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Civil Society, Political Stability and Peace-Building in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: A Comparative Study

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Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are promoted as an integral player of democratic development, the establishment of good governance, the promotion of human rights, (Dagher 2016; Morgenthau 1985; Lorch 2017) and sustained political stability and peace-building (Nilsson 2012). Peace accords with involvement from CSOs and political parties in combination are more likely to see peace prevail. The inclusion of civil society has a particularly profound effect on the prospects for overall peace in non-democratic societies (Nilsson 2012); conversely, most practitioners emphasize that enhanced CSO participation makes it more difficult to reach a peace agreement (Paffenholz 2014). More specifically, the centrality of civil society in enhancing and consolidating democracy, ensuring political stability and peace-building, and providing a deterrent against

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abuses by the state security forces (Forman 2006; Cole et al. 2008; Fukuyama 2011) has long been recognized.

Both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are South Asian countries and former British colonies. Bangladesh won independence from the British in 1947 as a part of Pakistan. In 1971, it split far from the western part of the nation throughout one of the world's bloodiest wars of freedom. In Bangladesh, political influence has played a hegemonic role in government machineries and other democratic organizations. Sometimes it takes a hostile turn; which is accompanied by conflict, violence and other radical misdeeds (Lorch 2017a). Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948. The Sinhala-Tamil ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka climaxed in 1983 into a civil war (Devotta 2004; Rahman 2007). In Sri Lanka, the electoral process continues to be dominated by ethnopolitics, and traditional political elites. Despite all these differences and similarities, however, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka display the same ambiguous relationship between civil society development, oligarchic politics, political stability and peace-building (Moniruzzaman 2009; Lorch 2017a).

However, CSOs have a long history to play the vital role to establish political stability and peace-building in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Local community-based organizations, civil society actors and other interventionists are active in assuring that political stability, peace-building and good governance can be strengthened in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the outcomes are different in the two countries; CSOs have played the potential role on (1) preventing violent conflict, (2) doing advocacy work on different political and social issues, (3) supporting negotiations and settlements, (4) endorsing reconstruction and reconciliation, (5) influencing the policy-making process (6) and public opinion (Orjuela 2003; Tasnim 2012).

The main objective of this chapter is to depict a comparative analysis of the roles of CSOs in political stability and peace-building in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The chapter will specifically also explore: firstly; interrelations between civil society, political stability and peace-building; secondly, attempt to identify the present status of civil society in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; thirdly, exploring the role of CSOs on resolving the political instability and peace-building in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; finally, identifying the difficulties faced by CSOs taking on these roles.

Civil Society

Civil society is not emerged as a new concept. It has been a part of the polity right from the times of Greek City-states. The recent development of civil society as a non-political organization is related to complex social and monetary power at work in the eighteenth century, as power decayed from rulers to prevalent assemblies. The evolution of the concept of CSOs in its various perspectives has tried to define its meaning and scope. As has been observed, the conditions for the formation and reproduction of civil society have not only been economic but also political and ideological. In the context of globalization, civil society needs to take off from here and find itself extensively inside the connection between the state, market and civil society (Dhameja 2003). On top of that, civil society is considered as a dominant element of the modern state, along with government and businesses. According to the realistic context, the role of civil society is idiosyncratic and independent. However, its power and network are not as strong as the state-level authority. Therefore, its hegemonic power cannot be replaced by the government of a state or territory. Its activities are limited to two main domains. One is the operation of policy advocacy and arranging campaigns for progressive change and the other is providing basic service to the people in need (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Thus, civil society should be an important element for a developing state such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for ensuring political stability and peace (Orjuela 2003; Parnini 2006).

Both countries have long been known as the countries with vibrant CSOs. In contemporary Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the concept of CSOs can be applied and reinforced with a definitive object of changing and improving the connection between the state and citizens, the formulation and execution of public policy and the institutional landscape (Parnini 2006).

However, civil society organizations in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, including those formed on the basis of profession, geography, chambers of commerce and industries, socio-political ones, advocacy groups and development NGOs, help to ensure popular sovereignty, political equality and political liberty (Orjuela 2005; Azharul 2005; Tasnim 2012).

Thus, the term 'civil society' has become quite controversial in South Asia; some favour to call it as the 'citizens group' and some others mention it as a 'civilian society.'

