Do Coups d'État Influence Peace Negotiations During Civil War?

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Based upon the empirical observation made by Clayton Thyne (2017: 287-307) that coups d'état shorten the duration of civil wars, this essay investigates the influence of military coups on civil war peace negotiations. To this end, this paper utilises a within-case comparative study of civil war bargaining between belligerents in the Second Sudanese Civil War that took place prior to, and following, the 1989 military coup which brought Omar al-Bashir to power. While recognising that it is not possible to say for certain if the 1989 coup d'état shortened (or even lengthened) the duration of the civil war, I offer that several observations appear consistent with a theoretical outline of how coups are expected to influence civil war bargaining. However, contributing to the understanding of how coups influence peace negotiations during civil war, I posit that the mechanisms by which coups come to resemble 'peace-inducing shocks' are easily interrupted by 'spoilers' who oppose the terms of peace.

The essay is structured as follows. The following section provides conceptual clarification regarding definitions of coup d'état and civil war, after which attention turns to existing literature which explores the theoretical and empirical links between coups and civil wars. In short, I observe that insufficient scholarly attention has been given to the influence of coups d'état on the civil war peace process – a lacuna this essay seeks to address. Puzzlingly, as noted elsewhere, 'the literature on civil war, coup, mass protests, nonviolent movements, and other types of extra-constitutional mechanisms for leadership change have developed mostly independently' (Bell and Sudduth, 2017: 1450). Subsequently, I present an argument of how, at least in theory, coups can be expected to influence negotiations of peaceful settlement to civil conflict. The theoretical section of this essay predominantly draws from a rationalist perspective of civil war bargaining, as well as from Thyne's (2017: 292-297) theoretical outline. Based upon this, the within-case comparative study of Sudan is presented.

Differentiating Coups from Civil Wars

By investigating the influence of coups on the duration and outcome of civil wars, this essay naturally departs from previous literature which blurs the conceptual distinction between the two phenomena. James Fearon (2004: 278), for instance, incorporates cases of bloody coups and 'the violent reshuffling of juntas' in his study of civil war duration, proposing that both meet the criteria for civil war. Other civil war scholarship has similarly coded coups that cross a minimum death threshold as instances of civil war within empirical models, thereby tacitly ignoring any distinction between the two (e.g., Gledistch et al., 2002; Balch-Lindsay et al., 2008). Instead, from its outset, the present study is based upon an understanding that 'the process of a coup is fundamentally different than a civil war' (Hultquist, 2013: 627). Indeed, though there is much disagreement regarding how best to define and measure civil war (see Sambanis, 2004), and there are similar inconsistencies in how scholars operationalise the meaning of coup d'état (Powell and Thyne, 2011: 249-250), they are each distinct political phenomena. For instance, by adhering to a broad definition of coups as 'illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive' (Ibid: 252), and equally considering a general definition of civil war as 'armed combat within a sovereign state between an incumbent government and a nonstate challenger that claims full or partial sovereignty over the territory of the state' (Cederman and Vogt, 2017: 1993), a number of key differences are revealed.

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For one, the perpetrators of coups are assumed to come from within the central apparatus of the state, whereas the belligerents in civil wars include nonstate challengers, often involving 'vast segments of the general population' (Thyne, 2017: 289). In addition, though many civil wars are fought by rebel groups with an intention to unseat the sitting executive – sharing the objective of coup perpetrators – others are fought for political goals including greater autonomy or even secession (Toft, 2012), while others still are fought in accordance with greed-based motives such as control over natural resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Hoeffler, 2011). Furthermore, Thyne (2017: 289) notes differences in brevity, since 'although coup attempts may spark long-running civil conflicts, the coup attempt itself is frequently so brief that it is over before the public is aware that the attempt has been made'. Hence, viewed together, civil wars are differentiated from coups d'état in terms of their perpetrators, their objectives, and their timescales.

