



# ELITE BARGAINS AND POLITICAL DEALS

## UK Government Stabilisation Unit Report

Christine Cheng, Jonathan Goodhand, Patrick Meehan

# 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

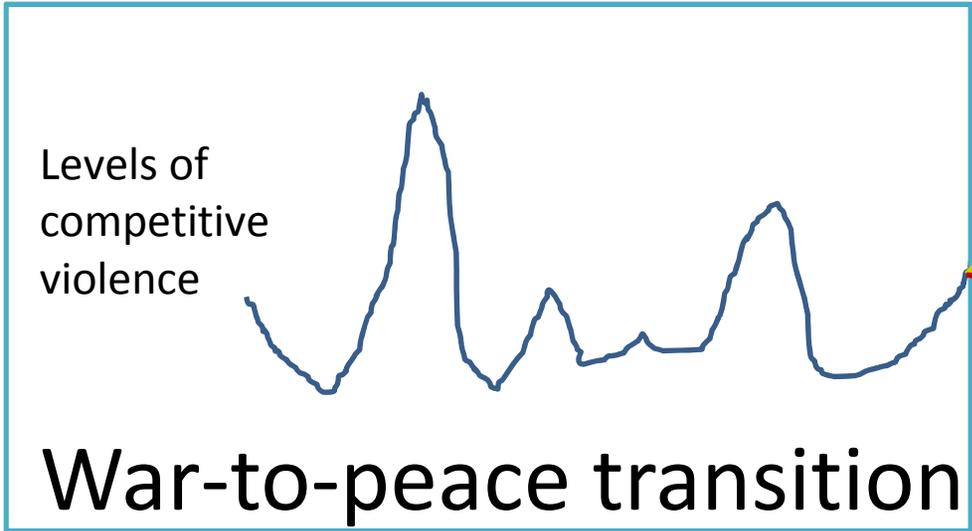
**Consolidating** e.g. Tajikistan, Mozambique, Guatemala

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

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

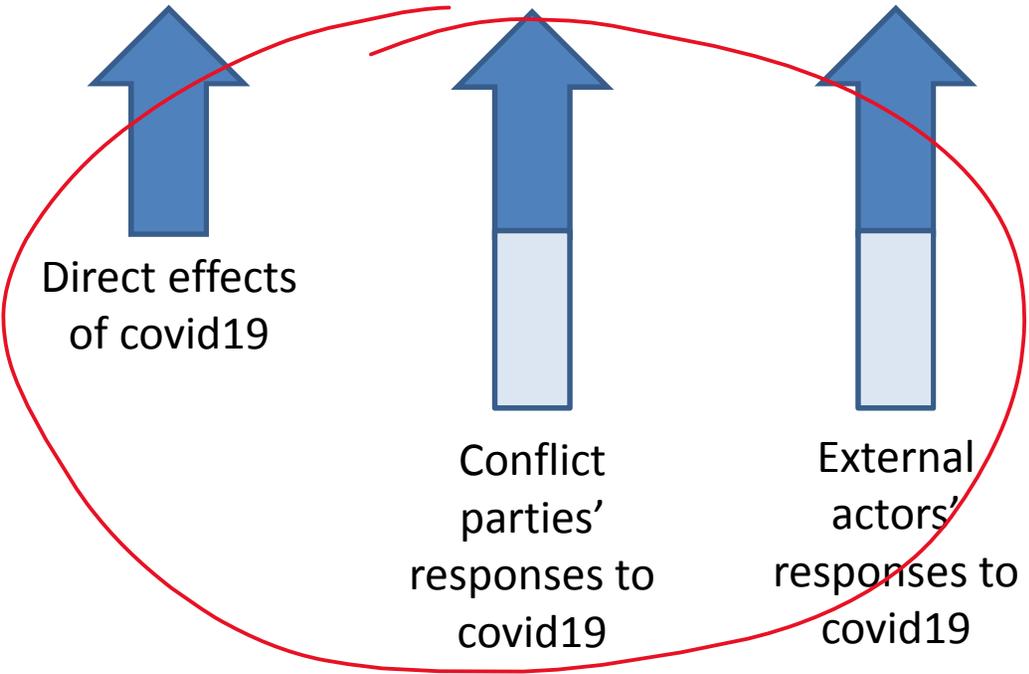
Interventions support a more transformation shift of the political settlement without destabilising post-war transitions

