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## The 'Revolutionary Settlement' in 17th Century England:

Deploying a Political Settlements Analysis

Edward Laws

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## 08

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### Abstract and Summary

Current thinking around the concept of the 'political settlement' draws largely on the literature about the contemporary politics of development, conflict resolution, peace processes and state-building. But does the approach offer a framework for plausible explanatory accounts of historical and empirical 'settlements'? And do individual cases of 'political settlements' help to build a more robust conceptual framework for the comparative understanding of the conditions and prospects for political settlements in general? What policy lessons can be derived from such cases?

This paper offers a brief and preliminary account of how the political processes at work in the revolutionary settlement in late 17th century England can be interpreted through the conceptual framework of the political settlements approach. It suggests that many elements in the current understanding of political settlements were present in the politics of 17th century England in the period after the Civil War and especially in the events leading up to, and following, the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1689. Although there were key and critical moments, the 'settlement' of the late 17th century was not a single event, but a long and on-going process, involving a number of components along a variety of dimensions. It required close interaction and the alignment of key individual leaders and elite interests; it was both prompted and aided by contingent 'triggers' along the way which provided both the occasion and incentive to help establish and consolidate this coalition of interests; it indicates the pivotal role of military forces in either supporting or frustrating new political settlements; it shows the importance of popular support for broad components of the settlement; it illustrates that the informal agreements which constitute defining features of the political settlement process need to be institutionalized in more formal arrangements if they are to survive, and that agreeing the detail of such institutions can be very difficult and conflict-prone.

The paper begins by summarising briefly some of the key features of the political settlements approach and suggests ways in which that approach may be deployed as an analytical framework for understanding the English revolutionary settlement. It then lists the key actors in the revolutionary period – which were for the most part leaders, elite groups and coalitions - and their particular interests in either bringing about, or not actively resisting, 'revolutionary' change. The paper then discusses the institutional content of the new settlement established under William III, focusing on the Bill of Rights of 1689. Finally, some reflections are put forward as to why these new institutions were successful in maintaining the comparative stability and political viability of the new settlement, and some policy implications are drawn out of the analysis.

This account draws primarily on four key historical texts on the revolutionary period: Jones (1972), Plumb (1967), Schwoerer (1981), and Speck (1988). It deploys important recent conceptual discussions of political settlements in Brown & Gravingholt (2009), Parks & Cole (2010) and Whaites (2008).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This paper has been written by Dr. Edward Laws, Research Assistant for the Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) at [www.dlprog.org](http://www.dlprog.org). The author would like to thank the following people for their advice, input and support in the development of this paper: Dr. Adrian Leftwich, Mr. Steve Hogg, Professor Bill Sheils, and Dr. Ronald Clayton. Any errors or shortcomings in the paper are the responsibility of the author alone.

## 1. Analytical Background: The Political Settlements Framework

Though the phrase is not new, 'political settlements' have recently become the focus of conceptual and strategic discussion amongst political analysts, policy makers and aid organizations. The political settlements framework suggests a new approach for the international development community. In line with increased interest in the central role played by politics in developmental outcomes, it directs attention away from concerns with the transfer of technical knowledge or skills to aid-recipient countries, and away from reform about single issues.<sup>2</sup> Instead, this framework regards the power, interests, alliances and coalitions of key elite figures and groups as central to the development process, through their capacity to hinder or promote inclusive, stable and economically productive political settlements (Parks & Cole, 2010). According to this approach, the nature of political settlements in developing countries can be a crucial factor in shaping the success or failure of foreign aid to encourage positive developmental outcomes.

Despite the recent attention it has received, the utility of the political settlements framework for understanding political events and for prescribing action for donor agencies is partly hampered by its lack of definitional clarity.<sup>3</sup> The term 'political settlement' is variously used to describe peace agreements, one-off events such as the signing of a declaration or bill of rights, and long-term political processes of state building, conflict resolution and power consolidation. Despite this conceptual ambiguity, there seems to be an emerging consensus in the literature that political settlements are on-going political processes that involve, and are partly determined by, the negotiation of the power relationships between key elite figures and groups, and the wider array of interests in society. For example, recent DFID literature understands a political settlement as: "(...) an expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organized and exercised to best serve their interests, and about how the relationship between state and society is to be articulated" (DFID, 2010a: 22). Similarly, Brown & Gravingholt (2009: 1) state that: "In essence, political settlements are the result of power struggles. Ideally, they embody an elite consensus on the preferability and means of avoiding violence". Likewise, Whaites (2008: 7) understands political settlements as: "(...) the deeper, often unarticulated, understandings between elites that bring about the conditions to end conflict, but which also in most states prevent violent conflict from occurring". On this account, all political regimes that are not undergoing civil war are based on a political settlement; political settlements constitute the "cornerstone of every social and political order" (Brown & Gravingholt, 2009: 4, 6).

On the basis of the conceptual literature that this paper draws upon, we suggest that it is useful to conceptualise political settlements as dynamic and fluid political processes that reflect the relations of power at a given time in society and the types of alliances and coalitions being forged or dissolved between elites (*ibid.*: 1-2). One-off events such as the signing of a declaration or bill of rights often form important components of political settlements, but settlements should not be understood as being reducible to any one particular event.<sup>4</sup> In discussions on political settlements, there is still some ambiguity about how settlements are to be distinguished (if at all) from elite pacts or informal institutional arrangements. An example of this can be seen in Brown & Gravingholt's (2009: 2) claim: "As inter-elite pacts, settlements are all exclusionary to a certain degree". But if political settlements can be reduced to, and understood comprehensively in, the language of 'elite pacts', why do we need to use the term 'political settlements' in the first place? For our purposes here, and on the basis of the literature drawn on for this paper, we can assert that institutions and elite pacts form discrete components of the wider political settlement, but do not embody the settlement itself.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, DFID (2010b); and Leftwich (2009).

