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Why fight when you can rule together? Rebel power-sharing during civil wars

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Introduction

"The factions worked jointly in the military field, after that came the Sharia courts. After that the civil sphere. But in this field they did not really work with, but rather against each other, because each group wanted to monopolize the control over the liberated territories" (informant discusses the relations between rebels in North-West Syria, (Schwab 2023)

"In 2012 when we were able to push the regime forces from our areas, we contacted them [the other groups] and proposed them to be part of the self-administration. [...] YPG protected the churches and villages against [jihadis] and they were happy for this liberation. [...] Let me give an example for Manbij. When Kobani was liberated from Daesh, and the people from Manbij, they came to our area, to our people. They said, 'Well, we are trying to, I mean, working to liberate Manbij from Daesh also.' And then, by the agreement of the Manbij people, there were two councils established. One of them was a military council to coordinate with the YPG, and the other was a civil council to direct, to look after the people, I mean, for Manbij's future, before their liberation. So, when Manbij was liberated, there was a military council and a civil council also from the Manbij people, who, of course, helped for the liberation of Manbij. And the same for Tabqa, the same for Raqqa, the same for Deir ez-Zor." (My interview with Salih Muslim, leader of the Democratic Union Party, 2023)

"We embraced that project, as in it we found a way of thinking that expresses our goals as Syriac people in the region. The project does indeed recognise each one of the various peoples, ethnicities and religions, and seeks to realise equality among them, allowing them to exert their cultural, social, and political rights in full freedom. We found then that this political project was the best suited for us as Syriacs and as Christians." (My interview with Sanharip Barsom, leader of the Syriac Union Party, 2023)

The concept of governance by rebel groups[2] in multi-ethnic societies during civil wars[3], presents a complex and underexplored aspect of political science. This thesis introduces a novel perspective to

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[2] I follow the UCDP definition of rebel groups: "Any non-governmental formally organised group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force to influence the outcome of the stated incompatibility." (UCDP n.d.) In this thesis, I will use the terms 'rebel groups,' 'armed groups,' and 'insurgents' interchangeably.

[3] I follow the UCDP definition of civil war: "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory over which the use of armed force between the military forces of" *at least* [my addition] "two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state" (UCDP 2006) . In contrast to UCDP's complete definition, I do not set any battle-deaths threshold and consider also multi-party conflicts, so as to include within the scope of civil war participants groups that may not produce many battle deaths but can be equally influential during the conflict.

the field, bridging a significant gap in existing literature by systematically investigating how rebel organizations manage ethnic diversity and establish inclusive governance structures, which I define as rebel power-sharing, amidst conflict. While previous studies have predominantly focused on the dynamics of violence and competition among rebel factions, my research shifts the lens towards understanding the strategic and ideologically driven formation of power-sharing institutions. This approach not only challenges conventional narratives of rebel governance as primarily coercive but also unveils the processes of negotiation, alliance-building, and institutional design that facilitate diverse ethnic participation in areas controlled by rebels. By dissecting the mechanisms behind these power-sharing arrangements, this thesis sheds light on the multi-dimensional character of rebel governance and contributes a critical analysis to the broader discourse in peace and conflict studies.

During the Syrian civil war, several rebel coalitions successfully wrestled control of various Syrian areas from the government. Groups with different ideologies such as the Free Syrian Army, Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIS, Ahrar al-Sham, and the PYD/YPG created alternative systems of governance in the areas under their control, effectively replacing most of the state functions. For instance, the military successes of Jaysh al-Fatah, a Jihadist rebel coalition formed mainly by Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham, led to the Syrian regime's complete withdrawal from the North-Western Idlib region. The success allowed the groups part of the coalition to divert resources from confrontation with the regime to territorial consolidation efforts and service provision. In Idlib, Jabhat al-Nusra's initial involvement in governance consisted mostly of their participation in joint shariah courts and small-scale local provision of security, arbitration, and relief work. However, after the group's territorial consolidation in 2015, Jabhat al-Nusra began to invest more in its judicial branches and in building a Public Services Administration, which assumed a key role in administering the province's electrical infrastructure. This shift towards unilateral governance led to increased competition with the Ahrar al Sham-controlled Service Administration Commission, the other major provider of governance in the region. Over time, each organization tried to increase its political footprint. Relations broke down, leading to armed clashes between the two groups and to Ahrar al Sham's military defeat. Jabhat al-Nusra took over the administration of Idlib and, to this date, still controls Idlib's political institutions. Over the course of the conflict, rebels committed countless episodes of violence against civilians. For instance, ISIS' territorial expansion was accompanied by a streak of violence against all groups the insurgents deemed as infidels, such as Shias, Alawis, Sunnis loyal to the government, and others. In one of the most infamous episodes, ISIS temporarily conquered the Sinjar region of Iraq in 2014, killing, kidnapping and driving out its entire Yezidi population.

Both examples represent a common phenomenon during civil wars: armed groups may cooperate to defeat common enemies such as the government or other rival groups, but these coalitions are often either short-term military agreements or deemed to collapse in infighting between the former allies once those groups consolidate control over a territory. Moreover, the episodes of violence against civilians follow a known pattern of rebel power consolidation in areas populated by populations considered as potential enemies, or not part of their imagined polity. Recent conflicts in Yugoslavia, Sudan and Congo suffered from such episodes of mass violence against other ethnicities. However, the Syrian conflict also provides an example of military cooperation between rebel groups translating into shared political institutions and a power-sharing arrangement between different groups. The Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), formed a military coalition with other ethnic-based organizations drawing from Christian and Arab constituencies. Under the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), these groups have created political institutions in which religious communities enjoy significant degrees of autonomy, with representation from diverse ethnic groups at every institutional level (Knapp and Jongerden, 2016, 2020; Holmes, 2019; UNSCWA, 2020). Despite the ongoing debate about the actual representativeness of these institutions (Özçelik, 2019; Balanche, 2020), it is possible to say that the AANES represents a case of power-sharing institutions emerging during civil wars. The creation of such institutions is puzzling. For instance, the Syrian civil war has been described as a 'semi-sectarian civil war' (Phillips, 2015) or as a 'proxy conflict organized along ethno-sectarian lines' (Heydemann, 2013). Local and foreign actors have mobilized the population along ethnic and religious lines, producing targeted violence against civilians. Not only ISIS but also Syrian rebel factions, the Syrian government, and foreign groups such as Hezbollah have used ethnic/religious-based discourses to mobilize their supporters, justify attacks, and target outgroup civilians (Balanche, 2015, 2018; Burch and Pizzi, 2020). In this context, distrust and commitment problems make cooperation between members of different groups particularly unlikely (McLauchlin, 2018). Thus, how and why did a rebel group like the PYD create power-sharing institutions? What explains the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars? This thesis aims to give a first answer to these research questions.

The establishment and operation of governance structures by non-state armed groups represent a critical aspect of modern conflict dynamics. The complexity and extent of governance activities can vary significantly among different groups. Some may implement basic social service provision or local security, while others develop more sophisticated and institutionalized forms of governance. The concept of rebel governance challenges traditional notions of state sovereignty and control. In

conflict zones, governance is not always a zero-sum game between the state and rebel groups. Instead, it often involves overlapping zones of control and collaborative efforts among various actors, including non-state entities like NGOs, religious organizations, and even other states. This governance landscape reflects a reality where authority and legitimacy can be fragmented and contested.

This thesis confronts a critical gap in the existing literature on rebel governance: the management of ethnic diversity and the establishment of inclusive governance structures during civil wars. While existing research predominantly focuses on the violent competition among rebel groups, with an abundance of studies on rebel infighting and factionalism, it often overlooks the non-coercive strategies rebels employ in their governance efforts. Studies such as Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour (2012); Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour (2012); Fjelde and Nilsson (2012); Pischedda (2018, 2021); and Gade, Hafez, and Gabbay (2019) have extensively explored the dynamics of rebel groups competing and fighting for control over scarce material and symbolic resources. However, this predominant focus on violent dynamics, while crucial, leaves a significant gap in understanding the various ways in which insurgents navigate the terrain of ethnic diversity within their controlled territories. Particularly, the use of non-coercive methods, which are crucial for establishing long-term stability and legitimacy, remains underexplored. This oversight is crucial because understanding these non-coercive strategies is key to comprehending how rebel governance can transition from mere armed control to sustainable, inclusive administration. This is not only of academic interest but also carries significant policy implications, offering insights into conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in ethnically diverse societies.

Existing literature has extensively examined rebel groups' violent dynamics and internal power struggles. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these groups, amidst their alliances, address governing in multi-ethnic landscapes. This oversight in literature underscores the need for an in-depth exploration of how rebel alliances[4] influence and shape governance practices in ethnically diverse regions. A recent trend started to explore both the dynamics of cooperation between rebel groups (Bapat and Bond, 2012; Gade et al., 2019; Tokdemir et al., 2021; Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda, 2022; Corradi, 2023) and non-coercive strategies of territorial consolidation (Schlichte and Schneckener, 2015; Arjona, 2016; Hafez, Gabbay, and Gade, 2021; Käihkö, 2021; Malthaner and Malesevic, 2022). However, the current understanding, as pointed out by Loyle (2021), is incomplete, particularly in the realm of more comprehensive inclusive arrangements such as power-sharing in

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[4] I consider rebel groups as allied when they are in a "cooperative relationship in their quest to defeat the government" (Akcinaroglu 2012) or another rebel group

multiethnic territories during civil wars. The literature predominantly recognizes the benefits that governance behaviors bring to rebel groups, such as enhanced legitimacy and effectiveness. Yet, the varied governance arrangements observed in practice suggest that governance can be both empowering and constraining for rebel groups. This duality is particularly relevant when examining power-sharing institutions in multi-ethnic contexts, where balancing diverse interests and maintaining legitimacy among different ethnic groups requires careful negotiation and sometimes concessions that may limit the rebels' immediate power. These constraints, while potentially reducing direct control, can lead to long-term stability and broader support, which are crucial in multi-ethnic settings.

The research question guiding my research is: *What explains the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars?* Are these genuine efforts towards inclusivity and stability, or are these strategic moves with limited commitment? What are the implications of these arrangements for the various ethnic groups involved, especially considering the vulnerability of certain populations during civil conflicts? To address these gaps, my research primarily focuses on understanding the factors that lead to the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups in multi-ethnic territories during civil wars. This involves investigating the motivations and conditions that compel these groups to establish such arrangements, and analyzing how these factors vary across different contexts and groups. By examining how rebel groups not only fight wars but also engage in the construction of governance structures in ethnically diverse settings, this thesis fills a gap by systematically examining the methods and strategies employed by rebel groups to manage ethnic diversity and establish inclusive governance structures. In doing so, it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of rebel governance, challenging existing narratives that predominantly focus on coercive control.

The thesis focuses on three case studies: the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. For the Syria case study, data was collected through in-depth fieldwork in Turkey from April to June 2021, in Italy throughout 2022 and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from December 2022 to January 2023. This fieldwork involved conducting in-person interviews and establishing contacts for subsequent online interviews. The individuals I interviewed were a diverse group, including leaders of Syrian rebel groups, local academic and journalist experts, NGO staff, and foreign volunteers who participated in rebel political institutions in Syria. For the Sri Lanka case, primary sources include an extensive range of materials gathered from archival research conducted in Colombo from November 2021 to March 2022. I accessed rare books, reports, and official documents, some of which are only available in this location. Moreover, I collected primary

documents from online sources. They include speeches, programmes, and official party documents of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), as well as the official programme of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), local elections results in Sri Lanka, the official text of the LTTE power-sharing agreement, propaganda pamphlets of the LTTE, and the Social Contract of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). These documents provide a firsthand look at the ideologies, strategies, and governance models of these groups.

Each of these three cases represents a distinct approach to managing ethnic diversity within the frameworks of rebel governance, providing a diverse spectrum of strategies and outcomes. Utilizing a comparative case study approach, this thesis will analyze diverse instances of rebel governance in multi-ethnic settings, drawing on a rich array of primary and secondary sources to uncover the underlying mechanisms of inclusive governance in rebel-held territories. Through these case studies, the thesis aims to uncover the varying mechanisms leading to variations in power-sharing.

The thesis identifies three primary strategies that rebel groups utilize in addressing ethnic diversity: co-optation, the formation of multi-ethnic fronts, and the establishment of rebel power-sharing arrangements. Co-optation refers to the inclusion of key local actors into the rebel governance structure, potentially extending to the devolution of power to certain regions. Multi-ethnic fronts encompass the creation or collaboration with diverse ethnic coalitions, reflecting the need to appeal to a broader ethnic base. Lastly, rebel power-sharing is characterized by institutionalized governance agreements among groups representing different ethnic constituencies, aimed at ensuring inclusive territorial consolidation.

The concept of rebel power-sharing is operationalized to differentiate between the mere formation of alliances and the deeper, more structured arrangements that constitute power-sharing. Such differentiation is essential for a rigorous analysis of the effectiveness and sustainability of these governance structures in the context of multi-ethnic civil wars. Rebel power-sharing is defined as the formalization of power-sharing agreements between different ethnic groups. These agreements range from elite-focused pacts to more comprehensive arrangements that encompass broader popular representation. To operationalize the concept, I focused on breaking down rebel power-sharing into measurable and observable elements. These elements span across four key domains: political, economic, territorial, and military power-sharing. In the political domain, I examined aspects such as the inclusion of different ethnic groups in governance and constitutional provisions for representation. Economically, I looked at the distribution of resources and economic assets among different groups. Territorially, the focus is on the devolution of power and the establishment of autonomous regions.

Militarily, I explored the integration of various groups into armed forces and command structures. This operationalization process involves identifying specific indicators for each category of power-sharing. For instance, in the political domain, observable elements might include the representation of minority groups in high-level government positions or specific quotas of political power in government branches. In the economic domain, indicators could encompass policies directing resources toward disadvantaged groups based on group membership or geographic location. Through this operationalization, the research aims to provide a clear and consistent application of the concept of rebel power-sharing throughout the study. This approach not only facilitates subsequent empirical analysis but also ensures a comprehensive understanding of the diverse forms and implications of power-sharing in rebel governance.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is grounded in an integrated approach that considers both structural and ideological factors to fully grasp the complexity of rebel behavior in civil wars. This framework challenges the traditional dominance of structural factors alone, advocating for an understanding that incorporates ideological influences as equally relevant in shaping rebel group actions and governance models. Structural factors, such as resource availability and territorial control, have traditionally been viewed as primary determinants of rebel behavior. However, this perspective often overlooks the complex social and ideological processes that also shape rebel governance. The main hypothesis of this research is that ideology plays a dual role in the formation of power-sharing institutions among rebel groups. Ideological proximity between allied groups diminishes the commitment problem, increasing the likelihood of alliance institutionalization. Groups with shared ideologies are more inclined to develop robust and lasting alliances, as ideological alignment enhances trust and cooperation, reducing the risks associated with potential defection. This phenomenon is underpinned by the logic that similar ideological frameworks facilitate common strategic outlooks and objectives, making cooperation more seamless and sustainable. Ideology, in this context, is not just a static set of beliefs but an active force that shapes and is shaped by the group's actions and decisions. Ideologies, whether rooted in Marxism, Islamism or others, do not merely rationalize actions ex-post, but often drive them, influencing both the level and type of coercion rebels employ when consolidating control and the type of political institutions they create. This framework heavily borrows from the work of Leader Maynard (2022), Hafez et al. (2023), and Arjona (2016), who have emphasized the joint role of both structural conditions and ideological commitments in rebel governance. Ideological factors are not merely subordinate to structural conditions but interact with them in significant ways, influencing rebel groups' strategic decision-

making processes, their methods of establishing and maintaining governance, and their interactions with local populations and other actors.

The thesis adopts a multi-level approach to analyze the factors influencing rebel power-sharing. First, I identify the groupings of variables influencing the behavior of rebel groups. Then, I analyze how these factors influence the formation of alliances between rebel groups and the creation of power-sharing governance arrangements. The framework is designed to dissect these factors into three primary levels: internal dynamics of rebel groups, their interactions with various actors, and the influence of international actors. The internal structure and coherence of a rebel group are fundamental in shaping its approach to governance and strategy. Internal dynamics directly impact the group's operational strategies, propensity for violence, and ability to govern effectively. Groups with strong, cohesive structures are more likely to engage in targeted violence and governance, while fragmented groups may lean towards indiscriminate violence or criminal activities. The second level of analysis involves rebel interactions with civilians and other armed groups within their territories. These interactions are key in determining the group's governance efficacy and legitimacy. The ability of a group to establish legitimacy and support among civilian populations can significantly enhance its governance capabilities. Conversely, competition with other armed factions for territorial control can lead to more aggressive and violent behavior. The relationships with other actors, including government forces, are also pivotal in shaping the group's strategies. Finally, the role of international actors in shaping rebel behavior during civil wars is examined. Foreign states, diasporas, transnational insurgents, international organizations, and corporations can significantly impact rebel groups. This influence can augment resources and impose constraints on rebel tactics, cohesion, and alliance formation. The actions of international actors can also affect the way rebel groups mobilize support and engage with civilian populations. These factors influence both alliances and rebel governance. The formation of alliances among rebel groups is often seen as a strategic necessity, though such alliances are typically temporary and fragile. I use insights from Christia (2012), Balcells et al. (2022), and Pischedda (2021) to discuss how the incentives for forming and maintaining these alliances are constantly threatened by competition for control over resources, territory, and war spoils. This competition often leads to unstable and fluid alliance patterns, as discussed by Christia. These strategic calculations are balanced by the effect of ideology. Ideological compatibility plays a crucial role in the formation and sustainability of rebel alliances. Groups with similar political aspirations and ideologies find it easier to cooperate due to reduced negotiation costs and increased trust. Groups with similar conflict framing, post-conflict visions, and territorial ambitions can form lasting alliances. The final part of the chapter hypothesizes a possible causal pathway from alliance formation

to the creation of power-sharing governance structures. Rebels use governance as a tool to enhance their capabilities and control over territories. The choice between coercive and inclusive strategies often depends on the constituency and the rebel group's ideological stance. Groups tend to employ different governance strategies based on the composition of the population they control, as well as their ideological orientation, which influences both the level and type of coercion used and the nature of the political institutions they establish. Ideological proximity between allied groups aids in overcoming commitment problems and facilitates the institutionalization of alliances. This institutionalization is crucial for the formation of governance structures in liberated areas, contributing to the development of power-sharing arrangements. However, the stability and effectiveness of these arrangements depend on various factors, including the strength of institutional links within the alliance, ideological alignment, and the need to accommodate diverse populations. In summary, the theoretical framework developed in my thesis seeks to explore the factors that influence rebel groups' decisions to engage in power-sharing. By examining internal dynamics, external pressures, strategic objectives, and ideological orientations, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and mechanisms behind rebel power-sharing in multi-ethnic contexts. The investigation will draw upon existing literature and empirical examples to illustrate these dynamics, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of rebel governance and conflict resolution in civil wars.

This research employs a comparative case study method to explore the formation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars. This method is particularly suited to the study due to the intricate nature of rebel alliance formation and governance, which are shaped by a multitude of contextual factors. A comparative case study approach allows for a detailed examination of these factors within specific contexts, expounding how they collectively contribute to the emergence of rebel alliances and governance structures. The methodological approach involves the analysis of three distinct case studies: the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) in Nepal, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, and the Democratic Union Party in Syria. Each case represents a unique setting and provides diverse perspectives on rebel power-sharing. The comparative analysis is structured in two phases of the causal pathway: the formation of a rebel coalition and the subsequent creation of inclusive governance institutions. For the first phase, the research employs a 'most-similar' comparison method, focusing on similarities across the cases in terms of rebel coalition formation. In contrast, the second phase utilizes a 'most-different' comparison approach, examining the diverse forms of governance institutions that emerged from these alliances. This dual comparison strategy is

essential for isolating the impact of different variables on the outcomes of interest, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings.

The empirical evidence presented in this thesis is drawn from a comparative study of three cases: The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. These case studies have been selected for their representativeness of diverse forms of rebel governance and power-sharing in multi-ethnic societies, each offering unique insights into the phenomenon under study.

1. **The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre)**: The CPN-M represents a unique case in the realm of rebel governance, particularly in its approach to ethnic diversity during Nepal's decade-long insurgency (1996-2006). The party's strategic engagement with various ethnic groups in Nepal was instrumental in both expanding its influence and consolidating its power. This engagement was not merely a military tactic but also a political and social strategy, as the Maoists sought to integrate ethnic rights and self-governance into their political agenda as a local interpretation of Mao's United Front. The CPN-M's alliance with ethnic groups, while driven by the practical need to expand their movement and recruit members, reflected a deeper strategic approach. The party's support for self-determination and national rights was seen as essential in a patrimonial society like Nepal, where small political entities could only attract supporters by addressing issues neglected by mainstream parties. However, the CPN-M's ultimate goal remained a class-based revolution, aiming to subsume ethnic identities under a united Nepalese nationalism. This approach, while incorporating ethnic minority demands and establishing ethnic liberation fronts, fell short of establishing genuine power-sharing mechanisms. The party retained control over the political structures in the autonomous regions it established, adhering to the principle of democratic centralism. The CPN-M's case study thus provides critical insights into how rebel groups can strategically engage with ethnic diversity while pursuing broader ideological goals.

2. **The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka:** The LTTE case in Sri Lanka concentrates on a critical period during the Sri Lankan civil war, specifically the end of the 1980s, when the LTTE tried to consolidate territorial control over the ethnically mixed Eastern Province. As part of the attempt, the LTTE and the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) signed a power-sharing agreement regulating political relations in the Eastern Province. This agreement, which ultimately failed, provides a unique opportunity to examine the factors influencing rebel groups' decisions to engage in power-sharing and the conditions under which such agreements can falter. The LTTE, initially adopting inclusive strategies, sought to

incorporate the Muslim Tamil-speaking minority into their governance framework, recognizing the strategic necessity of gaining local support and legitimizing control over the ethnically mixed Eastern Province. This approach was facilitated by an ideology that permitted the inclusion of Muslims as part of a broader Tamil-speaking nation. However, the rise of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and its success in advocating a distinct Muslim identity fundamentally altered the LTTE's stance. The SLMC's political ascent and the local Muslim population's growing alignment with it led to a stark transformation in the LTTE's tactics. The LTTE transitioned from inclusive consolidation strategies to aggressive territorial consolidation, culminating in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the Northern Province. The LTTE case study thus provides insight into the variable nature of rebel governance strategies, particularly in contexts where multiple ethnic identities and political aspirations intersect and compete.

3. **The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES)**: The AANES, spearheaded by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), offers a compelling case for understanding how rebel groups can create inclusive governance structures. The PYD, along with its allies, the Syriac Union Party (SUP) and the Arab Shammar tribe, formed a distinctive governance model during the Syrian civil war. This model is inspired by the ideology of democratic confederalism, which promotes direct democracy, inclusion, and representation across ethnic lines. The formation of the PYD-led governance structures in the Jazira[5] region between 2011 and 2014 demonstrates a strategic response to the power dynamics and sectarianization of the Syrian conflict. Despite the broader conflict's commitment problems, these groups institutionalized their alliance through co-governance agreements and the creation of power-sharing institutions. The PYD's alliance with the SUP, despite initial concerns of "Kurdification," evolved into a model of shared governance, reflecting the PYD's ideology and commitment to multi-ethnic representation. This case study sheds light on the formation of power-sharing institutions in civil wars, challenging conventional notions about the dynamics of rebel governance in ethnically diverse contexts.

The case studies of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria offer a rich ground for exploring key themes in rebel power-sharing. These include the formation and consolidation of rebel alliances, the establishment of power-sharing institutions, and the role of ideology, ethnicity, and external support in these processes. In Nepal, the CPN-M's approach to incorporating ethnic grievances; in Sri Lanka, the LTTE's power-sharing with the MULF and their shift in relations with the Muslim Tamil-speaking minority; in Syria,

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[5] For better clarity, I will use the English transliteration. The Kurdish transliteration of the region's name is Cizîrê

the PYD's alliances and governance strategies amid a complex conflict provide diverse contexts for examination. This comparative analysis aims to offer a nuanced understanding of rebel governance in multi-ethnic societies, exploring how these groups navigate the challenges of maintaining power and legitimacy while managing diverse ethnic constituencies. It will also assess the extent to which the theoretical predictions of rebel power-sharing hold in these varied contexts and identify any gaps or deviations from the expected patterns. This comprehensive comparative discussion will contribute significantly to our understanding of rebel governance, alliances, and power-sharing in civil wars, providing valuable insights for both academic research and policy formulation in conflict-affected regions.

To conclude, this thesis addresses the critical yet underexplored dimension of how rebel groups in multi-ethnic societies navigate the complexities of ethnic diversity to establish governance structures. While existing research predominantly focuses on the violent dynamics among rebel factions, there is a significant gap in understanding the non-coercive strategies employed for managing ethnic diversity and establishing inclusive governance during civil wars. Understanding these dynamics is pivotal for comprehending broader patterns of conflict and cooperation in civil wars. This research offers insights into the challenges and opportunities of establishing inclusive governance in deeply divided societies. It not only contributes to academic discourse but also has significant implications for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in ethnically diverse settings. The central research question of this thesis is: What explains the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars? This inquiry seeks to uncover the factors leading to the creation of such institutions and their implications for ethnic groups involved in the context of civil conflicts. Employing a comparative case study approach, this thesis analyzes instances of rebel governance in multi-ethnic settings. The study focuses on three case studies: the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. This method allows for an in-depth examination of the factors influencing rebel alliance formation and the creation of inclusive governance institutions.

This thesis thoroughly investigates how rebel groups in multi-ethnic societies during civil wars form inclusive governance and power-sharing structures. Chapter 1 discusses various strategies of inclusive governance in multi-ethnic areas. It starts by defining rebel governance, analyzing its different forms, and focusing on how it manifests in multi-ethnic settings. Chapter 2 clarifies the concept of rebel power-sharing, distinguishing it from mere coalitions, and examines its characteristics. Chapter 3 explores what influences rebel power-sharing, considering structural and

ideological factors and interactions between rebels and local actors. Chapter 4 details the comparative case study methodology, including case selection and data collection methods. Chapters 5 to 7 present case studies of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and the Democratic Union Party in Syria, each illustrating different approaches to rebel governance and power-sharing. Finally, Chapter 8 compares these cases, assessing how well theory matches practice and what these findings suggest about rebel power-sharing in civil wars. This study aims to fill a gap in existing research and provide insights useful for policy-making and conflict resolution in multi-ethnic societies experiencing civil wars.

With this foundational understanding, the next chapter will discuss inclusive rebel governance and rebel power-sharing as overlooked phenomena, setting the context for the detailed analysis that follows.

Chapter 1: Inclusive Rebel Governance and Rebel Power-sharing - an Overlooked Phenomenon

What is rebel governance?

The study of rebel governance during civil wars[6] has gained increasing attention in recent years, shedding light on the diverse strategies employed by rebel groups[7] to gain legitimacy, control, and support among civilian populations. These strategies not only impact the dynamics of conflict but also shape the political landscape in conflict-affected regions. In this first section, we delve into the concept of rebel governance, its evolution in the academic literature, and its significance in understanding the functioning and success of rebel groups. We explore the relational aspects of rebel governance, focusing on the interactions between rebels and civilian populations as well as other actors in the conflict environment. By examining the various definitions and approaches to rebel governance, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of this critical aspect of civil wars and its implications for conflict dynamics and resolution.

Understanding the strategies of rebel governance is crucial for comprehending the mobilization, functioning, and success of these groups. Previous research has tended to focus on the violent conduct of rebel groups and its impact on civilians. However, the expanding literature on rebel governance has underscored the significance of these groups' governance strategies in securing legitimacy, projecting strength, and eventually governing civilian populations. Such strategies include the provision of public goods, the creation of administrative structures, the regulation of economic activity, and the establishment of courts and legal systems. Effective governance by rebel groups can enhance their legitimacy and support among local populations, thereby facilitating mobilization, recruitment, and resource acquisition. Furthermore, rebel groups' ability to provide governance can lead to the formation of hybrid governance structures and the displacement of state authorities, thereby further enhancing their power and influence. Thus, understanding rebel governance strategies is essential for scholars seeking to comprehend the complex dynamics of rebel mobilization, functioning, and survival in conflict-affected regions.

Authors, who perceive rebel governance as a state-building process, argue that rebels compete with the state for a monopoly on violence, power, and legitimacy over a territory and its inhabitants. The

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[6] I use Kalyvas (2006) definition of civil wars: "Civil war can be defined as armed combat taking place within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities"
[7] I follow Loyle at al. (2021) in defining rebel groups as "organized non-state actors that challenge their host state through violent means in order to achieve a political objective".

"imperatives of war" (Jüde 2020) strongly incentivize rebels to create institutions to restore order, reduce unpredictability and ultimately act as Olson's "stationary bandits" to provide a better environment for resource extraction (Olson 1993). For this reason, earlier studies of rebel governance considered insurgency as "a process of competitive state-building" (Kalyvas 2006, 218). Studies of rebel governance come from the observation that insurgents organize "governments for civilians" (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015, 6). Rebels' interactions with actors both within and outside their territory lead to the formation of a "structure and distribution of authority: […] who rules, where and through what understanding" (Staniland 2012). However, the effects produced by the shaping of political order do not necessarily tend towards the monopoly of force and authority (Glawion and Le Noan 2023).

In contemporary civil wars, we often observe a process in which power is contested by multiple actors, rather than consolidated into a centralized government. Early research such as Weinstein's argued that rebel governance exists only when "a rebel group exercises control over a territory" through a "monopoly on the use of force" (Weinstein 2007, 164). However, civil wars often result in a situation characterized by a "heterarchy or oligopoly of violence," wherein certain actors can "establish enough local order to mute or contain violent anarchy" (Hinnebusch 2018). It is in this situation of oligopoly of power and violence that rebels attempt to establish order by engaging with "other forms of power and powerbrokers" (Worrall 2017), creating a multi-layered governance structure influenced by government forces, foreign state and non-state actors, and other actors (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017). Data collected by Broschè, Nilsson and Sundberg (2023) confirm that most civil wars involve a variety of actors, with some conflicts involving even more than 60 warring entities. Thus, rebel institutions not only allow rebels "to shape economic, political and social affairs" (Arjona 2014, 4), but they do so in a "continuous process of renegotiation" between the different actors both exercising and enduring power (Jüde 2017a).

Scholars have provided various understandings and definitions of rebel governance. According to Weinstein's influential work, "a rebel government exists when and where a rebel group

(1) exercises control over territory,
(2) establishes institutions within or outside of its military to manage relations with the civilian population, and
(3) these institutions set in place a series of formal or informal rules that define a hierarchy of decision making and a system of taxation" (Weinstein 2007, 164).

