



ELITE BARGAINS AND POLITICAL DEALS

UK Government Stabilisation Unit Report

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Research Questions

Securing and Sustaining Elite Bargains that Reduce Violent Conflict

- 1) In countries experiencing violent conflict, under what conditions and why have processes of elite bargaining led to a reduction in levels of large scale armed conflict?
- 2) Why have processes of elite bargaining had sustained impacts on peacebuilding in some contexts but not in others?
- 3) How have external interventions impacted upon the instigation, durability and longer term consequences of elite bargaining?

21 Case studies

Afghanistan (The 'Sangin Accord')

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Colombia

Democratic Republic of Congo (M23)

Ethiopia-Eritrea

Guatemala

Indonesia (Aceh)

Iraq's Sunni Insurgency (2003-2013)

Malaya

Mali

Mozambique

Nepal

Northern Ireland

Philippines

Sierra Leone

Somalia

South Sudan

Sri Lanka

Tajikistan

Vietnam

Project Hypothesis

How **elite bargains, peace processes and political settlements** align – or don't – is central to determining the trajectory of post-war transitions and the likely outcome of external interventions

ANALYSING (MIS)ALIGNMENT

Formal processes to establish new modes of political bargaining that rely less on violence than before

Peace processes

the balance or distribution of power on which a society is based, which results from conflict and coalition between contending elites. The political settlement underpins the formal and informal institutional arrangements through which resources (political, economic and social) are distributed.

Political settlements

Elite bargains

Discrete agreements that re-negotiate the balance of power between elites.
They may be a one-off bargain or develop through a series of bargains.

Examples of (mis)alignment

- **Afghanistan** – exclusive peace agreement, centralised institutions – fragmented politics, decentralised violence
- **Tajikistan** – ‘fit’ between peace agreement, underlying configurations of power and elite bargains



Who are elites?

those within society that control a disproportionate amount of political power, wealth and/or privilege and are thus able to make or influence decisions and implement policies that affect wider populations.

- Holding power / disruptive potential
- formal/informal power
- Authority based on (internal/external) wealth, coercive power, access to positions, perceived legitimacy, ideology, shared beliefs
- Elites command constituencies



Dynamics of elite bargains

- Rent-sharing arrangements
- Violence 'rights': embedded violence
- Horizontal and vertical inclusion
- Type of conflict: Divisible (e.g. over state resources, Tajikistan) or indivisible (e.g. secession, Sri Lanka)
- Transnational dimensions

Trajectories out of (or back into) violent conflict

- **Return to violence:** Where an initial deal to end armed conflict does not hold and there is a return to violence.
- **Elite capture:** Where an initial deal does hold and secures a reduction in violence, but provides little scope for stable, progressive change. A subsequent peace process may be non-existent or superficial.
- **Developmental peace:** Where an initial deal holds and provides scope for a more sustained and inclusive peace process that has developmental outcomes.

Three short examples

- **Return to Violence: Sri Lanka**

misalignment between peace process and settlement, 'unsettling' the balance of power, opening the space for renewed warfare and military victory.



- **Elite Capture: Tajikistan, Mozambique, Guatemala**

alignment leading to stability and elite capture; forms of embedded violence; limited scope for political and economic transformation.

- **Developmental Peace: Nepal**

Inclusive settlement, followed by elite push back – the costs of inclusion.



IMPACT OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Overview of interventions

- Broad range of diplomatic, military, economic, and legal interventions:
 - Counter-insurgency: Afghanistan and Iraq
 - Peacekeeping: Sierra Leone
 - Mediation: Sri Lanka
 - Sanctions: S. Leone
 - Reconstruction/‘peace dividends’: Philippines
 - Transitional justice: Guatemala
- Different geopolitical contexts and variety of intervening actors

Impact of interventions

Destabilising e.g. Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, South Sudan

interventions fragment and destabilise underlying political settlements; conditions for renewed violence