<sup>3</sup> One danger in stretching the concept too far is that the term 'political settlement' simply becomes synonymous with 'politics' more generally. Lack of definitional clarity about the term 'political settlements' is addressed in Laws (2010b, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> I defend this claim in more detail in Laws, E. (2010b).

Political settlements are shaped by power struggle amongst elite actors. 'Elites' are understood to be those individuals who occupy "formal or informal positions of authority and power in public and private organizations or sectors and who take or influence key economic, political, social and administrative decisions" (Leftwich, 2009: 14). Ideally, those elites reach an agreement to establish institutional arrangements that can prevent conflict, promote peaceful relations between potentially competing groups in society, and which provide a framework for positive developmental outcomes such as sustainable economic growth and political stability.

Institutions - understood as the formal and informal 'rules of the game' - are what sustain political settlements by ensuring that they continue to be viable (Parks & Cole, 2010:2). The viability of political settlements can be undermined if stable institutions do not embody them. They can also be undermined if the interests of key elite actors or groups of actors are either left out of, or unsatisfied by, the institutional terms of the settlement. A settlement can be unstable if it lacks popular support or legitimacy in the eyes of the general populace. Settlements can be dislodged through various means, the most common being the emergence of a new elite coalition with sufficient power (usually drawn from military support) and popular legitimacy to contest the existing settlement and its institutional expression, and to promote an alternative settlement and institutions. In cases where a new settlement is established through the use of force, such as a coup d'état, it is comparatively straightforward to identify the end of one settlement and the emergence of another. In other cases, it will be difficult to identify the point at which a new settlement comes into being, as there will be a more gradual emergence of new institutions, or a slow process of institution-reformation.

The following section provides a brief summary of the way in which this conceptual understanding of political settlements can serve as a useful analytical tool for understanding the political processes behind the 17th century revolutionary settlement in England. The events of the late 17th century cannot, of course, be understood comprehensively in isolation from the events that preceded them. In particular, the power struggles and the social and religious tensions that characterised the revolutionary period owe much of their origins to the restoration settlement of 1660, which saw the rule of the monarchy re-established in Britain and the accession of Charles II to the throne. The revolutionary process as a whole spans the period from at least 1640 to 1720 (Knights, 2005: 3), a period of at least 80 years. Despite the necessarily provisional historical account provided in this paper, the late 17th century revolutionary period can be used to support and clarify a number of conceptual generalisations regarding political settlements.

## **2. 17th Century England: Deploying the Political Settlements Framework**

Over the course of the 17th century, the political system of England changed from the absolute monarchy of the Tudors to a constitutional monarchy and the rule of Parliament. The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1689, which saw James II abandon the throne and the accession of William III and Mary II, was the culmination of a long and politically complex process of reform and consolidation by Parliament to achieve a balanced constitutional monarchy. The ensuing political settlement - which featured the formal signing of the Bill of Rights in 1689 and the Act of Settlement in 1701 - established a Protestant line of succession to the throne, as well as constitutional checks and safeguards on the exercise of the power of the monarchy. Through a series of royal concessions, the monarchy surrendered a large part of its authority over taxation, the military, foreign policy, and the right to call Parliament to assembly. Before 1688, it appeared that the political settlement in England was progressing towards the absolutism of the French model. By the close of the 17th century, much of English sovereignty and state authority had been transferred from the King to Parliament. Many of the key institutional details of the new settlement

under William remain in constitutional law today.

In keeping with the analytical framework offered by the political settlements approach to the contemporary politics of development, the 17th century revolutionary settlement needs to be understood as a political process that involved, and was importantly determined by: a) power struggle between key elites; b) the alignment or otherwise of the *interests* of those key elites and the interests of the wider society; and c) the nature of the alliances and coalitions formed between elites, which established new institutions, i.e. new 'rules of the game'.

The formal legal acts that together codified the revolutionary settlement - in particular, the signing of the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement – should not be understood as constituting the political settlement itself, but rather as discrete events that took place during the course of the wider revolutionary political settlement, understood as a fluid and dynamic process that was heavily influenced by the alignment of the interests of key elites and coalitions, and the wider array of interests in society. As such, analysing the revolutionary settlement through the political settlement lens requires us to look at the events and the social, economic and political conditions leading up to, and following on from, the signing of the actual documents, rather than simply focusing on their legal and institutional details.

In using the political settlements framework as a lens through which to make sense of these 17th century events in England, there are three key questions we need to ask. These questions concern the three core components of the political settlements framework: the agents or *actors* (often powerful elite figures), who pursue their *interests*, thereby establishing *institutions* (Parks & Cole, 2010: 6-7, 28-31).

- Who were the key actors that influenced the shape of the settlement? Were they domestic or external actors? Who was included and who was excluded from the settlement, and how did this affect its principal features, as well as its prospects for ensuring social, economic and political stability in England?
- What were the interests of these key actors, and how did the pursuit of those interests result in the settlement taking the form that it did and establishing the institutions that it did? Was the alignment of the interests of key elites and coalitions with the wider interests of society an important factor in the story of the English revolutionary settlement? Were there divisions or conflicts between the interests of dominant elites?
- What was the content of the settlement? What institutions did it establish/replace, and how did these institutions work to secure the stability of the new settlement under William III? What motivated the dominant elites to establish and comply with the new institutions?

By putting forward answers to these questions, the hope is that we might support and clarify some conceptual generalisations regarding political settlements, and, more specifically, regarding the relationship between political settlements and inclusive, stable and developmental politics. In order to utilise the political settlements lens to make sense of the English revolution, however, we have to first understand something of the background social and political conditions that led to the demands for a new settlement. Although the emergence of the new settlement in England can be identified partly with the rapid changes in the monarchy and the constitutional balance of power in 1688, these innovations were themselves the outcome of a slower process of power re-alignment that took place in 17th century England.

