

Inter-rebel Group Alliances in Multi-party Civil Wars

Overcoming the
commitment problem -
What factors make rebel
group alliances more
likely?

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Abstract

Under which conditions do rebel groups in multi-party civil wars form alliances? This paper proposes that rebel groups, just as nation states, find themselves in an anarchic context and as a result are trapped in a multi tiered dilemma; on the one hand they face a security dilemma which leads them to strive for cooperation, on the other hand they face the commitment problem and fear betrayal. This paper looks at three variables 'identity', 'ideology' and 'foreign support' as factors that are expected to reduce uncertainty, thus should help overcome the commitment problem and ultimately increase the likelihood that an inter-rebel alliance will form. Looking at two cases of inter-rebel alliances that formed during the war in Darfur; the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the National Redemption Front (NRF) this analysis presents an exploratory attempt to identify factors and conditions that make an inter-rebel alliance more likely.

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Acronyms/Abbreviations

DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
GoS	Government of Sudan
G-19	Group of 19
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
NCA	Non-State Actors
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NIF	National Islamic Front
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRF	National Redemption Front
SFDA	Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance
SLA/M	Sudan Liberation Army/Movement
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen the emergence of complex, protracted civil wars in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan and Sierra Leone that derive their high dynamism partially from the constant formation, changes and disintegration of alliances between warring groups. Of the 259 intrastate conflicts since 1945, approximately thirty have featured alliances among rebel groups, with a number of conflicts featuring multiple alliances.¹ This trend has increased with the emergence of multi-party civil wars in weak or failed states - conflicts which Kaldor defines as “New Wars”; where “goals and tactics ...have substantially changed...” in comparison to traditional inter-state wars, and which are “focused on capturing political control largely within the disintegrating states, [and] are increasingly privatized as state control breaks down”.² In these types of conflicts the actors involved have changed. Today, warring groups that are variously known as rebel groups, militants, terrorists and freedom fighters constitute “the opposition in some of the most intractable internal conflicts around the world”.³ These groups have emerged as crucial military as well as political actors, whose actions, decisions and interaction can have major consequences for conflict dynamic and processes. Inter-rebel group alliances have been responsible for the overthrow of incumbent regimes such as the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda or the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in Ethiopia. They have also emerged as an important factor responsible for the long duration and complexity of civil wars. The multitude of actors involved and changing networks of alliances contribute to the “conceptual mess”⁴ these civil wars represent. It becomes close to impossible for outsiders to understand them, since, they often times, do not follow an overarching narrative or cleavage.

In order to further enhance the understanding of the dynamics and processes involved in these types of complex, protracted civil wars this paper will attempt

¹ Weintraub (2011) 2

² Levy and Thompson (2010) 190

³ Furtado (2007) 1

⁴ Stearns (2011) 5

to shed light on the formation of inter-rebel alliances within multi-party civil wars.

I. a) The Puzzle

There is a well known axiom which says “the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and the friend of my enemy is my enemy”. According to this saying one would expect to see many inter-rebel alliances to form in multi-party civil wars, since the groups, despite differences, usually fight the same common enemy: the incumbent government. In addition, there are many potential gains from inter-rebel group cooperation and it can, in fact, become necessary for the group’s survival. By combining forces and carrying out joint military operations rebel groups can balance the power of their common enemy, who in cases of asymmetric civil wars is more powerful. Inter-rebel alliances can thus prove vital for the success of a rebellion. Additionally, they can provide practical, on-the-ground advantages by “induc[ing] civilian support, forcibly recruit[ing] new soldiers [and] consolidating their hold on important regions”⁵. Despite the obvious advantages inter-rebel cooperation would present, historical records indicate that numerous militant groups fail to form alliances, even when facing a more powerful common threat.⁶ The old maxim “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” seems to prove wrong, but why is that?

This paper argues that rebel groups find themselves in an anarchic context very similar to the one faced by nation states in the international system. As a result of this context rebel groups find themselves trapped in a security dilemma, while at the same time facing a commitment problem: even if a rebel group/state is willing i.e. prefers to align with another rebel group/state, (because it is aware of its potential advantages) there is no guarantee that the other will abide by the agreement. This feeling is mutual and thus the uncertainty and resulting mistrust ultimately keeps the groups from engaging in an alliance. Within the discipline of International Relations it has been the dominant assumption that the “the ability, or the lack of ability, to make

⁵ Weintraub (2011) 5

⁶ Bapat and Bond (2012) 2

commitments is a function of the anarchic international system.”⁷ In the context of multi-party civil wars and state collapse, and in the resulting absence of institutions that serve as constraining or determining factor, it is reasonably contended, that the scope condition for rebel alliances are the same as for nation states in the international system: it is anarchic. In this context rebel groups face the same problem as states: uncertainty which gets “to the very heart of politics” and can be seen as the “existential condition in human affairs.”⁸

Uncertainty and trust are mutually implicated since trust always develops under conditions of uncertainty and never entirely escapes it.⁹ The question of whom to trust is, in the words of political theorist John Dunn, a central question of political life.¹⁰ When considering the possibility of engaging into an alliance with another group, rebel leaders are presented with the dilemma of not being able to “trust” the future actions and intentions of their partners. This follows Sztompka’s definition of trust:

Acting in uncertain and uncontrollable conditions, we take risks, we gamble, we make bets about the future uncertain, free actions of others. Thus we have arrived at the simple, most general definition of trust: TRUST IS ABOUT THE FUTURE CONTINGENT ACTIONS OF OTHERS¹¹

It is one of the defining features of many rebel groups that internal structures do not remain stable and that their actions and decisions are not consistent. The volatility of rebel group’s structures and unpredictability of their behavior does not inspire confidence and trust in a potential ally. Therefore in a civil war situation mutual fear of betrayal leads to reciprocal commitment problems.

⁷ Grieco (1988)

⁸ Booth and Wheeler (2008) 1

⁹ For a discussion on the topic of trust see Booth and Wheeler (2008)

¹⁰ Dunn (1993) 641

¹¹ Sztompka (1999) 25

Overcoming the commitment problem - What factors make rebel group alliances more likely?

In civil wars such as those currently taking place in the DRC, Sudan and Chad virtually all groups can claim to be threatened (by the government, other ethnic groups, other rebel groups). Often their officially stated reason for fighting is derived from a perceived need to protect themselves and their respective group from violence and control inflicted upon them by others.¹² These armed movements often “cast the war in terms of a security dilemma” in which “not aligning - i.e. waiting it out – is usually not an option” since a group’s access to resources and capabilities is conditioned by the behavior of other groups.¹³ Therefore as Christia (2008) argues alliances in multi-ethnic failed states are security-driven.¹⁴

Rebel groups in multi-party civil wars thus face a multi tiered dilemma; they are more or less “forced” to form alliances while at the same time they cannot trust their alliance partner due to the commitment problem.

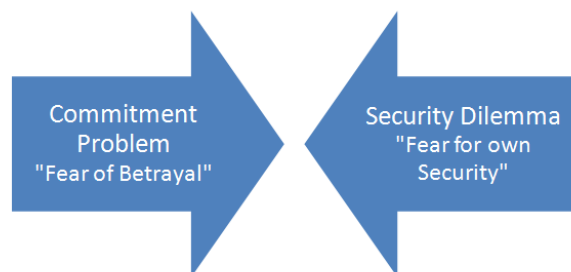


Figure 1: The dilemma facing rebel groups

The question thus arises, what factors and/or conditions can help overcome the commitment problem i.e. what factors and conditions help reduce uncertainty and thus make inter-rebel alliances more likely?

I. b) Significance of Question and Relevance of Research

The most prominent form of violent conflict today occurs within states, rather than between states. Since the end of the Second World War 75% of militarized disputes have been civil conflicts.¹⁵ At the same time, the most prevalent form of civil wars in the contemporary world have been fought between states and non-state actors;¹⁶ involving sub-national groups such as

¹² e.g. Sudanese rebel groups such as SLA and JEM taking up arms against the Janjaweed

¹³ Christia (2008) 6

¹⁴ Ibid., 7

¹⁵ Pearlman and Cunningham (2012) 3

¹⁶ Gleditsch et. al (2002)

rebels that challenge states and governments. Rebel groups have emerged as key players within civil wars but their behavior and interaction remain understudied and especially the study of inter-rebel alliances present a gap in academic literature.¹⁷ This should come as a surprise considering that the world is comprised of mostly multiethnic states, 67 percent of which have three or more ethnic groups – often caught up in disputes and fights.¹⁸ The potential for violent conflict is great and therefore the study of rebel groups and their interaction is significant. One cannot fully understand civil conflicts without noting inter-rebel group interaction such as the tendency of rebel groups to form alliances. The study of rebel group alliances, as part of the broader study of inter-rebel interaction, is thus an important aspect of civil wars and will further our understanding of the dynamics and processes of such conflicts. Additionally, insights into rebel interaction and alliance formation do not apply solely to conflicts on the national level. They can also prove important to conflicts that transcend borders such as larger regional conflicts e.g. the conflict raging between Chad, Sudan and Eritrea with its trends of trans-boundary rebel group alliances. The study of inter-rebel alliances can thus prove to be an essential feature of regional security studies,¹⁹ especially in such volatile and conflict-prone regions as the Horn of Africa or the Great Lake region.

In addition since rebel alliances have emerged as key players in conflicts their closer and systematic examination could also be useful for the broader literature on counterinsurgency. However, this subject matter is not solely of interest for the study of civil wars and regional security but can also answer more general questions of “Groupness” and group formation. Since inter-rebel alliances are a type of organization, it is part of the study of the formation of political organizations. In addition, they can act as examples for political and/or social cohesion of political organizations in the civil war context.²⁰

¹⁷ See Christia (2008), Bapat and Bond (2012), Furtado (2007)

¹⁸ Toft (2003) 17 and Appendix 1

¹⁹ See Seymour (2010)

²⁰ “Although organizational commitment should be of vital concern for those scholars that study the behavior of these groups, there have been few to no studies on the creation of organizational commitment in armed groups, whether these groups belong to the state or whether they are fighting it.” Haer and Banholzer (2011) 3

Besides the added value for the academic discourse, the study of rebel group alliance formation also might prove useful for policy advice. The disunity of rebel groups and subsequent fighting between different warring groups is a driving factor in many of today's multi-party civil wars such as the case selected for the analysis: the conflict in Darfur. The pivotal issue of the Sudanese state and central theme of its histories are the multiple competing power centers and lack of internal political cohesion. In the recent Darfur conflict the international community, Darfur civil society and many rebel leaders made the unification of the rebel groups a priority.²¹ The unification of Darfur rebel groups is seen as a "prerequisite for peace".²² This is not solely the case in Darfur as Nygard and Weintraub (2011) argue:

The complex constellation of belligerents in civil wars, the distribution of capabilities they bring to the table, and their ability and willingness to bargain with one another rather than engage in violence have profound consequences for civilians and state's long-term prospects for peace.²³

Knowing under what conditions inter-rebel alliances are more likely i.e. going a step further; under what conditions they are more effective and/or long lasting could prove valuable for conflict resolution, prevention and to a certain extent even for nation-building.

This thesis provides a limited account of rebel group behavior that sheds light on an important, but understudied, dimension of civil war which lies at the intersection of international security and comparative politics and could prove invaluable for policy advice.

²¹ Tubiana (2011) 142

²² Crisis Group, "Unifying Darfur's Rebels: A Prerequisite for Peace" Africa Briefing N°32, 6 October 2005.

²³ Nygard, Weintraub (2011) 31

I. c) Outline

In order to assess what factors make inter-rebel alliances more likely the thesis will be divided into the following sections. The first chapter provides an overview of the relevant Literature; highlighting in the first part the findings and debate of the general International Relations (IR) literature on the traditional notions of alliance formation between states as a starting point for the analysis on the sub-national level. The second part of the literature review section will outline the slowly emerging body of literature specifically targeting inter-rebel group dynamics in civil wars and will discuss its findings in light of the topic of inter-rebel alliances, thus situating this analysis within the broader context of academic literature and discourse. In the second chapter the scope conditions and concepts that operate as the basis and backbone for the proposed theoretical framework and its consequential hypotheses will be presented and discussed. A discussion of the choices made in term of the paper's research design including its methodology and case selection strategy will follow the theoretical framework in order to provide for conceptual clarity and clearly define the area of focus of this thesis. This chapter also includes a clear presentation of the scope and limitations of the analysis, an important aspect to consider in the final conclusion. The following section will illustrate the theoretical argument and test the proposed hypotheses by closely examining two cases of inter-rebel alliances in the Darfur conflict of Sudan: the National Redemption Front (NRF) and the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M). The concluding chapters will provide an analysis of the evidence presented and attempt to offer a conclusion.

II. OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

II. a) International Relations Literature in Alliances

The question of rebel group alliances within a civil war context has only very recently attracted scholarly attention and so far only a limited number of studies have been published. Due to the dearth of specific literature on alliance formation in civil wars at this point in time, it is useful to initially examine literature from the realm of International Relations (IR) on alliance formation between states to explore whether they provide insights to the empirical reality of civil wars and its analysis.