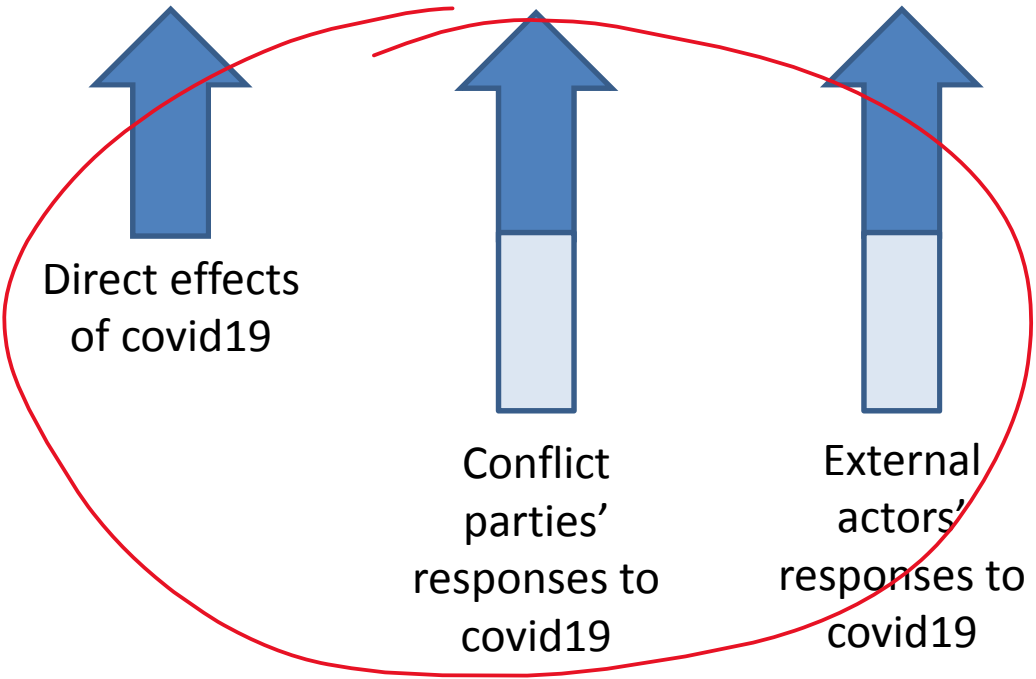
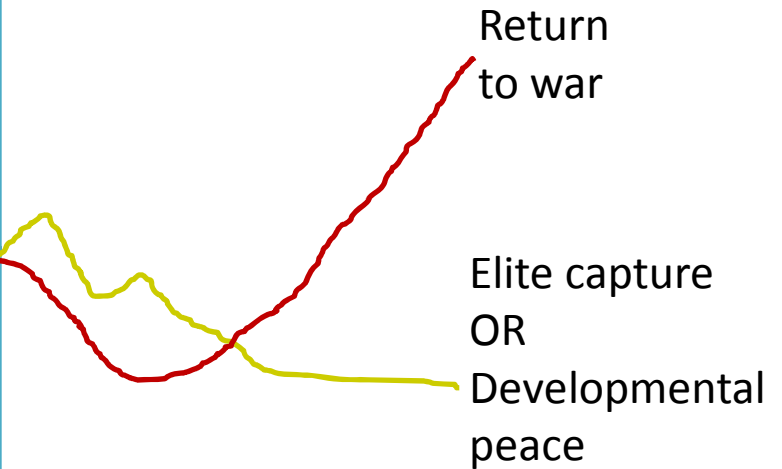
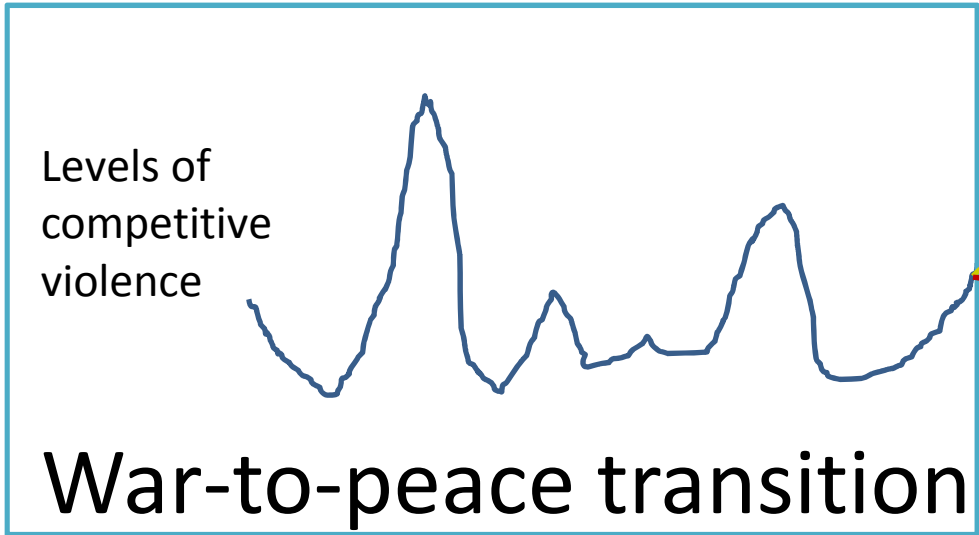
Consolidating e.g. Tajikistan, Mozambique, Guatemala

