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 war, 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

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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)
\(^6\) Bapat and Bond (2012)
commitments is a function of the anarchic international system." 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."

Uncertainty and trust are mutually implicated since trust always develops under conditions of uncertainty and never entirely escapes it. The question of whom to trust is, in the words of political theorist John Dunn, a central question of political life. 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 OTHERS

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.

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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
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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.

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

\(^{12}\) 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
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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.\textsuperscript{21} The unification of Darfur rebel groups is seen as a “prerequisite for peace”.\textsuperscript{22} This is not solely the case in Darfur as Nygard and Weintraub (2011) argue:

\begin{quote}
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.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

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.

\textsuperscript{21} Tubiana (2011) 142
\textsuperscript{22} Crisis Group, “Unifying Darfur’s Rebels: A Prerequisite for Peace” Africa Briefing N°32, 6 October 2005.
\textsuperscript{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”\(^\text{24}\) and “what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure”.\(^\text{25}\) 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.”\(^\text{26}\) 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.\(^\text{27}\) 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.\(^\text{28}\)

\(^\text{24}\) Posen (1993) 28  
\(^\text{25}\) Ibid., 28  
\(^\text{26}\) Waltz (1979) 117  
\(^\text{27}\) 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.  
\(^\text{28}\) 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 violence\textsuperscript{32}; civil war duration\textsuperscript{33} and combatant recruitment.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{36} The “only existing”\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{38} Inter-rebel violence and cooperation are two sides of the same coin; their findings thus could suggest

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Downes2004} Downes (2004); Kalyvas (2003 and 2006); Humphreys and Weinstein (2006)
\bibitem{Fearon2004} Fearon (2004)
\bibitem{ArjonaAndKalyvas2006} Arjona and Kalyvas (2006)
\bibitem{Balcells2010} See Balcells (2010); Humphreys and Weinstein (2008); Johnston (2008); Weinstein (2007); Wood (2003); Wood (2010).
\bibitem{Christia2011} See Christia (2011); Bond (2011); Bond and Bapat (2012)
\bibitem{NygandWeintraub2011} Nygard and Weintraub (2011)
\bibitem{FjeldeAndNilsson2012} Fjelde and Nilsson (2012)
\end{thebibliography}
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".\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{45}

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

\textsuperscript{42} Christia (2008) 2
\textsuperscript{43} Furtado (2007) 4
\textsuperscript{44} Has not yet been published
\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{46} Alliances are not costless and thus are a “product of tactical preferences”.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{48} A \textbf{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.\textsuperscript{49} It is a cooperative arrangement, which can be formal, informal, written or verbally

\textsuperscript{46} Clastress (1999)
\textsuperscript{47} Christia (2008)
\textsuperscript{48} Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2011)
\textsuperscript{49} Walt (1987)
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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.\textsuperscript{51}

The study of rebel group alliances in civil wars can be seen as part of the general study of group cohesiveness.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{54} Since “the world is simply too complex a place for us to survive without some means of simplifying and ordering it first”\textsuperscript{55}, identity at its core is a “means of reducing uncertainty, of making sense of the social world so as to survive and thrive”.\textsuperscript{56} According to Hale (2008) one of the fundamental human motivations to form identities and different groups is “uncertainty reduction”.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{58} Although grievance identity based explanations for civil wars had been pushed aside by scholars, recently there

\textsuperscript{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
\textsuperscript{52} A paper that regards Inter-rebel group cohesiveness in the context of rebel group fragmentation is Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2011)
\textsuperscript{53} Festinger, Schachter and Back (1950)
\textsuperscript{54} Hale (2008) 34
\textsuperscript{55} Brown (2000) 265
\textsuperscript{56} Hale (2008) 35
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 35
\textsuperscript{58} Sambanis (2001)
have been a number of works 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.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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 formation 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 groups.