In the realist tradition states are seen as self-interested actors that find themselves vulnerable to the threat by other states in the anarchic, international system. States are trapped within a Security Dilemma where “all fear betrayal”²⁴ and “what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure”.²⁵ For this school of thought, alliances are seen as being at the core of international politics, as Kenneth Waltz (1979) argues in his influential theory of the balance-of-power; “If there is any distinctively political theory of international politics, balance-of-power theory is it”.²⁶ According to this theory inter-state alliances are means to balance against a more powerful state. Walt (1987) altered this theory in 1987 into the “balance of threat” where (weaker) states, trapped within a security dilemma, align themselves if they consider a stronger state to be a threat.²⁷ He concludes that ideological similarities and state-sponsored instruments of increasing alliance commitment e.g. foreign economic aid are subordinate to security preferences in alliance formation.²⁸

²⁴ Posen (1993) 28

²⁵ Ibid., 28

²⁶ Waltz (1979) 117

²⁷ Posen (1993) transposed the security dilemma from the Field of IR onto the ethnic context, granting state-like characteristics to ethnic groups; an approach which was subsequently used by a number of scholars including Christia (2008) and which is also employed for the purpose of this paper.

²⁸ Waltz (1979)

Neither Walt nor Waltz see bandwagoning – siding with the stronger power - as an optimal option, while Mearsheimer (2001) regards it as equivalent to capitulation. In contrast Schweller (1994) argues that this alliance strategy is preferable to others if the objective is profit rather than security. Powell (1999) sees no normative difference between alliances strategies and in turn, regards them as purely instrumental, solely determined by the specific circumstances of the various groups and their objectives.

Other scholars challenge the realist convention that states solely “balance” against material (military) capabilities and argue that state alignment decisions are shaped on the basis of a state’s capabilities as well as its intentions. They argue that non-material factors such as ideology, common cultural values and/or multi-lateral institutions can be at the basis of state’s alignment i.e. inter-state alliances.²⁹

There are limits to the transfer of IR concepts to the sub-national and local level and one might get into the realm of conceptual stretching. In the IR realist tradition states are seen as unitary actors which, both in the case of states as well as for rebel groups is a highly simplifying assumption. A number of scholars³⁰ recently argued that the study of rebel groups needs to consider their inner dynamics and their oftentimes existing internal divisions.³¹ In addition, in contrast to states in the international realm the actors active in civil wars are not the same i.e. do not have the same characteristics; there can be local rebel groups, national rebel groups, foreign and national governments etc. Furthermore, in the case of rebel groups the motivations for fighting, i.e. forming an alliance could arguably be very different from the motivation of states. A theory on alliance formation between rebel groups can thus not simply translate traditional IR concept onto the national level. However, they provide insights and basic understanding for the usefulness of alliances between different actors: for the context of multi-ethnic civil wars group

²⁹ See Walt (1987); Ikenberry (2001); Huntington (1996); Shambaugh (2004)

³⁰ See Ballentine and Nitzschke (2003); Haer and Banholzer (2011)

³¹ Of course there are differences between rebel groups, some a more unitary than others e.g. well-organized groups such as the SPLA under Garang or the LTTE under Prabhakaran can be considered more unitary than states, others like the SLA are characterized by internal divisions and fractionalization

alliances can be seen as based on rational decisions, i.e. choices by the rebel leaders to increase security and gain (local) advantages while taking into account different power relations.

II. b) EXISTING LITERATURE ON INTER-REBEL GROUP DYNAMICS

A trend in the civil war literature shows a shift towards a focus on the micro-dimensions of civil wars relating to violence³²; civil war duration³³ and combatant recruitment.³⁴ Recently Non-state actors (NCAs) such as rebel groups have become the focus of a number of academic studies. Although the literature on rebel group behavior has expanded rapidly, the focus has been on the use of violence against civilians and inner group dynamics e.g. group fragmentation.³⁵ The interactions between rebel groups – be it collaboration or fighting – remains a new, so far understudied, topic with only a handful of scholars currently working on it.³⁶

The “only existing”³⁷ systematic study of inter-rebel groups violence is a just recently published large-N analysis by Fjelde and Nilsson (2012). Using the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Non-State Conflict Dataset from 1998 to 2008 their findings suggest that inter-rebel group violence can be explained as strategic actions, rather than opportunistic moves. They identify four conditions under which violence between rebel groups is more likely “when rebel groups control territory, when they have experienced a splintering of the organization, when the state is weak and no longer holds the monopoly power to determine territorial or political stakes, and when the rebel group is strong in relation to the other groups in the conflict”.³⁸ Inter-rebel violence and cooperation are two sides of the same coin; their findings thus could suggest

³² Downes (2004); Kalyvas (2003 and 2006); Humphreys and Weinstein (2006)

³³ Fearon (2004)

³⁴ Arjona and Kalyvas (2006)

³⁵ See Balcells (2010); Humphreys and Weinstein (2008); Johnston (2008); Weinstein (2007); Wood (2003); Wood (2010),

³⁶ See Christia (2011); Bond (2011); Bond and Bapat (2012)

³⁷ Nygard and Weintraub (2011) 3

³⁸ Fjelde and Nilsson (2012) 3

that cooperation is more likely if rebel groups do not control territory, are united and are relatively weak in relation to other groups and the government. In “Bargaining between rebel groups and the option of outside violence” Nygard and Weintraub (2011) set out to answer the question why rebel groups choose to fight each other, despite the fact that (military) cooperation could prove useful in defeating the common enemy or extracting concessions from an incumbent government. They model the strategic dilemma rebel groups face in multiparty civil wars as an alternating-offer bargaining game of incomplete information with an outside option which suggests against the general notion of neatly dividing rebel behavior into “opportunistic” and “strategic” motives.³⁹

This thesis sets out to answer the question under which conditions rebel group alliances are more likely and therefore is part of a small but growing literature of inter-rebel group cooperation.

In their text “Alliances between Militant groups” Bapat and Bond (2012) use two game theoretic models to specify the conditions under which militants (they regard both rebel groups and terrorists) form both bilateral and asymmetric alliances, statistically testing their findings using the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) non-state actor dataset. Their findings suggest that “while groups that are less vulnerable to government repression rely on the shadow of the future to enforce cooperation, weaker groups require an enforcer to sustain alliance cooperation.”⁴⁰ This enforcer is often a “state sponsor” i.e. a foreign state that provides intentional assistance.

Christia (2008) argues that rebel group alliances in multi-ethnic failed states are not driven by the principles of identity or ideology and instead suggests that they are “tactical, motivated by a concern with victory and the maximization of wartime returns”.⁴¹ Her findings suggest that inter-rebel alliances are highly opportunistic in that “alliance narratives prove to be a product of tactical preferences: elites of the warring parties pick their allies

³⁹ Nygard and Weintraub (2011) 31

⁴⁰ Bapat and Bond (2012) 3

⁴¹ Christia (2008) 1

based on power considerations and then look to their shared identity repertoires for characteristics shared with their allies and not shared with their foes".⁴² Using case studies of Bosnia and Afghanistan, including Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis she comes to the conclusion that within the context of emerging anarchy civil war alliances prove to be in "constant flux with no stable equilibrium outcome" resulting in a process of "constant defection, alliance reconfiguration and group fractionalization". Similarly to the findings of Bapat and Bond (2012), Christia identifies the only factor able to attain alliance stability is an "external arbiter [that] can enforce cooperation".

In her PhD thesis "Inter-Rebel Group Dynamics: Cooperation or Competition, the case of South Asia" Furtado (2007) uses a formal model to highlight the importance of credible commitments to the formation of rebel group alliances. In her eyes rebel groups can be regarded as "liberators with altruistic aims or criminal gangs with materialistic aims "...they differ radically in term of goal, ideological orientation but also in term of organizational structure and strategies."⁴³ In contrast to Christia's (2008) findings she argues that identity characteristics of rebel groups and other violent non-state actors play a role in determining the onset of cooperation among such actors while power characteristics influence the design of such cooperative arrangements. She comes to the conclusion that groups with symmetric goals and asymmetric resource endowments are more likely to form alliances.

Michael Weintraub suggests in "Fighting together: rebel group alliances in civil war"⁴⁴ that rebel group alliances are driven by two independent variables: rebel group weakness after sustained military setbacks as well as group's access to different streams of revenue i.e. rebel groups' control over significant natural resources such as diamonds, oil and coca decreases the likelihood of alliance formation.⁴⁵

This section provided an overview of the existing literature on inter-rebel interaction, considering both inter-rebel violence and cooperation.

⁴² Christia (2008) 2

⁴³ Furtado (2007) 4

⁴⁴ Has not yet been published

⁴⁵ See Weintraub (2011)

II. c) SCOPE CONDITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Following both the IR tradition and the trend in the existing Literature on rebel group dynamics, this paper follows the rational framework perceiving inter-rebel group alliances as the result of rational decisions i.e. choices made by rebel leaders. Rebel groups i.e. their leaders are benefit-maximizing and opportunistic; therefore inter-rebel alliances are, just as any alliance, “for everyone involved a means rather than a goal”.⁴⁶ Alliances are not costless and thus are a “product of tactical preferences”⁴⁷. Potential allies need to consider whether the alliance provides a net gain after associated costs are covered; they have to consider whether the alliance’s benefit outweighs its costs. The alliance thus needs to maximize returns; this instrumental behavior should be understood in terms of political control and power rather than in terms of goods or capital e.g. through pillage or booty.

At the same time rebel groups find themselves in the detrimental context of civil wars and often their group’s survival depends on the cooperation and support, thus the benefits ultimately outweigh the costs since the alternative is extinction. This feature of inter-rebel alliances can also account for the short duration of this type of cooperation in many civil wars, since both groups are more or less forced to form an alliance but do not invest into them. As soon as the conflict dynamic changes ending an alliance and possibly fighting the former ally might provide more benefits than continuing the cooperation.

Since “valid concepts are the starting point for sound theories” the definition of inter-rebel group alliance used for this work is an extension of Walt’s (1987) definition of interstate alliances which is also used by Christia (2008), among others.⁴⁸ A **civil war inter-rebel alliance** is a formal or non-formal relationship between rebel groups and/or other warring parties that provide both with an advantage, involves commitment and engenders certain trade-offs.⁴⁹ It is a cooperative arrangement, which can be formal, informal, written or verbally

⁴⁶ Clastress (1999)

⁴⁷ Christia (2008) 2

⁴⁸ Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2011) 3

⁴⁹ Walt (1987)

agreed to and which can take the form of joint military operations, sharing intelligence, joint training and/or financing. This concept is further extended with “inter-rebel alliances” also constituting alignment and coalitions e.g. loose coalitions of autonomous factional organizations. Since the interaction between rebel groups can take many forms, it proves useful to conceptualize the negative value of “alliance”. A “not-alliance” is if the two groups are neutral to one another - in the multi-party, anarchic context of “New Wars” a highly unlikely scenario - and obviously if there is open conflict and fighting between them (not including sporadic disputes and even violence between members of the groups).

The dependent variable ‘formation of inter-rebel alliance’ is a discreet variable, since rebel groups can either be in an alliance or not. The indicators for an “alliance” will be cooperative arrangement between two (or more) groups which can take the form of joint military operations, joint training, sharing of intelligence, financial support, sharing of resources and providing shelter. The simple announcement of the formation of an alliance e.g. in the News through a rebel leader, even if it is accompanied by the signing of an official contract or manifesto, is not automatically an indicator for ‘the formation of inter-rebel alliance’. In many of the “New Wars” alliances between fighting groups are often proclaimed but they do not take shape i.e. are mere “paper-alliances”. There must be some evidence that the alliance did exist e.g. through the execution of joint military operations over the duration of at least 2 months.⁵⁰

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

This paper sets out to identify those factors that make the formation of an inter-rebel alliance more likely, basing its analysis on the idea that rebel groups face the commitment problem. Since uncertainty, resulting from the anarchic context; lies at the root of the commitment problem this analysis will consider different factors that may reduce uncertainty thus helping to

⁵⁰ This time frame might seem very short, however due to the high dynamism of these type of conflicts it should be considered appropriate

overcome the commitment problem and ultimately leading to an increase in the likelihood of an inter-rebel alliance.⁵¹

The study of rebel group alliances in civil wars can be seen as part of the general study of group cohesiveness.⁵² According to Feistinger, Schachter and Back (1950), group cohesion is believed to develop from a field of binding social forces that act on members to stay in the group.⁵³ One of the most important factors influencing group cohesion is Member's similarity. This might also be a factor that reduces uncertainty since the more similar i.e. alike members are, the more predictable their behavior should be. In the case of inter-rebel alliances Member's similarity can either take the form of a shared or similar identity or ideology.

III. a) IDENTITY

Generally identity can be defined as "set of points of personal reference on which people rely to navigate the social world they inhabit".⁵⁴ Since "the world is simply too complex a place for us to survive without some means of simplifying and ordering it first"⁵⁵; identity at its core is a "means of reducing uncertainty, of making sense of the social world so as to survive and thrive".⁵⁶ According to Hale (2008) one of the fundamental human motivations to form identities and different groups is "uncertainty reduction".⁵⁷

Identity is central to grievances in wars in general, and in intra-state conflicts in particular. According to Sambanis (2001) "identity" accounted for 70% of the civil wars between 1966 and 1999.⁵⁸ Although grievance identity based explanations for civil wars had been pushed aside by scholars, recently there

⁵¹ There might be many other factors that increase the likelihood of alliance formation, for a debate of the scope and limitations of this approach see Section IV. c) Scope and Limitations

⁵² A paper that regards Inter-rebel group cohesiveness in the context of rebel group fragmentation is Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2011)

⁵³ Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950)

⁵⁴ Hale (2008) 34

⁵⁵ Brown (2000) 265

⁵⁶ Hale (2008) 35

⁵⁷ Ibid., 35

⁵⁸ Sambanis (2001)

have been a number of works⁵⁹ that tried to advocate the importance of ethnicity in civil wars arguing that the materialist explanations are overplayed as part of the grievance based explanations for civil wars.⁶⁰

In the context of civil wars identities usually equate ethnic identities. On a basic level ethnic groups are important because they satisfy a need to belong.⁶¹ Studies in evolutionary psychology point to natural selection as having resulted in–group versus out-group distinctions and the expectation of better treatment from co-ethnics.⁶² The idea of in-group preference was empirically reinforced by Tajfel, Billig, and Bundy (1971), who identified a strong trend for cooperation between individuals of the same group. This suggests that ethnicity facilitates collective action by structuring actor's preferences to assign positive values to the welfare of fellow group members.⁶³ Bates (1983) proposes that ethnicity provides a technology – a shared language and/or understanding of modes of social interaction that facilitates coordination among co-ethnics.⁶⁴ According to Hardin (1995) ethnicity operates as a focal point which allows individuals to coordinate their behavior to include or exclude others. Other scholars who support the claim of ethnic identities facilitating collective action include Fearon and Laitin (1996) and Hardin (1995).