Interventions play a role in consolidating pre-war/wartime power structures; stability with conditions for elite capture

Transforming e.g. Nepal? Northern Ireland? Malaysia?

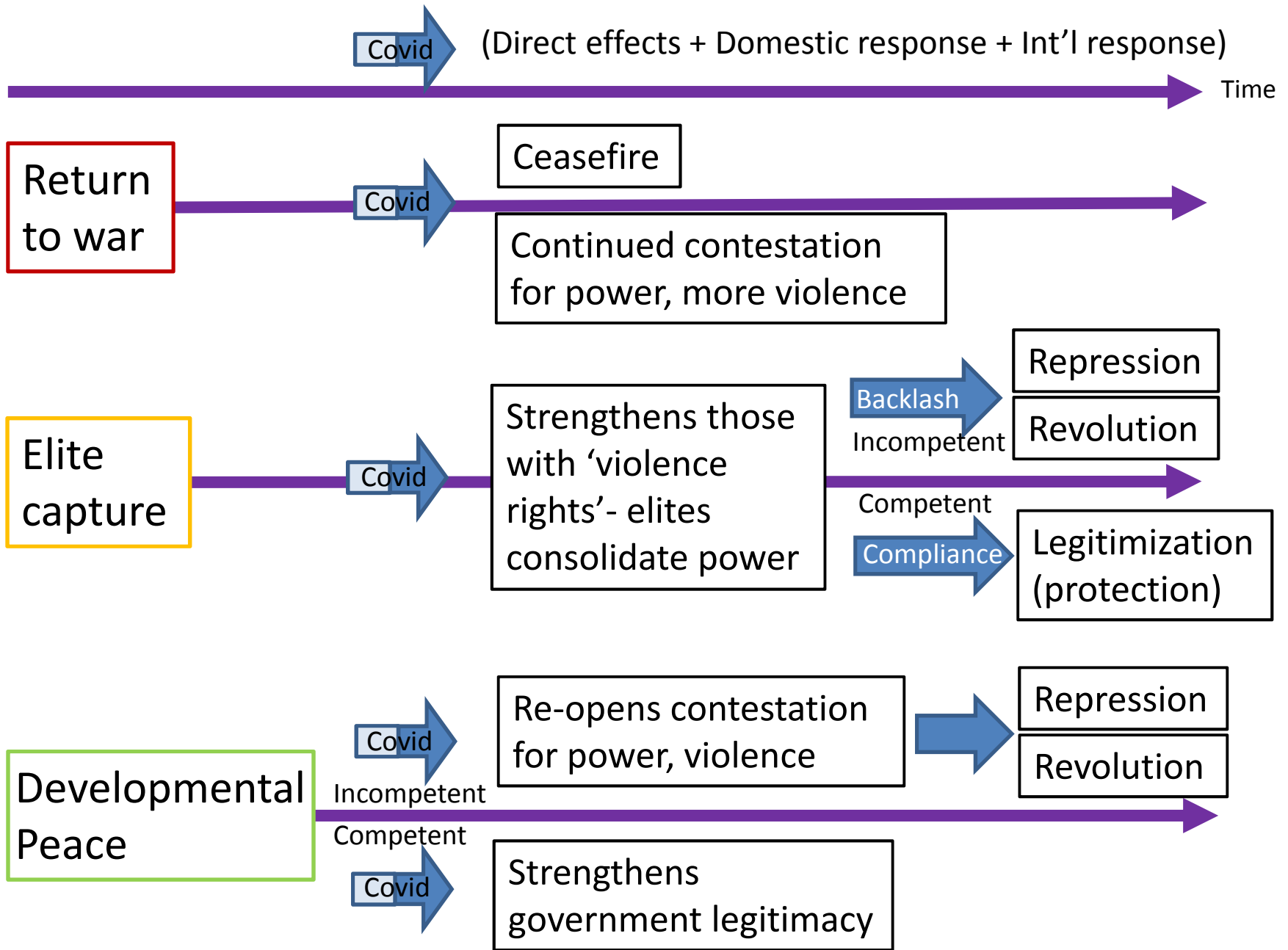
Interventions support a more transformation shift of the political settlement without destabilising post-war transitions