Civil Society, Political Stability and Peace-Building

"Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society, only democratic civil society can sustain democratic state" (Waltzer 1990). The activities of civil society and citizen activism in the space of civil society are also essential in the democratization process, governance, political stability and peace-building (Chowdhury 2018; Chandhoke 2011; Booth and Richard 1998) and it is the microcosm for the development of democratic norms and practices (Belloni 2018). Similarly, non-state actors have a limited but vital contribution to make in the transformation of internal conflict situations (Rupesinghe and Anderlini 1998). Civil society has been taking on significant roles in peace negotiations through different forms (Paffenholz 2014). Statistical evidence shows that the incorporation of civil society has constructive effects on the period of the peace treaty (Nilsson 2012). Strong civil society can contribute in numerous ways to control conflict situation. Civil society provides the opportunity for building trust in a way that is not available in the formal structure of the society. The concept of peace-building is a much-debated issue. Rather, the term is often used extensively to mean any action undertaken to stop, alleviate or mitigate the conflict. Furthermore, agencies have prevented such different functions as discussions of gender issues, health programmes, rape and torture counselling, and political mediation between conflicting groups under peace-building. A more concentrated definition of peace-building would incorporate functions that contribute to the organizational and infrastructure works connected to sustainable reconciliation and activities of social integration (Goodhand 1999). The role of CSOs in politics, democratic development, political stability and peace-building are far different from the CSOs literature would imply. However, it calls for a more contextualized and less value-laden approach to the realization of the political function of CSOs (Mercer 2002).

Political Instability and Ethnopolitical Problem in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka

A quick look at the political history of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka would confirm a clear role of CSOs on political stability and peace-building. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have been displaying huge differences as well as similarities concerning their historical legacy, political system, ethnic composition, religion and level of economic growth. According to the Failed States Index, both countries are staying in weak state zones in the world (FSI 2018). Since the early days of independence, Bangladesh has witnessed the confrontation and use of pervasive violence in politics. Also, decades-old insurgency and bloody conflict between the tribal insurgents of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the government of Bangladesh is the most common phenomenon of Bangladesh which makes the society more volatile and unstable. The 'periphery of conflict' between the country's main political parties and the weakness of the state has long been two sides of one coin (Migdal 2001). Ideologically political parties would not go about as a 'reliable' opposition by taking recourse of boycotts, strikes and political turmoil when they are defeated and rely upon patron–client relationships to reward supporters and keep up the coalition with predominant elites (Brett 2017).

Bangladesh shifted from democratic to military rule in 1975, and back to democracy in 1990, followed by regular elections, although, confrontational politics is a common spectacle among major political parties. The violence in politics took the most appalling and gruesome shape in its scale and nature, following the Fifteenth Amendment in 2011 (Islam 2015). But, the unrest in 2013 and 2015 before and after the election of the tenth parliament respectively, surpassed all the previous records that moved the state to an oppressive and uncertain future. It bears to be noted that the country was stunned by violent protests with a spate of blockades and shutdowns; particularly, the nature of attacks was quite different from the past pre-election and post-election attacks (Kamal and Kaiser 2015). The human right situation indicates that the nature and the quality of democracy are not satisfactory and very much disregardful to the rule of law (Riaz 2015). Likewise, the waves of political atrocities not

only affected the politicians, but the widespread bomb attacks and chaos also brought sufferings for secular intellectuals, cultural activists and general people (Obaidullah 2019).

On the other hand, Sri Lankan political conflicts represent a prime example of ethnic conflict, where minorities are severely suffering from economic, political and cultural deprivation and other grievances. Long-time deprivation has provoked the violent rebellions to organize themselves against the state (Orjuela 2003). Sri Lanka has an illiberal democracy that has denied equal citizenship rights to its Tamil minority groups resulting creation of a militant group which have long been engaged in an armed struggle for an independent homeland for the from 1983 to 2009 (Alagappa 2004). It is noteworthy that president Rajapaksa oversaw the end of the 27-year Sri Lankan civil war in 2009, launching military atrocities against the Tamil people in which, according to a United Nations (UN) estimate, more than forty thousand civilians had died. Surprisingly, President Mahinda Rajapaksa does not allow the UN to investigate the war crimes committed against Tamil Tiger insurgency, though Sri Lanka's parliamentary democracy has been practising a fusion of power since its inception. However, it is not well accepted by the country's non-Sinhala-Buddhist minority that a pro-active group has been pressing the government to press home their demands including to ensure equal rights for decades. Similarly, the mainstream population is not that optimistic for unified progress. Since 2015, although President Maithripala Sirisena was committed for reconciliation, but failed due to the unwillingness and non-cooperation of the majority Sinhala Buddhist (Padma 2018).

