Macro to micro cascades: Bangladesh

Macro violence

Chapters 5 and 6 began to reveal how imperial domination cascaded down to a politics of separation of India from the Mughal and British empires, which cascaded further down to a violent politics of separation of Pakistan from India, cascading to a war of separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. This chapter follows how this cascaded further through layers of internal conflict within Bangladesh. The focus of this chapter is to place the final cascades that occurred within the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh into the context of the entirety of the South Asian cascades. We consider how the macro cascades from the Mughal and British empires play out in one particular part of greater India: Bengal. While Chapter 5 shows the horizontal breadth of 26 different cascade dynamics, this chapter documents the vertical depth of cascade dynamics from greater India down to the most peripheral little villages of the CHT.

The South Asian cascades of partitions delivered homogeneity without peace to the geopolitically critical part of imperial India that was Bengal. We argue that this was because the comparative homogeneity that emerged in Bangladesh was achieved by a cascade of violence. This chapter resumes the theme that modern wars can cascade to the creation of Hobbesian rural spaces in which sexual violence becomes a strategy, revenge is indulged, rule of law is in abeyance and insurgents morph into gangs of organised criminals. These anomic spaces are in the market for a supplier
of order (Proposition 7). That supply might come from one organised crime group dominating or from an armed rule-of-law movement such as the Taliban, UN peacekeepers, a state that supplies community policing and the rule of law or a state military that allows enough pacification to justify its presence and enough anarchy to itself profit from organised crime. The CHT are seen as fitting the last description. The descent into this condition is viewed through a lens that points from the CHT back through the layers of the above cascades.

Plate 7.1 Peacebuilding Compared filmmaker Sari Braithwaite and Bina D’Costa, while smiling for John’s camera, have actually been detained by the military while attempting to visit a recently burnt-out indigenous village, Chittagong Hill Tracts, 2011. 
Source: John Braithwaite, fieldwork photograph.

Chittagong Hill Tracts’ layers of violence

The CHT conflict had been raging for 25 years when a peace agreement was signed in 1997. This was a conflict that pitted the indigenous peoples of the CHT against ethnically Bengali settlers and Bangladeshi security forces defending the settlers’ right to land in the CHT. The indigenous peoples of the CHT were concerned about a sequence of policies,
including the flooding of 40 per cent of the arable land in the CHT and, in 1961, the displacement of 100,000 mostly indigenous people for the Kapitai Dam, unsustainable exploitation of forests and state incentives for Bengalis to settle in the CHT that made indigenous hill peoples a minority in their own lands.

In 1947, indigenous people were 98 per cent of the CHT population; one estimate was 51 per cent in 1991 and falling since (Mohsin 2002: 119); another re-computed 2011 Census figures to suggest 53 per cent. The last figure is only a guess informed by interviews with donors as the state stopped collecting these statistics when the figure hit 51 per cent. In this sense, the conflict has been like the struggle of the people of West Papua to resist transmigration—a struggle that in the past decade passed the tipping point of non-Papuan Indonesians becoming a majority (Braithwaite et al. 2010a)—or the Christian Philippines pursuing a long-run policy of transmigration of Christians to render Muslim Moro a minority on the island of Mindanao. The conscious use of migration to marginalise indigenous people was also the policy of the British Empire in its Europeanisation of the continent of Australia two centuries ago. We therefore see the core dynamic of CHT violence as a historically recurrent modality of cascading violence, yet with each exemplar having its own very local dynamic character. This armed conflict was not a struggle for the independence of the CHT from Bangladesh. Rather, the insurgents’ objective was a level of autonomy comparable to that which the CHT enjoyed in British colonial times and the return of Bengali settlers who had arrived in recent decades. The European Union has more than once offered to fund resettlement incentives for limited returns to the plains by recent settlers. Our donor interviews confirm the Government of Bangladesh has spurned this offer.

The CHT conflict is still very much alive today because the government has been either unable or unwilling to implement key clauses of the 1997 CHT Accord. To the indigenous political leaders and the insurgency factions of the CHT, the Government of Bangladesh and the international community—especially India—tricked them into handing in their weapons and then walked away from the CHT Accord, which had motivated their leaders to opt for peace. Many insightful analyses have been written on this conflict (e.g. CHT Commission 2000; Fortna 2008; Mohsin 2002, 2003). In this chapter, we interpret the conflict as being the end point of a cascade of violence, while incorporating local drivers of conflict into the analysis. Fieldwork for this research comprised
114 interviews, some with more than one stakeholder in the CHT conflict, mainly conducted in trips to the CHT in 2010 and 2011, although Bina D’Costa had other research trips to her homeland during this period and John Braithwaite had another research trip in 2015.

Bengal was one of the regions deeply traumatised by the violence of the Partition of India. We saw in Chapter 6 that the violence of Partition was crucial to understanding why Pakistan became a militarised state (Jalal 1995). Military domination of East Pakistan by West Pakistan ensued. This long cascade of violence was constituted by the separation of India from the United Kingdom, of Pakistan from India, Bangladesh from Pakistan, the civil war of indigenous peoples of the CHT against Bengali settlers and violence between more and less dominant indigenous groups and spoiler factions within the CHT who were encouraged by Bangladeshi military and intelligence operatives (Fortna 2008; Mohsin 2002, 2003). At each level of the cascade, violence from the higher (more macro) level created a political niche for escalated violence at the next level down.

At the lowest level of multiple cascades of violence that we identified in Chapter 5 in the history of greater India (Majumdar et al. 1950) are the many localised Maoist/Naxalite insurgencies. Some Naxalites continue to have a foothold in Bangladesh; in fact, the Naxalite movement started in Naxalbari in Indian West Bengal. To some extent, similar to the indigenous struggles in the CHT, the Naxalite movement was also generated as a conflict over land rights and very poor people in the rural periphery of rapidly developing countries resenting oppression from metropolitan elites. For an overview of land rights as motivators of bottom-up conflicts in the CHT that have much in common with the Naxalite/Maoist conflicts documented in Chapter 5, the work of Shapan Adnan (2004) and Shapan Adnan and Ranajit Dastidar (2011) is illuminating.

This chapter brings into focus the idea of seeing South Asian history as cascades of violence by looking at them from the end point of the cascade within the CHT. We begin the analysis at the macro end, however, with the breakup of India. Greater India before Partition was a hugely diverse nation. It remained almost as diverse after Partition, with India including a larger Muslim population than Pakistan, and also with large Buddhist, Sikh, Christian and other minorities. Pakistan was rendered more homogeneously Islamic, with over 90 per cent of the population Muslim, yet remained ethnically diverse, with more than 60 language groups.
Ethnic and language conflicts contributed to the separation of East from West Pakistan in 1971. After this sequence of two bloody partitions, Bangladesh was left as one of the most homogeneous nations in the world: 90 per cent Muslim, 98 per cent ethnically Bengali, with almost all its citizens able to speak the Bengali language. In spite of this, it still suffered a civil war in which ethnic minorities constituting barely half of 1 per cent of the population took up arms against the majority. The South Asian cascade of partitions delivered homogeneity without peace to Bangladesh. We argue that this was because the comparative homogeneity was achieved by a cascade of violence that cascaded militarisation and domination (Proposition 8) and because it is not homogeneity that predicts absence of civil war; rather, it is non-discrimination and inclusion that create positive peace (as the total assembly of evidence concludes in Part III).

Let us now seek to understand something of the dynamics of each layer of a cascade that we will characterise first as a cascade of militarisation. First, we consider militarisation in imperial pacification, then in the Partition of India and Pakistan, then in the partition of Pakistan and Bangladesh, then in autonomy struggles within Bangladesh and, finally, militarisation in the resistance to the resistance within the CHT.

Militarisation in imperial pacification

The Mughal Empire and the British East India Company can be conceived as imperial protection rackets oriented to squeezing maximum tax in return for protection from other armies (van Schendel 2009). This was the first of a number of cascades of domination that our narrative conceives as washing across South Asia. It is hard to underestimate the importance of the Mughal Empire (1526–1710 CE) to the history of greater India. There was no continuity in state formation in India as there was in China after 200 BCE. While the Portuguese settlement in Goa in 1510 was strategic to control the sea trade across Asia and between Asia and Europe, it was nearly a century later that the Dutch, French, Danish and British began to establish their trading ports by setting up alliances with local powerbrokers (Sheppard et al. 2009: 355). However, following the 1526 invasion of the Persian Babar, the Mughals financed the establishment of the entire empire through a system of taxation on land and internal trade. Soldiers were needed to build, control and maintain hold of the empire. Desai (2009: 7) concludes that the Mughal Empire was the first time one
dynasty had controlled up to 80 per cent of India since the Maurya period of 400–300 BCE. By the 1590s, the Mughal emperor ‘commanded more than four million warriors—a force bigger than any army in Europe until the twentieth century’ (Boot 2006: 82–3). It was not a power the British Empire could defeat head-on.

Neither the Mughal nor the British empires ruled India in the direct sense of a contemporary state. While the rule of both empires was in most regions limited to collecting tax to enrich the rulers and fund their indirect administration and their military domination, the British East India Company differed from the Mughal Empire in that its modus operandi was ‘not just collecting but maximizing the revenue’ (Desai 2009: 54). East India Company profit maximisation was to satisfy the extravagant expectations created to raise capital from shareholders (Mill 1826). In comparison, Mughal revenue raising was haphazard, often flexible and tradition-bound—for example, during wars and good years of harvesting, the tax was higher than during times of poor harvest. The East India Company’s revenue raising was oppressive, savagely exacerbating the poverty of the ordinary people of the colony during their hardest times. Its rigid insistence on tax collection in response to a succession of droughts then floods in 1769–70, combined with unbridled profiteering in grain markets, led to a famine in which one-third of Bengal’s population—10 million people—perished (van Schendel 2009: 57).1 Tax collection in Bengal had been outsourced to zamindars (landlords), who were primarily Muslims during Mughal hegemony, but were later replaced mostly with Hindus under the British imperium. The East India Company2 was corrupt and failed to create institutions that would allow economic development and good governance. It exemplified Acemoglu et al.’s (2004) and Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2012) conclusion that, in the wealthiest parts of the early modern world, such as India, colonialism imposed exploitative, extractive military control that farmed and manipulated the formidable regimes that had created their wealth, while in the poor lands of early modernity, such as North America, Australia and New Zealand, colonialism created white settler economies designed to benefit the settlers through good governance.

