Variation In The Expansion of Rebel Governance Beyond Pre-existing Institutions: The Cases of the EPLF and the SPLM/A

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1. Introduction

During the Eritrean War of Independence, the traditional political and legal institutions in the Eritrean highlands were dismantled and replaced with a new system of governance (Pool 1998). Although the provision of governance has traditionally been considered a task of the state, this governance was provided by the rebel group the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) (Milliken and Krause 2002; Pool 1998). The EPLF created an expansive governance system, consisting of quasi democratic institutions, socio-economic reforms, and the provision of education and healthcare (Pool 1998; Dirkx 2024). During the Second Sudanese Civil War, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) also attempted to govern the population in liberated areas (Mampilly 2011). However, the SPLM/A's governance system was built upon the pre-existing institutions in the liberated areas (Mampilly 2011). It mostly focused on security and justice (Duyvesteyn et al. 2016). Why did these rebel groups transform and expand differently upon pre-existing institutions?

These two cases show variation in the expansion of rebel governance, provided by rebel groups in areas with pre-existing institutions. It is commonly agreed upon that, when rebel groups seek to regulate the life of civilians during war, they must interact with the pre-existing institutions of the area (Hoffmann 2015). These pre-existing institutions shape - and are shaped by - the values, norms, beliefs, and behaviour of the population (Hoffmann 2015). When rebel groups seek to govern civilians, they need to legitimise their authority (Wickham-Crowley 2015). This is done through a bargain: the rebel group offers the population benefits - such as security, order, or social services - and, in exchange, the population allows the rebel group to hold on to the territory (Wickham-Crowley 2015). This means that the pre-existing institutions affect rebel-civilian relations, and therefore also rebel governance (Arjona et al. 2015; Loyle et al. 2023; Brenner and Tazzioli 2023; Worrall 2018; Mampilly and Stewart 2021). However, less clear is why some of the rebel groups that occupy areas with pre-existing institutions only minimally change pre-existing institutions, while other rebel groups transform them and expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions (Worrall 2018; Pfeifer and Schwab 2023). Therefore, this paper aims to answer the question: ***What explains variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions?***

The answer to this question is not obvious, because, in the first place, the existing literature on rebel governance disagrees about the relation between expansiveness of rebel governance and pre-existing institutions. Some scholars argue that pre-existing institutions explain variation in the expansiveness of rebel governance in general (Arjona 2016; Wickham-Crowley 2015). According to Arjona (2016), pre-existing institutions limit rebel governance, because they grant civilians collective bargaining power to resist rebel rule; and according to Wickham-Crowly (2015), pre-existing institutions limit rebel governance, because it means that there is no authority vacuum that the rebel group can fill. This, however, does not explain the empirical case of the EPLF, which had both pre-existing institutions and expansive rebel governance. Others argue that pre-existing institutions in itself enable rebel groups to create expansive governance (Mampilly 2011). According to this logic, rebel groups first co-opt pre-existing institutions, and then invent upon these institutions (Mampilly 2011; Mampilly and Stewart 2017).

The question remains why rebel groups invent differently upon pre-existing institutions. According to Stewart (2021), rebel groups invent differently upon pre-existing institutions because of the goal of the rebel group. However, the effect of rebel ideology and goal on rebel governance is questioned, because the expressed ideologies and goals of actors do not always align with actual behaviour in conflict zones (Mampilly 2011). While this explanation suggests that the expansiveness of rebel governance is an ideological choice, other scholars suggest that the expansiveness of rebel governance is better explained by circumstantial factors.

Based on related research about rebel group behaviour and about governance in war zones, additional explanations for variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions can be formulated. Many scholars point out that local warzones are shaped by rebel groups and civilians, as well as by international organisations, states, and militias (Hagmann and Plécard 2010; Jentzsch 2017; Mampilly 2011; Lund 2006). They suggest that, when actors other than the rebel group under investigation provide governance, this impacts rebel group behaviour and governance (Loyle et al. 2023; Wagstaff and Jung 2020; Revkin 2020). Therefore, a second potential explanation for the variation in how rebel groups

transform and expand beyond pre-existing institutions is the governance provided by other actors.

In addition, many scholars study the effects of different resources on the behaviour of rebel groups (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Weinstein 2006; Salehyan et al. 2014). Some scholars argue that rebel groups govern to extract resources from the population, and, this way, to provide for their own basic needs (Dirkx 2024; Reno 2011; Conrad et al. 2022). However, sometimes, rebel groups receive support from external states, from diasporas, or from nongovernmental organisations (Podder 2013; Huang and Sullivan 2021). Therefore, a third potential explanation for the variation in how rebel groups transform and expand upon pre-existing institutions is the resources of the rebel group.

By investigating which explanation best explains the variation in expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions among the EPLF and the SPLM/A, this paper aims to contribute to the literature on rebel governance. Because of its focus on rebel governance in areas with pre-existing institutions, this paper acknowledges the impact of social structures and other actors on rebel governance (Loyle et al. 2023). It also contributes to the older literature that seeks to explain why and how rebel groups govern (Mampilly 2011; Arjona 2016). This way, it helps improve the understanding of rebel behaviour, rebel-civilian relations, victimisation of civilians, and governance in war zones (Arjona 2016; Loyle et al. 2023; Reno 2011; Sanín and Wood 2014). This is highly relevant, because, with the proliferation of weak states and intra-state wars, rebel groups have become prominent actors that shape human lives in and beyond global conflicts (Albert 2022; Milliken and Krause 2002; Hagmann and Plécard 2010; Podder 2014; Huang 2016; Shesterinina 2022).

2. Literature review

This research is interested in why and when rebel groups in areas with pre-existing institutions expand governance beyond these pre-existing institutions. Rebel groups are defined as 'consciously coordinated groups whose members engage in protracted violence with the intention of gaining undisputed political control over all or a portion of a pre-existing state's territory' (Kasfir 2015, pp. 24-25). Rebel governance refers to the situation in which rebel groups regulate 'the social, political, and economic life of non-combatants during war' through informal and formal institutions (Arjona et al. 2015, p. 3; Loyle et al. 2023; Brenner and Tazzioli 2023; Albert 2022; Worrall 2018).

Although pre-conflict governance institutions are largely absent in some areas, other areas contain pre-conflict institutions that are provided by the state, by traditional village authorities, or by both (Mampilly 2011; Dirkx 2024). When a rebel group seeks to operate in an area with pre-existing institutions, it must interact with these (Hoffmann 2015; Mampilly and Stewart 2021). As shown by the more expansive governance of the EPLF and the less expansive governance of the SPLM/A, there is variation in whether and how rebel groups expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions. This variation refers to the range of institutions, the quality of institutions, and the depth of institutions (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023; Mampilly 2011; Stewart 2021). Current scholarship suggests three plausible rival answers for this variation: 1) rebel group ideology; 2) governance provided by other actors; 3) the resources of the rebel group.

2.1. Rebel group ideology and goal

In the first place, variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions could be explained by variation in the ideology and goal of rebel groups. Rebel group behaviour is influenced by ideology (Wood and Thomas 2017), defined as a set of systematic ideas about how the world should be (Sanín and Wood 2014; Mampilly and Stewart 2021). Ideology includes a goal to obtain, and a strategy to obtain that goal (Sanín and Wood 2014). When a rebel group secures territorial control, it can use its authority to shape society according to its ideological worldview (Aponte González et al. 2024). Some ideologies call for a fundamental transformation

of the existing social order (Mampilly and Stewart 2021). Rebel groups that adhere to such ‘transformative’ or ‘revolutionary’ ideologies will transform or eliminate existing institutions, and establish new ones (Mampilly and Stewart 2021, p. 27). This way, rebel groups that adhere to a revolutionary ideology expand rebel governance beyond the traditional pre-existing institutions of the area.

In contrast, other rebel groups seek to uphold the status quo (Mampilly and Stewart 2021). For rebel groups that adhere to a conservative ideology, the provision of governance, beyond what is necessary for territorial control, does not advance their goal (Stewart and Mampilly 2021; Kalyvas 2015). Therefore, their governance tends to be characterised by indirect rule, and it tends to be limited to the provision of order and security (Kalyvas 2015). In the absence of a clear program to draw upon, the rebel group co-opts pre-existing institutions and uses these to govern (Kalyvas 2015). This way, rebel groups that adhere to a conservative ideology do not expand rebel governance beyond the traditional pre-existing institutions of the area (Mampilly and Stewart 2021).