Role of CSOs in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Political Stability and Peace-Building

Civil society actors play a role to open new spaces, build relationships in and across society and advocate the state for establishing peace (Pearce 2011). CSOs of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have played numerous functions for political stability and peace-building under the political and

ethnopolitical problems. However, before going into comparative analysis, the chapter will discuss the role of CSOs in political stability and peace-building in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The Bangladesh Context

Since independence, the CSOs have been working in the socio-economic development of the country, nurturing the newly established democracy and struggling for the restoration of the democracy while Bangladesh dismays many observers with its endless dysfunctionality and resulting "illiberal democracy" (Bertocci 2014; Islam 2017). Historically, during military rule from 1975 to 1990 and the period of military-backed caretaker government from 2007 to 2008, civil society assertions have attempted to resist authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships. During this long period of non-democratic rule, different CSOs, as part of their responsibilities, raised the demand for restoration of demcoracy, advocated a series of electoral and institutional reforms, and acted as pressure groups, mobilizing public opinion in support of their demand for reforms. In the 1990s, the CSOs in Bangladesh quite visibly proliferated and expanded their role in a wide range of activities; additionally, the tasks of good governance and civil society movements became more complex (Parnini 2006). At the same time, successive party governments have crippled independent state institutions by staffing the bureaucracy, judiciary and the security apparatus with their loyalists. Similarly, social services have often been channelled through the patron–client networks of the political parties rather than state agencies (Lorch 2014). Henceforth, various individuals and groups tried to nourish democratic ethos, motivate establishing a transparent and accountable government to prevent these irregularities.

The initial constructive engagement on the restoration of democracy among political parties began to evaporate within two years. Subsequently, the problem was to keep the doors of democratic dialogue open between them, the inability of which brought about a political deadlock that continued two years from 1994 to 1996, moving the state to the brink of economic deterioration and political chaos (Jahan 2005). Thus public life

became gradually intolerable with blockades, collapsing public services, strikes, shutdown of universities and gunfights among factions of party cadres. In this situation, civil society was compelled to step in and play the delicate role of moderator and peacemaker through negotiation and pressuring the government in different ways. The problem was resolved when the incumbent government was compelled to add non-party care-taker government (NPCG) provision in the constitution amid the pressure of opposition parties and the CSOs. In 2011, the same deadlock returned back when the ruling party withdrew NPCG provision from the constitution. This crisis was following the pre- and post-election political turmoil in 2013 and 2015. As a result, the country witnessed that political parties had seriously violated human rights situation. Also, attacks on police and setting fire on public vehicles and goods-laden trucks were common examples of political violence. Similarly, CSOs like Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), media, university teachers' association and professionals groups have played an immense role in restoring political stability and peace in Bangladesh. Most notably, media has become pressure group actor of CSOs to influence the citizen's view on public affairs such an active watchdog against human rights violation and other excesses of the state power.

In 1997, during the tenure of the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the two decades insurgency and bloody conflicts between the 12 different ethnic minorities' insurgent groups of the CHT and the government of Bangladesh came to an end following the signing of an accord between the government of Bangladesh and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS). This peace accord represents a milestone not only in the history of Bangladesh but also in the world at large in as much as none of the 15 or so similar ethnic insurgency-related problems of the world could yet to be solved. Resolving the land issue and guaranteeing the political, social, cultural, pedagogical and financial privileges of the indigenous communities of the CHT were the focal clauses of the accord. Equal privileges of all citizens of Bangladesh and the assurance of socio-economic advancement in CHT were equally incorporated into the peace accord. However, it did not happen overnight; rather it almost took two decades to formulate the peace treaty. Diverse national and international groups had a remarkable role as facilitators to proceed with the

negotiation for implementing the procedure of the Peace Accord to conciliate the insurgency groups in the CHT (Chowdhury 2005). Most notably, efforts at peace-building between the government and CHT minorities have continued until now after 21 years of signing the Peace Accord. Civil societies like Hill Tracts NGO Forum, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Action Aid Bangladesh and Green Hill have been working as pressure groups for the protection and implementation of all the clauses of the Peace Accord.