Coup and Civil War Dynamics in Extant Literature

Of the scholarly work that explicitly deals with coup d'état and civil war as distinct, but related, phenomena, significant debate centres upon the observation that both pose an existential threat to the political survival of leaders and that, more importantly, 'these threats typically occur contemporaneously' (Bell and Sudduth, 2017: 1433). Indeed, between 1990 and 2010, approximately half of states involved in a civil war also experienced at least one coup attempt, while 75 percent of states that saw coup activity also experienced civil war (Ibid). Accordingly, as is the intention of this essay, recent literature has begun to debate how, and under what circumstances, the two phenomena are theoretically and empirically linked.

For instance, establishing a connection between the risks of military coup and of civil war, several scholars have demonstrated an apparent trade-off faced by leaders who seek to 'coup-proof' their regimes against inside threats, and the consequent heightened risk of outside rebellion this brings (Roessler, 2011, 2016; Sudduth, 2016; Powell, 2014, 2019). In short, 'coup-proofing' refers to 'the set of actions a regime takes to prevent a military coup' (Quinlivan, 1999: 133; see also Sudduth, 2017). However, explained either in terms of the 'coup-civil war trap' (Roessler, 2016) or the 'coup-proofing paradox' (Powell, 2014; 2019), leaders who undertake coup-proofing measures such as ethnic exclusion and military purges risk generating conditions that increase the likelihood of rebellion. To elaborate, coup-proofing methods are thought to alter the balance of capabilities between the state and its dissidents by increasing the capacity of non-state actors to mobilise against the regime, while simultaneously decreasing the military capabilities of the state (Powell, 2014: 331-332).

Similarly investigating the contemporaneous risk of coup d'état and civil war, existing research has also examined how the incidence of civil conflict affects coup motivations and coup outcomes (Bell and Sudduth, 2017; Sudduth, 2021). Ongoing civil war is shown to have a positive impact on the probability of a coup attempt, but a negative impact on whether a given coup attempt is successful (Bell and Sudduth, 2017: 1450). Notably, that coup activity is increased during an ongoing civil war is consistent with a rational choice approach, since war diminishes the welfare of military elites and soldiers, increasing the willingness of potential plotters to accept riskier coup attempts than they otherwise would during peacetime (Ibid: 1432). As an alternative explanation, ongoing civil conflict may also be linked to increased coup activity if civil war increases the *capacity* of perpetrators to attempt a coup d'état. That is, civil war typically compels leaders towards heightened military spending, or to increasing the role of the military in society, or granting the military certain rights and privileges that are not afforded during peacetime – which thereby increases the viability of a coup attempt should the beneficiaries turn against the state (Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni, 2010: 665).

Not only is ongoing civil war shown to increase the likelihood of a coup attempt, but governments also face a heightened risk of experiencing military coup *at the end* of civil conflict. For instance, explained in terms of a commitment problem between the government and the military, the signing of a peace agreement is shown to increase the risk of coup d'état (White, 2020; De Bruin, 2022). That is, peace agreements which are intended to resolve civil war often contain provisions which directly challenge the military's status – a position which is relatively privileged during wartime – creating an incentive for the military to intervene while it is still powerful. In particular, provisions which require the military to integrate with former rebel-group members are seen to foster deep tensions in civil-military relations. This is because the integration process can pose an existential threat to the institutional identity of the military, thus provoking drastic action in the form of coup d'état (White, 2020: 105). Exemplifying this

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point, Erica De Bruin (2022: 14-15) utilises the cases of Burundi and Guinea Bissau to explain how post-conflict power-sharing, and the military integration process more specifically, exacerbates the risk of coup by incumbent elites, and also by newly-integrated former rebels.

However, thus far, disproportionate attention has been given to whether and how the incidence of civil war affects coup motivations and coup behaviour, while the reverse of this remains relatively underexplored. In other words, though the above discussions effectively demonstrate that the threat and occurrence of coup d'état and civil war appear intrinsically linked, they fail to capture whether coups influence the duration and outcome of civil wars, specifically – as is intended with this essay. For the most part, extant literature dealing with the duration and termination of civil war has ignored coups as potential catalysts which may change the course of an otherwise intractable conflict.