The way in which rebel groups with a revolutionary ideology expand rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions is determined by their ideology. The most common revolutionary rebel group ideologies are Islamist and leftist ideologies (Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Kalyvas 2015; Florea 2020; Wood and Thomas 2017). Well-known examples of Islamist rebel groups are ISIS and Boko Haram (Nilsson and Svensson 2021). Leftist ideologies, as the ideology of the EPLF, base themselves on a Marxist philosophy, in which class struggle is a central theme (Wood and Thomas 2017; Pool 1998). It prescribes a revolution as a strategy to liberate ‘peasants, workers, and other oppressed class groups’ (Wood and Thomas 2017, p. 34). Consequently, rebel groups that adhere to this type of ideology aim to reshape the existing social hierarchies (Wood and Thomas 2017). Therefore, they implement governance institutions to create socio-economic and political reforms, such as educational reforms, land reforms, and the empowerment of women (Stewart 2021; Wood and Thomas 2017).

In the literature about rebel group ideology and goal, nationalism and secession are frequently mentioned (Kalyvas 2015; Florea 2020; Mampilly 2011). Nationalism prioritises and seeks to politically institutionalise the 'nation', constituted by a particular social group (Freeden 1997). To this end, nationalist rebel groups may seek autonomy, or independent statehood (Freeden 1997; Conrad et al. 2022). Although nationalism is not considered a full ideology (see Freeden 1997), the goal of seeking autonomy or independence is relatively revolutionary (Stewart 2021). Governance demonstrates to domestic audiences and to outsiders that the rebel group is capable of fulfilling the tasks traditionally associated with the state (Florea 2020). Thereby, rebel governance advances the goal of obtaining formal statehood (Florea 2020; Stewart 2018). Nationalism and secessionism make the provision of education likely, because education helps promote the rebel group's interpretation of history and identity among the population (Conrad et al. 2022). This way, nationalism and secessionism lead to more expansive rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions.

The ideology and goal of a rebel group itself are products of a specific time, place, and social environment. The extent to which a rebel group adheres to a revolutionary ideology can evolve, for instance, as a result of socialisation with the civilian population (Hyyppä 2023). This way, ideology can account for variation in the expansion of governance among different rebel groups, as well as for variation within one group over time. This way, ideology could potentially account for variation in the expansion of rebel governance among the EPLF and the SPLM/A. While the EPLF adhered to Marxism and aimed for Eritrean independence from the start, the SPLM/A did not aim to create a separate state until around 1994 (Stewart 2021).

However, in conflict zones, rebel group behaviour does not necessarily align with the group's expressed ideology (Mampilly 2011; Arjona 2014). In the first place, when the individual fighters of a rebel group are not disciplined, they may victimise the population for short-term gains, which hinders the implementation of ideological rebel governance (Weinstein 2006; Kalyvas 2015). Secondly, rebel groups may compromise on their political ideas, because the elimination or transformation of pre-existing institutions may erode popular support, and would, therefore, impede the

rebel group's efforts to obtain its goals (Reno 2011; Worrall 2018; Furlan 2020; Mampilly and Stewart 2021). To deal with this, revolutionary rebel groups may first seek to obtain political support, through creating governance that corresponds to the interests of civilians (Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Hyyppä 2023; Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017).

Moreover, the literature suggests that rebel groups use ideology as an instrument to foster support from actors that adhere to the ideology in case (Weinstein 2006; Stewart 2021). Consequently, ideology cannot be the key explaining factor for variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions. Lastly, the ideology argument assumes that rebel groups govern because of intent. However, some scholars argue that rebel governance is necessary for rebel groups to obtain their goals (Kasfir et al. 2017), and requires certain resources and capabilities (Wagstaff and Jung 2020).

2.2. Governance provided by other actors

In the second place, variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions could be explained by the governance provided by other actors in rebel-held territory. Rebel groups provide governance to cultivate support among the civilian population (Berti 2016; Kasfir et al. 2017; Revkin 2020). Civilian support enables rebel groups to control the territory and the population, and to extract food, intelligence, and recruits from the population (Kasfir et al. 2017; Revkin 2020). Therefore, rebel groups prefer to implement an expansive system of governance (Arjona 2016). This suggests that, in the absence of legitimate governance provided by other actors, rebel groups are in an advantageous position to use rebel governance to obtain popular support (Revkin 2020). This way, in the absence of legitimate governance provided by other actors, rebel groups expand rebel governance beyond the traditional pre-existing institutions.

In contrast, when legitimate governance is provided by other actors, rebel groups will limit the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions. This is because the expansion of governance beyond pre-existing institutions requires costly

investments, time, and organisation (Wagstaff and Jung 2020; Conrad et al. 2022). Rebel groups are strategic actors that take into account whether they will be able to provide institutions that are more legitimate than those of other actors (Wagstaff and Jung 2020). Governance can be understood as a competition between the rebel group and other actors for legitimacy with the population (Berti 2016; Kasfir et al. 2017; Revkin 2020). When other actors provide governance that is considered legitimate by the population, it becomes more difficult for the rebel group under investigation to gain popular support with the provision of governance (Wagstaff and Jung 2020; Berti 2016; Kasfir et al. 2017). In that case, the rebel group under investigation will not aim to expand its own governance beyond the pre-existing institutions (Rolandsen 2005; Mampilly 2011). This way, when legitimate governance is provided by other actors, rebel groups do not expand rebel governance beyond the pre-existing institutions of the area.

Governance can be provided by actors that seek to help and access populations in areas controlled by rebel groups, to provide goods and services (Mampilly 2011). Examples of these are NGOs, defined as non-governmental organisations with non-commercial functions, such as the Red Cross; agencies of international organisations and of governments, such as UNICEF; religious institutions, such as churches; and initiatives formed by diasporas (Mampilly 2011; Podder 2014). These actors typically provide capital intensive services, such as healthcare, that require specific materials and knowledge (Wagstaff and Jung 2020). These are, in general, difficult to provide for rebel groups (Wagstaff and Jung 2020). When civilians become used to the services provided by these actors, this reduces the incentives for a rebel group to transform and expand upon the pre-existing institutions to create legitimacy (Rolandsen 2005; Mampilly 2011).

Governance can also be provided by armed actors other than the rebel group under investigation, such as rival rebel groups, or auxiliary armed forces (Jentzsch 2017; Hyyppä 2023). Auxiliary armed forces are local groups that possess intimate knowledge of place and people (Jentzsch 2017). Civilians that possess understanding of civil structures and strong social ties can also establish governance (Hyyppä 2023). Their ties to the population are valuable for obtaining popular support

(Kasfir et al. 2017; Jentzsch 2017). Consequently, their ability to cultivate popular support is usually superior to that of rebel groups and states, and their governance limits the expansiveness of rebel governance. Rival rebel groups seek to 'outgovern' each other, in order to assert themselves as the dominant rebel group (Reno 2011). Whether they are able to do so is dependent upon their organisational capabilities (Mampilly 2011) and resources (Wagstaff and Jung 2020).

This potential explanation for the variation in expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions takes into account that warzone orders are shaped by actors other than states, civilians, and the rebel group under investigation (Kasfir et al. 2017; Glawion and Le Noan 2022). These actors pursue their own agendas (Kasfir et al. 2017). The presence of legitimate governance provided by other actors could potentially explain the difference in expansion of rebel governance between the EPLF and the SPLM/A, because, in the case of the SPLM/A, many NGOs were present, while their presence was much more limited in EPLF-held territory (Podder 2014).

However, the dynamic relations between the different actors involved create a complex situation (Kasfir et al. 2017). When rebel groups co-opt institutions and insert their members into societal or nongovernmental organisations, it becomes difficult to distinguish between governance provided by rebel groups and governance provided by other present actors (Kasfir et al. 2017; Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017; Podder 2014; Mampilly 2011). Moreover, while a rebel group can withhold aid provided by other actors from the civilians that are unwilling to support the rebel group, it can also divert this aid towards the rebel group itself (Mampilly 2011).

This argument is based on the assumptions that rebel groups need to provide governance, because they need the population to obtain their goals. However, various scholars point out that rebel groups can draw upon other resources as well (see Weinstein 2006; Podder 2014). Lastly, it could be possible that factors - other than the calculation of whether a rebel group will be able to obtain legitimacy with its governance - influence under what conditions a rebel group accepts the governance provided by other actors and does not challenge it. For instance, rebel groups that

adhere to a revolutionary ideology might challenge legitimate governance provided by other actors, if it does not align with their ideological world view (Van Baalen and Terpstra 2023).