However, later work focused on the socio-political dynamics of rebel governance. As Mampilly pointed out, there is a difference between governance and government. On the one hand, government

generally refers to "a bounded organization that has the authority to make laws and regulations and the ability to enforce adherence by exercising control over the means of coercion within a defined territory". On the other hand, governance more broadly "refers to the control of social interactions" by rebels within a defined territory. For Mampilly as well, rebel governance happens when rebels control over a defined territory. However, the focus is not so much on the territory itself, but rather on the population living there (Mampilly 2011, 3–4). Indeed, rebel governance can be defined as "a political strategy of rebellion in which rebels use political organization to forge and manage relations with civilians" (Huang 2016, 111), in order to attain "significant material gain" (Kasfir 2015, 24). Thus, at its core, rebel governance can be seen as an attempt by rebels to "govern and meet their objectives…and which ensures the continuing authority of the rebel group" (Worrall 2017).

In conclusion, rebel governance is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various strategies employed by rebel groups to assert control, gain legitimacy, and establish order during civil wars. While earlier literature tended to focus on the monopolistic aspect of power and violence, more recent research has acknowledged the complex interactions and continuous renegotiations between rebels, civilians, and other actors in the conflict environment.

Elements and variations of rebel governance

Building on the foundational understanding of rebel governance established in the previous section, this part delves into the elements and variations of rebel governance, focusing on the types of institutions created by rebel groups and their implications for conflict dynamics. We examine the diverse range of political, economic, and social institutions that can be established by rebel groups, as well as the varying degrees of inclusiveness and effectiveness of these governance systems. Furthermore, we explore some of the factors influencing the variations in rebel governance, such as a) the relationship between the rebel group and its constituency; b) the group's ideology; and c) its ultimate goals.

Seminal work on rebel governance highlighted the importance and great variance of political institutions created by rebels (Arjona 2016; Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Mampilly 2011; Weinstein 2007). However, most quantitative studies saw rebel governance as a transactional process, in which service provision is a tool used to facilitate resource extraction activities (Heger and Jung 2017; Huang and Sullivan 2020; Stewart 2018). A significant number of rebel groups established political governing institutions to administer the population under their control, although the number and complexity of institutions created vary greatly. For example, nearly 64% of rebel groups active

in a civil war between 1945 and 2012 created at least one governing institution" (Albert 2022), but according to another study only 13% of groups created elaborate administrative institutions (Huang 2016, 71–72). Moreover, rebels create a great variety of institutions. Albert (2022) identified 25 different types of institutions created by rebel groups. She identified a several political, economic and social institution among which local governments, constitutions, holding elections, issuing IDs, providing welfare and administering law. Likewise, Huang (Huang 2016, 120) found that rebels can create all the "most fundamental governance institutions associated with a formal government", such as executive, legislative and judiciary bodies, tax systems, police forces, education and healthcare systems (Huang 2016, 120). Florea (2020) also found that rebel governance can be divided into activities of "political organization (establishing executive, legislative, or judicial institutions); redistribution (providing public goods); and extraction (engaging in regularized taxation). For instance, The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Mexico established autonomous municipalities with their own councils, laws, schools, clinics and cooperatives. On the other end of the spectrum, The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda and neighbouring countries did not create any political, economic or social institutions for the local population, but instead relied on coercion, abduction and violence to sustain itself and its ideology (Day 2019)

Recent studies on variations in rebel governance analysed both service provision and political institutions. These studies focus mostly on the relationship between the rebel group and its constituency because the main assumption is that insurgents tend to serve their constituents and have hostile relations with the other groups. These assumptions rely on the observation that rebel governance can be classified as a "collective good" because both rebel institutions and service provision are "targeted towards a collective and designed to sway popular opinion" (Gowrinathan and Mampilly 2019). Thus, rebel governance "requires the establishment of a collectivity as the recipient of insurgent appeals" (Gowrinathan and Mampilly 2019). In other words, rebels direct their actions towards a constituency, that is "the real social groups in a society, whom the militants address and to whom they refer, with whom they are actually involved in some form of relationship, and who – at least to a certain degree – actually sympathize with and support the militant groups" (Malthaner 2011). The literature develops these assumptions in two different ways. On the one hand, scholars may focus on differences in service provision. Welfare provided by insurgents may be directed exclusively towards the members of the group and their families, or it may be extended to the entire population under the insurgents' control (Albert 2022; Glawion and Le Noan 2023; Huang and Sullivan 2020; Stewart 2018; Suykens 2015). On the other hand, scholars may focus on differences in political institutions: government institutions may include members of the rebel group, or may

incorporate civilians and pre-existing social structures (Furlan 2020; Loyle et al. 2021; Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Teiner 2022). Rebels may provide inclusive services depending on their target constituency's nature: while centre-seeking rebels (those aiming to overthrow the government) may provide services exclusively to potential supporters, secessionist rebels may offer inclusive services to gain recognition as legitimate rulers both domestically and internationally (Stewart 2018).

However, inclusive political institutions are much rarer. As discussed by Furlan (2020), in recent literature the dimension of "inclusiveness" has been considered dependent on the group's ideology and ultimate goals. Namely, groups with an exclusivist rebel ideology, such as those based on ethnicity or religion, and groups that seek to capture power in the central government, tend to create institutions and provide services for a limited category of people, that is those who belong to their own ethnicity or religion. In contrast, rebel groups with an inclusive ideology and secessionist groups typically broaden their governance system to cover all individuals residing in the conquered territory. As posited by Mampilly, the assumption is that ethnically connotated groups will seek popular support from their ethnic kin (Mampilly 2011, 76). These assumptions stand true most of the time, as established in recent research on rebel governance (Breslawski 2021) and on the vast literature on ethnic conflict.

In summary, this section has illustrated that rebel governance is a highly varied phenomenon, characterized by the creation of a wide range of political, economic, and social institutions. The type and inclusiveness of these institutions are influenced by factors such as the relationship between the rebel group and its constituency, the group's ideology, and its ultimate objectives. While some rebel groups focus primarily on service provision and resource extraction, others establish elaborate administrative institutions that mirror formal governments. Moreover, the inclusiveness of rebel governance systems can vary considerably, with some groups targeting specific ethnic or religious communities and others adopting a more inclusive approach.

Ethnic groups and inclusive rebel governance: an overlooked occurrence

Ethnic diversity and inclusive governance within rebel groups represent a challenging and often overlooked aspect of civil conflict. While the interplay between ethnicity and civil wars has received considerable attention in academic literature, the occurrence of inclusive rebel governance involving various ethnic groups remains underexplored. Understanding the complexities and variations of inclusive governance among rebels in ethnically diverse contexts is crucial to better comprehend the dynamics of civil conflict, the potential for conflict resolution, and the lasting impacts on post-conflict societies. This section will focus on ethnic relations during civil wars, the factors influencing the

emergence of inclusive rebel governance, and the different strategies rebels may employ in engaging with diverse populations.

Relations between different ethnic groups[8] during civil wars are complex and often violent. Although the presence of different ethnic identities alone does not predict or cause conflict (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Lake and Rothchild 1998), during social strife tensions along identity lines are more likely to escalate. Indeed, in addition to wars for secession, nearly "half of all conflicts fought for control of government are started by rebel groups with a different ethnicity from the government"(Denny and Walter 2014), and ethnic conflicts generally last longer than other intra-state conflicts (Fearon 2004). Conflict is more likely to erupt when minorities and competing elites are excluded from power (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009), when ethnic and religious cleavages can be exploited for conflict caused by underlying socio-economic issues (L. E. Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011) and there are political elites ready to exploit them (Fearon and Laitin 2000). This demonstrates how ethnic diversity can turn into a conflict factor. For example, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, triggered by the assassination of the Hutu president, was fuelled by decades of political and economic marginalization of the Tutsi minority by the Hutu-dominated government, as well as by ethnic propaganda and hate speech. More than 800,000 people were killed in about 100 days (Hintjens 1999; Magnarella 2005).

Such episodes of violence occur due to several mechanisms[9]. The first is related to structural causes. When political power is divided along ethnic lines, ruling elites may favour their own ethnic group at the expense of others, creating grievances that align with ethnicity (L.-E. Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013). Under certain conditions, "different aspects of group position – economic advantages, political authority, cultural eminence, generalized prestige – become central issues" (Williams 2018, 135). Moreover, ethnic groups often live in concentrated areas and share language and customs, making it easier for them to mobilize support when they are aggrieved (Denny and Walter 2014). The second is related to the nature of the processes at play before and at the early stages of civil conflict. In cases where the division between government and opposition is also (among other factors) marked by identity, mass protest movements may "induce collective insecurity concerns within ethnic communities concerning the future political power and safety" (Mustasilta and Svensson 2023). These concerns not only challenge the state's rule but also create competition between various ethnic

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[8] I adopt Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug's (2013, 23) pragmatic view on ethnicity, defined as "any subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on the belief in common ancestry and shared culture"

[9] Reconstructing the vast debate on the causes of ethnic violence would be out of the scope of this dissertation. For the purpose of this review, it must be noted that the literature advanced from the greed-only models, which initially discarded ethnicity and distribution of political power as a relevant factors causing conflict (Collier 2006; King and Kaufman 2001; Mueller 2000).

groups within society. As ethnic identities become entangled in non-violent conflicts, mobilisation and support networks will likely follow ethnic lines (Mustasilta and Svensson 2023). As summarised by Wimmer (2002, 92), it is "this contest for the control of the state" that sometimes "escalates into ethno-nationalist civil wars". Moreover, if the government engages in targeted violence against any of those ethnic communities, it fosters "new violence-related grievances", both reinforcing the perception that violent actions are the sole means to bring about political change and fuelling the motivation of individuals to participate through anger and self-preservation (L.-E. Cederman et al. 2020).

Moreover, several factors are at play not only between the government and insurgents but also between different insurgent groups and insurgents and civilians. In some cases, ethnic violence seems directly driven by ideologies of ethnic or religious supremacy, as in the case of the Hutu against Tutsi in Rwanda or the Islamic State against Yazidis in Syria and Iraq. In other cases, even non-supremacist groups may initiate ethnic conflicts. Moreover, during multiparty civil wars, individuals may be tied to multiple "citizenship constellations"[10], meaning they may be simultaneously subject to the government and multiple rebel groups. For example, during the Syrian conflict, an individual living in Raqqa could have been subsequently subjected to the Syrian government, several Syrian rebel groups, ISIS, and finally the Kurdish-led SDF during different stages of the conflict. In such cases, "the people become simultaneously something to be protected but also feared" because rebels may doubt the civilians' and especially minorities' allegiances (Sosnowski 2020). Indeed, in one such case, the YPG carried out forced displacements targeting civilians based on their ethnicity, on the suspect they could be supporting ISIS -which formerly controlled the area-(Amnesty International 2015).

Factors such as lack of interethnic trust, growing anarchy and imperfect information about groups' goals escalate tensions between groups and cause ethnic conflicts (Bhavnani and Backer 2000; Roe 1999). This process, described as the "ethnic security dilemma" (Posen 1993), explains how interactions between ethnic groups may produce ethnic conflict. Posen posits that in situations where ethnic groups feel threatened by one another, they are likely to adopt defensive measures to protect their own security. However, such actions may be perceived as offensive by the other group, leading to a spiral of mutual suspicion and hostility. Posen argues that the ethnic security dilemma arises from the fact that each group tends to view the other through the lens of its own identity and interests, rather than trying to understand the other's perspective. This leads to a situation where both sides misinterpret each other's intentions, and assume that the other is seeking to dominate or threaten them.

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[10] Baubock (2010) describes such relationships as "a structure in which individuals are simultaneously linked to several political entities".

As a result, each group feels compelled to take measures to defend itself, which in turn reinforces the other's perception of the threat and triggers further defensive responses. The result is a situation where both sides become trapped in a cycle of escalating violence, even though neither side may have initially intended to engage in conflict. The ethnic security dilemma can be particularly acute in situations where there is a history of ethnic conflict, or where the distribution of power and resources between ethnic groups is perceived as unfair. In such cases, even small incidents can trigger a cycle of violence, as each side interprets the other's actions as a threat to its own security. Moreover, the dilemmas can be exacerbated by the presence of "predatory leaders engaged in symbolic politics" using "ethnic mythologies and fears" already embedded in mass attitudes (Kaufman 2006). For these reasons, rebels' attempts at creating shared identities or at creating inclusive governments including minorities in their system of governance are scarce and rarely successful and risk damaging the rebels' relations with their constituencies, ultimately "undermining their internal legitimacy" (Caspersen 2015, 2).

However, recent research criticizes this perspective as it rests on the assumption that ethnic groups are coherent political actors, driven to conflict by an overarching "master cleavage", such as unequal resource and influence sharing between two different ethnic groups (Parkinson and Zaks 2018). Indeed, the reality on the ground is more complex than it seems. However, the existing literature on this topic is very limited. For example, centre seeking groups such as the ELN and FARC in Colombia, Sendero Luminoso and the MRTA in Perú showed significantly different modes of rule over civilians (Schubiger and Zelina 2017). Likewise, of Maoist-inspired groups such as the Indian Naxalites, the Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), only the Naxalites created inclusive institutions (Mampilly 2011). In India, the secessionist Naga insurgents provided services and protection only to individuals of the same ethnicity, whereas the centre-seeking Naxalites created inclusive institutions (Suykens 2015). However, the centre-seeking Tigrayan People's Liberation Front in Ethiopia "provided services" only to fellow Tigrayans (Stewart 2018). Therefore, it is evident that there exists a significant variation in the behaviour of rebels concerning inclusive institutions, even among those sharing similar goals or ideologies.

Moreover, as noted by Mampilly and Stewart (2021) and by Loyle et al. (2021), there are several ways in which rebels may limit their own power. They could devolve power to civilians or encourage their participation in rebel governance institutions (Mampilly and Stewart 2021), hold elections (Cunningham, Huang, and Sawyer 2020), adhere to existing international legal commitments (Jo 2015) or enforce new laws even when it constrains the rebels' own behaviour (Loyle 2021). Thus, it

seems that in some cases "giving up power gives you more power" (Loyle et al. 2021). I build on these observations by arguing that rebels may also decide to create formal institutions of power-sharing during civil wars.

Rebels may establish a variety of arrangements and institutions, going beyond creating inclusive governments, to share power with other rebel factions and civilian groups. In a few cases, they create institutions designed to share power with other ethnic or religious groups. These institutions sometimes resemble the power-sharing institutions created after the end of conflicts as conflict resolution tools. The literature on variations of rebel governance does not directly discuss this specific sub-case. For this reason, there is no adequate data for measuring the extent of the phenomenon. For example, previous datasets covering variations of rebel governance did not include the variable of inclusive arrangements. The previously cited study by Stewart (2018) covers inclusive or exclusive service provision. The Rebel governance dataset (Huang 2016) and the Rebel Quasi-State Institutions dataset (Albert 2022) cover only the existence of certain institutions, but not their degree of inclusiveness. The LORT dataset (Breslawski 2020) does not specifically cover the inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities into governance. Finally, the MGAR dataset (Blair et al. 2022) covers the degrees of cooperation and conflict between different groups and may be useful for assessing equal alliances, but not for examining potential joint political institutions.

In qualitative studies as well, scholars have developed several typologies of rebel governance, frequently incorporating the dimensions of inclusiveness and power-sharing. However, there is great variation in their definition of these terms. Several scholars research non-conflictual behaviour between rebel groups (and between rebels and the state) operating in the same territory. Such behaviour has been defined as "complementary" (Idler and Forest 2015), "parallel" (Thakur and Venugopal 2019) or "competitive" (Berti 2020) governance. In this literature, the general assumption is that cooperation between rebels represents a temporary and unstable phenomenon. While these groups might join forces for military objectives, they often engage in governance competition to assert dominance over shared institutions, establish legitimacy, and promote their ideological objectives (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023). For instance, during the early stages of the conflict, rebel groups and civil society organizations within the Syrian opposition established councils that were characterized by their inclusion of multiple parties and their focus on legal and administrative functions. However, these councils soon disintegrated as different rebel factions began competing for local hegemony (Berti 2020). Thus, according to Pfeifer and Schwab (2023), "joint administration is not viable in the long term". However, Idler and Forest observed the existence of long-term strategic alliances in Colombia between the ELN and FARC in several municipalities of the Narino department in 2011, and in 2012 in Catatumbo. The authors defined those instances of strategic complementary

governance as "long term commitments in which [armed groups] share intelligence and revenues and/or expenses [to fight jointly against a third group [and with] joint provisions of public goods […] as if it were one single actor" (Idler and Forest 2015).

Other scholars identified the existence of these long-term commitments, but they did not distinguish between the inclusion of elites, civilians or ethnic and religious groups, making comparison between cases harder. Weinstein's (2007) study on rebel governance's variations introduced distinct dimensions of inclusiveness and power-sharing. He defined the former as the proportion of the population allowed to participate in the political process, and the latter as the creation of a joint military-civilian governance structure that allows rebels to know and act upon the preferences of civilians. However, later research used the same term not only to describe inclusiveness in the decisional system of governance but also inclusive welfare[11]. For example, according to both Suykens (2015) and Stewart (2018), inclusive rebel governance encompasses the inclusive provision of services but not the representativeness in the rebel's institutions. As a result, groups like the Communist Party of India (Suykens 2015) or the Polisario Front (Stewart 2018) are regarded as inclusive, as they offer goods and administer services to the entire population under their control. Stewart (2018) provided several examples of secessionist rebel groups providing services to people of different ethnicities. For example, the Karen National Union (KNU) "provided healthcare and education to Mons living in the territory the KNU controlled, even though the KNU sometimes fought against a primarily Mon insurgency" (Stewart 2018, 215). Likewise, Furlan (2020) defines inclusivity as "the extent to which the governance practices, norms and rules", understood as security, justice, taxation and service provision, "apply to the entire community or only part of it". Regarding the relationship of minorities with rebel institutions, Furlan discusses it in the category of "inclusion of other actors", which also includes other non-state actors such as NGOs, local mullahs, elders' councils, etc. Mampilly and Stewart (2021) use the dimensions of "power-sharing" and "inclusiveness", but these dimensions are fuzzy concerning the creation of institutional inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities. Similar to Weinstein's definitions, power-sharing is any "governance system that shares power with civilian institutions and leaders". Mampilly and Stewart include different arrangements under this loose definition, from rebels' collaboration with civilians "in the governance of a locality", to civilians' appointment into political institutions to "the outright co-optation of existing socio-political formations, such as traditional or religious councils" or the creation of local councils inclusive of "civilian constituencies". On the other hand, they define inclusiveness as "the degree to which a rebel group structures political institutions to facilitate civilian

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[11] Understood as "the direct delivery or indirect facilitation of services, programs and infrastructure"(Cammett and MacLean 2011)

participation". Both the overall civilian representation and specific structures to represent ethnic and religious minorities fall under this definition of inclusiveness. Moreover, under the scope of this definition, both the incorporation of pre-existing ethnic or religious social formation and the creation of new institutions representative of minorities account for "inclusiveness". Finally, Breslawski (2021) defines inclusive institutions in terms of civilians' participation in rebel governing institutions. Within her definition, rebels may keep pre-existing institutions or create new ones, but in both cases they "allow civilians to participate". However, her definition considers only the broader category of civilians rather than ethnic or religious minorities.

Based on the authors' definitions, it is possible to easily identify several instances of inclusive rebel governance and devolution of power to local society. For example, the Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia co-opted influential powerholders such as Islamic leaders and local activists into their governance system. These figures were included in the group's governance system as administrators, tax collectors, teachers, advisors, etc., improving the group's local and international legitimacy (Barter 2011). The Polisario Front in Western Sahara provided services to all the population under its control and created a participatory government system composed of an elective legislative body with veto power of the Polisario executive. The population elects the local administrative bodies as well (Metelits 2018). In both cases, the population under the rebels' control coincides with the rebels' constituency.

However, I argue that there are distinct instances of inclusive rebel governments operating within ethnically diverse territories. As shown earlier, creating such institutions presents several additional challenges, such as managing multiple identities and conflicting interests, building trust and legitimacy, and maintaining internal cohesion. Therefore, as there are specific factors involved, I claim that it is a phenomenon that deserves more in-depth analysis. However, as this brief overview of the use of the terms "inclusiveness" and "power-sharing" in recent literature reveals, there is no clear distinction between the inclusion of civilians and the inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities. Furthermore, the term power-sharing is often employed in its literal definition of "sharing power" between rebels and civilians, rather than between different ethnic groups. Thus, the literature did not consider the case of ethnically connotated rebel groups creating governments inclusive of minorities. Finally, datasets on rebel governance do not consider this dimension as well.

In conclusion, the study of ethnic groups and inclusive rebel governance reveals a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The existing literature provides insights into the factors and mechanisms that may foster or hinder the development of inclusive governance among rebel groups in ethnically diverse settings. However, a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between ethnicity and

rebel governance remains elusive due to the lack of a unified definition and consistent data on the subject. For these reasons, in the following sections I will explore the instances of inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic contexts, and identify and operationalize a specific framework for rebel power-sharing.

Inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic contexts

In this section, I present a (non-exhaustive) list of rebel groups' alliance strategies and political institutions created in the presence of a multi-ethnic population. These strategies and institutions exhibit varying degrees of inclusion of different ethnic groups. As shown in the following examples, rebels can employ several different strategies to engage with diverse populations. The literature provides examples of both rebel groups' inclusion of civilians and the participation of diverse ethnic groups in rebels' political institutions. It must be noted that this list does not represent the entire universe of possible strategies employed by rebels. Existing literature explored in-depth cases in which rebels resort to ethnic violence and exclusion to assert control over a territory, such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the Janjaweed militias in Sudan and many others. However, as discussed in the previous sections, analyses of inclusive strategies suffer from ambiguity of terms and the absence of comprehensive datasets. Thus, I have relied on non-systematic evidence from the literature to examine the subject, while acknowledging that further research is needed to explore the nuances of inclusive rebel governance, particularly concerning the inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities.

Due to the limited number of previous studies on power-sharing during civil wars, the cases presented should be considered illustrative examples of the phenomenon rather than a systematic review of all instances of inclusive institutions and power-sharing during civil wars. I selected groups from different geographic areas, and with different goals and ideologies to ensure a certain degree of representativeness. These examples show the breadth of inclusive strategies and institutional arrangements employed by rebel groups in the presence of multi-ethnic populations.

1. The de-facto state of Somaliland

Somaliland is an unrecognized state which declared secession from Somalia. Although Somaliland is linguistically and religiously homogeneous, Somali society is divided into "an elaborate system of clans and sub-clans" that "plays the same role as ethnic groups in other African societies" (Pegg and Kolstø 2015). Somaliland was established as a result of the struggle of the Issaq-led Somali National Movement (SNM) against the government forces and allied militias from the Dulbahante, Warsangeli and Gadabursi clans. After secession, Somaliland experienced a period of conflict between the

different SNM factions, each representing different sub-clans of the Issaq. This renewed bout of conflict created a power balance between "non Issaq sub-clans and the now divided Issaq" (Renders and Terlinden 2010) and ultimately "served to reassure at least some of the minorities that the Isaaq would not dominate Somaliland politically". Ultimately, Somaliland reached a great degree of stability due to the development of clan-based power-sharing institutions, which "safeguarded the interests of local clans at the national level" (Renders and Terlinden 2010). The inclusion of minority clans served also the purpose of fostering a Somaliland national identity larger than the Isaaqi one (Pegg and Kolstø 2015). However, only some of the minority clans (namely, the western Gadabursi clans) have been effectively incorporated into the political system, while the other groups "express support for a united Somalia rather than Somaliland" (Hoehne 2009).

2. The Forces Nouvelles governance in Man (Ivory Coast)

The Ivorian civil war started in 2002, after a decade-long crisis following the death of the first President Houphouet-Boigny in 1993. This was followed by the "marginalisation of the northern, Muslim population of the country", "unfair elections" and the "gradual militarisation of politics". A coalition of rebel groups, the *Forces Nouvelles* (FN), started an insurrection to depose the then president Gbagbo, and occupied large areas in the Northern and Western Ivory Coast. After the 2003 ceasefire froze the conflict line, the FN established a form of rebel governance in the areas under their control. In some areas, the FN "created organs in which the non-military population is represented" (Heitz 2009). The civil war in Ivory Coast had an "ethnic dimension", and the FN "relied on a heterogeneous constituency" of all the Northern Ivorians either belonging to "a northern ethnic group (e.g. Malinkè, Senoufo) or identified as Muslim" (van Baalen 2021). Heitz (2009) describes the local forms of power-sharing between "the rebels and local community leaders and corporations" in the rebel-held city of Man, where local activists created an umbrella organisation of "local associations and NGOs". The organisation was created with the specific purpose of voicing the civilians' needs and became an organ of mediation between them and the rebels. Similar forms of local power-sharing arrangements are found in other areas held by the FN. However, civilian involvement in the rebels' local governance was mostly informal. Local elites were capable of "bridging ethnic and national cleavages" thanks to their strong and far-reaching clientelist networks. Van Baalen (2021) found that these networks played a fundamental role in mediating between rebels' and civilians needs, and the strength of the elites' network influenced rebels' local responsiveness.

3. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front

Eritrea hosts a highly heterogeneous population, composed of "nine significant ethno-linguistic groups and two major religions, Christianity and Islam". Eritrea seceded from Ethiopia in 1991 after a 40-year-long conflict led by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). The EPLF "transformed into a state-like organization while conducting war", creating mass political organisations, healthcare, schooling, rebel-led industries and other institutions (Jüde 2020). Previous Eritrean secessionist groups such as the Eritrean Liberation Front lacked coordination because they "organised into autonomous geographical (ethnic or clan-based divisions). The EPLF activities were instead coordinated by the clandestine Marxist Eritrean People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The EPRP successfully centralized the command structure, and framed the conflict as an anti-imperialist struggle of the Eritrean nation, "avoiding ethnic, religious and geographical fragmentation" (Connell 2001). For this reason, the EPLF used nation-building as a "mobilization strategy" (Jüde 2020). Thus, the EPLF was inclusive of all ethnic and religious groups under its control, and it did so by constructing a unified national identity with which all sections of Eritrean society could identify.

4. The LURD during the second Liberian civil war

The insurgent coalition Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) emerged in 1999 to oust and exile Liberian President Charles Taylor. The five factions composing the LURD, aware that only a stable coalition could match President Taylor's armed forces, agreed on a power-sharing mechanism to ensure the alliance's stability. The agreement ensured equal representation in the LURD command structure to the two main ethnic groups, the Krahn and the Mandingo. As other minority groups joined the LURD, they were also integrated into the leadership. Likewise, the transitional government established by the LURD in 2002 was designed to represent all the ethnic groups part of the coalition. However, after their military victory and subsequent Taylor's exile in 2003, the rebels lost their unifying denominator and the coalition promptly collapsed. The LURD did not create political institutions or establish stable territorial control, and the power-sharing mechanism involved only the different ethnic components of the rebels' elites. Thus, this arrangement did not involve the creation of inclusive institutions. Power-sharing was limited to ensuring the ethnic balance in the rebels' military and political leadership (Käihkö 2015, 2021).

5. The SPLM/A in Sudan

The formation of South Sudan in 2011 was the outcome of a decades-long conflict. The conflict has been perceived as between an "Arab and Muslim north" and the "African and Christian South". However, this is a simplification, as the regions are not homogeneously divided, and the South's

many different ethnic groups have in common only the shared experience of repression from the central government (Mampilly 2011, 132–35). The SPLM/A was created as a united front for all of the South due to the patronage of the Ethiopian Derg government. It was composed of different ethnic groups but dominated by the Dinka, which constitute the biggest ethnic group in the South (Malwal 2015). The SPLM/A tried to avoid this perception by appealing to a sovra-ethnic national project of a "New Sudan" (Branch and Mampilly 2005). However, the group favoured Dinka civilians and committed atrocities against other groups. The SPLM/A used Ethiopia as a rear base for and safe haven for fighters and civilians. However, the end of Ethiopian support in 1991 started the spell of a military and humanitarian crisis, as the refugees were sent back to South Sudan. A Nuer faction in the SLPMA, the second largest ethnic group in the South, "began making both violent and non-violent demands for greater representation within the rebel leadership", leading to a split and war between the two factions (Mampilly 2011, 140–41). After a successful rapprochement between the factions, the SPLM/A undertook a process of reform by "building a civil administration that devolved governance decisions to the local level", so that the different Southern Sudanese ethnic groups could have a say in their local communities' decisional process (Mampilly 2011, 222). This process was not of devolution and decentralization of the political apparatus. "The SPLM/A divided its territory on the basis of pre-conflict multi-ethnic provinces […]to] prevent competition for political influence among different ethnic groups at the regional level" (Mampilly 2011, 148), because rebel leaders were "highly aware of the issues surrounding ethnic-based divisions" and wanted to avoid "the management of the population through the manipulation of politicized ethnicities", but the civil administration was active only "at the county level and below". Likewise, the judiciary was devoluted to local courts of elders, while "the military justice system of the rebellion served to allot justice interethnically" (Mampilly 2011, 157).

6. Maoist rebels in Nepal

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-M) launched an armed insurgency against the Nepali government in 1995, lasting for 10 years. Nepal's population is highly heterogenous, comprising 52 castes and 44 nationalities. Historically, the ruling class belonged to high-caste Nepali-speaking Hindus, and the state marginalised lower castes, ethnic groups and religious minorities (Gellner 2007a). Although the CPN(M) was not a secessionist party or representative of a specific ethnic group, it integrated the ethnic dimension into its revolutionary discourse, tapping into minorities' resentment and building on their historical exploitation (Boquérat 2006). The Maoists established a stronghold in the Magar region, creating a Magar-dominated special district, which laid

the foundation for subsequent declarations of autonomous regions in 2004, of which six were named on an ethnic basis (Gellner 2007a). Moreover, the Maoists incorporated into their platform many of the issues that the indigenous nationalities movement had voiced" (Hangen 2007, 37), and "established different ethnic fronts" (Lawoti 2003). Marginalized ethnic and caste groups widely supported the Maoists, but there were no specific mechanisms for ensuring their political representation (International Crisis Group 2005a, 15). The CPN(M) sought to create a support base among Nepalese minority groups by promising equal rights and autonomy in a new Nepal and establishing inclusive rebel governance institutions. However, their initial use of ethnic symbols seemed more like a strategic tactic, with their ultimate objective transcending ethnicity and focusing on achieving their ideological goal of establishing a Maoist republic (Shneiderman and Turin 2004, 102–3).

7.   Sendero Luminoso in Perù

Sendero Luminoso (The Communist Party of Peru on the Shining Path of Mariàtegui) is an insurgent group active since 1979. The group has been active mainly in the country's indigenous areas, advocating for a Maoist revolution driven by the peasantry. Perù's social and ethnic stratification mainly overlap. Spanish-speaking whites, criollos and mestizos comprise the ruling classes, while cholos and indigenous people, particularly occupy the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy (Munoz, Paredes, and Thorp 2006). Sendero Luminoso's ideology was primarily Marxist, focusing on class while largely disregarding the ethnic and cultural challenges faced by the indigenous population of the Andean highlands (Starn 1995). However, the group identified the indigenous peasantry as the revolutionary class to mobilize, investing efforts in having cadres learn local languages and culture to enhance recruitment. Their symbolic discourse adopted tropes and narratives from the indigenous Quechua tradition to "encourage the loyalty of the indigenous peasants" (Mealy and Austad 2012). Sendero Luminoso created local governance structures based on civilian empowerment and power-sharing "between the military, the party, and the local administration". They actively promoted "the involvement of a broad range of civilians in each community's…daily affairs' management" (Weinstein 2007, 187–92). Nevertheless, their leadership structure mirrored societal ethnic divisions, with the more educated mestizos in higher positions and an indigenous rank-and-file. While the group identified the indigenous peasantry as the revolutionary class, they overlooked the ethnocultural issues. Indigenous populations were included in governance as long as they adopted SL ideology. However, indigenous groups that refused SL's revolutionary teachings, such as the Ashaninka, were subjected to violent campaigns (Mealy and Austad 2012, 562–63).