Admittedly, beginning to address this lacuna, there is a modest body of literature which explores whether leadership change – including but not limited to change occurring as a result of a coup d'état – is associated with civil war termination. James Fearon and David Laitin (2008: 39-40), for instance, include leadership change as one of their 'random narratives' of civil war termination, and find that changes in government and/or rebel leadership can act as shocks which facilitate the cessation of conflict. In contrast, Michael Tiernay (2015) finds that a conflict is more likely to end if the current leader in control of the state was leader when the conflict began. However, alleviating some of the incongruity with Fearon and Laitin's study, replacement leaders who are not considered to be 'culpable' for the war were shown to be 'much more likely to sign peace agreements and much less likely to fight until one side or the other is victorious' (Ibid: 196). In other words, at least in some cases, leadership change can reasonably be assumed to bring in an executive whose performance is no longer tied to the outcome of the war, and is thus more willing to accept a peaceful settlement.

As touched upon previously, at the time of writing, the only study explicitly dealing with the influence of coups d'état on the duration of civil war is offered by Clayton Thyne (2017: 287-307). Most notably, Thyne posits that military coups can serve as 'peace-inducing shocks', since coups that take place during a civil war 'can shock an otherwise intractable bargaining situation, shortening the war's duration' (Ibid: 287). This argument is supported by hazard analysis of the duration of all civil wars between 1950 and 2009, which finds that, if the state has recently experienced a successful coup, the hazard of a conflict ending increases by 91 percent (Ibid: 298). Thyne rationalises this observation by suggesting that coups d'état 'condense government preferences into a single, unified viewpoint and allow governments to efficiently translate preferences into action' (Ibid: 287). Moreover, since they combine the military with the government, 'effectively eliminating the military as a potential spoiler', coups ease bargaining problems that would otherwise hinder peaceful resolution to civil conflict (Ibid).

Accordingly, the present essay seeks to probe, and ultimately build upon, Thyne's empirical observation that coups shorten the duration of civil war and potentially foster the peaceful resolution to conflict. Indeed, though certainly valuable, Thyne's probabilistic approach offers little insight as to the specific conditions under which coups d'état can shorten the duration of civil war. Certainly, it would be naïve to assume that, in all cases, military coups shorten the duration of civil conflict with an equal likelihood, and/or to an equal degree, thus prompting further inquiry. Accordingly, lending to Thyne's 2017 contribution, as well as to previous studies of coups d'état, leadership change, and civil war termination, the following section outlines how, at least in theory, coups can be expected to influence the duration of civil wars.

Theorising the Influence of Coup D'état on Civil War Duration

Adopting a rationalist framework of civil war bargaining (see Fearon, 1995; 2004; Powell, 2006), peaceful resolution to civil conflict is difficult to reach when, at every stage of the conflict, rebel groups and governments are confronted with severe bargaining problems (Walter, 2009: 249). That is, since war is always inefficient *ex-post*, there must always exist a peaceful *ex-ante* agreement which both sides prefer to fighting – though disputants often struggle to locate agreeable terms (Fearon, 1995: 383). From this perspective, information asymmetries and commitment problems, in particular, present significant barriers to peaceful negotiation, in turn explaining the duration of civil war. Hence, consistent with this approach, the present section theorises how a successful coup d'état might affect the

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beliefs and incentives of belligerents and, in turn, how this may influence civil war bargaining behaviour.

First considering information asymmetries, bargaining theory suggests that the onset and continuation of civil conflict can be rationally explained if the war's belligerents possess asymmetric information regarding their military capabilities and/or resolve (Walter, 2009: 246). The logic here is that it is difficult to locate an *ex-ante* agreement that all parties prefer to fighting if belligerents are unable to determine the relative strength of their opponent or, in other words, when their respective reservation points are unknown. However, Thyne presents that coups reveal information to rebel groups by 'clarifying the government's reservation point', thus informing the opposition about a range of acceptable agreements (Thyne, 2017: 293). This, in part, is based upon the observation that 'unlike civilian governments, the military is able to articulate and maintain a stable and unified viewpoint' (Ibid: 294). Accordingly, Thyne expects that, post-coup, the goals and policies of a military junta are clearly directed towards their preferences for a potential war-ending agreement – in effect signalling their reservation point to the rebel opposition.