2.3. Resources of the rebel group

In the third place, variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions could be explained by the resources upon which rebel groups draw. Rebel groups need assets, such as food, information, recruits, shelter, and weapons, to maintain their organisation, and to pursue their political and military goals (Conrad et al. 2020; Salehyan et al. 2014; Kasfir et al. 2017; Weinstein 2006; Huang and Sullivan 2021). For this, some rebel groups are directly reliant upon the population (Arjona 2016; Huang and Sullivan 2021). Because civilians can choose to assist or not assist rebel groups, rebel groups provide public goods and benefits to the population to obtain popular support (Conrad et al. 2020; Weinstein 2006). In exchange, the population enables the rebel group to extract certain assets from the population (Weinstein 2006; Beardsley et al. 2015). When the pre-existing institutions cannot help the rebel group in obtaining resources, the rebel group transforms them, and expands its governance beyond them. This way, rebel groups that are reliant upon the population for resources expand rebel governance beyond the traditional pre-existing institutions of the area.

In contrast, other rebel groups are less reliant upon the population. The reliance of a rebel group on the population is determined by the resources on which a rebel group draws (Salehyan et al. 2014; Stein 2022; Conrad et al. 2022). While rebel group resources can be obtained directly through the population, they can also be provided by external actors, such as external states, international organisations, or diasporas (Podder 2013; Conrad et al. 2022; Huang and Sullivan 2021). Establishing governance requires time and organisation (Conrad et al. 2022). When a rebel group is able to obtain the necessary resources independent of the population (Salehyan et al. 2014), transforming pre-existing institutions and expanding upon these does not help the rebel group advance its goal. This way, rebel groups that are not reliant upon the population for their resources do not expand rebel governance beyond the traditional pre-existing institutions of the area.

Different resources create reliance on the population in different ways. Since natural resource extraction requires civilian labour and specific knowledge, rebel groups dependent on this are incentivised to provide governance, especially health care, as it contributes to maintaining a pool of labour (Conrad et al. 2022). Moreover, rebel groups with limited external financial support draw upon norms and histories to legitimise their practices (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017). Rebel groups can use ideology to gain support, because external states are more likely to support rebel groups with similar goals (Salehyan et al. 2011). They use the provision of services such as education and popular elections to demonstrate their 'organisational sophistication' to create legitimacy (Huang and Sullivan 2021). This both increases domestic support, and encourages foreign sponsors (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Florea 2020; Cunningham et al. 2021).

External support can create indirect reliance on the population, and therefore result in more expansive rebel governance (Petrova 2019; Huang and Sullivan 2021). When support is provided externally, in the form of financing, weapons, or training (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Florea 2020), rebel groups will still be reliant upon the population for food, recruitment, and intelligence. Democratic external supporters wish to avoid the reputational costs of overtly sponsoring violent actors (Stein 2022; Salehyan et al. 2011). Since rebel groups do not want to lose political and material resources, they will create governance structures to build good relations with the population (Stein 2022). Foreign NGOs and diasporas provide both financial and political support, and, since this both enhances the rebel group's capacities, and draws international attention to the rebel group's purpose, this increases reliance on the population, and therefore also results in more expansive rebel governance (Byman 2013; Reno 2011).

However, external support can also reduce reliance on the population. When NGOs provide goods directly into rebel territory, the rebel group can divert these goods towards the rebel group itself, or it can co-opt NGO institutions and take credit for providing governance to obtain legitimacy, without actually devoting resources to it (Podder 2014; Mampilly 2011). External states support rebel groups in the form of

direct combat to destabilise rival regimes (Salehyan et al. 2011). This reduces the rebel group's reliance upon the population, because external states seek quick military victories (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Petrova 2019). Therefore, this support is free of conditions, such as proof of governance capabilities (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Petrova 2019; Reno 2011). As a result, rebel groups do not need the support of local communities to maintain these types of support (Reno 2011). This makes social service provision obsolete, and incentivises the rebel group to focus on military victory as well, to maintain its resources (Huang and Sullivan 2021; Reno 2011; Salehyan et al. 2014). It will result in limited rebel governance with institutions suited to maintain order and security.

Rebel groups can switch between modes of funding (Mampilly 2011; Salehyan 2011). This way, the resources theory is able to explain variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions among different rebel groups, as well as variation across time and place. It could potentially explain the variation in the expansion of rebel governance among the EPLF and the SPLM/A, because the SPLM/A enjoyed support from the Ethiopian government until the early 1990s, while the EPLF had few external resources (Reno 2011). Additionally, the resources explanation acknowledges the wider context in which rebel governance is situated, because resources, such as external state support, are dependent on the interests of states, and on regional conflict dynamics (Reno 2011). Moreover, this explanation can account for changes in rebel group ideology: a rebel group can use ideology to cultivate support from specific actors (Sanín and Wood 2014; Weinstein 2006).

However, when rebel groups draw upon multiple resources, it is difficult to determine the influence of individual resources (Mampilly 2011). Furthermore, this theory is unable to explain what determines which resources a rebel group will draw upon. This way, resources alone might be unable to account for variation in the expansion of rebel governance among rebel groups in areas with pre-existing institutions. Since rebel groups have agency over which resources they use (Reno 2011), the resources could be an ideologically motivated choice of the rebel group. Additionally, the mobilisation of foreign NGO support is facilitated by the ability to connect with foreign audiences, which is facilitated by rebel leaders with foreign education and previous

connections (Reno 2011; Huang et al. 2022). Moreover, some resources, such as natural resource extraction, are dependent upon location (Conrad et al. 2022). Others are dependent upon the foreign policy interests of states (Reno 2011; Byman 2013).

3. Methodology

Why and when do rebel groups expand their governance beyond pre-existing institutions? The literature suggests three plausible rival explanations: 1) ideology; 2) governance by other actors; 3) resources. In order to find out which explanation fits best, this research selects two cases, and uses a qualitative method known as process-tracing (González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021; Mahoney 2015).

3.1. Case selection

In order to investigate why variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions occurs, this research adopts a 'diverse case' case selection strategy (Gerring and Seawright 2007). It selects a case for each identified category. As a case of more expansive rebel governance, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) is selected. As a case of less expansive rebel governance, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) is selected. Moreover, the SPLM/A contains within-case variation: initially, the SPLM/A provided very limited governance, but it expanded its governance beyond pre-existing institutions in the early 1990s (Stewart 2012; Young 2012; Reno 2011). However, its governance did not become as expansive as that of the EPLF (Stewart 2021). Therefore, this within-case variation enables more robust theory-testing. In the first place, the explanations for variation can be tested across rebel groups, as well as across time. In the second place, the SPLM/A's rebel governance covers two different expansions. This way, the cases capture the range of variation that is the key interest of this paper (Gerring and Seawright 2007).

These cases fit the research puzzle, because the EPLF and the SPLM/A expanded governance differently beyond comparable pre-existing institutions. The literature on rebel governance identifies the governance of the EPLF as higher institutionalist (Huang 2016), more effective (Mampilly 2011), and more intensive (Stewart 2021) than that of the SPLM/A. In both cases, the state provided little to no services (Mampilly 2011; Pool 1998; Stewart 2021). In the case of the EPLF, the village committee formed a traditional judicial institution at local level (Pool 1998; Dirkx 2024). Muslim areas were ruled by Islamic law (Pool 1998). The situation in Sudan is comparable: the south of Sudan was neglected by the country's central authorities,

both during colonial rule and after Sudan's independence. Despite this, a system of legal and executive practices had been in place since colonial rule (Johnson 1998). Customary law was ruled by traditional courts and chiefs of ethnic communities, and executive authority was held by government administrators (Mampilly 2011; Johnson 1998).

3.2. Observable implications

Each of the three plausible rival explanations - 1) ideology; 2) governance by other actors; 3) resources - has its observable implications. The observable implications are the pieces of empirical evidence that should be observed if the theory is able to explain the case (González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021). Observable implications can be derived from the logical steps that make up a theory. Key observable implications are summarised in Table 1.

3.2.1. Ideology

According to the ideology theory, rebel groups expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions when they adhere to a more revolutionary ideology. Rebel governance, this way, serves to reform the existing political order and construct one based on the group's ideology. Consequently, a group that accepts the existing political order will not expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions, but rather limit governance to the provision of security, to safeguard the territory and the political order. As outlined in grey in Table 1, the first key observable implication of this theory is: rebel institutions correspond to the rebel group's ideology and goal. For instance, reforms of land ownership and nationalisation of housing can change class hierarchies and are, therefore, be linked to leftist ideologies (Stewart 2021). If no correspondence between ideology and institutions is found, this theory is falsified.

The implementation of ideologically-aligned governance structures and the cultivation of civilian support require the individual members to adhere to the group ideology and to not victimise the population for personal short-term gains (Weinstein 2006; Kalyvas 2015). Therefore, the second key observable implication is awareness of political

ideology and discipline among group members, because rebel group members play an active role in creating and maintaining institutions in line with the group's ideology.