### 3. Background to the 'Glorious Revolution': 1685-1688

On February 6, 1685, Charles II died and was succeeded by his brother, the Catholic James II. Despite the widespread fears of Catholicism in English society, and despite previous attempts to exclude James from the throne, his accession was straightforward and occurred without incident. James initially presided over a primarily loyalist Parliament. The House was quick to vote in favour of James having the same revenues as Charles II, and also voted James the additional resources and funds needed to put down an attempted uprising led by the Duke of Monmouth.<sup>5</sup> These measures were accompanied by passionate declarations of loyalty to the Crown. Since Parliament exercised a large degree of control over the state's finances, no English monarch could rule effectively – nor engage in expensive military conflicts – without having the support of the majority of the House.

This support was short-lived as James proceeded to alienate virtually every politically and militarily significant segment of English society, through revoking constitutional checks on the authority of the monarchy, and by promoting Catholicism. Parliamentary support for James began to fade in the summer of 1685, when he requested funds to maintain a standing army in peacetime. He further antagonised the House when he requested the repeal of the Test Acts. These were Acts, established by Parliament in 1673, during the rule of Charles II, which required all those in office to prove that they were not Catholic, by denouncing transubstantiation. This marked the start of James' attempts to remove the social and political disabilities that had previously been imposed upon Catholics and non-conformists; an attempt that was met with fierce resistance from nearly all sectors of English society, as we will see in more detail below.

In 1686, a court ruling declared that, in individual cases, James could revoke the Test Act without the consent of Parliament. He began to introduce Catholics into positions of power in the army, the universities, and even posts within the Anglican Church. On 15 July, James assembled an Ecclesiastical Commission. The Commission was empowered to remove members of the clergy from their positions of authority, and its first act was to suspend Henry Compton, the Bishop of London, because of his refusal to suspend a London clergyman who had denounced Catholicism. Compton would go on to become a member of the Immortal Seven – the elite coalition that negotiated the invasion of England by William of Orange in 1689. In 1687, a *Papal Nuncio* was officially accredited to St. James's Palace, and Roman Catholics gained control over Magdalen College, Oxford.

Catholicism was associated in this period with the absolutist and persecuting rule of the French monarch, Louis XIV. This association seemed to be confirmed by James' heavy-handed approach to asserting his authority over the Commons. Faced with resistance in Parliament to his requests for greater toleration of Catholicism, James adjourned the House in November 1685. For the next year and a half he continually prorogued Parliament, until finally dissolving it altogether in July 1687. Throughout the rest of that year James instructed his Lord Lieutenants to call together local prominent people and to ask them whether, if they were to be elected as MPs, they would approve of the repeal of the penal laws, which prevented Catholics and non-conformists from holding positions of high authority in government. The surviving answers show widespread opposition.

At the time, it was feared that James was using his prerogative to circumvent statute in order to promote Catholicism. James' belief in his divine authority over and above Parliament, combined with his efforts to secure rights and political power for Catholics, fostered dissatisfaction across a number of key elite groups in English society. The crisis was brought to a head when James' second wife, Mary of Modena, gave birth to a male heir in June 1688. The event changed the succession of the throne, which would

<sup>5</sup> The Duke of Monmouth was the illegitimate son of Charles II. Having fled to Holland in the aftermath of the failed Rye House Plot, in 1685 Monmouth invaded England and attempted to organise a military campaign against James II, whilst asserting his own right to the throne. Although the Duke enjoyed a degree of support in the predominantly Protestant South West and West of England, his rebellion was soon crushed by James' larger and professionally trained army.

have otherwise passed to his two adult Protestant daughters – Mary, married to the Protestant Dutch prince, William of Orange; and Anne. The birth of James' male heir may be seen to have functioned as a 'trigger', or 'critical juncture', that brought into alignment the interests of key elites figures in the Anglican Church, in the Whig and Tory parties, in the landed gentry and aristocracy, in the military, and in the commercial class.

The following section discusses how each of these elite groups had a vested interest in opposing the terms of the settlement in place under James II.

## 4. The Key Actors and their Interests

### 4.1 The Clergy

The role and influence of the Anglican clergy as a key elite group that influenced the course of the revolutionary settlement cannot be overstated. Conflict of religious interests was above all the main factor in bringing about revolutionary change. As we have seen, it was clear that James II wanted to re-instate Catholicism as the dominant religion in England, and he took a number of important steps to increase the prominence and political power of Catholics during his time as King.

These moves towards re-instating Catholicism in England were anathema to the Anglican clergy. The resistance of the clergy to the authority of James II was made clear when - against a royal mandate - the Archbishop of Canterbury and six other bishops refused to read in Church his revised version of the Declaration of Indulgence (which aimed to secure religious toleration for Catholics in England). Whig historians later named this group 'the Seven Bishops'.<sup>6</sup> The Seven Bishops petitioned the King to withdraw the order on the grounds that his Declaration was illegal, as it was based on a suspending power, which Parliament had condemned.

On June 8th 1688, the Seven Bishops were arrested and sent to the Tower of London to await trial. The importance of conflict between Protestant and Catholic religious interests in influencing the course of the political settlement was exacerbated beyond measure when, two days later, James' wife gave birth to a son, thereby establishing a Catholic male heir to the throne. The birth of James' male heir represents a critical juncture in the story of the English revolution. As Burton & Higley (1987: 298) point out, one of the most common catalysts for the emergence of a new political settlement is "the occurrence of a major crisis, which provokes elite action". The very real prospect, in 1688, of a Catholic alliance between France and England, consolidated through a Catholic heir to the throne, was just the kind of external trigger that was needed to fuel the formation of a new settlement.