Moreover, that leaders who are installed in a wartime coup d'état are more inclined towards peaceful settlement than the previous government appears consistent with an adapted model of bargaining which also incorporates leadership incentives, as offered by Alyssa Prorok (2016: 70-84). Indeed, building upon Thyne's theoretical outline by considering leaders' incentives to avoid punishment from both internal audiences and from opponents, one can expect leaders who 'bear responsibility' for involvement in civil conflict to face strong incentives to continue the fight in order to avoid the negative political consequences of defeat (Prorok, 2016: 70). Comparatively, leaders who take charge in the midst of conflict bear less responsibility – or are less 'culpable' (Sudduth, 2021: 427) – and are assumed to be less concerned about achieving decisive military victory.

With regards to commitment problems, as outlined by Thyne (2017: 294), coups provide a mechanism by which the government is better able to credibly commit to war-ending agreements, thus reducing concerns among rebel groups that, once implemented, the government might renege on the terms of a peaceful settlement. Indeed, building upon Stephen Stedman's observation that the largest threat to civil war peace agreements comes from 'spoilers' – 'leaders and parties who believe the emerging peace threatens their power, world view, and interests and who use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it' (Stedman, 1997: 178), Thyne argues that by consolidating the government and the armed forces, coups essentially eliminate the most important actor that might wish to renege on a war-ending agreement; that is, the military (Thyne, 2017: 295). As touched upon previously, under civilian rule, integrative provisions within peace agreements are often perceived as threatening to the military (White, 2019; De Bruin, 2022), which potentially creates an incentive to renege and re-escalate conflict. Comparatively, post-coup, 'when a deal is struck by the military, we should expect the deal to reflect the military's preferences, giving it little incentive to renege when the war comes to an end' (Thyne, 2017: 295).

Furthermore, Thyne posits that military coups may alleviate commitment problems through another mechanism. That being, compared to when under a civilian government, other potential spoilers are considered less likely to challenge the policy decisions made by a ruling junta, based upon the observation that 'emergency rule and repression frequently follow coups' (Ibid: 295). The logic here is that coups d'état are often associated with the emergence of new authoritarian regimes and increased levels of state-sanctioned violence (see Derpanopoulos et al, 2016: 1-7), which greatly increases the cost of challenging governmental policies.

Note however, departing from Thyne's theoretical argument and offering a potential explanation as to why, in some cases, coups may not shorten the duration of civil wars, campaigns of repression 'do nothing to resolve the conditions that fed [rebels'] grievances in the first place' (Mason et al., 2011: 174). Rather, repression is likely to worsen those conditions, potentially expanding the support base for continued rebellion (Ibid; see also Mason and Krane, 1989). Hence, the emergence of a repressive authoritarian regime via coup d'état may indeed raise the stakes of noncompliance, but, equally, make the status quo less favourable to rebels. That is, since it is precisely the fear of a return to repression post-settlement that prevents rebels from engaging meaningfully in the peace process (Powell, 2006), repressive campaigns will do little to indicate that the post-war situation will be an improvement on the status quo. Hence, the mechanism offered by Thyne requires closer examination. As an additional caveat, the observation that repression follows coup d'état is not even strictly true, since various studies have demonstrated that, particularly within existing autocracies, coups may usher in democratic reform (e.g., Miller, 2016) – again possibly

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explaining deviation between cases.

Accordingly, the remainder of this essay is guided by the above theoretical considerations. The following section briefly covers the methodological choices, before the case study is presented.

Research Design

The following empirical analysis is based upon a within-case comparative study which explores the effect of the 1989 coup d'état on the nature of peace negotiations during the Second Sudanese Civil War. Comparisons are made across time, distinguishing between a pre-coup episode (1983-1989) and a post-coup episode (1989-2005). Evidence is drawn from existing scholarly work detailing the course of the war, as well as from contemporary news publications.