Ethnic identity is also said to play an important role in group formation⁶⁵ and both Tilly (1978) and Gurr (2000) argue that the formation of enduring identities are central to mobilizing groups. Similarly, Hale (2007) claims that ethnic boundaries are potent cleavages for conflict and that ethnic identities have powerful potential for mobilizing groups⁶⁶.

Since ethnic identity is a defining aspect for group formation and in the context of civil wars an ethnic group provides an “ideal recruitment pool”⁶⁷, one can

⁵⁹ Cederman and Girardin (2007)

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the greed versus grievances debate see Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2009)

⁶¹ van den Berghe (1981)

⁶² Barkow, Cosmides and Tooby (1992)

⁶³ Tajfel, Billig and Bundy (1971)

⁶⁴ Bates (1983)

⁶⁵ Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2008) 96

⁶⁶ Hale (2007)

⁶⁷ Hoeffler (2012) 194

argue that they are also an important factor in the decision to form an alliance. Therefore, the first hypothesis proposes⁶⁸:

Hypothesis 1: If the ethnic identity of rebel groups is the same i.e. is similar, alliances between them are more likely.

In this context it is important to consider what the term 'ethnic identity' entails. Generally the term refers to a group of people who identify with each other, "bound together through a common heritage that is real or presumed".⁶⁹ Scholars such as Kaufman (1996a, 1996b) and Biddle (2006) argue that group identities, especially ethnic identities, are unchangeable, visible and relatively sticky; almost to the point of being inescapable. This primordialist argument leads to the claim that the deep and long-standing differences between groups cause conflicts in diverse societies.⁷⁰ This logic would imply that alliances stay along ethnic lines and that they shouldn't change and/or break down, however, conflicts are "complex and ambiguous processes that lead to important shifts and realignments within identity groups".⁷¹ Rebel groups, that initially are thought to be homogenous, often break down into smaller factions; therefore, identities change as conflicts go on. Following the lead of constructivist scholars such as Mitchell (1956), Epstein (1958), Barth (1969) and Posner (2005) this paper adopts a conceptualization of ethnic identity as "fluid and situation bound".⁷² Each person has multiple identities and the relevance of one particular identity can increase or decrease according to changes in the context. In addition as a number of scholars⁷³ have argued ethnic identities are not only situational but instrumental, they can be, and in civil conflicts often are, "the product of a deliberate decision

⁶⁸ This paper argues that a shared i.e. similar identity increases the likelihood of alliance formation, not that it is a defining aspect: since then, inter-rebel alliances would take on predictable patterns that would stay constant throughout the conflict.

⁶⁹ Hoeffler (2012) 193

⁷⁰ Horowitz (1985); Huntington (1996)

⁷¹ Kalyvas (2003) 475

⁷² Posner (2005) 11

⁷³ Cohen (1969, 1974); Patterson (1975); Young (1976); Kasfir (1979); Bates (1983); Brass (1991); Posner (2005)

designed for maximum payoffs” by calculating political and/or military leaders.⁷⁴

Therefore identity is both rigid, on the level you want to exclude and changeable on the in-group level: while an ethnic group can present the “lowest common denominator”; within this group there can be again different subgroups and factions.

Operationalization of Independent Variable: (ethnic) Identity

Following the constructivist view that identities are “fluid and situation bound”; this paper will regard a group’s identity as fixed and stable, at the specific moment of the formation of an alliance. Many identities, especially ethnic identities are based on such visible factors as ‘tribal affiliation’, ‘language’ and ‘religion’. However, while determining the ‘identity’ of a group it is also important to consider how it defines itself (in-group vs. out-group distinctions), for example in case the sub-group of a tribe (e.g. of a specific area) tries to distinguish itself from the larger tribe. Considering that identity, especially ethnic identity, is often times instrumentalized by leaders, one needs to consider how the group might identify itself e.g. in statements.

Independent Variable	Operationalization
Identity	‘Ethnicity’, ‘Language’, ‘Religion’, ‘tribal affiliation’, ‘group’s own conception’ e.g. through statements

III. b) IDEOLOGY/MOTIVATION TO FIGHT

Similarly to group’s ethnic identity, a shared ideology can be seen as a factor that can decrease uncertainty thus helping to overcome the commitment problem by facilitating and supporting group membership. Ideology generally refers to “a set of closely related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes,

⁷⁴ Posner (2005) 11

characteristic of a group or community”.⁷⁵ It is said that ideology motivates action⁷⁶ and according to Morong “Ideology becomes important in times and situations where there is uncertainty.”⁷⁷ In the public choice literature North (1981) sees ideology first of all as an “economizing device by which individuals come to terms with their environment and are provided with a “world view” so that the decision-making process is simplified.”⁷⁸

Since the end of the Cold war debates on the importance of ideology have lessened and in the field of civil war studies it has not been considered a central theme over the last years. It is thus useful to turn towards the field of comparative politics to gain some insights into the importance of ideology for the formation of political coalitions on the national level. Theories on policy-viable coalitions presume that political parties prioritize their policies over being in power.⁷⁹ In addition Axelrod’s (1970) theory on minimal connected winning coalitions suggests that while parties are keen to form minimal winning coalitions, they are constrained by ideology and try to build alliances with ideologically similar/close parties.⁸⁰

These theories thus suggest that alignment should be seen between parties with the same ideological background i.e. parties closer on the ideological spectrum. Transferring this to the civil war context and rebel group alliance formation, one can argue that rebel groups that share the same or a similar ideology are more likely to form alliances. Thus:

Hypothesis 2: If two rebel groups are closer on the ideological spectrum, then an alliance between them is more likely.

Operationalization of independent variable: Ideology

In many of the new multi-party civil wars rebel groups do not state a clearly defined ideology such as ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’. The independent variable “Ideology” will thus include the group’s motivation to fight i.e. the stated

⁷⁵ Plamenatz (1970)

⁷⁶ Kalyvas and Sambanis (2003) 44; Brown and Fernandez (1991) 98

⁷⁷ Morong

⁷⁸ North (1981) 49

⁷⁹ De Swaan (1973)

⁸⁰ Axelrod (1970)

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reason for the armed struggle e.g. autonomy, secession etc. Indicators for this variable are political statements made by leaders such as founding declarations and can also include possible party affiliations and/or links to other ideologically-motivated rebel groups.

Independent Variable	Operationalization
Ideology/Motivation to fight	Party affiliations, Political statements, founding declarations, If not stated clearly can also be the stated reason/motivation for fighting (autonomy, secession, resistance)

III. c) FOREIGN SUPPORT

External influence and foreign intervention is a reality in most civil wars. Current conflicts like in Colombia, Kurdistan, Darfur and Afghanistan “exhibit significant cross-border dynamics as well as outside interference”.⁸¹ Despite the implications of the term “civil wars”, internal conflicts often have a significant external dimension to them, since foreign states can play a variety of “roles from hosting and facilitating negotiations, offering incentives to groups to negotiate, deploying peacekeepers or peace enforcers, and providing economic or military support to either side, all the way to sending military forces to participate in the conflict”.⁸²

There is a large and growing body of literature on the causes and effects of external involvement in civil war⁸³ including the external support for Insurgent groups. Scholars have shown that foreign support for rebel groups changes the dynamics of civil wars, since wars with outside involvement tend to cause

⁸¹ Saleyhan, Gleditsch, Cunningham (2011) 709

⁸² Cunningham (2010) 115

⁸³ See Salyhan, Gleditsch, Cunningham, (2011); Balch-Lindsay and Enterline (2000); Bapat (2006); Collier et. Al. (2003); Regan (2000); and Saideman (2001)

more fatalities,⁸⁴ last longer⁸⁵ and a more difficult to resolve through negotiations.⁸⁶

Sponsoring and supporting another state's rebel groups is a tactic states often use to destabilize rival governments, "as a way of gaining leverage and [in many cases [to] combat[ing] their own insurgencies".⁸⁷ During the cold war these type of conflicts were referred to as "proxy wars", but even after the end of the ideological struggle of "capitalism" versus "communism" supporting other state's rebel groups is a widespread phenomenon. Salyhan, Gleditsch and Cunningham (2011) argue that "one cannot fully understand civil conflicts without noting the pervasiveness of external support for rebels."⁸⁸

In the context of inter-rebel group alliances and their likelihood, foreign support (whether from a foreign government, diaspora group, other rebel group etc.) might overcome the commitment problem which emerges due to the structural properties of an anarchic environment which makes it difficult for rebel groups to trust each other "to uphold the deal". According to Kalyvas:

political actors external to the community [e.g. foreign governments] play a critical role in the conversion of local and private conflicts into violence because they provide incentives without which local actors would be unable or unwilling to undertake violence.⁸⁹

Therefore, a foreign supporter who provides financial support; delivers weaponry or offers rebel groups safe haven or sanctuary on its territory might provide the "incentives" necessary for rebel groups to align themselves. As, both Christia (2008) and Bapat and Bond (2011) argue, the provision of material goods is only one factor facilitating alliances, more importantly foreign supporters or "sponsors" can serve as a "guarantor, or *capo*, that enforces co-

⁸⁴ Heger and Salehyan (2007)

⁸⁵ Regan (2002)

⁸⁶ Cunningham (2010)

⁸⁷ Seymour (2010) 50

⁸⁸ Salyhan, Gleditsch and Cunningham (2011) 710

⁸⁹ Kalyvas and Sambanis (2003) 383

operation amongst groups”⁹⁰ or are “external arbiter[s]...necessary to induce cooperation among warring groups by doing away with commitment problems and spoiler issues”.⁹¹ Following the reasoning of those scholars the third proposed hypothesis states:

Hypothesis 3: The presence of a common foreign supporter makes rebel group alliances more likely.

Operationalization of independent variable: foreign support

For the purpose of this paper “foreign support” can be conducted by another (foreign) state, a diaspora group or another (external) rebel group. The variable is operationalized through a number of indicators: a foreign supporter can provide safe havens i.e. sanctuary on its territory and can provide financial as well as logistical and material support, especially the supply of arms. It might also provide political aid and ideological support to the movement.

Independent Variable	Operationalization
Foreign support	Provision of safe havens or sanctuaries on one’s territory , financial support, supply of resources, weaponry, political and ideological support

⁹⁰ Bapat and Bond (2011) 29

⁹¹ Christia (2008) 19

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III. d) ENDOGENOUS TRENDS

Set of proposed Hypotheses that will be tested:

Independent Variable	Identity	Ideology/Motivation to fight	Foreign support
Hypothesis	Shared/Similar identity makes inter-rebel alliances more likely	Shared/Similar ideology makes inter-rebel alliances more likely	The presence of a common foreign supporter makes inter-rebel alliances more likely
Operationalization	'Ethnicity', 'Language', 'Religion', 'tribal affiliation', 'own perception'	Secession, autonomy, government control, Islamist, Democratic-secular	Provision of safe havens or sanctuaries on one's territory , financial support, supply of resources, weaponry, political/ideological support

All of the proposed hypotheses are fairly static and do not take into account conflict dynamics and possible endogenous trends and effects. This is problematic since, in the words of Mary Roldan, "ambiguity is central to civil wars" and one of the defining features of conflicts, like the one raging in Darfur, are the constant changes and its high dynamism.⁹² It would thus be of interest to examine how endogenous trends could possibly change the influence of the three variables: 'identity', 'ideology' and 'foreign support'.

There is a recent tendency in civil war literature to assume that even if the politics matter at the outbreak of conflict, the internal dynamics of war are driven by factors that are not necessarily political.⁹³

Consequently, one might argue that even if groups form around ethnic lines and, initially, see this as defining factor to base their decision whether or not to form an alliance with another group on; this might change later on in the

⁹² Roldan (2002) 230

⁹³ Blacells (2010) 292

conflict. In addition since identities change within conflicts and are deliberately instrumentalized by leaders, the effect of identity as a factor that helps overcome the commitment problem might weaken. Therefore:

Hypothesis *endogenous trends: identity*: The longer a conflict lasts, the less likely “identity” is a crucial factor in the decision to form an alliance.

Similarly, the effects of ideology might decrease as conflicts continue. In many long lasting wars, even the ones that emerge out of ideological struggles, as the conflict continues the initial (political) motivations for fighting become diluted. As Kalyvas proposes civil wars cannot solely be seen as “collective actor’s quest for power” but in addition need to be seen as the “local actor’s quest for local advantage”.⁹⁴ Local elites and strongmen become extremely opportunistic looking for new economic and political advantages. This leads to:

Hypothesis *endogenous trends: ideology*: The longer a conflict lasts, the less likely “ideology” is a crucial factor in the decision to form an alliance.

Even as a conflict continues over a long period of time a foreign supporter can reduce uncertainty, increase the benefit of an alliance and thus make its formation more likely. However, the presence of one or multiple foreign supporters can have direct effects on the members of an alliance: the rebel groups e.g. lead to internal struggles and fragmentation. By impacting the members of an alliance, foreign support might indirectly have a negative effect on inter-rebel alliances.