### 4.2 The Common Public

The interest of the clergy in resisting the re-introduction of Catholicism as the dominant religion in England was aligned with the broader interest in society in avoiding social disruption and violent conflict. The memory of the Civil War and the destruction it had wrought on English society was still fresh in the popular consciousness of the English people. Although statements regarding 'popular opinion' in the 17th century lack rigorous supporting data, contemporary historians argue that a desire to avoid further violence and conflict amongst the common public was instrumental in bringing about James' downfall and in generating popular support for a new political settlement (Speck, 1988: 213).<sup>7</sup> Schwoerer (1981:

<sup>6</sup> 'Whig history' is a term that refers broadly to historical analyses of British history that regard the constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary democracy as key signs of an inevitable march of moral and political progress. It is often used in a pejorative sense, to identify historical analyses that embody naive teleological and anachronistic assumptions. Whig historians are not necessarily committed to Whig political ideology – see Note 7 on page 11, below.

<sup>7</sup> During the 1690s, poll-books were introduced for the first time in England. These voting records provide historians with some insight into the political temperament of the electorate during this period, and often appear to form the basis of their claims regarding the



285) agrees that all sections of English society - including those from non-elite categories - were “wary of the possibility of another violent Civil War ... with its concomitant threat to property, life, and social status”. Burton & Higley (1987: 298) point out that – in addition to the emergence of an external crisis – a key motivation for a new settlement is often the recent “experience of costly, but also essentially inconclusive, conflict”. In a situation where there is no clear winner, elite groups are more likely to seek a compromise, thereby putting into motion a new political settlement.

Such circumstances clearly fit with the ambiguous outcome of the English civil war of the 1640s. For decades, England had been wrought by tensions between the Crown, Church, Parliament and the people. This illustrates how the alignment of elite interests (in this case, the interest of the clergy in resisting a Catholic dynasty) with the wider interests of the society (in this case, the interest of the non-elite public in peace, stability and prosperity) can be instrumental in bringing about a new political settlement. This much is congruent with Parks & Cole's (2010: 2) claim that the success or failure of a political settlement depends partly upon the interests of dominant elite coalitions being aligned, and on the interaction between those interests and the wider array of interests in the society.

When the Seven Bishops were released from the Tower on 30th June huge crowds gathered to celebrate in the streets of London. That same day, seven politicians signed a letter of invitation to William of Orange to intervene through a military invasion (it was not, at this point, self-evident that William would go on to assume the throne in place of James). They became known as ‘The Immortal Seven’.

### 4.3 The Immortal Seven

These were seven leading politicians and noblemen of the day, drawn from the Whig and Tory factions, who together drafted the invitation in 1688 to William of Orange.<sup>8</sup> The Seven consisted of: Lord Shrewsbury, Lord Devonshire, Lord Danby, Lord Lumley, Henry Compton, Edward Russell and Henry Sidney. Russell and Sidney were leading Whigs, while Lord Danby was a key Tory. He was joined in his support of the Tories by Henry Compton, who was also the Bishop of London. Compton thereby established a link between the Seven and the disaffected clergymen across England. Lord Devonshire was one of the wealthiest landowners in the country, and so would have had a keen awareness of the interests of the elite landed gentry.

Russell, Earl of Orford, played perhaps the most significant role in bringing together the Seven and extending the invitation to William. Having previously served in the Royal Navy, he became unemployed as a result of the Russell family falling into the King's disfavour, over allegations that Lord Russell had been involved in the Rye House Plot.<sup>9</sup> It seems that personal vendettas and individual resentment towards James II were key contributing factors in uniting the Immortal Seven into an elite coalition and power network that had the potential to facilitate the emergence of a new political settlement:

Danby was chagrined that he had not been reinstated as a chief minister after suffering for his services to Charles II. Devonshire was smarting from the fine of £30,000 imposed on him for breach of the peace in a royal palace. Two other signatories of the invitation to William of Orange ... had been stripped of their commissions in the army (Speck, 1988: 192).

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ethos of the ‘common public’ in the late 17th C. However, since the use of poll-books was far from universal, and since no other reliable polling methods existed in the 17th C, such claims must necessarily be regarded as highly speculative. See Plumb (1967: 43-45), and Speck (1988: 207, 210).

8 The Whigs and Tories were the main contending parties in British Parliament from the 1680s to the 1850s. Broadly speaking, the Whigs supported the formation of a constitutional monarchy and were ideologically opposed to absolutist forms of rule. By contrast, the Tories supported the absolute rule of the monarchy and believed in the divine right of Kings. In the 19th century, the Whigs became the Liberal Party and the Tories became the Conservative Party.

9 The Rye House Plot of 1683 was an alleged plan amongst a group of Protestant noblemen to assassinate Charles II and James, on account of their pro-Catholic sympathies. The alleged plan involved ambushing Charles and James as they neared the country manor Rye House, in Hoddesdon in Hertfordshire, on their journey from Newmarket to London. The outbreak of a fire in Newmarket altered their travel plans and prevented the execution of the plot. News of the planned ambush was later leaked and made public, and many of those suspected of involvement were executed.

On June 30th, 1688, the invitation asking William to invade was sent. Although the chief composer remains anonymous, it is known that Henry Sidney served as transcriber, and that the invitation was signed by the Immortal Seven, with each signatory having been assigned a particular number to use *in lieu* of his actual name. In the letter, the Immortal Seven claimed that nineteen-twentieths of the English people wished for political change. In the fall of 1687, James had held an opinion poll in an attempt to determine whether or not the nation would support the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, so as to prevent punishment of dissenters from the Church of England (thereby protecting Roman Catholics).<sup>10</sup> Responses to the questionnaire are said to have formed the basis of the Immortal Seven's assertion, given to William in the letter of invitation, that "there are nineteen of twenty of the people throughout the Kingdom who are desirous of change".<sup>11</sup>

Henry Sidney played a particularly important role in encouraging revolutionary change. Sidney had been the envoy to Holland from 1679-1685, and established the channel of communication and informal power network between William of Orange and the Immortal Seven, which would later facilitate the accession of William and Mary to the throne.