In Bangladesh, civil society actors are struggling for the inclusion of citizen participation in all democratic institutions for a stable democratic country. Scholars have similarly argued that citizen involvement in organizations contributes directly or indirectly in political participation, democratic values, democratization and economic growth (Booth and Richard 1998). At this standpoint, CSOs have not only created awareness and participation of citizens of various democratic institutions but also made attempts to ensure of accountability by the concerned officials. Besides, investigation and research-based news also conduct a vital role for ensuring accountability and transparency of government, bureaucrats and political leaders. Moreover, the political element of many CSOs enables to create awareness and to groom a more informed citizenry that participates in politics, make better voting choices and hold government more accountable and transparent consequently. One of the far-reaching initiatives of CSOs is the creation of mass awareness to develop a questionnaire of seeking information from candidates contesting in the election. All these efforts assisted in identifying significant electoral issues, which were then mentioned by the media, thus leading to education, building awareness and consequently making a movement for reform.

In recent years, some civil society institutions, such as Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), *Ain-o-Shalish Kendro* (*ASK*) and the Human Rights Watch, have played a seminally important role in holding successive governments to account for their perceived anti-democratic practices; nor galvanizing support for institutionalizing the rule of law and human rights; which are vital to establish political stability in Bangladesh (BIGD2013). For a long, the ruling party has been maintaining an unscrupulous practice for recruiting and appointing civil servants using political power, position and favour instead of giving preferences of

merit, performance and experiences (Zafarullah and Rahman 2008). Moreover, the predominance of quota policy in government recruitment policy is also seen a hindrance against the merit system (Kaiser 2015). In 2018, college and university students organized a forum against this recruitment policy, especially discriminatory quota policy. The government was compelled to amend the recruitment policy amid countrywide strong student demonstration. CSOs of the country supported their activities actively, especially the media advocated in favour of the protest and aired their all sort of protest programmes and activities. The role of civil society in Bangladesh is described concisely in Table 27.1.

The Sri Lankan Context

Civil society tradition in Sri Lanka is vibrant and intricately woven in the fabric of the nation (UNDP 2007). Sri Lankan ethnopolitical conflict turned into civil war from 1983 to 2009. Most notably, in this crisis, civil society has played a pivotal role in promoting peace-building and sustainable development through policy advocacy and grassroots initiatives by resettling displaced communities, restoring livelihoods, coordinating interventions, collaborating with decision makers and advocacy work with politicians and different minority groups (Akurugoda 2018). Peace education, courses, seminars, media campaigns, rallies, posters and pamphlets have served to attract people's attention for maintain peace and to alert people in terms of new facts and different ways of framing peace and conflict. CSOs involvement in creating policy networks helps in mobilizing local activists, social movements and other factors that can pressure governments to change their policies and practices for a stable democratic country. These measures may not lead to dramatic attitude changes but can serve to initiate discussions, public opinion, envision a future for peace and give strength to those who already have pro-peace attitudes (Orjuela 2008). When the civil war started to put tremendous impacts over the civilian lives in Sri Lanka, many CSOs were emerged and worked on peace work at all levels in all parts of the country.

Citizen Committee for National Harmony, Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality, Jaffna Citizen's Committee, Mother's Front, the

Table 27.1 Role of civil society in political stability and peace-building in Bangladesh

Activities	Target group	(Intended) Impact
Public opinion formation, disseminating information, advocacy work	General people, politician, minority groups	Creating awareness; make government and political parties accountable and transparent; developing human rights situation
Negotiation work, bringing different groups together	Political parties, minority groups	Mitigating political instability; development of democratic institutions and boost up relationship between Bengali and other minority groups
Pressure group, watchdog	State forces, political parties, religious leaders	Prevent violence; protect human rights
Free-flowing discussions on diverse issues, investigation based news	Citizens, different stakeholders through media, seminars	Influence the citizen view on public affairs; checking the exercise of assuming power arbitrary by the state
Collective bargaining, awareness-raising	Trade unions, different political parties	Accountable to its citizens through elections and the rights of advocacy
Maintaining a high standard of professionalism, protecting the rights of members, promoting interests	Professional bodies, cultural bodies	Political equality; all enjoy the full range of professional and human rights
Promoting social welfare	The vulnerable group, minority communities	Changing the condition of livelihood, education of people for the betterment of the country and its democracy