8. The PYD in Syria

The PYD is a Kurdish Syrian revolutionary group that follows democratic confederalism, the ideology of the PKK leader Ocalan. Since the inception of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the PYD took control of Kurdish-majority areas and successively took control of other regions of North-East Syria from rival Syrian groups and ISIS. These areas are home to various ethnic and religious groups such as Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians and Turkmen, Sunni Muslims, Christians and Yazidis. In 2018, the PYD established the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), a quasi-state entity claiming to empower the region's diverse ethnic, religious and political groups (Jongerden 2019; Krajeski 2019). The PYD did so by forming a coalition with several smaller parties and rebel groups, among which the Christian Syriac Union Party and the Arab Shammar tribe. The governance practices of the AANES have garnered mixed evidence. In theory, the PYD/YPG developed bottom-up democratic institutions in which power is delegated to local councils representing all sectarian groups. The city councils are co-chaired by members of two different ethnic groups, depending on the local population composition (Al-Saidawi 2018; Favier 2018; Sary 2016), all cities send delegates to the representative body the Syrian Democratic Council (Balanche 2018), and there mechanisms to ensure the political participation of the Arab tribes (Awad 2018). However, some author claims that the SDC itself is a "multi-sectarian fiction" in which the Arab representatives are just "puppets", and that the power-sharing model is designed to exclude parties critic of the PYD (Balanche 2018a). institutions created by the PYD seem to be composed of a mix of power-sharing and authoritarianism. Inclusion and representation of minorities in civilian and security institutions are allowed and encouraged as long as it doesn't threaten the party's hegemony over political decisions, education and media (R. M. Khalaf 2016).

9. The FSA and the SNA in Syria

The Free Syrian Army constituted one of the main armed actors in the first years of the Syrian conflict. Constituted by an array of groups, it created a system of local power-sharing to establish local grassroots councils in areas under their control. It is estimated that about 800 councils were active in 2015 at the height of the Syrian rebellion. These councils provided basic governance, were appointed "through the principle of elite self-selection" and were composed of representatives of armed groups, notables, and opposition members (Berti 2020, 6). These local councils provided complex governance services, but their activities depended on cooperation with the armed groups and overly relied on foreign donors, who had the final say on the destination of the funding (Hajjar et al. 2017; R. Khalaf 2015). These local councils suffered from political rivalry and "competitive relations with the armed

groups" (Narbone, Favier, and Collombier 2016), which eventually led to the collapse of these cooperative arrangements (Berti 2020). Part of the groups formerly in the FSA reorganized as the Turkish-sponsored SNA. Following the Turkish operation against the PYD in the Kurdish-dominated region of Afrin (2018), rebels created local councils to administer the region, and at least initially guaranteed a number of local government posts to members of all ethnic groups. However, power-sharing institutions exist[13] seem to be merely cosmetic (al-Khateb 2018), with reports of ethnic-based persecution against Kurds and individuals considered loyal to the PYD (Aydintasbas 2020; Haid 2017; Waters 2019). As the SNA succeeded the PYD in controlling the Afrin region, the existence of power-sharing institutions alongside practices of ethnic cleansing can be explained as an attempt to garner international legitimacy.

10. The LTTE in Sri Lanka

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were a secessionist group that fought against the Sri Lankan government from 1983 until their defeat in 2009. The LTTE fought for the secession of the so-called Tamil Eelam, an area encompassing the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. Whereas the Northern Province is almost entirely Tamil, the Eastern Province was approximately equally divided among the country's three main ethnic groups (Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim) (McGilvray and Raheem 2007). The first phases of the conflict saw the expansion of the LTTE at the demise of other Tamil militant groups and the Sri Lankan government. After the intervention and withdrawal of an Indian peace-keeping force, the LTTE managed to fill the power vacuum and consolidate its control over the Northern Province. It did so by attacking other rival Tamil militant groups, and establishing authoritarian rule over the population (Lilja 2009). However, it pursued a different strategy to consolidate control over the contested Eastern Province. There the LTTE signed a power-sharing agreement with a Muslim party. The agreement protected Muslim minority rights and envisioned the creation of ethnic quotas in the local administration and land ownership (Thiranagama 2011a). Ultimately, the agreement was not implemented due to a series of massacres against civilians perpetrated by both the LTTE and Muslim militias (Knoerzer 1998).

The examples provided in the previous sections showcase an array of groups with distinct ideologies (Maoists, Islamists, nationalists) and objectives (secessionists and centre-seeking). These rebel groups have all operated within multi-ethnic contexts, prompting them to adopt various arrangements

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[13] e.g. in the Afrin city council, seats are allocated according to the local ethnic composition, with 11 seats to the Kurds, 8 to the Arabs and one to the Turkmens (al-Khateb 2018)

to address the challenges posed by such ethnic diversity. When groups created only limited institutions, they privileged informal power-sharing arrangements between rebels and local notables or between rebel leaders (The FN in Ivory Coast, LURD in Liberia). When rebels created more complex political and administrative institutions, they also created a variety of institutions for ethnic minorities. These arrangements span from devolving power at the district level (SPLM/A in Sudan, CPN-M in Nepal) to creating complex power-sharing mechanisms (the PYD in Syria). Finally, the rebels may try to unify the different ethnic components of society by adopting inclusive ideologies (EPLF in Ethiopia, Sendero Luminoso in Perù). Although this review of cases is non-systematic and does not represent the universe of all possible cases of inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic territories, it does provide valuable insights into the different ways in which rebel groups can manage ethnic diversity.

Drawing from these cases, I argue that it is possible to recognize four primary strategies that rebels adopt to deal with ethnic groups in the context of inclusive governments. It is important to note that these strategies are not mutually exclusive, and some rebel groups may adopt a combination of approaches depending on the specific context and objectives.

1. **Devolution and Decentralization**: This strategy involves granting certain regions or territories a degree of self-governance, often corresponding to the geographic distribution of particular ethnic groups. This approach allows ethnic groups to exercise control over local issues while remaining part of a larger political entity. This strategy can be carried out through informal agreements between the rebels and local notables (FN in Ivory Coast), or more complex administrative structures. The first approach mainly targets individuals, particularly local community leaders, with whom rebels negotiate to provide governance. The latter case is exemplified by the SPLM/A in South Sudan, which created a civil administration structure that allowed diverse Southern Sudanese ethnic groups to participate in local decision-making processes.

2. **Ethnocultural Integration**: This strategy involves promoting the integration of different ethnic groups within the rebel movement by addressing the unique cultural and social needs of each group. This could include recognizing and respecting the customs, languages, and traditions of different ethnicities and working to address historical injustices or disparities between groups. This strategy could be pursued by both secessionist rebels trying to foster a new national identity (the EPLF in Eritrea), or by revolutionary groups dealing with a multi-ethnic constituency (Sendero Luminoso in Perù). This strategy is more focused on the ethnic

communities themselves, aiming to integrate them within the larger structure of the rebel movement.

3. **Multi-ethnic Fronts**: This strategy is characterized by the formation of coalitions that incorporate diverse ethnic groups under a shared political entity. It involves either merging with pre-existing political bodies or creating new ones. Such a common entity could be a rebel front, a coordination body, or any other organization comprised of representatives from constituent ethnic groups. By forging alliances between different ethnic factions, multi-ethnic coalitions can promote cooperation and inclusivity, reducing the potential for conflict within the rebel movement. This strategy can be pursued both at the elite level (the LURD in Liberia) and as part of the rebels' effort to create political institutions (the CPN-M in Nepal, and the PYD in Syria).

4. **Rebel Power-sharing**: this strategy entails formalizing power-sharing agreements between ethnic groups, ranging from elite-focused agreements to broader agreements encompassing more comprehensive representation. By establishing a framework for cooperation and representation, power-sharing agreements can facilitate stability and inclusivity within rebel-held territories. These arrangements can be the result of formalization of military alliances (the PYD in Syria, or can be stipulated between armed and non-armed actors (the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the SNA in Syria). Moreover, they vary in scope as they can be limited to specific areas (the LTTE in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province) or the whole territory under the rebels' control (the PYD in Syria), and inclusiveness, as they could be merely cosmetic (the SNA in Afrin) or more comprehensive (the PYD in Syria).

Building on the conceptual discussion, the following table provides a cross-comparison of various rebel groups, their goals, the type of institutions they created, their inclusivity strategies for ethnic groups, and the broader categories these strategies fall into. This overview serves to further our understanding of the diverse methods employed by rebel groups to navigate complex multi-ethnic environments and to establish inclusive systems of governance.

Rebel Group	Goals of the Group	Type of Institutions Created	Inclusivity Strategy for Ethnic Groups	Category
Somaliland	Secessionist	De-facto State government	Clan-based power-sharing	Rebel power-sharing
FN	Centre-seeking	Local government	Informal agreements with local notables	Devolution and Decentralization
EPLF	Secessionist	Parallel government	Inclusive national identity	Ethno-cultural integration
LURD	Centre-seeking	No institutions	Elite power-sharing	Multi-ethnic fronts
SPLM/A	Secessionist	Parallel government	Ethnic-based administrative divisions	Devolution and Decentralization
CPN-M	Centre-seeking	Parallel government	Ethnic-based administrative divisions, Alliances, new national identity	Devolution and Decentralization; Multiethnic fronts; Ethno-cultural integration
Sendero Luminoso	Centre-Seeking	Local governments	Ethno-cultural integration	Ethno-cultural integration
PYD	Autonomy-seeking	Parallel government	Ethnic quotas for all government levels	Multiethnic fronts (Rebel power-sharing)
SNA	Centre-seeking	Local governments	Ethnic quotas for local government	Multiethnic fronts (Rebel power-sharing)
LTTE	Secessionist	Parallel government	Regional Power-sharing agreement	Multiethnic fronts (Rebel power-sharing)

Tab. 1Comparative overview of rebel groups, their goals, type of institutions, ethnic inclusivity strategies, and categorization of these strategies.

Overall, these strategies represent different approaches that insurgents may adopt to address the challenges posed by ethnic diversity within the context of rebel governance. As mentioned previously, to my knowledge there is no study of the factors leading to the inclusion of minorities, or on the characteristics of these institutions. These strategies may be context-dependent and influenced by the specific objectives and ideologies of the rebel group in question. Furthermore, the success of these

strategies may depend on factors such as the willingness of different ethnic groups to cooperate and the ability of the rebel group to effectively implement and enforce these governance arrangements, or on factors such as the actions of other local and international actors. By analysing these governance strategies, we can gain a better understanding of how rebel groups navigate the complexities of multi-ethnic contexts and how they seek to create inclusive governance systems that address the needs and aspirations of diverse ethnic groups within their territories. In the next section, I will discuss rebel power-sharing in the context of the literature on rebels' territorial consolidation and power-sharing, to advance a first tentative definition of the phenomenon.

A typology of inclusive consolidation strategies in multi-ethnic territories

In this section, I analyse the rebel strategies found in the previous section in light of recent literature. As discussed in previous sections, rebel groups are more likely to create inclusive political institutions when civilians belong to the same rebels' constituency, but not when rebels exercise power over a heterogeneous community (Breslawski 2021). In these cases, rebels prefer to consolidate their power using competitive and coercive, rather than cooperative strategies (Hafez, Gabbay, and Gade 2021). Thus, although significant, the phenomenon has been overlooked in recent scholarship. Moreover, as previously discussed, the lack of clarity over 'inclusive', 'power-sharing' rebel institutions, hinders the study of this phenomenon. In order to systematize these varied approaches and offer a clearer framework for understanding rebel strategies for ethnic inclusion, I develop a 2x2 typology by comparing the rebels' strategies highlighted in the previous discussion with recent literature on inclusive rebel governance and consolidation. This typology distinguishes between strategies that target individuals and those that target organizations (both armed and non-armed groups), thus providing a multi-level perspective on how rebels engage with the social fabric of multi-ethnic territories. Finally, I advance a tentative definition of rebel power-sharing, that is rebel political institutions designed to include ethnic and religious minorities.

I argue that these institutions are part of strategies deployed by rebels to overcome the "inherent limitations and commitment problems" (Moghadam and Wyss 2020) faced when trying to rule over multi-ethnic constituencies. I will not focus on the strategy of promoting ethno-cultural integration. The efforts needed to subsume all ethnic differences into a national identity, and the issues deriving from it, have been long known to rebel leaders (Cabral 1972). Moreover, this strategy does not involve creating specific governance institutions.

	Rebel Governance	Rebel alliances
Individuals	Co-optation	Informal Cooperation
Organisations	Power-sharing	Multi-Ethnic fronts

Tab. 2 Typology of inclusive consolidation strategies

The first strategy is co-optation. Whereas legitimation targets broader constituencies and involves the kind of 'social contract' upon which rebel rule rests, co-optation specifically targets strategically important elites. As defined in studies of autocracies, co-optation is an inclusionary "capacity to tie strategically-relevant (groups of) actors to the regime elite", so that these actors are "persuaded not to exercise their power to obstruct" (Gerschewski 2013). In contested terrain, rebel groups may adopt a wide range of co-optation strategies during civil wars (Arjona 2016; Mampilly 2011) or in their immediate aftermath (Liu 2022). I argue that the strategy of Devolution and Decentralization found in the previous cases may be classified as an instance of co-optation in multi-ethnic territories. For example, the FN in Ivory Coast, co-opted local community leaders, corporations and NGOs into their local government. Likewise, the SPLM/A devolved power at the county level, where the government functions were carried out by the local elders.

A second cooperative consolidation strategy involves the creation of multi-ethnic fronts, that is, alliances or groups formed by the rebels that include representatives from diverse ethnicities within the local population, encompassing both strategies of creating political ancillaries and formal alliances. The groups part of these fronts can have different degrees of autonomy. On the one hand, they may be "political ancillaries". In this case, a hegemonic rebel group does not co-opt individuals from the local elites but creates proxy groups representing "particular segments of the local population" beyond the rebels' core constituency. In countries with ethnic heterogeneity, rebels could select proxies that are representative of the local population and that can help them gain the trust and support of the community. By selecting proxies that reflect the ethnic, sectarian, or tribal identities of the local population, nonstate actors can also tap into existing social networks and power structures (Moghadam and Wyss 2020). However, in other cases, rebel groups created formal alliances in which all groups retained their autonomy. For instance, the LURD in Liberia constitutes an example of the latter, whereas the ethnic fronts led by the CPN-M in Nepal were composed of both types of groups. A third strategy is used in scenarios where rebel groups exercise no governance. In this case, rebels' strategies at the individual level may not involve formal co-optation aimed at long-term governance; rather, they often engage in 'Informal Collaborations' for short-term objectives, such as gathering intelligence on government forces or receiving supplies from locals.

However, rebel groups not only can forge (in)formal agreements with individuals or form multi-ethnic fronts with other organizations, but they can also create political institutions designed to represent and protect ethnic groups. I argue that rebel power-sharing can be considered a fourth strategy of cooperative consolidation. The concept of power-sharing is usually employed to describe institutional arrangements designed to accommodate ethnic groups in conflict-affected societies. Although many forms and prescriptions for the creation of power-sharing institutions are not suited for the contexts of civil wars[15], power-sharing in its most common minimal definition is a framework of institutional arrangements providing for the "participation of representatives of all significant groups in political decision making" (Lijphart 1977), and its goal is to prevent the resurgence of conflict (McCulloch and McEvoy 2018). Power-sharing institutions are designed to accommodate the interest of the principal groups in fragmented societies so that "different identity groups recognize that their aims can be achieved, and interests protected, by political means and do not require recourse to violence"(Cordell and Wolff 2016, 306). For this reason, I argue that the term power-sharing can be used to describe those rebels' institutions created with the same goal.

Conclusion

Studies of rebel groups during civil wars have recently focused on rebel governance. Rebels employ a wide range of strategies to rule the civilian population under their control, from informal rule to developing quasi-state structures. However, there is a dearth of studies on rebels' political institutions created to deal with multiethnic populations. In this chapter, I discussed existing literature on the topic. First, I explored the factors shaping inter-ethnic relations during civil wars. The production of social mobilization, collective insecurity concerns and violence-related grievances along ethnic lines make conflict onset and duration more likely. During conflicts, rebels tend to resort to violence against non-co-ethnic civilians due to the rebels' ideology and the imperfect information environment. For these reasons, the creation of inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic contexts is considered an unlikely occurrence. However, recent research showed that ethnic identity should not be considered an overarching master cleavage and that rebels can decide to limit their own power. I built on these observations to argue that rebels may decide to share power *even* in multi-ethnic localities. Due to the dearth of available data, I conducted a non-systematic review of cases of inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic contexts. I found that rebels may engage in strategies of devolution and decentralization, ethnocultural integration, multi-ethnic fronts and of rebel power-

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[15] Indeed, many prescriptions for the creation of successful power-sharing institutions "aiming at establishing democracy and/or sustainable peace" (Binningsbø 2013) are not suited for contexts of civil war.

sharing. I argued that rebel power-sharing can be considered a strategy of rebel cooperative consolidation and that the concept can be employed in the context of civil wars in its minimal definition of "framework of institutional arrangements providing for the "participation of representatives of all significant group in political decision making". In the next chapter, I will discuss alternative explanations of the elements influencing the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions during civil wars, focusing on the literature on rebel alliances and on inclusive rebel governance.

Chapter 2: Rebel Power-sharing - Concept Operationalization

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explored various strategies that rebel groups adopt to deal with ethnic diversity in the context of cooperative consolidation strategies. I identified three primary strategies that rebels employ to address ethnic diversity in the context of inclusive rebel governance. It is important to note that these strategies are not mutually exclusive, and some rebel groups may adopt a combination of approaches depending on the specific context and objectives. These three strategies are:

1. "*Co-optation*": co-optation is an inclusionary "capacity to tie strategically-relevant (groups of) actors to the regime elite", so that these actors are "persuaded not to exercise their power to obstruct" (Gerschewski 2013). Strategies may entail the co-optation of local community leaders into the rebel government, or more complex devolution and decentralization strategies, in which rebels grant certain regions or territories a degree of self-governance;

2. "*Multi-ethnic Fronts*": This approach involves forming multi-ethnic coalitions or rebel fronts by collaborating with pre-existing parties or creating new ones. These groups may have different degrees of autonomy from the main rebel group. They could be minor partners of a rebel alliance, or they could be the main rebel group's proxy. In both cases, the rebel group employs this strategy to reach ethnic populations outside their constituency;

3. "*Rebel Power-sharing*": This strategy entails formalizing power-sharing agreements between ethnic groups, ranging from elite-focused agreements to broader agreements encompassing more comprehensive representation. These arrangements facilitate stability and inclusivity within rebel-held territories.

This chapter further examines an under-explored dimension of these strategies: rebel governance institutions and power-sharing arrangements. First, I will discuss the qualitative difference between formal alliances and rebel power-sharing. Then, building on the literature on power-sharing, I discuss the concept of rebel power-sharing and argue that the concept can be used to identify specific rebel governance arrangements. I discuss the four domains of power-sharing agreements (political, economic, territorial and military) and compare them to the domains invested by rebel governance institutions. By doing so, I operationalize rebel power-sharing arrangements, identifying the observable elements for each type.

In the second part of the chapter, I present a framework for understanding the different types of factors that influence rebel groups' adoption of power-sharing institutions. Moreover, I specify the scope and focus of the theoretical analysis that will follow in the third chapter. I use literature on the dimensions of civil wars and rebel governance to argue that the implementations of these strategies may depend on factors such as the willingness of different ethnic groups to cooperate, the ability of the rebel group to implement and enforce these governance arrangements, and the actions of other local and international actors involved in the conflict. The operationalization of the concept, along with the identification of the levels of analysis, will enable me to further theorize about the factors that influence the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions.

What is the Difference Between Formal Coalition and Power-sharing?

The creation of a formal coalition between rebel groups, even when stable and institutionalized is a phenomenon distinct from rebel power-sharing. The Syrian conflict provides an example of the interaction between the two levels of analysis (rebel-to-rebel groups and rebels-to-civilians), how both influence each other and how the presence of an institutionalized alliance between different rebel groups is a necessary but insufficient pre-condition for the creation of power-sharing institutions.

During the first stages of the Syrian Conflict (especially between 2011 and 2013), the Free Syrian Army and the Al-Nusra Front cooperated against the Syrian regime. Despite the ideological differences, this pattern of alliance between secular-oriented and Islamist groups continued and was institutionalized in the Military Council, created to coordinate rebel groups' operations. However, by 2012 several Islamist groups had become influential among the opposition and joined the Military Council. The alliance was justified on the basis of the Islamists' legitimacy among the population and military effectiveness and reflected also the will of the foreign sponsors (O'Bagy 2013). This alliance was mutually beneficial: on the one hand Jihadi groups such as Al-Nusra obtained Western-supplied advanced weaponry (such as TOW anti-tank missiles), on the other hand, the Free Syrian Army prevailed in several battles against the government due to the intervention of the highly skilled Al-Nusra brigades (Adraoui 2019). However, in several cases, these groups clashed with one another. The nature of the contrast was both ideological for control over resources and regarded "administration of rebel-controlled areas, including the practice of establishing religious courts […] and flying the black flag typically associated with jihadist organizations" (O'Bagy 2013). Often, rebels created parallel and competing institutions in the same city. For example, in rebel-held Aleppo, there were two competing judicial systems. While the FSA created a Unified Judiciary Council with the broader objective of creating an alternative and unified governance apparatus, a coalition of Islamist groups created the Shariah Committee of Aleppo, a parallel religious court regulating "both

civilian and military affairs", with "law enforcement capability" and "relief work branch" (Berti 2020). This pattern was observed in most rebel-held cities. Ideological differences, the lack of a coordinating actor in the rebel camp and the need for resources opened the way for inter-rebels' competition, "to the detriment of the initially plural power-sharing governance arrangements established through the civilian councils" (Berti 2020). The case of cooperation and conflict between rebel groups during the first years of the Syrian Civil War is a distinct example of the qualitative difference between formal alliances and rebel power-sharing.

Power-sharing - Features of Rebel Power-sharing

What are the features of rebel power-sharing? As stated in the previous chapter, it is not possible to translate power-sharing institutional designs directly into civil war contexts. However, by analysing the broader domains and goals of power-sharing arrangements it is possible to outline the main characteristics of rebel power-sharing.

In the previous discussion, I identified forms of rebel governance that incorporate different identity-based groups (ethnic and/or religious) under the concept of power-sharing. This term captures both the methods and objectives of these governance models. These methods and objectives align with the essence of power-sharing: "an inclusive model of governance" to broaden "opportunities for entry into government for ethnic minority groups who would be marginalised and excluded under traditional majoritarian process" (Agarin and McCulloch 2020, 4). It may be argued that power-sharing as identified in Lijphart's (1977) seminal work encompasses a set of institutional dimensions that do not exist in civil war contexts, such as grand coalitions, proportional representation, cultural autonomy and minority veto. However, recent research on power-sharing moved beyond consociationalism and focused on all the "arrangements between social groups within a given society" (Farag et al. 2023, 901) and, in the case of post-conflict arrangements, agreements "that grant influence to formerly warring opponents in the political, economic or military sphere" (Bormann 2014). The concept of arrangements distributing power among key societal groups is repeated in several definitions of power-sharing, such as Hartzell and Hoddie's "rules that, in addition to defining how decisions will be made by groups within the polity, allocate decision-making rights, including access to state resources, among collectivities competing for power" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003, p. 320), and O'Leary's (2013, p. 3) "any set of arrangements that prevents one agent, or organized collective agency, from being the winner who holds all critical power, whether temporarily or permanently". As such, power-sharing arrangements "distribute various elements of state power among rival groups, thus helping to ensure that no single collectivity controls all of the levers of state

power" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2019). Thus, it is clear that power-sharing arrangements concern the distribution of power. For this reason, for the purpose of this thesis I also adopt a minimal definition of power-sharing which allows me to study and operationalize the phenomenon in the context of civil wars. Following Lijphart's more recent work, I define power-sharing as a framework of institutional arrangements providing for the "participation of representatives of all significant groups in political decision making" (Lijphart 2002, 41).

To discuss a theory of power-sharing during civil wars, it is necessary to understand what are the elements of power-sharing. This means determining the forms of rebel power-sharing, its observable elements, and its domains. I do so by first discussing the categories used in power-sharing literature. How and to whom is power distributed? These questions need to be answered to be able to operationalize the concept of rebel power-sharing.

Domains of Power-sharing

Most researchers classify power-sharing as encompassing four distinct domains: political, territorial, military, and economic (C. A. Hartzell and Hoddie 2007; Jarstad 2013; Walter 2021). First, I will provide minimal definitions of each dimension. Second, I will discuss the logic and forms each dimension may assume.

Political Power-sharing

Political power-sharing is a form of political arrangement that involves the distribution of political offices and decision-making powers among different groups or parties within a state or a society. Political power-sharing is often used as a mechanism to manage conflicts or accommodate diversity in divided or plural societies. Political power-sharing can also enhance the legitimacy and accountability of the political system by ensuring the representation and participation of various social groups in governance.

Political power-sharing can take different forms and degrees of inclusiveness, depending on the context and the design of the institutions. To define this typology, I draw upon the work of (Bell 2018b; Horowitz 2014; Lijphart 2004). Common types of political power-sharing are:

- **Consociationalism**: A governance system that ensures the representation and veto rights of all major societal segments, often defined by ethnic, religious, or linguistic identity. Consociationalism typically comprises a grand coalition cabinet that includes all significant parties, a proportional electoral system that guarantees fair representation, a mutual veto

mechanism that safeguards minority interests, and a high degree of autonomy for each segment. Examples of consociational countries are Belgium, Lebanon, Switzerland and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- **Centripetalism**: A system of government that promotes moderation and cooperation among political actors across ethnic or ideological lines. Centripetalism generally incorporates a majoritarian electoral system that rewards broad-based parties or coalitions, a robust executive that centralizes power, a unitary state that curtails regional autonomy, and a civic culture that endorses national identity. Examples of centripetal countries are Botswana, Mauritius and Nigeria.

- **Integrative**: A system of government that aims to transcend ethnic or sectarian divisions by fostering cross-cutting cleavages and common interests. Integrative power-sharing usually entails a mixed electoral system that combines proportional and majoritarian elements, a semi-presidential or parliamentary system that balances executive and legislative powers, a federal or devolved state that accommodates regional diversity, and a deliberative democracy that facilitates public participation and consensus-building. Examples of integrative countries are South Africa, India and Canada.

Territorial Power-sharing

Territorial power-sharing refers to the distribution of authority and resources between the central government and subnational units, such as regions, provinces, states or municipalities. Territorial power-sharing is often used as a mechanism to accommodate the demands of geographically concentrated ethno-national groups seeking greater autonomy or self-determination. Territorial power-sharing can take different forms and degrees of decentralization, depending on the context and the design of the institutions. I draw upon recent research (Hale 2004; Neudorfer, Theuerkauf, and Wolff 2020; Wise 2018; Wolff 2009) to delineate the main types of territorial power-sharing:

- **Federalism**: A system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units, such as states or provinces. Federalism usually involves a written constitution that defines the powers and responsibilities of each level of government, as well as mechanisms to ensure coordination and cooperation. Examples of federal countries are Canada, India, Germany and Nigeria.

- **Regional autonomy**: A form of decentralization that grants a degree of self-government to a specific region within a unitary state, usually based on the cultural or ethnic identity of its population. Regional autonomy can vary in terms of the scope and extent of the powers

devolved, as well as the degree of representation and influence they have at the central level. Examples of regions with autonomy are Catalonia in Spain, Kurdistan in Iraq, and Aceh in Indonesia.

- **Devolution**: A form of decentralization that transfers some powers and functions from the central government to lower levels of administration, such as local or municipal governments. Examples of countries with devolution are Italy, Japan and South Africa.

Military Power-sharing

Military power-sharing is a form of political arrangement that involves the sharing of military decision-making and/or operational tasks between different armed contenders for power, such as state and rebel forces, or between different ethno-national groups or former combatants within the state's security sector. Military power-sharing aims to provide security guarantees and incentives to end or prevent conflict by disarming parties and making them join a common military framework. Military power-sharing can also enhance the legitimacy of the armed forces, by ensuring the representation and participation of various social groups in military affairs.

The forms and degrees of integration in military power-sharing can vary significantly based on the context and the design of the institutions. I utilize the work of Hoddie and Hartzell (2003), Glassmyer and Sambanis (2008), and Bell et al. (2018) to outline the main types of military power-sharing:

- **Joint military command structures**: This form of military governance involves creating a unified or integrated command centre that oversees the operations of both state and rebel forces, or different societal segments. Joint military command structures facilitate coordination and cooperation between former enemies, reducing mistrust and hostility. Countries like Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and Sudan have adopted joint military command structures.
- **Mergers of state and rebel forces**: This system involves the incorporation of rebel fighters into the state's armed forces, either by creating new units or by assigning them to existing ones. Mergers of state and rebel forces can foster reconciliation and demobilization, as well as increase the capacity and diversity of the state's military. Examples of countries with mergers of state and rebel forces are Angola, Burundi and Liberia.
- **Proportionality**: A system of military representation that involves the allocation of ranks, positions or resources within the security forces according to the size or strength of different groups or parties. Proportionality can ensure fair and equitable treatment of former combatants

or minority groups, as well as enhance their loyalty and commitment to the state's military. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Zimbabwe are examples of countries employing proportionality in their security sectors.

Economic Power-sharing

Economic power-sharing involves the sharing of economic resources and opportunities among different groups or parties. Economic power-sharing is often used to address the economic grievances of different groups, especially those that are marginalized or discriminated against in the distribution of wealth and income. Economic power-sharing can take different forms and degrees of inclusiveness, depending on the context and the design of the institutions. I used the work of (Bell 2018a; Le Billon and Nicholls 2007; Binningsbø and Rustad 2012; Humphreys 2005) as references to delineate the common types of economic power-sharing:

- **Proportionality**: Proportionality involves the allocation of public resources, such as budgetary expenditures, public sector employment, or development aid, according to the size or strength of different groups or parties. Proportionality can ensure their fair and equitable treatment, and enhance their loyalty and commitment to the state. Examples of countries with proportionality in the economic sector are Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Zimbabwe.
- **Joint management**: A system of economic governance that involves the creation of joint or shared institutions that oversee the management of key economic sectors, such as natural resources, banking, trade, or taxation. Joint management can facilitate coordination and cooperation between different groups or parties, as well as reduce mistrust and hostility. Examples of countries with joint management of economic sectors are South Africa, Sudan and Iraq.
- **Autonomy**: This system involves the granting of a certain degree of self-government to a specific region or group within a unitary state, usually based on its historical, cultural or ethnic identity. Economic autonomy can allow for the allocation and management of resources according to local needs and preferences. Examples of regions or groups with economic autonomy are Kurdistan in Iraq, Aceh in Indonesia and Scotland in the United Kingdom.