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”, one can

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59 Cederman and Girardin (2007)
60 For a discussion of the greed versus grievances debate see Murshed and Tadjoeddin (2009)
61 van den Berghe (1981)
62 Barkow, Cosmides and Tooby (1992)
63 Tajfel, Billig and Bundy (1971)
64 Bates (1983)
65 Murshed and Tadjoeddin (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 proposes\textsuperscript{68}:

\textbf{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”.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{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 scholars\textsuperscript{73} 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

\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{69} Hoeffler (2012) 193
\textsuperscript{70} Horowitz (1985); Huntington (1996)
\textsuperscript{71} Kalyvas (2003) 475
\textsuperscript{72} Posner (2005) 11
\textsuperscript{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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>‘Ethnicity’, ‘Language’, ‘Religion’, ‘tribal affiliation’, ‘group’s own conception’ e.g. through statements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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,

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74 Posner (2005) 11
characteristic of a group or community”. It is said that ideology motivates action and according to Morong “Ideology becomes important in times and situations where there is uncertainty.” 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.”

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. 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.

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

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75 Plamenatz (1970)  
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.

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

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”. 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 Saleyhan, Gleditsch, Cunningham, (2011); Balch-Lindsay and Enterline (2000); Bapat (2006); Collier et. Al. (2003); Regan (2000); and Saideman (2001)
more fatalities, \(^\text{84}\) last longer \(^\text{85}\) and a more difficult to resolve through negotiations.\(^\text{86}\)

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”. \(^\text{87}\) 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.” \(^\text{88}\)

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:

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

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-

\[^{84}\text{Heger and Salehyan (2007)}\]
\[^{85}\text{Regan (2002)}\]
\[^{86}\text{Cunningham (2010)}\]
\[^{87}\text{Seymour (2010) 50}\]
\[^{88}\text{Salyhan, Gleditsch and Cunningham (2011) 710}\]
\[^{89}\text{Kalyvas and Sambanis (2003) 383}\]
operation amongst groups”\textsuperscript{90} or are “external arbiter[s]…necessary to induce cooperation among warring groups by doing away with commitment problems and spoiler issues”.\textsuperscript{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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Operationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign support</td>
<td>Provision of safe havens or sanctuaries on one’s territory, financial support, supply of resources, weaponry, political and ideological support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{90} Bapat and Bond (2011) 29
\textsuperscript{91} Christia (2008) 19
III. d) ENDOGENOUS TRENDS

Set of proposed Hypotheses that will be tested:

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

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.\(^\text{92}\) 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.\(^\text{93}\) 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.” 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.

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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”. 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. 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”.

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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.”

In addition this method can play an important role in the development and testing of theories, which is precisely what this analysis represents.

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98 Bennett and Elman (2010) 503
99 George and Bennett (2004)209
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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”. 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”. 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.

Stake (1994) 243
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:

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

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
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. 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. 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”. 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”. 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

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102 El-Battahani (2009) 44
103 Flint and de Waal (2008) 6
104 Ibid., 15
105 De Waal (2007) 4
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Sudanese state over many generations". 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”: 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. 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.

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.

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

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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”.

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

The Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) (Arabic: harakat tahrir as-Sudan) was the first Darfuran 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 Darfuran village self-defense forces in the late 1990s. 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,

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111 Flint and de Waal (2008) 115
112 Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 17
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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 Darfurian rebels “helped create the western front the SPLA had pursued since 1991 and provided leverage as the peace process”\(^{117}\) gained momentum from 2001.\(^ {118}\)

The group also received support from Eritrea which became the man 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 Asmarra the support for the Darfurian 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 Darfuri: the Fur, the Zaghawa and the Massalit. They thus shared a common Darfuri 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

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\(^{117}\) 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 Darfurian 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”.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{125} There was no evidence found on the foreign support for the Massalit.

