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Evidence from the Conflict Research Programme

Submission to the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy

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About the Conflict Research Programme

The Conflict Research Programme is a four-year research programme managed by the Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the LSE, and funded by the UK Department for International Development.

Our goal is to understand and analyse the nature of contemporary conflict and to identify international interventions that 'work' in the sense of reducing violence or contributing more broadly to the security of individuals and communities who experience conflict.

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1. Executive Summary

This paper summarises research from four years of the DFID-funded and LSE-led Conflict Research Programme, which provides comparative research on the drivers of conflict and 'what works' to reduce violence in five of the world's most affected countries: Syria, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan and the DRC. The findings are relevant for other conflicts, for example, Afghanistan, Yemen or the Sahel.

The paper is written to inform the UK Integrated Review and the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It argues that the UK can only be more secure in a more secure world. Today's conflicts are linked to other global issues including migration, extreme poverty, terrorism, organised crime and global pandemics. The UK cannot address these global issues and reduce global conflict unilaterally, and can only do so by working with partners, including through the multilateral system. This requires a decade-long, joined-up strategic approach focused on reducing conflict by applying the best diplomatic, development and defence resources available. Adopting such an approach would enable policymakers to continuously assess how UK and partner interventions interact with conflict at regional, national and local levels and to adapt them accordingly. This is clearly in the national interest, though we should expect UK interests in different parts of the world to come into tension with one another as conflicts and their protagonists evolve, for example if security related closures to borders or infrastructure disrupt trade and global economies or undermine local capacities to resist armed groups or respond to a pandemic. Better understanding these shifts could help HMG navigate trade-offs and act on opportunities as they emerge.

The first part of the paper sets out three 'logics' of conflict and peace, indicating that interventions within a strategic approach are more likely to work when they take account of these. We argue that conflict should be understood as a set of competing 'authorities' driven by these 'logics', rather than as a war between 'sides' or a project to build a central state entity. The logics are 1) the 'political marketplace', driven by financial transactions for loyalties 2) 'identity politics', which mobilise people to support violent agendas (either in support of, or in competition with the financial incentives of the political marketplace) and 3) 'civicness', the opportunities presented by civic actors organising to reduce conflict and build long term constituencies for public goods.

The second part of the paper notes interventions where our research has found evidence of a contribution to 'civic' outcomes. This does not mean that all these interventions should be supported everywhere, but that opportunities for 'civicness' should be supported where they emerge. The interventions identified include: 1) upholding international conventions and treaties; 2) peace talks that are multi-level and involve civic actors; 3) justice interventions that aid documentation and local problem solving during conflict; 4) humanitarian and development programmes that promote 'civicness' and livelihoods; 5) targeted sanctions that do not fuel the political marketplace; 6) civic-minded coalitions for security reform; 7) tax systems that move away from predatory extortion and contribute to public goods; 8) crisis response (e.g. to COVID-19) that is developed in partnership with local communities.

We cannot know in advance what political formation will come out on top in these fragmented conflicts, but we can support actors that work towards UK interests; specifically where they contribute to civic good and to reducing conflict, and where they have potential, in time, to create stable nations that no longer pose a threat to the UK, are self-financing and enable local and global security and prosperity.

2. Main Recommendations

- Understand conflict as a pervasive and persistent social condition and take a multi-level, multi-dimensional and long-term (decade or more) approach. Apply diplomatic and programme responses that adapt to context, rather than the standard international template of policy responses and benchmarks (such as pre-, during or post-conflict).

- Instead of seeing conflict in terms of 'sides', analyse it in terms of multiple public authorities operating according to different logics. This can help policymakers to better understand how conflict actually works in practice (including the trade-offs and risks inherent in different interventions), to identify opportunities to mitigate its violent consequences, and to set realistic, balanced and coherent objectives.

- Conduct detailed analysis of patronage networks in conflict settings, and of the flows of finance that determine loyalties and authority, in order to understand the logic of the political marketplace. Pay attention to shifts in power (e.g. the death of a key leader) or economics (e.g. changes in revenue sources) to track changes in incentive structures, determine openings for shifting the logic, and avoid interventions that might fuel it.

- Understand how identities are violently constructed (and reinforced by media and social media), through a logic of exclusivist identity politics, as a way to gain and maintain authority; how patronage groups draw on identity-based narratives and scripts to mobilise public support; but also how identity-based allegiances may motivate behaviour that runs counter to financial incentives.

- Conflict analysis often seeks to identify spoilers, but should also pay attention to those who perform the opposite function, and represent a logic of civicness: citizens, professionals, activists and office holders, from local to international levels, who find creative ways to broker agreements, contest sectarian cleavages or extremist ideologies, resist corruption, and open up spaces for non-violent deliberation. CRP research has identified three forms of civicness: 1) activism or protest; 2) the behaviour of individuals, such as uncorrupted judges or impartial doctors, or those who engage in self-help and mutual assistance at community levels; and 3) safe spaces and local authorities that are protected from the dominant logics.

- Adopt a flexible approach to programming and avoid fragmented and contradictory responses. It is in the national interest for the UK to act as a civic agent in relation to conflict. This means actively avoiding policies that risk reinforcing the political marketplace or exclusivist identity politics, as well as supporting civic initiatives.

- Currently, the move away from multilateralism threatens to reinforce the dominant logics of the political marketplace and identity politics worldwide, as powers are increasingly intervening independently in support of different actors. It is vital to develop tools and capabilities that could enable the UK, along with others, to reverse these tendencies. Multilateralism is not sufficient in and of itself to the promotion of civicness, but it is a necessary starting point for coherent policymaking.

- Make conflict analysis and policy formation more agile, informed and reflexive. Prioritise research, analysis and communication to build a detailed and dynamic knowledge of context, and amplify the voices of those directly affected by conflict at every stage. This includes decolonising research through greater engagement with local researchers.

- Peace talks should be: aligned with interventions on the ground; multi-level, including local as well as global and regional talks; and inclusive. In the UN-led Syrian political talks, for example, the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) not only enriched UN mediation efforts by improving analysis of

conflict dynamics and signposting the way forward on key areas of agreement, but it also helped to facilitate humanitarian action on the ground and create the space for constituencies of change.

- Justice should not be postponed until an overall settlement is reached, since the very nature of the political marketplace and identity politics involves a systematic disregard for the rule of law. In particular, there is a need to support legal activism, legal empowerment, community paralegalism, and efforts to document crimes committed during conflict.

- Humanitarian assistance is necessary to save lives in conflict, but vulnerable to co-option. Longer-term programmes that support livelihoods and civicness, and draw on detailed knowledge of context to avoid fuelling the political marketplace and identity politics, are likely to be more effective. When it comes to urgent humanitarian response, for example in instances of acute food insecurity, policymakers should be aware of the challenges of integrating famine early warning systems and conflict analysis, and triangulate these with timely research on how communities predict, prevent and mitigate their own food insecurity (especially where these manifest a logic of civicness), while supporting broader efforts to hold those responsible to account.

- Security sector reform works best in the context of civic coalitions that are able to articulate effective political demands for reform. Promote such coalitions by fostering security dialogues and transparency initiatives, capacity building for civic-minded actors in and outside government, and including discussion of such issues in peace talks.

- Targeted sanctions are an instrument that affects the internal functioning of a political marketplace, and may be instrumentalised by the elites of the target country in their own transactional politics. Political marketplace analysis is a useful tool for assessing their intended and unintended political consequences.

- Promote the reform of tax systems, not just as an economic exercise, but rather as a method to forge pathways out of the predatory logic of the political marketplace. This should include a focus on bottom-up initiatives to increase civil society tax literacy within countries, and proposals for progressive taxation to reduce existing inequities and economic grievances, which have both national and transnational financial dimensions. The present global crisis offers an opportunity to develop alternative methods of financing public authority so as to contribute to a shift of logic.

- The emergency response to COVID-19, both by governments and international agencies, has a better chance of success if designed and implemented in consultation with affected communities. The political marketplace tends to subvert top-down responses. The reduction in global financial flows, especially oil revenues, has the potential to weaken the political marketplace. At the same time, the severity of the expected recession is likely to hurt small business and the most vulnerable in society, diminishing the potential for civicness.

3. Introduction

The Conflict Research Programme (CRP) is a four-year multi-disciplinary research programme funded by DFID. It investigates the drivers of conflict and 'what works' interventions in five sites – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria. This note summarises our main findings, and their implications for HMG policy, as an input to the current process of reviewing the UK's defence, security and foreign policy and the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. The CRP's findings are framed by two broad conclusions.

First, the CRP's research suggests that contemporary conflict can largely be understood as a pervasive and persistent social condition in which multiple groups, associated with fragmented forms of authority, depend on violence itself both for finance and for political mobilisation. This contrasts with the idea of conflict as a deep-rooted political contest between two sides, for example government and rebel, where the aim is winning, and where there are clear beginnings and endings. These conflicts persist in countries in which the state has been disassembled and its components are subject to different authorities, often rivalrous, and where transactional politics conducted for short-term advantage trumps organised institutional politics.

The implication of this is that the traditional toolbox for addressing conflict no longer works. Military intervention on one side or another carries a high risk of exacerbating violence. Top-down political diplomacy aimed at reaching a peace agreement usually formalises and entrenches the power structures inherent to the social condition. Humanitarian assistance, while it may be necessary, often fuels the political economy of conflict. What is needed instead is a multi-level, multi-dimensional and long-term approach, underpinned by detailed knowledge of context, and using a range of redesigned tools. The aim of such an approach is to chip away at the social condition of conflict by changing the logics that characterise the exercise of authority.