Source: Azharul (2005) and Author

University Teachers for Human Rights—Jaffna, and National Peace Council were emerged as a strong CSOs, based on peace movements, worked against war and to establish peace in Sri Lanka (Aliff and Sarjoon 2010; Orjuela 2004). Moreover, some vociferous CSOs are inclined to mobilize Sinhalese nationalism. They perceive it as a commitment to protect the unity and the sovereignty of holy Buddhist country. They also

think that if they go against nationalism, it may help the minorities and Tamil militants to be a stronger force against the state. To them, it could be a betrayal of the country, and it might result in a concrete separation between majority and minority (Orjuela 2005). Also they could not stop the continuation of war, the cost of war, declination of the economy and most importantly the declination of parliament democracy (Aliff and Sarjoon 2010). Despite all these failures, they did not give up their struggle for ensuring peace in the South Asian Island. Furthermore, peace organizations have attempted to improve the skills and ethical knowledge of journalists, and expand their understanding of conflict through initiating courses, meetings and paying visits to the vulnerable zone. These activities have not been able to alter the underlying structural problems due to lack of resources in media sector and the use of media for political party and national interests (Orjuela 2008). On top of that, the role of CSOs had increased when a ceasefire agreement signed in 2002 with Norwegian assistance and after the 2004 tsunami of the Indian Ocean claimed that over 30,000 lives in Sri Lanka alone and other half of million people left displaced (UNDP 2007). Many donor peace-building programmes involving components were implemented through Sri Lankan NGOs. The purposes of these programmes were to strengthen public support for peace-building; to forge connection between different ethnic groups; to minimize inter-community tensions by organizing seminars and workshops, trainings and media campaigns, and conducting research.

Likewise, international organizations develop a multilateral network with their counterparts and share information and ideas regarding the peace-building process. They also develop and maintain public support in their respective constituencies. UNDP's works on a business development ground that promotes peace and adopts a three-step strategy: (1) developing an environment for investment and trade; (2) promoting a capacity-building strategy for sustainable development in business-supporting institutions; and (3) enhancing business to work pro-actively for peace (UNDP 2007). CSOs to extend innovative projects to communicate and generate public dialogue on peace, to improve interpersonal relations and cross-cultural understanding, and to increase public participation in peace-building process. Civil society has played a vital role in

promoting accountability and transparency in Sri Lankan local institutions. Their purpose was to strengthen local capacity for institutional development. Although the 2002 ceasefire was proved successful, but later the situation started getting worse for serious disagreement among actors. For example, disagreements over the distribution of aid to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2004 and the election of 2005 caused severe violence all over the country (Bowden and Binns 2016). In Sri Lanka, popular mobilization efforts are typically undertaken by groups advocating a particular nationalist or ethnic cause. The popular support for the military victory over the LTTE in 2009 demonstrates the power of the pro-war movement where the facilitators and the international community had greatly underestimated (Paffenholz 2014).

In the post-civil war in Sri Lanka, the state and non-state are actively engaged in cooperative dialogues and agreements across the ethnic line. However, these initiatives are considered as the donor-driven actions and not recognized as an appreciated initiative in official discourse. Also, some advocacy-level initiatives have been undertaken by the Sinhala nationalist organizations and the Sri Lankan armed forces. Their aim was to make a unified Sri Lanka by reaching out to the Tamil war victims and other ethnic groups. They tried to build a common ground where participation of every actor was important (Höglund and Orjuela 2011). During the conflict period, citizens' lives were volatile due to the instability of the state, including economic decline and the dysfunctionality of the public services in different sectors such as education and health. The less skilled people suffer from severe austerity and unplanned government actions. Also, the unemployment rate of a conflict-driven region is alarmingly high. The government and the CSOs can work together to address these issues. Their bilateral relationship can arrange oral communication, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and leadership quality, as well as specific vocational skills for creating employment in different types of business (Bowden and Binns 2016). Many CSOs are working for rural Tamil women who acquired a disability during the civil war in Sri Lanka by advocating justice for gender based disability, social assistance for rights, resistance and reintegration, reconciliation and building cross-ethnic relationships. After their involvement with the organization, Tamil women had experienced significant improvements specially financial

supports for their lives which is highly important to establish trust-building by reconciliation and cross-ethnic relationships for stability and peace (Kandasamy et al. 2016).