Note, however, that the intention of this comparison is not to establish a causal inference between the 1989 coup d'état and the duration of the civil war. Indeed, multifarious factors that cannot be accounted for, such as international intervention or battlefield dynamics, likely influenced the duration of the war (see for example Ali et al., 2005; Knopf, 2016). Rather, this essay offers an explorative first look into the mechanisms that appear to link coup d'état and civil war.

The Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005)

Often attributed to a legacy of colonial rule, and more specifically to the role of the British 'Southern Policy' in shaping the initial conditions of the conflict (see Johnson, 2016: 11-12; Ali, Elbadawi and El-Batahani, 2005: 195-197), Sudan has experienced two civil wars since achieving independence in 1956. This essay focuses on the Second Sudanese Civil War; a conflict predominantly fought between the central Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). In many ways a continuation of the First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972), factions within the SPLM/A aspired to an independent South Sudan and an end to the religious oppression of Sudanese citizens committed by the central government – actions which were deemed in violation of the 1972 Addis Ababa Accords that formally ended the first civil war (Brosché and Duursma, 2018: 565).

The conflict began in 1983 with the SPLM/A launching attacks from Ethiopia, and officially ended in January 2005 with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Naivasha, Kenya. *Inter alia*, the CPA obligated the central government to recognise the autonomy of the South for an interim period of six years, after which a South Sudanese independence referendum was to be held (Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2005: para 1.2, 1.3, 2.2). Crucially, even though 'many aspects of the agreement remain unimplemented' (Brosché and Duursma, 2018: 560), the CPA succeeded in terminating the civil war after 22 years of conflict, and ultimately led to the secession of South Sudan on July 11, 2011.

The 1989 Coup D'état

On the 30th of June 1989, six years into the civil war, a military coup succeeded in overthrowing Sudan's multiparty system which had been in power since 1985. The leader of the coup was identified as Brigadier Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir who, a day later, announced the suspension of the Constitution, the dissolution of the Constitutional Assembly, the Head of State Council, and the Council of Ministers, as well as the dissolution or suspension of all political parties, trade unions, non-religious societies, public demonstrations, and all newspaper and magazine publications (Kaballo, 1989: 76). This was accompanied by the formation of the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation (RCCNS), which would 'assume supreme constitutional, legislative and executive authority' (Ibid).

The coup d'état took place amid heightened confrontation between the armed forces and then-Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi over the state of the economy and his inability to end the civil war (New York Times, 1989). A group of officers had previously presented al-Mahdi with an ultimatum demanding that he either find a political settlement to the civil war, or he provide the military with the means to achieve a decisive victory on the battlefield (Ibid). Press announcements delivered by the leaders of the coup declared their priorities to be 'the solution of the southern

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problem, the economic crisis and fighting corruption' (Kaballo, 1989: 76).

Notably, as will be discussed further in the following section, the 1989 coup also ushered in a wave of political Islam, with indications that the coup was organised by the National Islamic Front (NIF) – a Sudanese Islamist party and descendant of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ahmed, 2007: 189; see also O'Fahey, 1996). Indeed, consistent with Thyne's expectations, the 1989 coup was followed by a repressive authoritarian rule with little tolerance for dissidence, though state resources and institutions were also mobilised 'to serve the interests of political Islam' (Ali, 2010: 437).

Therefore, by serving as a point of comparison, the following analysis treats the 1989 coup as a critical juncture in the Second Sudanese Civil War. Note, however, that although another military coup took place in 1985 – unseating then-President Ga'afar Nimeiry – comparatively, I do not expect this event to be as informative for the purposes of this essay. The principal reason is that, in direct contradiction to the theoretical expectations as outlined above, the 1985 coup established a democratic coalition government within just six months. Nonetheless, as an outlier, future research into the influence of this event is certainly welcomed and would benefit the study of coups and civil wars.