Power-sharing Domains	Forms	Observable Elements
Political	Consociationalism, Centripetalism, Integrative	Inclusion of major societal groups in decision making, majoritarian electoral system, mixed electoral system
Territorial	Federalism, Regional Autonomy, Devolution	Constitutional division of sovereignty, legislation granting autonomy, transfer of powers to lower administration
Military	Joint Military Command, Mergers of Forces, Proportionality	Joint military command structures, mergers of state and rebel forces, proportional allocation of positions
Economic	Proportionality, Joint Management, Autonomy	Proportional allocation of resources, joint management of key economic sectors

Tab. 3 The domains of power-sharing (Author's elaboration)

Rebel Power-sharing

Having examined the concept of power-sharing, the various domains it encompasses, and the diverse forms it can take, I will now analyse power-sharing arrangements in the context of rebel governance.

Power-sharing arrangements established by rebel groups during civil wars present a different challenge. These contexts are typically marked by a level of instability and fluidity that can significantly alter the dynamics of power-sharing. Rebel groups may have different motivations for sharing power, and may face unique constraints in doing so. For instance, they may seek to build a broad-based coalition to challenge the incumbent regime, or they may use power-sharing as a mechanism to consolidate control over a territory. Given these different dynamics, it will be necessary to adapt the analytical framework to better capture the observable elements of rebel power-sharing. In this section, I will identify the key actors involved, the domains potentially invested by rebel power-sharing agreements, and the potential effects.

It must be noted that power-sharing primarily entails the distribution and delegation of authority and decision-making capabilities within the specific contexts of democratic states or post-conflict peace agreements. In these contexts, the agreements are the result of constitutional reforms or negotiations between groups formerly in conflict (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2003). Although the context of civil wars is

profoundly different, it is reasonable to assume that such arrangements would be negotiated between rebel groups and other (non-) armed actors based in a certain territory. This is not dissimilar from most power-sharing agreements, largely considered as, inherently elite-led (Agarin and McCulloch 2020), negotiated settlements avoiding "a winner-takes-all outcome -especially when taking all implies killing, expelling or assimilating the losers" (O'Leary 2005). In scenarios characterized by diverse ethnic and religious groups, the beneficiaries of power-sharing arrangements could be other rebel factions, civilian populations, or both. Drawing from recent studies exploring inclusive rebel governance arrangements (Breslawski 2021; Mampilly and Stewart 2021) it can be inferred that power-sharing agreements may encompass a wide range of actors representing specific constituencies distinct from the main rebel group. These actors can include:

1. Armed non-state actors such as rebel groups drawing from distinct identity-based constituencies.
2. Non-state actors such as political parties, civil society organizations, or traditional institutions, such as tribal councils.
3. Prominent civilian leaders, for example, clan elders or religious leaders, who wield substantial social and/or economic power within their respective communities.

The nature and the degree of institutionalization of the agreements may vary. Rebel governance encompasses both the formal and informal institutions created by rebel groups (Huang 2016; Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Podder 2014). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that rebel power-sharing arrangements would take the form of elite-level coalitions, and would entail the creation of both formal and informal arrangements. This is consistent with existing literature on power-sharing in post-conflict societies. First, the "original core and primary characteristic" of power-sharing is indeed the creation of elite coalitions (Bormann 2014). Second, power-sharing scholars found "a mismatch between formal, institutional power-sharing and de facto elite cooperation" (Bormann 2014, 22). In fact, Bormann et al. found that power-sharing behaviour, that is the way different groups interact under power-sharing agreements, determines the effectiveness of these agreements (Bormann et al. 2019). Likewise, in the case of rebel power-sharing, due to the inherent instability of rebel institutions, it may be possible to observe power-sharing behaviour and practices rather than definite power-sharing institutions. Similar observations are made in discussions on formal and informal power-sharing. The former is a system of governance that involves the creation of formal institutions or rules that regulate the distribution of political, military, or economic power among different groups or parties. Formal power-sharing can be based on constitutional frameworks, legal norms, electoral systems, or institutional arrangements that guarantee the representation, participation, or autonomy

of different groups or parties in governance (Bormann et al. 2019; Juon and Bochsler 2022). On the other hand, informal power-sharing involves the creation of informal pacts or practices that regulate the distribution of power. Informal power-sharing can be based on personal ties, patronage networks, coercion tactics, or charisma that influence the behaviour of different groups in governance. Informal power-sharing can complement or undermine formal power-sharing institutions, depending on the context and the interests of the actors involved (Murtazashvili 2014; Spears 2013). Often, power-sharing agreements incorporate both formal and informal elements. A notable example is the Taif Agreement in Lebanon. This agreement established a confessional system of government that allocates political offices and public resources according to a fixed ratio among the main religious sects (Maronite Christians, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Druze). However, it also relies heavily on informal networks of sect-based patronage and clientelism (Bogaards 2019). Therefore, rebel power-sharing agreements will likely incorporate both formal and informal elements.

To operationalize rebel power-sharing agreements, I am comparing categories found in existing literature with dimensions of rebel governance. Specifically, I'm utilizing Albert's Rebels Quasi State Institutions Dataset(2022) as it is the most comprehensive dataset on rebel governance, encompassing both the economic, political, military and social domains. Out of the 25 categories in Albert's dataset, I have selected 13 variables that align with areas potentially impacted by rebel power-sharing arrangements.I build on Albert's variables and I define each variable by using relevant literature on rebel governance.

1. **Government**: It refers to the established administrative apparatus exercising authority in rebel-held territories, which includes creating and implementing policy, maintaining law and order, and providing essential services. The efficacy and reach of a rebel group's governance often shape its relationship with the civilian population and can be a key factor in building legitimacy (Arjona 2016; Mampilly 2011)

2. **Constitution**: the legal and political framework, norms, and values that regulate social and political life in rebel-held areas, as well as the legitimacy and ideology of rebel groups among civilians and external actors. Constitutions can also serve as a tool for rebel groups to codify their vision, mobilize support, or challenge the state (Barter 2015; Terpstra and Frerks 2018).

3. **Elections**: Elections (either free or manipulated) may be held in rebel areas to affect the representation, participation, and accountability of civilians and rebel leaders, as well as the credibility and popularity of rebel groups among civilians. Elections can also serve as a way for rebel groups to signal their capacity, commitment, and democracy to external actors (Cunningham, Huang, and Sawyer 2020).

4. **Diplomatic mission abroad**: it affects the recognition, negotiation, and cooperation of rebel groups with foreign states and international organizations, as well as the resources and support of rebel groups from external actors. Diplomatic missions abroad can also serve as a means for rebel groups to signal their legitimacy (Coggins 2015; Malejacq 2017).

5. **Negotiate resource rights**: it affects the access, control, and distribution of natural resources in rebel-held areas, as well as the revenue and sustainability of rebel groups from resource extraction. Negotiating resource rights can also serve as a way for rebel groups to manage conflicts, alliances, or grievances with local communities or other armed actors (Ahram 2022).

6. **Taxation**: it affects not only the financial resources and sustainability of rebel groups, but also their relationship with civilians, states, and external actors. Taxation can also serve as a means for rebel groups to extract information, assert authority, or signal commitment (Breslawski and Tucker 2021; Revkin 2020).

7. **Education**: it affects civilians' identity formation, political socialization, and economic opportunities. Education can also serve as a tool for rebel groups to enhance their legitimacy, mobilize support, or indoctrinate followers (Huang and Sullivan 2020).

8. **Welfare/aid**: it affects the humanitarian situation and the survival of civilians under rebel control, as well as the legitimacy and support of rebel groups among local and international actors. It can also serve as a way for rebel groups to demonstrate their vision for a post-conflict society (Stewart 2018).

9. **Housing**: it affects the displacement, resettlement, and property rights of civilians affected by conflict, as well as the revenue generation of rebel groups. Housing can also serve as a means for rebel groups to redistribute resources, reward loyalty, or punish dissent (Bitar 2022).

10. **Justice**: it affects the rule of law, human rights, and conflict resolution in rebel-held areas, as well as the accountability and credibility of rebel groups among civilians and external actors. Justice can also serve as a way for rebel groups to enforce norms, settle disputes, or deter defection (Ginsburg 2019; Provost 2021).

11. **Law**: it refers to the legal framework, norms, and values that regulate social and political life in rebel-held areas. Drafting new laws or adhering to international law conventions can serve as a tool for rebel groups to codify their vision, mobilize local and international support, or challenge the state (Ginsburg 2019; Provost 2021).

12. **Policing/security**: it affects the protection, order, and stability of civilians and rebel fighters in rebel-held areas, as well as the authority and discipline of rebel groups among civilians and external actors. Policing/security can also serve as a way for rebel groups to enforce norms and settle disputes (Baker 2017; De Graaf and Yayla Ahmet 2021).

13. **Armed forces**: it is a crucial dimension of rebel governance because rebels' survival depends on their military capability against the state or other armed actors. Armed forces can also serve as a symbol of rebel strength and identity (Terpstra and Frerks 2018)

Rebel Power-sharing Agreements

In the following section, I present potential observable elements of rebel power-sharing agreements, assigning each element to the categories of political, territorial, military, and economic power-sharing. For each category, I provide a minimal definition grounded on the operationalization made by Jarstad and Nilsson (2008) for the political, territorial, and military forms of power-sharing, and by Binningsbø (2013) for the economic form, and I make examples of observable elements in the context of rebel governance. I have chosen these minimal definitions because they are consistent with my previous discussion on power-sharing, and they are apt to be applied to rebel power-sharing.

Rebel Political Power-sharing: Defined as "provision that offers the combatants guaranteed positions in the new government at the level of cabinet or above, or a specific quota of political power in at least one of the main branches of government" (Jarstad and Nilsson 2008). Observable elements could be the inclusion of other ethnic groups into the rebel government, the presence of constitutional provisions for the representation or protection of other groups, provisions to ensure the representation of other groups in elections, proportional allocation of funds to rebel groups and organizations part of the coalition, proportional representation in diplomatic missions abroad, and the adoption of hybrid legal systems.

*Rebel Territorial Power-sharing***:** Defined as: "A provision for some form of regional autonomy, [. . .] if one or both sides was allowed to continue to administer areas under their control, [. . .] or if specific self-governing zones were established " (Jarstad and Nilsson 2008). Observable elements include devolution of power to local government units and the enshrinement of local autonomies into law.

Rebel Military Power-sharing: Defined as: "A provision that offers the combatants guaranteed integration into the […] armed forces and/or command structures"(Jarstad and Nilsson 2008). Observable elements could be the creation of ethnically/religiously connotated local security forces/militias, and the integration of various groups into the command structure.

Rebel Economic Power-sharing: Defined as: "Resource-distribution to disadvantaged groups and/or policies to direct economic assets towards groups based on group membership or geographic

location" (Binningsbø 2013). Observable elements could be the proportional allocation of resource extraction revenues, land reform provisions, rules for local taxation, provision of aid to communities belonging to other groups, and the protection of all groups' properties to prevent demographic engineering[16].

Power-sharing Type	Institution	Observable Elements
Political	Government, Constitution, Elections, Political Parties, Diplomatic Mission Abroad, Education, Justice, Law	• Inclusion of other ethnic groups in governance, constitutional provisions for representation • election provisions • proportional diplomatic representation • adoption of hybrid legal systems
Territorial	Government, Constitution, Elections, Education, Justice	• Devolution of power to local government • enshrinement of local autonomies • local control over education[17]
Military	Policing/Security, Armed Forces	• Creation of local security forces/militias • integration into command structure

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[16] In this context, "protection of property" involves the protection of property rights regarding land and housing. The ethnic-targeted lack of property protection is one of the causes of ethnic displacement (Atnafu 2018; Cordell and Wolff 2016). Moreover, issues related to property rights of displaced communities affect local cohesion after ethnic conflicts (Phuong 2000). Ethnic displacement during war often leads to the resettlement of other groups on property and land owned by individuals belonging to other groups (Al-Hilu 2019). Thus, mechanisms for property protection are likely to be observed in rebel power sharing arrangements.

[17] Language policy in the education field is a contentious issue and is part of the grievances that lead to ethnic conflict (Duncan 2016; Wagaw 2001). Considering that rebel groups often provide education (Huang and Sullivan 2020), power-sharing agreements would likely address this issue. In the case of territorial power-sharing agreements, we would expect some level of local control over the language of education.

Economic	Negotiate Resource Rights, Taxation, Welfare/aid, Housing	- Proportional resource allocation - land reform - local taxation rules - aid provisions - protection of property (housing and land)

Tab. 4 The dimensions of rebel power-sharing

This detailed framework enables us to better understand the dimensions of power-sharing within the specific context of rebel governance, and allows us to investigate these arrangements in a more nuanced and comprehensive manner.

Political power-sharing refers to post-war agreements between key parties to form a large coalition government. The mechanism behind political power-sharing is that it "reduces the uncertainty of actors who fear losing power" (Jarstad, 2013, p. 278). Territorial power-sharing consists of granting forms of local self-government, devolving power to local institutions, or granting autonomy regarding to certain issues such as personal law or education. Economic power-sharing entails revenue sharing agreements (for example, oil revenue sharing (Rolandsen, 2011). Military power-sharing may involve rebel groups' integration into a unified army or the creation of separated military forces (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003).

Jarstad and Nilsson (2018) found that authoritarian regimes are more likely to sign political and military sharing pacts because the warring parties are incentivized to access political power and distribute spoils through their patronage systems. Autocratic leaders are not selected through elections, and use co-optation to share spoils with local powerholders to assure their loyalty and avoid coups (Svolik, 2009; Roessler, 2011). Likewise, civil wars present similar mechanisms of uncertainty due to the power of rebel leaders, their likelihood of recurring to violence and their use of resources as spoils. For these reasons, it is reasonable to expect forms of political and military rebel power-sharing rather than territorial, and the presence of mechanisms involving the co-optation of key influential figures through ethnically based patronage systems.

Moreover, Cama and Coticchia (2019) identify the negative and positive goals of power-sharing arrangements. Positive goals are characterized by a long-term time horizon and involve ex-post negotiation between actors to reconcile, cooperate and improve the "responsiveness and

accountability" of the state. On the other hand, negative goals are characterized by a shorter-term horizon and are based on the predetermined allocation of political seats, administrative posts and "material and symbolic" resources to reduce "fear and insecurity". Strøm et al. (2017) make a similar distinction over the types of political power-sharing, identifying inclusive, dispersive and constraining agreements. Inclusive agreements ensure that each group can exercise political power, usually by granting positions at the "decision making" level. The purpose of inclusive arrangements is "to solve collective action problems among political leaders", which is also the main concern of rebel leaders when striking cooperative agreements with other groups. Moreover, inclusive power-sharing is the most common form of power-sharing in states currently at war where "the security dilemma for many minority groups is particularly acute" and the risk of recurring violence is very high (Strøm et al., 2017, p. 176). Indeed, given the precarious context of local order in civil wars and the armed nature of the main actors involved, it is possible to assume that the main concern for the actors is to manage the security dilemma to lower the level of distrust between the different groups. For these reasons, it is reasonable to expect that rebel power-sharing is mostly characterized by negative rather than positive goals and it consists of inclusive rather than dispersive or constraining arrangements.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I presented the different categories of rebel governance institutions that could be characterized by political, territorial, economic, and military power-sharing arrangements created by rebel groups during civil wars. For instance, are inclusive rebel governance institutions created by groups such as the PYD in North-East Syria examples of rebel power-sharing? By conceptualizing rebel power-sharing, I allow for further theorization and empirical research on its characteristics and the factors influencing it. It must be noted, however, that this conceptualization presents limitations due to the diverse contexts of power-sharing. The definitions used are those identified for institutional arrangements implemented in post-conflict environments. Moreover, even in these contexts, measuring power-sharing can be a challenging task. Power-sharing can be influenced by both formal institutions and informal practices and norms, which may not be easily observable or quantifiable. Informal power-sharing might involve personal ties, patronage networks, coercion tactics, or charisma, all of which are difficult to measure or verify. This distinction between measurable and non-measurable institutions becomes even more pressing in the case of rebel institutions, which are as much "concrete institutionalizations of power with measurable faculties" as they are "contingent political constructs...produced through everyday acts" (Martínez and Eng 2018, 236). Thus, while

this typology provides a foundational framework for examining power-sharing arrangements in rebel governance institutions, I also acknowledge the limitations and challenges inherent to my approach.

Chapter 3: The Determinants of Rebel Power-sharing

Introduction

This chapter integrates the concept of rebel power-sharing within civil war contexts, building on the operationalization and analysis presented in the previous chapter. The first chapter advanced a definition of rebel power-sharing and operationalized its political, military, economic and territorial dimensions. This foundation is crucial for advancing a theoretical analysis of elements influencing rebel power-sharing. In the first section, the chapter identifies the variables essential for understanding rebel behaviour. This includes the internal dynamics of rebel groups, their interactions with other actors, and the impact of international actors. Rebel groups, embedded within social, political, and normative structures, formulate governance strategies influenced by their organizational structure, interactions with civilians, other armed factions, governments, and international actors' influence. The interaction between rebels and local actors, influenced by diverse identities and norms, is pivotal in shaping governance outcomes. The agency of individual actors, especially rebel leadership, affects decision-making and governance strategies, influenced by their beliefs, experiences, and goals. Structural factors like resource endowment and territorial control also play a role, as does ideology in shaping rebel choices and governance styles.

The second section of this chapter analyses the factors influencing the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions. I argue that it is necessary to analyse the entire causal process from alliance formation to rebel governance. Thus, I discuss the factors influencing the dynamics of cooperation and alliance formation among rebel groups and the factors driving rebels to establish cooperative arrangements with non-combatant populations, including diverse ethnic and religious groups. Firstly, I examine the creation and institutionalization of alliances between rebel groups. These alliances, often temporary and fragile, are shaped by power balance, common threats, external support, ideology, and ethnicity. They reflect strategic calculations, shared goals, perceptions of enemies, and shared visions for post-conflict society. Secondly, I analyse the factors influencing the relationship between rebel alliances and governance. Successful alliances can lead to governance institutions in liberated areas, initiating organization forms that may evolve into rebel power-sharing institutions, influenced by the area's ethnic composition, rebels' relative strength and need for external support, and rebels' ideological styles. Finally, the chapter hypothesizes a causal chain from rebel alliance formation to rebel power-sharing institutions creation.

The argument

I argue that to understand the factors influencing the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions is necessary to look into two levels of analysis: a) the dynamics of cooperation and alliance formation between rebel groups, and b) the factors that make rebels establish "cooperative bargains with noncombatant populations" (Weinstein 2007, 10) involving different ethnic/religious groups. Rebels may decide to attack enemies and potential competitors, as shown by literature on rebel infighting (Pischedda 2021), or may choose to form coalitions with other groups. These coalitions may be informed by the logic of minimum winning coalitions (Christia 2012), or may be larger (Walther and Pedersen 2020). Literature on rebel cooperation and infighting (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022; Gade et al. 2019; Schwab 2021) shows the influence of the incumbent government's threat, relative power considerations, and ideology over the dynamics favouring coalitions or infighting between groups. However, insurgents' behaviour is also constrained by their relationship with the local population[18]. When a rebel movement is composed of several ethnic or religious components, as in the case of a broad rebel front, such differences "impact the behaviour of rebel leaders", who have to "pay particular attention to mitigating potential cleavages that could emerge" (Mampilly 2011). These alliances are often threatened by commitment problems and competition, especially when the factors pushing rebels to cooperate are removed and when consolidating control on a multi-ethnic territory. Rebels' ideological repertoires influence the characteristics of the compensation mechanisms used to overcome the aforementioned commitment problems, leading to rebel power-sharing institutions as one of the outcomes.

Scope Conditions

The following theory is valid only under certain scope conditions. First, rebels aim to exercise control over a multi-ethnic territory. Several groups have this goal, both in cases of secessionist and centre-seeking objectives. For instance, the SPLM/A was formed to represent all ethnic groups of Sudan's southern region (Malwal 2015). Likewise, liberation groups such as the EPLF in Eritrea (Connell 2001) and the NRM in Uganda (Kasfir 2005) aimed to control the entirety of their multi-ethnic countries. Second, rebels aim to create political institutions to govern that territory. Third, the civil war is characterized by the presence of multiple non-state actors drawing from different constituencies. Fourth, that ethnicity and/or religion are relevant mobilizing factors in the conflict. Such conditions

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[18] As famously epitomized by Mao Zedong, an effective guerrilla should "move amongst people as a fish swim in the sea"

are present, to varying degrees, in several conflicts globally, including recent ones in Syria (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017), Iraq (Jüde 2017b), Myanmar (South 2018), Sudan (Malwal 2015). These scope conditions do not encompass cases where rebels are characterized by short-term time horizons and therefore behave opportunistically. In the case of rebel groups with short time horizons "due to high armed competition, internal opportunism, or macro-level changes level in the war […] disorder is the equilibrium" (Arjona 2016, 167). Seymour argues that for rebels with short-term time horizons, factors such as ethnicity, ideology, territorial control, and relative power considerations play a less significant role, as long-term goals are supplanted by the pursuit of immediate short-term gains (Seymour 2014). Kaldor and De Waal (2020) argue that under these conditions, exemplified by the case of 1994-2005 Somalia, order emerges in the form of a "political marketplace". Here, political relations and allegiances are "bought and sold according to the laws of supply and demand". In these cases, rebel leaders engage in "individual tactical bargaining in a competitive environment", prioritizing short-term gains over the main goals of the rebel groups. Within this framework, insurgents "alternate collusion and competition", a logic informed by the efficient gathering and use "of material resources to survive in the context of the commodification of political power" (Kaldor and de Waal 2020). Thus, in a political marketplace, factors such as identity, ethnicity, ideology, or a rebel group's long-term goal do not drive a rebel group's decisions; instead, they merely serve as mechanisms facilitating political transactions. Conversely, I argue that the behaviour of interest operates in the context of long-term horizons. Following Arjona, I start from the assumption that rebels with long-term time horizons "establish a social contract with the local population, giving rise to local order" (Arjona 2016, 33).

Understanding Rebel Groups' Behaviour: Independent Variables

Having operationalized rebel power-sharing, it is now possible to analyse the elements leading to the creation of these institutions. To do so, I first analyse the different dimensions influencing civil wars and rebel groups' behaviour. Earlier research has categorized civil wars as binary conflicts, characterized by overarching issue dimensions such as ideology, ethnicity, religion, or class. However, recent research has recognized the complex dynamics operating at both macro and micro levels, as well as the interplay between them. This section examines these dynamics, examining three macro groupings of variables and the interactions between rebel groups and various actors involved in the conflict. I analyse a) the internal dynamics of rebel groups, b) their interactions with civilians and other armed factions, and c) the international arena. I identify these three variables as the main drivers of rebel groups' behaviour, thus influencing rebel power-sharing as well.

Civil wars are complex phenomena. Previous research classified and understood civil wars as binary conflicts defined by their overarching issue dimension or cleavage, such as ideological, ethnic, religious, or class wars. Recent research developed a more nuanced understanding of conflicts, devoting attention to both macro and micro-level dynamics, as well as the interaction between them. As already argued by Kalyvas (2003), understanding the interaction between actors at the supralocal and local actors is crucial for understanding civil wars, and it is important to consider multiple levels of analysis in understanding civil wars and political violence. Likewise, rebel governance institutions are also shaped by factors at different levels. Péclard and Mechoulan (2015) noted that rebels, even those with complete territorial control, are still "entangled in complex figurations of power" that dictate and influence their governing capacity. Furthermore, these rebel groups are obliged to negotiate and reconcile demands from three distinct sectors. These include "from below" (namely, from the civilian populations residing in territories under their control), "from within" (indicating the ever-present risk of internal dissension and rebellion), and "from above" (referring to pressures exerted by the international community).

Drawing from recent research on the topic, I identify three levels of analysis that influence conflict dynamics and rebel governance. I follow the assumption that rebels are *not* in absolute control and are *not* unitary actors, but rather their power is limited and mediated by processes at different levels.

Rebel Groups' Internal Dynamics

The first level is the internal dynamics of rebel groups. The organizational structure and internal coherence of rebel groups fundamentally shape their operational strategies and governance capabilities. The lowest level concerns the command structure of the rebels, where "control may be centralized", or "delegated to agents". Rebel groups may be cohesive and held together by strong vertical hierarchies or may be formed by a constellation of "individual military entrepreneurs" (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017). Groups that are well-organized and disciplined are more likely to engage in strategic and targeted violence, while groups that are fragmented or undisciplined may engage in more indiscriminate violence or criminal activities (Shesterinina 2022; Staniland 2014; Weinstein 2007) Moreover, internally fragmented groups are more likely to be "co-opted or penetrated by other actors" and less likely to be able to govern (Worrall 2017).

Rebel Groups and Other Actors

Rebel groups' interactions with civilians and other armed factions within their operational territories significantly determine their governance efficacy and legitimacy. Even strongly disciplined groups

have to negotiate with the other societal agents present in the area they operate. For instance, even ISIS in some cases could not enforce its strict regulations due to the local citizens' resistance (Worrall 2017). This brings us to the second level of analysis, which is the relations of the rebels with the other actors in their territory. This involves both civilians and other armed groups. Groups that can establish a degree of legitimacy and support among civilians may be better able to govern the areas they control and provide services to the population. This can help to build support for the group and undermine support for the government (Shesterinina 2022). As argued by Worrall, legitimacy emerges from rebels' balancing act between the different actors and social forces present in the area "in which the rebels attempt to govern". These powerful actors could be both individuals such as traditional authority figures or organizations such as political parties (Worrall 2017). Indeed, civilian agency and the strength of local societal networks have a direct impact on rebels' ability to extend control and forms of governance over a population (Arjona 2016) Moreover, rebels interact also with other armed actors. The number and type of different warring actors can affect the dynamics of the conflict, such as the formation of alliances and rivalries, and can also affect the effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts. The higher the number of actors, the more complex the conflict, and fragmentation and shifting alliances between actors can further increase complexity (Brosché, Nilsson, and Sundberg 2023). If other armed groups are competing for control of the same territory, rebel groups may engage in more violent or aggressive behaviour to establish dominance. Likewise, rebels interact also with the government. Strategies used by both parties in the conflict vary greatly and may range from open conflict to cooperation with each other (Shesterinina 2022). Likewise, the State may fight an all-out war against rebels, but there are also several instances of "mediated stateness", "instances of cooperation between rebels, other armed groups and the state with which they co-exist" (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017).

Rebel Groups and International Actors

Finally, the third level of analysis is the international arena. The behaviours of rebel groups during civil wars are profoundly influenced by international actors who can both augment and constrain their operational resources and tactics. International actors, including foreign states, diasporas, transnational insurgents, international nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, and private corporations, can have a significant impact on the behaviour of armed groups during civil wars. Such support can augment armed groups' resources, but it can also impose constraints on their behaviour, for example, regarding tactics against the state and civilians. International actors can also impact armed groups' ability to mobilize support, their cohesion and fragmentation, and their decisions to form alliances with each other. Moreover, international actors can be co-opted by armed

groups to bolster their legitimacy and divert resources intended for civilian populations to their advantage, with implications for violence against civilians and humanitarian actors themselves (Karlén et al. 2021; Shesterinina 2022)
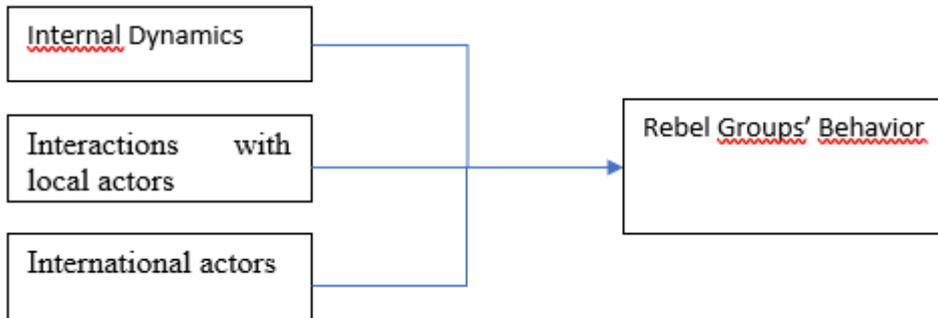
Tab.5 The three main variable groupings influencing rebel groups' behaviour

In conclusion, civil wars are complex phenomena that involve dynamics at multiple levels. Rebel groups' behaviour is influenced by internal dynamics within rebel groups, their interactions with other actors such as civilians, armed factions, and the government within their operational territories, as well as the impact of international actors on their behaviour. But how do rebel groups manage to deal with these different levels? And what is the effect of the interactions at these levels on rebel governance?

The relevance of the interaction between rebels and local actors

Analysing rebel governance necessitates considering the relational interplay between rebels and other state and non-state actors. This critical perspective is echoed in the work of Pfeifer and Schwab (2023), who argue that the analysis of rebels' behaviour should account for their interactions and the broader political, social, and normative structures they are embedded in.

Civilians, who are often the subject of rebel governance, are far from isolated entities. They possess diverse identities, being members of ethnic groups, religions, tribes, social classes, interest groups, and political parties. These identities are deeply rooted within local and national societal norms, shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards the government, rebel groups, and other political entities (Waterman and Worrall 2020). Studies of political violence noted that "groups adopt from the available repertoire elements that do not simply match their goals and identity orientation but correspond to changing environment and actions of their opponents" (Bosi, Demetriou, and Malthaner 2014a, 2). Relational factors, such as the relationship between rebels and the population,

other non-state actors, the government, and state actors, can thus play a significant role in shaping rebel governance strategies. These factors can influence the availability of resources, the level of external support, and the legitimacy of rebel governance institutions. Rebel groups that can establish a positive relationship with the local population are more likely to be successful in implementing governance reforms and maintaining control over a territory (Stewart 2021). Civilians' role and their interactions with rebels are not unilateral but constitute a dynamic interplay. This dynamic is captured by Kalyvas (2003), who highlights that the locus of agency can be found both at the bottom and the top. The alliances formed during civil wars, according to Kalyvas, result from the collaboration between supralocal actors, such as rebel leaders, who establish the overarching goals of the conflict, and local actors, who are motivated by local issues. This narrative reveals the multi-layered power dynamics at play in civil wars and highlights the complexity of the interactions between the involved actors.