Second, interventions designed to reduce the violent consequences of conflicts need to take account of their global and regional contexts, drivers and consequences. Contemporary conflicts are usually neither purely inter-state (international) nor purely intra-state (internal). In fragmented or disassembled states, the difference between internal and international is eroded. Conflicts are globalised and regionalised, involving transnational flows of arms, money, people (refugees, trafficked persons, international personnel, and volunteer fighters), smuggled commodities (for example oil, drugs, or antiquities) as well as basic necessities, such as food.[1]

Contemporary conflicts are inextricably linked to other global challenges, such as pandemics, climate change, extreme poverty, mass distress migration, high-level corruption, and the risk of nuclear war. For example, recent research on the impact of COVID-19 in some of our sites suggests that conflict areas are least able to cope with the illness, with significant consequences for the overall global impact of the pandemic, and for any future attempts at global containment of transmission.

The UK cannot insulate itself from the risks that arise from contemporary conflict. It is in the UK national interest to contribute to ways of reducing or ending conflicts that are sensitive to their regional and global drivers, and are integrated in multilateral frameworks. The UK does not have the capacity to insulate itself unilaterally from global risks and threats, or to engage in geopolitical rivalries on equal terms, especially after Brexit. The UK can only be secure in a more secure world. Conflicts represent the sharp end of global insecurity. This is why a focus on ending conflict, and helping the victims of conflict, should remain a major priority.

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[1] This is evidenced, for example, in the CRP's database of transnational conflicts in Africa. See Noel Twagiramungu, Allard Duursma, Mulugeta Gebrehiwot and Alex de Waal, 'Re-describing Transnational Conflict in Africa,' *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57, no. 3 (2019).

As a contribution to this, the CRP has developed a framework for conflict analysis. This framework explains contemporary conflict in terms of the interaction between overlapping and competing logics of public authority, notably those of the political marketplace, identity politics, and civicness. Levels of violence, and ultimately the persistence of the social condition of conflict itself, depend on the changing nature of this interaction. CRP research suggests that interventions can 'work' when they open up space for a shift of logic, by weakening the generally dominant logics of the political marketplace and identity politics, and nurturing existing or potential 'pockets of civicness'.

The following sections first summarise CRP findings on the character of contemporary conflict, drawing on examples from its research sites, before outlining the kinds of interventions, tools and capabilities needed to address and mitigate its drivers and consequences.

4. Understanding Conflict

During conflict a variety of sources of 'public authority' emerges. These sources are often in competition with each other. State structures may play a role but are unlikely to be the only source of public authority. All of our sites are characterised by fragmented or disassembled states, so a public authority could be a municipality, a customary or religious authority, a regional organisation or an international institution. We argue that the central issue is not national versus local, or state versus non-state, but how these different forms of authority function - what we call the 'logic' of public authority. CRP research highlights the importance of three logics of public authority in particular (the CRP list is non-exhaustive): the political marketplace, where competition for power is monetised; identity politics, where exclusivist ideologies based on ethnicity or religion shape and are shaped by the distribution of power; and civicness, where something akin to a social contract between authority and citizens exists, even at the height of the most intense fighting. CRP research sites are dominated by the first two logics, which are the main drivers of violence. Nevertheless, what we might term 'pockets of civicness' exist in all CRP sites.

4.1 The Political Marketplace

The political marketplace characterises all of our sites but has a different expression in each. There is no one model. We use the term 'political marketplace' to refer to a contemporary form of transactional politics where political power is commodified and subject to the rules of the market. In these countries, political loyalties and services are sold to the highest bidder in a competitive manner. For example, a ruler might bargain with members of the political elite over how much he needs to pay - in cash, or in access to other lucrative resources such as contracts - in return for their support. They exert pressure on him using their ability to mobilise votes, turn out crowds, or inflict damaging violence.

All of the political systems studied by the CRP are extraordinarily complicated and different, but they do share some general characteristics.[2] A successful formal state-building process is not taking place in any of these countries. Instead, transactional politics dominates over the functioning of formal institutions, and everyday transactional politics is exclusively an elite activity – there are significant barriers to participation for non-elites. Political power is fragmented, and different forms of violence (and the threat of violence) are widespread and diffused across all levels of society.

Political markets, such as the ones we study, usually occupy a subordinate position in the world economic order, and are subject to movements in global markets and regulatory regimes outside their control (for example, in grain or commodity prices, trade rules and agreements or the regulation of

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[2] For a discussion, see Alex de Waal, Aditya Sarkar, Sarah Detzner, and Ben Spatz, A Theory of Change for Violent Political Markets, Conflict Research Programme Memo, February 2020.

illicit financial flows). As a result, they are uniquely vulnerable to external economic, political, and environmental shocks, and short-term politics in these countries is persistently unpredictable.

External interventions form a critical part of these political systems, by providing resources for, and by changing the incentives of, actors in the marketplace.

Finally, it is worth noting that not all fragile states are political markets, but all political markets are fragile states, or heading in that direction.

The CRP approach enables analysts to assess changes in political markets over time. The CRP is developing a toolkit (which is a diagnostic method, rather than a standardised template) that can help us to understand how these systems actually function, even if — or especially when — they present institutionalised facades to the outside world. The toolkit can also help policymakers understand how these political systems are likely to respond to external interventions and other political and economic shocks.

Among our cases, South Sudan is a classic example of a rentier marketplace, dependent on oil revenues, which collapsed when oil-production was shut down in 2012. Since then, political and military elites have relied on violence, pillage, funds and support from regional powers (notably Uganda and Sudan), as well as the prospective revenues from future peace deals, to fund their contest for power.[3] In the last three years, the regime of President Salva Kiir has emerged militarily dominant and financially more capable than its rivals, but has not consolidated authority over the people or the territory in any meaningful sense. In this context, 'peace' means moderation of the coercive, autocratic regime in Juba.[4] With the current collapse in international oil prices, prefiguring the transition to sustainable energy, South Sudan is also a poster child for the effects of unplanned or traumatic decarbonisation on fragile states.

Somalia, on the other hand, remains a deregulated political marketplace characterised by a still nascent (and conflictual) federal structure, the lack of an effective, centralised national army, and multiple external patrons with divergent geopolitical interests. Numerous internal configurations of power exist, including a fractured ruling coalition of convenience (known as the FFK according to the names of its leaders): President Farmajo; Prime Minister Khaire, and the Director General of NISA, Fahad Yasin. The FFK, which retains precarious control over the political marketplace in the capital, has developed close security and aid relationships with external patrons (including Ethiopia, Turkey, Qatar and to some extent, the USA), consolidated its control over revenue collection and contracting, and used coercion to achieve its strategic goals. Nonetheless, the ruling coalition's political agenda (beyond the pursuit/retention of political power and control) remains largely incoherent, reflecting the turbulence of the Somali political marketplace.[5]

The Democratic Republic of the Congo can be understood as an amalgamation of interlocking, but relatively autonomous (or segmented) political markets.[6] Political power (at the centre) is exercised through a series of constantly shifting networks and alliances, and Congo's political economy is shaped by coercion, and characterised by conflict over control of key sites of revenue generation, including production sites, marketplaces, border posts, infrastructure, forced monopolies, coercive

[3] Alan Boswell, Nanaho Yamanaka, Aditya Sarkar and Alex de Waal, The Security Arena in South Sudan: A Political Marketplace Study, Conflict Research Programme Report, December 2019.

[4] Alex de Waal, Alan Boswell, David Deng, Rachel Ibreck, Matthew Benson and Jan Pospisil, South Sudan: The Politics of Delay, Conflict Research Programme Memo, December 2019.

[5] CRP Somalia Research Team, "Galmudug – Election Dynamics and Prospects," Research Memo, Mimeo; CRP Somalia Research Team, "Jubaland – Election Dynamics and Prospects," Research Memo, Mimeo; CRP Somalia Research Team, "Jubaland – Post Election Overview," Research Memo, Mimeo; CRP Somalia Research Team, "South West State of Somalia – Post Election Analysis," Research Memo, Mimeo; CRP Somalia Research Team, "Puntland – Retrospective Election Analysis," Research Memo, Mimeo; CRP Somalia Research Team, "Somali Region, Ethiopia – pre-election dynamics and prospects," Research Memo, Mimeo.

[6] Peer Schouten, Kasper Hoffmann, and Koen Vlassenroot, Congo's Violent Political Marketplace, forthcoming.

resource extraction, price fixing and plunder and asset-stripping.[7] Eastern DRC, in particular, remains highly militarised and fragmented, with politics increasingly militarised and militarised politics increasingly 'democratised'. At last count, over 130 different armed groups exist in the Kivus alone, while the adjacent provinces of Tanganyika and Ituri are experiencing increasingly convoluted armed conflicts. It is worth noting that although a new round of political competition was triggered between the political networks of the former president Kabila and the current president Tshisekedi after elections in 2018, the rules of the Congolese political market remain unchanged.

The CRP focuses on two political systems in the Middle East: Iraq and Syria. The political marketplace in Iraq is centred around unstable (and often violent) coalition-based competition for control over oil resources, associated contracts and government ministries and payrolls.[8] Since 2003, most analysts have understood national power dynamics in Iraq through the lens of a national quota-based system (called *muhassasah* in Arabic) that distributes ministries and oil revenues across the country's political groups according to ethno-sectarian allocations. At the sub-national level, however, political power is constituted and maintained both through coercion and transactional deals (often involving external and regional actors). In the post-ISIL period, Iranian-backing for certain   Popular Mobilisation Forces have transformed provincial political and security landscapes, to become the principal security actors in areas across several of the predominantly Sunni provinces, where they have traded on the role as guarantors of stability for taking cuts from local business and levying informal taxes, as well in some cases persuading the local populace to vote for their electoral candidate.[9] Opportunistic alliances often cut across ethno-sectarian lines, defying assumptions around post-2003 identity-based politics. The primacy of purchasing loyalties over providing services has led to poor governance and pervasive instability, which is only likely to be exacerbated in the face of falling oil revenues.[10]

Syria, the last of our cases, is a highly segmented conflict marketplace, which has been reconfigured rapidly since 2011 due to the inflow of external resources and force. The Syrian political market shifted from a centralised authoritarian state prior to the ascendance of Bashar al-Assad, to a violent war economy where the role of external actors became more important (in around 2012-13).[11] International intervention functioned very differently in different segments of the market. Financial patronage from Gulf states and U.S. military assistance contributed to a highly deregulated and competitive market in opposition areas. More recently, Russian and Iranian interventions have assisted regime efforts to consolidate the market by force, with some success in the regime-dominated market segment. Critically, however, the political system that has emerged from the conflict is not the centralised authoritarian system which existed prior to 2011, but a landscape consisting of several differentiated segments, combined with an oligopolistic structure in the regime-controlled areas in which authoritarian gangsterism combines with kleptocracy.[12]

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[7] Tatiana Carayannis, Koen Vlassenroot, Kasper Hoffmann and Aaron Pangburn, Competing networks and political order in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a literature review on the logics of public authority and international intervention, Conflict Research Programme Synthesis Paper, 2017.