Hypothesis *endogenous trends: foreign support*: A foreign supporter can increase the likelihood of alliance formation, while at the same it can have negative effects on the rebel groups, thus, indirectly impacting alliances.

⁹⁴ Kalyvas (2003) 486

This section offered a brief outlook on the issue of endogenous trends and presents some first ideas; the proposed hypotheses will be briefly discussed in the final analysis. However, it is important to consider the preliminary and highly limited character of this analysis, which can be seen as a base for further academic enquiry.

IV. METHODOLOGY

IV. a) RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to test the above hypotheses and attempt to answer the question which factors make inter-rebel alliances more likely, a within-case study will be conducted. This within-case analysis will examine two cases of inter-rebel alliances within the same conflict: the war in Darfur which officially started in 2003. The within-case method was chosen since according to David Collier “within-case comparisons are critical to the viability of small-N analysis”.⁹⁵ As Collier stated the case study method has the merit of providing a framework in which a scholar with modest time and resources can generate potentially useful data on a particular case.⁹⁶ Within the boundaries of a Master thesis a large-N analysis of inter-rebel alliances is not feasible, and thus, when examining a limited number of cases a within-case analysis presents the best choice. In addition, since the topic of inter-rebel alliances is still understudied and the academic discourse remains in a phase of theory building, the close examination of one case might provide new, useful insights. Robert Yin defines case studies as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ George and Bennet (2005) 179

⁹⁶ See Collier (1993)

⁹⁷ Yin (2003) 64

The universe of cases are rebel group alliances in weak, failed or collapsing states at a time of multi-party civil war or what Kaldor referred to as “New Wars”. Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) argue that civil wars that erupt in strong unified states are likely to take the form of irregular wars characterized by a power asymmetry, while in cases of weak or collapsed states it is likely to be more symmetric. While internal conflicts in strong unified states usually take the form of bi-party civil war with an insurgent group challenging the government e.g. the Basque’s fight in Spain, in weak, failed or collapsing states conflicts are more likely to turn into multi-party civil wars. Inter-rebel alliances are more probable in cases of conflicts with a number of different actors (rebel groups) involved, therefore in order to answer the question what makes inter-rebel alliances more likely, it is useful to look at multi-party civil wars in the context of weak, collapsing or failed states.

The level of analysis are rebel groups, however in some cases, due to the dearth in data, the rebel group leader (his identity etc.) will act as a proxy for the entire group since his/her choices and decisions are considered as representative for the entire group. This approach is flawed and generally treating rebel groups as unitary actors is highly problematic, since it harshly oversimplifies the inner dynamics of rebel groups and cannot account for internal divisions, struggles and group fragmentation which are characteristic for “New Wars”. However, for the purpose and objective of this paper this simplification will be accepted. Due to the lack in data on rebel groups, focusing on their leaders will prove more feasible even though it arguably diminishes the explanatory power of the analysis.

The method of analysis used in this research project will be process tracing because this method enables the examination of complex cases in detail and assess evidence in order to, “affirm some explanations and to cast into doubt, through eliminative induction, explanations that do not fit the evidence.”⁹⁸ In addition this method can play an important role in the development and testing of theories,⁹⁹ which is precisely what this analysis represents.

⁹⁸ Bennett and Elman (2010) 503

⁹⁹ George and Bennett (2004)209

IV. b) CASE SELECTION

In order to conduct a case study cases need to be chosen, according to Stake “nothing is more important than making a proper selection of cases. It is a sampling problem”.¹⁰⁰ The case selection strategy for this paper is based on the above defined universe of cases; the cases selected thus need to be inter-rebel alliances in weak or failed states that are currently experiencing a multi-party civil war. Sudan i.e. the war in Darfur can be seen as the archetype of Kaldor’s “New Wars”; “with extreme ethnically-targeted violence conducted by a combination of regular army units and tribally-mobilized paramilitaries, often in pursuit of economic goals, [which was] a feature of Sudan’s civil wars from the mid-1980s”.¹⁰¹ This complex and highly protracted conflict is characterized by a multitude of actors, including a large number of rebel groups, and high dynamism with realities on the ground constantly changing. Since this paper attempts to identify those factors that make inter-rebel alliances more likely and test the proposed hypotheses, any “successful” alliance that fits the definition would be appropriate. The cases are selected based on the dependent variable - inter-rebel alliance formation – presenting a clear selection bias, however, for the purpose of this analysis this choice is deemed appropriate. The inter-rebel alliances selected are the early Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) as well as the National Redemption Front (NRF). Although the Darfur conflict featured a number of inter-rebel alliances, the selected cases are the most appropriate for this analysis; first they fit the offered definition. Second, as previously mentioned rebel groups in general and their alliances in particular have not yet received much scholarly attention. As a result only very little data and documentation on the subject exists; the case selection was thus also based on considerations of feasibility.

¹⁰⁰ Stake (1994) 243

¹⁰¹ De Waal (2007) 5

IV. c) SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The topic of alliance formation in civil wars has so far not received much scholarly attention and accordingly theories and approaches are limited. This paper is highly exploratory and therefore its findings need to be regarded with caution. For the limited scope of this analysis only three variables have been identified and are tested to examine whether they influence the likelihood of inter-rebel alliance formation. This paper focuses on factors that may reduce uncertainty and thus help overcome the commitment problem between rebel groups, but there are a number of possible alternative explanations and intervening variables that could influence the likelihood of inter-rebel alliance formation, these include:

Group fractionalization, fragmentation
Personal rivalries between rebel leaders and feelings of revenge
Possibly presence of (loot able) resources, as suggested by Weintraub (2011)
Rebel group type i.e. rebel group organizational structure, as suggested by Furtado (2007)
Rebel group strength i.e. relative strength, as suggested by Fjelde and Nelsson (2012)
Recent military setback, as suggested by Weintraub (2011)
Territorial control

This leads to the problem of equifinality which might apply to the results of this analysis. In addition, as previously mentioned, for the purpose of feasibility this paper regards rebel groups as unitary actors - at least in the moment of alliance formation - which might lead to oversimplifications.

An important difficulty for this research is that documentation on alliance behavior in civil wars is rare, resulting in a dearth in data. The local level in this type of conflict has not yet been systematically documented and therefore the available documentation used for data purposes may not cover certain relevant events, decisions etc. The Data is derived from the best sources available such as influential studies conducted by academic Institutes e.g. the

Small Arms Survey and detailed historical accounts and analysis by leading Sudan experts like Julie Flint, Alex de Waal and Gerard Prunier. However the possibility remains that important details will be overlooked. Due to the nature of the topic primary sources such as interviews and commentaries in newspaper articles made by the leaders will need to be examined with caution since there is obviously a bias.

There might also be a problem of endogeneity since only cases of alliance formation can be considered, while the non-formation of alliances (negative cases) and factors that cause it cannot be proven. In addition the paper focuses on a small number of actors in one conflict and its results are not easily generalizable and therefore need to be examined with caution in regard to other conflicts, More research in other conflicts is necessary, including possibly large-N quantitative studies.

Although this paper will be rather restricted in its scope and have many limitations, the subject of alliance formation in civil wars requires further scientific analysis, and as such, this paper should be seen as a first step.

V. CASE STUDIES: INTER-REBEL ALLIANCES IN THE WAR IN DARFUR

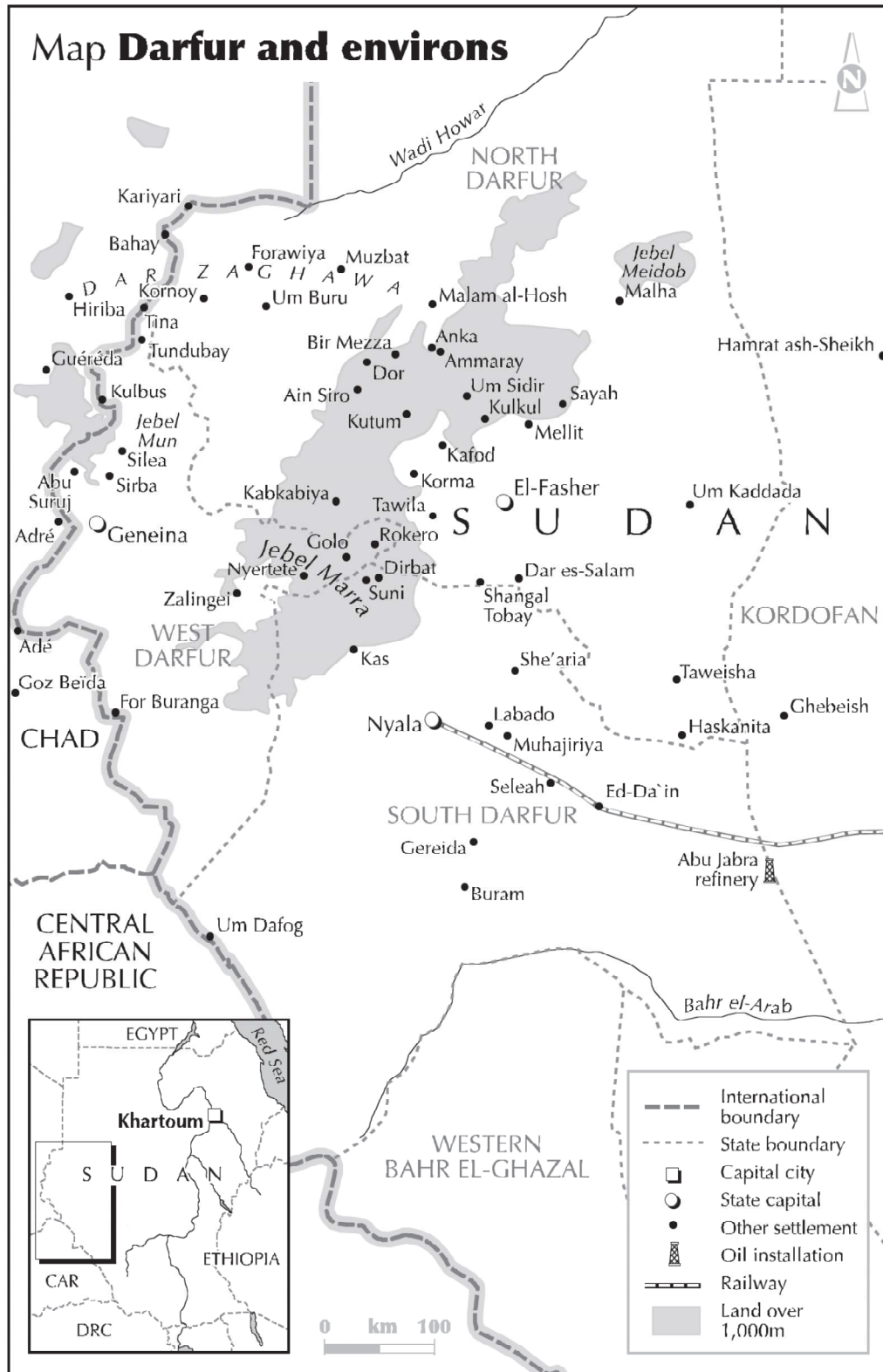


Figure 1: Map of Darfur and its borders

Source: Tanner, Victor and Jerome Tubiana, "Divided they fall: The fragmentation of Darfur's rebel groups" Small Arms Survey HSBA Working paper 6, July 2007. 12

V. a) BACKGROUND ON THE WAR IN DARFUR

Situated in the Western part of Sudan, bordering the three Sudanese states of Northern and Western Kordofan to the east as well as the state of Bahr el-Ghazal to the south, the Darfur region covers a territorial area of approximately 490,000 square kilometer.¹⁰² The region also shares borders with three neighboring countries: Central Africa and Chad to the west and the Libyan Arab Jamahria to the north. Darfur which means 'Land of the Fur' is home to a "host of ethnic groups or tribes – between forty and ninety depending on one's definition"; including the Fur, the Massalit and Zaghawa.¹⁰³ Many of these tribes are also home in neighboring countries such as the Zaghawa in Chad.

Darfur was an independent state and one of the most powerful kingdoms in the region for almost three centuries until it was incorporated into Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian forces in 1916. In the post-Independence period the region became extremely marginalized, in the words of de Waal and Flint "Darfur was a backwater, a prisoner of geography"¹⁰⁴. The discrepancy between the center and periphery throughout Sudan grew; while Khartoum possessed immense private wealth and has been developing, the peripheries are "not only poor but are subject to processes of subjugation and exploitation" with Khartoum playing out its "hyper-dominance".¹⁰⁵ Today Darfur is widely considered as one of the least developed areas of the world.

It is a conflict prone region; in the last decades it has seen a number of severe droughts and famines e.g. in 1984, as well as violent conflicts such as the First Arab-Fur war in 1987. The past generations have experienced extreme patterns of political violence. The current deadly conflict which has been raging between government forces and rebel groups since 2003 cannot be seen as an isolated event but rather as "the most recent manifestation of a pattern of extreme political violence that has afflicted the peripheries of the

¹⁰² El-Battahani (2009) 44

¹⁰³ Flint and de Waal (2008) 6

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15

¹⁰⁵ De Waal (2007) 4

Sudanese state over many generations”.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, there is not only one conflict raging in Darfur, but an intricate web of different types of conflicts situated at different levels. El-Battahani identifies five different types of conflict in the region that are all “interrelated, interdependent and overlapping”¹⁰⁷: there are local conflicts involving clans over land ownership, water points and pasture; subnational conflicts over local councils between Arabs versus “Zurqa”; a national conflict over wealth and power sharing between different rebel groups and the central government; regional power struggles with neighboring states, as well as an international level conflict involving the international community over humanitarian assistance and resources.¹⁰⁸ All of these conflicts influence the Darfurian rebellion, yet one level which is especially important is the “regional” since Darfur’s “recent history is inextricably linked to regional security politics” and the competition between Chad, Libya, Eritrea and Sudan.¹⁰⁹

The current phase of the “national” Darfur conflict, and the one which will be subject of the following analysis, officially started in 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) took up arms against the Government of Sudan (GoS).