The role of structural factors and ideology in rebel governance

Structural factors, defined as external, material conditions such as resource availability and territorial control, have traditionally been viewed as primary determinants of rebel behaviour. In contrast, ideological factors - the set of beliefs, values, and doctrines guiding rebel groups - have often been perceived as secondary. In this section, I aim to reassess this perception, arguing that ideological influences are not merely subordinate to structural conditions but interact with them in significant ways, significantly influencing rebel groups' behaviour. Early research in rebel governance primarily emphasized structural factors Kalyvas (2006, 2012), Weinstein (2007). Authors posited that elements such as leadership skills and ideological orientations are less influential compared to the broader structural context within which rebels operate. Thus, structural factors such as resource endowment (Weinstein 2007), or the extent of territorial control (Kalyvas 2006) strongly influence rebels' propensity to use violence and build governance institutions. Structural factors exert substantial influence, directing rebels' strategies towards what Arjona calls "the logic of irregular warfare" (Arjona 2016, 301). For instance, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola. UNITA was led by Jonas Savimbi, who fought for the independence of Angola from Portugal and later against the Marxist-Leninist MPLA government. UNITA's ideology was initially anti-colonial and pro-democracy, but it changed over time to suit Savimbi's personal ambitions and the interests of his external patrons, such as the US, South Africa, and China. UNITA's ideology also shifted from socialism to capitalism, from nationalism to regionalism, and from secularism to mysticism (Pearce 2012).

However, recent critiques, such as by Malthaner and Malesevic (2022) seek to extend these foundational arguments by challenging the dominance of structural factors in the analysis of rebel governance. They argue against the adoption of "elements of a utilitarian theory of action, and a focus on how rebel groups "choose" – in cost-benefit calculations based on military power balances, available resources, and the population's expected reactions – a certain form of government", which may be more or less coercive and inclusive (Malthaner and Malesevic 2022, 5). This perspective, while acknowledging the importance of structural conditions, tends to overlook the complex social and ideological processes that also shape rebel governance. Stewart (2021) further supports this critique by emphasizing the agency of individual actors, including rebel leaders. According to Stewart, these leaders are not merely reactive to structural conditions. Rather, they make strategic decisions influenced by their beliefs, experiences, and goals. This highlights the significant role of ideology in shaping governance strategies. Rebels are not passive entities moulded only by external conditions, but they are active agents whose ideologies inform their actions and interactions within the structural context (Stewart 2021). Moreover, the dichotomy often assumed between coercion and legitimacy in rebel governance does not adequately capture the reality where both coercive and consensual control involve relationships with local stakeholders, shaped by both structural conditions and ideological commitments (Malthaner and Malesevic 2022, 7–8). This perspective necessitates a broader view that incorporates ideologies as pivotal in understanding rebels' actions and governance models.

Proposing an Integrated Approach

In this section, I propose an integrated approach that simultaneously considers structural and ideological factors to fully grasp the complexity of rebel behaviour. While structural conditions provide the backdrop for rebel operations, their decisions, strategies, and governance systems are also profoundly influenced by their ideological motivations. This integration allows for a more nuanced understanding of rebel behaviour. In this light, the foundational studies by Kalyvas, Weinstein, and Arjona remain relevant but need reinterpretation to include the ideological dimension. Malthaner and Malesevic's arguments for viewing rebel governance through a lens of complex social processes and relationships underscore the importance of incorporating ideology into our analysis. Rebels' coercive strategies, as well as their methods of establishing and maintaining governance, are not merely outcomes of structural conditions but are also deeply embedded in their ideological beliefs and objectives.

Ideology, in its broad definition "is a distinctive set of normative, semantic and/or reputedly factual ideas, typically shared by members of groups or societies, which underpins their understandings of their political world and shapers their political behaviour (Leader Maynard 2019a, 4). Ideology has been famously described as the "most elusive concept in the whole of social science" (McLellan, 1995 cit. in (Leader Maynard 2014). For this reason, past studies tended to overlook the ways in which ideology shapes rebels' behaviour. However, recent scholarship found that ideology has a wide-ranging effect on rebel groups' behaviour. It legitimizes the use of political violence, (Asal et al. 2013; Scharpf 2018), ideological socialization contributes significantly to organizational cohesion and discipline, as well as reducing defections (Hoover Green 2016; Ugarriza and Craig 2013), and ideologies shape the strategies and structures of rebel groups (Revkin 2020; Revkin and Wood 2021; Sanin and Wood 2014). These scholars underscore the effect that a set of normative beliefs can have on the operational and organizational aspects of rebel groups. For instance, the way in which ideological commitments influence strategic choices is evident in the behaviour of groups like ISIS, where an Islamist ideology not only legitimizes violence but also dictates the forms of governance and social control employed. However, the influence of ideology on rebel behaviour is linked with their strategic decision-making processes. As Sanin and Wood (2014) argue, ideology is not just a static set of beliefs but an active force that shapes and is shaped by the group's actions and decisions. In the context of civil wars, this dynamic interaction becomes particularly evident. Ideologies do not merely rationalize actions but often drive them. In this context, the examples of the ELN in Colombia and the Naxalite movement in India provide insightful illustrations. The ELN was founded by radical Catholic priests and students, inspired by the Cuban revolution and liberation theology. The ELN's ideology was based on a Marxist-Leninist and anti-imperialist worldview, and it aimed to create a socialist and democratic society in Colombia. However, as the war progressed, the ELN has been willing to modify its ideological stance on issues such as democracy, human rights, and peace, in response to changing conditions and strategic needs. The ELN has also used its ideology to justify its involvement in criminal activities, such as kidnapping and extortion (International Crisis Group 2018). The Naxalite movement in India, rooted in Maoist ideology, initially focused on armed struggle against social injustices, representing marginalized communities. Over time, their ideology evolved, impacting governance strategies in controlled areas. The Naxalite movement's ideology in India evolved from focusing on armed struggle against social injustices to encompassing a broader range of governance and social welfare activities. Initially targeting urban intelligentsia, the ideology expanded to include rural and agrarian issues, shifting from Maoist-driven guerrilla warfare to providing governance and social services in controlled areas (Ray 2012).

The role of ideology in rebel groups extends beyond strategic and governance considerations to encompass a broader influence on the nature of conflict and interactions with civilian populations. As argued by Gutierrez-Sanin and Wood (2014, 214), "all armed groups engaged in political violence … do so on the basis of an ideology". According to Malthaner and Malesevic, ideology is "a source of diverse normative commitments" observable in civil wars, where groups "engage in restraint when it would be profitable to use violence, while others deploy indiscriminate violence when this is not beneficial" depending on their "ideological precepts" (Malthaner and Malesevic 2022, 5). Ideology impacts rebel groups by offering a deeply ingrained political framework that shapes their perceptions, evaluations, and decisions in political situations (Sanin and Wood 2014). Leader Maynard emphasizes that ideology not only motivates and rationalizes actions but also serves as a tool for mobilization and shaping group identity. This multi-functionality of ideology is crucial in understanding the behaviour of rebel groups. Ideology produces this effect through three different causal mechanisms: First, ideology "generates or shapes active motives that create the desire" to do certain actions. Second, it creates "legitimating perceptions or beliefs" which justify the doing of certain actions. Third, it "provides rationalising resources for retrospectively dealing with the commission" of those actions (Leader Maynard 2014, 11) Thus, "ideology may serve to motivate, legitimate, and rationalise for a committed core of policy-initiators […] but it may also serve as a means for the committed core to mobilise, providing them with ideological motivations legitimations or rationalizations" (Leader Maynard 2014, 12)

Brosché, Nilsson, and Sundberg (2023) emphasize the complexity of issues that wars are fought over, which range from short-term demands like amnesties or prisoner release to long-term objectives such as systemic political changes or independence. These issues exert a profound influence on the rebels' actions, particularly on their perception of the issues' salience, divisibility, and totality. It is here that ideology steps in as a crucial determinant. Pfeifer and Schwab (2023) argue for a re-centring of ideology as a key driver of rebel choices, as the actions of rebel groups emanate from a "deeply political nature", rooted in a fundamental contestation of the prevailing political status quo. As such, groups with transformative goals are especially susceptible to influences from ideology, ideas, and culture, which shape both their approach to governance and their conflict behaviour (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023). Ideology impacts rebel groups in two primary ways: first, by offering a deeply ingrained political framework that influences their actions, and second, as an integral aspect of their social milieu, reflected in political norms and governing institutions. Internalized ideologies can define how rebel groups evaluate actions or policies as desirable or legitimate, thereby significantly guiding their behaviour (Hoover Green 2016; Oppenheim and Weintraub 2017). Ideological

structures not only influence individual members within the group but also create a set of shared expectations that reinforce group cohesion and strategy, sometimes even irrespective of the level of sincere ideological commitment among the members (Leader Maynard 2019b). Thus, "ideological adoption" may be the determining factor discouraging rebels from abusing civilians or, on the other hand, "leading them to willingly participate in massacres" (Leader Maynard 2019b). Moreover, rebel groups operate within intricate webs of power and social structures, positioning themselves as political actors with an identity and a unique ordering project. This ideological lens, therefore, not only shapes their actions but also influences their broader governance style. This style, according to Worrall (2017), is how rebels navigate the constraints posed by all other actors within their operational context. Thus, as argued by Worrall, "agency is enhanced by structure", but also "most structures can be re-shaped by agency" (Worrall 2017, 13).

The interaction between rebels and civilians within these structural constraints has been conceptualized as an equilibrium by Keister and Slantchev (2014). They propose that successful rebel governance must navigate a delicate balance between the preferences of civilians, the rebels' ideological leanings, and the imposed structural constraints. This equilibrium acknowledges that civilians have a specific set of preferences regarding their preferred form of governance and the ideological orientation of the ruler, and any divergence by the rebels can diminish the perceived utility of the positive goods provided by them. Likewise, Worrall sees rebel governance as a process in which rebels influence local orders, but at the same time "other actors and social forces" impose limits and constraints upon the rebels' behaviour (Worrall 2017). However, while ideology certainly plays a role in shaping rebel leaders' beliefs and goals, it does *not* account for the ways in which they adapt their governance strategies to fit the specific context in which they operate. Rebel leaders may hold a particular ideological orientation, such as communism or Islamism, but this does not necessarily dictate their governance strategy. Furthermore, rebel leaders may also adapt their governance strategies over time based on changing circumstances (Stewart 2021). In sum, borrowing from Straus's (2012) interpretation, it is possible to say that both "a strategic perspective that emphasizes the importance of armed conflict as the main macro environment" where the actions of rebel groups take place, and "an ideological perspective that emphasizes the political imaginary" is necessary to analyse rebel groups' behaviour. Thus, the interwoven dynamics of ideology and strategic decision-making are central to understanding rebel groups' behaviour. Ideological frameworks not only forge a common identity among rebel group members but also set the stage for strategic interactions with civilians and other actors, as political leadership's ideological vision is a crucial determinant of their strategic responses to perceived threats. While ideological leanings might provide a foundational

compass for rebel groups, their governance strategies are not predetermined by these ideologies. Instead, these strategies are dynamically shaped by the exigencies of the operational context and the evolving landscape of armed conflict.
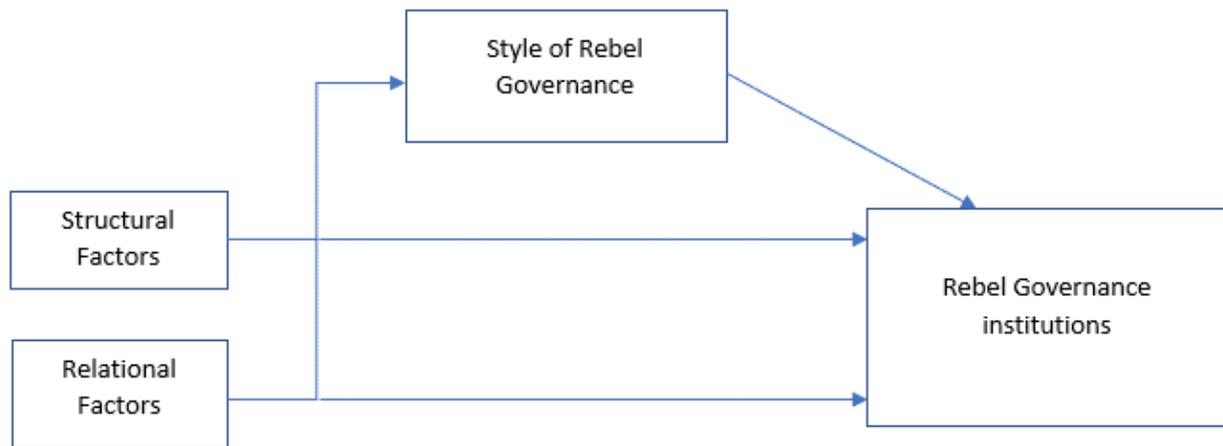
Figure 1 The factors influencing rebel governance

The above visual representation aims to depict the role of structural factors, relational factors, and ideology in shaping the outcome of rebel governance. The diagram illustrates how structural factors (such as resource endowments and territorial control) and relational factors (including interactions between rebels, civilians, other non-state actors, the government, and international actors) influence rebel governance outcomes through the mediation of the style of rebel governance. The 'style of rebel governance' refers not only to the ideological principles that guide the actions of rebel groups but also to the practical strategies and methods they employ in their governance efforts. This style, therefore, encapsulates how rebel groups, influenced by their ideology, navigate the constraints posed by all other actors within their operational context to establish and implement governance institutions. The style of rebel governance serves as a *key mechanism* mediating the impact of structural and relational factors on rebel governance institutions. This underlines the importance of considering the ideological lens when analysing the emergence and structure of rebel governance. The representation also highlights the interconnectedness of these factors.

Factors Explaining Rebel Alliances

Formal alliances between rebel groups, even when they share the same ethnicity or ideology, are usually considered temporary and fragile. In fact, despite rebel coalitions being a force multiplier that

significantly increases the possibility of winning the war (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022) rebels rarely engage in formal alliances (Akcinaroglu 2012, 890).

As argued by Blair and Potter, alliances are a way in which rebel groups "strategically manage the interplay between their strength and weaknesses" (Blair and Potter 2022). Rationalist approaches adopt the greed and grievances framework to civil wars. They explain rebels' motivations with a combination of a desire for power and resources and desire to address perceived grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Draman, Berdal, and Malone 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003). These frameworks assume that rebels will always act strategically to "become more powerful than their rivals" (Schwab 2021), and that rebels' calculations over the relative balance of power and distribution of capabilities shape relations between them (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; Nygård and Weintraub 2015; Stein and Cantin 2021). This theoretical framework allows us to understand why formal alliances between rebels are usually temporary. Competition over both short-term and long-term gains such as control over territory, manpower, economic and social resources, and the share of war spoils are factors strongly motivating rebels to eliminate other groups rather than to cooperate with them (Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour 2012; Schwab 2021). Thus, despite the clear military incentives, alliances are constantly threatened by the rebels' "mutual incentives to exploit each other" (Bapat and Bond 2012). According to this approach, alliances can be stable only when incentives for defecting do not outbalance those for staying. In other words, rebels would form stable coalitions only when defection is too costly. For example, as argued in Christia's (2012) seminal study, rebel alliances tend to be unstable and are informed by the logic of minimum winning coalitions[22], that is "alliances with enough aggregate power to win the conflict, but with as few partners as possible so that the group can maximize its share of post-war political control" (Christia 2012, 240). Within this logic, smaller rebel groups are incentivized to form new alliances to prevent possible attacks from their coalition leaders and to secure a better position during peace negotiations. As a result, insurgents' alliance pattern tends to be highly fluid and unstable. Hence, rebels would form stable coalitions only when defection is too costly, that is, with the presence of a strong incumbent government, or a hegemonic rebel group. This theory explains why rebel coalitions are often fragile, and why sides-switching against former allies occurs. For example, the Tajik and Uzbek factions in Afghanistan in 1992 allied to counter the dominant Pashtun faction led by Hekmatyar. This alliance broke down in 1994 when Hekmatyar switched sides and joined forces with the Tajiks, creating a new power balance that favoured the

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[22] That is, rebel coalitions big enough to win the war, but with the smallest possible number of participants in order to maximize the sharing of the spoils of war

Pashtuns. According to Christia, when relative power distribution within the alliance changes[23], in the absence of credible commitments, rebel groups may enter or leave coalitions to maintain a balance of power and maximize the sharing of the war spoils.

Scholars identified factors that help overcome the commitment problem. First, when the combined strength of two ideologically similar rebel groups is higher than the government's, rebel groups are confident in the ally's capability to resist attacks or concession offers from the government, overcoming the commitment problem. Such alliances allow rebels to "specialize in their area of strength". For example, during the conflict in Afghanistan, the allied group Quetta Shura was reportedly proficient in conventional combat operations, whereas the Haqqani specialized in attracting foreign fighters and orchestrating high-profile terrorist attacks (Bapat and Bond 2012). Likewise, Schwab found that rebels may choose cooperation when they need specific expertise[24] held by another group, or when facing a severe military threat from the incumbent government. For example, the Al-Nusra Front's decision to fight or cooperate with other groups depended on the perceived threat coming from the Syrian regime. In that case, groups would "negotiate with rivals to keep them as potential allies" as a survival strategy (Schwab 2021). However, according to Schwab and in line with Christia, these agreements would stand only with the presence of a common threat. When this constraint is removed, "rebels will escalate force […] at the expense of their rivals" (Schwab 2021). This mechanism is exemplified by the case of the LURD[25] in Liberia. As previously mentioned, the five factions composing the LURD, aware that only a stable coalition could match Liberian President Taylor's armed forces, agreed on a power-sharing[26] mechanism to ensure the alliance's stability. The LURD alliance successfully ousted Taylor. However, after Taylor's exile, the rebels lost their unifying denominator and the coalition promptly collapsed (Käihkö 2021). Finally, studies found that alliances are stable only under certain circumstances. The presence of foreign sponsors supporting rebel coalitions makes alliances stable (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022; Bapat and Bond 2012) because foreign sponsors "may demand cooperation between their agents" to increase their legitimacy and that they have the means to "credibly threaten to punish them for non-compliance" (Popovic 2018, 1).

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[23] For example, the balance of power may change due to military developments, political negotiations, or external interventions.

[24] For example, knowledge of the local terrain, ingrained ties with the local society, or "other capabilities that are needed in the joint fight" (Schwab 2021)

[25] Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, a multi-ethnic rebel coalition that fought in 1999-2003 to oust Liberian President Charles Taylor

[26] The LURD did not create political institutions or establish stable territorial control, and thus I do not discuss it as an instance of rebel power-sharing.

As mentioned, the rationalist approach does not consider ideology a major factor influencing rebel alliances, although it may be a confounding element. However, recent research shifted this perspective by shedding light on the mechanisms through which rebel groups' ideology[27] influences their behaviour. Studies found that ideology influences levels of insurgents' violence (Bloom 2012; Jeff Goodwin 2007) and variations in rebels' strategies (Medina and Sarkar 2022). As argued by Revkin and Wood (2021), "an organization's ideology may mandate […] an overarching strategy to reach its objectives" and "may also prescribe policies and institutions essential to the realization of those objectives". Costalli and Ruggeri (2015) suggest that ideology "implies a range of strategies to change social relationships in the world". Likewise, ideology influences rebels' cooperation. Groups with similar "political aspirations" suffer from smaller negotiation costs in cooperating, both in terms of agreeing on a common platform and meeting their own constituencies' expectations. Moreover, higher levels of trust between groups sharing similar ideologies make them not only more likely to establish formal alliances[32] (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022), but also to maintain cooperation under sustained government repression (Blair et al. 2022). According to Gade et al. (2019), ideology influences alliance formation through the mechanisms of rebels' conflict framing[33], their conception of the ideal polity[34] and their territorial aspirations[35]. Groups that target similar out-groups, even if for different reasons, may find it easier to cooperate based on those common targets. However, if one group's conflict framing justifies controversial attacks against civilians in the other group's in-group, it can inhibit cooperation. Moreover, groups with fundamentally divergent post-conflict visions and goals will have a harder time forming alliances because they have a larger ideological gap to bridge. Finally, separatist groups may be unwilling to compromise their territorial demands, creating tension with non-separatist groups. As conflicts drag on, differences in territorial ambitions can grow and accentuate disagreements, making compromise harder. In other words, rebel groups are likely to cooperate if they share the same goals and perception of who is the enemy, and if they agree on the desired political and territorial configuration of post-conflict society.

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[27] In the context of rebel groups, ideology is defined as a "set of ideas that includes the identification of a referent group (a class, ethnic, or other social group), an enunciation of the grievances or challenges that the group confronts, the identification of objectives on behalf of that group […], and a […] program of action" (Sanin and Wood 2014).

[32] The authors defined formal alliances as "publicly announced commitments by two or more rebel organisations to cooperate in their fight against the government, entailing the creation of a named institution"(Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022, 5)

[33] Conflict framing delineates the narrative a group employs to define the scope and nature of the conflict, marking clear boundaries between in-group and out-group, thus acting as a significant factor that governs the choice of potential allies

[34] Conception of the ideal polity represents the prescriptive ideological dimension that defines the group's desired end state, marking some institutional and political configurations as desirable while others are deemed unjust or oppressive

[35] Territorial aspiration refers to the group's desired territorial boundaries, thus reflecting the group's commitment to either uphold or challenge the territorial integrity of their state.

In sum, ethnicity is not considered a significant factor influencing alliances between rebel groups. Christia (2012) analysed cases involving alliances between groups representing different ethnicities, such as Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs during the conflict in Yugoslavia. However, these alliances were highly volatile and influenced by power considerations. Rather, ethnicity plays a significant role in rebels' infighting. Scholars agree that groups sharing the same ethnicity are more likely to fight, due to competition over the same resource pool[37], "triggering (at least the perception of) a zero-sum game" (Conrad et al. 2021). This dynamic is explained through the concept of "constituency". A rebel constituency represents "the social groups […] whom the militants address, […] who […] sympathize with and support the militant groups". Co-ethnic rebels tend to fight each other to establish hegemony over their ethnic constituency (Lilja and Hultman 2011), to control a specific set of resources and manpower tied to the area where rebels operate (Christia 2008) and to absorb the material and human resources previously controlled by a rival co-ethnic group (Pischedda 2018). Although the insurgents' constituency would support an alliance, rebels would gain more from defeating co-ethnic insurgents and monopolizing their support and social resources base (Pischedda 2021). For these reasons, alliances between co-ethnic rebel groups tend to be rare and short-lived, because the alliances' benefits would be always lower than taking over the resources of rival groups (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022). It must be noted that power-related and ideological factors do exclude each other, but they can both influence rebel cooperation at the same time. As discussed by Costalli and Ruggeri (2015), insurgents' behaviour and alliance pattern are informed by power considerations and material interests, but ideology constitutes a – relatively but not completely – flexible boundary within which the dynamics of interest can act.

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[37] That is, over the same constituency.

Factor Name	Factor Type	Outcome	Potential for Stability
Relative Power Balance	Interactions with local actors	Fragile, temporary alliances due to shifting power dynamics	Low
Common Threat	Interactions with local actors	Temporary alliances when facing a severe military threat	High (while the threat persists)
Ethnicity	Interactions with local actors	Alliances more likely between different ethnicities due to less resource competition	Medium (if resource competition can be managed)
Ideology (Conflict Framing, Conception of Ideal Polity, Territorial Aspirations)	Internal Dynamics	Alliances more likely with shared conflict framing, post-conflict visions, and territorial demands	Medium (if ideological alignments remain)
External Support	International Actors	Alliances more likely with foreign backing	High (due to external enforcement)

Tab. 6 Factors influencing rebel alliances' stability

To conclude, scholars agree on considering relative power relations an important factor shaping rebels' behaviour. Generally, in multiparty civil wars rebels prioritize fighting against the government or other groups depending on which threat is considered more immediate. If the incumbent government threatens a rebel group's survival, then rebels will be more likely to ally and cooperate. But if the government's threat is more remote, then rebels will fight against each other in ways that depend on other factors (ethnicity, ideology, power considerations, windows of opportunity). According to this approach, alliances are more likely to be formed between rebel groups drawing from different constituencies, including from different ethnic groups, although they are supposed to be short-lived and transactional. Finally, external support also emerges as a significant factor that can sustain rebel alliances. The backing of foreign sponsors can not only provide resources but also enforce cooperation among disparate rebel groups. Their power to sanction non-compliance may act as an effective deterrent against alliance breakdown. Moreover, when factoring ideology in, it is

possible to infer a possible pathway leading to the creation of stable and inclusive coalitions informed by the maximum winning coalition logic. First, ideology has an indirect effect on the groups' power relations considerations. Second, ideology exercises a direct effect through its normative power. Therefore, the influence of ideology extends beyond simple affinity; it directs actions, establishes norms and informs strategic decisions. Ideology can shape the nature of alliances, fostering trust, providing a unified vision, and creating a cohesive strategy. For rebel groups with shared ideologies, the potential benefits of cooperation often exceed the potential advantages of internal competition. As a result, these alliances are more likely to withstand the strains of conflict and may persist even in the face of external pressures. This suggests a nuanced interplay between power, ethnicity, and ideology within the context of rebel alliances. Importantly, power-related factors and ideological inclinations are not mutually exclusive; they often interact and influence rebel cooperation simultaneously. The dynamics of these relationships can influence the stability and longevity of an alliance. For instance, the presence of a common external threat may catalyse the formation of an alliance, while shared ideology may provide the glue that keeps it together. The alliances' endurance, thus, might not only depend on immediate survival tactics but also the shared visions for the post-conflict society.

From Rebel alliances to Rebel governance

Scholars studied rebel alliances and rebel governance, but the intertwined dynamics between the two have been seldom analysed. Successful rebel alliances may produce rebel governance. Stable alliances improve rebels' combat capabilities against the government and coordinate the use of resources, leading to the formation of governance institutions in the liberated areas. The degree of this coordination, and thereby the resulting strength and effectiveness of the rebel alliance, greatly depends on the level of institutionalization within the alliance. Cohesive movements are defined by the existence of robust, durable institutional links that facilitate synchronicity in their behaviour and strategic efforts. These institutional structures can take various forms, from overarching intra-organizational alliances to central committees and coordinated practices with exiled rebels, all contributing to the overall cohesion and discipline of the movement (Walther and Pedersen 2020). For instance, the military successes of the Jaysh al-Fatah coalition[39] led to the Syrian regime's complete withdrawal from the Idlib region and allowed Jabhat al-Nusra to divert resources from confrontation with the regime to "territorial consolidation" efforts and service provision (Berti 2020). As discussed, rationalist approaches to rebel cooperation predict that the commitment problem makes

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[39] A Jihadist rebel coalition, formed mainly by Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham

alliances highly unstable (Bapat and Bond 2012, 794). When the factors pushing rebels to cooperation are removed "rebels will escalate force […] at the expense of their rivals" (Schwab 2021). As argued by Christia, each rebel group wants to win the war and maximize their share of post-war power (Christia 2012). Agreeing to rule a population together with another group would thus be against the rebels' interests because it would involve distributing the benefits of rebel governance. This could be offset by the advantages of distributing the costs of rebel governance. However, more severe commitment problems would be at stake: stronger groups would fear the weaker party's betrayal could make their governance effort collapse, while smaller groups would be afraid of being attacked when the bigger group is powerful enough to sustain the costs of governance on its own. Therefore, alliances between rebel groups involving rebel governance agreements would be even more vulnerable to commitment problems. These arguments start from the assumption that outbidding would be the most preferred strategy by rebel groups because they would prefer to take exclusive control over a territory. However, as noted by Crenshaw (2014, 296), "it is important to remember that outbidding does not always occur". Studies on political violence and outbidding found that radical groups do not always choose the most violent option, and "only when competition is so threatening that doing nothing would be unwise that […] we would expect to see a strategic shift of the kind" (Gupta 2014, 154). In fact, "organizations factor in whether their rivals represent a credible threat to their own position or power" when determining the course of action. Thus, "organizations that feel secure or who believe rival groups present little threat" would be less likely to engage in violence (Gupta 2014, 139–40). Transitioning from the establishment of an alliance to the creation of shared governance structures involves strategic considerations, where rebels assess the benefits of collaboration against the potential risks and costs. This progression often stems from a recognition that, despite the challenges, joint governance can provide a more sustainable and effective approach to territorial control and resource management, especially in areas where diverse rebel factions must coexist and cooperate. How, then, does the dynamic evolve from the mere institutionalization of a rebel alliance into the establishment of power-sharing institutions?

From a strategic point of view, rebel governance is a tool used by rebels to increase their own capabilities in the fight against the government. Controlling a territory through sheer violence usually involves greater costs in terms of manpower and coercion against civilians (Arjona 2017). Thus, scholars assume that rebels prefer to build at least a modicum of institutions to control the territory and to gain access to "population-based resources" (Breslawski 2021; Kasfir 2015; Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Rubin 2020). Rebels tend to use coercive rather than inclusive governance strategies in multi-ethnic areas where sectors of the population do not belong to the rebel's constituency. In the

conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian government, rebels governed the local population in different ways, depending on the constituency and cohesion of the communities under their control. In areas where rebels had no constituencies, rebels relied entirely on coercion. In areas where rebels had some constituencies, they created exclusive institutions based on patronage and co-optation of local elites. In areas where rebels had a strong constituency, rebels created inclusive institutions that involved civilians in local governance. In these cases, rebels tend to use violence to consolidate power due to limited trust towards out-group civilians (Breslawski 2021). Indeed, when "the population does not include members of the rebel group's envisioned political community", rebels may prefer to use coercion "to monitor and control a potentially hostile population" (Gowrinathan and Mampilly 2019). Likewise, Ottmann (2017) argued that rebels relying "on a constituency comprising more than one ethnic group" are more likely to engage in violence against civilians "to enforce lack of support" caused by distrust between civilians from different ethnic groups.

However, I argue that this outcome is not inevitable for two reasons. First, coercion is a costly strategy. A rebel group having to rule over an out-group population is likely to encounter issues with "recruitment and extraction activities" and will have to allocate "substantial manpower to policing the population" (Pischedda 2021). Where possible, insurgents would prefer to pursue less costly alternative strategies to engage in these governance activities. Second, coercion or inclusion towards other groups depends also on the rebels' goals and conflict framing. For instance, violence against other ethnic groups is less likely to be attempted by secessionist groups that do not perceive ethnic diversity as an obstacle to the realization of their desired state (Bulutgil 2017). Likewise, another study found that groups aiming to establish legitimacy and gather support from a wide range of actors, including both external and domestic constituencies, are likely to adopt non-violent strategies" (Pfeifer and Schwab 2023). Thus, coercion is influenced by "the ways in which leaders imagine the purpose of their polity and the legitimate community of citizens that belong to the polity", that is, by how constituencies are conceived. In other words, the ideological stance adopted by political leaders significantly influences their approach to potential threats and conflicts within ethnically diverse contexts (Straus 2012). Therefore, ideology influences inclusive or coercive rebel behaviour through the same mechanisms of conflict framing and demarcation of the ideal polity described in the previous section. Through conflict framing, rebels identify "who is the main enemy and the possible ally", and by outlining an ideal polity they define "who qualifies as a legitimate participant in [their] political system" (Hafez, Gade, and Gabbay 2022, 134). Studies on the institutionalization of power after conflict show that rebels do employ strategies of cooptation "in unsecured terrain where ties [with

the locals] are weak". In these areas, the former insurgents use co-optation strategies to reduce distrust and to "induce community cooperation" (Liu 2022). Thus, adapting Mampilly's argument[42] (2011), it is possible to argue that there are cases in which rebels may be incentivized to "establish mechanisms" that consider the "population composition" to "compensate minority factions" and prevent costly societal divisions, factional splits and internal rebellions.