\textsuperscript{122} Quoted in Flint and de Waal (2008) 74
\textsuperscript{123} Flint (2008) 160
\textsuperscript{124} Flint and de Waal (2007) 77
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 75
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V. c) ANALYSIS: SUDAN LIBERATION ARMY/MOVEMENT (SLA/M)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Ideology/motivation for fighting</th>
<th>Foreign Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fur resistance</td>
<td>Fur</td>
<td>Resistance/survival</td>
<td>Fur diaspora</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massalit resistance</td>
<td>Massalit</td>
<td>Resistance/survival</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaghawa resistance</td>
<td>Zaghawa</td>
<td>Resistance/survival</td>
<td>Chad, Libya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 warriors\(^{126}\), 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 Diraige, former governor of Darfur and initially chairman of the new movement.\textsuperscript{128}

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

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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 ground\(^{141}\); 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  
\(^{139}\) Tanner and Tubiana (2007) 56  
\(^{140}\) “The real rebels” *Africa Confidential* 47 (17) August 2006. 6-7  
document from November 2006 the NRF was considered the “primary rebel army in Darfur” at that time.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{Foreign Support:}

The National Redemption Front (NRF) received support from a number of different foreign governments. Chad supplied the rebel alliance with weaponry and logistics\textsuperscript{143}. According to \textit{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.\textsuperscript{144}

The Sudanese Government has openly accused the government of Chad of supporting the rebel alliance in 2006.\textsuperscript{145} A second known supporter of the NRF is Eritrea\textsuperscript{146}. The NRF is both based in the Eritrean capital of Asmarra 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”\textsuperscript{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 Libya\textsuperscript{148}, according to the UNMIS Media Monitoring report from the 25\textsuperscript{th} of July the

\textsuperscript{144} “After Darfur’s deal”, \textit{Africa Confidential} Vol.47 (16) 2006. 5
\textsuperscript{147} Flint and de Waal (2008) 92
\textsuperscript{148} See Prunier (2008) 5
movement received seventy land cruisers from Libya as well as the permission to recruit fighters from Libya.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{151} He had served as the state minister for education in Darfur between 1991 and 1994, was state minister for social


\textsuperscript{150} Prunier (2008)

\textsuperscript{151} Flint and de Waal (2008) 100
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affairs in Blue Nile in 1997 and took up the post of advisor to the governor of Southern Sudan in 1998.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{153} According to Prunier: “JEM is an almost exclusively Zaghawa movement with few combatants…and a lot of money”.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{155}

**Ideology/Motivation to fight:**
Despite a “stiff dose of tribalism”\textsuperscript{156} and inner quarrels\textsuperscript{157}, due to the perceived domination of Kobe within the group, according to Flint: for the JEM “ideology initially came first”.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{159} According to Seymour (2010) JEM was “not a peripheral insurgent force, but one with access to the powerful Islamist


\textsuperscript{154} Prunier (2008)

\textsuperscript{155} Flint and de Waal (2008) 110

\textsuperscript{156} Flint (2007) 161

\textsuperscript{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”.

\textsuperscript{158} Flint (2007) 161

\textsuperscript{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”\(^\text{160}\)

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.\(^\text{161}\)

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.”\(^\text{162}\) 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.\(^\text{163}\) 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”\(^\text{164}\)

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.”

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”. 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”. They officially state that while Islamic law should not be imposed on non-Muslims, “the believers of other faiths must not opposed Muslims’ attempts to apply the laws of their religion to themselves”.

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.” Other scholars, such as Seymour (2010), note that the JEM had links to other foreign governments. The relationship between the JEM and Chad has been complex due to intricate patterns of conflict and cooperation between Zaghawa elites. The JEM leader, Khalil Ibrahim, posed a threat to Deby’s position “at the top of the Zaghawa social and political hierarchy”. Nevertheless, Darfuri rebels received arms and ammunition from members of the Chadian army. In addition according to an article in the *Independent*
the JEM received political and financial support from Libya. According to Flint (2008) after the Darfur rebellion began Eritrea supported both the SLA and the JEM; Asmarra became the main conduit for external support for both rebel groups providing fuel, food and weapons.