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1 The first governor-general of India, Warren Hastings, and some of his colleagues in 1772 reflected on the British East India Company’s key role in meeting revenue demands for repatriation to Britain (Sheppard et al. 2009: 366).
2 The decisive Battle of Plassey in 1757 was the first major clash of arms between the Moghuls and the East India Company, following which the British became masters of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and eventually of most of India (Butalia 1998: 144–54).
institutions. Keay (2010: 414–15) argues that Pax Britannica devastated the Indian rural economy not only because it was Tax Britannica, but also because it was Axe Britannica—deforesting the continent from 1780 and disrupting ecological balances on which rural livelihoods depended. This critique became less true as British influence in India passed from the East India Company to the British state (the company was wound up in 1857). The British colonial state built many enduringly valuable institutions such as law courts, a legal profession and a fine university system by nineteenth-century standards.

On the other hand, the militarisation of greater India by the British Raj was more oppressive as time went on. It was beyond the power of the British to subdue and fragment a military power as formidable as the Mughal Empire without turning other local rulers against the Mughals and assisting their armies to resist. British sovereignty, like British taxation, could only be achieved indirectly by opening up divisions in the country, enrolling weaker rulers to be British puppets and to usurp, through violence, stronger rulers who might challenge British control. Enmities the British Raj intentionally stoked continued to create flashpoints of conflict for centuries afterwards. In sowing fragmentation to underwrite indirect rule, the British were taking a page from the Mughal Empire’s playbook. Divide and conquer were not the only tyranny that cascaded from the Mughals to the British to the present. When General Reginald Dyer fired on peaceful demonstrators in Amritsar on 13 April 1919, a week after Gandhi’s first hartal (withdrawal of the cooperation of people with their governors through strikes and shop closings), it provided a model (Proposition 2) for how South Asian states later in the century would respond to Gandhian tactics of resistance.

So we conclude that the first cascades of violence that rolled across greater India and across the centuries, and the first cascades of corruption, cronyism and money politics that crippled the whole of greater India, were at the hands of the haphazard yet responsively traditionalist tax exploitation of the Mughals and the systematic, destructive tax exploitation of the British that was locally unresponsive and responsive instead to the logic of the capitalism of the metropole. While the cost of these cascades in institutionalising violence and in crippling institutions of economic development were inestimable, progressively, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British state power that displaced the capitalist power of the East India Company began to build noble institutions such as courts, an education system and a national bureaucracy that were
constructive contributions to the development of modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Gandhi, after all, was as much a product of these institutions—of a British education and British legal professionalism—as he was a product of Indian spiritual traditions of nonviolent ethos and citizenship. In Gandhi’s satyagraha (truthful resistance)—denoting a legitimate, authentic and moral form of political action against state oppression (Chakrabarty and Pandey 2009: 40)—one crucial variable was *ahimsa* (nonviolence), which drew on the strength of persuasion (p. 51). Even with his nonviolence, Gandhi learnt—via his vegetarian socialist circle in London—from the radical, patient, solidaristic, tactical nonviolence of the Chartists (Desai 2009: 135).

Gandhi was a great sometime resident of Bangladesh (where he organised the weavers, whose struggle is symbolised at the centre of the Indian flag), a leader who saw the possibility of cascades of reconciliation. We return to a discussion of cascades of reconciliation in Part III of this book.

Militarisation in the partition of Pakistan

At first, Mohandas Gandhi, who assumed the presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1921, attempted to cultivate Muslim solidarity with Congress as a party. He did this by exposing the Sykes–Picot Agreement for putting Palestine under British colonial rule that would remove some of Islam’s holiest sites from Muslim control (Desai 2009: 142). However, instead of increasing Hindu–Muslim solidarity, Gandhi’s strategies deepened the hold of the *ulamas* (Muslim scholars), thereby alienating secular Muslim leaders, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Parekh 1997: 18–19), the founding prime minister of Pakistan. There was a perception that Muslims suffered the greatest sacrifices from Gandhi’s nonviolent tactics. Nonviolence required boycotting education institutions and career restrictions that particularly disadvantaged Muslim activists. Because Gandhi also denounced and spurred Muslims when they sometimes resisted with violence the terrible oppression the British inflicted on them, Muslim engagement with the Indian National Congress eroded rapidly between the two World Wars. Some scholars also argue that the idea of Pakistan as a separate state of the *Paks* (‘the pure’) came very late in the Muslim resistance to British colonialism (Keay 2010: 496). During most of the anticolonial struggle, the majority of Muslim leaders,
including Jinnah, favoured a greater Indian federation with a number of autonomous Muslim democracies scattered across India, shaped by Sharia principles more than by British law.

Many in the evolving Indian National Congress resisted this devolution of power. Most of the Congress leaders believed in an uncompromisingly secular state that had one rule of law for all. Some others were Hindu fundamentalists who resisted Muslim autonomy because of a will to religious hegemony. Most of all, the Congress had become a hierarchy under the control of a few Hindu leaders who did not want to share power with Jinnah and Muslim leaders, preferring ‘to rule India on its own terms’ (Desai 2009: 450), even if constituting only 75 per cent of the population of greater India. So the Congress elite could, in the end, be persuaded by Lord Louis Mountbatten to surrender to the ‘inevitability’ of Partition. It was Congress resistance to powersharing with Muslim leaders that had given birth late in the struggle to thoughts of the two-state solution. Once that imaginary was conceived, ambitious Muslim politicians could see that the Pakistan idea could give them power over what could become one of the most powerful states in the world. Indeed, Pakistan did become a geopolitically important state and a nuclear power. Had Pakistan and Bangladesh continued to be unified today, it would be the third most populous state in the world after China and India. The temptation of this kind of geopolitical Muslim leadership was great for ambitious Muslim politicians and military officers.

In the lead-up to independence for India, contestation of top-down religious separatist ideas gave platforms to all manner of bottom-up religious mobilisation of protest. Sikhs and Christians began to fear some of the fundamentalist utterances they heard about building Hindu or Muslim states in their homelands. The tensions were particularly great in regions where both Muslim and Hindu populations were large and where they aggressively contested political and economic opportunities. Some political leaders sought to make their mark during this period of anomie (when the rules of the political game were unsettled and about to be resettled in an independence settlement) by preaching religious violence (Proposition 7). They led mobs in attacks on the religious other. Stories of riots and religious oppression from Noakhali (in south-eastern East Pakistan), Bihar and Rawalpindi spread like wildfire throughout India (D’Costa 2011: 51).
However, it did not always take word spreading of these religious riots before all religious communities felt they might be in a security dilemma (Proposition 5). People worried how their community could inherit political control of their district after independence. They calculated that perhaps it would be better to drive out the religious other before they were driven out themselves. Innocent gestures by the other, even by Gandhi himself, were read as a threat. The decaying postwar British colonial security sector did not have the capacity to manage these security dilemmas. It did not have the personnel to guarantee the security of religious communities living in fear of attack. Hobbesian anarchy and violent self-help were the result—to Gandhi’s despair—although they did abate as a result of the shock of Gandhi himself being murdered by this religious violence in 1948. Instead of solving this predictable security dilemma through good community policing once the spectre of Partition began to hang over greater India, the British state took the seemingly cheaper, more convenient path of giving in to separatism and announcing that Pakistan would be created as a separate Muslim state of two halves on opposite sides of the subcontinent.

This weak decision executed by Lord Mountbatten was the decisive one in giving ambitious leaders total sway over large areas where they enjoyed religious majority support. Dividing and spoiling (Stedman 2000) caused another series of cascades of violence as debates raged about where the precise boundaries between Muslim and Hindu sovereignty should be drawn and about which way Sikhs should move. The announcement of Partition only worsened the security dilemmas of local communities; millions of Muslim refugees headed for Pakistan and millions of Hindus headed from Pakistan to India (Propositions 5 and 6). The large Muslim enclave left behind in Hyderabad in the heart of India created a civil war there that took years to resolve. The population pressures from the stream of refugees in search of somewhere safe to settle, especially the 7 million Muslims pouring into Pakistan, created new cascades of Muslim–Muslim and Hindu–Hindu violence of a more ethnic character.

In sum, these various cascades of violence triggered by a combination of bottom-up mob violence and top-down political ambition and miscalculation cost perhaps as many as 2 million lives. It was the responsibility of the British state to make the security sector investment (Proposition 4) to quell these security dilemmas at the final curtain of the Raj. It failed in that responsibility, struggling as it was to recover from even worse cascades of violence that had washed over Europe during
World War II. If this level of religious slaughter had occurred in the twenty-first century, one would hope that the United Nations would demand of the British state that it honour its ‘responsibility to protect’ (Evans 2008) its citizens. If it were unable to meet that responsibility, the contemporary international community, when at its best, can mobilise its responsibility to protect innocents from religious slaughter by deploying peacekeepers. Today, we know that international peacekeepers are frequently ineffective, but, on average, in the best multivariate studies, peace operations prove effective in substantially increasing the prospects of ending civil violence and preventing future civil wars (Call 2012; Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Fortna 2008; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Quinn et al. 2007; Riordan 2013; Sambanis 2008; Walter 2002). With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see that, had it been politically possible, it certainly would have been a profoundly sound investment for other major powers to support the United Kingdom in mobilising to resolve these security dilemmas, not only to prevent the loss of so many lives, but also to prevent cascades from them to future calamities.