A Comparison of Negotiations Pre- and Post-Coup D'état

Upon first inspection, it appears difficult to argue that the Second Sudanese Civil War exemplifies a case in which a coup d'état fostered peaceful negotiation between belligerents engaged in a civil war. The war is regarded as one of the 'longest and most destructive' civil conflicts in African history (Reeves, 2002: 167), and fighting continued for a further 16 years after al-Bashir was implanted as the country's leader. As the following analysis will elucidate, the Sudanese military government and the SPLM/A were at a seemingly irreconcilable impasse over the South's right to self-determination in the absence of secular governance (Lesch, 2001). However, on the other hand, one may point to the observation that it was al-Bashir's government who eventually brokered the peace agreement, with al-Bashir temporarily hailed as a 'peacemaker' – prior to revelations regarding the Sudanese Armed Forces' conduct in the Darfur war (Moorcraft, 2015: 2). Indeed, the 1989 coup d'état installed the very government who would eventually oversee the formal termination of civil war in 2005.

Accordingly, debates regarding whether the 1989 coup shortened the duration of civil conflict in Sudan – as would be expected when considering Thyne's (2017) empirical observation – are ultimately fruitless. It is not possible to deduce the effect of the coup on the length of the conflict, specifically. What are better observed, however, are developments in the patterns of negotiations that took place throughout the conflict.

Negotiations Prior to the 1989 Coup

Concordant with theoretical expectations, neither the government of Ga'afar Nimeiry nor the coalition government of Sadiq al-Mahdi engaged in meaningful negotiations with the SPLM/A during the early years of the civil war. In fact, the first formal contact between the government and the SPLM/A did not take place until April 1985, following the military coup, when the Transitional Military Council (TMC) – headed by former Armed Forces Commander in Chief Abdel al-Dahab – met with delegates of the rebel group to outline a route to peaceful settlement (Chand, 1989: 57). Already lending modest support to the theoretical argument that unified military rule fosters peaceful negotiation, following the 1985 coup d'état, al-Dahab had indicated that he would annul Nimeiry's Islamic decrees and sign a peace accord with the SPLM/A (Lesch, 2001: 14). Indeed, al-Dahab had promised the opening of a 'direct dialogue' with rebels in the South with the stated aim of achieving national unity (New York Times, April 7, 1985). However, partly 'as a consequence of intransigence, bureaucratic red tape, and incivility', the peace initiative broke down (Chand: 1989: 58). Ultimately, the TMC re-committed itself to achieving outright military victory over the SPLM/A, launching military offensive '*Sabur Ziada*' later in 1985 (Ibid).

The coalition government between the Umma Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) – elected in April 1986 – also failed to take effective steps to start negotiations with the SPLM/A (Lesch, 2001: 14). For several reasons, evidence suggests that 'no progress towards a negotiated peace was possible during the period of democracy 1985-1989' (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban, 2001: 3). Most critically, consistent with the view that 'spoilers' prevent

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successful civil war bargaining attempts, negotiations were hindered by disagreement within the coalition government. For instance, in 1988, the leader of the DUP had signed an agreement with SPLM/A leader John Garang that would freeze Nimeiri's Islamic decrees, and committed to the resolution of political differences by democratic dialogue in a constitutional conference, rather than by force (Wöndu and Lesch, 2000: 10). However, in reaction, al-Mahdi's government joined forces with hard-line Islamist Hasan al-Turabi to block the implementation of the agreement over fears that, once frozen, the Islamic laws would never be returned (Lesch, 2000: 13). Indeed, it was concerns regarding the implementation of the DUP-SPLM/A agreement that led NIF conspirators to plan and execute the 1989 coup (Wöndu and Lesch, 2000: 12).

Negotiations After the 1989 Coup

There were early indications that, following the coup d'état, al-Bashir might be more willing to engage in peaceful negotiation than the previous governments. Though he immediately denounced the DUP-SPLM/A accords, al-Bashir stated that the junta would restart negotiations with southern rebels from scratch (Lesch: 2001: 14). He also revealed that he may be willing to offer concessions to bring about an end to the conflict, promising that the issue of Sharia law in Sudan would be determined by referendum, and that he would accept a separated South 'if all Southerners accepted', though this declaration was later negated by a spokesperson of the RCCNS (Kaballo, 1989: 76).