While considering the following case studies of inter-rebel alliances it is important to note that Darfur’s rebels were what Flint and de Waal call:

an awkward coalition of a handful of professionals who dared to take on the burden of leadership, largely untrained Fur and Massalit villagers, Zaghawa Bedouins feuding with Arab Abbala, and a sprinkling of intellectuals, many of them disillusioned Islamists.¹¹⁰

In contrast to other rebellions like the SPLA in South Sudan the Darfurian rebel groups started their rebellion due to their grievances which were a result of the marginalization by the central government their region had suffered for the last decades and the increasing violence conducted by government

¹⁰⁶ De Waal (2007) 1

¹⁰⁷ El-Battahani (2009) 47

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 47

¹⁰⁹ Seymour (2010) 51

¹¹⁰ Flint and de Waal (2008) 115

backed groups. It was not an “insurgency born of revolutionary ideals, but rather a last-resort response to the escalating violence of the Janjaweed and its patrons in Khartoum”.¹¹¹

V. b) THE SUDAN LIBERATION ARMY/MOVEMENT (SLA/M)

The Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) (Arabic: harakat tahrir as-Sudan) was the first Darfurian rebel group that started the fight against the GoS in 2003. Even though the SLA/M is a rebel group not an alliance between different rebel groups, one can argue that it was never a real organization but instead was always just a loose coalition of similar but separate tribally based movements. This would also explain the many splits and fragmentations this rebel group went through in the consecutive years. It therefore fits the definition of inter-rebel alliance used for this analysis.

It is usually considered that the rebellion in Darfur began on the 26th of February 2003 when a group calling itself the Darfur Liberation Front (DLF) group - later on renamed to Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) - claimed an attack on Golo, the district headquarters of Jebbel Marra. However, according to Flint and de Waal (2008) “it is difficult to identify a single date for the beginning of the rebellion...the most plausible is 21 July 2001, when an expanded Fur and Zaghawa group met in Abu Gamra and swore a solemn oath on the Quran to work together to foil Arab supremacist policies in Darfur”.

The Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) has its roots in the clandestine efforts of a group of educated Darfurians who opposed the NIF regime and tried to mobilize and eventually join different Darfurian village self-defense forces in the late 1990s.¹¹² Throughout the 1990s the level of violence in Darfur increased and as a result different tribes started to organize their own small resistance and self-defense groups to defend their villages and respective areas. These tribes include the Massalit, Zaghawa and Fur,

¹¹¹ Flint and de Waal (2008) 115

¹¹² Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 17

this resistance however was always local and there was no coordination between different groups, especially not beyond tribal borders. In 1996 three young Fur activists including Abdel Wahid Mohamed al Nur formed the nucleus of an organization which subsequently became the SLA/M. After organizing the activities of the Fur resistance, by collecting money and rallying for support, the group sought to “situate the Fur struggle in a Darfur-wide context”.¹¹³

In the late 1990s and 2000 Abdel-Wahid and his group initially attempted to reach out to the leaders of the Massalit– the group which was more similar to the Fur. However, the Massalit’s own struggle had experienced a setback when their leader Khamis Abakir was imprisoned by the GoS and his group was engulfed “in the middle of war”.¹¹⁴ As a result the first alliance the Fur forged was with the Zaghawa, which took place in the summer 2001 by swearing on the Quran as previously mentioned. This alliance “proved central to the birth of the SLA”¹¹⁵ since the relationship at the heart of the SLA is “the unlikely and unstable alliance between Fur and Zaghawa”.¹¹⁶ The Masalit joined the struggle later on in November of the same year.

Foreign support:

The SPLA/M enjoyed support from different governments and groups. Early on in the effort, the Fur and Zaghawa rebels looked for logistical and political support within Sudan and turned to the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance (SFDA) of former governor Ahmed Diraige. Diraige did not support the idea of armed rebellion and as a result the Darfurian rebels did not receive help from the SFDA. In turn, John Garang, leader of the SPLA, contacted the SLA/M and proposed cooperation. The SLA received logistical, military and especially political i.e. ideological support from the SPLA. They received both weapons and military training from the South Sudanese rebel group, but their most obvious influence was the slowly emerging political program and ideological orientation. The new name (SLA/M) adopted by the DLF in March 2003,

¹¹³ Flint and de Waal (2008) 77

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 77

¹¹⁵ Tanner, Tubiana (2007) 18

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 26

reflected the SPLM tutelage and the writing of its 2003 manifesto was assisted by SPLM officers. Supporting the Darfuriian rebels “helped create the western front the SPLA had pursued since 1991 and provided leverage as the peace process¹¹⁷ gained momentum from 2001.”¹¹⁸

The group also received support from Eritrea which became the main conduit for external support of the Darfur rebellion. The Eritrean government had previously supported the armed struggle in South Sudan, providing the SPLA with ammunition, passports and training and now used the rebellion in Darfur to gain even more leverage over Khartoum.¹¹⁹

Another supporter of the SLA was Chad, in contrast to Asmara the support for the Darfuriian armed struggle did not come from the highest level of the regime. The Chadian government actually officially assisted GoS to fight the rebels.¹²⁰ Nevertheless the SLA did receive support in the form of arms from members of the Zaghawa group in the Chadian army as well as presidential guard, there is evidence that “Chadian government agents were acting on their own initiative”.¹²¹

The following section will identify each of the SLA/M member’s “identity”, “ideology” and their “foreign support”.

Identity:

All three ethnic groups whose resistance movements constituted the SLA/M are indigenous Darfuriian: the Fur, the Zaghawa and the Massalit. They thus shared a common Darfuriian identity.

Ideology/Motivation to fight:

The case of the early SLA/M as an inter-rebel alliance is a clear example of how Christia (2008) defines alliances between rebel groups in multi-party civil

¹¹⁷ In the North-South conflict between the SPLA and the GoS

¹¹⁸ Seymour (2010) 57

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 57

¹²⁰ For a discussion on the relationship between Chad’s president Deby and Darfuriian rebels, particularly the JEM, see Seymour (2010) pp. 58

¹²¹ Seymour (2010) 58

conflicts; the different groups were fighting for their survival and their motivations were primarily security driven. As Khamis, a Massalit SLA commander, stated “They began burning villages twice...We had no choice but to organize. We were fighting for our lives”.¹²² The different tribal groups that constitute the SLA/M did not previously have any political agenda and therefore one can argue that in the beginning of the rebellion they did not follow a clear ideology. It was only once the organization had formed and with the assistance of the SPLM that a political manifesto and clear political goals were stated. As previously mentioned this rebellion was not the result of ideological struggles but the fight for survival. Survival and resistance was at the core of this movement, as Flint (2007) argued for the SLA resistance came first, ideology later.¹²³

Foreign support:

Some of the three tribal resistance movements had received foreign support prior to the formation of the SLA/M. The Zaghawa in particular enjoyed support from a number of foreign governments; they were represented in government and security services in both Khartoum and N'Djamena, as well as received support from Libya.¹²⁴

The Fur resistance led by the student activists received ammunition from kinsmen in the Sudanese army that was distributed among the self-defense groups as well as financial support by Fur diaspora.¹²⁵ There was no evidence found on the foreign support for the Massalit.

¹²² Quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 74

¹²³ Flint (2008) 160

¹²⁴ Flint and de Waal (2007) 77

¹²⁵ Ibid., 75

Overcoming the commitment problem -
What factors make rebel group alliances more likely?

V. c) ANALYSIS: SUDAN LIBERATION ARMY/MOVEMENT
(SLA/M)

Group	Leader	Identity	Ideology/motivation for fighting	Foreign Support
Fur resistance		Fur	Resistance/survival	Fur diaspora
Massalit resistance		Massalit	Resistance/survival	No evidence
Zaghawa resistance		Zaghawa	Resistance/survival	Chad, Libya

The first hypothesis proposed that a shared i.e. similar identity makes inter-rebel alliances more likely. All three resistance movement share a Darfurian identity, however they are three different and separate tribes. While the Masalit and Fur are very similar, both being Non-Arab sedentary farmers and the alliance between them supports the hypothesis, the Zaghawa are camel nomads and had previously clashed with, among others the Fur, over grazing rights. The Zaghawa are traditionally seen as raiders and warriors¹²⁶, they are also regarded as being wealthier, dominating Darfur's trade and commercial sector and after the 1989 coup were close to the NIF regime. Flint and de Waal call the alliance between Fur and Zaghawa as "unlikely", since the Fur had only little trust in the Zaghawa.¹²⁷ It was this alliance that was at the heart of the SLA/M and which provided its backbone, the evidence presented here thus seems to suggest that a shared i.e. similar identity was not a defining factor in the formation of the alliance.

The second hypothesis suggests that an inter-rebel alliance is more likely if rebel groups either share the same ideology or are close on the ideological spectrum. In the case of the three tribal resistance movements one can argue that neither of the groups followed a clear ideological path. Their motivation to fight was born , not out of an ideological struggle, but a fundamental need of

¹²⁶ Flint and de Waal (2007) 18

¹²⁷ Ibid., 77

survival. The reason for the armed struggle was thus the same for all three groups. This case supports the claim that a similar ideology i.e. a similar reason for fighting makes an inter-rebel alliance more likely.

The third hypothesis states that the presence of a foreign supporter reduces uncertainty between rebel groups and thus increases the likelihood of inter-rebel alliance formation. This claim is supported by the evidence presented above; the rebels received military, logistical and political i.e. ideological support from the SPLA and the Eritrean government.

The following section will examine the second case of an inter-rebel alliance during the conflict in Darfur: the National Redemption Front (NRF).

V. d) THE NATIONAL REDEMPTION FRONT (NRF)

The National Redemption Front (NRF) (Arabic: jebhat al-khalas al-watani) is an alliance of the non-signatory groups, which was formed on June 30th 2006 in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. This alliance was a response to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in May 2006 in Abuja, between the GoS and a faction of the divided SLA lead by Minni Minawi (SLA – Minni). According to its founding declaration the NRF consists of three rebel groups: The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a hold-out faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLA/M) and the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance (SFDA). The declaration was signed by Dr. Khalil Ibrahim the JEM leader and previous NIF leader, Khamis Abdalla Abaka the dissident SLA faction's leader (SLA/M G-19) and two representatives of the SFDA; Sharif Harir and Ahmed Ibrahim Dirraige, former governor of Darfur and initially chairman of the new movement.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ "Peace in the Balance: the Crisis in Darfur" (eds.) Brian Raftopolous and Karin Alexander, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, South Africa, 2006 [Cited on 1 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web:
<<http://www.africanminds.co.za/books/Peace%20in%20the%20Balance%20-%20The%20Crisis%20in%20Sudan.pdf>>

In the NRF founding declaration they state:

We leaders of political and military organizations abstaining from signing the Abuja document...reaffirm our rejection of that faulty process. Realizing the virtues of combining efforts and resources to *National Redemption Front (NRF)*, as an instrument for coordinating political, military, diplomatic, and media initiatives.¹²⁹

Both in the declaration and in statements following it e.g. made by Ibrahim it was made clear that that this new alliance would accept any other movement opposing the Abuja agreement and the policies of the GoS generally.¹³⁰

Although not directly a signatory of the declaration,¹³¹ the G-19 was part of the NRF due to a military coordination agreement between the JEM and the G-19 field commanders that was signed in Bir Mirge, in the Wadi Howar area of North Darfur a few weeks before the official founding of the NRF.¹³² According to *Africa Confidential* "the G19 appears to be a key element of the newly formed National Redemption Front (NRF).¹³³

In addition a number of SLA factions that did not officially join the NRF, as the Fur groups led by Abdel-Wahid and Abdesh-Shafi, "associated themselves with the NRF but chose to retain a measure of autonomy".¹³⁴ According to the definition of an 'inter-rebel alliance' used in this paper these groups are still considered to be part of the alliance since they align themselves with them. In addition there is evidence that the NRF reinforced the Fur fighters with

¹²⁹ Founding Declaration National Redemption Front (NRF), Asmarra June 30, 2006 [for full version see Appendix]

¹³⁰ See Founding Declaration National Redemption Front (NRF), Asmarra June 30, 2006; „ Sudan Watch, *JEM-Ibrahim expands by forming alliance with SFDA & Darfur rebel holdouts to deal with all the issues of Sudan: National Redemption Front (NRF)* [online]. June 30 2006. [Cited on 1 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web:

<<http://sudanwatch.blogspot.nl/2006/06/jem-ibrahim-expands-by-forming.html>>

¹³¹ Although Khamis Abdalla Abaka was one of the signatories of the NRF declaration, he did not sign it in the name of the G-19

¹³² Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 54

¹³³ "After Darfur's deal" *Africa Confidential* 47 (16) August 2006. 5

¹³⁴ Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 54

vehicles, weapons, stores and troops in September 2006 and that Non-NRF Fur fighters repeatedly joined NRF attacks on government forces.¹³⁵

As an alliance the NRF “can be confusing”¹³⁶ since a number of different groups were officially and unofficially involved, while parallel processes of rebel group fragmentation and fractionalization took place.¹³⁷ This however, reflects one of the general issues of the Sudan i.e. Darfur conflict; the issue of the multitude of actors involved and its highly dynamic character. For the purpose of this paper the big, main rebel groups that made up the NRF i.e. that were collaborating with them will be observed: JEM, SFDA and G-19.