The observation of correspondence between rebel governance and rebel ideology is irrelevant for the resources theory, as well as for the governance by other actors theory, because, according to those theories, rebel governance serves a different purpose. Likewise, political awareness among group members is irrelevant for both. However, depending on the resources of a rebel group, it may use ideology to obtain or maintain support. If a rebel group relies on conditional external support, the observable implications of the ideology theory provide some support for the resources theory as well.

3.2.2. Governance by other actors

According to the governance by other actors theory, legitimate governance provided by other actors explains variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions. Rebel groups strategically devote their resources to governance. When other actors already provide legitimate governance in a certain sector, the rebel group is unlikely to obtain popular support by providing a similar sector, unless it can provide a better version than the other actor. Therefore, the key observable implication of this theory, as outlined in green in Table 1, is that the sectors of rebel governance and those of other actors do not overlap, unless the rebel governance institution provides a legitimate alternative to governance of other actors in the same sector.

This indicates that rebel institutions will be more limited if more governing actors are present and if the rebel group possesses relatively few resources. Because governance competes for civilian support, the second key observable implication is: rebel governance corresponds to the interest and demands of the population. The less expansive rebel governance is likely to co-occur with the presence of NGOs and governmental agencies. If this constellation of governance provided by different actors is not found, this theory is falsified.

For the ideology explanation, the provision of rebel governance in sectors where other actors do not provide governance is mostly irrelevant. Nevertheless, strategically providing rebel governance can be beneficial for obtaining particular resources. Therefore, depending on the rebel group's resources, this observation can provide support for the resources theory. The observation of only popular institutions is, according to the ideology theory, unlikely, especially for the rebel group with the more expansive governance. Although the resources theory suggests that this is likely when the dependence on the population is direct, this observation is unlikely in cases of other resources, especially when reliance on the population is low.

3.2.3. Resources

According to the resources theory, different resources explain variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions. Rebel groups expand more beyond pre-existing institutions when they are more reliant upon the population for obtaining resources, because rebel groups govern for resources. Specific resources create a specific type of reliance on the population. Therefore, the first observable implication of the resources theory, as outlined in blue in Table 1, is that rebel governance secures resources or contributes to obtaining them.

Reliance on the population is caused by direct dependence upon the population for basic needs, or external support that is conditional upon civilian well-being. Institutions that correspond to this contribute to civilian well-being. Examples are political inclusion and healthcare. Less reliance is caused by external supporters, in particular by unconditional aid to the rebel group. This should correspond with governance limited to pre-existing institutions and the provision of security. If this link between resources, reliance, and governance is not found, the theory is rejected. Additionally, a lack of reliance on the population for resources is likely to correspond to high victimisation of the population (Stein 2022). In contrast, when reliance on the population is high, and the provision of governance is needed, a disciplined rebel group is likely.

For the ideology theory, as well as for the governance by other actors theory, a correspondence between resources, reliance, and governance is irrelevant.

According to the ideology theory, observing only institutions that correspond to civilian interests in the group that expands governance more beyond pre-existing institutions is unlikely. This observation would provide some support against this theory. In contrast, for the governance by other actors theory, this observation is key. However, according to this theory, higher victimisation of the population by the rebel group with less expansion is unlikely, because this theory holds that, in general, obtaining civilian support is important.

Table 1. Observable implications

Observable implication	**Meaning for the theory**		
	1) Ideology	**2) Other actors governance**	**3) Resources**
Rebel institutions correspond to ideology.	Necessary; strong support if present, falsification if absent.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.
Politically motivated and educated rebel group members.	Possible. Strong support if present.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.
Rebel institutions in sectors where no other actors provide legitimate governance .	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Necessary; strong support if present, falsification if absent.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.
Governance corresponds to civilian demands.	Possible, if pre-existing rebel group-population ties are absent and/or	Necessary. Inconclusive	Possible, if reliance on population for

	alignment with ideology. Inconclusive support if present. Some support against if this is only type of governance.	support if present.	resources. Inconclusive support if present.
Rebel institutions correspond to obtaining resources.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Necessary; strong support if present, falsification if absent.
High levels of civilian victimisation by rebel group with less expansive governance.	Absence or presence irrelevant for verification.	Unlikely. Some support against if present.	Possible, if the rebel group has external, non conditional support. Inconclusive support if present.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

In order to find out which theory is best able to explain the variation in expansion beyond pre-existing institutions, as observed in the rebel governance of the EPLF and the SPLM/A, the theories need to be verified or falsified. As summarised in Table 1, finding or not finding the observable implications of a theory can falsify or verify a theory. To verify or falsify a theory, empirical data is needed (Mahoney 2015). Then, this empirical data needs to be linked to the logical steps that constitute a theory (Mahoney 2015). The observable implications of the theories, as outlined in Table 1, are characteristics of rebel groups, behaviour of rebel groups, and characteristics of rebel governance institutions. Therefore, in order to gather empirical evidence to verify or falsify the different theories, this research will use academic research, and documents published by organisations such as NGOs and the rebel groups themselves (Lamont 2015).

Although this method has limitations, strategies to address these exist (González-Ocantos and LaPorte). The main limitation of this method is the difficulty of obtaining factual information about conflict zones (González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021). In the first place, data from secondary sources reflects the bias of the author and the author's sources (see Fuglerud 2009). To deal with contradictory evidence and to limit using a singular perspective, this research aims to contextualise and triangulate the collected data (Lamont 2015). In the second place, data may be 'missing': the empirical evidence of an event predicted by the theory is unfindable (González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021). This could occur: external actors sometimes support rebel groups covertly (Stein 2020). This can result in erroneous conclusions. In case data is 'missing', this research will investigate whether findable evidence suggests that the 'missing' evidence used to exist (González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021).

4. Variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions

4.1. More expansive rebel governance: Eritrean People's Liberation Front

4.1.1 Rebel governance and pre-existing institutions

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was a rebel group formed in 1972, during the Eritrean War of Independence (1961-1991) (Stewart 2021; Dirkx 2024). The origins of this conflict can be traced back to Ethiopia's opposition to Eritrean independence. Eritrea first became a political entity as the Italian colonial state of Eritrea (Woldemariam 2018). After the British Military Administration (1941-1952), Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia, and Eritrea became a province of Ethiopia in 1962 (Pool 1998). The EPLF was formed by 'radical' factions of the in 1960 founded Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) (Stewart 2021). Throughout the 1970s, the EPLF became the major rebel group that fought against the Ethiopian government (Dirkx 2024). In 1994, the EPLF was transformed into a mass political movement (Connell 2001).

The EPLF transformed and expanded governance beyond pre-existing institutions. The EPLF dismantled the pre-existing political institutions, consisting of village chiefs and committees that collected taxes for the Ethiopian state (Dirkx 2024). The EPLF replaced this with its own institutions (Dirkx 2024). The EPLF created People's Assemblies, which were responsible for the administration of services, such as the provision of water (Stewart 2021). Representatives for the People's Assemblies were elected by the mass organisations that had also been created by the EPLF (Dirkx 2024). The People's Assemblies also formed judiciary committees, and their task was to resolve disputes (Dirkx 2024). This way, they took on the role previously held by the village chiefs (Dirkx 2024). Nevertheless, they were under control of the EPLF, and the EPLF handled the most important disputes (Stewart 2021). Traditional laws that did not conflict with the EPLF's programme were maintained (Dirkx 2024).

Although the Ethiopian state in many areas barely provided any services (Pool 1998), the EPLF provided health care, medical training, and population-wide education (Dirkx 2024; Stewart 2021; Connell 2001; Dirkx 2024). It also implemented economic reforms and regulations, land redistribution, and cultural reforms that increased the

rights of women (Stewart 2021). From 1981 onwards, the EPLF became more inclusive: it undertook efforts to reach out to Eritreans across the political spectrum, and limited its earlier social reforms and political mobilisation (Connell 2001). In 1987, a Department of Justice was established, and the Central Committee drafted new legal codes (Dirkx 2024).

4.1.2. Theory-testing

Ideology

From its founding until the early 1980s, the EPLF adhered to a revolutionary ideology, and it aimed to liberate and transform Eritrean society (Stewart 2021; Pool 1998; Connell 2001; Serequeberhan 1989). During the first decade, the EPLF characterised itself as ideologically Marxist (Stewart 2021). The perceived problems of Eritrean society, and the solutions to these, were approached through a class-based lens (Stewart 2021). In 1977, the EPLF held a first organisational congress and adopted the National Democratic Program (Connell 2001). The primary goals were to 'abolish the Ethiopian colonial administrative organs', and 'safeguard the interests of the masses of workers, peasants, and other democratic forces' (EPLF 1977, p. 23). Moreover, the EPLF was highly disciplined (Connell 2001). The leadership had strict control over the organisation and recruitment (Pool 1998). The EPLF had an internal party, the Eritrean People's Revolutionary Party (Connell 2001).