In what ways was the cost of failing to make international humanitarian intervention in India in the 1940s much greater than 2 million lives? It was the cost of lives we saw in Sikh separatism, particularly in Punjab in the 1990s, which took the life of prime minister Indira Gandhi, the cost we see today in Kashmir and which we find in the conflict in Afghanistan fuelled by Pakistani intelligence agents that now blows back into Pakistan through the agency of the Pakistani Taliban and Islamic State. And there is the potential future cost to the world of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan or of nuclear terrorism—a risk that is greater in South Asia than in any part of the world. In addition, there was the cascade of the Bangladesh war of liberation, to which we turn in the next section, which cost 200,000 to 1.5 million lives (LaPorte 1972: 105), doubtless fewer than the official Bangladeshi estimate of 3 million, but possibly as high as 1.7 million (Rummel 1998: 153–63). It was the cost of a huge foreign aid burden to fight the massive famine of 1974 (for details, see Sen 1981) that Bangladeshi state institutions could not counter because the war had razed state institutions. In addition, the food politics of the Cold War era made Bangladesh vulnerable to political pressure from states such as the United States, which used food aid to manipulate economic policies (Sobhan 1979), which also contributed to subsequent catastrophic agricultural consequences. That 1974 famine cost another 1.5 million lives.
The unusually massive famines that have plagued the history of Bangladesh are part of an appalling pattern across human history. Complexities of climate change interact with cascades of domination and cascades of violence that disable adaptation to climate change. Cascades of domination and violence, as in Bangladesh, can destroy the state institutions that can manage adaptation. More simply, insecurity can prevent farmers from taking the risk of planting their crops exposed in open fields at the optimum time for planting. Insecurity also recurrently throughout human history disrupts distribution systems for food that is grown. At the time of writing, we see many societies in North Africa and the Middle East that are mobilising their institutions to adapt adequately to the worst drought conditions in decades. The societies with the most massive famine mortality as we write are societies across North Africa and the Middle East that have suffered particularly shocking decimation by recurrent cascades of violence: Yemen, Somalia, Nigeria (where farmers fear Boko Haram), Syria and South Sudan. Some other societies that have suffered institutional decimation by war in recent decades also have unusually large numbers of famine deaths, including Sudan, Ethiopia, Niger, Chad, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq (Robertscribbler 2017).

For South Asia, the largest problem was that the cascade of violence produced a cascade of militarisation in Pakistan (Aziz 2008; Siddiqa 2007; Chapters 5 and 6, this volume). Border disputes, particularly in Kashmir, created a perceived imperative for the weaker of the two states to build a large military to match its giant adversary. The new India and Pakistan both had larger problems than most new states—because of their size and diversity of language groups—in holding together a fragmented society. In terms of holding fragmentation together, India inherited the advantage of the administrative centre and the institutional infrastructure of greater India in New Delhi, the older imperial centre in Kolkata, as well as nearly all of its industrial capacity (Desai 2009: 295). It also inherited greater revenue and administrative capacity to collect it. Hence, the Indian state could buy loyalty from dissenting regions by supporting them economically. Pakistan could not afford to do that in its early years, so it chose the path of holding the country together by buying the loyalty of a strong military to keep the lid on dissident regions and groups. Between 1947 and 1970, over 50 per cent of Pakistan's central state expenditure was on defence (van Schendel 2009: 135) and, in some periods, it was over 60 per cent (Mohsin 2002: 152).
As conflict in Kashmir imposed ever-greater military burdens, the military became even more politically indispensable and an ever-greater fiscal burden. This made it more difficult to buy peace from dissident regions. Truncation of options for peace through development was reinforced by the fact that, in Pakistan, unlike in India, the brightest and best sought military careers rather than careers in business or the professions. Both the state and the elite became militarised. By militarisation, we refer to the increasing power and influence of the military in society, the spread of militaristic behaviour/ideologies/values in society and its institutions (Batchelor 2004: 77; Ross 1987: 564) and military build-up with a rapid increase in military spending, armed forces, arms imports and arms production (Batchelor 2004: 78). These processes positioned the Pakistani military to make itself even more indispensable to its political masters, by fomenting security threats in Kashmir, in Afghanistan and through terrorism. Later, the military made itself valuable to foreign clients in China in achieving a regional power balance after India and Afghanistan became aligned with the Soviet Union, and, later still, with the United States when the United States became interested in destabilising the Soviet Union by causing it to bleed into the sand of Afghanistan. Pakistan’s military leaders benefited from the equipment and training, including nuclear knowhow, that these great powers could provide, and became wealthy men by corruptly creaming foreign military aid.

We saw in Chapter 6 that their budgets also gave the military the wealth to buy politicians, as did massive funding that the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) collected from benefactors in Arab states for the mujahidin fighting in Afghanistan. As Pakistan became progressively militarised, military control of politicians was exercised through sticks as well as carrots. Leaders whom the military and intelligence commanders did not ‘like’ were assassinated by their agents posing as terrorists. Entire regimes were overthrown by military coups followed by execution or imprisonment of selected leaders of the old regime (usually for corruption). Military patronage passed control of industry and finance to crony families. We will see that the foregoing militarisation imaginary and narrative came to apply to Bangladesh as well as Pakistan. Just 22 families monopolised two-thirds of Pakistan’s industrial assets and controlled 87 per cent of the assets of the banking and insurance industries (D’Costa 2011: 84). It is worth noting for the next step in our analysis that none of these families were Bengali.
Thus, the creation of Pakistan by partitioning India left the smaller state more impoverished, even though its fertile land saw it start out with a higher per capita income than the rest of greater India. It also became more militarised, while India enjoyed a relatively stable democracy with a military continuously under democratic civilian control. Worse was to come when all this cascaded into a civil war that tore Pakistan in two.

Militarisation beyond the partition of Bangladesh

Most international scholars opine that it was the folly of Pakistan’s militarised competition with India that caused it to lose Bangladesh (for a critique of this view, see D’Costa 2011: Ch. 3). There were other aspects of Pakistan’s militarisation that contributed to the Bangladesh ‘Liberation War’. For various reasons, British colonialism had cultivated Punjab as ‘our Prussia’ and Punjabis as a loyal ‘military race’ useful for the control of more pacific peoples of greater India (particularly Bengalis during and after the 1857 rebellion against British rule). Approximately 75 per cent of the Pakistani army is drawn from three districts in Punjab (Siddiqa 2007: 59). The resultant inheritance of military traditions and familial reproduction of military opportunity structures in Punjab province meant that when the military progressively came to control the Pakistani state, Punjabis increasingly controlled the state, with Punjabi politicians and senior civil servants often chosen by the military to be its clients. Punjab being a centre of power in West Pakistan left Bengalis in East Pakistan feeling excluded from militarised state power. East Pakistan had a majority of the population but only 3 per cent of the higher ranks of the armed forces (van Schendel 2009: 119). In Chapter 6, we saw that this systematic discrimination in military powersharing was also a factor in the 1970s Balochistan civil war. Western control of the state for the greater benefit of the west also captured most foreign aid, with five times as much American aid going to West Pakistan as to East Pakistan before the ‘War of Liberation’ (Brecher and Abas 1972: 62). Bengalis most deeply resented the displacement of Bengali by Urdu as the official language of state. The ‘War of Liberation’ actually started from a grassroots (Bengali) language movement in 1952.
In March 1971, after its near unanimous victory in East Pakistan, the reformist Awami League (AL) had the numbers in the national parliament to dictate sweeping constitutional reform to empower the east. As West Pakistan leaders feigned talks over this political crisis, they secretly mounted a military solution. Pakistani troops streamed into Dhaka and commenced targeted killings of Bengali leaders and political activists that then spread all over East Pakistan. Some Bengali units managed to either kill or overthrow their Pakistani officers and, with Bengali police, began to organise military resistance. They formed the Mukti Bahini, to which young combatants flocked as arms and training flowed to them from India. The Soviet Union also supplied and supported the resistance.

India decided to teach Pakistan a lesson in the east that was more militarily difficult to do in the west. Indian troops marched in to support the Mukti Bahini and delivered a humiliating defeat to Pakistan. One of the Indian terms for the return of Pakistani prisoners of war (POWs) was a grab for land beyond the Line of Control in Kashmir that had been recently occupied by Pakistan. India took this West Pakistan territory as damages after holding 93,000 POWs until 1973. So Pakistan’s defeat in the Bangladesh War of Liberation was a continuation of the cascade of violence that had started with Partition and the subsequent military contests over Kashmir.

The 1971 war was also a continuation of Cold War competition that had cascaded violence across Asia and Africa, with the Soviet Union backing Bangladesh and the United States and China supporting Pakistan. US president Richard Nixon saw cooperation with China and Pakistan as a step towards the United States–China thaw that he and Henry Kissinger were executing. Nixon’s handling of the Bangladesh crisis had a detrimental effect on the United States–India bilateral relationship, which was compounded by the mutual animosity between Indira Gandhi and Nixon. The 1971 war and the emergence of a third sovereign state in the subcontinent shifted the South Asian regional balance of power decisively in India’s favour.

In the aftermath of Pakistan’s military retreat, there was a cascade of retribution for those accused—sometimes wrongly—of collaborating with the occupation, including in the CHT. Many of those targeted fled to West Pakistan, where they became unwelcomed refugees, cascading to further internal conflict there (Proposition 6). Thousands of non-Bengalis, mainly Biharis, were killed in this counter-slaughter and more
than a million who had fled their homes ended up huddled in refugee slum settlements inside Bangladesh where they received some help and protection from the international community. Many of these people described themselves as ‘stranded Pakistanis’ and demanded repatriation to Pakistan. This never happened. Pakistan did not want the disruption and welfare burden they would bring to the country. They remained in their slums/camps, ostracised, stateless, impoverished, living to old age in never-ending limbo. The High Court of Bangladesh in November 2007 issued a rule on a writ petition filed by seven Biharis living in Bangladesh that stated that around 300,000 ‘Urdu-speaking people’ have been living in Bangladesh, and finally approved citizenship and voting rights for about 150,000 refugees who were minors at the time of Bangladesh’s war of independence in 1971. Those who were born after would also gain the right to vote in May 2008 (D’Costa 2009: 13).