Although there had been accusations that the NRF was a diaspora creation (since many of the rebel leaders were not on the ground in Darfur) with little effect on the situation on the ground, the NRF did prove, between June and October 2006, to be a “highly effective military coalition if not a political success”.¹³⁸ After a number of successful fights e.g. the Um Sidir battle on September 11, 2006 and increasing attacks on oil installations at the end of November 2006; the estimated number of NRF fighter was around 10,000 men.¹³⁹ In August 2006 analysts from *Africa Confidential* called the NRF “not only opposition to the DPA but to Khartoum’s NC regime – the kernel of a revived Northern opposition”.¹⁴⁰ Although this alliance started to disintegrate at the end of 2006 due to internal problems and in June 2007, after several failed attempts to elect an executive body, was at the verge of disintegration with its members working alone on the ground¹⁴¹; it can still be considered to have been a relatively successful alliance and had been one of the most important conflict actors at that time. According to a Small Arms Survey

¹³⁵ Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 55

¹³⁶ Ibid., 54

¹³⁷ Examples G-19, splintering of SLA factions

¹³⁸ Tanner, Tubiana (2007) 54, 55. Also see “Peace in the Balance: the Crisis in Darfur” (eds.) Brian Raftopolous and Karin Alexander, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, South Africa, 2006 [Cited on 1 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.africanminds.co.za/books/Peace%20in%20the%20Balance%20-%20The%20Crisis%20in%20Sudan.pdf>>

¹³⁹ Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 56

¹⁴⁰ “The real rebels” *Africa Confidential* 47 (17) August 2006. 6-7

¹⁴¹ Darfur rebel faction signs peace agreement with Khartoum [online], *Sudan Tribune*, 7 June 2007. [Cited on 26 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.sudantribune.com/Darfur-rebel-faction-signs-peace,22282>>

document from November 2006 the NRF was considered the “primary rebel army in Darfur” at that time.¹⁴²

Foreign Support:

The National Redemption Front (NRF) received support from a number of different foreign governments. Chad supplied the rebel alliance with weaponry and logistics¹⁴³. According to *Africa Confidential*:

It [NRF] is getting support from Chad's president Idriss Deby Itno who wants it to help defend Chad's border against Khartoum's proxy militias. Recent Janjaweed attacks into the Chadian area of Dar Silah helped create fresh recruits for the NRF inside Chad.¹⁴⁴

The Sudanese Government has openly accused the government of Chad of supporting the rebel alliance in 2006.¹⁴⁵

A second known supporter of the NRF is Eritrea¹⁴⁶. The NRF is both based in the Eritrean capital of Asmara and its founding declaration was signed there. The Eritrean government is both “consistent and opportunistic, and had been trying since 1995 to open a western front against Khartoum”¹⁴⁷, it had previously supported the SPLA, as well as the SLA/M and the JEM.

There is also some evidence that the NRF received support from Libya¹⁴⁸, according to the UNMIS Media Monitoring report from the 25th of July the

¹⁴² Small Arms Survey, *Darfurian Armed Rebel Groups*. Sudan Humans Security Baseline Assessment Issue Brief 4, Switzerland, 2006.

¹⁴³ Sudan Watch, *CHAD: NRF rebels aim to extend in South Darfur & Jebel Marra*, [online], August 27, 2008. [Cited on 29 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <<http://sudanwatch.blogspot.com/2006/08/chad-nrf-rebels-aim-to-extend-in-south.html>>

¹⁴⁴ “After Darfur's deal”, *Africa Confidential* Vol.47 (16) 2006. 5

¹⁴⁵ Sudan Watch, *Sudan's Bashir accuses world of silence on NRF's attacks* [online] December 09, 2006. [Cited on 28 May 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <http://sudanwatch.blogspot.com/2006/12/sudans-bashir-accuses-world-of-silence.html>; Sudan urges Chad to stop support for Darfur rebels [online], Sudan Tribune, 9 November 2006. [Cited on 27 May 2012] Available from World Wide Web:

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?iframe&page=imprimable&id_article=18572>

¹⁴⁶ See Seymour (2010) 57, See Prunier (2008) 5; See Flint (2008) 142

¹⁴⁷ Flint and de Waal (2008) 92

¹⁴⁸ See Prunier (2008) 5

movement received seventy land cruisers from Libya as well as the permission to recruit fighters from Libya.¹⁴⁹

The following section will analyze each of the rebel groups that were part of the National Redemption Front, regarding their “identity”, “ideology” and “foreign support”.

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM):

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) was the second Darfurian rebel group that announced itself a few weeks after the SLA in 2003. However, its beginnings can be traced back to as early as 1996. The JEM was established in 2003 by a “group of educated, politically experienced Darfurians” many of whom were former members of the National Popular Congress Party (NPCP) of Hassan al-Turabi.¹⁵⁰ In the years leading up to the outbreak of conflict in Darfur in 2003, regime insiders had become increasingly disenchanted by Sudan’s Islamist leader. In May 2000 a secret twenty five-man committee from the six states of Sudan published *The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in Sudan* which presented a detailed account of the political and economic marginalization of regions within Sudan, including Darfur. The authors were persecuted by the GoS but in the following three years the JEM was created.

Leadership:

The undisputed leader of the JEM is Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed a “highly educated, superb organizer...as a descendant of Zaghawa sultans on both sides of his family, he enjoyed respect and support among the tribal leaders of the Darfur native administration”.¹⁵¹ He had served as the state minister for education in Darfur between 1991 and 1994, was state minister for social

¹⁴⁹ UNMIS Media monitoring Report, 25th July 2006. [Cited on 28 May 2012] Available from *World Wide Web*: < <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/2006Docs/mmr-juL25.pdf>>

¹⁵⁰ Prunier (2008)

¹⁵¹ Flint and de Waal (2008) 100

affairs in Blue Nile in 1997 and took up the post of advisor to the governor of Southern Sudan in 1998.¹⁵²

Group's identity:

The JEM was formed by men who had previously held positions in regional government under the NIF, including its leader Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed. Since its founding members had mostly come from Islamist parties, it is said to have "Islamist roots". At the same time there was an ethnic dimension i.e. tribal, according to the Small Arms Survey "most of its leader and membership initially came from the Kobe tribe, a Zaghawa sub-group more numerous in Chad than Darfur."¹⁵³ According to Prunier: "JEM is an almost exclusively Zaghawa movement with few combatants...and a lot of money".¹⁵⁴ The "identity" of the JEM is thus defined as Zaghawa (-Kobe), which played an important role since as Flint and de Waal argue "the movement's core was at tribal at least as much as it was Islamist".¹⁵⁵

Ideology/Motivation to fight:

Despite a "stiff dose of tribalism"¹⁵⁶ and inner quarrels¹⁵⁷, due to the perceived domination of Kobe within the group, according to Flint: for the JEM "ideology initially came first".¹⁵⁸ It is an Islamist group with strong links to Hassan al-Turabi's National Popular Congress Party (NPCP), a split wing of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).¹⁵⁹ According to Seymour (2010) JEM was "not a peripheral insurgent force, but one with access to the powerful Islamist

¹⁵² Law, Eric „Dr. Khalil Ibrahim: Leader of the Darfur rebels in Sudan.“ [online] *The Independent*, 27 December 2011. [cited on 25 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/dr-khalil-ibrahim-leader-of-the-darfur-rebels-in-sudan-6281848.html>>

¹⁵³ Small Arms Survey, *Darfurian Armed Rebel Groups*. Sudan Humans Security Baseline Assessment Issue Brief 4, Switzerland, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Prunier (2008)

¹⁵⁵ Flint and de Waal (2008) 110

¹⁵⁶ Flint (2007) 161

¹⁵⁷ In May 2006 some JEM members published a "reformatory memo" regretting that the JEM itself is becoming dominated by elites and is "imprisoned by tribalism".

¹⁵⁸ Flint (2007) 161

¹⁵⁹ Turabi was ousted from his influential role in the GoS by President Omar al-Bashir in late 1999 as a consequence of Turabi's support to radical Islamists in neighboring countries throughout the 1990s

movement at the center of power in Sudan and with connections to governments in neighboring states".¹⁶⁰

The five point Manifesto published by the JEM early in 2003 was similar to the one published previously by the SLA, demanding:

Justice and equality in place of social injustice and political tyranny; radical and comprehensive constitutional reform that would guarantee the regions their rights in ruling the country; basic services for every Sudanese, and balanced economic and human development in all regions of the country.¹⁶¹

Similar to other rebel groups the JEM fights for a decentralized federal state and rules out self-determination of single Sudanese provinces and regions. However, the JEM "laid even greater stress on the need for national solutions".¹⁶² In contrast to other rebel groups such as the (early) SLA/M the neglect and marginalization of Darfur was not the prime concern of the JEM leadership, instead the political objective of this group was the unity of Sudan.¹⁶³ As its leader Khalil stated:

The most important aim behind our movement's taking up arms is the fear of the country being torn...we oppose the secession of any part of Sudan...we will not lay down arms until after the government falls, or a fair political settlement is reached for all the peoples in Sudan's provinces"¹⁶⁴

From very early on it was clear that JEM had a national agenda for political change. In part two of *The Black Book* which was published on the JEM

¹⁶⁰ Seymour (2010) 56

¹⁶¹ See Heleta (2008)

¹⁶² Flint and de Waal (2008) 105

¹⁶³ Ibid., 105

¹⁶⁴ Interview with *Asharq al Awsat*, 3 May 2005; quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 100

website in August 2002, the group called for a “comprehensive congress” to redress injustices perpetrated by a small group of autocratic rulers”¹⁶⁵

In addition the JEM with its Islamist background does not openly discuss the separation of state and religion. According to the JEM website the group states that religion has been manipulated both by the government “for political reasons that brought together nothing good to the people or to the state” as well as by the SPLA which had “exploited religion in order to gain western aid and support”.¹⁶⁶ In regard to the ideas of religious freedom the JEM follows a position consistent with mainstream northern Sudanese political thought which “treads a fine line between constitutional secularism and enshrining Shari’a for Muslims”.¹⁶⁷ They officially state that while Islamic law should not be imposed on non-Muslims, “the believers of others faiths must not opposed Muslims’ attempts to apply the laws of their religion to themselves”.¹⁶⁸

Foreign support:

The evidence pointing to JEM’s foreign support is ambiguous. While Sudan specialist Gerard Prunier (2008) argues that they do not receive any foreign support, since with the split from the NCP; “The Turabi wing retained control of most of the money and has used it – *inter alia* – in financing the JEM.”¹⁶⁹ Other scholars, such as Seymour (2010), note that the JEM had links to other foreign governments.¹⁷⁰ The relationship between the JEM and Chad has been complex due to intricate patterns of conflict and cooperation between Zaghawa elites.¹⁷¹ The JEM leader, Khalil Ibrahim, posed a threat to Deby’s position “at the top of the Zaghawa social and political hierarchy”.¹⁷² Nevertheless, Darfurian rebels received arms and ammunition from members of the Chadian army.¹⁷³ In addition according to an article in the *Independent*

¹⁶⁵ *JEM official Website*: www.sudanjem.com; quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 103

¹⁶⁶ *JEM official Website*: www.sudanjem.com; quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 105

¹⁶⁷ Flint and de Waal (2008) 105

¹⁶⁸ *JEM official Website*: www.sudanjem.com quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 105

¹⁶⁹ Prunier (2008) 3

¹⁷⁰ Seymour (2010) 56

¹⁷¹ See Marchal (2007)

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 191

¹⁷³ Seymour (2010) 58

the JEM received political and financial support from Libya.¹⁷⁴ According to Flint (2008) after the Darfur rebellion began Eritrea supported both the SLA and the JEM; Asmara became the main conduit for external support for both rebel groups providing fuel, food and weapons.¹⁷⁵

The Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance (SFDA):

The Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance is a Darfur diaspora opposition movement that was founded in 1994 and is lead by Ahmed Diraige.¹⁷⁶ This group is considered more political than military¹⁷⁷, it does not possess large military capabilities on the ground and was part of the national resistance umbrella group: the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In addition its leader had initially opposed armed rebellion and overruled its deputy Sharif Harir's recommendation to adopt the SLA as the SFDA's military wing in 2003.¹⁷⁸

Leadership:

The group's president is Ahmed Diraige who is a member of the Fur tribe and was born to a shartai (paramount chief). Diraige was governor of Darfur from 1980 to 1983 and was considered the first locally accountable governor. He warned President Nimeiry in 1983 in the famous "famine letter" of the danger of a coming drought in Darfur, but since this directly opposed Nimeiry's vision of Darfur being "the future breadbasket of the Arab world" he issued an arrest warrant forcing Diraige into exile in London. He has not returned to Darfur and remains in exile.

¹⁷⁴ Law, Eric „Dr. Khalil Ibrahim: Leader of the Darfur rebels in Sudan.“ [online] *The Independent*, 27 December 2011. [cited on 25 June 2012] Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/dr-khalil-ibrahim-leader-of-the-darfur-rebels-in-sudan-6281848.html>>

¹⁷⁵ Flint (2008) 150

¹⁷⁶ Tanner, Tubiana (2007) 21

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 51

¹⁷⁸ Flint and de Waal (2008) 81

The second in the SFDA's leadership was Sharif Harir, a Zaghawa who acted as the deputy chairman of the SFDA. He actively fomented the armed rebellion from Eritrea from the year of 1995 onwards.¹⁷⁹

Identity:

The identity i.e. ethnic identity of the SFDA is not easily defined. In contrast to rebel groups that are made up of mostly the same ethnic groups and where the ethnic identity serves as a factor that contributes to the group's cohesion e.g. the JEM; the SFDA does not seem to have predominantly tribal affiliations i.e. ethnic concerns at its core. However, for the purpose of this paper the group's identity needs to be identified according to the chosen criteria.¹⁸⁰ The rebel leaders Ahmed Diraige's and Sharif Harir's identity will thus be used as a proxy for the entire group's identity. Since the two leaders Diraige and Harir have different ethnic identities, the SFDA is defined as a multi-tribal i.e. multi-ethnic rebel group: Fur-Zaghawa.