[8] Toby Dodge, Zeynep Kaya, Kyra Luchtenberg, Sarah Mathieu-Comtois, Bahra Saleh, Christine M. van den Toorn, Andrea Turpin-King and Jessica Watkins, Iraq Synthesis Paper: Understanding the Drivers of Conflict in Iraq, Conflict Research Programme Synthesis Paper, 2018.

[9] This will be expanded on in a forthcoming CRP article. Jessica Watkins & Mustafa Hasan, 'Post-ISIL Reconciliation in Iraq and the Local Anatomy of National Grievances: The Case of Yathrib'.

10 See Mac Skelton and Zmkan Ali Saleem, Iraq's Political Marketplace at the Subnational Level: The Struggle for Power in Three Provinces, Conflict Research Programme Report, 2020.

[11] See Anne Marie Baylouny and Creighton A. Mullins, "Cash is King: Financial Sponsorship and Changing Priorities in the Syrian Civil War," Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 41, no.12 (2018): 990-1010. See also Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Rim Turkmani, 'War Economy, Governance and Security in Syria's Opposition Controlled Areas', Stability: *International Journal of Security and Development* 7, no.1 (2018): 1-17.

[12] Yahya Fares, "The Political Marketplace in Syria," 2019, Mimeo.

4.2 Identity Politics

Exclusivist identity politics also occur in all CRP sites. The term refers to the claim to power on the basis of an exclusive identity, which could be ethnic or religious - for example, Dinka versus Nuer in South Sudan, or Sunni versus Shi'ia in Syria. The puzzle of the resurgence of politicised religion, nativism and various forms of exclusivist nationalism in the contemporary globalised world has preoccupied numerous scholars and other commentators. This puzzle is even more marked in the case of political marketplaces: there is no inherent reason why this ultra-neo-liberal system of governance should be associated with exclusivist identities. While most political markets are oligopolies with limited competition, their 'ideal type' is a more 'perfect' competitive political market in which identity-based affiliations are dissolved and replaced by individualised, opportunistic calculus. Indeed, one of the original rationales for formulating the political marketplace framework was to challenge identity-based framings of the wars in Sudan and Somalia: in both these countries, the observed political calculus of members of the elite were based on individual tactical bargaining in a competitive environment, routinely transgressing any principles of ethnic solidarity.

What we find is that money is necessarily supplemented, by what we term 'identity capital', as a method of political mobilisation, or of recruitment into armed groups. Financial incentives alone cannot explain why men (and it is usually men) are ready to kill and to risk their lives. The notion of identity capital is adapted from Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital acquired through education, taste, and family background; his theory explains the stability of complex and unequal social orders. Our contexts differ from European late modernity, which was Bourdieu's focus. Our countries are disrupted and disordered; among their most salient characteristics are fierce contests over formal institutions and norms.

Violence produces dramatic changes in power relations and the types of resources on which power asymmetries are based. All forms of capital - material, social and cultural - are dramatically transformed and reordered through violence and reinvented brutalist forms of identity capital are established. For example, social assumptions based on, say, taste or education, are upended and supplanted by a simplistic identification with ethnic or sectarian identity units. Just as in the UK, during the Brexit debate, being British or English came to mean more than being expert, something similar happens in our conflict zones.

Political entrepreneurs make use of identity capital in order to reframe social discord, to dub political opponents as dangerous enemies or 'terrorists', or to provide a mechanism for organising a cohesive armed unit, inspiring selfless actions among followers or enticing support from foreign sponsors.[13] In eastern Congo, for instance, ethnic identity capital is one of the most salient resources of leaders of local armed groups, especially Mai-Mai groups,[14] and customary chiefs.[15]

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[13] For an example, see Jessica Watkins, 'Beyond Sectarianism? Transnational Identity Politics & Conflict in the Modern Middle East: Pasts, Presents, Futures', Middle East Centre Blog, 2018.

[14] Mai-Mai groups are often mobilised within particular ethnic communities and to a large extent their public authority is built through their claims to defend these against foreign intruders, which can be framed in a number of ways (e.g. ethnic adversaries, state authorities, mining companies). In a context like eastern DRC marked by decades of multi-scalar violent conflict, institutionalised ethnic competition, militarisation, oppression, and patronage politics, ethnic capital has become a highly valuable political resource. It enables the leaders of armed groups to accumulate political and economic resources See Hoffmann, K., Verweijen, J., 2018. Rebel rule: A governmentality perspective. *African Affairs* 118 1–23. And Hoffmann and Verweijen: Rethinking Rebel Rule: How Mai-Mai groups in eastern Congo govern, Conflict Research Programme Blog, 03 October 2018.

[15] Customary chiefs are considered to embody and guard the traditional values of ethnic communities in eastern Congo. Ethnic identity capital is the core resource of customary chief's public authority, which is considerable. It has made them important political actors in rural areas in eastern Congo and enabled them to exercise control over resource and people there. For those reasons they are attractive allies and partners for external actors like rebel leaderships, army units, NGO's, confessional organisations and business people. They can help mobilise recruits for armed groups, shape electoral outcomes,

Whether motivated by ambition, opportunism or desperation, a politician can draw on identity capital as well as money. But identity capital may follow a logic of its own; once people have experienced killing or the loss of loved ones in the name of identity, its singularity and exclusivity becomes entrenched, so that the politician remains forever marked by the identity label he opportunistically took on, and associated identity custodians and advocates are entangled in a political and social process for which they are poorly prepared. Violence represents a process through which fragmented forms of exclusive, singular and fixed identities are elevated as a way of establishing political legitimacy for disassembled public authorities, disrupting earlier forms of national identity associated with state formation.[16]

Our research in Somalia,[17] Syria,[18] and Iraq,[19] investigates the process through which singular identities are constructed. In the case of Somalia, it was the war of 1987 to 1992 that turned out to be pivotal in the trajectory from a modernist state to a set of disassembled public authorities defined in terms of clan units. In Syria, sectarianisation was a deliberate process, fostered both by regime and Islamist militias, funded by different Gulf donors, through the selective use of violence, and combined with public messaging in the first few years of the war. In Iraq, it was the political settlement post-2003 which confirmed Shi'a Islamist parties as dominant, and the emergence of a Sunni-Islamist insurgency which consolidated sectarian divisions. Iran's political backing for Shi'a Islamist figures, military support for predominantly Shi'a Popular Mobilisation Forces to combat ISIL, and financial and technical support for Shi'a clerics, charities, and television channels has undoubtedly magnified the sectarian aspects of grievances between Iraqis.[20]

Irrespective of how they began, wars tend to become framed as intra-ethnic, or intra-confessional, as they proceed. There are several likely reasons for this: political leaders' preference for appointing their close kin to the most sensitive security positions (in government or armed opposition); the efficacy of ethnic manipulation by political leaders at times of anxiety; the tendency of people to seek out family or ethnic protectors at times of insecurity; the fact that territorially-based armed groups are more likely to survive the initial rapid survival-of-the-fittest competition in a condition of violent turmoil; the fact that rural insurgencies tend to be more resilient than urban ones, and rural territories tend to be ethnically homogenous; the preference for external sponsors to select armed groups organised on their preferred identity basis; and the cycle of atrocity and grievance that consolidates identity-based opposition.

The result is that even when a conflict begins as (for example) a broad-based opposition to dictatorship, a protracted war tends to be redefined as a conflict among identity units. Beneath the overt conflict on ethnic or sectarian lines is a continuing contestation of the terms of the war between two categories: those that remain from the broad-based opposition, regrouped as civil society, who are pitted against exclusivist identity-based politics on all sides.

and provide access to land for investment. In other words, identity capital makes customary chiefs important actors in eastern Congo's conflict dynamics. Hoffmann, K., Vlassenroot, K., Mudinga, E., 2020. Courses au pouvoir: the struggle over customary capital in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. *Journal of East African Studies* 14, 125–144.; Hoffmann K., Vlassenroot, K. and Mudinga, E., 2020; Conflict and Chieftaincy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Conflict Research Progrmmae Blog, 25 March 2020.

[16] Mary Kaldor and Alex de Waal, 'Identity Formation and the Political Marketplace', Conflict, Security and Development, forthcoming. See also Mary Kaldor, Identity Politics and the Political Marketplace, Conflict Research Programme Blog, 29 November 2018.

[17] Alex de Waal, 'Somalia's Disassembled State: Clan Unit Formation and the Political Marketplace', Conflict, Security and Development, forthcoming. See also Alex de Waal, The Prairie Fire that Burned Mogadishu: The Logic of Clan Formation in Somalia', Conflict Research Programme/World Peace Foundation Occasional Paper, December 2018.

[18] Sami Hadaya, 'Sectarianisation in Syria: The Disintegration of a Popular Struggle', forthcoming paper.

[19] Toby Dodge, Seeking to Explain Sectarian Mobilisation in the Middle East', Middle East Centre Blog, September 2018,

[20] Jessica Watkins, 'Iran in Iraq: The limits of 'Smart Power' in the Face of Public Protest'. LSE Middle East Centre paper for the Conflict Research Programme, July 2020.

