access**

- We follow EPR. [discriminated]

### **Group size**

- We follow EPR. [0.1]

### **Regional concentration**

- Neither GeoEPR nor MAR code the Hindus in Bangladesh as concentrated. According to MAR, they are “widely dispersed”. Both data sets employ a lower threshold for territorial concentration. [not concentrated]

### **Kin**

- Hindus in India and Burma constitute ethnic kin (MAR). [kin in neighboring country]

## Sources

- Ahmed, Ishtiaq (1998). *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Amnesty International (2013). "Bangladesh: Wave of Violent Attacks Against Hindu Minority." March 6. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2013/03/bangladesh-wave-violent-attacks-against-hindu-minority/> [June 14, 2022].
- Amnesty International (2021). "Bangladesh: Wave of anti-Hindu attacks must be fully investigated by authorities." <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/bangladesh-wave-anti-hindu-attacks-must-be-fully-investigated-authorities> [July 14, 2022].
- BBC (2001). "Bangladesh alleges 'separatist plot'." [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1725254.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1725254.stm) [June 17, 2015].
- BBC (2021). "Bangladesh's Hindus living in fear following mob attacks." <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-58999047> [July 14, 2022].
- Brekke, Torkel (2011). *Fundamentalism: Prophecy and protest in an age of globalization*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min (2010). "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel: New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62(1): 87-119.
- Current trigger (2020). "55 Years of the Vested Property Act in Bangladesh and the situation of the Hindus." <http://www.currenttriggers.com/blog/vested-property-act/> [July 14, 2022].
- Dasgupta, Siddhartha (2014). "Identity question in Bangladesh: implication for west Bengal." *JAIR Journal of International Relations*: 1(2): 59-66.
- DBPedia (n.d.). "Bangabhumii". <https://dbpedia.org/page/Bangabhumii> [February 15, 2023].
- Feldman, Shelley (2016). "The Hindu as other: State, law, and land relations in contemporary Bangladesh." *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* (13).
- GADM (2019). Database of Global Administrative Boundaries, Version 3.6. <https://gadm.org/> [November 19, 2021].
- Hewitt, Christopher, and Tom Cheetham (2000). *Encyclopedia of Modern Separatist Movements*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Latif, Asad-ul Iqbal (2013). "The Bengal Partition and Identity Politics: A Ghoti\* View." *Peace and Security Review* 5(10): 25-45.
- Lewis, M. (2011). "Border Delineation and Geopolitical Wrangling between India and Bangladesh." <https://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/border-delineation-and-geopolitical-wrangling-between-india-and-bangladesh>.
- Minahan, James (2002). *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Minahan, James (2016). *Encyclopedia of Stateless Nations. Second Edition*. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press.
- Minority Rights Group International. *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*. <http://www.minorityrights.org/5645/bangladesh/hindus.html> [December 18, 2014].
- New Age (2020). "Hindu Marriage Registration Act a protective shield for women." <https://www.newagebd.net/article/98262/hindu-marriage-registration-act-a-protective-shield-for-women> [July 14, 2022].
- One India (2007). "Organisations appeal for public support for peace in Karbi Anglong". *One India*. September 3. <https://www.oneindia.com/2007/09/03/organisations-appeal-for-public-support-for-peace-in-karbi-anglong-1188821209.html> [February 15, 2023].
- Panday, Pranab Kumar (2016). "Politics of land grabbing: The vested property act and the exploitation of Hindu communities in Bangladesh." *International journal on minority and group rights* 23 (3): 382-401.
- Reuters (2021). "Bangladesh's ruling party rallies for Hindus after deadly clashes." <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/bangladesh-arrests-hundreds-violence-against-hindus-2021-10-19/> [July 14, 2022].

- Roth, Christopher F. (2015). *Let's Split! A Complete Guide to Separatist Movements and Aspirant Nations, from Abkhazia to Zanzibar*. Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books.
- Samad, Saleem (2009). "State of Minorities in Bangladesh: From Secular to Islamic Hegemony." <https://bangladeshwatchdog1.wordpress.com/2009/04/19/state-of-minorities-in-bangladesh-from-secular-to-islamic-hegemony/> [December 18, 2014].
- The Daily Star (2004a). "BDR, BSF agree to bust camps". *The Daily Star*. January 11. <https://archive.thedailystar.net/2004/01/11/d40111011212.htm> [February 15, 2023].
- The Daily Star (2004b). "Over 90 rebel camps in India active against Bangladesh". *The Daily Star*. January 10. <https://archive.thedailystar.net/2004/01/10/d4011001099.htm> [February 15, 2023].
- The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (1992): "Information on the Banga Sena and how it is perceived by the government of Bangladesh." [http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/170010/286062\\_de.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/170010/286062_de.html) [December 18, 2014].
- The New Nation (2011). "Hindu Leaders Protest Stealing Gold of Goddesses from Dhakeshwari Temple." January 10.
- The New Nation (2012). "Human Chain Protesting Attack on Temples." October 12.
- The Telegraph (2004). "Dhaka seeks proof, Delhi readies maps." January 6. [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040107/asp/nation/story\\_2760337.asp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1040107/asp/nation/story_2760337.asp) [December 18, 2014].
- Times of India (2003). "Hindu republic 'born' in Bangladesh." February 4. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Hindu-republic-born-in-Bangladesh/articleshow/36407847.cms> [December 18, 2014].
- Uddin, Sufia M. (2006). *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation*. Univeristy of North Carolina Press.
- Van Schendel, Willem (2005). *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia*. London: Anthem Press.
- Vogt, Manuel, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin (2015). "Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Data Set Family." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7): 1327-1342.
- Zahur, Mahua (2014). "The Hindu marriage system in Bangladesh: Addressing discrimination." *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 40(4): 608-630.