By 1975, there was a rapid decline in the popularity of the new Government of Bangladesh, due to corruption and nepotism in the Awami League, which formed the government, combined with widespread concern over undue Indian influence over the new nation and economic decline in the aftermath of war and famine. The cronyism that characterised Pakistan
had become part of the legacy of Bangladesh. Modelling was the cascade mechanism in play here (Proposition 2). Import licences, smuggling, extortion and industrial opportunities went to Awami League cronies. Steps towards renewed militarisation were taken with Awami League leaders. They formed a paramilitary force, the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini (JRB, National Defence Force of Bangladesh). Its 30,000 troops terrorised and tortured Awami League opponents. The military resented the level of funding the JRB received while the military budget for 1975–76 was set at 13 per cent of the national budget—a shock compared with the 50–60 per cent the military enjoyed under Pakistani rule. Most of the officers of the Bangladeshi military had been trained in Pakistan and retained its praetorian culture concerning the need for the military to dominate the nation and cleanse corruption among greedy civilian leaders. In fact, the bitter rift between the military and civil servants repatriated from West Pakistan (on one side) and those who fought on the frontline (on the other) opened security sector cleavages in postwar Bangladesh. A group of middle-ranking army officers—most of whom were repatriates—assassinated Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, popularly known as Bangabandhu (‘Friend of Bengal’), the country’s first prime minister (and later president) and the leader of the Awami League, along with more than 40 members of his family on 15 August 1975. Saudi Arabia and China recognised Bangladesh only after Mujib’s death.

While Mujib’s assassination sent shockwaves throughout the region, the coup was also perceived to be politically popular, at least among some segments of urban Bangladeshi society. Between 1977 and 1981, the alleged coup leader, Major General Ziaur Rahman (Zia), delivered economic development and pushed administrative reforms. Jagodal (Jatiyatabadi Gonotantrik Dal), Zia’s national front, was consolidated later in 1978 to form a new political alliance, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). It emerged as the key political player opposed to the Awami League. Zia, however, began to lose popularity and there was another military coup, which put Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad in power from 1982 to 1990. This followed an earlier failed coup attempt in November 1975 by a pro–Awami League chief of general staff, which had triggered the murder of four of the most respected and senior leaders of the Awami League inside a Dhaka prison. While during the Mujib era the Rakkhi Bahini killed an estimated 40,000 people, the numbers of extrajudicial killings and disappearances within the armed forces during Zia’s rule remain an all-time high. Colonel Abu Taher, a liberation wartime
sector commander who subsequently appeared as a left-leaning leader on retirement from the army, was the first Bangladeshi to walk to the gallows in independent Bangladesh. He was hanged immediately after a controversial military court trial along with 16 others, mostly belonging to the left-leaning Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Jasod or JSD, National Socialist Party), on treason charges in July 1976. In a bizarre twist, during a plane hijacking drama by the Japanese Red Army in Bangladesh that kept Zia and his senior commanders busy in Dhaka, an army battalion mutiny in Bogura in south-western Bangladesh cost the lives of 200 more soldiers. This uprising was ruthlessly crushed, with 1,100 soldiers either hanged or shot in the next two months. Militarisation cascaded on.

There was also a cascade of liberation politics—anti-militarisation politics—from below throughout the entirety of Bangladeshi history. The University of Dhaka was one hotbed of it, as were elements of the media that were, for the most part, clients of the military and the regime. The way surges of republican politics in defence of a democratic constitution worked in Bangladesh was similar to that in Pakistan. They were rather Gandhian at first: hartals that mobilised large proportions of the population on to the streets, pledging their refusal to cooperate with military regimes, especially in 1990 when people power ended the long military rule that had begun in 1975. Hartals in recent decades came to be enforced (by the political party that calls the hartal) and with much more violent forms of protest. Even so, the movement in December 1990 was very much about people power. People massed, demanding the resignation of president Ershad and calling for free elections in rallies and strikes organised by the All-Parties Student Union and supported by the major political parties. Ershad’s generals deserted him when he asked for their support to restore order (Multiple military interviews, 2010). While West (as well as East) Pakistan had experienced other formidable moments of people power in 1969 and 1981 (Milam 2009: 89), in Bangladesh people power has been historically somewhat stronger in surging back to check military power than in Pakistan. As in Pakistan, in Bangladesh, many ordinary people were rather supportive of military leaders who took over if they seemed to bring competence and integrity to the management of the country, if money power and dirty deals in politics seemed to reduce and if the economy seemed to provide increased opportunity for them and their children. But when coup leaders slipped into corruption and cronyism themselves, and when things started going badly for the country, people power had its opportunities to mobilise for constitutional values.
Generals and party leaders alike live in heightened fear that they will suffer the assassin’s bullet or the noose when people power is on the march. People power creates great opportunities for competitors to rally military elites to replace incumbents and to rally replacement political elites who make more credible commitments than political incumbents to restore the constitution. Consequently, often generals judge that the best bet is to relent to surges of liberation that call for a return to electoral politics. One reason they relent in this call is that, in both Bangladesh and Pakistan, the culture of politics has become so militarised that generals can sustain great influence over elected leaders. Just as military coup leaders fear the assassin’s bullet in a militarised polity, so do elected leaders. They fear the military, especially its intelligence elite, as those who might hire the assassin, and they crave the loyalty of the military to protect them from other potential assassins. Elected leaders fear coups, just as coup leaders fear counter-coups.

Until the end of 1990, the political power of the military had been sustained in Bangladesh in a way similar to the Pakistani formula. General Zia-ul-Haq came to power in Pakistan in a military coup in which he raised the banner of Islam against corrupt secular government. He built an Islamist civil society base for his regime: ‘Militarism and Islam were to be the twin pillars of the Zia regime’ (Jalal 1995: 101). In the same period, in Bangladesh, the regimes of both Ziaur Rahman and Ershad militarised a state created with democratic, rule-of-law aspirations (Riaz 2016). These military regimes also Islamised a state (Riaz 2007) that was founded with secular aspirations in revulsion at the widespread slaughter of Hindus by the Pakistani army during the ‘War of Liberation’. Zia militarised the national police system by firing thousands of police on charges of corruption and appointing army officers to oversee the system (Heitzman et al. 1989: Ch 3)—a legacy that continued during and after the Ershad period.

Quite unlike the era of military takeovers in the 1970s and 1980s, even when opportunities for the military to take control arose, the military elite did not take over again, until 2007. Electoral deadlock between the Awami League and the BNP in 2007, violent clashes and subsequent mass protests led to military intervention, but of a much more subtle kind. The military took over behind the scenes and led a caretaker civilian government that was in power from January 2007 until December 2008. The military strategy was to reconfigure political power bases by forcing Sheikh Hasina (daughter of Mujibur Rahman) and Khaleda Zia (wife of
General Zia) into exile. They intended to then allow others to emerge as alternative viable options in that leadership vacuum. The election on 29 December 2008 made it clear that it was not so easy for the military to accomplish this against party machines that could outspend and outmuscle new competitors; the Awami League won 229 of the 300 seats. By punishing, marginalising or removing dissenting political and economic actors, Sheikh Hasina silenced (and continues to silence) dissenting voices. The military then had to be content with hegemonic influence. The framework of the democracy of two competing family dynasties was ossified.

The Bangladeshi military continues to exercise considerable power through civilian facades—for example, journalists, newspaper editors, intellectuals, politicians and business leaders who are in their pay, in fear of them or who respect them as a source of stability or Islamic ideals. This is very much as in Pakistan and Indian Kashmir. Another path has been colonisation of other institutions by retired military officers. As in Pakistan, in Bangladesh, the dual strategy of militarisation and Islamisation has provided a broader base for the power of generals than a pure militarisation strategy could have provided without the support of religious networks in civil society. When General Ershad was president (1982–90), he broadened his political support through a local mosque-building program. The legacy of all this was revealed in our interviews, as captured in the following extract:

J. B. interview: Who is the more influential, the two major political parties or the military?

Senior political leader in the CHT: This country is ruled by the military and the DGFI [Directorate General of Forces Intelligence]. (Interview, CHT, 2011, No. 101129)

Bangladesh has a two-party political system today that is more vibrant and somewhat less controlled by the military than the system in Pakistan. The Awami League is less Islamised than its competitor, the BNP, which was founded by a military man and is led today by Khaleda Zia. Yet how the state-founding Awami League has changed is a tribute to the dual appeal of militarisation and Islamisation for securing hegemony. This was the party whose grassroots leadership pulled on the crisis that led Bangladesh to independence. It was a determinedly secular party in the 1970s that assumed power with the military firmly under its control.
Nevertheless, today it is a considerably Islamised party that works with the military as partners in a pact of mutual intimidation: a dynasty in fear of military power and a military in fear of dynasty power.

Khaleda Zia first took the BNP to an election victory in 1991. The Awami League is led by Sheikh Hasina. Both parties are dynastic. Both Hasina and Khaleda have alternated as prime minister and opposition leader, both serving in each role twice, monopolising these leadership positions since 1991. Both have sons who they have groomed to succeed them. The dynastic quality of the leadership plays into the dynamics of militarisation and democracy that have driven domination through dynastic populist Islamisation of politics.

Insiders from both dynasties reported to us that their leaders feel the chill of their family biographies. They both have a highly developed fear of the assassin's bullet and the coup that caused so much pain to their father, their husband and extended families. They also remember other unsuccessful assassination attempts by elements of the military against the male family members who founded their parties.