Ideology:

SFDA's charter "A new political structure for the Sudan" which was published in January 1994 states that the aims of the movement are:

To create a political order free from racism and religious intolerance, one which ensures individual freedom and promotes the common interests of all the Sudanese people, and to this end, to promote a democratic process that accommodates differing political views and basic freedoms based on clearly stated laws.¹⁸¹

The SFDA's aim is to create a united, democratic federal Sudan, while being secularist. According to the Political Handbook of the World 1999, the SFDA considers "all means legitimate" in its aim to end the al Bashir regime and

¹⁷⁹ Flint and de Waal (2008) 79

¹⁸⁰ See Operationalization of 'Identity' Variable page 24

¹⁸¹ Salih (2005) 18

proposes a “substantially decentralized federal structure for Sudan in which the traditional parties would play no role”.¹⁸²

Foreign support:

The known foreign supporter of the SFDA is Eritrea. Since the year of 1995 Sharif Harir has been actively fomenting armed rebellion in Darfur from his Eritrean base.¹⁸³

The Group of Nineteen (G-19):

The Group of Nineteen (G-19) was a new but highly disparate collection of former SLA commanders from the North of Darfur who started to join forces in the months following the conclusion of the Darfur Peace Agreement. Its leaders were united in their opposition to the peace agreement, personal experience of the abusive power of SLA-Minawi and “a determination to reunite the rebel movement under new leadership”¹⁸⁴. Although these reformers had initially aligned themselves with Abdel Wahid’s faction they became disgruntled with his leadership style. Although they did not reject him altogether, they “froze” him because of his “inflexibility, rigidity, grudge [and] division” and established a Transitional Revolutionary Council under Vice Chair Khamis Abdallah.¹⁸⁵

The G-19, which as commanders from other factions joined, was later on renamed SLA-Unity, were, according to *Africa Confidential* in 2006 “the real power that emerged in Darfur earlier this year”¹⁸⁶. According to Flint (2007) by late 2006 the G19 “was the strongest force on the ground in Darfur”.¹⁸⁷ However, this rebel group failed to establish clear political and military structures.

¹⁸² Political Handbook of the World 1999. (Eds.) Arthur S. Banks and Thomas C. Muller. Binghampton, NY: CSA Publications, 1999. 926

¹⁸³ Flint and de Waal (2008) 79

¹⁸⁴ Flint (2007) 167

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.,168

¹⁸⁶ “The real rebels” *Africa Confidential* 47 (17) August 2006. 6-7

¹⁸⁷ Flint (2007) 167

Identity:

The G-19 is a multi-tribal movement and includes fighters and leaders from the Zaghawa, Fur, Meidob, Messalit and Berti tribe. The identity of the group can thus be defined as multi-tribal: Zaghawa, Fur, Messalit and Berti.

Ideology/Motivation to fight:

The G-19 was originally part of the SLA/M and emerged as a separate rebel faction only as concerns over the SLA/M leadership style and the opposition to Minni Minawi grew. The fragmentation of the SLA/M was not a result of a change in attitudes towards the ultimate goal of the struggle, thus, one can argue that the G-19's fundamental motivation to fight is still consistent with the SLA/M's ideology.

The SLA's manifesto was drafted in Southern Sudan in January 2003 by a SLA delegation from Darfur with the help of senior SPLA officials. The manifesto which was made public on March 6, 2003 clearly reflected John Garang's vision of a "New Sudan", Garang was seen by both Abdel-Wahid as well as Minni Minawi as an ideal. The SLA manifesto demands a secular, decentralized state with the right of self-determination as basis for "viable" unity, and calls for the "restructuring of power and an equal and equitable distribution of both power and wealth in all their dimensions".¹⁸⁸ When considering the SLA's ideology, one needs to consider that John Garang, leader of the SPLM/A, as the ideal of the SLA's leadership, rejected all ideologies, believing that "a country must depend on the rights of citizenship – not on ideology".¹⁸⁹ Thus Flint (2008) argues that "for the SLA, resistance came first and ideology later".¹⁹⁰

The G-19 did not publish a manifesto and never established clear political and military structures; nevertheless they did publish statements. In a statement issued on March 6th 2006 the nineteen SLA members called for a single negotiating position at Abuja, called for unity within the multi-tribal movement (SLA) and urged for a Darfur-Darfur dialogue to "lay the foundation for stability

¹⁸⁸ Flint (2007) 160

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.,144

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.,160

Overcoming the commitment problem -
What factors make rebel group alliances more likely?

and development in Darfur”.¹⁹¹ The initial nineteen reform-minded commanders wanted closer ties to the traditional tribal leaders and “signaled a new desire to build bridges to sectors of Darfurian society which had been sidelined in the SLA’s “revolution””.¹⁹² They called for a “complete change of ideas and behavior” by the rebel forces.¹⁹³

Foreign support:

There is no evidence of foreign supports for G-19 prior to the National Redemption Front. This, however, should not come as a surprise since this rebel group only emerged as a separate entity in the months following the conclusion of the Darfur Peace Agreement on May 5th 2006.

One could argue that this split-group possibly still received some support from its former supporters¹⁹⁴, the SLA had previously enjoyed support by the governments of Eritrea, arguably Chad as well as from the SPLA/M.

V. e) ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL REDEMPTION FRONT
(NRF)

Rebel group	Leader	Identity	Ideology/ Motivation to fight	Foreign Support
JEM	Khalil Ibrahim (Zaghawa-Kobe)	Zaghawa – Kobe	Islamist, affiliations with Turabi’s NCP decentralized federal state, ruling out self- determination	Eritrea, Libya
G -19	Khamis Abdallah Abebka (Messalit)	multi-tribal: Zaghawa, Fur, Messalit and Berti	“resistance comes first ideology later” ¹⁹⁵ secular,	No evidence for foreign support Previously

¹⁹¹ Flint (2007) 167

¹⁹² Ibid., 167

¹⁹³ Ibid.,167

¹⁹⁴ One has to take into account that this was not the first split within the SLA

¹⁹⁵ Flint (2008) 160

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			decentralized state with the right of self-determination	SLA: Eritrea, Chad, SPLA
SFDA	Ahmed Diraige (Fur) Sharif Harir (Zaghawa)	multi-tribal: Fur - Zaghawa	Federal Democratic state, secular	Eritrea

According to the first Hypothesis proposed, an inter-rebel alliance is more likely if the (ethnic= identity of the groups is alike i.e. similar. All the rebel groups that constitute the National Redemption Front (NRF) are Darfurian groups that oppose the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) of 2006. They thus share some identities. However, taking into account the ethnic identity of the groups as operationalized for this paper, these groups are very different. While the G-19 and the SFDA are both multi-tribal and include members from the same ethnicities, the JEM is primarily made up of just one particular subgroup of a Darfurian tribe. This evidence seems to suggest that the same i.e. similar ethnic identity was not a factor in this alliance formation.

The second Hypothesis proposes that an inter-rebel alliance is more likely when the groups are closer on the ideological spectrum. Once again there are overlaps in all three groups' motivations to fight; all of them strive for a Sudanese state that is decentralized, where citizens from all regions are treated equally and no marginalization takes place. Both the G-19 and the SFDA fight for secular states, while in contrast the JEM with their Islamist background do not exactly specify their perspective on the issue of the separation of state and religion. In this regard the rebel groups are clearly far apart on the ideological spectrum.¹⁹⁶ Although the SFDA and G-19 are very similar in their motivation and stated aim of fighting, forming an alliance with the JEM seems to weaken the proposed hypothesis.

The third Hypothesis stated that the presence of a common foreign supporter who provides logistical, financial, military or political support reduces

¹⁹⁶ The issue of JEM's Islamist views had previously prevented closer cooperation between the JEM and the SLA/M because Abdel Wahid rejected it.

uncertainty and makes inter-rebel alliances more likely. There is some evidence for this claim; all members of the NRF had previously had backing from foreign governments, the government in Asmara had actually supported all three rebel groups, to different degrees. The National Redemption Front (NRF) itself enjoyed support from Chad, Eritrea and Libya. This evidence seems to suggest that the presence of a common foreign supporter reduces uncertainty between groups, thus making alliances between more likely.

VI. ANALYSIS

Summary of Case findings:

Alliance	Identity	Ideology/Motivation for fighting	Foreign support
NRF			X
SLA		/	X

VI. a) IDENTITY

The first hypothesis stated that a shared i.e. similar identity decreases uncertainty and thus helps overcome the commitment problem faced by rebel groups. The findings from the two cases do not support this claim. The evidence suggests that identity is not a factor that makes inter-rebel alliances more likely. These findings support Christia's claim (2008) that a shared identity does not drive alliance formation.

However, ethnic identity does play an important role in the Darfur conflict, according to *Africa Confidential*:

tribal, clan and historical ties remain important in defining allegiance...in the run up to the conference [Darfur rebel commander's conference 2007] politically unlikely alliances

emerged driven by history and kinship ties across movements¹⁹⁷

Endogenous trends:

There is still some evidence that a shared identity is considered important by rebel leaders; however, the significance of it might decrease as the conflict continues. A second hypothesis on the endogenous trend of the significance of identity for alliance formation stated that the longer a conflict lasts the less crucial a shared identity will be for the decision to form an alliance. There is some evidence for this claim since when the Fur resistance initially looked for partners to ally with they turned towards the Massalit first (the groups which is more similar to them) and only then turned toward the Zaghawa. It would be interesting for future research to examine whether difference in identity ultimately make inter-rebel alliances less likely.

VI. b) IDEOLOGY/ MOTIVATION TO FIGHT

The second hypothesis claimed that an alliance is more likely between rebel groups that share the same or a similar ideology i.e. that are close on the ideological spectrum. With only this limited number of cases the evidence is not entirely conclusive; in the case of the NRF the groups did differ in regard to their ideology, while all members of the SLA shared the same motivation to fight. A difficulty with this hypothesis is that many rebel groups do not have clearly defined ideologies, when considering the motivation for fighting as an indicator overlaps are greater, but the explanatory power is reduced.

Endogenous trends:

The hypothesis regarding the endogenous trend of the second variable proposed that as the conflict prolongs ideology becomes less important a factor in leader's decision to form an alliance. Once more, there seems to be some evidence for this claim. In the beginning of the Darfur rebellion, after

¹⁹⁷ "The commanders confer" *Africa Confidential* 48 (4) August 2007. 8-9

some joint military operations between the SLA and JEM, Abdel Wahid and Minni Minawi both ruled out further cooperation due to JEM's Islamic past.¹⁹⁸ However, later on in the conflict the groups did ally in the National Redemption Front (NRF) and other inter-rebel alliances later on in the conflict.

VI. c) FOREIGN SUPPORT

The third hypothesis claimed that the external/ foreign support by another government, diaspora or rebel group makes inter-rebel alliances more likely. The evidence from the two case studies supports this claim; common foreign support seems to be a factor that helps overcome the commitment problem by reducing uncertainty, thus making inter-rebel alliances more likely.

Endogenous trends:

Foreign support by one or more parties seems to increase the likelihood of inter-rebel alliances, however, it is not entirely unproblematic since it can also undermine cooperation and in addition might have detrimental effects on rebel groups e.g. can lead to further fragmentation. Foreign support, thus, can also have an indirect impact on e.g. the longevity, strength and effectiveness of an alliance. An example of foreign support undermining cooperation was support by Chad that the NRF received which, ultimately triggered a split within the alliance between factions that were close to N'Djamena and others that were keen on showing their independence from external powers.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, SPLM/A support to the SLA lead to Zhagawha suspicion of Garang's favoritism for Abdel Wahid, which "laid the foundations for the subsequent split between Fur and Zaghawa factions in the SLA".²⁰⁰

In addition in many conflicts there are multiple external supporters involved; but the "presence of multiple foreign backers diminishes the external backer's leverage" and thus could also decrease its capability as a "guarantor" or

¹⁹⁸ Flint (2007) 151

¹⁹⁹ See Tanner and Tubiana (2008) 39

²⁰⁰ Seymour (2010)

“external arbiter”.²⁰¹ It would be compelling if future research on inter-rebel alliances considers these features of foreign support and further examines its effects.

VII. CONCLUSION

What factors make inter-rebel alliances more likely? Answering this question was what this analysis set out to do, and thereby, shed light on a critical phenomenon of many multi-party civil wars, which remains yet understudied. This paper proposed that rebel groups, just as nation states, find themselves in an anarchic context and as a result are trapped in a multi tiered dilemma; on the one hand they face a security dilemma which leads them to strive for cooperation, on the other hand they face the commitment problem and fear betrayal. In order to overcome the commitment problem three factors i.e. variables were presented that are expected to reduce uncertainty and thus make inter-rebel alliances more likely: a shared ‘ethnic identity’, similar ‘ideology’ and common ‘foreign support’.

The evidence from the two cases of inter-rebel alliances in the conflict in Darfur suggest that the first two variables ‘ethnic identity’ and ‘ideology’ do not increase the likelihood of alliance formation. However, the third variable ‘foreign support’ was supported by the evidence. The presence of a common foreign supporter who acts as a guarantor and can provide incentives increases the likelihood for an inter-rebel alliance to form.