The dominant international approach to conflict resolution reinforces this tendency. Our research suggests that peace agreements (and, in common parlance, political settlements) tend to confirm, legitimise, and consolidate the process of political identity formation that occurred during the war. Such agreements do not necessarily end violence, but rather mark the moment when an international presence is deployed in the conflict zone. Indeed because of the consolidation of both identity politics and the political marketplace, the post-agreement situation is necessarily marked by continued turbulence and disorder, even if violence between the disassembled units, as opposed to violence against civilians, is lessened. Bell and Pospisil use the term 'formalised political unsettlements' to describe such agreements.[21]

Finally, our research shows that even though they tend to co-occur, the relationship between identity politics and the political marketplace is by no means harmonious. Identity politics has its own logic that may contradict the requirements of transactional politics. There is no neat fit between disassembled political units, identity politics and the political marketplace. Indeed research in South Sudan uncovered the term 'Nuer weu' – the Nuer of Dinka money- referring to a Nuer politician who struck a deal with a Dinka dominated government, following the logic of the political marketplace;- something that was applauded by the international community as providing a basis for future agreement but which could not carry popular support.[22]

4.3 Civicness

Not all actions, spaces and institutions within conflicts are governed by the logics outlined above. A major finding of the CRP is that, in all of our field sites, and in the international dynamics and processes that relate to them, there are examples of a logic of civicness: civic-minded forms of resistance to corruption or exclusivism, mutual assistance within communities, and attempts to preserve or build forms of public authority more oriented towards the public good. Indeed, the existence of what might be called 'pockets of civicness' is a necessary condition for survival. In the midst of violence and criminality, it is only through the prevalence of civicness that minimal access to public services such as health and education or water and electricity is possible.

Civicness should not be confused with civil society, although the terms share the same roots.[23] Civil society in its contemporary meaning tends to refer to NGOs or to grassroots community groups. Such institutions and groups are perhaps likely to behave in civic ways, but they can easily be ethnicised or, in cases where they are dependent on external funding, be captured by political markets. Civicness may refer to activism but, more often, it relates to the behaviour of those who are engaged in public activities such as the provision of welfare, the courts of justice, the police and security services, the media, or even political assemblies that represent the concrete expression of the relationship between the polity and the individual.

Our research has uncovered three forms of civicness. The first is direct activism and protests. Demonstrations in Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan have been explicitly organised around a narrative of opposition to corruption (one product of the political marketplace) and sectarianism (exclusive identity politics). In Iraq, the slogan '*Bis mil-din baguna al-haramiya*' means 'In the name of religion we were robbed by looters'.[24] The logics of the political marketplace and of exclusivist identity politics tend to

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[21] Christine Bell and Jan Pospisil 'Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettlement' *Journal of International Development*, 29, no.5 (2017).

[22] Naomi R. Pendle, 'The "Nuer of Dinka money" and the demands of the dead: Contesting the moral limits of monetised politics in South Sudan', Conflict, Security and Development, forthcoming.

[23] Mary Kaldor, 'The phenomenon of civicness and researching its advancement', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 22 May 2019.

[24] Zahra Ali, 'Protest movements in Iraq in the age of a "new civil society"', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 03 October 2019.

be violently gendered, and it is notable that large numbers of women have been prominent within peaceful protests in all three countries.

The second type of example has to do with the behaviour of individuals ranging from officials to those who work in public services to ordinary citizens. Thus, for example, in Iraq, we find doctors and nurses who refuse instructions from above to treat patients according to sectarian criteria.[25] Or in South Sudan, we find legal activism, fascinating examples of how 'committed judges, chiefs, lawyers and citizens try to reckon with everyday injustices even during a civil war.'[26] In Syria, we find first responders to humanitarian emergencies like the White Helmets, or groups of people who try to keep public services going like the People of Aleppo who brought together engineers to repair water supplies, electricity or gas pipes.

And a third type of civicness is to be found in safe spaces or even local authorities who have negotiated local-level ceasefires based on the involvement of citizens. While there are many examples in Syria of ceasefires that involve surrender to regime forces, there are also examples of negotiated safe spaces within the fighting. In eastern Ghouta, for example, under siege for most of the war, a dairy farmer, whose products were needed to feed Damascus made a deal with the government not to bomb his farm, which became a safe place for displaced persons and other victims of violence. Hama is another example where the dignitaries of the town kept out both government and opposition forces.

It is important to note that parties to a conflict may also carry out acts of civicness or may co-opt civicness. In many places, politicians or armed groups may support 'civic' projects, but their capacity to do so is constrained by the logic of the system – they are 'prisoners of the deal'.[27]

The research on roadblocks in eastern Congo, for instance, shows that not all roadblocks erected by the notoriously corrupt Congolese army are viewed unfavourably. Roadblocks erected in high-risk areas are sometimes viewed favourably by travellers and residents as they provide some deterrent to robberies and kidnapping. In addition, they may provide shelter for travellers.[28] While in Iraq, *Hashd al-Sha'abi* or Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), parts of which are backed by Iran, have sought to associate themselves with the protest movement despite the fact that many of the protestors are very opposed to Iran.[29]

Another example from the DRC is the opening up of the democratic space as part of elections.[30] CRP research shows how citizens have claimed their right to vote as an expression of civicness. Armed groups have been directly engaged in campaigning, but the threat of using violence was not successful in guiding citizens' voting behaviour. While a large part of the population developed strategies to accept the presence of candidates imposed by these armed groups, in most cases they did not vote for them. It shows the need to revise the sometimes simplistic, distinction between acts considered as civic and democratic and those considered non-civic and non-democratic (e.g. violence, identity politics, the trading of money for political support etc.). Our research indicates that such apparently opposite acts can, in reality, be complementary.

An interesting finding from our sites is that the international encounter can enhance civicness. This does not necessarily mean through funding; other types of international action can also be effective

[25] J. Mac Skelton, 'Cross-Sectarian Social Networks and Movements in Iraq: The Case of Healthcare', paper given at CRP civicness workshop, February 2020.

[26] Rachel Ibreck, South Sudan's Injustice System: Law and Activism on the Frontline (London: Zed Books, 2019), p. 3.

[27] Zmkan Ali Saleem, 'Prisoner of the Deal: Nineveh's governor and local state capture', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 2020.

[28] Bismiwa, Stanislas, Bienvenu Mukungilwa, Godefroid Muzalia, and Kasper Hoffmann: Beyond Predation: The social dynamics of roadblocks in eastern Congo, Research Brief, forthcoming.

[29] Jessica Watkins, 'Iran in Iraq: The limits of 'Smart Power' in the Face of Public Protest'. LSE Middle East Centre paper for the Conflict Research Programme, July 2020.

[30] Koen Vlassenroot, Godefroid Muzalia, Emery Mudinga, Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka, Tumukule, Tumukwepe: How 'Citoyenneté' Reshaped the Democratic Space during Congo's 2018 Elections, Conflict Research Programme Blog, 31 May 2019.

(and international funding needs to be agile and responsive to civic initiatives and opportunities). Examples include conditionality attached to support for hospitals in Kurdistan that meant that cancer patients from all over Iraq could gain treatment in those hospitals,[31] diaspora activists who provide what is referred to as 'social remittances' in Somalia,[32] or support for local journalists' attempts to expose corruption in Iraq through the publication of the Panama Papers.[33]

4.4 Regional and Global Dynamics

The logic of the political marketplace operates in fundamentally the same manner at the local, national and transnational levels. This has the consequence that activities and privileges, conventionally considered a matter of sovereign public policy, can be traded for material reward to the highest bidder. The engagement of Gulf States in the Horn of Africa is an example of how the political marketplace operates at a regional or trans-regional level. For example, the rivalry between Middle Eastern states (especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE on one side, and Qatar and Turkey on the other) has played out in Somalia with these countries offering substantial financial incentives to members of the Somali elite and Somali state and sub-state authorities, in return for political alignment. The members of the Somali political class have expertly played these stronger rivals against one another, retaining more political autonomy than might be expected. In the case of Sudan, the 'Arab Troika' of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE were able to dominate the Sudanese political market, excluding their regional rivals (Iran, Qatar and Turkey), and ensuring that their preferred security power-brokers in Sudan would not be disadvantaged by the democratic transition. The ability of these regional actors to move quickly, providing cash-in-hand to fund the political budgets of their chosen clients, has meant that they have shaped the transition far more effectively than either the Sudanese democratic forces, or western donors which have used the much slower and less flexible funding mechanisms of the Bretton Woods Institutions and ODA. As Ethiopia moves rapidly towards completing the dismantling of its previous developmental state and embracing the logic of the political marketplace, we can also see the power of regional brokers increasing.

In the MENA, the political economy of oil has similarly permeated conflict dynamics across the region. Interventions over the past two decades by Iran and/or the Arab Gulf States into conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Bahrain have been characterised by transactional deal-making with a series of warring factions at both the national and subnational levels. [34] These alliances have blurred the boundaries between state and non-state, and fuelled the functioning of political marketplaces at both centre and peripheries. In several cases, they have also exacerbated sect-driven domestic identity politics between Sunni and Shi'a through their choice of allies, and their media representations of the conflicts.[35] This in turn has reduced the scope for external interventions promoting civic governance.

In the case of Iraq, sectarian politics had already been set in motion by the post-Saddam political settlement supported by the Coalition Provisional Authority. The perceived political marginalisation of the Sunni population has undoubtedly generated sympathy domestically for Sunni insurgent groups

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[31] J. Mac Skelton, 'Cross-Sectarian Social Networks and Movements in Iraq: The Case of Healthcare', paper given at CRP civicness workshop, February 2020.

[32] Nisar Majid, 'Transnational Citizenship and Activism: Political Engagement and Resistance in the Somali Environment', paper given at CRP civicness workshop, February 2020.