Throughout the 1980s, the EPLF's adherence to Marxism declined (Dirkx 2024). In 1986, at the second congress of the party, the party renamed itself Eritrean Socialist Party, and adopted a social democratic programme (Connell 2001; Stewart 2021). It replaced terms such as 'the masses of workers' with 'the people', reduced the role of the state, and committed itself to multiparty politics (Connell 2001, p. 359). Although the EPLF had employed a nationalist discourse from the start, it became more nationalistic over time, and used nationalism to unify people of different social, ethnic, religious, and political groupings (Dirkx 2024).

The governance provided by the EPLF corresponded largely to its expressed ideology. In line with its ambition to abolish class hierarchies and feudalism, the EPLF implemented a series of economic reforms (Stewart 2021). These included rent control programmes and salary adjustments to benefit the poor; and price controls on food and medicine (Stewart 2021). The EPLF also created shops where the prices of food were below those in private shops (Stewart 2021). The EPLF implemented land reform as well (Stewart 2021). Furthermore, the EPLF aspired to eliminate the 'bad aspects' of Eritrean culture, and to develop its 'good and progressive' content (EPLF 1977). This is reflected in how the EPLF altered marriage laws, thereby extending the rights and protection of women (Stewart 2021). Prior to this, women were not allowed to own property, and most of them were illiterate (Stewart 2021). To challenge conservative practices, female EPLF cadres also contacted older, traditional women (Stewart 2021).

To represent the interests of the people, the EPLF implemented the 'quasi democratic' People's Assemblies that were overseen by the Mass Administration (Stewart 2021; Pool 1998). The People's Assemblies handled judicial cases, public works, taxation, price controls, and some security issues (Pool 1998). Initially, representation was based on Maoist categories of class, and since most people were poor, it resulted in a PA consisting mostly of poor people (Connell 2001; Pool 1998). In the early 1980s, class-based representation was eliminated (Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). This predates the official change in ideology in 1987 (Connell 2001). Nevertheless, during this period, the EPLF's governance did not diminish: land reform was further expanded, and agriculture and infrastructure were improved (Connell 2001).

Lastly, the EPLF's commitment to implementing governance in line with its ideology can be supported by the order in which the EPLF implemented its reforms. When the EPLF started to control a town, it first provided order and security; then, it provided desirable goods, such as healthcare, to cultivate legitimacy; and then it would replace historical patterns with its own institutions, and introduce more radical social and political reforms (Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). Nevertheless, the unpopularity of some reforms is evidenced by occasional local resistance, and people becoming

informants for the Derg after the EPLF faced military losses in 1978 (Stewart 2021). This way, it appears likely that the EPLF governed to realise its ideal world view.

Evidence that further supports the ideology theory is the emphasis the EPLF placed on education (Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). In the first place, in line with the ambition to create an independent nation and to transform society, the EPLF started a population wide literacy campaign, and developed a programme to educate the population on Eritrean identity, language, mathematics, geography, agriculture and industry (Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). In the second place, EPLF cadre schools were established, to which both men and women had access (Stewart 2021). Recruits underwent a six month training, and attended meetings for political education three times a week (Connell 2001). In 1975, the party published the General Political Education for Fighters, which addressed Eritrean history and Marxism (Connell 2001). Before civilian members were accepted as rebel fighters, they were to study the National Democratic Program (Connell 2001). In the late 1980s, political education was reduced in intensity (Connell 2001). This way, the EPLF created motivated and educated rebel group members, in line with its ideologies.

The empirical evidence largely corresponds to the observable implications, as outlined in grey in Table 1. The evidence of the case of the EPLF suggests that ideology can explain why rebel groups expand their governance beyond pre-existing institutions. However, since the pieces of evidence that support the ideology theory do not falsify the other two theories, those need to be investigated as well before drawing definitive conclusions.

Governance by other actors

The EPLF provided governance in sectors where it was more capable of obtaining legitimacy with the population than other actors that provided governance. A key actor that also provided governance was the ELF, a rival rebel group that fought against the Ethiopian regime, from the start of the war until 1981 (Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). However, the ELF's governance was only able to obtain limited legitimacy. The ELF carried out taxation, and extracted goods from the population,

occasionally by force (Stewart 2021). It was able to do so, because it promised future returns to the population, and the rebel leaders were affiliated with the local clans (Connell 2001). The ELF established education, but western visitors noted that the books in an ELF library were all communist classics in English, and therefore inaccessible to the population (Stewart 2021). Health care was provided by the governments of Kuwait and Egypt, to support the ELF, and it was mostly inaccessible to the population (Stewart 2021). The ELF organised local elections, but it did not provide political education to the population that was unfamiliar with democracy (Stewart 2021). As a result, the population elected the prewar local leaders they knew (Stewart 2021). Although ELF allowed women to participate, it did not implement reforms for their liberation (Stewart 2021).

While, initially, the ELF had larger numbers and more military strength, the EPLF was better able to provide governance because of its politicised membership (Connell 2001). The EPLF provided governance in the same sectors as the ELF, but in such a way that it was suited to obtain legitimacy. The EPLF studied communities, and took surveys, in order to identify the local grievances (Reno 2011). Education was targeted at the population as a whole, as was health care (Stewart 2021). To provide healthcare, the EPLF initially formed mobile teams of medical personnel, which could generate support among those in more remote areas (Stewart 2021; Dirkx 2024). The introduction of political reforms was accompanied by political education (Stewart 2021). Efforts were made to include and educate women (Stewart 2021). The People Assemblies formed judiciary committees, to resolve disputes, and a committee of elders was created (Stewart 2021). This way, the EPLF worked to obtain the legitimacy of the population, and was able to assert itself as the dominant rebel group.

In the absence of other actors that provided legitimate governance, the EPLF further expanded its governance. In 1981, the EPLF drove the ELF into Sudan (Connell 2001). NGOs only started to play a role in 1985, and even then, the EPLF regulated NGO aid (Dirkx 2024; Connell 2001). In 1982, the EPLF organised at least 550 new village committees (Connel 2001). During the first half of the 1980s, the EPLF expanded land reform through the highlands, and again tried to improve rural

productivity (Connell 2001). Projects were initiated to finance infrastructure projects in villages (Connell 2001). A public health programme was set up, in which traditional village medics were trained (Connell 2001). This way, the empirical evidence of EPLF rebel governance corresponds to the first observable implication, as outlined in green in Table 1.

However, the empirical evidence does not correspond to the second observable implication of the theory: the EPLF's governance beyond pre-existing institutions does not always correspond to civilian demands. On the contrary, some reforms led to local resistance (Stewart 2021). Moreover, the EPLF also encouraged foreigners to visit the territory (Connell 2001). This cannot be explained with the theory. Encouraging foreign visits indicates that governance served to obtain external legitimacy (Mampilly 2011; Stewart 2021). The cultivation of external legitimacy suggests that a rebel group does not govern to compete for civilian support, and therefore represents counter-evidence for this theory.

Resources

During the war, the EPLF drew upon different resources, but it was always reliant upon the population. Until 1975, the Libyan government of Muammar Gaddafi supplied hard currency and weapons (Woldemariam 2018). Libyan weapons first reached the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, from where they were picked up by the EPLF with camels and transported through the desert (Woldemariam 2018). Since this aid was not readily available, the EPLF acquired military equipment foremost by capturing equipment from the Ethiopian army, during military successes (Pool 1998; Serequeberhan 1989). The EPLF used the open border provided by the Sudanese government, to access the refugee communities in Sudan for recruitment, and Port Sudan for import of supplies (Pool 1998).

The diaspora contributed financially by paying 'taxes' to the EPLF (Reno 2011). The diaspora-based organisation Eritreans for the Liberation of North America (EFLNA) formed the EPLF's external connection for financial support (Woldemariam 2018). EPLF representatives collected money in underground banks in cities with large Eritrean diasporas (Woldemariam 2018). However, the underground banks were

risky, and revenue from minor economic activities, such as selling illegal goods in Suda, were limited (Dirkx 2024). This way, the EPLF still needed to provide for the basic needs of its fighters. As a result, the EPLF needed the population's support, to move through the liberated areas, and for shelter, food, intelligence, labour, and recruits (Pool 1998).

In line with direct reliance on the population for shelter, food, intelligence, labour, and recruits, the EPLF implemented governance to obtain the population's support (Pool 1998). The EPLF studied communities, and took surveys, in order to identify the local grievances (Reno 2011). This way, the village assemblies and land reforms could be implemented in such a way that they aligned with the interests of the villagers (Reno 2011). The EPLF first created institutions based on the existing traditional institutions for conflict resolution, as well as institutions to protect the communities (Reno 2011). For the highland peasant society, land disputes were common, so the EPLF's intervention, with emphasis on land reform, was welcome (Pool 1998). At the same time, the civilians enjoyed protection from the Ethiopian army, and accepted the EPLF, even if they did not agree with all of the EPLF's policies (Reno 2011). Services were provided mostly to the poor and middle class peasants (Pool 1998). Population-wide education and healthcare was provided, and, for talented recruits, the EPLF created a cadre school (Reno 2011; Stewart 2021).