This study was highly exploratory and its findings are not easily generalizable, but it should be seen as a first step toward a more comprehensive and systematic study of this intriguing phenomenon. There is a definite need for further enquiry and extensive academic research. In the future studies of rebel group alliances should not only examine the onset of this type of cooperation but take into account the strength, duration and effectiveness of rebel alliances. In addition, the phenomenon of rebel group fragmentation and inter-rebel alliances are inextricably linked in many conflicts. A more

²⁰¹ Seymour (2010)

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comprehensive approach which takes into account a rebels group's inner dynamics in relation with its propensity to form alliances would be useful.

In conclusion, there are many factors that influence a rebel group's leader's decision to form an inter-rebel alliance, but, according to the findings of this analysis, one factor which increases the likelihood of its formation is the presence of a common 'foreign supporter'.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A:

Press Release/Commentary by SLM/SLA posted on
March 14, 2003, at 13:42:53: EST (-5 GMT)

The Sudan Liberation Movement and Sudan Liberation Army (SLM/SLA): Political Declaration

Darfur had been an independent state from the sixteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth, when it was coercively annexed to modern-day Sudan. As an independent state, Darfur enjoyed worldwide recognition and had embassies in the capitals of the major empires of that time. If Sudan is seen as the microcosm of Africa, Darfur is the microcosm of Sudan. The peaceful coexistence between its African and Arab tribes, between the sedentary populations and the nomadic ones, and between emigrants from its eastern and western neighbors and indigenous groups was the source of its stability, prosperity, and strength.

However, successive postindependence regimes in Khartoum, both civilian and military, have introduced and systematically adhered to the policies of marginalization, racial discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, and divisiveness. Darfur was made and continues to be a reservoir of cheap labor for central Sudan's agricultural and industrial projects, the major source of lower-ranking soldiers thrown into the fray of the supremacist war waged by Khartoum against south Sudan, Nuba, Fung, Beja, Rashaida, and other marginalized areas, and a fair game for central Sudan's political parties and elite seeking to field nonindigenous parliamentary candidates in safe seats.

The monopolization of power and wealth led to the institutionalization of the hegemonic policies of riverian Sudan's dominating establishment. These were further entrenched through the fueling of ethnic and tribal wars, with the governments in Khartoum providing military assistance to some Arab tribes and organizations to fight against their non-Arab brethren, with whom they have peacefully coexisted for centuries. Rapid desertification, famines, and cross-border population movements from neighboring countries into Darfur have provided Khartoum's regimes with additional ammunition to further its divisive policies between Arab and non-Arabs and sedentary and nomadic groups. These evil policies reached their zenith on the hands of the NIF junta that usurped power in June 1989. The present Khartoum junta has even created a Bantustan-type department of tribal affairs whose mission is to oversee the implementation of Khartoum's divide and rule schemes and channel government assistance to its local allies. These policies have resulted in massive human rights violations amounting to ethnic cleansing and genocide in certain areas of all the three states of Darfur.

The brutal oppression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide sponsored by the Khartoum government left the people of Darfur with no other option but to resort to popular political and military resistance for purposes of survival. This popular resistance has now coalesced into a political movement known as the Sudan Liberation

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Movement and its military wing, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLM/SLA), which we are happy to announce today to the Sudanese people and to the world at large.

The Objective of SLM/A

Although the SLM/A has originated from Darfur as a matter of necessity in response to the brutal genocidal policies of the NIF government in that region, we want to affirm and underline that the SLM/A is a national movement that aims along with other like-minded political groups to address and solve the fundamental problems of all of Sudan. The objective of SLM/A is to create a united democratic Sudan on a new basis of equality, complete restructuring and devolution of power, even development, cultural, and political pluralism and moral and material prosperity for all Sudanese.

SLM/A Position on the Unity of Sudan

The SLM/A is of the view that Sudan's unity is of paramount importance, but it should not be maintained and cannot be viable unless it is based on justice and equality for all the Sudanese peoples. Sudan's unity must be anchored on a new basis that is predicated on full acknowledgment of Sudan's ethnic, cultural, social, and political diversity. Viable unity must therefore ultimately be based on the right of self-determination and the free will of the various peoples of Sudan. The fundamental imperatives of a viable unity are an economy and political system that address the uneven development and marginalization that have plagued the country since independence, so that the interests of the marginalized majority are adequately catered for and they are brought to the same level of development of the ruling minority. The SLM/A shall work with all political forces that ascribe to this view.

SLM/A Position on Human Rights and Democracy

The SLM/A shall struggle for the full realization and respect for human rights and democratic pluralism in accordance with international standards leading to equal development and the eradication of political and economic marginalization.

SLM/A Position on System of Governance

The SLM/A shall struggle to achieve a decentralized form of governance based on the right of Sudan's different regions to govern themselves autonomously through a federal or confederal system. At the same time the central government must be completely restructured and recast so that it adequately reflects Sudan's rich diversity as represented by the component regions, which are its stakeholders.

SLM/A Position on the Questions of Identity, Culture, Power, and Wealth

The SLM/A shall struggle to realize a new system of rule that fully respects the cultural diversity in the Sudan and creates new democratic conditions for cultural dialogue and cross-fertilization generating a new view of the Sudanese identity based on Sudanism. Sudanism will provide the Sudanese with the necessary space, regardless of whether they are Arabs or Africans, Christians or Muslims, Westerners or Easterners, Southerners or Northerners to achieve greater cohesiveness on the basis of the simple fact of being Sudanese. This would require restructuring of power and an equal and equitable distribution of both power and wealth in all their dimensions.

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SLM/A Position on Religion

Religion is a source of spiritual and moral inspiration for our peoples that serves the needs of our peoples and the entire humankind in their pursuit of peaceful interaction and greater moral and spiritual ascendancy. The state machinery belongs to all Sudanese regardless of their religious or spiritual values and its neutrality must be preserved. Religion and politics belong to two different domains and must be kept in their respective domain, with religion belonging to the personal domain and the state in the public domain, that is, religion belongs to the individual and the state belongs to all of us. In this way, religion cannot become a cause of conflict among citizens of the same country.

SLM/A Position on Armed Struggle and Sudanese Opposition Armed Groups

Armed struggle is one of our means to achieve our legitimate objectives. The SLM/A shall strive to achieve a common vision and programme of action and unity among Sudan's different opposition armed groups as well as with nonarmed political groups with which it shares the same political objectives.

SLM/A Position Regarding Arab Tribes and Groups in Darfur

The Arab tribes and groups are an integral and indivisible component of Darfur social fabric who have been equally marginalized and deprived of their rights to development and genuine political participation. SLM/A firmly opposes and struggles against the Khartoum government's policies of using some Arab tribes and organization such as the Arab Alliance and Quresh to achieve its hegemonic devices that are detrimental both to Arabs and non-Arabs. We call upon all fellow citizens of Darfur from Arab background to join the struggle against Khartoum and its divisive policies, the restoration of our traditional and time-honored peaceful coexistence and the eradication of marginalization. The real interests of the Arab tribes of Darfur are with the SLM/A and Darfur not with the various oppressive and transient governments of Khartoum.

SLM/A Position on Peaceful Solution to the Sudanese Problem

Negotiation for the peaceful resolution of Sudan's conflict is one of our means of struggle to achieve our objective provided that it should be aimed at attaining a comprehensive and just peace. Negotiations must be conducted in good faith and the government must desist from its practices that seek to divide, co-opt, and destroy opposition forces.

SLM/A Position Regarding the NDA and Other Political Forces

SLM/A shall struggle to achieve understanding and common ground with the NDA and other political forces in order to remove the NIP's dictatorial regime and establish a democratic system based on a new political dispensation of freedom, justice, respect for human rights, and equality for all Sudanese. The SLM/A will therefore reach out to establish contact and dialogue with the NDA and other political forces.

SLM/A Appeal for Support

We appeal to the sons and daughters of Darfur, both inside the Sudan and in the diaspora, and to the Sudanese people in general, to give political and moral support

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to the SLM/A, and despite their poverty and suffering to make financial and material contributions to the SLM/A to enable it to achieve the objective of a free and democratic New Sudan. We appeal to our people in the rural areas, both agriculturalists and pastoral nomads, to rally behind the SLM/A and give the movement their full political and material support. We appeal to our brothers in the regime's armed forces to abandon the regime and join us, or if it is not possible to join us, not to fight us. We appeal to those in various government departments to find ways of supporting the SLM/A. We appeal to our intellectuals to use their pens and pockets to support the SLM/A. We appeal to businessmen to make financial donations. We appeal to our women to organize and find ways to support the SLM/A. We appeal to our youth to join the SLA and contribute their generation's share to rid our people of this dictatorship and establish a new Sudan that belongs equally to all its citizens.

SLM/A Position Regarding Neighboring Countries and International Community

The SLM/A shall strive to build relations of friendship and partnership with the neighboring countries, especially the Republic of Chad, the Great Libyan Jamahiriya, Egypt, and the Central African Republic, as well as all of Sudan's other neighbors. The SLM/A shall seek to create friendly relationships with the international community that will enhance international peace and stability in the world away from Khartoum's policies that have contributed to regional and international instability through its direct involvement in promotion of local, regional, and international terrorism.

SLM/A Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance for Darfur

Finally, on behalf of the people of Darfur, we appeal to the international community to assist the people of Darfur with humanitarian relief to address and ameliorate the serious and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region. Ethnic cleansing and other gross acts of genocide sponsored by the Khartoum regime have caused massive displacement and suffering in all the three states of Darfur. This has been further compounded by draught and desertification. The population is in dire need of food, human medicine, animal drugs, and other nonfood services.

Signed): _____

Minni Arkou Minnawi
Secretary General, SLM/SLA
Satellite Phone 8821631110628
Darfur, Sudan: March 13, 2003

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APPENDIX B:

National Redemption Front: Founding Declaration

To our fellow citizens across Darfur and the entire Sudanese nation;

To our comrades in arms in the struggle for just peace;

To all individuals, organizations, and members of the international community who share our indignation at the brutalities of the Khartoum regime.

Driven by our deep commitment to end the suffering of the people of Darfur and the tragic conditions in the refugee and displaced camps in particular;

Committed to end political, economic, cultural and social injustices, and all forms of repression in Darfur as well as other marginalized areas of Sudan;

Aware of the unity of purpose and fundamental objectives of the Darfur armed movements and other political forces in opposition to the government of Khartoum;

Determined to end the genocidal war and ethnic cleansing in Darfur by the Khartoum regime and its militias;

Conscious of the values of solidarity, cooperation, and coordination between our revolutionary movements and other Sudanese opposition forces in the struggle against the hegemony of repressive minority regimes, the tyranny of internal colonialism; and, to free marginalized peoples from the horrors of war, poverty, exclusion, and exploitation.

Cognizant of the after effects of the failed Abuja's process of May 5, 2006.

We, leaders of political and military organizations abstaining from signing the Abuja document, who earlier issued a joint statement in Asmara on June 7, 2006, reaffirm our rejection of that faulty process.

Realizing the virtues of combining efforts and resources to end the suffering of our people, we hereby join hands in establishing the *National Redemption Front (NRF)*, as an instrument for coordinating political, military, diplomatic, and media initiatives.

Fellow Citizens:

We, the revolutionary movements listed below and signatory to this statement:

1. Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A);
2. Justice and Equality Movement - Sudan (JEM);
3. Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance (SFDA);

call upon organizations of marginalized communities and other opposition political forces to join NRF in realizing the following principles:

1. Uphold Sudan as multicultural, multireligious, and multiethnic country where diversity constitutes the basis of citizenship for individuals, and unity of our nation.
2. Citizenship is the sole basis for all rights and obligations without discrimination on religious, ethnic, cultural, or regional background.
3. Guarantee all human rights, basic freedoms, rule of law, along with the recognition that accountability and transparency are necessary conditions for good governance.

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4. Safeguarding democracy, political pluralism, freedom of expression as fundamental for sharing, and transferring state power.
5. Ensuring priority of human development programs and capacity building as prerequisites for social and sustainable development. Introducing affirmative action in support of free basic social services, health, and education as well as introducing job creation policies.
6. Realizing harmony and interaction between people in various regions, and thereby consolidating national unity by facilitating travel and communication facilities throughout Sudan.

NRF objectives include:

- a) Bringing together all Darfurians in their various movements, organizations, groups, and associations within and outside Sudan.
- b) Organizing and unifying political, military, diplomatic, legal, media, and various popular initiatives for the realization and protection of the legitimate rights of Darfurians and all Sudanese.
- c) Ending the unceasing genocide and prosecuting its perpetrators.
- d) Coordination and consolidation of regional and international efforts to end the suffering of our refugees and displaced, and ensure a fair compensation as well as their repatriation to the original regions and villages.
- e) Endorse all legitimate demands of the marginalized areas.
- f) Advocate a just system for sharing wealth and power between the various regions of Sudan.
- g) Realize the full and unimpeded implementation of a federal system; and, ensure regional self-rule.
- h) Guarantee a fair participation in administering national political, economic, military, and civil service institutions on the basis of population percentages of various regions.

NRF structure is composed of a leadership council from the leaders of the founding organization with a rotating presidency, and a general-secretariat responsible for the daily executive affairs.

We appeal to all people of Darfur and the marginalized communities of Sudan to join NRF in order to realize justice and lasting peace for all. In conjunction with this declaration, a separate statement on our position regarding the Abuja document will be issued.

Victory to our people and glory to our martyrs.

Signed:

Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Dridg
Dr Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed
Mr Khamis Abdalla Absak

D. Sharif Hani
Asmara: June 30, 2006.