Both incumbent party leaders have a robust contest with the military. In power, they promote the generals most likely to be loyal to them:

Sure, you promote your own men from a party point of view, but you know those passed over are a danger to you. So you seek to maintain good relations with everyone in the military, including those you pass over and you keep them in good positions. (Interview with former BNP minister, 2011, No. 101151)

Junior and middle-ranking officers wish to stay on good terms with both dynasties, but, at the end game of their careers, the most senior among them only make it right to the top by backing the incumbent dynasty or the dynasty they believe will soon succeed it. Once they take sides in dynastic politics to boost a surge to the top, they might last at the top only as long as that side remains in power, unless they are clever in the way they change sides at the right moment to assist the successor dynasty back to power. This interplay between democracy and militarisation contributes to a type of democracy that is a driver of domination (Proposition 5(a), Chapter 10).

This game, of course, makes it difficult for third parties to draw on the formidable power of the military. Conversely, the praetorian culture of the military is reinforced by what insiders from both major parties
reported as a preference of both party leaders for being displaced by a nonviolent military coup over being replaced with the other party leader. The militarised two-party system is also reinforced by money politics. Our interviews with business leaders and lobby groups indicate that they best serve the interests of their business by not supporting third parties and by making large payments when asked by both dynastic parties. Many of them make larger payments to one over another to reinforce the better crony networks they have with that party for securing government contracts, favourable tax treatment and rapid project approvals when their favoured party is in power. Business leaders also cultivate military leaders who might help them persuade the civilian government to do deals with them and who can help guarantee their own security as members of the elite.

This symbiosis between military politics and money politics engenders a two-class system or a ‘two-networks’ system, as one senior supporter of the current government put it. Yes, there is a professional class, an intellectual class, the glamour classes of stage, screen and fashion, traditional castes and religious and NGO elites. Notwithstanding these and other nuances of elite composition, the deep structure of the Bangladeshi class system is bifurcated into a military class who do military politics and a business-political class who do money politics. ‘In the 1973 parliament, 10 per cent of the members were businessmen; today the figure is 70 per cent and increasing’ (Interview with a newspaper editor, Dhaka, 2011, No. 101154). However accurate these numbers are, there were no informants who disagreed that the moneyed business class has progressively taken over parliamentary politics since the ‘War of Liberation’. ‘In Bangladesh, politics is a continuation of business by other means’ (Interview with political insider, 2011, No. 101156). ‘Politics is the best business in Bangladesh’ (Interview with indigenous leader, CHT, 2011, No. 111018). Few military leaders go into politics. They can be more influential as a general who guides the dynasties than as a Member of Parliament who seeks to influence them through enacting laws. ‘They [the military] don’t tell us what to do. Their attitude is to guide you’ (Interview with former minister, 2011, No. 101151).

The military class is reproduced through an elite system of cadet schools that was initially inherited from Pakistan, with new cadet schools emulating Pakistan’s after separation (Proposition 2). The Pakistani military had modelled these schools on Eton College in England. Today, there are two elite cadet schools for girls as well as the 10 for boys.
While maintaining a low-profile facade, these are some of the wealthiest schools in Bangladesh and are highly competitive to enter, though easier for military families with the right connections. Graduation from these schools is the best route into graduation from the best universities. Bangladeshi military officers are extremely well educated compared with the officers of Western militaries. In our interviews with dozens of them, we learnt that many have multiple masters’ degrees from good universities.

For most of Bangladeshi history, the military has been the safest path to wealth, status and power. This has begun to change in recent years as the economy has boomed, creating more lucrative business opportunities today than in the past. Yet it continues to be the case that many of the brightest young people are inducted into the military rather than business through the portals of the cadet schools. This underwrites the hegemonic class power of the military. Politicians often respect senior military officers as more educated, more sophisticated, more urbane and broader in their understanding of the rest of the world, compared with themselves. This respect for the good preparation the military class has had for rule, in comparison with those who have come up through money politics, also infects the perceptions of ordinary people. When money politics becomes so incompetent, so corrupt and so debilitating that the people want change, a cleaner, more highly educated, religiously pious general has been a politically credible option.

Understanding this symbiosis and dialectic between a distinct military class and a business-political class is necessary for understanding the dynamics of the next cascade of violence down into the CHT. Because military politics and money politics cascaded across time and across space (from Pakistan) in Bangladeshi history, violence cascaded down to a civil war in the CHT and from the instability there across to insurgencies back in India, where all these cascades began, and into Myanmar.

**Militarisation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts**

We have seen that the sequenced breakaway of Pakistan from India and Bangladesh from Pakistan left Bangladesh an unusually homogeneous state: 90 per cent Muslim and 98 per cent Bengali. Even with that degree of homogeneity, an internal armed conflict with its indigenous minorities in the CHT risked further fragmentation of the state. We have interpreted the CHT civil war as an outcome of the earlier cascades of violence.
The first South Asian fieldwork for the Peacebuilding Compared project was in the CHT. Indeed, the central inference of this book about cascades of violence first came to the project in Bangladesh, before we began to apply the cascade lens to India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and beyond.

Within the CHT, we found a further cascade of domination. This is partly military domination, but also domination of other indigenous minorities by the largest minority, the Chakma. When the CHT Accord was finally signed in 1997, spoiler factions broke away—the lowest level of our cascade of violence.

The domination dynamics that cascade down to the CHT take many forms, including—among other dynamics—cascades of exclusion, militarism, cronyism, corruption and money politics, of mob violence, of land grabs in an overpopulated, flooded country and of class politics. These cascades of domination are met from below by brave surges of liberation, of resistance to domination, of self-help and self-education, of nonviolence, of human rights activism, of women’s rights activism and of empowerment and participatory village and NGO politics. So we can conceive the nest of conflicts in the CHT and across South Asia in terms of contests between cascades of violence and surges of liberation from the bottom up.

Our conclusion also embraces alternative, top-down cascades of rights discourse, of separations of powers, of constitutional inclusion (as opposed to the exclusion of indigenous rights in the current constitution), of respect for and responsiveness to the ethnic other and the rule of law. These are top-down cascades of peacebuilding that check cascades of violence. We conclude that South Asian insurgency groups, such as those we find in the CHT—the Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party (PBSP, Proletarian Party of East Bengal) in the 1960s and 1970s in the south-west, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB, Awakened Muslim Masses of Bangladesh) in the north-west of Bangladesh from the late 1990s until 2006—have taken root where top-down law and order have broken down. This allowed militants to move in, promising a parallel state structure that worked in providing personal security or addressing personal grievances such as those related to land disputes.

This book does not seek to replicate the excellent analyses of the grievances concerning land rights, gendered inequality, migration and more that led the indigenous peoples of the CHT to take up arms against the Government of Bangladesh. This can be found in the
work of scholars such as Amena Mohsin (2002, 2003), Devasish Roy (2007, 2011), Meghna Guhathakurta (2004), Shapan Adnan (2004) and Bhumitra Chakma (2010). The non-Bengali indigenous peoples of the CHT—of which the three largest groups are the Chakma, Marma and Tripura, with others being Bawm, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Mru, Pangkhua, Chak and Tanchangya—hoped the secular Awami League government of 1972–75 might be more open to their rights as non-Islamic minorities than Pakistan’s militarised Islamic regime had been. Their hopes were dashed when prime minister Mujibur implored them to ‘join the mainstream of Bengali culture’ in 1973.

The military was deeply distrustful of the indigenous peoples of the CHT. At the time of Partition from India, some CHT leaders had raised the Indian flag to signal their preference for staying loyal to India, because the CHT was a 95 per cent non-Muslim region (predominantly Buddhist, but there were also some Hindus, Christians and animists). They backed the wrong side, as the boundary commission forced the CHT to go with Pakistan under the guns of the Pakistani military. Then in the war of partition of Bangladesh from Pakistan, the most important CHT leader, the Chakma king, Raja Tridiv Roy, who was also the local member of parliament, sided with Pakistan for strategic reasons to protect non-Bengali ethnic minority interests. He conceived the war as being fought primarily on the ground of Bengali nationalism. He became a minister in the Pakistani Government and left the CHT before Pakistan declared war on India (9 November from CHT and 12 November 1971 from Dhaka). In our military interviews, there was bristling intolerance of this history of perceived disloyalty. Adivashis (indigenous peoples) had failed in their eyes to come to terms with the fact that they live in a Bengali society: ‘It’s called the Bay of Bengal, not the Bay of Chakma’ (Interview with a brigadier, Dhaka, 2011, No. 101145).

The military coup of 1975 led the (largely Chakma) political leadership of the CHT to believe that under military control there would be even less chance of regaining the level of autonomy the CHT had secured during indirect British colonial rule of the remote area. The founding leader of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS or JSS, United People’s Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts), Manabendra Narayan Larma, was forced to flee to India in 1975. The Indian Government, which had backed the Awami League and feared the coup leaders, whom it saw as anti-Indian, welcomed JSS to the Indian state of Tripura, just across the border from the CHT. Indeed, it was the Indian intelligence agency, Research and
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Analysis Wing (RAW), that approached Larma on 16 August 1975, the day after the coup (Interviews with many JSS leaders, 2010, 2011). India supplied arms and training and allowed bases for the JSS’s military wing, Shanti Bahini (Peace Force), to conduct cross-border raids. The first major attack by Shanti Bahini on a Bangladeshi military convoy did not occur until 1976, although there had been minor engagements from 1972 when Shanti Bahini was originally formed to protect CHT villages from atrocities committed by a liberation army rampaging against whomever it saw as an enemy of the ‘Liberation War’ or of Bengali nationalism. Supporting Shanti Bahini was a way for India to remind Bangladesh, especially its military, that Bangladesh remained in the Indian sphere of influence. India was not interested in supporting the JSS if it became an independence movement, because an independent CHT would have weakened Indian leverage over the Government of Bangladesh.