Regarding the formation of power-sharing institutions, I argue that ideology interacts with rebels' strategic considerations in two ways. Ideological proximity between allied groups reduces the commitment problem and makes more likely the institutionalization of the alliance. Moreover, ideology influences the political institutions created both to institutionalize the alliance between groups and the characteristics of these compensation mechanisms needed to compensate minority factions and address the population composition. I make this argument by building on Arjona's observation that ideology affects both "how social orders are built as well as some of their attributes". In fact, although Arjona did not observe ideology influencing whether rebels establish aliocracy or rebelocracy[43], she expected the type of ideology to influence both the degree of coercion used by rebels (Arjona 2016, 80) and the "content" of the rebels' "social contract when they are established" (Arjona 2016, 301).

Ideology influences both the level and type of coercion rebels use when consolidating control, and the type of political institutions they create. For instance, Thaler (2012) found that Marxist-Leninist ideology influenced the restraint in violence of Frelimo in Mozambique and the MPLA in Angola. However, when the leadership became less committed to their ideological principles, violence levels increased in both cases, regardless of other factors. Medina and Sarkar (2022) argued that the "strategic outlook" of rebel groups was directly influenced by their ideological differences. They found that various outcomes such as the choice of constituency and the adoption of specific military tactics and strategies by the EPL in Colombia and the CPI (ML) in India, resulted from different ideological interpretations of Marxism-Leninism. Moreover, rebels' ideology is a factor influencing both the number and typology of rebel institutions (Florea 2020). For instance, different interpretations of jihadism by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Katiba Macina caused them to appeal to different constituencies (local communities for Katiba Macina, marginalized pastoralists for ISGS) and led to different governance practices regarding taxation, resource

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[42] Mampilly described situations of factional diversity within rebel groups. All rebel groups considered in his case studies failed to establish such mechanisms and eventually split.

[43] Rebelocracy is a type of social order where armed groups establish their own institutions and rules to govern civilians and enforce them through coercion and persuasion. Aliocracy is a type of social order where armed groups delegate the governance of civilians to local elites or authorities, who may or may not share their goals or interests

allocation, and justice delivery (Cold-Ravnkilde and Ba 2022). Rebel governance is not only used to better control territory but also for "ideological, performative or goal-oriented reasons directed at invested onlookers within and outside the conflict" (Stewart 2020). Ideology is found to push rebels towards specific strategies and institutions "setting in motion a path-dependent form of organization" (Sanin and Wood 2014). The case of rebel taxation is particularly useful for understanding this dynamic[44]. For instance, ISIS levied taxes in natural resources-rich areas of Iraq as part of its state-building project driven by the group's Islamist ideology. ISIS could have limited itself to extracting oil revenues, but its taxation policy was part of a set of institutions aiming to foster "collective identity formation", "demographic engineering", and "to promote adoption of and compliance with ISIS ideology" (Revkin 2020). Both leftist and Islamist rebels are influenced by their ideologies' tenets, in terms of conflict conduct and type of political institutions (Breslawski and Tucker 2021; Cold-Ravnkilde and Ba 2022; Mampilly 2011; Medina and Sarkar 2022).

As previously discussed, studies considered ideological proximity between allied rebel groups as a factor helping overcome the commitment problem. Alliances between groups sharing similar ideologies are considered to be more effective and more likely to become institutionalized through mergers, joint commands and coordinated military operations (Balcells, Chen, and Pischedda 2022). However, the presence of a similar ideology is necessary but not sufficient to facilitate co-governance. In Idlib, Jabhat al-Nusra's initial involvement in governance consisted mostly of their participation in joint shariah courts and small-scale local provision of security, arbitration, and relief work. However, after the group's territorial consolidation in 2015, Jabhat al-Nusra began to invest more in its judicial branches and in building a Public Services Administration, which assumed a key role in administering the province's electrical infrastructure. This shift towards unilateral governance led to increased competition with the Ahram al Sham-controlled Service Administration Commission, the other major provider of governance in the region. Over time, each organization began relying on its own shariah courts to increase its political footprint, leading to political and armed clashes between the two groups and Ahrar al Sham's military defeat (Berti 2020). On the other hand, Gade et al. found that "ideological homophily is a driver of rebel cooperation in Syrian militant networks" (Gade et al. 2019). In these situations, rebel institutions enhanced cooperation among groups by exchanging information and resolving disputes. For example, in some Islamist insurgencies, different groups established common religious justice systems to settle conflicts between them, as their shared vision of the ideal political order gave clerics a high status as legitimate authorities (Hafez, Gade, and

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[44] Taxation is likely to cause tension between rebels and civilians and to involve a certain degree of coercion. Thus, insurgents should be engaging in taxation only when other revenue sources (for instance, lootable resources) are not sufficient.

Gabbay 2022, 145). Thus, it is evident that the creation of joint governance institutions is possible only if rebel groups' ideology is compatible in terms of the ideal polity, but ideology ought to be considered in conjunction with strategic considerations. For instance, a study of the governance practices of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in South Yemen during 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 shows that AQAP was influenced by the need to obtain local support. When the group took control of parts of South Yemen it ruled unilaterally and with an uncompromising stance on religion. After retaking control of some areas in 2015, AQAP took a more compromising stance and "sought the support of the local communities and elites". Although AQAP never modified its Salafi-Jihadist ideology, the group adapted its governance practices to boost its legitimacy and thus its long-term survival chances (Furlan 2023). Thus, similarly to what is discussed for rebel alliances, also local communities ideologically proximate to the rebels "may be allowed to have some autonomy […] because the group anticipates high cooperation to stem from ideological proclivities (Arjona 2016, 302). Thus, cases of competition between rebel groups governing together underscore the importance of strong institutional links for coordination and cooperation even between groups sharing the same ideology. Without them, fragmentation may occur, leading to conflicts and power struggles within the alliance. In the absence of strong institutionalization, allied groups would likely enter into competition over controlling governance structures. Moreover, groups ruling over a multi-ethnic territory would likely encounter issues due to the presence of a potentially hostile population. These factors strongly incentivize rebel groups to further institutionalize their alliance and to establish compensation mechanisms for minorities. As observed by Arjona, armed groups "have incentives to approach that part of the community that would favour change" to gain local allies and be able to establish new institutions. According to Arjona, "such alliances can be sought with a segment of powerful elites, a union, an organization of peasants, *an ethnic minority*, […] *or a political party*. Ideology here plays a central role, as it is likely to determine who is the most viable candidate" (Arjona 2016, 166). These institutional structures must possess both breadth and depth, meaning they are widely accepted and deeply ingrained within rebel organizations. This widespread and deeply rooted institutionalization fosters political synchronization, further enhancing the effectiveness of the alliance (Walther and Pedersen 2020). Finally, ideology is found to strongly influence the number and forms of rebel governance institutions. Thus, the form assumed by these institutionalized alliances will depend also on the rebels' governance style, understood as a package of strategies, ideological orientation and preferred institutional design.

Factor Name	Factor Type	Mechanism	Outcome	Effect on Transition to Power-sharing
Institutionalization within Alliance	Relational Factors	The existence of robust, durable institutional links within the alliance	Formation of governance institutions in liberated areas	Promotes development into power-sharing arrangements
Ideological Proximity	Relational Factors	Shared ideology facilitates cooperation and institutionalization	More effective and institutionalized alliances	Facilitates the transition into joint governance, especially if ideologies align
Population Composition	Structural Factors	Rebels' need to control a diverse population	Use of co-optation strategies to control population	Could incentivize power-sharing to accommodate diverse populations
Rebels' Ideology	Style of Rebel Governance	Ideology influences the number and type of rebel institutions	Use of specific governance strategies (power-sharing)	Shapes the form of power-sharing based on ideology, preferred institutional design

Tab. 4 Factors influencing rebel governance

Causal Pathway: From Alliances to Power-Sharing

In the previous section, I discussed and summarized the factors influencing rebel governance and how these factors may influence the creation of power-sharing institutions during civil wars. In this section, I propose a possible pathway leading from alliance formation to the creation of rebel power-sharing. The pathway represents a stylization of the complex process that involves several stages and is influenced by different factors. It must be noted that the following causal pathway represents only one of the possible chain of processes leading to the creation of rebel power-sharing arrangements. As stated by Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner (2014b, 5) in their discussion of political violence

dynamics, "such interactions are considered to be the result – and part – of temporal sequences of events and causal dynamics bounded together", but such "groupings of dynamics" are "by no means exhaustive or comprehensive", because there are several mechanisms and factors at play "which may be grouped in different ways". It begins with the formation of alliances among rebel groups, driven by shared ideologies, common threats, and the balance of power among the groups. These alliances then work towards institutionalizing their relationships to foster cohesion and discipline within the movement. The stabilization and effectiveness of the alliance, greatly depend on the level of institutionalization within the alliance, the presence of strong institutional links for coordination and cooperation, and the breadth and depth of the institutional structures. As the alliances gain military successes and control over territories, they divert resources to territorial consolidation efforts and service provision. This leads to the formation of governance institutions, which can involve either coercion or co-optation strategies to control the population, especially in multi-ethnic areas. The ideology of the rebel groups plays a significant role in shaping these governance institutions, influencing both their number and typology. The style of governance influences the nature of the co-optation strategies employed. As these institutions mature, the rebel groups establish mechanisms for power-sharing, which involves compensating minority factions and preventing societal divisions, factional splits, and internal rebellions.

This pathway highlights the complex dynamics of rebel governance and the various factors that can facilitate or impede the process. It underscores the importance of shared ideologies, strong institutional links, and effective governance strategies in the creation of stable and effective rebel power-sharing arrangements.
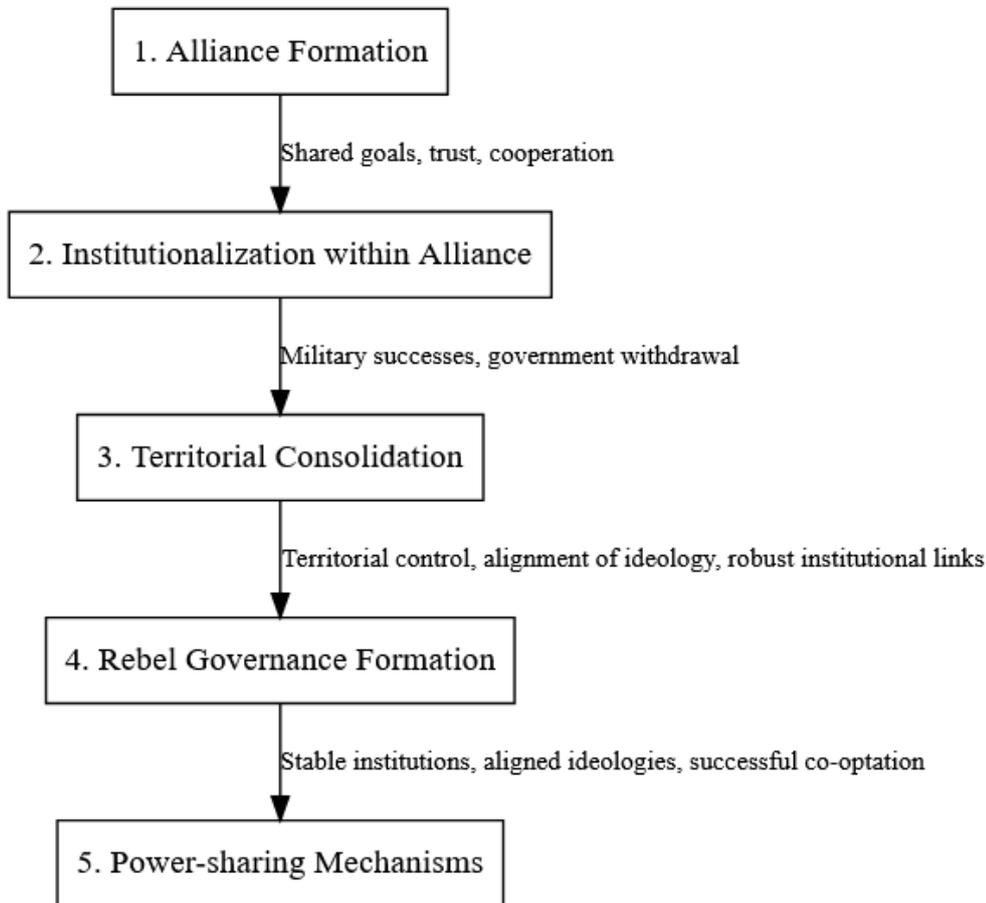
Figure 2 Causal Pathway: from alliance formation to Rebel Power-sharing

1. **Alliance Formation**: Rebel groups form alliances to increase their combat capabilities against the government and to coordinate the use of resources. This is often driven by shared ideologies, common threats, and the balance of power among the groups. However, these alliances are often temporary and fragile due to competition over resources and territory. *Facilitating Factors*: Shared ideology, common threats, balance of power. *Impeding Factors*: Divergent ideologies, absence of common threats, imbalanced power dynamics, competition over resources and territory.

2. **Institutionalization within the Alliance**: Once the alliance is formed, the groups work on building robust, durable institutional links within the alliance. These institutional structures can take various forms, from overarching intra-organizational alliances to central committees and coordinated practices, all contributing to the overall cohesion and discipline of the movement. *Facilitating Factors*: Shared goals, trust, and cooperation among alliance members. *Impeding Factors*: Distrust, lack of cooperation, divergent goals.

3. **Territorial Consolidation**: As the alliance gains military successes and the government withdraws from certain areas, the rebel groups can divert resources from confrontation with

the regime to territorial consolidation efforts and service provision in the liberated areas. *Facilitating Factors*: Military successes, government withdrawal. *Impeding Factors*: Military failures, strong government presence.

4. **Rebel Governance Formation:** With territorial control established, rebel groups initiate governance structures. The type of governance largely depends on the relationship with the local population. In multi-ethnic areas, groups might resort to either coercion or co-optation strategies. Here, the ideology of the rebel groups plays a role in defining the nature and type of governance strategies applied. *Facilitating Factors*: Territorial control, alignment of the group's ideology with the local population's, and robust institutional links within the alliance. *Impeding Factors*: Lack of territorial control, discordance of the group's ideology with the local population's, weak institutional links within the alliance.

5. **Power-sharing Mechanisms:** As governance institutions mature, mechanisms for power-sharing are established. This transition involves strategies to accommodate minority factions and to prevent societal divisions, factional splits, and internal rebellions. The ideology of the rebel groups influences the form of power-sharing that evolves, creating a governance style characterized by their strategic choices, ideological orientation, and preferred institutional design. *Facilitating Factor*s: Stable governance institutions, alignment of ideologies within the rebel alliance, successful co-optation strategies**.** *Impeding Factors*: Unstable governance institutions, conflicting ideologies within the rebel alliance, unsuccessful co-optation strategies.

Limitations

I acknowledge that this theory of power-sharing adopts an elite-focused approach, which may not consider the agency of civilians living in conflict areas. As showed in Arjona's research (2015, 2016), civilian responses, ranging from cooperation to organized resistance, significantly influence the governance strategies of rebel groups. This interaction often shapes the administrative and coercive mechanisms employed by rebels. In contrast, my theory considers the effect of civilian responses on rebel groups only indirectly, as I consider the strategic considerations of rebel groups, which include their relations with civilians, both within and outside their constituency. The elite-based approach is both a result of the necessity to narrow down the number of variables of interest and a reflection of the nature of power-sharing agreements, which often result from elite negotiations. As Mehler (2009) points out, these agreements are typically inherently elite-led, excluding the local population from

the process. As a result, the leaders involved may be more or less representative of the ethnic groups they claim to represent.

Furthermore, the theory does not assume that rebel groups or political parties claiming to represent certain ethnic and/or religious groups are the representatives of these identities. Instead, it acknowledges that rebel groups draw support from specific constituencies, which may not encompass the entire ethnic or religious group they claim to represent. The resulting power-sharing agreements reflect the rebels' need to gain legitimacy and support from different constituencies, but such agreements do not necessarily encompass the entirety of the communities involved. This outcome is compatible with existing knowledge about the representativeness of power-sharing arrangements. For instance, Agarin and McCulloch (2020) have highlighted that such agreements often exclude several sectors of a population. Their research underscores how power-sharing agreements, while encouraging inter-group cooperation, tend to focus on specific groups, leaving marginal and non-dominant groups within minorities unrepresented. Power-sharing, as noted by scholars like Hartzell and Hoddie (2003), often serves as a mechanism for elites to secure and distribute political power among themselves, as it typically involves leaders from dominant factions or groups who have the resources and influence to partake in such negotiations. Consequently, the agreements reached may not necessarily reflect the interests or needs of the broader populations they claim to represent. In the specific context of rebel governance, this perspective is critical. This phenomenon is also observed in Fraenkel's work (2020), which points out that elites often enter power-sharing agreements not necessarily to facilitate minority inclusion. These agreements typically involve the division of power among elites, rather than a broader distribution across the populations they claim to represent. Rebel groups, often positioned as representatives of certain communities or ideologies, might in reality be perpetuating elite-dominated structures of power. This observation is supported by the work of Tull and Mehler (2005), who argue that broader power-sharing agreements can mirror the same exclusionary practices seen in rebel governance.

Conclusions

This chapter has aimed to articulate a comprehensive theoretical understanding of rebel power-sharing within the framework of civil wars and rebel governance. The first part has focused on addressing the essential variables for understanding rebel groups' behaviour. It has examined the internal dynamics of rebel groups, their interactions with other actors, including civilians, other armed factions, and governments, as well as the influence of international actors. Rebel groups are embedded within broader social and political structures, and their governance strategies are influenced by these

interactions. The chapter has also explored how the joint effect of various factors, including the agency of individual actors, especially rebel leadership, and structural conditions such as resource availability and territorial control, shape governance outcomes. These factors interact with groups' ideological beliefs to shape rebel groups' decision-making and governance approaches. In the latter part of this chapter, I analysed the dynamics that facilitate the formation of rebel power-sharing institutions. To do so, I identified two sequential phases of analysis crucial for comprehending these dynamics: Firstly, the process of cooperation and alliance formation between rebel groups, and secondly, the subsequent phase where rebels establish cooperative bargains with non-combatant populations, involving different ethnic or religious groups. The determinants that drive the creation and institutionalization of alliances among rebel groups include factors such as the balance of power, shared threats, external support, ideology, and ethnicity. Such alliances are not merely strategic but are also shaped by a shared vision for the post-conflict society, indicating a complex relationship between power, ethnic identity, and ideological beliefs. The chapter posits that successful alliances among rebel groups can lead to the development of governance institutions in areas under their control. This development is influenced by the ethnic composition of these areas and the ideological leanings of the rebel groups, which can culminate in the establishment of power-sharing institutions. Finally, I discussed the limitations of this analysis. The theoretical framework presented is applicable under specific conditions: the rebels' intention to govern multi-ethnic territories, their desire to establish political institutions, the civil war context characterized by multiple non-state actors from diverse constituencies, and the relevance of ethnicity and/or religion as mobilizing factors. This framework is less applicable in scenarios where rebels exhibit short-term goals and opportunistic behaviours. By integrating these perspectives, this chapter sets the groundwork for subsequent chapters, which will compare the case studies of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria to further examine the factors influencing the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I am to discuss the methodological choices made in this research, particularly concerning to case selection and data collection. The research question that drives this study is, "What explains the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars?" This question is of significant importance as it delves into the dynamics of rebel alliance and governance formation, which are crucial aspects of understanding conflict resolution and post-conflict state-building processes. To answer this question, I identified rebel power-sharing as an inclusive governance strategy employed in multi-ethnic territories controlled by rebel groups. I proposed that rebel power-sharing is the outcome of an alliance consolidation process between a rebel group and other ethnic non-state organizations. To validate this causal chain, I will compare three case studies: the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) in Nepal, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, and the Democratic Union Party in Syria. The research process will involve comparing two distinct phases of the causal pathway. The first phase leads to the creation of a rebel coalition, and the second phase leads to the creation of different forms of inclusive governance institutions. For the first phase, I will employ a most-similar comparison, while for the second phase, I will utilize a most-different comparison (*infra*). This chapter will discuss the rationale behind these methodological choices, the methods used to collect and analyse data for each case, the ethical considerations about data collection, and the limitations of the methods used. The aim is to ensure that the research process is clear, logical, and replicable, thereby ensuring its systematic nature, validity, and reliability. This research follows the steps recommended by Rohlfing (2012). Having formulated the concepts and hypotheses in the previous chapter, this chapter will focus on case selection and provide the rationale for this selection. The subsequent chapters will discuss the empirical analysis, and finally, the hypothesis will be evaluated and refined in light of the results.

Theory and Operationalization

The research question necessitates an exploration of the concept of power-sharing institutions created by rebel groups. I have contextualized this as one of the strategies that rebels employ to address ethnic diversity within the framework of inclusive rebel governance. Power-sharing is defined as the formalization of power-sharing agreements between ethnic groups, which can range from elite-focused agreements to broader agreements encompassing more comprehensive representation. To operationalize this concept, I distinguished between different domains of rebel power-sharing (political, economic, military, and territorial). Furthermore, I identified two other inclusive strategies:

co-optation and ethnic fronts. Co-optation refers to the inclusion of influential individuals in the rebels' structure, while ethnic fronts refer to the institutionalization of alliances with other identity-based organizations. In the previous chapter, I discussed the factors influencing rebels' decisions to create power-sharing institutions. I proposed that power-sharing institutions are the outcome of a causal pathway that starts with a rebel coalition and ends with co-governance agreements between identity-based rebel groups and other (armed) actors. Given that the presence of an institutionalized rebel alliance is a prerequisite for power-sharing institutions, I divided the pathway into two parts. The first part leads to cooperation between rebel groups, while the second part starts with the presence of an alliance and ends with power-sharing. I hypothesized that alliances between identity-based groups in multi-party civil wars are shaped by immediate power dynamics, but their durability can be reinforced by two factors. The first is shared external support, and the second is ideological proximity, which could foster longer-lasting alliances by offering a unifying vision that goes beyond the immediate benefits of cooperation and outlines a shared goal for a post-conflict society. Moreover, I hypothesized that these institutionalized alliances may result in the creation of rebel power-sharing institutions in the presence of a diverse population composition. This is because the need to control a diverse population may push rebels towards co-optation strategies, including power-sharing. Furthermore, the style of rebel governance, influenced by the rebels' ideology, can also affect the number and type of rebel institutions, leading to the use of specific governance strategies such as power-sharing.

Justification for Comparative Case Study Method

In the post-Cold War era, the renewed interest in civil wars led to many studies on the causes of ethnic conflict, violence, and civil wars. Seminal studies of civil wars were conducted using statistical methods (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003), but scholars also pointed out the importance of case studies to analyse causal mechanisms in civil wars (Sambanis 2004). Comparative case study analysis is a research method that is used to compare and contrast two or more cases that share a common characteristic or set of characteristics. This method is often used in political science and international relations research to examine the impact of different variables on political outcomes (Gerring 2009). According to Gerring, comparative case study analysis should be used when the researcher wants to answer questions about causation, explanation, and generalization. Comparative case studies are particularly useful when the researcher wants to identify causal mechanisms that operate across cases. In this research, the comparative case study method is particularly suitable due to the nature of the research question. The question seeks to understand the dynamics of rebel alliance

formation and governance, which are complex processes influenced by a multitude of factors. These factors can include power dynamics, shared external support, ideological proximity, and the need for resources, among others. A comparative case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of these factors and how they interact within specific contexts to lead to the formation of rebel alliances and governance structures. This level of detail and contextual understanding would be difficult to achieve with other research methods, such as surveys or experiments.

Case studies are defined as the intensive study of a single unit to generalize across a larger set of units (Gerring 2004). They are the empirical analysis of a small sample of bounded empirical phenomena that are instances of a population of similar phenomena (Rohlfing 2012). Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. The goal of a case study is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations) (Yin 2014). At the core of this method is the notion that cause and effect are connected via causal processes and one or more causal mechanisms (Rohlfing 2012). In this research, I am using a hypothesis-testing case study. The phenomenon of rebel power-sharing constitutes a puzzle. The phenomenon is understudied and there are no pre-existing theories explaining it. However, in the previous chapters, I considered power-sharing as a form of cooperative rebel behaviour and established a possible causal pathway leading from alliance to power-sharing during rebel governance. For this reason, I discussed existing literature on rebel alliances and rebel governance. This allows me to proceed with a hypothesis-testing rather than a hypothesis-building case study method. A main challenge of using case study methods is the issue of replicability and generalization. However, case studies can address issues of internal and external validity by narrowing down the number of theory-relevant variables and stating the scope conditions within which the causal relationship is expected to exist. By doing so, it is possible to reduce indeterminacy. Furthermore, adding scope conditions reduces the size of the universe of cases, making the findings more generalizable and thus increasing external validity (Rohlfing 2012). On the other hand, by narrowing down the N, there is the risk of diminishing the scientific relevance of the study. The findings may apply to a small number of real-life cases, and thus become less relevant. However, I argue that the remaining universe of cases is still relevant. Recent research highlighted that a high number of rebel groups' actions are political, thus driven by long-term horizons. Moreover, a significant percentage of civil wars have ethnicity or religion as a salient element.

Alternatively, I could have used statistical methods. However, I decided against this option because case study analysis is better suited to understanding the process leading to an outcome, and power-sharing initiated by rebel groups during civil wars is an under-researched topic. Moreover, there are

no datasets on rebel power-sharing and at this stage, it is not possible to conduct a quantitative analysis.

Case Selection Criteria

In contrast with variable-oriented researchers, comparative case-oriented researchers see cases as complex configurations of events and structures. They treat them as singular, whole entities purposefully selected, not as homogeneous observations drawn at random from a fixed population of equally plausible selections. Thus, in much comparative case study research, cases usually are not predetermined, nor are they "given" at the outset of an investigation. Instead, they often coalesce in the course of the research through a systematic dialogue between ideas and evidence (Ragin 2000).

In order to select case studies, I first tried defining a population. However, due to the dearth of research on the phenomenon of rebel power-sharing, I could not rely on data covering the universe of cases. Initially, I attempted to create a new dataset by merging the MGAR (Blair et al. 2022) and the Rebel Quasi-state Institutions Dataset (Albert 2022). However, due to the lack of variables on power-sharing, I tried looking for proxies. I listed all rebel groups that both engaged in extensive cooperative relations with other groups and created political institutions and from there I tried to use existing academic literature to list all instances of power-sharing. However, I realized that the resulting data excluded known cases. For this reason, I did not pursue this strategy because I judged it imprecise and not compatible with time constraints. Thus, I followed a second-best strategy. I analysed the literature on rebel groups which I considered to be likely to have created cooperative agreements in multi-ethnic territories. From the literature, I selected 11 cases with different variations of these arrangements I looked for cases until I reached a good degree of variation in terms of geographical location, goals, ideology and other factors. Considering the population available, I searched for cases compatible with the theory-relevant elements and processes discussed in my theory chapter. In selecting case studies for this research, my primary goal was to cover a range of variations in critical variables influencing rebel alliances and governance. The three selected cases, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre - CPN-M), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), all demonstrated significant variance across these factors. The CPN-M, a Maoist rebel group in Nepal, integrated the ethnic dimension into its revolutionary discourse, tapping into minorities' resentment and building on their historical exploitation. The Maoists established large alliances composed of ethnic-based organizations. The group established a stronghold in the Magar region, creating a Magar-dominated special district, which laid the foundation for subsequent declarations of autonomous regions in 2004, of which six were named on an ethnic basis. The LTTE, a nationalist secessionist group in Sri Lanka, fought for the secession of the so-called Tamil Eelam, an area encompassing the Northern and Eastern Provinces

of Sri Lanka. The group pursued a different strategy to consolidate control over the contested and multi-ethnic Eastern Province. The LTTE did not ally with other groups but signed a power-sharing agreement with a Muslim party. The agreement protected Muslim minority rights and envisioned the creation of ethnic quotas in the local administration and land ownership. The PYD, a Kurdish Syrian revolutionary group, established the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria (AANES), a quasi-state entity claiming to empower the region's diverse ethnic, religious and political groups. The PYD did so by forming a coalition with several smaller parties and rebel groups, among which the Syriac Union Party and the Arab Shammar tribe.

These variations across the cases not only allowed for a rich comparative analysis but also provided opportunities to test and refine the hypotheses under different contexts. Thus, this diversity allows for a robust testing of the proposed causal pathway and contributes to the generalizability of the findings. While selecting cases based on the dependent variable, in this case, power-sharing might appear to introduce a bias in the selection process, it is crucial to note the context and purpose of this research. The two-step selection process is designed specifically to provide comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics of rebel alliance formation and governance, especially in the context of multi-ethnic populations. This is not a random sampling of a larger population where the objective is to make statistical generalizations. Instead, it is an in-depth investigation into a specific phenomenon. In the first step, potential cases were selected based on their likelihood of having established power-sharing agreements in multi-ethnic territories. This was driven by the specific research question and by the necessity to provide a comprehensive analysis of the variations of power-sharing. In the second step, among the preselected cases, three were chosen to represent diverse power-sharing outcomes. The CPN-M, LTTE, and PYD were selected because they demonstrated distinct strategies and degrees of power-sharing and were otherwise dissimilar in relevant variables. This facilitated a robust analysis of how these different factors interacted with the power-sharing outcome. Therefore, while it is true that the selection was based on the dependent variable, the rationale behind this was not to predetermine the outcome but to ensure that the selected cases were indeed instances of the phenomenon of interest - power-sharing. The goal was not to bias the findings, but rather to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon, thereby enriching the study's findings and providing a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of rebel power-sharing in multi-ethnic contexts.

The following charts illustrate the characteristics of each case in terms of rebel alliances and rebel governance:

Rebel Alliances

Case	Power Balance	Common Threat	External Support	Conflict Framing	Territorial Aspirations	Different Ethnicity	Outcome
CPN-M	Weak vs state	Yes	No	Compatible	Compatible	Yes	Ethnic front
LTTE	Weak vs state (in Eastern Province)	Yes	No	Incompatible	Incompatible	Yes	No alliances
PYD	Weak vs other groups	Yes	No	Compatible	Compatible	Yes	Ethnic front

Tab. 7 Variables influencing rebel alliances: Case studies comparison

Rebel Governance

Case	Alliance Institutionalization	Ideological Proximity	Ideology	Need for Resources	Outcome
CPN-M	Yes	Medium	Leftist (Maoist)	Yes	No Power Sharing
LTTE	No	Low	Nationalist	Yes	Power-sharing
PYD	Yes	Medium	Leftist (Democratic Confederalist)	Yes	Power-sharing

Tab. 8 Variables influencing Rebel Power-sharing: Case studies comparison

These cases allowed pursuing a most-similar and most-different strategy. Most similar case studies are those that select cases that are similar on all relevant variables except the outcome of interest, while most different case studies are those that select cases that are different on all relevant variables except the outcome of interest (Gerring 2009). In the first part of the analysis, I will conduct a most similar comparison (the LTTE differs only in its ideology). In the second part, I will conduct a most different comparison (the LTTE shares only the need for resources with the other cases). The PYD will also be considered a typical case because I will use it to conduct an in-depth analysis not only of

the processes but also of the outcome. I consider the PYD as an extensive manifestation of power-sharing. Thus, I will also describe the power-sharing institutions found in the case study and analyze them in light of my operationalization. The strategy of examining the a case study more thoroughly than the others is justified by Gerring (2004), who distinguishes between formal and informal units, studied through secondary literature.