[33] Aida Al-Kaisy, 'Media and Civicness in Iraq', paper given at CRP civicness workshop, February 2020. For more CRP work on media and civicness in Iraq, see Aida Al-Kaisy, '"Pockets of Media Civicness" in a Conflictual Political Landscape: A Case Study of Iraqi Media', LSE Middle East Centre Blog, 7 November 2018, and Aida Al-Kaisy, A Fragmented Landscape: Barriers to Independent Media in Iraq, LSE Middle East Centre Report for the Conflict Research Programme (2019).

[34] Jessica Watkins 'Identity Politics, Elites and Omnibalancing: Reassessing Arab Gulf State Interventions in the Uprisings from the Inside Out,' forthcoming in Conflict, Development and Security.

[35] Jessica Watkins, 'Satellite sectarianisation or plain old partisanship? Inciting violence in the Arab mainstream media.' LSE Middle East Centre paper for the Conflict Research Programme (2019).

including al-Qa'ida and Iraq. Yet, Iran's political backing for Shi'a Islamist figures and military support for a collection of predominantly Shi'a paramilitary factions has magnified the sectarian aspects of grievances between Iraqis.

There do exist trans-regional and transnational civic links among think-tanks, NGOs and protestors (for example, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, or Kenya and Sudan) and, in some instances, regional dialogues have been promoted by multilateral institutions, such the African Union, IGAD (the Intergovernmental Authority for Development) in North East Africa, or the European Union. Regional institutions in the MENA region such as the Arab League or the Gulf Co-operation Council are much more state-dominated. Nevertheless, some UN agencies, especially UNDP and UNICEF, have been able to promote initiatives like the regional Human Development or Human Security Reports that help to promote some transnational civic space.

5. 'What Works' Interventions

In most of our research, we find that external interventions tend to be subverted by the dominant logics of the political marketplace and identity politics, but these risks can be reduced if properly understood and considered within strategy, policy and programmes. Peace agreements consolidate political marketplaces defined in sectarian terms. Humanitarian assistance often ends up supporting the flows of funding required by the various identity based political entrepreneurs. Security sector reform turns out to provide another mechanism through which the different factions can compete for funding, status and integration in the state apparatus. Airstrikes contribute to sectarian polarisation and often empower the different armed factions on the ground.

It follows from our analysis that external interventions are only likely to work, in the sense of addressing the underlying social condition that produces violence, to the extent that interventions can open up space for a shift of logic, whether they can a) weaken the dominant logics of the political marketplace and identity politics, b) identify moments of contradiction in the dominant logics where change might be possible, and c) nurture existing or potential 'pockets of civicness'. Conflict analyses often seek to identify spoilers, but they should also pay attention to those who perform the opposite function: citizens, activists, professionals and office holders, at all levels from local to international, who find creative ways to broker agreements, contest sectarian cleavages or extremist ideologies, resist corruption, and open up spaces for non-violent deliberation. Those responsible for external interventions need to consider how such interventions affect the incentive structures of public authority and whether funding flows bolster, sideline or undermine the dominant logics.

A holistic approach to intervention needs to start from the assumption that the UK itself can act as an agent of civicness. Underlying assumptions that remain prevalent among policymakers about 'ancient hatreds' or 'ethnic rivalries' need to be discarded, and any pressure to put short-term commercial interests before the needs of those experiencing conflict need to be resisted. Some HMG priorities such as upholding international conventions and treaties are generally both procedurally and substantively civic; while others, such as the commitment to multilateralism may be procedurally civic, but in practice can work for or against civic outcomes depending on the precise nature of the intervention undertaken. Meanwhile, defence and security partnerships, and funding flows that are insensitive to the conflict dynamics outlined above, run the risk of casting the UK as a spoiler to its own civicness-promoting interventions. Fragmented implementation along these lines is more likely to fuel conflict dynamics than to mitigate them.

With these considerations in mind, and based on our research into what works interventions, we briefly outline some of the ways in which policy tools can be redesigned to work towards a shift of logic. This is not a comprehensive set of policy tools; rather it is drawn from the evidence collected by the CRP.

5.1 Research, Analysis and Communication

A multi-level, multi-dimensional and long-term approach to conflict requires a substantial knowledge base acquired through detailed research, analysis and communications, especially with local experts and civic-minded activists at all levels. The research products CRP is developing aim to enable local activists and foreign observers to analyse the specific nature of the political marketplace in different contexts so as to identify moments and methods through which change might be promoted. For example, research on the political marketplace in Sudan has shown how the shift from oil as a source of revenue, to gold and mercenarism, involved a redistribution of power relations and opened up opportunities for civic change.[36] Similarly, the CRP approach can be usefully applied as a basis for designing interventions aimed at weakening the political marketplace such as targeted sanctions (see section 5.6).

Much CRP research is undertaken by researchers at local levels. The CRP team at Ghent University have published a series of blogs from local researchers aimed at 'decolonising' research on conflict.[37] This is the kind of initiative that needs support , not just to help those researchers, but also to improve the quality of contextual knowledge. The impact of research is probably greatest at local levels. The researchers themselves represent elements of civicness that influence the situations in which they find themselves, whether they are monitoring courts as in South Sudan and Somalia, mapping local authority in ways that have the potential for increasing accountability, or contributing to the transparency of revenue flows.

5.2 Diplomacy

Peace talks are important because they provide a political framework for a multilateral presence in conflict areas and, as such, are crucial for all external interventions. If we are to avoid the consolidation of political marketplaces, the conduct of such talks needs to be redesigned. Elements of such a redesign include:

- Peace talks need to be thought of as an ongoing process (perhaps punctuated by agreements on specific issues), building relational contracts among the parties, rather than aiming at a decisive once-and-for-all or one-size-fits-all settlement.

- In terms of content, they need to align with external interventions on the ground and focus on issues such as ceasefires (albeit partial or temporary), lifting sieges, controlling border crossings, humanitarian access, and so on. Armed actors and their political allies are likely to press for consideration of constitutional questions and these may need to be considered in order to be able to discuss other issues, but they need to be discussed in terms of future processes and frameworks for involving the broader citizenry rather than in terms of specific outcomes.

- Peace talks need to be multi-level – international, regional, national and local. At present, the focus is national. In particular, the international mediating team, usually the UN, needs to have a formal mandate (and funds) for acting in local talks and not just at the international level. Our research on local peace agreements shows that such agreements are pervasive in contemporary conflicts. Some agreements entrench the power of armed actors and may be merely about sharing the spoils of war, demographic engineering, or managing violence, and can even contribute to new forms of conflict. Others produce meaningful reductions in violence, improve livelihoods, and can create the space and basis for functioning institutions or even a for working towards a larger national-level settlement. Our

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[36] See Alex de Waal, 'Sudan's Political Marketplace and Prospects for Democracy', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 2019.
[37] An Ansoms, Emery Mudinga, Koen Vlassenroot, Aymar Nyenyezi and Godefroid Muzalia Invisible Voices in the Production of Knowledge: Introduction to the (Silent) Voices, Bukavu Series, 3 June 2019.

research suggests that they are more likely to 'work' in the latter sense, when civic actors are more involved in talks.[38] International actors can play an important role in making this happen, as in the case of Galkaio in Somalia.[39] Regional talks are also very important, especially in addressing flows of arms and finance.

- Finally, peace talks need to be inclusive. CRP research demonstrates the value of including women and civic actors in peace-making initiatives both on and beyond political negotiations in contemporary conflicts. In the UN-led Syrian political talks, for example, the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) not only enriched UN mediation efforts by improving analysis of conflict dynamics and signposting the way forward on key areas of agreement, but it also helped to facilitate humanitarian action on the ground and create the space for constituencies of change across divided communities to develop a shared vision for a future Syria. The close link of the CSSR to official processes was critical for legitimating and elevating the 'political' position and role of civil society in peace-making and peacebuilding in Syria. Even if the UN failed to reach a political agreement, the logic of civicness it injected into the process can be seen in the design of the Constitutional Committee, in the actions taken to broaden inclusivity and foster debate, in influencing the discourse of the political actors, and in articulating the political position of civicness within the Committee.[40]

5.3 Justice

The CRP analysis suggests that it is essential to be consistent in support for the principle and practice of advancing justice routinely at all levels, from local to global. The promotion of justice mechanisms is a necessary condition for a shift away from the political marketplace and extremist violence; the very nature of these logics implies a systematic disregard for the rule of law. Thus, the dysfunctions of justice systems underpin and exacerbate the social condition that constitutes contemporary conflict. Rather than waiting for conflicts to end, or for an overall peace settlement, in order to implement institutionalised transitional justice or rule of law programmes, our research suggests the scope for, and importance of, incremental, bottom-up efforts to improve the practice of justice at local levels even while conflict continues.

Part of the problem is that multiple legal, normative and regulatory systems exist and are applied in all of CRP's conflict settings. These include customary, religious and statutory law, as well as international humanitarian and human rights law, codes of conduct, and ad hoc regimes (e.g. arms embargo and financial sanctions). This plurality fuels uncertainty and creates opportunities which political actors exploit. In South Sudan, for example, statutory law and legal authorities and instruments have been harnessed to political agendas and implicated in human rights abuses, including through arbitrary arrests and detentions. Meanwhile local, customary, and religious courts have served political interests by regulating society, while reproducing norms that are functional to political entrepreneurs, who rely on ethnic differences as well as gender and generational inequalities.

Furthermore, CRP carried out research in eastern Congo on projects by international and local NGOs to secure ordinary people's land rights through formalisation and privatisation of pervasive customary land rights, which have become increasingly insecure. The research showed that these projects promote different types of land rights, and are often carried out in competition with each other, and

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[38] Mary Kaldor, Marika Theros and Rim Turkmani (eds.) 'Understanding Local Agreements in Conflict-Affected Contexts', special issue of Peacebuilding, forthcoming.

[39] See Nisar Majid, 'Local agreements: a case study of Galkaio, Somalia', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 8 January 2020. and Nisar Majid, 'Agreement-making at local levels in Somalia: the case of Galkaio', Peacebuilding, forthcoming.