POTENTIAL IMPACT PATHWAYS OF COVID19 ON ELITE BARGAINS



Volatility + Opportunity

Handwritten text in red ink, written in a cursive style, reading 'Volatility + Opportunity'.



Sudan's Elite Bargain

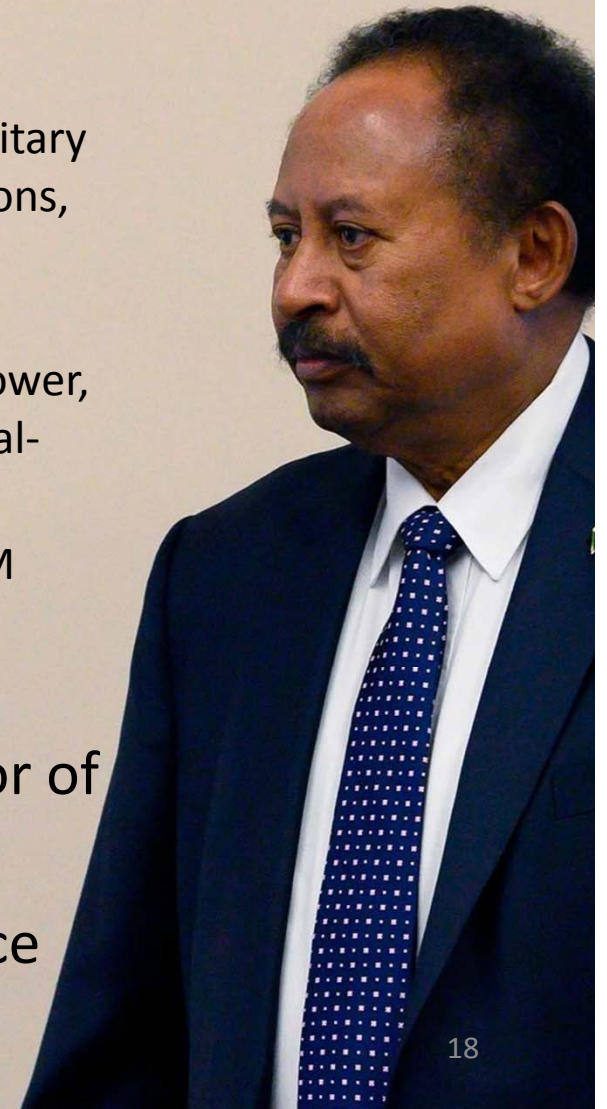
8 months of street protests (Dec 2018 – Aug 2019) led to ousting of al Bashir (April 2019) , Transitional Military Council, Khartoum massacre (3 June 2019)

- ‘Political Agreement’ signed 17 July 2019
- Power-sharing between TMC and Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) alliance
- Sovereignty Council (5 military, 5 civilian, 1 civilian by consensus)
- Head of state: Military leads for 21 months (Lt Gen al-Burhan, then civilian leads for 18 months)
- Power is shared between 3 bodies: Sovereignty Council, PM & Cabinet, Legislative Council (still to be formed)