The selection of an in-depth case study (the PYD) and two shorter ones (CPN-M and LTTE) was methodologically deliberate and grounded in theoretical considerations. As suggested by Gerring (2004), the selection of cases for analysis should be based on the ability of these cases to shed light on broader phenomena. In this research, I am examining power-sharing in the context of rebel alliance formation and governance, a complex process that unfolds differently across various contexts. The in-depth analysis of the PYD case serves to intensify the study of a single unit, as Gerring (2004) suggests. An intensive examination of this unit provides a deeper understanding of how power-sharing institutions are developed by rebel groups in civil wars. The richness and complexity of the PYD case, particularly its extensive manifestation of power-sharing, allows for a nuanced understanding of the processes and outcomes involved in the formation of such institutions. Thus, the PYD case provides a fertile ground for analyzing causal mechanisms, the different power-sharing institutions, and understanding its implications on inter-ethnic relations during conflict. For these reasons, the PYD can be considered a "formal unit" in the terminology of Gerring (2004), studied extensively and in greater depth.

However, the examination of power-sharing in rebel groups should not be limited to just one context, as this could lead to narrow and ungeneralizable conclusions. To mitigate this, I incorporated two additional case studies - the CPN-M and LTTE - serving as what Gerring (2004) calls "informal units". Although these cases are studied in less depth than the PYD, they are still critical in broadening the understanding of the phenomenon. These cases were selected as they represent different strategies of alliance formation and governance, providing variation and thus allowing for a broader, more encompassing understanding of the phenomena under study. Additionally, the use of a most similar and most different approach to case selection, with the CPN-M and LTTE serving as the most similar and most different cases, respectively, allows for robust testing of the proposed causal pathway. This case selection approach gives us the ability to isolate the impacts of different variables on the outcomes of interest, thereby increasing the robustness of the findings.

In conclusion, the case selection was guided by the need to find cases that are most similar in terms of the variables relevant to the formation of rebel alliances, but most different in terms of the variables

relevant to the formation of rebel governance. The combination of one in-depth case study and two smaller, contrasting case studies in this research is a carefully considered approach that aims to balance the depth and breadth of analysis. This strategy provides rich insights into the dynamics of rebel alliance formation and governance while also ensuring that the findings have broader applicability and generalizability. This approach allows for testing of the hypotheses developed in the theory chapter, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in the formation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was conducted in two phases and involved the use of various types of data. Regarding the cases of the CPN-M and the LTTE, the primary sources of data included academic research, reports from international organizations and NGOs, traditional media sources, and statements from the rebel groups themselves. In the case of PYD, I supplemented the data with qualitative interviews conducted with key stakeholders. It must be noted that the data collection strategy was severely constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which strongly limited access to the field both in 2020 and 2021. Although I managed to spend several weeks on the field in Turkey and Sri Lanka over the course of 2021, the cycles of lockdowns and shutdowns (including research institutions) hindered the fieldwork. The fieldwork goals in Turkey were: to meet other researchers and local experts[45] to assess the feasibility of more extensive research in the country, gather preliminary information on the Syrian actors and draft a first list of contacts for future interviews. Although this preliminary phase was successful, the pandemic situation restricted my travels within the country. I ultimately considered conducting fieldwork in Turkey as not feasible due to security concerns, given the sensitivity of the research topic[46]. Likewise, the fieldwork in Sri Lanka coincided with prolonged periods of lockdowns. During most of my stay in Colombo, research institutions and archives were not accessible to the public and inter-provincial travel was prohibited. I was able to access primary data through the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies, which provided access to several reports and documents not available in European institutions, and Tamil-language online archives, which contain large amounts of documentation related to the conflict. However, it was not possible to arrange online interviews with potential candidates. In this regard, I encountered the same

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[45] Federico Donelli (Prof. University of Trieste), Filippo Cicciù (Rai journalist), Estella Carpi (researcher University City of London), Andrea Glioti (journalist), Can Cemgil (Prof. Bilgi University), Jacopo Franceschini (PhD candidate, Kadir Has University), Diego Cupolo (journalist), Suhail Al-Ghazi (researcher), Obahida Hitto (journalist), Rena Netjes (journalist), and other anonymous sources.

[46] Turkey considers the PYD as an extension of the PKK, and several Turkey-based Kurdish organizations sharing similar ideologies are under constant threat of crackdowns and closure.

issues faced by other field researchers, who noted that "in non-western societies, networks of trust are typically much more important to everyday interactions, and getting meaningful information from strangers is much less likely" (Glasius et al. 2018).

The end of the emergency phase of the pandemic allowed me to finally return to the field. Due to time constraints, I could only conduct fieldwork in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, but not in South Asia. For this reason, most of the primary sources have been collected in the case of the Democratic Union Party in Syria. The first phase of data collection involved a comprehensive review of secondary sources. This review served to establish a chronology of events and delineate the characteristics of the rebel power-sharing institutions. It also provided valuable context for understanding the events and processes that influenced the creation of rebel institutions and the decisions made by rebels regarding power-sharing with other ethnic or religious groups. The second phase of data collection involved conducting qualitative interviews with 21 key stakeholders. These interviews were unstructured, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the causal mechanisms and expectations related to the new conceptual framework. Interviewees included leaders of the PYD and the Syriac Union Party, leaders of opposition Kurdish groups, political analysts with close connections to the Kurdish movement, academics with fieldwork experience, NGO personnel, and political activists. The interviews were conducted in Erbil (Kurdistan Region of Iraq), several locations in Italy, and online. Some of the interviews were conducted with the assistance of Arabic and Kurdish interpreters.

The selection of these data sources was based on their relevance to the research question and their ability to provide rich and detailed information on the formation of rebel alliances and governance structures. The credibility of these sources was assessed based on their reputation, the quality of their data, and their relevance to the research question. However, data collection was not without challenges. One of the main challenges was ensuring the truthfulness of the information provided by interview participants. As noted by Mosley (2013), interview participants may not always provide truthful answers, either because they have their own motives or because they may simply repeat the official party line. To mitigate this risk, I used interview data only if confirmed (or sufficiently plausible) when compared with information from other sources, such as academic research, newspaper articles and reports from international organizations and NGOs. Some of the interviews were not cited in the PYD chapter, either due to not providing relevant data, or because the information provided was not confirmed by any other source. Another challenge was the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it difficult to conduct in-person interviews. Moreover, the process to obtain the necessary authorizations from the University's Ethics Committee lasted several months, and severely affected the length of my fieldwork. This challenge was addressed

by conducting some interviews online, and by increasing the reliance on secondary sources. In conclusion, the data collection for this study was systematic and rigorous, involving the use of various types of data and the application of strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. The data collected provides a rich and detailed picture of the formation of rebel alliances and governance structures, thereby strengthening the validity of the research findings.

The following table presents the list of individuals I interviewed for this research, outlining their roles, and the dates and locations of the interviews.

Name/Pseudonym	Role	Interview Date and Location
Rena Netjes	Journalist	May 2021, Istanbul (Turkey)
Suhail Al Gazi	Conflict analyst	June 2021, Istanbul (Turkey)
Cam Cemgil	Professor, Bilgi University	June 2021, Istanbul (Turkey)
Obaida Hitto	Journalist, TRT world	June 2021, online
K.N.	International volunteer, PYD	May 2022, Italy
M.C.	International volunteer, YPG	May 2022, Italy
C.F.	International volunteer, AANES	May 2022, Italy
S.	International volunteer, women's civilian organizations	May 2022, Italy
B.B.	International volunteer, YPG	June 2022, online
A.A.	International volunteer, YPG	June 2022, online
Mahmod Ahmad Alarabo	Politician, KNC member	Dec 2022, Erbil
Abdulhakim Bachar	Politician, first president of the KNC	December 2022, Erbil
Kamaran Mantk	Professor, Salahaddin University	January 2023, Erbil (Iraq)
Sam Sweeney	NGO founder, Mesopotamia Relief Foundation	January 2023, online
S.N.	Academic	January 2023, Erbil
S.M. Mosa	Politician, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement	January 2023, Erbil
Joseph Sliwa	Politician, Vice President of Bethnahrin Patriotic Union	January 2023, Erbil
Ibrahim Biro	Politician, president of the KNC (2015-17)	January 2023, Erbil
M.R.	Political Analyst	February 2023, Erbil
Salih Muslim	Politician, Co-chair of the PYD	June 2023, online
Sanharip Barsom	Politician, Co-chair of the SUP	July 2023, online

Tab. 9 List of Interviewees

Limitations of Case Selection and Data Collection

Every research study has its limitations, and this one is no exception. The first limitation pertains to the population of the study. Due to data constraints and time limitations, I was able to identify ten instances of inclusive rebel governance. Consequently, the case selection process was influenced by this limited population. The second limitation is related to the sources of information for the CPN-M and LTTE cases. The Nepal case relied solely on primary sources available online (such as official documents and statements from the CPN-M congress, party publications and leadership's statements) and secondary sources, while the Sri Lanka case incorporated primary sources such as personal diaries, documents, pamphlets and speeches from both the Tamil Tigers and the opposition party Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. I had planned to conduct fieldwork in Sri Lanka, but the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these plans. The country experienced long periods of lockdown, which hindered my ability to establish contacts and conduct interviews. Although access to research centres and archives was severely limited, I managed to collect material from primary and secondary sources available on-site. The third limitation pertains to the depth of research for the CPN-M and LTTE cases, which was less extensive than that for the PYD case. For the PYD case, I conducted preliminary fieldwork in Turkey and interviews in Italy and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The KRI, being a gateway to North-East Syria and a place where many Syrian Kurdish political leaders, academics, journalists, and NGO staff reside or pass by, constituted a viable second-best option for fieldwork.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lengthy procedure to obtain clearance from the ethics committee limited the number of interviews I could conduct for the PYD case. Safety concerns also made it impossible to conduct fieldwork in North-East Syria. While I managed to conduct online interviews with Syrian political leaders, the format of these interviews had an impact on the findings. I observed a significant difference in the quality of responses between online and face-to-face interviews. Interviewees whom I met in person provided more in-depth insights, especially when they agreed to anonymity. Online interviews, although valuable, offered fewer insights. To mitigate this issue, I cross-checked the information provided by the interviewees with other sources, including academic and journalistic ones. Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the pace of the research. The after-effects of the illness and pandemic restrictions limited travel, and access to resources, and disrupted planned fieldwork. This resulted in delays and changes in the research process.

In conclusion, while these limitations may have influenced the findings of the study, I have made every effort to mitigate their impact and ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Future

research could build on this study by addressing these limitations, perhaps by conducting more extensive fieldwork when conditions allow, or by expanding the population of cases studied.

Research Ethics

In conducting the interviews for this study, I adhered to the recommendations of the University of Milan's Ethics Committee, which approved the fieldwork in Iraq[47]. These recommendations emphasize the importance of transparency, researcher and participant safety, and personal data protection. The guiding principles of my approach were self-determinism, non-malfeasance, and justice, as outlined by Clark and Cavatorta (2018), and Russo and Strazzari (2020).

In terms of self-determinism, I prioritized the autonomy of the interviewees. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the interview and was asked to provide either written or oral consent, depending on their preference. They were also given the option to withdraw their consent at any time and to choose whether they wished to be quoted anonymously. To uphold the principle of non-malfeasance, I took measures to ensure the safety and comfort of the interviewees. Given the sensitive nature of the research context, I offered the option of oral consent to foster a relationship of trust and to avoid leaving a paper trail that could potentially make respondents traceable. This involved reading the consent form at the beginning of the interview. Additionally, online interviews were conducted via encrypted messaging and video calling apps to ensure privacy and security. All records, notes, and transcripts of the interviews were immediately transferred to a secure encrypted folder.

In terms of data protection, I followed the guidelines provided by the University of Milan and the IT team of the Political Science Department. This involved encrypting all interview data to ensure its security. Furthermore, to protect the identities of the interviewees, all interviews have been pseudonymized. In conclusion, the ethical considerations of this research were taken seriously and addressed thoroughly to ensure the respect, safety, and privacy of all participants.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodological choices that underpin my research on the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars. The chapter began with an introduction to the case selection process, where I explained the rationale behind the choice of the CPN-M, LTTE, and PYD cases. These cases were chosen based on their ability to allow for a most-

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[47] The Ethics Committee officially approved the fieldwork on the 5th of December 2022, opinion number 113/22

similar and most-different systems design, which is crucial for robust hypothesis testing. I then justified the use of the comparative case study method, highlighting its suitability for an in-depth exploration of the causes and dynamics of rebel alliances and governance formation. This method allows for a detailed examination of specific examples, focusing on the complexity and particular nature of each case.

In the data collection section, I discussed the types of data used in the study, which included academic sources, documents produced by the rebels themselves, and interviews for the PYD case. I also addressed the challenges faced during data collection, such as ethical considerations and limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how these were dealt with. Despite the limitations of the case selection and data collection strategies, I have strived to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The limitations discussed in this chapter will be considered when interpreting the results in the following chapters. The next chapter will focus on the empirical analysis of the selected cases. The methodological framework outlined in this chapter will guide the analysis, allowing for a systematic examination of the causal pathways leading to the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups.

Chapter 5: The CPN-M's United Front Strategy - Inclusion without Power-sharing

Introduction

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), along with its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), engaged in a protracted armed conflict in Nepal from 1996 to 2006[49]. The CPN-M's primary objective was to dismantle the existing monarchical regime to establish a people's republic based on Maoist principles. During the decade-long insurgency, the CPN-M exerted control over extensive territories, especially in rural areas and regions distant from the national capital, Kathmandu. Their influence in these areas was not just military but also political and social, as they sought to establish alternative governance structures and mobilize local populations in support of their cause. The conflict was marked by significant violence, resulting in approximately 13,000 deaths. The conflict ended with the initiation of a peace process and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on November 21, 2006. The CPA was a landmark agreement that facilitated the reintegration of the Maoists into mainstream political processes. It marked the end of armed conflict and laid the foundation for significant political transformations in Nepal. Following this accord, the CPN-M participated in democratic processes and achieved a remarkable victory in the 2008 elections.

A notable aspect of the CPN-M's strategy during the conflict was its approach to ethnic diversity in Nepal. The Maoists actively promoted an inclusive policy towards the various ethnic groups in Nepal, advocating for ethnic rights and self-governance as part of their political manifesto. They also engaged in the creation and co-optation of numerous ethnic-based organizations. This inclusive strategy was instrumental in garnering support from these groups, which played a fundamental role in the success of the Maoist insurgency. By supporting the aspirations of ethnic minorities, the CPN-

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[49] See (Gellner 2007b; Hutt 2004, 200; Lawoti and Hangen 2012; Lawoti and Pahari 2010) for in-depth studies of the Maoists' insurgency

M was able to broaden its base of support and strengthen its position both militarily and politically.

Pre-War Ethnic and Religious Situation in Nepal

Nepal's socio-cultural landscape is characterized by a diversity of ethnicities and castes, each with distinctive cultural norms and geographic concentrations. Although a few districts are dominated by a single ethnic group, the country does not generally exhibit absolute ethnic majorities at the district level. The social fabric is predominantly Hindu, augmented by considerable Buddhist, Muslim, and indigenous religious communities. The caste system, with roots in Hindu tradition, has historically stratified society and perpetuated inequalities, especially against indigenous communities, constituting approximately 36% of the population (Boquérat 2006). This system has fostered a hierarchical structure that often correlates with ethnic divisions, manifesting in persistent discrimination and social disparities (Bhattachan 2000, 149). The introduction of the 1962 constitution formalized the Panchayat system, enshrining the Hindu Monarchy, proscribing political parties, and elevating the Nepali language—spoken by the ruling castes—as the sole official language (Chemjong 2017, 42). While the state promulgated a narrative of tranquillity and ethnic cohesion, it actively pursued the homogenization of society into a singular Hindu Nepali-speaking identity, systematically marginalizing lower castes, ethnic groups, and religious minorities (Hangen 2007). This exclusionary practice is rooted in land ownership patterns established in the 19th century, where power was often a function of land possession. The high caste Hindu groups, particularly the Bahun and Chhetri castes, held significant landholdings and thus wielded substantial influence, while groups with minimal or no land, such as the Dalits, were left dependent and disenfranchised (Gellner 2007a). Furthermore, the caste-based societal order was codified during the autocratic Rana regime, which sought to apply orthodox Hindu laws across the kingdom's diverse populace. The legal framework during this era entrenched the division between the elite Tagadhari and the Matwali, the latter including tribal minorities deemed 'clean' yet subjected to varying degrees of servitude and social mobility constraints. The Bahun and Chhetri castes, spreading as landowners and administrators, consolidated the caste system by placing tribal groups in an intermediate position, with their assimilation into higher castes often facilitated by intermarriage and subsequent generations. This practice allowed for a gradual elevation in status, particularly for the offspring of such unions, who could eventually attain a higher caste status, notably within the Chhetri group (Gellner 2007a). For these reasons, although the country experienced strong growth of income, health and education indicators, this development did not reach the excluded groups. The inequalities and the exploitation of marginalized groups already led to several uprisings in the 19th and 20th centuries, and fed the

1990s Maoist insurgency (Einsiedel, Malone, and Pradhan 2012). The institutional reforms of 1990 brought about political liberalisation and the constitutional recognition of the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual character of Nepal. However, Hinduism and Nepali continued to be the country's official religion and language, and the national groups continued to be marginalised by the political system (Boquérat 2006; Chemjong 2017). The opening of the political space however, allowed for the creation of ethnic-based political organizations and "resulted in a period of ethnicity building" (Gellner 2007a).

The concept of "indigenous nationalities" (adibasi janajati) in Nepal emerged as a collective identity for diverse ethnic groups historically marginalized by the state's dominance by high-caste Hindus. In the late 1980s, the term "janajati" gained prominence as a collective identity, particularly towards the end of the Panchayat era. This term was strategically selected by activists to denote a community outside the Hindu caste system, reflecting the movement's rejection of the state's Hindu-centric identity. Their commonality lies not in a shared language, religion, or culture, but in their collective history of subjugation by a state dominated by high-caste Hindus. The state's recognition of linguistic and religious categories in the census played a significant role in shaping this collective identity (Hangen 2007). During the Panchayat era, numerous ethnic organizations emerged, focusing on social, linguistic, religious, and cultural aspects. The movement was represented by various ethnic organizations, initially coordinated by entities like the Nepal Janajati Mahasangh (Nepal Federation of Nationalities), established in 1990. These included the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Kirat Rai Yoyokha, Nepal Magar Sangh, and many others. These groups organized seminars, meetings, and published manifestos advocating for ethnic freedom (Shrestha 2004). The primary objectives of Nepal's indigenous nationalities encompassed both political and cultural domains. Politically, they demanded a restructuring of the state to be more inclusive and representative, advocating for federalism to enable ethnic autonomy. They sought reservations in government and state-sponsored institutions to include "caste and ethnic group in the state system" and advocated for the recognition of Nepal as a secular state (Chemjong 2017, 46–49). However, most of the indigenous organizations focused on cultural activities. These groups promoted their distinct cultural practices, languages, and religions through language classes, cultural festivals, and other activities (Hangen 2007). At the same time, a number of ethnic parties emerged during the 1990s. Ethnic parties aimed to provide a platform for these communities to participate more actively in the political process and influence government policies. The leadership of mainstream parties largely excluded indigenous nationalities, prompting the latter to either run as independents or align with smaller parties. However, ethnic parties failed to gain electoral support due to several factors. Legal constraints, such as the 1990 Constitution barring

the Election Commission from recognizing political parties based on ethnicity, have significantly hampered these parties (Hangen 2007). Moreover, the dominant parties were still perceived as more powerful and able to distribute (albeit unfairly) state resources to the minorities. As a result, ethnic groups continued to be marginalised in the Nepali power structure. Thus, the period 1990-1996 saw an increase in ethnic awareness, but no party managed to represent the national groups adequately (Boquérat 2006).

Category	Subcategory	Percentage
Parbatiyas (Hill People)		
	Bahun	13%
	Chhetri (incl thakuri)	18%
	Dalit	9%
Janajatis (Hill Minorities)		
	Magar	7.2%
	Newar	5.5%
	Tamang	5.6%
	Rai	3%
	Gurung	2.4%
	Limbu	1.6%
Taraians (Plains People)		
	Tharu	6.7%
	Yadav	4%
Others		
	Muslims	4.2%

Table 1 1 Ethnic groups in Nepal according to the 2001 census (Gellner, 2007a)

The rise of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist

The reformed Nepali political system was unable to improve the socio-economic situation of the country. A stagnation of social and economic progression in rural areas, coupled with ceaseless political squabbling and fragmentation at the national level, instigated conditions ripe for a public

rebellion. In response to this climate, the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M) started an insurrection on February 1996 (Bogati, Carapic, and Muggah 2013).

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) originated in 1949 with Indian communist support and progressively gained popular support despite periodic bans and state repression. It was marred by factionalism and frequent splits, with around a dozen factions present at any given time since the 1960s. The CPN's first violent movement was initiated in 1971, influenced by the violent Naxalite Maoist movement in West Bengal. The CPN-Maoist, which emerged as a significant faction within the larger communist movement, originated from the CPN-Fourth Congress established in 1974. After a series of splits and transformations, some of its members renamed their group as CPN-Maoist in 1995. By that time, the communist movement in Nepal had grown significantly. It was rooted in a long history of peasant insurgencies against landlords and village chiefs in Nepal's poorest districts (Gidwani and Paudel 2012). Its utopian ideals and promises to end all forms of inequalities and injustices attracted the poor, youth, and marginalized groups, as well as clerical government workers, labor unions, and school teachers. However, the CPN-M represented a minoritarian current within the movement, and it was only the insurgency that transformed the party into a major force in Nepalese politics (Lawoti 2009). The armed uprising emerged in the western hilly area of the Rapti region and expanded throughout rural Nepal (Gellner, 2010; Paudel, 2016). Most of these rural areas had an history of local revolts and revolutionary politics. For instance, one of the Maoists' strongholds was the Thabang village in the Rapti region, which had "historically been in opposition to the state" since Nepal's unification and experienced several uprisings against "feudal domination and exploitation" and where communist ideology was entrenched since the 1950s. Villages such as Thabang constituted the core support areas for the Maoists (Paudel 2019).

The CPN-M aimed to overthrow the Nepalese government by following Mao's strategy of protracted war. The strategy was to establish base areas in the rural regions, conduct extensive political activities to increase the number of cadres and supporters, and eventually move to the urban areas and, ultimately, install a People's Government (Bogati, Carapic, and Muggah 2013). During the first three years, the Maoists focused on strengthening their support base. They recruited combatants (referred to as "full-timers") and local advocates (known as "part-timers") from socio-culturally marginalized groups. These included rural peasants, women, lower castes, and indigenous communities (Bogati, Carapic, and Muggah 2013). Thus, the conflict was initially limited to the Maoist strongholds in Central-Western regions and involved relatively few militants (Einsiedel, Malone, and Pradhan 2012). This strategy of slow growth was influenced by the Maoists' lack of external support, as the

group could not count on neither an organized diaspora nor a foreign sponsor[50] (Gidwani and Paudel 2012). The Maoists had to rely entirely on the local population, and for this reason insurgents initially engaged in self-funding activities such as seizing weapons from police stations, bank robberies and extortion (Einsiedel, Malone, and Pradhan 2012). The Maoists, recognizing the potential of ethnic grievances as a mobilizing force, sought to incorporate various indigenous ethnic groups into their struggle (International Crisis Group 2005a, 15). In fact, the CPN-M's first core area was "from the land of the Kham Magars", an indigenous group constituting 37% of Nepal's population and which provided the bulk of Maoists' manpower. (Lawoti 2010). The Maoists sought minorities' support in two ways: they incorporated "minority demands in the policies and programs of the insurgency" and "established different ethnic fronts" (Lawoti 2003). They successfully presented themselves as "a political thread joining diverse anti-state rebellions and various other forms of subaltern politics, especially in agrarian settings" (Paudel 2019). The Maoists built upon increased awareness of ethnic issues and increased ethnic activism, and "shortly before launching the People's War in 1996, they incorporated into their platform many of the issues that the indigenous nationalities movement had voiced" (Hangen 2007, 37). The CPN-M created a national counternarrative insisting on the historical exploitation of the indigenous ethnic groups by the monarchy, and promised a devolution of power to autonomous regions in which there would be "representation of all nationalities in the local state powers on a proportional basis" (Boquérat 2006). Finally, the government's heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics, which indiscriminately targeted suspected villagers, also pushed minorities to side with the Maoists (Lawoti 2010).

The Ethnic Issue and Proposed Policies in the CPN-M Documents

The analysis of the CPN-M internal and public documents reveals the progressive incorporation of minorities' grievances into their programme. The CPN-M acknowledged that regions inhabited by indigenous groups have become the most backward and oppressed due to both internal feudal exploitation and external semi-colonial oppression, leading to socio-cultural and economic subjugation, which they interpreted as national oppression. The Maoists considered the issue of one group's domination over others as a significant problem and as such, regional disparities were highlighted in their repertoire. This commitment to addressing ethnic grievances was at the heart of their attempt to incorporate indigenous ethnic groups into their struggle (Thapa 2012).

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[50] Notably, "an ostensibly natural ally" such as China did not provide any "ideological or material support" (Gidwani and Paudel 2012)

In the document adopted in 1995 at the inception of the armed insurrection, "Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal," the CPN-M engages in a historical materialist analysis of Nepal's socio-political struggles. The focus is on the historical context of violent resistance against various forms of oppression, particularly against foreign invaders and internal feudal systems. The document does not explicitly analyse caste and ethnic identities in the context of Nepal's political struggles. Instead, it presents a narrative that amalgamates these struggles into a larger fight against feudalism and imperialism. The document calls for new resistance against foreign imperialism and domestic reactionary ruling classes, positioning the Communist Party as the vanguard in the fight. The possible supporters and enemies of the struggle are discussed from a class, not ethnic, perspective. "Feudals, landlords, comprador & bureaucratic capitalists" are identified as the targets of the armed struggle, whereas "the proletariat", "the farm workers", and "the middle peasants" are seen as the backbone of the revolution. The document addresses ethnic issues only in relation to the possibility of exploiting their grievances for the armed struggle. In fact, the document directly relates the country's geography and demography, stating that as the "geographical situation is the most favorable for waging guerrilla war with direct links to the people […], a good mass base for guerrilla war can be created from the struggle against the national oppression of the majority of the nationalities" (CPN-M 1995a). Likewise, excerpts from the document "Plan for the Historic Initiation of the People's War," adopted by the Party's Central Committee in September 1995, reflect the strong influence of "Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" on the Party. The document confirms the adoption of a strategy based on insurrection from the countryside to capture "state power" to achieve a "new democratic revolution after the destruction of feudalism and imperialism" and to progressively transition to socialism and communism by way of "the dictatorship of the proletariat." The maximalist goals of the party are stated throughout the document. Regarding the ethnic dimension, the document states that the CPN-M will never settle for "partial reforms in the condition of the people," that is "all sorts of petty bourgeois, narrow nationalist, religious-communal, and casteist illusions," confirming the class-based perspective of the party (CPN-M 1995b). Similarly, another internal document from March 1996, "Review of the Historic Initiation of the Protracted War and Future Strategy of the Party," focuses on the Maoist characteristics of the insurgency and does not refer to any ethnic dimension of the conflict. It cites Mao's call for flexibility in conflict, opening with his statement, "From the particular characteristics of war there arise a particular set of organizations, a particular series of methods, and a particular kind of process," and reiterating that the Party should be in constant relation to "the people's immediate problems" and develop new strategies (CPN-M 1996c).

The documents intended for the wider public place a much stronger emphasis on ethnic issues. For instance, the "Appeal of the C.P.N. (Maoist) to the People," distributed in February 1996, shows a mix of ethnic-based, class-based, and nationalistic themes in its call for action. The appeal is deeply rooted in the socio-economic and political crises facing Nepal, emphasizing the need for a revolutionary transformation of the state. While class-based themes are still predominant, with the appeal critiquing "the economic degradation borne primarily by the peasantry," constituting 90% of the population, ethnic-based appeals are also significant. The CPN-M rejects the dominance of a single ethnic group and criticizes the state for maintaining "the hegemony of one religion (i.e., Hinduism), one language (i.e., Nepali), and one nationality (i.e., Khas)," oppressing other religions, languages, and nationalities. The appeal includes a strong nationalistic component, criticizing the state for subservience to foreign interests and for "permitting the foreign plunderers to grab the natural water resources of Nepal," framing it as a betrayal of Nepal's sovereignty (CPN-M 1996b).

Building on the themes introduced in the public appeal, the 40-Point Demands presented to Nepal's Prime Minister further elaborates on ethnic issues, explicitly addressing the rights and autonomy of various nationalities. The 1996 40-Point Demands presented to Nepal's Prime Minister by the CPN-M as part of the United People's Front presents a comprehensive section on the problems of nationalities. The demands concern issues of national sovereignty, resistance to Indian economic influence, the democratization of society through the drafting of a new constitution, and the abolition of royal privileges. They also include a series of livelihood demands covering economic self-reliance, employment, fair wages, land rights, and basic services. An important section of the document addresses issues of caste, ethnicity, and religion. The memorandum calls for Nepal to be declared a secular nation, an end to patriarchal exploitation and discrimination against women, cessation of racial exploitation and suppression, and the elimination of the system of untouchability. It states, "Where ethnic communities are in the majority, they should be allowed to form their own autonomous governments" and that "The right to education in the mother tongue up to higher levels should be guaranteed". These demands related to caste and ethnic identities are positioned as essential to achieving true democracy and addressing livelihood concerns, and are seen as inseparable from the struggle for democracy and national self-determination (CPN-M 1996a).