[40] See Rim Turkmani and Marika Theros, 'A Process in its Own Right: the Syrian Civil Society Support Room', Conflict Research Programme Report, June 2020 and Marika Theros and Rim Turkmani, 'Engendering Civicness in Intra-Syrian Political Talks: a Case Study of the Civil Society Support Room', Peacebuilding, forthcoming.

existing land authorities. They therefore risk increasing the uncertainty and fragmentation of land rights and become engulfed in existing power struggles over land.[41]

Courts respond to all manner of crimes, from murder to domestic violence, and deal with difficult social issues from hunger to trauma.[42] However, they have little purchase on war crimes or crimes by political elites. Yet local and customary courts are also adaptable, problem-solving institutions that have the potential for reform from below and to contribute to broader normative changes. They create openings for lawyers and paralegals to create new norms of legal practice, through documentation, advocacy and negotiation at local level. This activism is central to promoting accountability relationships between people and political authorities.

Research in South Sudan has shown that legal activism has continued throughout its conflict, creating scrutiny, influencing social norms, and setting legal precedents, often with little or no financial support.[43] These small gains at local level have the potential to be amplified through documentation, recognition, advocacy and support. International support for legal empowerment and community paralegalism is viable and impactful, even in conflict settings.

In particular, documentation can serve as a vehicle for civic activism and participation in conflict zones and a catalyst for justice. Local human rights groups, women's groups and victims' groups organically emerge and coalesce around the investigation and documentation of human rights violations, because they recognise that such violations are key drivers and manifestations of the conflict, which should be addressed as a matter of priority. Documentation can catalyse justice efforts aimed at disrupting some of the networks and narratives that sustain the violence, e.g. accountability and truth-seeking processes, or help meet pressing justice needs on the ground such as resolving housing, land and property (HLP) disputes, and providing restitution and compensation to refugees and IDPs. The availability and quality of documentation plays an important role in influencing both the likelihood and character of justice: whether justice is pursued or not, what form it takes, how effective and legitimate it is.

Our research on Syria examined the documentation efforts of international actors and Syrian civil society and assessed their implications for justice. We found that their efforts have been closely aligned and focused on accountability, resulting in a growing number of universal jurisdiction prosecutions of Syrian offenders in Europe. However, they have largely neglected other aspects of transitional justice such as addressing HLP violations, which is the most urgent priority for millions of displaced Syrians. The implication is that policymakers should adopt a balanced approach to documentation, ensuring that the overall documentation efforts can catalyse and support both retributive and reparative/restorative justice processes and mechanisms.[44]

5.4 Humanitarian Assistance

Humanitarian aid is essential to save lives in conflict areas. In Syria, some 13.2 million people have been counted as being in need,[45] amounting to 68% of the entire Syrian population. Around 70% suffer from lack of food security.[46] In Somalia and South Sudan, humanitarian assistance has been essential

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[41] Joël Baraka and Kasper Hoffmann, 'Formalization of land rights in eastern Congo: Rethinking Approaches', forthcoming.

[42] Naomi Pendle, 'Accountability for famine: Learning from the chiefs' courts in South Sudan', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 03 October 2018.

[43] Rachel Ibreck, South Sudan's Injustice System: Law and Activism on the Frontline (London: Zed Books, 2019).

[44] Sema Nassar and Iavor Rangelov, 'Documentation of Human Rights Violations and Transitional Justice in Syria: Gaps and Ways to Address Them', CRP Report, forthcoming.

[45] See here.

[46] See here.

to preventing famine during the last four years and 'no regrets' programming has been adopted as a much-needed principle to inform timely response.

However, even leaving aside problems of waste and logistics, humanitarian assistance tends to strengthen the political marketplace. Armed groups can become involved in the delivery of assistance, gain control over the distribution of food and health items and use the aid to favour loyalists and deprive the opposition of necessities. At local levels, the withholding of humanitarian assistance is often used as a tool to manipulate power relations. Even some civil society organisations seem to be drawn into the political marketplace. Our research in Syria has uncovered examples where humanitarian organisations favoured specific local NGOs for the implementation of health-related projects at higher costs and lower quality standards than those offered by other NGOs. Control of humanitarian aid by Government Ministers and pro-regime civil society organisations has provided a mechanism for shoring up support for the regime.

Research undertaken by CRP Somalia has focused on understanding collusive relationships between aid, business and political actors and specifically with concern about how the allocation of security, humanitarian, and developmental assistance contracts contribute to violent political markets at the national and subnational level. A recent CRP study analyses how the distribution of food aid from the mid-1990s until 2010, as well as contributing to improved food security for some, empowered a group of kleptocratic business and political actors, involved in fuel supply, construction, and the provision of security equipment.[47] The shift from food aid to cash programming in Somalia has shifted the epicentre of financial beneficiaries from contractors to formal financial institutions and money-transfer operators, as well as to the local administrative level (including District Commissioners) that control and manage cash programming and other aid contracts either coercively or collusively with local and international NGOs.

International interventions focused on humanitarian aid and state-building generate their own political-economic dynamics. This is most clearly seen in Mogadishu, Claire Elder's research,[48] ongoing since 2017, examines how the dominance of 'powerbroker' industries – economic activities in the logistics and infrastructure sector more broadly – has prevented the consolidation of state or political power and kept Somalia in a phase of 'hyper-disorder'. Her work examines the interests, authority and financial practices of this group of powerbrokers, some of whom are linked to the international aid and security activities, and the ways in which they use insecurity, clan politics, credit-led exploitation, and donor discoordination to build authority and state-like governance structures, and keep the state at bay. She argues that the dominance of powerbrokers - rather than being an outcome of state collapse, endemic economic informality and structural underdevelopment - reflects deep contradictions within the fragile state discourse and tensions in the post-civil war political economy. Periods of collusion followed by violent confrontation occur as the Somali 'state' is both reliant on powerbrokers for security, political lobbying and conflict resolution but also as they seek to rein in their opportunism and consolidate power.

Humanitarian assistance needs to be based on analysis of the political marketplace to establish whether the extent to which it risks fueling the political marketplace is outweighed by lives saved, and whether alternative methods can be found to reduce those risks. Longer-term programmes that support livelihoods and civicness, and which draw on detailed knowledge of context to minimise the risk of fuelling the political marketplace and identity politics, are likely to be more effective. From an economic perspective, livelihood projects have typically a more sustainable impact on household income and wellbeing (financial capital). In Syria, for example, support that was given to Syrian

[47] Susanne Jaspars, Guhad M. Adan and Nisar Majid, 'Food and power in Somalia: business as usual? A scoping study on the political economy of food following shifts in food assistance and in governance', Conflict Research Programme Report, January 2020.

[48] Claire Elder, 'The humanitarian response to COVID-19 in Somalia will increase capital flight and violent conflict', Africa at LSE Blog, 30 April 2020.

agricultural projects and skills led to improvements in food security as well as increased income at the household level.[49] Such projects also helped to build skills, induce greater trust within communities as well as bringing together people from different areas through nurturing joint projects. Such projects also provide an incentive for individuals to give up fighting.

Although such projects are less vulnerable to the predation of the political marketplace than humanitarian assistance, more research is needed on mechanisms for accountability and evaluation.

In terms of shorter-term humanitarian response, CRP work has demonstrated some of the technical and political challenges of making famine early warning systems more conflict-sensitive. [50] The famines that are currently taking place all occur in conflict-affected areas characterised by monetised transactional politics.[51] Indeed, the risk that the dynamics of contemporary conflict raise in terms of greater food insecurity are recognised in UNSC Resolution 2417. As such, in conflict-affected settings, policymakers should combine in their analysis of the information provided by famine early warning systems with detailed conflict analysis informed by conflict data, but also ongoing qualitative research on ways in which communities at risk predict, prevent and cope with food insecurity. In this sense, the approach again involves learning from examples where a logic of civicness emerges in the face of food insecurity that is likely to have been produced and exacerbated by the interplay of the dominant logics. This is also why it is so important for the UK, acting as a civic agent, to support efforts to ensure political accountability for famine or starvation crimes.

5.5 Security Sector Reform

CRP's central finding regarding security sector reform (SSR) is that pro-reform coalitions, which could be described as civic pressure, are the only path to durable progress.[52]

The UK can increase the efficacy of this pressure by calibrating its approach to fit the political conditions within the states it seeks to assist. When the competition for political power within a state takes place between autocrats who purchase armed support – in short, a political marketplace - security reforms are not in the interest of anyone with the power to implement them. Further, experience has shown that pro-reform donors do not have the level of context-specific political skills necessary to prevent the resources provided to support SSR (and especially DDR) from being misappropriated.

However, comparative research on patterns of SSR success show that at some point in each SSR success story, the existing ruling coalition (political elites, business interests, and security services) breaks apart. At this critical juncture, the states that achieved rapid and sustainable SSR gains, were those where domestic pro-reform advocates from different classes, regions, ethnicities, etc. were able to exert joint pressure around a broadly unified reform agenda and recruit supporters from the business community and/or security services and form a new civic coalition. Examples include Indonesia, Peru, and South Africa.

Successful pro-reform coalitions do not emerge without effort. The UK can play the critical role of helping these coalitions be ready to succeed when reform becomes possible by:

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[49] A $17.4 million DFID project to boost cereal production between 2014 and 2016 provided income to some 49,000 farmers.
[50] Daniel Maxwell, 'Famine Early Warning and Information Systems in Conflict Settings: Challenges for Humanitarian Metrics and Response', CRP/WPF/FIC Report, November 2019.
[51] Alex de Waal, Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).
[52] Sarah Detzner, 'Security Sector Reform in Sudan and South Sudan: Incubating Progress', CRP Memo, December 2019.
Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe & Sarah Detzner, 'Sustaining Momentum: Seizing the opportunity for SSR in Sudan', CRP Report, June 2020. For more CRP work on the security sector see here.