#### 4.4 The Military

Henry Sidney was instrumental not only in establishing a line of communication between disgruntled nobles and politicians in England and a powerful but excluded elite figure in William of Orange. He was also able to confirm that key figures in the military desired a new political settlement. According to Speck (1988: 219), Sidney had contacts with many senior military officers and, as such, was able to inform William of Orange that the army's loyalties were divided. They could not be relied upon to support unconditionally James II in the event of a revolution or popular uprising, despite being nominally under his control. Furthermore, Russell's prior position as an Admiral in the Royal Navy meant that he was able to advise William that his invasion force would not face resistance on the high seas. Without the assurance of support within the military, it is unlikely that William would have accepted the invitation to invade (Speck 1988: 219). The inclusion of high-ranking officials in the military would seem therefore to be a crucial factor in explaining the stability of political settlements.

Plumb (1967: 61-62) argues that James' nominal control over the military - even if they were divided in their loyalties - significantly shaped the course of the settlement. Although William considered his army to be of sufficient strength and experience to defeat James' forces, he decided to avoid the risks of battle and to maintain a defensive position, in the hope that James' forces would collapse internally. He therefore landed far from James' army, and hoped that his English allies would take the initiative in acting against James. Parks & Cole (2010: 11) observe that the most basic method of maintaining an existing political settlement is through the capacity to deploy force against competing coalitions. This was a capacity that, at first glance, James II seemed to possess. Nevertheless, Sidney's advice to William was sound; when William arrived in England, officers from James' army deserted *en masse*, and swelled the Dutch ranks (Plumb, 1967: 62). Losing the support of the military severely undermined James' capacity to maintain the existing political settlement. Again, this is congruent with Parks & Cole's (2010: 14) claims that the stability of an existing political settlement will be undermined if its coercive capacity relative to other competing groups declines, and that, when faced with an outside power intervening militarily, the current political settlement will often collapse.

James considered himself to be a military man. He had not appointed a Lord High Admiral or Board of Admiralty, but had instead kept the chief direction of maritime affairs under his own control. By doing

<sup>10</sup> The Corporation Act of 1661 excluded non-members of the Anglican Church from positions of authority in town corporations. The Test Act of 1673 imposed the same conditions on holders of civil and military offices.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to bear in mind that this opinion poll would only have covered a very small minority of the population, and so its results cannot be regarded as reliable evidence of the general political temperament of the English people. Therefore the assertion, given to William III, that nineteen-twentieths of the population favoured a change in the nature of British political rule, must be viewed as a highly speculative and politically motivated claim.

so, he had in fact succeeded in bringing the navy to a much more efficient state than it had been at the time of his accession. However, as a result, James depended on these military forces to a great extent during his reign and he trusted them to defend him. In a letter to Lord Faversham, Commander in Chief of his armed forces, James laments: "If I could have relied upon all my troops, I might not have been put to this extremity I am in, and would at least have had one blow for it". The impact these desertions had on James' morale was also stressed in the declaration he later published to justify his flight to France.

#### 4.5 Noblemen and the Landed Gentry

Opposition to the political settlement in place under James II amongst noblemen and the landed gentry was consolidated in the face of James' efforts to challenge their political power and to establish his dominance over the county representation. In 1688, James made a sustained attempt to 'purge' from positions of local power those members of the aristocracy and gentry who challenged his authority, and to put in their place individuals upon whom he felt he could rely for support. According to Plumb (1967: 60-61) this policy backfired, with disastrous consequences for James' popular support, because it served to alienate the vast majority of the aristocracy and gentry - even those who had previously been staunch royalists. Faced with their complete exclusion from the existing political settlement, we can see why the aristocracy and gentry supported the formation of a new political settlement which would potentially return them to their positions of local power, and which would insulate them from the threat of the arbitrary exercise of state power against their interests. This fits neatly with Parks & Cole's (2010: 8) claim that: "Where excluded elites feel their fundamental interests are at stake ... they can pose a threat to the political settlement established and maintained by the core coalition".

Mid-way through 1688, James II attempted to alter the course of the exclusionary settlement by restoring the traditional men of power whom he had replaced. But by this point he had already caused irreparable damage to his popular support amongst the nobility and gentry, ensuring that they would not actively resist the new settlement under William III (Plumb, 1967: 61; Speck, 1988: 192-194). The way in which the landed gentry and nobility shunned James II in the face of William's invasion contrasts strikingly with the earlier support they showed James in the context of the rebellion led by the Duke of Monmouth in 1685. In the earlier situation, the self-interest of these elites in the protection of their local authority, property, wealth and rights led them to vote for the financial measures that would enable James II to defeat the uprising, thereby sustaining the political settlement in place. In 1689, however, the same self-interested motives led them to withdraw their support for James and to back a new settlement (Speck, 1988: 211).

#### 4.6 The Commercial Class

The 17th century was a decade "of commercial expansion on an unprecedented scale" (Speck, 1988: 205). As such, the commercial interest emerged as a key elite group that could exercise political influence over Parliament. Parks & Cole (2010: 13) point out that "... the emergence of an independent entrepreneurial class, with access to significant resources, can, to the extent that it is organized, lead to changes in the political balance of power and to the emergence of new elite coalitions". Both James and the traditional ruling class made efforts to win over the commercial interest, by attempting to align their preferred conception of liberty (in the case of James, religious toleration; and in the case of his opponents, freedom from absolutist rule) with improved economic growth and individual prosperity (Speck, 1988: 205). The significant immigration of Huguenots into England during the 1680s seems to have weighed against the idea that absolutist rule was conducive to prosperity, free trade and economic growth. The Huguenots (many of whom were tradesmen and artisans) were fleeing persecution in France under the absolutist rule of Louis XIV, and would have relayed tales of their ordeals to tradesmen

and craftsmen in England (*Ibid*: 206).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.7 The Shared Interest in a Free Parliament