Sri Lanka had been divided on the context of ethnopolitical problem and faced crisis of democracy, where civil society could play an important role for a stable democracy. But civil society and its activities were very poor in institutionalizing democracy in Sri Lanka. After the 2015 presidential elections, the elected ruling party started using the same fear psychosis and physical violence like the previous regime. During that time, a wide spectrum of organizations and individuals comprising the majority of civil society took a leading role to establish political stability and peace (Bopage 2016). But, in 2018, the country's politicians have unleashed a democratic crisis and the legislators were engaged in fisticuffs in parliament, attacked police personnel and the speaker with parliamentary equipment. A parliamentarian was accused of bragging a knife and another was accused of attacking opponents with water mixed chilli powder. The world witnessed the incident which ruined Sri Lankan political reputation (DeVotta 2018). The role of civil society in Sri Lanka in the context of political stability and peace-building is depicted in short in Table 27.2.

Comparative Analysis

It is a tough task to compare the role of CSOs in political stability and peace-building between these two countries amid similarities and dissimilarities in their history, politics, ethnic-religious minority problem and their economy. CSOs in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have played expanded roles for political stability and peace by their advocacy work, emerging as a pressure group, negotiation and of course for popular mobilization. In Sri Lanka, CSOs played a significant role in peace establishment in the civil war period especially in the ceasefire in 2002 and have also been working in the post-civil war period for reconciliation, building trust and development, particularly in the war-ravaged area. Similarly, Bangladesh, CSOs worked a lot for restoring democracy, singing the Peace Accord in CHT, and ensuring political stability among

Table 27.2 Role of civil society in political stability and peace-building in Sri Lanka

Civil-society activity	Target group	(Intended) Impact
Advocacy work	Politicians, the international community, different ethnic group	Put pressure on political leaders to work for political stability, peace-building, political reform, reconciliation and trust-building.
Research and information	The general public, politicians and international community through media, seminars	Increased knowledge about the background, cost and possible solutions to the conflict; increased awareness of the conflict and human rights abuses
Informal diplomacy	Key actors from the Sri Lankan government and other actors	Upholding of a dialogue between actors on different sides, conveying messages and exchange views of the other side, discussion for future solutions
Reconstruction, mobilizing people to satisfy their own basic needs	Local communities and vulnerable communities	Improvement livelihood; decreased risks of discontent and conflict
Awareness-raising and peace education	Local communities, teachers, community leaders and religious leaders	Increased dialogue and prevent the conflict from spreading; vote for peace at elections and abstain from supporting or mobilizing for violence; mobilization of people in manifestations
Organization of peace marches, rallies, and support for livelihood change	Grassroots, NGOs and other networks	Increased awareness for peace among the general public; put pressure on political leaders to work for de-escalation, peace negotiations and political reform; support victims of the civil war
Bringing persons from different ethnic groups together	Local communities, professional groups, religious leaders and political leaders	Decrease prejudices between ethnic groups; develop cross-ethnic relationships

Source: Orjuela (2003) and Author

political parties. Despite, in both country's initiatives, Sri Lanka achieved a 'victor's peace' where Bangladesh achieved 'negotiated peace' in their ethnic problem. Peace in CHT, still, sustaining and the government and CSOs are almost successful in reconciliation and trust-building among government, Bengali and ethnic minorities. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has failed to sustain its peaceful solution in the post-civil war period; it has also failed to build trust among the government, the Sinhalese, the Tamils, and other religious minorities, although many CSOs are working in different ways to promote it.