The insurgency continued, with many failed peace negotiations until the 1997 CHT Accord. It was not a high-intensity conflict, with the number of lives lost uncertain, but not more than thousands. Nonetheless, the continual violence in the CHT deeply affected indigenous peoples’ security at every level. Between 1979 and 1997, there were 11 major massacres in which several thousand indigenous CHT people were killed (CHT Commission 2000). One of the terrible features of the 1971 ‘War of Liberation’ was the militarisation of rape (Proposition 9), with the Pakistani military using rape as a strategic tool of warfare. There were more than 25,000 officially recorded cases of forced impregnation (D’Costa 2011). The militarisation of rape also cascaded, with 94 per cent of reported rapes of CHT women between 1991 and 1993 committed by security personnel (Mohsin 2003: 54). A senior official from an indigenous women’s organisation observed:

[B]efore 1980 we never heard of rape incidents. With the increase in the number of army posts and Bengali settlements, rape of women and children have increased, with some alarming events of pahari [CHT/indigenous] girls between five and eight years of age being raped.

(Interview, CHT, 2010)

In 2012, newspapers also reported rapes of indigenous women committed by indigenous men. Indigenous men—in particular, indigenous youth—are extremely intolerant of indigenous women who choose to marry outside indigenous communities (most often to Bengali Muslims). The deep hatred towards the Bengali other and gender insensitivity have created various cascades of dominating prejudice.
Rape of indigenous women and girls and forced marriages in the CHT persist as an endemic residue of these cascades today. Women were heavily involved in the politics of the PCJSS/JSS and the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) and in fighting (Interviews with many female combatants 2010, and with women activists from various factions, 2011). Sexual and gender-based violence by security personnel was the single biggest motivating factor for the formation of the Hill Women’s Federation (Guhathakurta 2004: 11). Some revisions to the *Hill District Act 1989* were made after the signing of the CHT ‘Peace’ Accord to include three female representatives (two indigenous and one non-indigenous) in the 34-member Hill District Councils (HDCs). The CHT Regional Council also reserves three (two indigenous and one non-indigenous) of 25 seats for women. The HDCs are not able to function adequately as they are run by ruling party members and loyalists. Appropriation of the HDCs for party politics and the meagre representation of indigenous women in the upper echelon of formal politics have added to the deeply embedded traditional and patriarchal structure of the CHT. Our research in the CHT suggests that women’s peace initiatives and peace leadership from women’s NGOs and networks, on the other hand, were less a feature for this conflict than in many others we have studied to date for Peacebuilding Compared. When a retired general who led one of the most prominent peace processes of the 1980s referred to ‘tribals who went to the insurgents and said please come in and talk’, we asked if there were many women involved in this kind of shuttle diplomacy: ‘No. Hardly one woman among 99 gentlemen’ (Interview with military general, Dhaka, 2010, No. 111024).

What was decisive in making the 1997 peace process ‘succeed’ where earlier efforts had failed? One reason is that it was negotiated by the first elected Awami League Government to enjoy power since 1975. To India’s relief, Sheikh Hasina was elected as prime minister in 1996. India hoped the Awami League would provide a secular government that would be less militarised, less Islamised and less hostile to India. India showed its support to the new prime minister by telling the JSS leadership that its military aid had come to an end and that the JSS would have to reach a peace agreement with its government that would include handing in Shanti Bahini’s weapons (Interviews with negotiators and political leaders, 2010, 2011). The JSS bases in India would be closed. JSS cadres and refugees were forcibly returned to Bangladesh as part of the peace accord. India immediately stopped food supplies to hungry refugees to
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put pressure on the deal. A shift in Indian policy to curb insurgencies through peace deals with groups in its north-east was also a motivating factor for it to push for stability in the CHT.

This put Prime Minister Hasina in a strong negotiating position. She also enjoyed and used a good relationship with Jyoti Basu, then chief minister of West Bengal (Interviews with indigenous leaders, CHT, 2010). That strength was especially profound because Shanti Bahini and the Bangladeshi military were both war weary after 25 years of fighting since the ‘Liberation War’. The military in 1996–97 was a strong supporter of reaching a peace agreement. ‘The Accord would have been impossible without that support from the military’ (Interview with JSS peace accord negotiator, CHT, 2011, No. 101156). But the military proved a duplicitous supporter of the peace. Once its objectives of the surrender of most weapons, the closure of the Tripura insurgent bases and return of the JSS leadership to their martial control and surveillance were accomplished, successive military leaderships from 1998 to the present mobilised their political power to defer, delay and ultimately deny implementation of key elements of the 1997 agreement. Initially, dozens of temporary military camps were closed in the CHT to implement the demilitarisation part of the agreement, but effective remilitarisation of the CHT was ultimately asserted with slightly fewer military and more police, intelligence and auxiliaries under military control.

A majority of the Bangladeshi army inside the country continues to be based in the CHT. The clause in the peace agreement to establish an autonomous indigenous police force in the CHT has never been realised. Most critically, CHT Accord provisions on the return of land confiscated from indigenous peoples during the war have been ignored (Adnan and Dastidar 2011: 23–6), as have unwritten agreements between the prime minister and JSS leader, Shantu Larma, concerning repatriation of Bengali settlers (Interviews with JSS leaders and Members of Parliament, 2010, 2011, 2015). It is important to note that the Bengali settlers in the CHT also distinguish between old Bengali settlements (permanent Bengalis) predating Bangladesh and natural migrations before the early 1980s of people who are ‘not tribal and possess land legally in the Hill district’ and the government-sponsored illegal Bengali settlements (Interviews with many Bengali settlers, CHT, 2010). In our interviews, the leaders of the old Bengali settler communities indicated that the new (post-1980) settlers should leave the CHT. However, in our conversations with the imams of several mosques, we found that Muslim religious leaders
support a strong Bengali Muslim presence and expansion in the CHT (e.g. Interview, CHT, 2011, No. 111016). Both the religious leaders and the Bengali settlers of all categories share (both formal and informal) information with the security sector in the CHT.

Plate 7.3 A demonstration conducted by Jumma (indigenous) people in Bandarban, CHT, in 2011.
Source: Per Liljas.

Successive governments all tacitly supported the military’s policy of Bengalisation of the CHT through state-assisted transmigration of Bengali settlers, although through consolidation rather than escalation in recent years. One reason the major parties supported Bengalisation was that the CHT is a strategically important region with resource riches that they believed should not be held hostage to indigenous insurgents who might one day decide to work again with India. ‘If we misbehave with India, the Chittagong Hill Tracts will be burning again’ (Interview with retired general, Dhaka, 2011, No. 111024). Basically, none of the parties wishes to implement the CHT Accord because that would inflame the army as well as Bengali settlers, who now have strong majorities in CHT electorates. Stories of continuing ‘terrorism’ in the CHT—either by the spoiler factions or by the ‘others’, such as Bengali settlers, various extremist groups and Rohingyas from neighbouring Myanmar—have eroded support for implementation of the 1997 accord in the wider Bangladeshi electorate. District and regional councils were never given
the autonomy from the central government or control over many of the specific domains of governance nominated in the accord. Amnesties for insurgents provided for in the peace deal were generally honoured and refugees were provided with modest resettlement funding.

The founding leader of the JSS, Manabendra Narayan Larma, was killed in 1983 and succeeded by his brother, Shantu Larma, who had been imprisoned for five years. Shantu Larma’s strong hold as an underground leader and later as the sole legitimate political leader of the CHT delivered peace but in a rather fragile form due to factional politics and the government’s careful manufacture of peace offerings. What were delivered in the peace package were ‘personal sweeteners’ aplenty (Interview with breakaway faction leader from the PCJSS, CHT, 2011) for Shantu Larma, including a government salary as chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, a government car and driver, personal security provided by the government and patrimonial control of a limited set of autonomous government functions in the CHT, albeit with a promise of more to come (they never did) as the peace process progressed. These rather limited concessions generated strong resentment that was expressed during our interviews with indigenous leaders. Some of them associated this cascade of unequal distribution of power with Chakma domination. Some held a strong view that the set of functions over which Shantu Larma was given personal control, while limited, were enough for him to dole out many government jobs and education scholarships, mainly to the elite of his Chakma ethnic group. These went overwhelmingly to the children of his Chakma elite, leaving the Chakma and, to a lesser extent, the other two dominant CHT groups—the Marma and the Tripura—with higher levels of education and literacy than many ethnic Bengalis today. Meanwhile, the other CHT indigenous groups continued to languish with shockingly low levels of access to education, with literacy in some cases only one-tenth that of the Chakma (Interviews with indigenous people, 2010, 2011, 2015). In aggregate, however, affirmative action (or, as it was sarcastically described, the ‘Larma quota’) with educational scholarships for CHT students is one way the accord has delivered.

Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 are useful to understand the power discrepancies and resulting resentment brewing in the CHT, particularly concerns about Chakma and regional Marma domination and marginalisation of women as they existed at the time of our fieldwork in the first half of the current decade.
Table 7.1 Membership composition of the Hill District Councils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Class/type</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Bandarban</th>
<th>Khagrchari</th>
<th>Rangamati</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous members</td>
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<td>Chakma</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marna*</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongchangya</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bawm**</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangkho</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khumi</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaak</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-indigenous members</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-indigenous</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For Bandarban HDC, 10 seats are for Marna and Khyang together
** For Bandarban HDC, one seat is for Bawm, Lusai and Pangkho together

Table 7.2 Membership composition of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Chairperson (indigenous)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Indigenous member</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Non-indigenous member</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Indigenous women</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Non-indigenous women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Chairperson of three HDCs</td>
<td>3 (ex officio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council was established to supervise the implementation of development work and preservation of tribal traditions by Hill District Councils, including municipalities, in accordance with the 1997 Peace Accord.
Table 7.3 Indigenous group representation on the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Group</th>
<th>Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Chakma</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Marma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Tripura</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Mro (Murang) and Tanchangya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Lusai, Baum, Pangkhua, Khumi, Khyang and Chak</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The power politics aspects of the peace deal cascaded to a politics of resistance to the PCJSS’s local power by non-Chakma indigenous groups, and also by excluded Chakma factions. CHT civil society saw it as a peace that benefited a few—‘peace without justice’ (Mohsin 2003)—and a militarised peace at that, regularly punctuated with violence. One might go further and say the CHT has only a partial negative peace, without truth, justice or reconciliation. The 1997 peace agreement was not a best-practice inclusive process. It was an elite deal that totally excluded the participation of wider civil society and women. There was no international engagement or monitoring to ensure that marginalised voices were not suppressed in the process. The exception to this absence of international engagement was Indian manipulation behind the scenes. The accord was not discussed in the parliament prior to its signing, contributing to opposition to the accord from all three opposition parties in the 1997 parliament. A naive international community applauded the peace agreement, showering plaudits on Prime Minister Hasina, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for the accomplishment.