According to Speck (1988: 232, 240), the demand for a free Parliament was by far the most important factor in creating a broad consensus in England in favour of replacing James II. James was committed to the absolute authority of the monarchy. It was his commitment to absolutism and the divine right of Kings that cemented - however briefly - widespread support for an alternative political settlement (Plumb, 1967: 62). Those who favoured the divine right of Kings *as well* as those who supported contractual Kingship could *both*, in principle, support the demand for a free Parliament against the absolutist rule of James II, without sacrificing their core conviction. This was because the institutional terms of the revolutionary settlement did not explicitly address the question of the divine right of Kings over and above Parliament. The new settlement under William III was acceptable to those who wanted to change the King and to those who merely wanted to change the nature of the Kingship, by limiting its prerogatives. As Schwoerer (1981: 327) argues: "... every section of society had a common interest in abolishing the methods which ... James had used to manipulate the law". The emergence of a new political settlement under William III clearly relied upon the fact that the settlement he brought into being satisfied this crucial interest that was shared across English society. However, when the particular details of the settlement had to be codified in law - through the signing of the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement - its popular support diminished. This suggests that the more specific the institutional terms of a particular settlement, the less likely it is to receive broad-based popular support, because it is more likely to conflict with the interests of some faction or factions in society.

Without the support of key elite groups - the military, the Anglican clergy, the landed gentry and noblemen, and the commercial class - James II was unable to mount any effective resistance to the emergence of a new political settlement. His subsequent flight from England left open for debate the question of succession. Upon arrival in London, William did not claim the throne by conquest. Instead, a convention of Lords and MPs was summoned to devise a political settlement. It became clear that William III would take the throne, although the institutions through which he would gain, control and exercise power, and thereby sustain a new political settlement, had to be agreed upon in Parliament.

### 5. The Accession of William III: Codifying the New Settlement

In the immediate aftermath of James' flight from England, a Convention Parliament was hastily assembled. The Convention had to address a complex set of fundamental institutional issues that would either sustain or contribute to the dissolution of the new settlement under William III. This included: "the succession, the power of the crown, the preservation of Parliamentary independence and electoral freedom, the rights of the judiciary and juries, martial law, (and) the position of the established Church and of the dissenters" (Jones, 1972: 312). The task of settling these institutional questions in a way that would sustain the new settlement was made all the more daunting by the fact that virtually all the peers and MPs who made up the Convention belonged to bitterly antagonistic parties and court groups. The Convention as a whole was riven by personal and political rivalry and hostility (*Ibid*). As Burton & Higley (1987: 305) observe: "(...) English elites confronted the especially divisive conditions of the mid-seventeenth century without widely accepted rules of the game for peacefully managing their conflicts and those of the larger society".

It seems that the urgency of the need to settle upon a deal was a key factor in overcoming the personal

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<sup>12</sup> I am grateful to Professor Sheils and Dr. Ron Clayton for drawing my attention to this point.

vendettas and factional disputes between these elites. The flight of James II from the country meant that all governmental offices had to be filled immediately, and the most pressing institutional questions decided upon within a matter of weeks. The urgency with which these complex institutional issues had to be agreed upon meant that there was little time for political debate, and therefore little room for factional disputes and competing elite interests to frustrate the establishment of the institutions that would be required to sustain the new settlement (*Ibid*: 317).

Whigs and Tories disagreed about whether James had abdicated or not, whether the throne should be declared vacant, and whether Mary alone or William jointly should be asked to fill it. But these differences failed to obstruct the formation of the new settlement. In part, this was because the wording of the Declaration of Rights simply stated all the main positions, and left it to individuals to decide how to resolve the contradictions (Hill, 1980: 276).

The Tory members of the Convention were divided between those who supported the accession of William III, those loyalists who refused to recognise any other sovereign authority besides James II, those who wanted to re-instate James on certain conditions, and those who advocated a period of regency rule (divided again between those who wanted James and those who wanted William to rule as regent). There are three reasons that help to account for how this factionalism within the Tories failed to frustrate the emergence of a new settlement.

First, the majority of Tories who were absolutely opposed to the new settlement under William III were not elite figures as such, but rather a small, mostly clerical group with very little political significance or power (Hill, 1980: 315). Second, it seems that support for the new settlement under William amongst the otherwise divided Tories was a product of realism and pragmatism; an awareness that there was no feasible alternative and that the prospect of military conflict in Ireland, Scotland and France necessitated an immediate effective government (*Ibid*). Last, several key Tory leaders (including Lord Danby from the Immortal Seven) had a personal vested interest in establishing a new set of governmental institutions, which was their need to be involved in the distribution of offices (*Ibid*). During the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81, the Tories had been opposed to the right of Parliament to decide upon the succession.<sup>13</sup> What seems instrumental in securing their support for the institutions that would provide the foundation for the new settlement under William III is that the oath they were required to read made no mention of the legitimacy of his title (*Ibid*: 319).

The Whig members of the Convention presented a far more united front on the question of succession. Their fundamental ideological conviction in the contractual basis of authority meant they had no qualms about advocating the removal from office of a monarch who ruled - as James II had done - with absolute authority (*Ibid*: 314). Moreover, the Whigs had already established their position on the rule of a Catholic monarch: during the Exclusion Crisis, they had supported the exclusion from the throne of James, on the grounds of his Catholicism. Their united conviction meant that the Whigs dominated the Parliamentary debates during the period of crisis before the rule of William III was formally in place, which helped to establish agreement that the throne had been abdicated and that William had a legitimate claim on the monarchy.

<sup>13</sup> The Exclusion Crisis refers to a period of political instability during the reign of Charles II. From 1678 to 1681, Parliament was called to session three times, and attempts were made by discontented Whigs to exclude Charles' brother and presumptive heir, James, from taking the throne, on the grounds of his suspected Catholicism. On each occasion, opposition to the legitimacy of James' claim to the throne was defeated when Charles used his prerogative to shut down the Parliamentary proceedings.