- Sponsoring (and protecting) security dialogues and domestic transparency initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels (for and between multiple groups of stakeholders – women, youth, businesspeople, police, lawyers, judges, etc.);

- Building the capacity of a variety of civil society actors throughout the state to weigh different reform alternatives and thus develop a context-appropriate security and justice agenda.

- Pushing, during any negotiations, for inclusive (of interests beyond political parties and armed groups) discussion of, and agreements concerning, a broad range of security and justice issues.

Military leaders and political elites cannot be allowed to make private, spoils-dividing back room deals. Peace agreements secured by pushing the SSR agenda (in particular, judicial reform and security governance / oversight measures) down the road are doomed to failure.

5.6 Targeted Sanctions

Political marketplace analysis provides a powerful tool to help explain how sanctions can penetrate into existing systems of transactional politics and influence the dynamics of power relations among members of the political elite. The political marketplace approach enables policymakers to understand 1) the potential impact(s) of targeted sanctions, and 2) policy trade-offs that arise from their use. Effective targeted sanctions are predicated on detailed understanding of the target's political system, the logic of how actors operate, their goals, constraints and incentives. Without adequate analysis, sanctions, as in the cases of Syria, Iraq or Serbia, often have unintended consequences that include violence and corruption, and which can serve to reinforce the very mechanisms of the political market while further undermining institutional politics.

Sanctions impact political dynamics (for good or for ill) by selectively squeezing material access to the twin currencies of political power in political marketplace systems - arms and money. Through such material impacts, sanctions distribute political power; there are winners and losers (i.e., sanctions could increase the power of one warlord at the expense of another). This can fundamentally change how members of the elite in the political marketplace systems interact with one another, which can lead to elite fracture or cohesion, violent conflict or assist with consolidating peace. The crux is to understand the distributional impacts of sanctions (i.e., on elite access to money and weapons), how they will shape political market dynamics, and the how elite will change their behaviour as circumstances change and in accordance with the political marketplace logic.

Assessing how sanctions impact on the political marketplace helps to:

- identify the material sources of political power in political marketplace systems (i.e., violent capabilities and political finance), and which sanctions might impact.

- identify winners and losers and understand the implications of (re)distributions of political power among them.

- assess changing intra-elite relationships and bargaining dynamics (i.e., whether sanctions contribute to fragmentation of elite groups or greater coherence);

- weigh the implications of removing sanctions (which can have equal political impacts to the imposition of sanctions).

One good example of effective targeted sanctions is the gradually tighter sanctions imposed on Charles Taylor from 2001-2003 (arms embargo, diamond / timber ban, travel bans, aviation ban), in conjunction with other tools of statecraft, especially the indictment by the Special Court of Sierra Leone. The sanctions dramatically decreased Taylor's ability to fund his political budget, and lessened his coercive capabilities. This ultimately led to peace talks. The sanctions remained in place on Liberia

once Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took power in 2006 (that is, an arms embargo and targeted measures - travel ban and asset freezes - on Taylor's associates / potential troublemakers). The arms embargo kept weapons out of the hands of Sirleaf's potential challengers, while the government forces were gradually able to acquire arms; the UN mission provided her extra muscle, giving her a massive edge in coercive capabilities vis-a-vis any potential elite challenger, which helped her consolidate political control, especially over the security arena. The arms embargo was so beneficial to her that she subtly, and successfully, manoeuvred to keep it in place until 2016, far longer than necessary (13 years after the war ended). She was also able to use her influence over lists of potential targets as leverage for political control. However, her increasing reliance on money, rather than violence, left Liberia still a prisoner of the political marketplace.

5.7 Taxation

Questions of how states are financed are at the heart of the CRP's overarching political marketplace framework.[53] As a longstanding body of literature argues, countries that are largely funded by external rents such as 'mineral exports, aid and security cooperation' are more likely to consist of patronage-based or highly incorporated patron-client orders.[54] Though taxation has often been seen as the relatively narrow purview of economists, a revitalised body of research, including work generated by the DFID and Gates Foundation-funded International Centre on Taxation and Development (ICTD), illustrates that taxes are deeply political.[55] And, as the CRP's overarching research agenda illustrates, taxes might be the key to helping states subvert or even break free of the political marketplace's frequently coercive dynamics. Increasing the state's dependence on broad-based tax revenue might enhance the delivery of public services because more people have a stake in how their taxes are spent.[56]

In all of the CRP's research countries, the vast majority of the decentralised parts of the state heavily depend on the central government for fiscal transfers. Likewise, parts of CRP countries that are particularly resource rich are often some of the most contentiously fought over, both in political discourse and at times in military campaigns to claim or occupy territory by the state and armed groups. With these dynamics in mind, interventions that more carefully consider tax reforms that subvert this relationship or potentially reshape the ways in which these regions relate to centre might be desirable.

CRP research on taxes and political authority in South Sudan has identified and categorised a range of formal and informal taxes and payments in the country, and explored the ways in which they are tied to different types of public authorities and to ideas about the state and civicness. This research builds upon work that other CRP research teams have conducted in the DRC, which illustrates how taxes inform public authority in eastern Congo and also underscores the broad range of taxes in conflict-affected countries such as the DRC and South Sudan.[57] In both South Sudan and the DRC,

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[53] Alex de Waal, The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, War and the Business of Power (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

[54] Alex de Waal, '#Public Authority: The Political Marketplace: Analysing Political Entrepreneurs and Political Bargains with a Business Lens' LSE Centre for Public Authority and International Development Blog, 1 February 2018.

[55] See e.g. Wilson Prichard, Taxation, Responsiveness and Accountability in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Tax Bargaining (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mick Moore, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad and Wilson Prichard Taxing Africa, Coercion, Reform and Development (London: Zed Books, 2019).; Mujtaba Piracha and Mick Moore 'Revenue-Maximising or Revenue-Sacrificing Government? Property Tax in Pakistan', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 52 no 12 (2016): 1776-1790.; Giulia Mascagni, 'Aid and Taxation in Ethiopia', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 52 no 12 (2016): 1744-1758.; Samuel Jibao and Wilson Prichard 'Rebuilding Local Government Finances After Conflict: Lessons from a Property Tax Reform Programme in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone', *The Journal of Development Studies*, 52 no 12 (2016): 1759-1775.

[56] Wilson Prichard, Taxation, Responsiveness and Accountability in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Tax Bargaining (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Mick Moore, Odd-Helge Fjeldstad and Wilson Prichard Taxing Africa, Coercion, Reform and Development (London: Zed Books, 2019).

[57] Kaspar Hoffmann, Koen Vlassenroot, and Gauthier Marchais, 'Taxation, Stateness and Armed Groups: Public Authority and

these taxes and payments include those that people make to customary authorities such as chiefs, as well as the variety of taxes collected by officials working for different state revenue authorities. However, as our research illustrates, in the South Sudanese case, there is little evidence that any of these payments go beyond keeping the state machinery 'alive' at the local level. Crucially, this is despite the fact that nearly all respondents argued that taxes should be financing public services such as education, healthcare and other public goods.[58]

The political marketplace in all of our sites depends on access to regional and global finance though these are declining. In particular, South Sudan appears to be traumatically decarbonising, as oil reserves are predicted to run dry by the end of this decade and there are suspicions that the kleptocratic regime is turning to other types of mineral wealth and other natural resources to finance the state.[59] This transition in sources of revenue does offer a potential opportunity for a shift in logic. Given its uniquely outsized role in the country, HMG could support initiatives to improve taxpayer awareness of where their money goes, with a focus on local budgets, which are especially politicised following the on-going transition to 10 states in the country. More specifically, this could include programming to improve tax expertise in civil society organisations, to challenge the unspoken truism in South Sudan that a very small number of people, who essentially constitute the core of the ruling elite, truly understand the country's balance sheets.[60] Unsurprisingly, questions of who the state actually works for, and what people get in exchange for paying taxes, are arguably some of the most radical in all of the countries in which we work.

At the same time, there is also a risk that newly appointed state Governors, who are widely believed to hold strong ties to the state, might be able to rapidly exploit the country's tax system to expand the regime's hold over the country. Given the reality that South Sudan is traumatically decarbonising, rising bottom-up pressures to undo the politics of the political marketplace are increasingly likely to be in direct competition with how political business has been conducted since at least 2011. While this example draws from the CRP's South Sudan research, our findings are also applicable in other conflicts dominated by the political marketplace. These kinds of policy engagements have the power to help invigorate HMG's engagement in other fragile, resource dependent, countries.

5.8 Responding to COVID-19

Our work on COVID-19 distinguishes between the epidemic itself (transmission of SARS-CoV2 leading to morbidity and mortality) and the COVID-19 crisis, which includes the secondary impacts on human wellbeing, other immediate social and economic impacts, political actions taken in the context of the epidemic and crisis which may have other motives and other outcomes, and the structural

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Resource Extraction in Eastern Congo', Development and Change, 47 no 6 (2016): 1434-1456. See e.g. Kailee Jordan, 'Community-Based and Customary Taxation in South-Central Somalia: Possibilities for Hybrid Governance and DIALOGUE Programming', Danish Refugee Council, Somalia, September 2016.; Laura Paler, Wilson Prichard, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra and Cyrus Samii, 'Survey on Total Tax Burden in the DRC', Institute of Development Studies Report prepared for the UK Department of International Development, April 2017.

[58] Matthew Benson, '"Who is this Government Really": South Sudanese Perspectives on Taxes and Public Authority', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 14 May 2020.

[59] United Nations Security Council, 'Final Report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan Submitted Pursuant of Resolution 2471 (2019)', United Nations Security Council, S/2020/342, 28 April 2020.; The Sentry, 'The Taking of South Sudan: The Tycoons, Brokers, and Multinational Corporations Complicit in Hijacking the World's Newest State', The Sentry, September 2019.