Three civil society groupings had been pre-eminent in the PCJSS struggles: the Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP, Hill Students’ Forum), the Pahari Gono Parishad (PGP, Hill People’s Council) and the Hill Women’s Federation. Some of the prominent leaders from these groups who had done much of the work of sensitising wider civil society networks across Bangladesh to the grievances of CHT people, walked out of the PCJSS, protesting the way the deal was negotiated and repudiating the peace agreement. Large factions of the memberships of these three groups split from the PCJSS to form a new resistance party, the UPDF, demanding ‘full autonomy’. Later, other factions broke away from Shantu Larma’s PCJSS. To them, Larma seemed to be allowed—‘unlike anyone else’—to speak out against the military and the government without being arrested, because he could be tolerated by the government to use tight personal control of the PCJSS to prevent any more effective leadership against the government from
taking root. He had a cosy mandate to bluster, seemingly bravely, but was not to threaten the regime (Interviews with senior indigenous leaders, 2010, 2011).

**Militarisation of the resistance to the CHT resistance**

Our interviews suggest that, at various times, the DGFI (Bangladeshi intelligence) has found it helpful to provide funding or weapons to the UPDF. The military decided to use the UPDF to divide the CHT resistance. At times, the UPDF and the PCJSS have used force of arms to murder or kidnap members of the other group. As the local commands of these parties became more criminalised, police and military informants allege that each party used firefights with the other as an excuse to eliminate their own in ‘crossfire’ (Proposition 9). At the height of the CHT conflict, another neglected element of the cascading of violence was the use of civil war to exact revenge for conflicts that had nothing to do with the autonomy struggles of indigenous peoples (see Kalyvas 2003). Likewise, critics of the military allege that the military finds the PCJSS–UPDF conflict a useful pretext for military murder of troublesome members of both groups. The military then blames the killing on the other group (CHT Commission 2000: 27) (Proposition 9). Shantu Larma and some of the senior leaders of the PCJSS regularly refer to the UPDF as ‘terrorists’. In this, they do useful work for the military in justifying its continued militarisation of the CHT. On the other hand, a senior UPDF leader thinly disguised his threat in a 2010 interview and noted:

> Mr Larma says that UPDF must be banned. Well, we could do more damage if we want to. And we could just take him off the equation. But he is getting old, and we have time, plenty of time to wait.

UPDF members also have their linkages with the military that use these personal and ideological differences to maintain control over the CHT.³ Killing between the PCJSS and the UPDF is easier for the military to manage using force than killing between indigenous people and Bengali settlers.

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³ Mithun Chakma, one of the central UPDF leaders, who we interviewed, was shot dead in January 2018.
During the 1980s, one of the smaller CHT ethnic groups, the Mru, deserted Shanti Bahini, forming the Mru Bahini, which engaged in some fighting with Shanti Bahini forces. This occurred because of excessive taxation of Mru villages by Shanti Bahini, disrespectful treatment of the Mru by Chakma officers, including an incident of rape of a Mru woman after the officers had demanded that she husk paddy for them, and other allegations of sexual assault. The military exploited this cascade to interethnic conflict, providing weapons training and funding for the Mru Bahini, and using Mru who defected from the PCJSS to lead them to PCJSS hideouts (CHT Commission 2000: 28; Shelley 1992: 117).

During the civil war, there were also armed clashes between different Shanti Bahini factions that divided over ideological and tactical questions. As noted above, in one of these clashes, the founding leader of the insurgency, Manabendra Narayan Larma, was killed (by the breakaway JSS-Preeti faction).

We have begun to explain why the Bangladeshi military sees the CHT as a strategically important zone. It has repeatedly been the scene of heavy fighting in the history of wars in the region, including in the most recent major war, in 1971. With the CHT an insecure zone, the military
can justify heavy state expenditure in keeping a large military presence there. It can thereby keep on the table the options of allowing insurgents from India and Myanmar to locate bases there if that suits its strategic interests, or the strategic interests of a potential ally such as the United States, China or Pakistan. During the Pakistan era, the CHT was used this way, with the Mizo National Front, the Meitei rebels of Manipur and the Tripuri rebels of Tripura all well entrenched in the CHT for the conduct of hostile operations into India (Mohsin 2003: 89). Myanmar insurgents still inhabit the CHT to a degree today.

In 1997, Assam was broken up into seven states, the ‘seven sisters’. These seven new states were suffering under more than 30 insurgent organisations. That has reduced somewhat today. At the junction of the borders of Bangladesh, Myanmar and India, there were 24 known insurgent groups in 1990 (Interview with retired Bangladeshi general, Dhaka, 2010, No. 111024). So the CHT conflict was connected to the most variegated cluster of violent cascades in greater India.

As the CHT is not totally insecure, development of its believed resource riches is possible. And, better still for the military, its leaders are empowered by moderate insecurity to personally cash in on such resource opportunities. This is so, for example, if a locale is insecure enough for them to be able to demand protection money from investors. The CHT is a land of opportunity and of importunity. Extortion is already a reality, with the military extracting healthy rents from illegal logging, tobacco, tourism and other businesses that operate in the CHT. The wives of military officers have often ended up as beneficiaries of CHT land stolen after its owners were driven off or by illegally buying national forest reserves (Interviews with indigenous leaders during which we have been shown documents of illegal land acquisition, 2011) (Proposition 9). In the past, a source of revenue for the military was the collection of protection money from Indian Naxalite and other insurgent groups permitted to use the CHT, especially those groups trading drugs or arms under Bangladeshi military protection. The special conflict zone allowances that soldiers receive for serving in the CHT, combined with these protection rackets and business opportunities, make CHT postings the most lucrative in Bangladesh. Awami League governments negotiated agreements to send Indian insurgents back to India. In some cases, informants we interviewed said the top leaders were pushed back, with others being allowed to stay if they paid local Bangladeshi military commanders enough. The military also sees the CHT as valuable training for peacekeepers. Bangladesh is
Currently the world’s largest supplier of UN peacekeepers (military and police); UN peacekeeping is seen as a good income opportunity for the security sector.

A lot of the insecurity in the CHT is a result of groups of Bengali settlers driving indigenous people off their land. Cascades of mob violence thus enable cascades of land grabs as Bengali settlers are also driven off land by indigenous people or by the military using proxies. Sometimes the military tolerates or foments Bengali land grabs out of sympathy for the settlers or because it creates opportunities for the military to grab land. And the whole insecure scene of bottom-up cascading of violence in pursuit, and defence, of land grabs justifies a continuation of the militarised cascading of violence across the whole region.

Many of the post-1980 Bengali settlers in the CHT are extremely poor. Some are refugees from the changing and increasingly surging flows of the plains rivers as Himalayan snow-melt responds to global warming. Like the indigenous people, they work hard for meagre returns and then find they have to pay taxes on what they grow to armed UPDF men when they transport their produce through UPDF-controlled areas and to PCJSS men when they move produce through their areas. After decades of fighting, these two groups and the military have generally worked out stable accommodations about where and within what limits each of them can and cannot shake down citizens. As in so many conflicts around the world, such accommodations have transformed former combatant groups who have a presence in the CHT from armies into organised crime gangs extorting taxes, kidnapping people who can pay ransoms, engaging in contract killings and contract violence for the military and for political parties, illegal logging, drug dealing and arms trading. In the CHT, however, one should say the violent elements among the PCJSS, the UPDF and foreign insurgent groups are the ones who have morphed to organised crime (Proposition 9), not the nonviolent majorities of the memberships of these political movements against indigenous oppression.

Cascades within cascades

In our rush to move the story of the cascade of violence forward from one cascade to the next within the space of this chapter, we have skated quickly over various other cascades that recur at multiple levels. Some we were not expecting to encounter, such as cascades of taxation as a cascade
of domination. Impoverished Indians disliked the taxation of the Mughal Empire. This resentment was a resource the British East India Company could use to persuade Indians to fight alongside the British to sideline the Mughals. Another resource was promising new Indian elites that they could replace Mughal clients as tax collectors (which in Bengal were mainly Hindu landlords who replaced Muslim zamindars). At a later cascade, many impoverished Muslim Bengalis were attracted to joining Pakistan in the 1940s in the hope of throwing off the yoke of these Hindu landlords. Tax is an issue that cascades; it runs right through to the lowest level of the cascades of violence we document. During our CHT interviews, dozens of poor rural people complained to us of the injustice of having to pay off both the PCJSS and the UPDF in ‘taxes’ per unit of production.

More broadly, we have seen how money politics has cascaded to the point where politics in Bangladesh has become ‘business continued by other means’, where all businesses must do their bit to entrench the two dynasties by monetary tribute to both at election time. We have seen also how the Bangladeshi military elite is intertwined with the business elite, drawing corrupt payments from Dhaka at the top, down to insurgents trading illegal logs at the bottom, to the point where occupation of the CHT is a profitable business for the military. Hence, politicians specialise in a business politics in which their political support for the family dynasties is bought through trading the right to approved forms of plunder. Soldiers specialise in military politics whereby the family dynasties and politicians allow military elites that support the dynasty to partake in certain other forms of plunder.