## 6. The Declaration of Rights

The revolutionary settlement represented a fundamental shift in the balance of power and the nature of English political institutions. In essence, the principles and institutions of the *ancien regime* - legitimate monarchy, divine right, the absolute authority of the monarchy in every sphere of life - were replaced by the rule of Parliament, the common law, a jury system and local government by the justices and corporations. The revolution witnessed the triumph of individual rights and the rule of Parliament over the absolute and divine rights of the monarchy. The Declaration of Rights that was put together by the Convention Parliament was shortly thereafter slimmed down from its original 28 articles into The Bill of Rights (1689), which listed 13 articles. These were primarily designed to re-establish liberties and rights that had been eroded during the rule of James II. The Bill was not intended to bring new rights or liberties into being (Ibid: 318, 328). The Bill was composed of the following articles:

1. That the pretended power of suspending of laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, without consent of Parliament, is illegal.
2. That the pretended power of dispensing with laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal.
3. That the commission for erecting the late Courts of Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Causes and courts of like nature are illegal and pernicious.
4. That levying money for or to the use of the Crown, by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is, or shall be granted, is illegal.
5. That it is the right of the subjects to petition the King, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal.
6. That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law.
7. That the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions and as allowed by law.
8. That election of members of Parliament ought to be free.
9. That the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court of place out of Parliament.
10. That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed; nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
11. That jurors ought to be duly impannelled and returned, and jurors which pass upon men in trials for high treason ought to be freeholders.
12. That all grants and promises of fines and forfeitures of particular persons before conviction are illegal and void.
13. And that for redress of all grievances, and for the amending, strengthening and preserving of the law, Parliament ought to be frequently held.

## 7. The Aftermath

The widespread resistance across virtually all levels of English society to James' absolutism and to the prospect of a Catholic line of succession was reflected clearly in the institutional terms of the new political settlement under William III. According to Speck (1988: 246), the settlement represented a transformation that saw - for the first time - Parliament become an independent and frequently assembled organisation in its own right. Equally important was the fact that the Bill of Rights established the Protestant line of succession; the only novel piece of legislation included in the Bill stipulated that any Catholic, or anyone married to a Catholic, was barred from the throne. Catholics in England had been rendered politically ineffective by the flight of James II. Lacking any leadership or a key domestic elite or elite group to represent their interests, they were unable to form a politically viable coalition or to mount any tangible political resistance to the new settlement (Jones, 1972: 313). The Bill of Rights established freedom from taxation by Royal Prerogative. So the interests of the emerging commercial class were included in the new settlement, which contributed to its stability. By establishing Parliamentary control over the army in peacetime, the Bill also helped to ensure that the monarch would be unable to challenge the rule of Parliament through military means. In this way, we can see how the Bill of Rights put into place institutions that helped to ensure that the new settlement continued to be viable.

However, the broad consensus across all sections of English society, that saw the emergence of a new settlement under William III, was short-lived. Jones (1972: 329) observes that: "The immediate aftermath was one of war and depression, of unprecedentedly high levels of taxation and of civil wars in Scotland and Ireland". Rather than ushering in a period of political stability, the new settlement provoked divisions and disorder. The hasty agreements established regarding the succession and constitutional liberties "were followed by ... faction-fighting, patronage questions and personal and party recriminations about issues of the past" (*Ibid.* 319). The stability of the settlement was further jeopardised when William, in exercising his power of patronage, sought to distribute offices to Whigs and Tories equally. This move towards a more inclusive political settlement exacerbated existing divisions and animosities, so that the new institutions of government were impeded (*Ibid.* 322). This supports the point made by Parks & Cole (2010: 15) that - in the short-term - the stability of a settlement may have to be traded off against its inclusivity.

Despite the instability, factionalism and divisions in Parliament during the period immediately following the establishment of the rule of William III, the revolutionary settlement successfully laid the groundwork for political stability, relative prosperity, and domestic peace. According to Jones (1972: 331), the new settlement was comparatively stable because "its solvency, as well as its successes in war after 1702, proved its superiority over the absolutism of Louis XIV. Limited, or mixed government, was shown to be capable of respecting liberties at home whilst waging successful war abroad". After the signing of the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Rights, output and productivity in agriculture, industry and trade improved, which would have contributed to the stability of the new settlement under William. This seems broadly congruent with Parks & Cole's (2010: 28) claim that an emerging political settlement will be more stable and will gain popular legitimacy "through delivery of development and improved services in the aftermath of a transition".

Two final points need to be emphasised. First, the emergence in the 17th century of an electorate with sufficient numbers to represent a politically significant group in itself was an entirely new feature of the political landscape of England (Plumb, 1967: 34-35, 50).<sup>14</sup> In part, this worked against the stability of the emerging settlement under William, because it encouraged partisanship and conflict between Whigs and Tories over electoral support. The frequency with which Parliament met under the terms of the Bill

<sup>14</sup> Speck (1988: 247) estimates that the electorate in the late 17th century was composed of 25% of adult males. In the period between 1679 and 1716, general elections were held, on average, every two and a half years (Knights, 2005: 3).

of Rights and the re-instated Triennial Act (which required Parliament to convene at least once every three years) perpetuated this instability and party rivalry, by creating a highly politicised society in the grip of 'election fever'. This fever died down with the introduction of the Septennial Act in 1716, under which a Parliament could remain in place for up to seven years. Again, this supports the idea that the inclusiveness of a political settlement may work against its stability and effectiveness.