Achieving a sustainable peace in Sri Lanka is a complex and challenging task. In post-war literature, the word 'peace' is debatable. There is no definite explanation of 'peace' in a war-torn country. Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority have developed a different form of post-war sentiments which are moulded by their post-war experiences (Bowden and Binns 2016). Surprisingly, in both countries, public universities have done tremendous work in restoring democracy, peace-building and raising the voice in ensuring human rights. Most importantly, public universities of Bangladesh played vital roles in the historical ideological and cultural struggles of 1971 and against the military regime in between 1981 to 1990 and any crisis of the country as a dynamic subset of civil society (Maîtrot 2016). Sri Lankan university teachers' association and undergraduate associations have also done some significant role in establishing peace and protecting human rights in the civil war and have been working restlessly since the post-civil war (Aliff and Sarjoon 2010).

Moreover, the word political party and crisis have become regular companions in Bangladesh & Sri Lanka. Now Bangladeshi civil society is more concerned about political stability rather than any other problem because it is a common phenomenon during pre and post-election political impasse. In Bangladesh, non-political actors have failed to build trust among political parties; similarly, Sri Lankan politics also faced a severe crisis in 2018. CSOs in Bangladesh have almost ensured political freedom for all citizens of Bangladesh; conversely, the political space for ethnic minority rights remains highly constrained in Sri Lanka (Goodhand 2013; Wickramasinghe 2014; Byrne and Klem 2014). Since the end of the civil war, the Sri Lankan government has tried to build up a unified state and set up an authoritative power by reforming its political and

economic strategy (Goodhand 2013). In the context of Bangladesh, the vigilant role in which civil society associations successfully influenced the state in institutionalising democracy is, however, restricted due to the inability of civil society to maintain its autonomy vis-à-vis the state and political parties (Quadir 2015). In sum, it can be argued that Bangladeshi CSOs are more successful and get vast freedom from the state in their activities which are comparatively better than Sri Lanka.

The section will explore problems faced by CSOs in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in taking aforementioned roles. CSOs of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are lagging behind due to the lack of autonomy. Apart from that national and international agencies are also dominating them. Moreover, loyalty for political parties is a great threat for ensuring political stability and peace-building (Orjuela 2003; Tasnim 2017). National and local CSOs are hardly neutral or independent and they tend to be aligned with political parties and further political interests that create crises of autonomy and freedom due to the unwillingness of the country and involved in party politics. Most trade unions are not effective in achieving the objectives for which they have been constituted. Ottaway (2004) draws the same findings that weak states civil society often lacks autonomy, displaying fluid boundaries with powerful social forces both inside and outside the state. Civil society in Bangladesh has faced numerous difficulties to play these roles such as encroaching on the autonomy of the civil society sphere by the government (Alam et al. 2011; Stiles 2002; Lorch 2017), and the dominating politicization and patronizing culture (Blair 2001; Devine 2006) diminishing the space for civil society (Maîtrot 2016). Furthermore, supporting or opposing the government and philosophical divisions are also acute within most professional associations (Quadir 2003). Comparatively, the high politicization of Sri Lankan society leaves a relatively small space for civil society activities. Most of the civil society function in Sri Lankan rural areas is introduced or controlled by local or international NGOs with a top-down approach (Orjuela 2003). Moreover, the ethnic polarization resulting from political and violent conflict also impinges on CSOs, which is ethnically divided. The Sri Lankan government has been slower to provide legal protection and proper regulation for CSOs than other South Asian countries. Walton (2008) finds in his research that although donors have

increasingly favoured national NGOs in their peace-building interventions, these organizations have been particularly vulnerable in the context of crises of legitimacy.

Conclusion

Paffenholz identified seven functions for peace-building. They are protection, monitoring, advocacy, socialization, social cohesion, facilitation and service delivery (Pearce 2011). Despite having limitations and political unrest, CSOs in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are working to ensure the above functions for country's political stability and peace-building. Vast initiatives like advocacy work, negotiation with different groups, research, awareness-raising and trust-building programmes have been taken in this connection. Notably, in Bangladesh, CSOs have almost succeeded in resolving the decades-long ethnopolitical problem through peace accord and are now working for institutionalizing democratic institutions like the electoral system, people's participation and trust-building between political parties. Conversely, the CSOs of Sri Lanka had worked a lot during the time of the civil war for maintaining peace and protection for human rights although they have earned little success in this arena. In the post-civil war era, they had worked for reconciliation and trust-building among citizens of the country, especially the war-ravaged area. In this reality, future research should also be explored on the potential role of CSOs for political stability and peace-building.

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