The provision of services and the EPLF's socio-economic programme deepened the EPLF's ties to the population (Pool 1998). Once acceptance among local civilians was obtained, the EPLF started to integrate local institutions into the rebel group (Reno 2011). This way, the EPLF could control them, and prevent civilians from becoming proxies for outsiders (Reno 2011). Over time, the EPLF also formed peasant militias to support regular fighters (Pool 1998). The EPLF recruited significantly from technically skilled peasants and from skilled workers and students (Pool 1998). This enabled the creation of manufacturing shops that manufactured military equipment, maintained equipment, and produced clothing (Dirkx 2024). The stability that was achieved strengthened the EPLF's control and enabled the EPLF to further expand its governance and activities in liberated zones (Reno 2011).

Throughout the war, the EPLF also used governance in an attempt to attract foreign support from different actors. (Reno 2011; Stewart 2021; Connell 2001). Initially, the EPLF aligned itself ideologically with the Soviet Union, and implemented Marxist policies, some of which led to resistance among the population (Stewart 2021). However, when the Ethiopian imperial regime of Haile Selassie was overthrown and the Derg took power, the Soviet Union started to back the Ethiopian regime (Reno 2011; Stewart 2021). Shortly afterwards, the EPLF realised that ideological alignment and governance did not attract external support (Stewart 2021). From 1981 onwards, the EPLF limited its social reforms and political mobilisation, but still expanded its governance (Connell 2001). This way, it used rebel governance to cultivate external legitimacy with western audiences (Dirkx 2024). Diaspora activists focused on mobilising left and liberal groupings in Europe and the US (Pool 1998; Woldemariam 2018; Serequeberhan 1989).

This way, the EPLF's reliance upon the population became indirect as well: the EPLF used resources that were conditional upon good relations with the civilian population. From 1985 onwards, Western NGOs became an important resource (Dirkx 2024; Connell 2001). Scandinavian NGOs, which had connections with the EPLF through refugees, encouraged the International Committee of the Red Cross to send aid to areas held by the EPLF (Dirkx 2024). The Eritrean Relief Agency (ERA) formed a 'front' institution through which foreign NGOs could deliver aid in areas held by the EPLF, without explicitly supporting a secessionist organisation (Reno 2011; Dirkx 2024). Although the ERA was officially an independent organisation, it was, in reality, part of the EPLF (Dirkx 2024; Reno 2011). The food and money was partially diverted to the EPLF's fighters, and partially used to fulfil the needs of civilians (Dirkx 2024).

Providing for civilians through rebel governance helped to foster international legitimacy (Dirkx 2024). The connections between the ERA and NGOs and governments in the west created a positive image for the EPLF (Dirkx 2024). Additionally, as the US started to be more strongly opposed to the Ethiopian regime, it became more sympathetic to the Eritrean cause (Pool 1998). Consequently, the EPLF shifted to more democratic, pluralist policies in 1987 (Pool 1998). The EPLF propagated its governance internationally, through publications, and encouraged

transnational activists and international organisations to visit the liberated areas (Stewart 2021). This shows how governance was used to create external legitimacy, which helped obtain foreign support. This evidence corresponds to the observable implications that support this theory.

As shown by this section, the broad expansion of the EPLF's governance beyond pre-existing institutions provides some support for all three theories. However, because the EPLF did not govern only to obtain local popular support, it does not support the governance provided by other actors governance. Support for both the ideology and the resources theory is strong. To better assess the different explanations and answer the research question, an analysis of a case of limited expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing traditional institutions is necessary.

4.2. Less expansive rebel governance: Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

4.2.1 Rebel governance and pre-existing institutions

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was a rebel group formed in 1983, at the start of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017). The origins of this conflict can be traced back to the political and economic marginalisation of the South by the North, during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1899-1955), as well as after independence (Mampilly 2011). The consequent grievances made it easy to politicise racial and religious identities (Mampilly 2011). The SPLM/A was founded with the objective of overthrowing the Sudanese government, and obtaining greater autonomy for southern Sudan (Stewart 2021). In 2005, a peace agreement between the government and the SPLM/A turned the SPLM/A into a political party (Mampilly 2011). The governance of the SPLM/A can be divided into a pre-1994 and a post-1994 period (Stewart 2021; Rolandsen 2005).

Until 1994, the SPLM/A only minimally expanded upon pre-existing institutions. Initially, the areas controlled by SPLM/A were organised through a civil military-chief structure (Rolandsen 2005). Political power was held by the Political Military High

Command (Mampilly 2011). This was an administrative and judicial structure that mirrored the system that had been implemented during colonial rule and was maintained after independence (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017; Johnson 1998; Mampilly 2011). This administration carried out taxation, and provided security and basic justice (Rolandsen 2005; Mampilly 2011). The SPLM/A co-opted the traditional chief courts that had ruled customary law for generations in the south of Sudan (Stewart 2021; Mampilly 2011). In line with the South's historical marginalisation, education and healthcare provision was limited, and the SPLM/A did not provide such services either (Mampilly 2011).

Around 1994, the SPLM/A started to transform and expand its governance more beyond pre-existing institutions (Podder 2014). The military and civil authority were separated from each other (Podder 2014). The SPLM/A created the Civil Authority in New Sudan (CANS), a civil administration framework (Mampilly 2011; Podder 2014). It formed a hierarchical system (Podder 2014). The tribal chiefs resolved local disagreements, and were responsible for the provision of recruits, labour and food to the SPLM/A (Podder 2014). The chief courts of the villages reported to local representatives of the SPLM/A, which mirrors how they previously reported to representatives of the colonial rulers, and of the Sudanese government (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017; Johnson 1998; Mampilly 2011).

4.2.2 Theory-testing

Ideology

The ideology and goal of the SPLM/A changed over time. Initially, the SPLM/A adhered to a socialist ideology; its goal was a socialist transformation of the country (Podder 2014). This 'New Sudan' would be based on unity and equality to resolve conflicts caused by racism and tribalism (Podder 2014). Southerners and other marginalised populations would enjoy political representation and equal opportunities for development (Podder 2014). However, no plans to reform existing social hierarchies were formulated (Stewart 2021). The SPLM/A's main focus was on a quick military victory, and, once achieved, reforms would be made from within (Stewart 2021, p. 137). In the early 1990s, the SPLM/A started to employ a secessionist rhetoric, and the goal became the independence of the state of South

Sudan (Mampilly 2011; Stewart 2021; Garang 1994). The leftist ideology was abandoned (Stewart 2021). Although the new ideology contained democratic reforms, the SPLM/A aimed to preserve culture and society (Stewart 2021). This way, the ideology of the SPLM/A was, at all times, less revolutionary than that of the EPLF. This aligns with the ideology theory, according to which rebel groups that adhere to less revolutionary ideologies expand governance less beyond pre-existing institutions.

Correspondence between the SPLM/A's ideology and its institutions is absent pre-1994. The ideology of the SPLM/A contained some revolutionary aspects. However, during the SPLM/A's socialist period, the SPLM/A's governance was limited to creating order and security (Stewart 2021). Because political power was held by the Political Military High Command (PMHC), life in the territories held by the SPLM/A was militarised (Mampilly 2011). Although this corresponds to the strategy of focusing on a military victory, this does not correspond to the socialist ideology that prescribed some social and political reforms.

Correspondence between the SPLM/A's ideology and its institutions is stronger after the reform of its ideology, but it remains limited. The reform was followed by the SPLM/A's expansion of its governance beyond pre-existing institutions. In line with a ideological commitment to democracy, the political organisation and administration were reformed (Mampilly 2011; Rolandsen 2015; Stewart 2021). Throughout the early 1990s, the SPLM/A developed a civil administration system, which oversaw the mobilisation of human and material resources, and traditional chiefs were to provide recruits and resources (Mampilly 2011). In 1995, the Civil Authority of the New Sudan (CANS) was founded (Mampilly 2011). However, while CANS was supposed to create a democratic local government, it was controlled by the SPLM/A's military wing (Mampilly 2011). Additionally, the civil administration was in control of education, health, and economic development only on paper (Mampilly 2011). In reality, these tasks were carried out by the SPLM/A's front organisation (Mampilly 2011). This organisation was founded in 1986, as the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA) (Mampilly 2011; Rolandsen 2005; Stewart 2021).