[60] See e.g. Vanessa van den Boogaard 'How can Civil Society Help Achieve More Equitable and Accountable Tax Systems', International Centre for Tax and Development Blog, 8 June 2020; Jalia Kangave, 'Promoting Tax Bargains in Uganda and Beyond: The Importance of Civil Society and Parliamentarians', International Centre for Tax and Development Blog, 31 July 2015.

implications of the pandemic and the crisis. Our analysis follows the established approach, 'know your epidemic, know your response, act on its politics.'

All of our research sites are exposed to the transmission of COVID-19.[61] While initial transmission occurred among well-connected, highly-mobile members of social elites, including (in some cases) international civil servants and aid officials, the general epidemics have taken hold among people who are poor and vulnerable, including populations in displaced and refugee camps, those in informal urban settlements, multi-generational families, and those in the informal sector, especially in and around markets and transport hubs. Prisons and detention centres are hubs of transmission. Population susceptibility to widespread severe COVID-19 related symptoms is associated with factors such as age demographics and co-morbidities, and the relatively young populations mean that case-fatality rates are likely to be lower than in developed countries. However, there are vulnerabilities that expose our countries. In all our locations, essential supplies of personal protective equipment, testing kits, and respirators are grossly insufficient, contributing both to accentuated transmission and to greater risks of morbidity. Tertiary health care capacity is so limited as to be a near-irrelevance in many countries, and in Syria, a former middle-income country which was the best-equipped of our sites, we estimate that there are only 650 intensive care beds in the entire country.[62]

During March 2020, there was an astonishing worldwide phenomenon of policy copycatting, whereby almost all countries adopted nearly-identical epidemic containment plans. These standardised responses were drawn from the influenza pandemic preparedness playbook, on the assumption that COVID-19 would follow the influenza pattern of a single two-to-four-month wave of infections. The policies consisted of variants of lockdown, social distancing, and isolation of the symptomatic, along with largely aspirational policies of widespread testing and contact tracing of those testing COVID-positive. (There were outlier variants, including COVID denialists such as Brazil, Burundi and Tanzania.) Island states could become total exclusionists for a while. Highly authoritarian and administratively capable states such as China could implement sustained lockdown, case-identification and contact tracing for long enough to attempt total suppression. Each of our case countries implemented the time-limited transmission mitigation strategy. Unfortunately, the assumption that COVID-19 would behave like influenza was not correct. The lockdowns could be sustained only for a few months before they became unenforceable. In principle this was sufficient time to develop alternative strategies, but in almost all our sites, available funding and energies were absorbed by the dynamics of the political marketplace, so that they could not take the opportunity. Consequently, in most countries, including our cases, easing lockdown simply returns national epidemics to where they were when the lockdowns were first imposed. Assessments of the 'success' or otherwise of COVID-19 containment policies are therefore premature: it will only be possible to ascertain whether they have worked or not when national epidemics are ended, which is likely to be several years hence.

Government responses to COVID-19, while initially similar, have evolved in divergent directions influenced by national political dynamics. In some countries, governments have drawn on a legacy of community health and civic engagement to adjust policies in line with local realities and popular demands. In others, governments have been influenced by the special interests of security or

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[61] In addition to the works cited below, CRP outputs on COVID-19 include: Alex de Waal, 'Governance Implications of Epidemic Disease in Africa: Updating the Agenda for COVID-19', CRP Research Memo, April 2020.; Alex de Waal, 'COVID-19 in Africa: "Know your Epidemic, Act on its Politics."', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 31 March 2020; Nisar Majid and Ahmed M. Musa, 'Somaliland and COVID-19: Emerging Issues and Economic Impact', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 23 April 2020; Jessica Watkins and Mustafa Hasan, 'The Popular Mobilisation and COVID-19 Pandemic in Iraq: a new raison d'être?', Conflict Research Programme Blog , 28 April 2020.; Nisar Majid, Salman Hassan, Sahra Ahmed Koshin, Ahmed M. Musa and Khalif Adbirahman, 'Puntland and COVID-19: Local Responses and Economic Impact', Conflict Research Programme Blog, 05 May 2020. Khalif Abdirahman, 'Reflections on Islamic edicts and authority in the COVID-19 response in Somalia', Conflict Research Programme Blog 18 May 2020.

[62] Mazen Garibah and Zaki Mehchy, 'COVID-19 Pandemic: Syria's Response and Healthcare Capacity', CRP Policy Memo, April 2020.

commercial actors to target lockdown measures on certain communities or extend emergency financial assistance to certain businesses and not others. Generally speaking, small and medium sized enterprises have suffered, many of them going bankrupt, while larger corporations with deeper pockets and better political connections will withstand the downturn, and may emerge stronger insofar as they are able to expand their market share by moving into the vacuum left by those forced out of business.

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in that its economic impacts unfold at both the local and international levels, threatening economic recession on a scale not seen for many decades. The local impacts follow from the adverse consequences of lockdown for the informal sector and social support networks that provide for the most vulnerable. The international impacts include a collapse in oil prices, removing at a stroke the single most important source of state revenue and political finance in oil producers such as Iraq and South Sudan. This accelerated traumatic decarbonisation risks major short-term destabilisation of political markets. Other impacts include massive unemployment in sectors geared to commodity exports and travel, and - of particular interest to our Somalia researchers - a dramatic downturn in remittances from family members working in vulnerable occupations in western countries.[63]

In all of our sites, the pandemic compounds the fear and anxiety in which people live, often fuelled by rumours of conspiracy.[64] The COVID-19 pandemic can also provide a context for resistance. As in the case of the DRC and in line with the Ebola pandemic, the protracted nature of conflict and violence helps to explain why populations have increasingly expressed, during periods of the Ebola and COVID-19 pandemics, their resistance against humanitarian responses and against the central government.[65] In eastern DRC, for example, rather than accepting the health care priorities of interventions, people living in conflict-affected areas see pandemics as moments of struggle and resistance, and mobilise these moments to express their demands to a wide variety of public authorities. The same value-for-life argument underlying current health interventions today is used by people to question how, in the name of bio-legitimacy, interventions select risks and thereby lives that are worth saving.

The following recommendations arise from our initial research on COVID-19 in our sites.

Our main recommendation is that emergency epidemic response has a far better chance of success if it is designed and implemented in consultation with the affected communities. There is some experience with the community model in the cases of Ebola and HIV/AIDS in Africa. In opposition areas, in north-west Syria, this approach seems to have been applied by medical NGOs and others.

This recommendation applies not only to governments but to international agencies. The recent COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan launched by the UN Secretary General to help the least developed countries is a positive step but the UN, including the WHO, have not been able to exercise leadership - they have not set the narrative or led the agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the pre-existing trend towards remote management by humanitarian agencies, as expatriate staff are confined to headquarters. The overall trend in remote management has been to replace frontline aid workers with impersonal metrics for assessment and monitoring, rather than to delegate authority to local staff. This can result in aid agencies having a reduced understanding of the local realities. In the context of a rapidly unfolding epidemic, which has new and unpredictable effects, no existing metrics can be considered reliable, and understanding local context is therefore more important than ever.[66]

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[63] Nisar Majid, Laura Hammond, Khalif Abdirahman, Guhad Adan, and Nauja Kleist, 'How will remittances affect the Somali COVID-19 response?', CRP Blog, 07 April 2020.

[64] Matthew S. Benson, 'COVID-19 Rumours as Transcripts of Resistance in South Sudan', CRP Blog, 18 June 2020.

[65] Nyenyezi and Vlassenroot, forthcoming

[66] Susanne Jaspars, 'Going remote: learning from aid practices in Somalia and Sudan for the COVID-19 crisis', Conflict

Our second main recommendation is that more attention needs urgently to be paid to the political-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, which may turn out to be the most severe recession for a generation or longer, and contribute to major structural political-economic changes. In Africa, the last comparable economic crisis occurred in the 1980s, which so eviscerated institutionalised states that it gave birth to transactional, marketised survival politics among the elite. The turn towards mercenary, transactional politics was constrained by the combination of a new international aid order (the creation of DFID, the Jubilee Campaign, etc.) and the adoption of the norms, principles and institutions for peace-making and constitutional democracy by Africa's leaders themselves. Comparable responses need to be put on the policy agenda today. The decline in global financial flows, especially oil revenues, opens up an opportunity for a shift of logic away from the political marketplace. In particular, both Iraq and South Sudan face traumatic decarbonisation. On the other hand, the impact of the recession on small business may constrain civic possibilities. It is all the more urgent to develop thinking about how to address the underlying social condition and shift the logics of public authority.

6. Conclusion

In this note, we have summarised the CRP's conceptual framework, and suggested how it could be used to redesign tools and capabilities, in order to help reduce violent conflict in some of the most difficult places on earth. Our framework draws attention to the logics of public authority, which we have defined as the political marketplace, identity politics and civicness.

Many of the interventions currently undertaken by international actors end up reinforcing the dominant logics of the political marketplace and

identity politics. The CRP has investigated how interventions in such areas as peace talks, justice, humanitarian assistance, education, or sanctions could be redesigned to weaken or shift the dominant logics and nurture civicness.

At the current moment, the opposite is happening. Populist regimes all over the world are exhibiting the dangerous combination of the political marketplace and identity politics that the CRP observes in our field sites. The spread of COVID-19 and the move away from multilateralism are likely to reinforce these tendencies. This could threaten the UK's national interest both in obvious, short-term ways (distress migration, extremism, the inability to mount coordinated and effective infection containment policies globally), and in longer-term ways that we have yet fully to grasp.

As seen in previous oil-related economic crashes, the parties and militias have used these non-oil alternative forms of political finance to maintain patronage networks and continue political co-optation, effectively increasing their share of power in relation to a cash-strapped central government institutions. In light of such developments on the horizon, the newly installed government and international community have ever-contracting options at their disposal.

Research Programme Blog, 17 April 2020.

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Photography: Participants attend a community-policing workshop on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) held in Belet Weyne, Somalia. Source: Flickr, The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

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