Moreover, perhaps indicating a greater commitment to achieving peace, the frequency of attempted negotiated settlements to the civil war increased in the first few years following the coup d'état, with notable inclusions being major peace talks hosted by Nigeria (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban, 2001: 6), and others mediated by the United States (Wöndu and Lesch, 2000: 16). The issue, however, was that throughout the 1990s, 'the Bashir-NIF regime refuse[d] to negotiate any amelioration or abrogation of the Sharia as state law, for example to its pre-1983 status' (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban, 2001: 6). The SPLM/A repeatedly rejected this position, and insisted as a *sine qua non* for genuine negotiation that Sudan exists as a secular state, and that democracy is restored (Lesch: 2001: 15).

Critically, that al-Bashir's regime refused to alter its position with regards to Sharia law speaks to a potentially overlooked assumption behind the theoretical mechanisms as outlined above. That is, if coups d'état are expected to alleviate bargaining problems by 'condensing government preferences into a single, unified viewpoint' (Thyne, 2017: 287), this assumes that other groups in society have little influence on the decision-making within the emergent military junta. The Sudanese case stands in direct contrast to this. To explain, observers of al-Bashir's regime offer that, effectively, 'the country was governed de facto by a shadowy group, *al-tanzim*, a secret nucleus of hard-line militants (civilian and military) of the Islamist organisation' (Ahmed, 2007: 193). Within just weeks of the period of military rule following the coup, Islamist Hasan al-Turabi was instituting the political program of the NIF (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban, 2001: 4). In this regard, throughout the 1990s, the militant Islamist wing of the post-coup regime emerged as a significant 'spoiler' to any potential peace agreement, in the sense that al-Bashir would face severe punishment if he were to deviate from the 'religious project' (Ahmed, 2007: 192). Exemplifying this point, 'alarm grew' among hard-line Islamists when al-Bashir indicated that he would not object to the separation of the South (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban, 2001: 4). As outlined by Einas Ahmed (2007: 192), it is not until a phase of 'post-Islamism', which culminated in the imprisonment of al-Turabi in 1999, that 'intensive negotiations reopened with the SPLM, which led to the 2005 peace agreement'.

Conclusion: Coups D'état as a 'peace-inducing shock'?

Seeking to explore the influence of coup d'état on civil war peace negotiations, this essay utilised a within-case comparative study of peace negotiations between actors in the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) that took place prior to, and after, the 1989 military coup. I find modest evidence in support of the theoretical mechanisms which underpin Clayton Thyne's (2017) empirical observation that coups d'état shorten the duration of civil war. Specifically, while it is not possible to determine the influence of the 1989 coup on the length of the conflict, per se, I present some evidence to suggest that, post-coup, President al-Bashir showed greater commitment to the peace process than his predecessors, consistent with theoretical expectations.

However, if anything, the Sudanese case demonstrates that the theoretical mechanisms which connect coup d'état to

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improved bargaining situations and therefore shortened civil war duration, as outlined by Thyne (2017) and expanded upon within this essay, are easily interrupted. Even within a seemingly 'unified' authoritarian military junta with little tolerance for dissidence, spoilers – in the form of a militant Islamist wing – prevented a quick cessation of conflict. Accordingly, I consider this empirical observation a compelling avenue for future research into the relatively under-explored relationship between civil war and coup d'état.

As a concluding remark, even if future research is somehow able to conclusively determine that the 1989 coup shortened the duration of the Second Sudanese Civil War, to label such an occurrence a 'peace-inducing shock' as labelled by Thyne (2017: 287) is contentious, to say the least. The negative definition of peace as the absence of war disregards much of the political instability that continues to affect Sudan, and the newly formed South Sudan, which can, at least in part, be attributed to the repressive regime of Omar al-Bashir (see for example, Kalpakian, 2017).

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