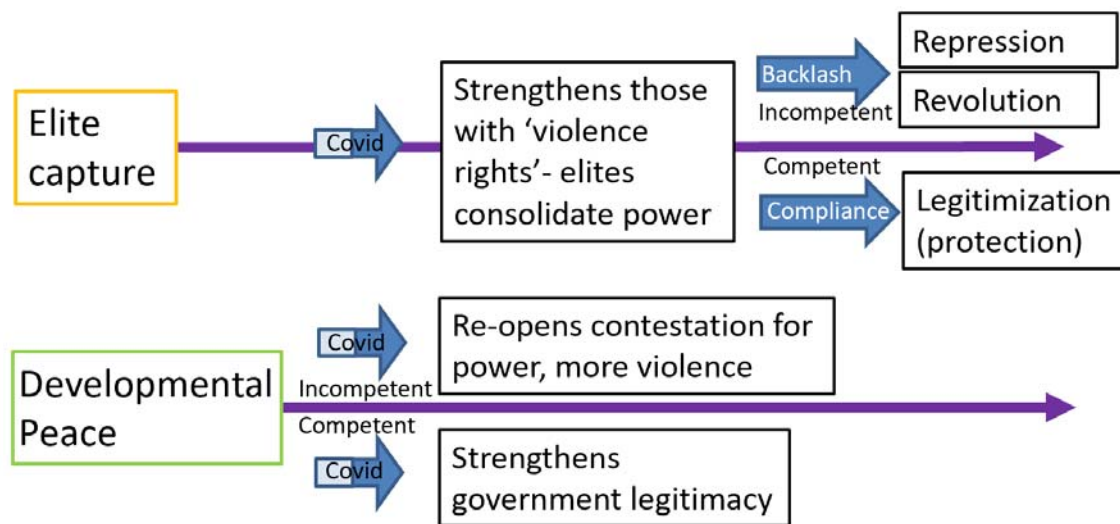
Sudan's Elite Bargain

- Political power struggles continue:
 - Ongoing peace talks in Juba with rebel groups, but military members of Sovereignty Council are leading negotiations, causing a power struggle with PM Hamdok & (civilian) Cabinet
 - Hemeti and Rapid Reaction Force continue to wield power, but are now [aligned with civilians](#), and against Lt Gen al-Burhan
 - Army mutiny in Jan 2020; assassination attempt on PM Hamdok in Mar 2020
 - Economy in free fall
- US has not de-listed Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism
- No boost in overseas development assistance



Covid19 and Sudan's elite bargain

- Sudanese army and Rapid Support Forces enforced lockdown in Khartoum; mass gatherings banned
- Protestors against lockdown gathered at army HQ calling for Hamdok's removal
- Hamdok fired the governor of Khartoum, Lt Gen. Ahmed Abdoun Hamad, for refusing to cancel Friday prayers. But Hamad refused to leave post.
- Senior Sudanese civilian officials warned Western reporters that covid lockdown would be used as a pretense for seizing power.



Conclusions

- **Dangers of ‘reverse-engineering’ institutions**
 - Formal/informal sites of power
- **Military responses can crowd out other forms of interventions**
 - Weakens domestic bargaining processes
- **The endless peacekeeping trap**
 - Propped up deals
- **The costs of non-intervention**

Policy implications and trade-offs

- Precautionary principles
- All good things don't go together
 - Tensions and trade-offs between stabilisation and transformation
- Beyond national frameworks
- Turning the mirror inwards
 - The political economy of external actors

Three ideas to remember

- (Mis)alignment between elite bargains, peace processes and political settlements is key to 'post-war' transitions
- Ending war is not the same as ending violence
 - Competitive/embedded/permissive violence
- Elite bargaining processes have different trajectories
 - (1) Return to violence
 - (2) Elite Capture
 - (3) Developmental peace

Further questions...

How to move from stabilisation to more inclusive peace: What are the door step conditions for a 'developmental peace'

From elite capture to 'captured elites'?

The Report

Stabilisation Unit: Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project Report: *Securing and Sustaining Elite Bargains that Reduce Violent Conflict*

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<https://sclr.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/publications/elite-bargains-and-political-deals>