Second, although the new settlement in 1689 was initiated by a small number of nobles, efforts were made to win approval across a broad spectrum of society, including Englishmen outside socially and politically elite categories. This, in turn, contributed to its popular legitimacy and stability. Burton & Higley (1987: 301) note that despite the fact that the origins and concrete institutional shape of the English revolutionary settlement lay in the compromises and coalitions worked out amongst elite actors, those actors felt compelled to seek support from the wider society: "(...) the English elites who plotted William's invasion and subsequently worked out the rules under which he would be king felt compelled to mount a huge public relations campaign announcing and defending their actions". Similarly, it has also been pointed out that gaining the support of the lower classes and non-elite categories in England was an important component of the stability of the settlement under William:

The manipulation of public opinion through the use of printed pamphlets, visual materials, and ceremonies was more important than has been understood to the process of the ... revolution in general. As a result, in part, of the effort in the press, a broad consensus of approval for the settlement was achieved when it was most needed – during the deliberations of the Convention (Schwoerer, 1981: 285).

This, too, is congruent with Parks & Cole's (2010: 11) argument that one of the most important methods for consolidating the position of a ruling coalition is "through building and maintaining the *legitimacy* of state institutions established and shaped through the political settlement". The vast proliferation of political propaganda during the late 17th century testifies to the fact that Royalists and Parliamentarians alike understood the importance of securing perceived public legitimacy for the organisations and institutions underlying their favoured political settlement.

## 8. Policy Implications

The 17th century is of course not the 21st century. But the story of the English revolutionary settlement, analysed through the political settlements lens, yields a number of interesting implications to be borne in mind by the international community and donors when considering the prospects for promoting political settlements in unstable polities.

1. Political settlements are long-term political processes. Developmental outcomes are unlikely to be immediate. To understand the set of opportunities and constraints which shape the possibilities for settlements, the international community needs to take not only a wide view of the political dynamics and the structural context of the country or context in question, but also a deep historical view.
2. The interests, ideas and incentives of elite leaders and groups are critical factors which can influence the course of a political settlement and donors need to have a deep understanding of who these are and what these are.
3. Though individual leaders (agents) seldom achieve anything on their own, their importance lies in the degree to which they speak for, or represent, wider elites and their ideas and interests (whether organized or not), and also the manner in which they are able to forge durable coalitions.



4. Donors need a wide range of analytical and explanatory frameworks to help understand the often complex and multi-dimensional interests and processes at work. Current reliance, for instance, on so-called political economy 'tools' alone will never uncover the historical pathways (embedded in institutional patterns) and the political traditions which influence - but do not determine - behaviour. Nor will political economy help in reading the 'political opportunity structure', that is the contexts and moments of narrowing or widening political space in which agencies for change can seize opportunities, reach out to build coalitions or gather momentum (Tarrow, 1998).
5. Donors need to be savvy in recognising the ways in which, and the reasons why, those leaders, elites and interests may conflict – and how that would hamper the formation and endurance of settlements.
6. Donors need also consider ways to work politically in order to broker, facilitate or convene multiple opportunities where such leaders and elites can be given space and occasion to reach understandings, compromises and agreements and to form alliances and coalitions.
7. Donors also need to be alert to opportunities – often unpredictable and sparked by contingent events, both internal and external and which may be personal, social, political or economic. These can create favourable 'triggers', moments or critical junctures for facilitation or brokering.
8. If certain key elite groups are excluded from the political settlement process – for example, if the interests of military commanders, significant economic interests or powerful religious groups are not aligned with the terms of the settlement - the risk is that they will fail to support it or even work actively to undermine it.
9. The long-term stability and effectiveness of political settlements will also depend on the degree, kind, and resilience of their legitimacy in the eye of a wider public. Without significant support amongst non-elites and the general public, political settlements are likely to be unstable.
10. Political settlements are constituted by a number of linked and overlapping phases which help to construct the 'rules of the game' which, if successfully institutionalised, will enable players to learn how to play more stable 'games within the rules' in more regular and developmentally positive ways.

## 9. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to present a brief analytical narrative that encapsulates the essence of the story of the 17th century English revolution, using the political settlements approach as a conceptual framework. James' belief in the divine right of Kings over and above Parliament, combined with the measures he took to promote Catholicism in England, were two features of the political settlement in place under his rule which proved unsustainable. James managed to unite a wide variety of interests in opposition to his policies across a number of groups, including key leaders and elites. The pursuit of their interests by a *de facto* coalition of those leaders and elites contributed to the emergence of a new political settlement. The institutional embodiment of the new settlement, as codified in such documents as the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Rights, was part of the process that helped to ensure that the emerging settlement under William III and Mary II continued to be viable. The new (or, in most cases, the restored) institutions spoke to: a) the interests of the clergy, by ensuring a Protestant line of succession; b) the interests of the landed gentry and nobility, by insulating their rights and positions of local power from the arbitrary exercise of state power under the control of the monarchy; c) the interests of the commercial class, by protecting them from taxation by Royal prerogative; d) the interest of the general, non-elite public in avoiding the socially divisive religious conflicts that had led to the recent Civil War;

and e) the widespread interest across virtually all levels of English society in limiting the absolute power of the monarchy, through the establishment of a constitutional monarchy whose powers were limited by a freely elected and frequently assembled Parliament.

The political settlements approach is a comparatively fresh conceptual perspective for the international community. Interest in this approach confirms the growing recognition that the political processes which underpin, accompany and sustain settlements are a crucial factor in determining whether robust institutional arrangements will emerge and hence whether they can provide a locally appropriate environment for sustainable economic growth and political stability. The supporting aim of this paper has been to show that the emerging literature on political settlements does contain some conceptual insights that help to make sense of the historical case study of 17th century England and that, conversely, there are aspects of that story which highlight some crucial elements that need to be incorporated in the comparative study of political settlements, and in the thinking of policy-makers.

If valid, the upshot of this analysis is that the political settlements lens is a useful analytical framework for making sense of a wide range of both historical and contemporary political processes behind developmental statehood and stable polities more generally. However, understanding the conditions under which settlements can occur; and how the international community can work politically to broker, support and facilitate their emergence, will require a very detailed and nuanced knowledge of local political agency – in the form of individuals, groups or organizations – and the structural, political and institutional context in which they operate, as well as wider social and political forces, traditions and configurations.

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