In line with how secessionist rebel groups seek international legitimacy as a state, the SPLM/A used governance to create legitimacy with external audiences (Podder 2014). The SRRA was restructured, to serve as an SPLM/A representative abroad (Mampilly 2011). In 1995, a Memorandum of Understanding was implemented to regulate the relationship between the SPLM/A and the NGOs: NGOs were required to request permission from the SPLM/A to access local communities, and they had to pay administrative fees and taxes (Podder 2014). This way, the SPLM/A argued that it was responsible for bringing in the UN and for saving civilians (Podder 2014).

The SPLM/A also undertook efforts to provide education and healthcare to further create external and domestic legitimacy as a state (Podder 2014; Stewart 2021). For education, the SPLM/A mostly relied on the support of NGOs and churches (Stewart 2021). In the early 2000s, USAID and the SPLM/A worked together to implement a USAID-funded educational programme (Stewart 2021). The SPLM/A also started to offer learning programmes to civilians, children as well as uneducated adults, under another system, the Alternative Education System (AES) (Stewart 2021). AES addressed the specific cultural contexts of New Sudan, as well as practical knowledge, such as ‘Agro-Forestry Education’ (Stewart 2021, p. 153).

The health care system was also funded by international agencies, and it was staffed with SPLM/A personnel (Stewart 2021). The system comprised local level institutions for basic health care, health care centres equipped with laboratories, and general hospitals where basic surgeries were performed (Stewart 2021). With USAID funds, the SPLM/A implemented economic policies, such as County Development Committees (CDCs) to fund local small businesses (Stewart 2021). By implementing education, health, and economic policy, the SPLM/A consolidated authority over southern Sudan (Stewart 2021). This way, steps towards state building were taken, in line with the new secessionist goal.

Empirical evidence provides some support for the ideology theory, but clear connections between ideology and rebel governance pre-1994 are absent. Although the correspondence is stronger during the post-1994 period, the key role played by

actors such as NGOs suggests that ideology might not be the key factor for this change.

Governance by other actors

In contrast to the case of the EPLF, the SPLM/A was confronted with actors better capable of providing governance to the population than the SPLM/A itself. From 1989 onwards, in the areas occupied by the SPLM/A, other actors that provided governance and services were abundant (Mampilly 2011; Podder 2014; De Waal 1997).

Although NGOs had been expelled in 1983, before the start of the conflict, they started to re-enter the southern region in 1988, when a famine caused a humanitarian crisis (Mampilly 2011). In 1989, the UN set up Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to deliver aid to both rebel and government territory (Podder 2014). Between 1989 and 1999, under OLS, NGOs directed about two billion USD towards the provision of education and health (Podder 2014). NGOs implemented agricultural programmes, developed civil society organisations and local agencies, provided logistical military support, and enabled SPLM/A members access to vehicles and communication (Podder 2014). Since 1992, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been present in the South (Podder 2014). INGOs, such as World Food Programme (WFP) have, since the 1990s, supplied food, and Save the Children has provided education (Podder 2014).

The SPLM/A was unable to provide more legitimate governance than these actors (Podder 2014). The NGOs had high technical and administrative capabilities, in contrast to the SPLM/A (Podder 2014). The task to monitor and oversee NGO aid was assigned to the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA) (Rolandsen 2005; Stewart 2021). It had been founded as a humanitarian wing in 1986, but it initially served to provide SPLM/A fighters with food and aid in Ethiopia (Rolandsen 2005, p. 73). When NGOs entered the region, the SRRA was tasked to coordinate the return of refugees in rebel-held areas, and to coordinate with programmes established by UN agencies, NGOs and donors (Podder 2014; Reno 2011).

However, the SRRA had limited administrative capacities, and it was subject to the military arm of the SPLM/A (Podder 2014; Stewart 2021). This way, the SPLM/A was able to manipulate the supplies provided through the SRRA and divert them towards its fighters (Stewart 2021; Poder 2014).

NGOs and religious organisations, such as missionaries, provided social services, and started to play a key role in creating social and political order (Kindersley and Rolandsen 2017, Mampilly 2011; Podder 2014). As a result, the SPLM/A's governance only minimally expanded beyond pre-existing institutions. Although the SPLM/A eventually started to cooperate with these actors to provide services, the interaction between the SPLM/A and these actors is characterised foremost by outsourcing (Podder 2014). Nevertheless, even though the provision of services was outsourced and governance was delegated, the notion of governance in rebel areas created legitimacy with external audiences (Podder 2014). This way, the SPLM/A was able to assert itself as the dominant rebel group, and, indeed, 'outgovern' rival rebel groups (Reno 2011). This way, evidence that supports the governance by other actors theory is found.

However, counter-evidence is found as well. During the earlier period in which the SPLM/A controlled territories with civilians, it provided very limited governance, and victimised the population (Podder 2014; Mampilly 2011). Although the expansion of SPLM/A rebel governance was limited during the period in which NGOs were active, it was more expansive than during the previous period, when no other actors provided legitimate governance. During the previous period, no efforts were made to use rebel governance to obtain popular support. During the second period, the SPLM/A started to incorporate traditional leadership into the governance structure to create legitimacy on the basis of kinship between the community and the chief (Podder 2014). However, since some chiefs were actually appointed by the SPLM/A, their legitimacy was contested (Podder 2014). This way, the second period of the SPLM/A's rebel governance provides support for the presence of legitimate governance provided by other actors as an explanation for variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions. However, the case of rebel governance by the SPLM/A as a whole does not support this theory, because it

shows that rebel governance expanded when other actors started to provide legitimate governance.

Resources

Throughout the war, the SPLM/A relied on various resources. In contrast to the EPLF, the SPLM/A had resources that did not create reliance upon the population. From the start, the Ethiopian regime of Mengistu provided the SPLM/A with financial aid and logistical support (Mampilly 2011). The security services of Ethiopia policed the SPLM/A for dissenters (Reno 2011). Moreover, the SPLM/A maintained bases in Ethiopia, from where it broadcast a radio service to educate the population of the south of Sudan (Mampilly 2011). In 1991, when the Ethiopian Derg was overthrown, the SPLM/A lost its main source of support (Stewart 2021). Then, the SPLM/A also relied upon the population for food and labour (Mampilly 2011). The main resource of the SPLM/A, however, became aid provided by international organisations.

The period during which the SPLM/A was supported by the Derg corresponds to the period during which SPLM/A rebel governance was limited. The Derg encouraged the SPLM/A to combine the military and political wing under the authority of the SPLM/A's leader (Mampilly 2011). In line with this, the Political Military High Command created a militarised civilian life in the SPLM/A held territories (Mampilly 2011). SPLM/A fighters used violence for personal enrichment (Stewart 2021). In particular, the SPLM/A was victimised and marginalised the non-Dinka communities that lacked representation within the SPLM/A (Podder 2014; Mampilly 2011). Additionally, within the SPLM/A, not all supported the vision of a 'New Sudan', a moderate goal formulated to be acceptable to an international audience, in particular to Ethiopia, nor the socialist ideology adopted to maintain Ethiopia's support (Podder 2014; Stewart 2021).

Following the collapse of the Derg, the SPLM/A needed alternative modes of resources. In the first place, it implemented reforms to gain the support of the population. Throughout the 1990s, the SPLM/A held consultations, to integrate local people into new administrative structures (Reno 2011). In order to gather popular support, the SPLM/A also started to create dialogues, aiming to give more

responsibilities and independence from the military wing to the political wing (Mampilly 2011). The incorporation of traditional leadership into the SPLM/A;s governance served to create legitimacy on the basis of kinship, although its success was limited (Podder 2014). Even though no actual democratic reforms were made, the integration of the SPLM/A and local leaders helped the SPLM/A strengthen its control over the communities, and it also helped to suppress rival rebel groups (Reno 2011).

Additionally, in 1991, the SPLM/A started employing a secessionist rhetoric (Mampilly 2011). Initially, it had refrained from doing so, in order to not alienate support from Ethiopia, which was engaged in a war against Eritrean independence movements (Mampilly 2011). The independence of Eritrea made secession more acceptable internationally, and the SPLM/A started to use the full independence of South Sudan to gather support domestically (Mampilly 2011). In 1994, a conference was held (Reno 2011). Here, the SPLM/A adopted a ‘seemingly liberal constitution’ (Reno 2011, p. 157). This way, the SPLM/A aimed to demonstrate its commitment to democratic rule and local government to the international community, among which US officials, from which a significant amount of support came (Reno 2011). By 1997, through the Transitional Assistance Rehabilitation (STAR), the US provided about 100 million USD annually to areas held by the SPLM/A (Reno 2011).