# **POTENTIAL IMPACT PATHWAYS OF COVID19 ON ELITE BARGAINS**

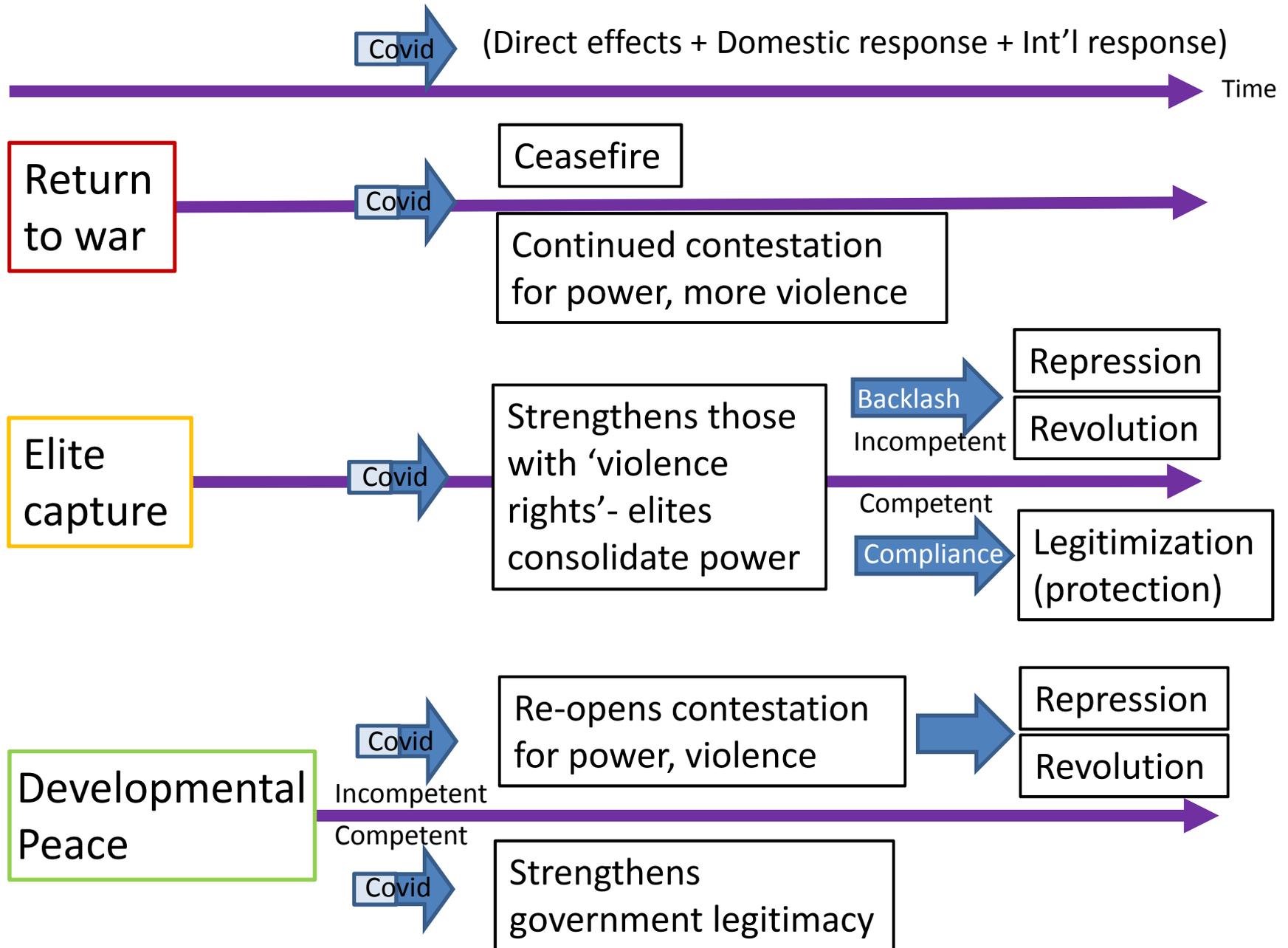


Return to war

Elite capture  
OR  
Developmental peace



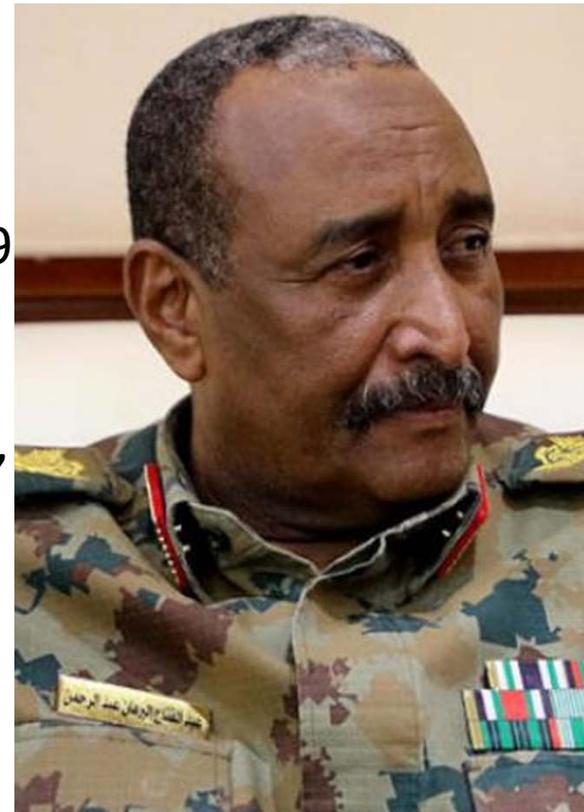
Volatility + Opportunity



# Sudan's Elite Bargain

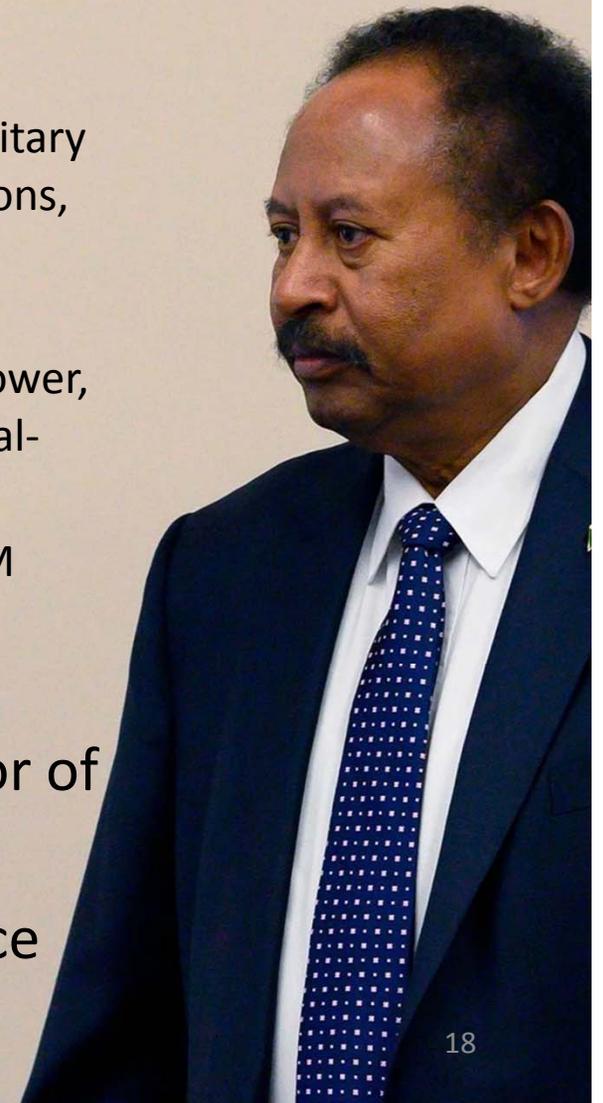
8 months of street protests (Dec 2018 – Aug 2019) led to ousting of al Bashir (April 2019) , Transitional Military Council, Khartoum massacre (3 June 2019)

- ‘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)



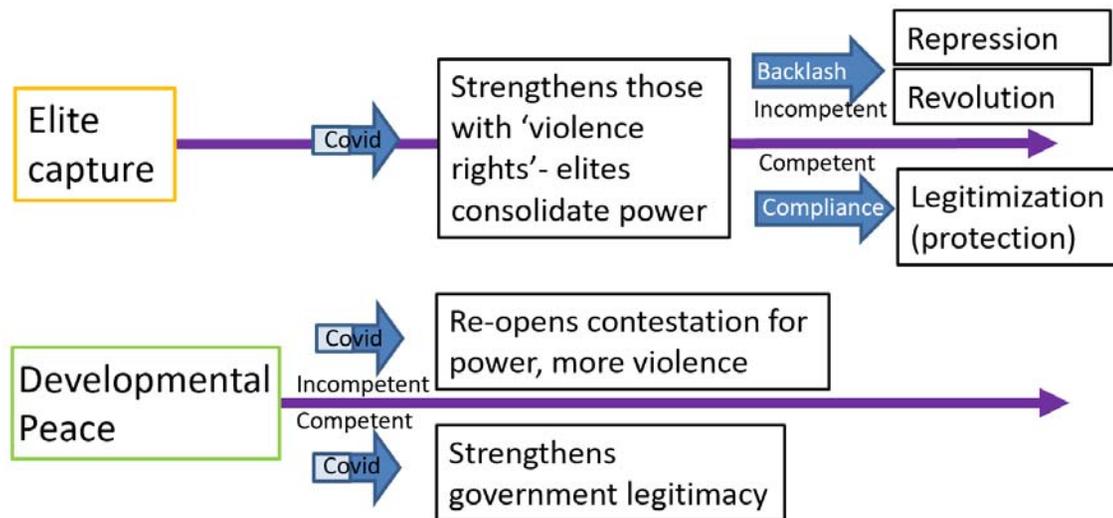
# Sudan's Elite Bargain

- 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***

*By Christine Cheng, Jonathan Goodhand, Patrick Meehan*

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