Moving from the cascading of tax defiance to noting the cascade of money politics is not the most abstract move we should remark on here. The more important abstraction is to see cascades of taxation as an instance of cascades of domination. Just as the Mughals, Clive of India and India’s first governor-general, Warren Hastings, wanted to dominate Bengal, so, at the bottom of our cascades, the UPDF, the PCJSS and Arakan insurgency extortionists from Myanmar such as the Rohingyas wish to dominate their local piece of the CHT. Violence such as cutting off the ear of a farmer who does not pay—as interviewees complained Rohingya insurgents sometimes did in the CHT—is just a tool of domination here. These incidents exemplify the way domination has been inductively conceived in this book through reflecting on the narratives and the examples of those who struggle violently and nonviolently to resist ‘domination’ as they see it. In these narratives, domination is conceived as an arbitrary
form of power, as opposed to a form of power that issues from a legitimate
rule of law. Hence, tax policies that are debated and decided through
democratic politics and that respect rights constraints—for example,
against discrimination—result in taxes that are not domination. ‘Taxation
without representation’, as under the Raj, was domination—as is taxation
of farmers enforced by cutting off their ears, collected by competing
groups of militants as farmers move their produce to market.

Cascades of domination also connect to cascades of exclusion. As Partition
unfolded in the 1940s, Hindus excluded Muslims, Muslims excluded
Hindus and both excluded Sikhs. After Partition, the Pakistani army
dominated East Pakistan and embraced an ideology of exclusion as they
slaughtered and raped in 1971, leaving behind many texts about how they
saw Easterners as not true Muslims—fake Muslims with ‘Hindu hearts’.
In turn, even as the Indian army helped Bangladesh win its ‘Liberation
War’, exclusionary attitudes—indeed, contempt—motivated many Indian
soldiers to loot, brutalise and rape many of the Bangladeshis they had saved,
particularly the refugees (Proposition 6), leaving a legacy of resentment of
India that cascaded to the coup against the Awami League partly for being
too close to India. And this, in turn, led to India’s support for the CHT
insurgency. At the bottom of the cascade of exclusion, the indigenous
peoples of the CHT were treated as primitive second-class citizens by
both Bangladesh and India, particularly when India used violence and
starvation to drive refugees back to Bangladesh in 1997 (Proposition 6).
Finally, smaller indigenous groups who have been deprived of literacy
often feel the Chakma treat them contemptuously as primitives. The Mru
resistance to the Chakma through the Mru Bahini militia illustrates one
upshot of this humiliating domination (Proposition 8(a)).

In countries that seem to have experienced less civil war than Asia and
Africa, such as Australia and the United States, we find the same dynamics
in close calls that did not become bigger wars. In Australia, the same
policies of transmigration to make Indigenous people a minority in their
own land did not have to be enforced by a large war machine because
European diseases did most of the decimation, as also happened in North
America and in the South American decimation of the Inca Empire.
And, of course, tax (at the Boston tea party) was more than just a spark
that lit the American War of Independence from its colonisation (and in
the South American wars of independence as well). The American Civil
War was fought over both slavery as an institution of domination and
domination of the rural south by the industrial north. So, in ‘peaceful’
societies such as the United States and Australia, we see cascades of colonial exploitation, domination, humiliation and exclusion. Yet, it is violence that is contained by circumstances that lead to quick capitulation rather than long war and by a politics of national reconciliation. We see this especially strongly between the United States and its British colonial master and between Abraham Lincoln’s attempts at reconciliation of north and south. Lincoln began this with the new national narrative at Gettysburg that north and south, black and white—all Americans—had been victims of a terrible institution called slavery.

In less lucky societies where violence has been cascading in many directions for decades, people become war weary. One of the questions they then ask themselves is: Who is going to be in charge in five years; perhaps I should be supporting them for the safety of my family? We found people asking this a lot in our 2011 interviews in Afghanistan and indeed throughout Afghan history, as we did in Bangladesh. We found in Bangladesh that, when violence cascades, ordinary folk can suffer double waves of violence for supporting the wrong side, for being suspected of having done so or for being in the company of someone who has done so.

An additional abstraction in all this is that when violence cascades, revenge cascades. In making choices to try to minimise their exposure to violence, people can make decisions that expose them to revenge attacks for harbouring sentiments they do not have. Revenge is regulated when spaces are pacified by the rule of law. In more anarchic spaces such as the CHT, armed men can get away with revenge. Anomie creates spaces where resentments that have nothing to do with the war—about a property dispute, a sexual relationship or a gesture of disrespect—can trigger a revenge attack (Proposition 7). Finally, as so many have observed in Africa (Reno 1995, 1999), in the CHT, we also found that war can cascade into the violence of organised crime (Proposition 9).

The CHT case study shows cascading down, up and horizontally. The dominant dynamic in this chapter is one of cascading downwards. But there are also upwards cascades of the mobilisation of mob violence directed against the ethnic or religious other, sometimes revenge attacks, sometimes calculated attempts by small fry to grab land. There are other bottom-up cascades that we might have included in our narrative, such as the Salafist terrorist group with links to Pakistan’s Lashkar-e-Taiba and the JMB. The JMB detonated 500 bombs in all but one of the 64 districts of Bangladesh within half an hour on 17 August 2005 (ICG 2010).
Violence also cascades horizontally across borders, from Myanmar to Bangladesh, and from Bangladesh to India back to Bangladesh. Cascades of refugees across the borders of the CHT, as in Pakistan and Afghanistan and so many modern wars, have facilitated the recruitment of resentful, footloose young fighters motivated by hunger and by the suffering of their refugee families to fuel the next cascade of violence (Proposition 6).

Reversing cascades in Bangladesh?

In the less anomic international system that has prevailed in recent decades, compared with the 1940s (before the rules of the UN game had been settled), one might have hoped that the terrible cascades we have described might have been interrupted at their source. One might have hoped that states that were a ‘group of friends of India’ might have worked to prevent a slapdash British exit and the imposition on Pakistan by Mountbatten and the Indian National Congress of a ‘moth-eaten Pakistan’ that was unsustainable. There might have been more plural, hardworking preventive diplomacy to craft a win–win solution for the people of both India and Pakistan. Then, for the unfortunate refugees who were still its losers, international peacekeepers might have filled the policing gap that the British felt they could not afford to fill to meet the international community’s responsibility to protect victims of predictable, preventable security dilemmas.

Imagining such counterfactuals is useful for understanding how the international community might prevent future cascades of violence on other continents. The Bangladeshi state at a more micro level has begun to understand that one reason the JMB gained a foothold in the Rajshahi Division is the same reason the Afghan Taliban won a foothold in rural Kandahar province in 1994 (Chapter 2). There was a rule-of-law vacuum, an absence of any effective governance in these spaces that attracted the most brutal of forces (Proposition 4). It was the JMB in Rajshahi Division and the Taliban in Kandahar province who were advocating the use of Sharia law to assure people that they did not need to yield to gangs of armed criminals. The Government of Bangladesh began to realise after 2005 that religious extremism is a risk when the state fails to provide the protection of people from revenge with good community policing. In other words, when states and the international community both decide that it is too hard and too expensive to make the rule of law work
across a Hobbesian space, they should not fail to see that such spaces are vacuums that ultimately will attract a provider of order. If the state or the international community declines to fill those vacuums of social order, there are ‘armed rule-of-law movements’ (Kilcullen 2011) such as the Taliban and the JMB that will cascade into them.

More fundamentally, cascades of domination, exclusion, corruption, money politics and violence cannot be ended by a ceasefire and surrender of weapons cashed out with an amnesty and reintegration payouts. Preventive diplomacy is not enough at the end of a cascade, even if it can sometimes work to prevent a cascade at the source. Not everyone can get what they want in a peace process. Yet war weary people repeatedly grant legitimacy to a peace if it is settled in a process they accept as genuinely giving voice to all sources of grievance and injustice, strenuously seeking peace with justice, even though that ideal is never fully or even fulsomely attained. The CHT peace—precisely because it was at the end of such a long cascade of so many peoples feeling they were victims of dire injustice—had to be a more participatory peace than it was. That participation needed to include not only indigenous civil society and women, but also Islamist members of parliament in Dhaka who felt deprived of an opportunity to discuss the peace deal in their parliament.

What was needed were not only peace with participation and peace with a search for justice, but also peace with a search for truth and reconciliation. Bangladesh, through all its cascades of suffering, has practised a politics of forgetting. Peace with truth and reconciliation requires a different ethos from the money politics that sees nonviolent (Gandhian) tactics of liberation, such as the hartal, harnessed by corrupt, dynastic political parties to destabilise democracy and institutionalise violence. A politics of truth, justice and reconciliation is likely to come not from practitioners of money politics, but from civil society practitioners of a spiritual politics of grace, humility and forgiveness. These abound in South Asian people power, which can join on the streets to support the students of universities such as the University of Dhaka when opportunities arise in the future, as they have in the past, in 1952, 1969, 1971 and 1990. Bangladesh can be seen as a society with a history dotted with inspiring struggles of people power against domination.

Discounting people-power cascades of bottom-up liberation is one of many kinds of errors of misplaced realism (Braithwaite et al. 2012). Bottom-up cascades of liberation, at the right moment, can overwhelm
cascades of domination. Another error of misplaced realism is seeing a clear, achievable objective—such as a more powerful nation changing the regime of a less powerful one—as a single-layered objective, rather than as violence that may cascade. The prescription from our analysis of South Asian cascades is that military powers should stop and ask: What is the worst-case cascade this could trigger and the most likely cascade? Insisting on more thoughtful answers to these questions might prevent violence.

Fine-grained study of cascades of violence, such as the one we have begun to attempt from the CHT, at least uncovers some of the vertical diversity in the way violence can cascade. This complements the analysis of horizontal diversity of cascades in Chapters 5 and 6. That is another step towards understanding how to prevent cascades. The particular addition to our understanding from this chapter comes from methodological openness to causal process tracing of domination from the geopolitically macro, through many layers of history down to the extremely micro. This book advocates methodological openness to tracing how a micro politics that coordinates resistance to domination recurrently bubbles up both violent and nonviolent resistance. Cascades of domination induce both cascades of violence and cascades of nonviolent liberation politics. The challenge is to understand the contingencies these top-down and bottom-up, macro and micro, violent and nonviolent cascades turn on. Part III begins to tackle the challenge of that contingent complexity.