In the second place, from the late 1980s onwards, the SPLM/A started to reform to take advantage of the presence of NGOs (Mampilly 2011). The SPLM/A recognised the value of an institution to distribute aid, and the SRRA was moved into the south (Mampilly 2011). In the 1990s, the SPLM/A set up the institutional infrastructure to manage service provision (Reno 2011). By using the SRRA to interact with NGOs, the SPLM/A provided NGOs access to civilians, and created the impression that the NGOs were working with a neutral partner in rebel-held territory (Reno 2011). In exchange, NGOs provided resources, such as vehicles and communication services (Reno 2011; Podder 2014). As shown by the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, the SPLM/A used its authority to retrieve money from the NGOs (Podder 2014). Because the SPLM/A controlled the SRRA, it was also able to divert the supplies provided by external organisations towards its fighters (Stewart 2021;

Poder 2014). This way, it became more reliant upon NGOs for resources (Podder 2014).

As shown by the evidence presented in this section, the limited expansion of the SPLM/A's governance beyond pre-existing institutions provides some support for all three theories. However, during the first period of SPLM/A governance, its governance did not correspond to its socialist ideology. The governance of the SPLM/A started to expand when other actors started to provide legitimate governance, which falsifies the governance provided by other actors theory. The SPLM/A co-opted aid provided by international organisations, and also cooperated with them. Significant support for the resources theory is found.

4.3 Discussion of evidence

Why does variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions occur? Empirical evidence shows that some of the explanations suggested by the current literature - 1) ideology; 2) governance by other actors; 3) resources - are better explanations than others.

The empirical evidence shows that ideology cannot fully account for the variation. On the one hand, evidence shows that rebel governance is more expansive when a rebel group adheres to a more revolutionary ideology: at all times, the EPLF adhered to a more revolutionary ideology than the SPLM/A, and also provided more expansive governance. The SPLM/A first adhered to a relatively non-revolutionary ideology, and minimally expanded governance beyond pre-existing institutions; then, it adhered to a relatively more revolutionary ideology with a secessionist goal, and expanded its governance. However, if rebel groups govern to realise their ideal world view, their governance should also correspond to their ideology, and rebel group members should be aware of this ideology. The case of the EPLF contains politically educated rebel group members, which provides strong support for the theory. Rebel governance of the EPLF, and of the SPLM/A post-1994 corresponded to rebel group ideology. Rebel governance of the SPLM/A pre-1994 did not. Therefore, the first key

observable implication of the ideology theory is not present in the analysed cases. Consequently, this theory is falsified.

The empirical evidence shows that legitimate governance provided by other actors cannot account for the variation. The evidence shows that more legitimate governance provided by other actors did not result in less expansive governance. This counter-evidence is found in the within-case variation of the SPLM/A's governance. Although the SPLM/A as a whole provided less expansive governance than the EPLF and faced more legitimate governance provided by other actors to which it could not provide an alternative, the SPLM/A's governance expanded more when governance by other actors increased. Additionally, evidence shows that both the EPLF and the SPLM/A also governed to obtain external legitimacy, and provided unpopular governance. The SPLM/A is found to have excessively victimised the population. Therefore, neither of the key observable implications are present in the analysed cases.

The empirical evidence shows that resources can account for the variation. It shows that rebel governance is more expansive when a rebel group is reliant upon the population to obtain its resources: at all times, the EPLF was more reliant upon the population for its resources than the SPLM/A, and it provided more expansive governance than the SPLM/A. The rebel institutions corresponded to obtaining resources. The EPLF was directly reliant upon the population, and provided expansive governance that created popular support and enabled it to assert control to withdraw resources. Additionally, it created governance that corresponded less to popular demands, but that aligned with the interests of external actors from whom the EPLF sought to obtain support. The SPLM/A initially was, initially, not reliant upon the population, and did not expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions. During this period, it also engaged most in victimisation of the population. After the SPLM/A lost unconditional external support from a rival regime, the SPLM/A became reliant upon the population to maintain the sources provided by humanitarian organisations, and expanded its governance to cultivate external legitimacy and to regulate the resources provided by these organisations. Because it was also able to co-opt and divert these resources that were provided directly, the SPLM/A did not become as

reliant upon the population as the EPLF. This way, the key observable implications are present in the analysed cases.

The resources theory is the only theory that has been verified by the analysis, in line with the observable implications, as outlined in Table 1. The key observable implications of the theory are present in all cases individually, as well as when the cases are compared. This provides strong support. No evidence that falsifies this theory has been found. Although this might suggest missing evidence to falsify the theory (see González-Ocantos and LaPorte 2021), the evidence that has been found suggests that this is not the case. The other two theories are falsified based on clear evidence. Moreover, the resources theory is able to account for the correlation between ideology and governance, as found in both the EPLF and the SPLM/A post-1994. Both groups changed their ideology when their resources changed, and both used ideology to obtain external support. The resources theory is also capable of explaining the correspondence between more expansive SPLM/A governance when NGOs started to provide legitimate governance: the SPLM/A co-opted NGO aid and supplies, and at least some rebel governance was necessary to maintain it. This way, the resources of the rebel group are best able to explain variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions.

5. Conclusion

This research paper has aimed to answer the question: ***What explains variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions?*** To this end, three possible explanations were formulated: 1) a revolutionary ideology incentivises a rebel group to expand governance beyond pre-existing institutions; 2) legitimate governance provided by other actors limits the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions; and 3) resources that create reliance upon the population incentivise a rebel group to expand governane beyond pre-existing institutions. This research has tested these explanations, by investigating whether they can explain the variation in the expansion of rebel governance of the EPLF and the SPLM/A. This research concludes that variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions is explained by different resources.

Rebel groups interact differently with pre-existing institutions, because rebel groups govern to obtain resources, and different resources create different types of reliance upon the population. When a rebel group is more reliant upon the population, it is more likely to transform pre-existing institutions, and to expand on them. The EPLF provided expansive governance to extract recruits and labour, in exchange for protection and social services; and to cultivate legitimacy among foreign donors. When a rebel group is less reliant upon the population, it is less likely to transform pre-existing institutions, because it does not need governance to suit its specific needs. When the SPLM/A drew on external state support, it did not create expansive governance. Later, it provided more expansive governance, but because it was able to divert resources from NGOs, it was still less reliant upon the population than the EPLF.

Although this research has aimed to outline a faithful representation of rebel governance by the SPLM/A and the EPLF, mistakes may exist. The research has aimed to triangulate data by drawing upon a variety of secondary sources in the form of scholarly research. Nevertheless, data collection in war zones is difficult, and both instances of rebel governance studied occurred decades ago. Although this research has aimed to address a variety of resources on which rebel groups can draw, there is the possibility that it has missed resources and that it is unaware of this because of

missing data. Although the plausible answers and the cases were selected based on research, some factors, such as the different geographies of Ethiopia and Sudan and the different governments that might have affected rebel governance as well, have not been addressed. Nevertheless, the cases enabled testing the different theories, and the variation within SPLM/A governance added nuance.

This research has addressed the importance of pre-existing traditional institutions: pre-war institutions influence how rebel groups govern during war (Hoffmann 2015; Arjona 2016). However, even in areas with similar pre-existing institutions, some rebel groups that govern co-opt and minimally change them, while others transform them and expand governance beyond them. Therefore, this research has focused on variation among rebel groups in areas with similar pre-existing institutions. The findings clarify the circumstances under which this variation occurs. The findings challenge the notion that rebel groups always need the population (Kasfir et al. 2017), and the notion that their governance is explained by a specific ideology or goal (Stewart 2021). By investigating the potential role of governance by other actors, this research has addressed gaps in the rebel governance literature that stem from neglecting the complexity of warzone orders (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023; Loyle et al. 2023). By addressing a variety of resources on which rebel groups can draw, this research has expanded on the older literature that focuses predominantly on external state support and natural resources (Weinstein 2006). This way, the findings contribute to the literature on rebel group behaviour, and on rebel governance in particular.

Finally, the findings of this research indicate that resources play a key role in shaping warzone orders, and impact civilians in conflict situations. As various studies have pointed out (Podder 2014; Huang 2016; Young 2012; Dirkx 2024), rebel governance during wartime affects post-conflict regime stability. Therefore, the findings suggest that external supporters must consider how their aid affects the reliance of a rebel group on the population. However, this is difficult, because, as shown by the cases of the EPLF and SPLM/A, rebel groups draw upon different resources that have different consequences for rebel governance. The findings raise questions about the relationship between resources and other factors. To what extent do rebel groups

choose their resources? How do rebel groups decide from which external actors they seek support? Does variation occur in expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions among rebel groups with similar resources and similar reliance on the population? Do resources affect variation in the expansion of rebel governance in a similar way among rebel groups in areas with different pre-existing institutions? These are suggestions for further research. This way, further research could carry out more in-depth investigations of how the resources of rebel groups lead to variation in the expansion of rebel governance beyond pre-existing institutions.

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