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. This group is considered more political than military, 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.

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.

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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.\textsuperscript{179}

\textbf{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 were 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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textbf{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:

\begin{quote}
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.\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}

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

\textsuperscript{179} Flint an de Waal (2008) 79  
\textsuperscript{180} See Operationalization of ‘Identity’ Variable page 24  
\textsuperscript{181} Salih (2005) 18
proposes a “substantially decentralized federal structure for Sudan in which the traditional parties would play no role”\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{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”\textsuperscript{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\textsuperscript{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”\textsuperscript{186}. According to Flint (2007) by late 2006 the G19 “was the strongest force on the ground in Darfur”\textsuperscript{187}. However, this rebel group failed to establish clear political and military structures.

\textsuperscript{183} Flint and de Waal (2008) 79
\textsuperscript{184} Flint (2007) 167
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid.,168
\textsuperscript{186} “The real rebels” *Africa Confidential* 47 (17) August 2006. 6-7
\textsuperscript{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”. 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”. Thus Flint (2008) argues that “for the SLA, resistance came first and ideology later.”  

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

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188 Flint (2007) 160
189 Ibid., 144
190 Ibid., 160
and development in Darfur”. 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””. They called for a “complete change of ideas and behavior” by the rebel forces.

**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 supporters, 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)**

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

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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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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SFDA</th>
<th>Ahmed Diraige (Fur) Sharif Harir (Zaghawa)</th>
<th>multi-tribal: Fur - Zaghawa</th>
<th>Federal Democratic state, secular</th>
<th>SLA: Eritrea, Chad, SPLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.
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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 Asmarra 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Ideology/Motivation for fighting</th>
<th>Foreign support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 movements\textsuperscript{197}

**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.

\textbf{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

\textsuperscript{197} “The commanders confer” *Africa Confidential* 48 (4) August 2007. 8-9
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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. 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. 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.”

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

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198 Flint (2007) 151
199 See Tanner and Tubiana (2008) 39
200 Seymour (2010)
“external arbiter”. 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

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201 Seymour (2010)
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:


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 migrants from its eastern and western neighbors and indigenous groups was the source of its stability, prosperity, and strength.

However, successive post-independence 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, Beja, and other marginalized areas, and a fire 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 central 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 peaceably 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 1999. 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 stems along with other like-minded political groups to address and solve the fundamental problems of all Sudan. The objective of SLM/A is to create a united democratic Sudan with new values 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 as the minority. The SLM/A shall work with all political forces that subscribe 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 restituted so that it adequately serves in 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 domains, 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 Qurash 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 existence 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 NIF’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 proclists 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 Ethiopian Federation, 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 drought 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/A
Satellite Phone 882163110628
Darfur, Sudan: March 13, 2003
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 justice,
To all individuals, organizations, and members of the international community
who share our indignation at the brutality 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 militia;
Consistent with 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.
Consistent with the advocacy efforts of the failed Abuja process of May 9, 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,
realize the value of that faulty process.
Realizing the virtues of coordinating 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. Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A);
3. Sudan Liberation Army/Justice Movement – Sudan (SLM/JM);
4. Sudan Freedom and Justice Movement (SFD);
5. 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, multiethnic, and mainstreamed 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, and 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. Realising 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 Darfuris in their various movements, organizations, groups, and associations within and outside Sudan.

b) Organising and amalgamating political, military, diplomatic, legal, media, and various popular initiatives for the realisation and protection of the legitimate rights of Darfur and all Sudan.

c) Ending the ongoing genocide and prosecuting its perpetrators.

d) Coordination and consolidation of regions 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 marginalised 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 Dideg

Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Mohamed

Mr. Khamis Abbass Abasik

D. Sheik Heba