The analysis of nationalities in the 1996 document written by CPN-M leaders Yami and Bhattarai introduces a more nuanced understanding of Nepal's ethnic dynamics, recognizing the historical subjugation of the indigenous groups and proposing the formation of a united front. The document highlights both the "external" and "internal" dimensions of the nationality issue. The 'external' dimension relates to Nepal's semi-colonial status and domination by external powers, especially

Indian expansionism. The internal dimension is discussed in relation to the dynamics of various nationalities within Nepal. The CPN-M recognizes Nepal as a multi-national state, acknowledging the historical domination of the Indo-Aryan nationality and the subsequent subjugation of other nationalities. The document emphasizes the need for a broad coalition that includes "people of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes, nationalities, and regions" in a collective struggle against feudalism, imperialism, and external domination. The document proposes to address the nationality question by granting "autonomy for different nationalities keeping in view the low level of development of the nationalities and other specificities of the country" and "equal treatment and opportunity by the state to all the languages"(Yami and Bhattarai 2004). CPN-M Chairman Prachanda's 1997 article reinforces this perspective, emphasizing the necessity of a broad united front that integrates the struggles of various oppressed classes, nationalities, and regions for the success of the People's War. The document emphasizes that the basis of this united front is the unity of workers and peasants, but it must be adapted to the specific historical and social context of Nepal. This means the front should unite not only "people of all oppressed classes" but also "nationalities and regions." This is crucial for addressing the specific historical development of Nepal, where nationalism and democracy are intertwined with the "class struggle against feudalism and imperialism." Prachanda states that the united front should address the "right of self-determination of the oppressed nationalities" and emphasizes that this right "can be best realized through national autonomy" (Prachanda 2004a). The inclusion of nationalities is motivated by another leader of the CPN-M, Baburam Bhattarai as the only way to solve the economic inequalities of the country. In a 1998 document he argues that Nepal's semi-feudal and semi-colonial social structure has led to a specific regional structure that combines elements of feudal and capitalist systems. The text states, "These indigenous people dominated regions...have been reduced to the present most backward and oppressed condition due to the internal feudal exploitation and the external semi-colonial oppression". The solution proposed involves "granting regional and national autonomy" based on the specific conditions of each area (Bhattarai 2004). A May 1998 document from Prachanda further articulates the strategic importance and the conceptual framework of the Revolutionary United Front in the context of Nepal's revolution. The document emphasizes that the success of the democratic revolution is contingent on forming a broad united front encompassing various anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes, sections, and levels of the population under the leadership of the proletariat. While the unity between workers and peasants forms the basis of this front, the actual process of initiating and developing it varies depending on each country's specific situation. In the case of Nepal, Prachanda notes, "the broad united front of oppressed classes and masses, oppressed nationalities and the people of oppressed regions will be the concrete manifestation of our Revolutionary United Front."

Prachanda places particular emphasis on the struggle against national and regional oppression as integral to the revolution. He asserts the importance of recognizing the rights of different nationalities "to self-determination, including the right to secede politically." He justifies this stance as necessary "to ensure [the nationalities'] participation as a necessary part of the Revolutionary United Front." For this reason, the Party included "national autonomy" in the Party's program (Prachanda 2004c).

Another document published in 1998 discussed the group's armed tactics and long-term strategy, reiterating its adherence to the Maoist principles of protracted war and the need to create "base areas" by continuing guerrilla activities and developing mass popular support for the Maoists. It highlights how the CPN-M was able to "get big support from different forms of mass movements and mass mobilizations," emphasizing that "various forms of mass movements must be continuously developed at central and local levels" (CPN-M, 1998). Simultaneously, the document discusses the need to mobilize "different classes, nationalities, and sections of people, who are anti-feudal and anti-imperialist," encouraging them "to participate in the new state power through a democratic process." The document hints at mobilizing local ethnic-based organizations and stresses the importance of developing "the structure of local people's power" under one or another form of organization. However, these organizations should follow the principle of "democratic centralism," meaning they should adhere to the decisions of the CPN-M. The Party is seen as the "central formation" that will "organize and mobilize for agitation" all the different groups in the country that will join the united front (CPN-M 1998). This focus on broadening the United Front to increase people's participation and for "propaganda and revolutionary mass struggle." was confirmed during the 1999 Fourth meeting of the CPN-M. The CPN-M decided to "initiate the development of local people's power" and form "a united front consisting of different fronts, nationalities," and progressive forces (Prachanda 2004b).

With the progression of the insurgency and the increase of guerrilla activities outside its core support areas, the CPN-M increasingly emphasized the organization of ethnic fronts. This strategic focus on ethnic inclusion and autonomy is evident in the 2001 Party conference, where the CPN-M explicitly details the mobilization of ethnic-based formations, highlighting the tactical necessity of such an approach for broad national unity. Describing the formation of local governing structures, the document states, "The United Front in Nepal obtained practical shape in the form of […] local United People's Committees and the process of formation of various national and regional fronts based on the recognition of the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and program of national autonomy". The document expresses the strategic and tactical necessity of such a strategy. Actions such as the creation of "tactical United Fronts […] to attract broad masses" and the "coordination of

central and local struggles of different mass organizations" are seen as ways to exploit the enemy's contradictions and build "people's broad national unity against the so-called national consensus of the enemy." Regarding the theoretical basis for the creation of these national fronts, the document reiterates the importance of the "class outlook" and the revolutionary role of the peasants as the cornerstone of the insurgency. However, it also states that the policy of developing fronts and organizations of oppressed nationalities and regions "represents the only scientific method to make oppressed nationalities […] participate in […] the revolution." Thus, it is crucial to study the "historical peculiarities of Nepalese society" and the "formulation of national and regional policies" that take into account the "right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination and the program of the establishment of national autonomy." The final goal is to "lay the foundation of a consolidated national unity […] in accordance with the right of nations to self-determination" (CPN-M 2001). Finally, the 2001 Programme of the Revolutionary People's Council proposed specific institutional arrangements regarding the issue of nationalities, focusing on the autonomy of local authorities within the framework of democratic centralism. The document outlines a decentralized state structure "fully in the hands of the people" through multiple levels of government: the Centre (Union), Autonomous Regions, Districts, and Village/Town/Autonomous Town. These bodies are to be elected by the Houses of People's Representatives and function as state organs at their respective levels. The document asserts that the Houses of People's Representatives shall be "the most powerful organs equipped with legislative and executive rights." All these bodies should work under the principle of democratic centralism, where the minority shall obey the majority's decisions, and appointments and decisions at the local level must be approved by higher levels, including the Central People's Government. The document ensures that all "nationalities and languages of the country" should receive "equal treatment" and have the right to self-determination within the framework of national autonomy. It states that oppressed nationalities "shall exercise their own autonomous rule in the land they inhabit" with specific sectors like the People's Army and foreign relations remaining under the central government's jurisdiction. It also specifies that in areas of mixed nationalities, there will be proportional representation of all nationalities in local state powers. This arrangement suggests controlled autonomy where local bodies have significant authority over local matters but are constrained in areas vital to Nepal's national interest. The document proposes a complex state system where local authorities have meaningful autonomy in certain areas, yet their decision-making power is ultimately circumscribed by the overarching authority of central bodies through the principle of democratic centralism (Revolutionary United Front 2001).

To conclude, the CPN-M approach to Nepal's nationalities evolved over the course of the insurgency. Initially, the Party's official documents predominantly adopt a historical materialist perspective, focusing on class struggle and proletarian revolution without explicitly addressing ethnic issues. These early documents amalgamate various struggles into a broader fight against feudalism and imperialism, identifying specific class enemies and potential supporters without an explicit ethnic focus. However, documents intended for public dissemination exhibit a marked shift towards recognizing and incorporating ethnic issues. These documents criticize the state's dominance of a single ethnic group, language, and religion, and advocate for the rights and autonomy of various nationalities. This shift signals a strategic adaptation of the CPN-M, acknowledging the socio-political complexities of Nepal's multi-ethnic society and the need to mobilize the country's nationalities. The evolution of the Party's stance is also evidenced in later documents, which explicitly discuss the need for a broad united front that includes various anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes, nationalities, and regions. This united front approach aims to address the "right of self-determination of the oppressed nationalities" and proposes national autonomy as a solution. The Party's strategy evolved to emphasize the organization of ethnic fronts and the formation of local governing structures that recognize the rights of oppressed nationalities to self-determination. Finally, the CPN-M's later documents, such as the Programme of the Revolutionary People's Council, propose specific institutional arrangements for nationalities, advocating for decentralized state structures and local autonomy within a framework of democratic centralism. These arrangements suggest a controlled autonomy, where local authorities possess significant power over local matters but remain under the overarching authority of central bodies. Thus, the CPN-M's strategy towards nationalities reflects a pragmatic approach, balancing the Party's historical materialist and class-based ideology with the recognition of Nepal's ethnic diversity and the strategic necessity of incorporating ethnic issues into its broader revolutionary goals. While the Party's documents, particularly in the later stages of the insurgency, propose decentralized state structures and local self-rule, these are framed within the broader context of democratic centralism. This indicates a model where local authorities have meaningful autonomy in specific areas, especially concerning cultural and linguistic rights. However, this autonomy is circumscribed by the overriding authority of central Party structures.

	Early Stage (1995-1996)	Public Appeals and 40 Point Demand (1996)	United Front Strategy (1996-1998)	Evolving United Front (1998-2001)	Institutional Arrangements (2001)
Problems Identified	Focus on class struggle, amalgamating ethnic issues into broader resistance.	Recognition of oppression of nationalities; state's dominance of a single ethnic group.	Need for broader coalition including various nationalities.	Integration of ethnic minorities into the revolutionary movement.	Balancing local autonomy with national unity.
Solutions Proposed	Utilization of ethnic grievances for armed struggle without explicit policies for ethnic autonomy.	Revolutionary transformation, promises for ethnic autonomy, secular nation, and education in mother tongues.	United front of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes, nationalities, and regions.	Formation of ethnic-based fronts and local governing structures.	Decentralized state structure with autonomous regions under democratic centralism.

Table 2 Summary of the CPN-M analysis of the nationalities issue

The CPN-M and the Ethnic Fronts

The CPN-M successfully recruited fighters and supporters from the minorities. The Maoist movement was largely composed of ethnic peasants, who had suffered from decades of discrimination and exploitation. The rural masses, especially the ethnic peasants, were drawn to the revolution by the Maoists' pledge of peasants' emancipation and self-rule from state tyranny and feudal oppression. They advocated for autonomy as a political system that would free peasants from economic, social, and cultural subjugation by the state and upper-caste elites. The peasants' livelihood resources (land, water, forest, and pasture) had been seized by the state or were being plundered by the feudal and commercial elites. Growing discontent had sparked uprisings in various regions of the country during the latter half of the twentieth century. The Maoist insurgency in Nepal effectively addressed the issues of cultural oppression (based on ethnicity, caste, and gender) in addition to the problems of economic disparity, regional bias, and political tyranny (Paudel 2016)**.**

At the same time, the Maoists extensively engaged with ethnic-based political organizations. The Maoists adopted a strategy of infiltration where no pre-existing groups existed and co-optation where other groups were present (Lawoti 2003). On the one hand, the CPN-M created several ancillary organizations to represent all sectors of society, including the different ethnic groups of the country. As reported by Crisis Group, this list included the All-Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary), the Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary), the All-Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary), the All-Nepal Janajati Federation, the All Nepal Peasants Association (Revolutionary), the All-Nepal Teacher's Organisation (Revolutionary), the Nepal National Intellectuals Organisation, the All-Nepal People's Cultural Union and the All Nepal Peasants Association. These organizations "follow [CPN-M's] directions and act as subsidiaries with specialised tasks or support bases" (International Crisis Group 2005b, 11).

On the other hand, the pre-existing ethnic organizations had a varied response to the Maoists. While prominent ethnic leaders refused to join the Maoists, other ethnic militants were co-opted by the Maoists (Boquérat 2006). In fact, the Maoists initially mostly failed to secure the pre-existing ethnic based organizations' support, which preferred non-violent political means (Bhattachan 2000, 149) or disagreed with the party's Marxist ideology and practice (Boquérat 2006). Moreover, according to a Crisis Group report, alliances between the Maoists and ethnic organizations were hampered by the "Maoists' compulsion to eliminate political rivalry across the country". For these reasons, the CPN-M could not persuade "forces with different aims to join them in a shared task for common objectives" (International Crisis Group 2005a, 12) Many ethnic movement leaders

remained sceptical about whether Maoists claims were genuine or just an instrumental tool to achieve power (Hangen 2007). However, the Maoists' focus on ethnic issues also successfully attracted some organizations. Groups such as the Khambuwan Liberation Front reportedly joined the CPN-M "only because the Maoists had embraced identity as the main political agenda" (Chemjong 2017, 30). The alliance with ethnic militias helped the Maoists to replenish ranks with new recruits. At the same time, the militias used Maoist influence to push for their national agenda in their core areas. For example, in the Khotang district of Eastern Nepal, the Khambuwan militia pressed "the Party to ban the teaching of Sanskrit in state schools" and to adopt an anti-Brahmin stance (Ghimire 2009). These groups retained the autonomy of initiative and in several cases left the alliance with the Maoists due to political disagreements (Hangen 2007). For instance, in 2004 the Kirant Workers' Party left the alliance with the Maoists denouncing the insurgents' failure to include more ethnic minorities in the upper levels of the leadership (Boquérat 2006). Therefore, the establishment of a significant number of National Liberation Fronts by the CPN-M should be considered as a strategy to circumvent the existing ethnic organizations. Whereas the ancillary organizations were more or less directly controlled by the Maoists, the allied parties retained autonomy of initiative, so that "inclusion did not always prevent a conflicting relationship" (Boquérat 2006).

The cases of by the Limbuwan Liberation Front (LLF) and the Madhesi National Liberation Front (MNLF) serve to exemplify this pattern. Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, several ethnic organizations sought autonomy and the right to self-determination. Groups such as he Limbuwan Liberation Front (LLF) and the Kirat National Front (KNF) made explicit demands for local autonomy, political recognition and cultural rights (Shrestha 2004, 19–22). The CPN-M, in its efforts to expand its influence, engaged with these ethnic organizations by promising to address their demands for autonomy and self-determination. The CPN-M's ethnic policy, which emphasized ethnic autonomy and the right to self-determination, became a key factor in attracting these organizations(Shrestha 2004, 26). The party pledged support for the creation of an autonomous Kirat state, a move that was seen as an acknowledgement of ethnic identities and aspirations. This approach was seen as a departure from the traditional political focus on class struggle, positioning the CPN-M as a party that recognized and valued ethnic diversity, especially in comparison with the other Nepalese Marxist parties. However, tensions between the CPN-M and the KNF and LLF rapidly emerged as the ethnic organizations accused the CPN-M of failing to genuinely implement agreements related to ethnic autonomy and rights. For instance, the CPN-M's refusal to create of ethnic militias led to friction with the KNF (Shrestha 2004, 32). The CPN-M's unilateral actions, such as the formation of the Limbuwan National Liberation Front (LNLF) to counter the LLF, were seen

as attempts to undermine the ethnic organizations (Shrestha 2004, 28). The CPN-M's decision-making process often excluded the ethnic groups, leading to a sense of marginalization and betrayal. This was evident in the CPN-M's failure to include the KNF at the proposed levels in its central committee and in key decisions (Shrestha 2004, 33). These tensions between the CPN-M and ethnic organizations were further exacerbated by ideological differences. While the ethnic organizations emphasized ethnic liberation, the CPN-M viewed class liberation as a prerequisite for ethnic liberation (Shrestha 2004, 28). This fundamental difference in perspective created a rift between the two sides. The CPN-M's approach was seen as an attempt to subordinate ethnic issues to its broader class-based agenda, leading to discontent among ethnic groups.

Following the strategy of gaining marginalized groups' support by appealing to their identities, the Maoists set up a Madhesi National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 2000. The MNLF had a wide range of demands, such as fair Madhesi representation in state bodies; full issuance of citizenship papers; recognition of Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Awadhi as official languages at the local level, safeguarding of other cultural rights, and allocation of Madhesh revenues to the area; radical land reform; and abolition of dowry, women's oppression, untouchability, and social bias. However, the group was little more than a front for the Maoists. The MNLF role was "mainly subordinate". According to the International Crisis Group, they were created to back the CPN-M activities by offering a regional platform, devising locally appealing policies, recruiting and organizing" (International Crisis Group 2007)

Rebel governance in Nepal

The governance practices of the Maoists in Nepal, particularly their approach towards the ethnic groups, encompassed a diverse range of actions and strategies. Initial engagement in governance by the Maoists was not extensive. They did not touch the existing health and education system, which was the most prominent type of public infrastructure in rural areas, but engaged in taxation, recruitment campaigns, debt forgiveness initiatives, and limited land redistribution (Gersony 2003, 62). Likewise, Marks argues that the Maoists did not engage in extensive reforms. Land was not "systematically seized or redistributed" schools maintained the old curriculum, and the CPN-M cadres engaged in small-scale infrastructure improvement projects. The main changes in governance were made in the "core areas of longstanding insurgent presence" (Marks 2003, 15) An extensive study of Maoist governance practices in the Deurali district noted that the education system was revised to teach Maoist ideology, and religious teaching was forbidden. Moreover, villagers faced heavy taxation and policies such as the prohibition of homemade beer and alcohol

sales, a primary income source for local women, which led to economic hardship. Traditional village governance was significantly altered. The Maoists pursued initiatives aimed at disrupting traditional ethnic and caste-based social structures. The Maoists often appointed the village chiefs drawing from underprivileged caste and ethnic background. Inter-caste marriages and inter-ethnic marriages (for instance, between Damai and Magar) were encouraged, breaking traditional norms. The consumption of cow meat, traditionally taboo, was promoted. However, the enforcement of these new social rules varied, as Dalits continued to stay outside 'pure caste' neighbors' houses despite the theoretical abolition of such norms. Despite the CPN-M class-based discourse, there were limited attempts at collectivization. Collective work for infrastructure was met with strong opposition due to fear of losing ownership of tools and cattle (Lecomte-Tilouine 2010). However, the Maoists' influence over civilian populations was often characterized more by intimidation than consent (Gersony 2003, 99). The Maoist cadres, despite being few in number, exerted significant influence over the local population. According to Lecomte-Tilouine (2010), in the Maoist-controlled areas religious practices faced severe restrictions. The heavy taxation imposed by the Maoists led to the impoverishment of the villages under their control. Moreover, the Maoist local authorities were involved in identifying and abducting teenagers for the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA). Thus, locals would send their children to schools in areas under the government's control. According to Marks (2003), the Maoists had genuine popular support in the core areas, but in other areas "they held sway only through terror, through their ability to call upon guerrilla formations to act as enforcers". For instance, Marks witnessed episodes such as the accusation and abduction of a village postman on charges of espionage and explicit threats of violence towards community members. Although it seems that such episodes were the product of the cadres' varying levels of discipline, these actions collectively contributed to an atmosphere of fear and control.

As the Maoists' territorial control expanded, particularly in the Magar region, the CPN-M devised a novel model of self-administration. This model was successfully replicated throughout the country, leading to the division of Nepal into nine autonomous regions, six of which were based on ethnicity. In these regions, the informal policy was to grant the leadership and the "majority of representatives in the regional government" to the local majoritarian ethnic group (Gellner 2007a). Moreover, the local administrative units, called wards, gained greater independence under Maoist rule. Collective lands like forests and pastures were reassigned under the control of the wards. Each ward managed its resources and utilized funds raised for its infrastructure. s (Lecomte-Tilouine 2010). The "People's Committees," local civil administrative structures established at the local level, represented a crucial aspect of Maoists' governance. In these newly established regions, the Maoists ensured that the

regional government's leader and the majority of representatives were chosen from the local majoritarian ethnic group. This strategy was complemented at the local level, where the rebels' political institutions provided "special rights of representation in people's committees" for women and Dalits, signifying their intention to create a more inclusive governance structure (Parvati 2005). For example, in the Dolakha district each "people's government" committee included at least one member from every ethnic group found in the district (Shneiderman and Turin 2004, 80). In these territories, "ethnic leaders were promoted" and even incorporated as members of the party's central committee. They were also included in delegations for peace talks with the Nepalese government (Boquérat 2006). In addition to establishing representation structures, the Maoists also implemented policies in support of indigenous cultures. They promoted festivals, facilitated education in local languages, and created autonomous regions based on ethnicity. These actions were part of a broader strategy aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the local population and legitimizing their rule (International Crisis Group 2005a, 4).

It must be noted that these self-determination policies were pursued only after 2003, in light of military setbacks against the army. As argued by Lawoti, this could be a sign that "accommodation to the ethnic demands" were "tools to mobilize the ethnic groups in times of dire straits" (Lawoti 2003, 93). Moreover, local participation did not translate into control at the top levels. In fact, by analyzing the party's leadership ethnic composition among the CPN-M leadership bodies in 2005, ten years after the insurgency's inception, it is possible to notice that the Brahmin and Chhetris dominated the party's leadership. For instance, only two members of the ethnic communities were part of the CPN-M standing committee. In all of the party's bodies, while there were members hailing from minorities' communities such as Magar, Gurung, and Rai, they were notably fewer compared to the Brahmin/Bahun and Chhetri groups.

Leadership Body	Ethnic Group	Number of Members
Standing Committee Members	Brahmin/Bahun	4
	Chhetri	2
	Indigenous Groups and Minorities	2
Party's Politburo	Brahmin/Bahun	14
	Indigenous Groups and Minorities	9
	Chhetri	2
Central Committee Members	Indigenous Groups and Minorities	20
	Brahmin/Bahun	17
	Chhetri	6
	Unspecified	13

Table 3 Ethnic Composition of the CPN-M leadership (Source: Appendix C (International Crisis Group, 2005b, pp. 34–36).

Thus, challenges were still evident in the Maoists' governance model, particularly regarding representation at the top levels. With only two ethnic minority members in the standing committee, the party's highest body, the Maoists' commitment to ethnic representation was questionable. Other political bodies, although more representative, held little political power. The Maoists' promise of self-determination and the establishment of autonomous regions did not translate into the creation of power-sharing mechanisms to ensure ethnic representation.

Discussion

The CPN-M alliance with ethnic groups had significant effects. The attention to ethnic, caste and women issues helped Maoists' recruitment greatly and translated into high participation of these oppressed social groups in the insurgency (Lawoti 2003). It allowed the Maoists to gain legitimacy and support in rural and peripheral areas, establishing bases in regions with a patchwork of small ethnic communities. According to local analysts, the co-optation and creation of affiliated ethnic organizations "played a crucial role in expanding Maoist influence", although after the Maoists consolidated their influence they then "established their own organizational networks"(Poudel 2004).

The Maoists' strategy was motivated by the need to overcome difficulties in expanding their movement and recruiting members. The inclusion of ethnic issues and the rights to 'self-determination' by the Maoists can be seen as a strategy to broaden the scope of the struggle through the formation of a broad coalition of interests against the state (Bhattachan 2000, 149). According to Lawoti, this was the only strategy available in a patrimonial society such as Nepal. In this context, small political parties could attract supporters only by focusing on issues ignored by mainstream parties. Thus, the Maoists' support of self-determination and national rights should be seen in the context of their efforts to increase party militancy (Lawoti 2003, 90–91). Ethnic groups were targeted as "potential sources of support and recruits" due to their dispossessed status and history of resistance against the state.(Shneiderman and Turin 2004, 87) In fact, the Maoists began to espouse specific ethnic demands more vehemently right before or at the beginning of the insurgency, and the party itself motivated this focus because minority groups provided "good mass base for guerrilla war" (CPN-MAOISTS 1997, as cited in Lawoti, 2003, p. 90).

Although the Maoists saw the conflict and the societal cleavages in terms of class (Bhattachan 2000, 149), they successfully tapped into ethnicity-based grievances. The Maoists garnered support and legitimacy in the villages and periphery for their actions against the rich landowners and moneylenders, which traditionally were high caste Hindus and belonged to different ethnic groups than the lower classes (Shneiderman and Turin, 2004).

Moreover, the strategy of creating ethnic fronts should be interpreted as an adaptation of Mao's "United Front" strategy. In Maoist revolutionary strategy, "the united front, armed struggle and Party building" represent the three pillars of a revolutionary movement. In Maoist strategy, the United Front is an alliance with forces representing different sectors and classes of the society, spearheaded and directed by the revolutionary party (Mao 1939). In fact, the CPN(M) created a large number of other ancillary organizations, representing different sectors of society such as women, students, trade unions, etc. (International Crisis Group 2005a, 11). The CPN(M) followed Mao's strategy of creating a revolutionary United Front, which was the United Revolutionary People's Council, "fashioned as a central people's government in waiting" (International Crisis Group 2005a, 7). The Maoist leadership progressively came to consider the "organisations of oppressed nationalities and regions" as fundamental actors in the revolutionary process due to a "new consciousness for fighting for their own rights and liberation" (Boquérat 2006).

The Maoists analysed the ethnic issue in the context of broader economic inequality. According to the CPN-M leadership, the problem needed to be analysed through "Marxist-Leninist-Maoist political

economy". Likewise, their proposals to granting equal rights, and regional and national autonomy to the minorities mirrored Marxist leaders' approach to the "nationality question" (Thapa 2012) As argued by Shneiderman and Turin (2004), their main demands were agrarian reform and economic empowerment, and they used ethnic grievance to pursue a long strategy of "achieve the ideological goal of a Maoist republic" (p. 103). The Maoists aimed to subsume ethnic identities within a united revolutionary nationalism. The Maoist propaganda attempted to construct a new revolutionary national identity in which all the different ethnic groups " will be united and ultimately dissolved" (Sales 2000, 68).

In conclusion, the Maoist rebels allied with Nepal's ethnic minorities to gain support but aimed to subsume ethnic identities within a united revolutionary nationalism. The Maoists incorporated ethnic minority demands into their agenda and established ethnic liberation fronts to represent these groups. They also created ethnic autonomous regions in areas under their control and promised ethnic representation in the rebel governance structures. However, they adopted the rhetoric of ethnic struggle and self-determination but failed to establish power-sharing mechanisms that would give ethnic groups real influence. The Maoists did not share power with the other ethnic-based organizations and the party retained control over the autonomous regions' political structure through the principle of democratic centralism. The CPN-M's inclusion of ethnic groups should be considered a strategic decision taken to adapt to the complex multi-ethnic socio-political Nepali context. This decision was implemented following Mao Tse Tung's blueprints, that is, by creating a United Front composed of ancillary and allied ethnic organizations. However, the Maoists' main goal remained a class-based revolution, and they aimed to subsume ethnic identities under a united Nepalese nationalism.

Chapter 6: The LTTE - Power-sharing to Control Contested Constituencies

In this case study I will discuss the power-sharing agreement signed in 1988 during the civil war in Sri Lanka between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF). The purpose of this analysis will be to highlight the factors that led the LTTE to pursue a power-sharing agreement with a different constituency and what caused the failure of this alliance. I chose this case study for multiple reasons. First, because the case satisfies the scope conditions and allows us to verify the presence of the factors discussed in the previous sections. Second, the LTTE signed a power-sharing agreement with representatives of the Muslim Tamil-speaking minority, but the agreement was never upheld and shortly after the LTTE forcibly expelled all the Muslims from the territories under its control. Thus, I will be able to assess whether one or more variables of interest changed from the "before" case to the "after" case and whether that affected the changed outcome. Finally, using a within-case comparison has the advantage of limiting the number of influential variables to examine (Levy 2008).

Research on rebel groups during the war in Sri Lanka has focused on the causes of the Tamil militant groups' fragmentation and infighting and the LTTE rebel governance and military strategies. Most research has not problematized the LTTE's relationship with the Muslims, because it is not considered the Tigers' ethnic constituency. However, in this case study, I follow Thiranagama (2010, 2011a, 2022) in saying that "Muslim minorities are not at the margins but the key problem for Tamil nationalism" (Thiranagama 2011a, 108). Building on her research, I argue that the LTTE engaged in inclusive consolidation strategies to cement its control over the ethnically mixed Eastern Province. I argue that the Muslims of Eastern Sri Lanka were at the centre of a battle for allegiance between the LTTE and the newly formed Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC). On the one hand, LTTE engaged in inclusive consolidation strategies to cement its control over the ethnically mixed Eastern Province by promoting a discourse inclusive of the Muslims and proposing a power-sharing agreement granting extensive powers to the Eastern Muslims. On the other hand, the SLMC waged a political campaign fighting against the concept of "Tamil-speaking people" to re-centre Eastern Muslims' identity as part of the global Muslim ummah.

By reconstructing the context leading to the failed power-sharing agreement, I find all the theory-relevant elements I set out in the previous sections. The LTTE did not have full control over its constituency due to the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) intervention, it needed local support to legitimize its bid for control over the North-Eastern Province, it was preparing to fight against the Sri Lankan Army and it developed an ideology that allowed for the inclusion of Muslims. These conditions changed in 1988-1990, when the LTTE defeated the other Tamil rebels, establishing full control over the Tamil constituency, while the Eastern Muslims sided with the Muslim regionalist party Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC). After the LTTE failed to include Muslims into the Tamil - imagined and material - community, the Tigers began to regard Muslims "of the same ilk as the Tamils from dissident Eelam groups who were also being weeded out at the same time" (Roberts 2013), that is, as "traitors to their ethnicity" (Haniffa 2011). The LTTE switched to violent territorial consolidation strategies against Muslims. This led to increased violence against civilians in the contested Eastern Province and to the forced expulsion of all Muslims from the LTTE-controlled Northern Province.

Time Frame of the Case Study

Concerning the timeframe of this study, I will discuss the first phase of the civil war: from 1983 until the renewal of hostilities between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in 1990. The Sri Lankan conflict was rooted in the policies carried out after independence by the political parties representing the majoritarian Sinhalese population[51]. These policies, such as the 1956 "Sinhala Only" Act and the 1971 standardization policy strongly limited Tamils' access to the public sector and higher education and contributed to creating a discriminatory climate towards the Tamils. In the 1970s, after several of anti-Tamil pogroms, militant groups began to emerge, demanding an independent Tamil state in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Among these groups was the LTTE, which officially formed in 1976 and advocated for a separate Tamil homeland ('Tamil Eelam'). The conflict officially began in July 1983, following the "Black July" riots. Following an ambush by the LTTE on the Sri Lankan Army, organised Sinhalese mobs attacked Tamil civilians across the country. The 'Black July' riots, sparked widespread anti-Tamil violence, leading to the death of hundreds, possibly thousands, of Tamils, and marking the start of the full-scale civil war. The civil war in Sri Lanka was characterized by periods of fighting followed by peace talks, temporary ceasefires and the re-eruption of fighting. The conflict eventually ended in 2009 with the military defeat of the LTTE "amidst mass atrocities and war crimes" (Rasaratnam 2016a, 2016b).

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[51] See (Goodhand, Korf, and Spencer 2010; Jayapalan 2015) for ethnic politics and conflict in Sri Lanka. For work on the LTTE,

Following the onset of the conflict in 1983, the LTTE withdrew from the initial peace talks with the Sri Lankan Government in July 1985. After two years of fighting, the LTTE and the other Tamil militant groups accepted the terms of the 29th July 1987 Indo-Lanka agreement, which offered limited devolution of powers. Subsequently, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed to ensure the agreement's implementation. The LTTE rejected the agreement almost immediately and began a campaign to force the IPKF out of the island, aided by covert support from the Sri Lankan Government. Eventually, Sri Lanka and India agreed on the withdrawal of the IPKF by the end of 1989. In January 1990, the LTTE took over the areas formerly controlled by the IPKF. Talks between the LTTE and the Government failed and conflict resumed in June 1990.

The LTTE's Bid for Territorial Control and the Eastern Province as a Contested Space

Between 1983 and 1990, the Sri Lankan conflict can be classified as a multiparty civil war. Throughout the 1980s, the LTTE was only one of the several Tamil armed groups fighting against the Sri Lankan government. Among those, the main groups were the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Front (EPRLF) and the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS). Except for the LTTE, all militant groups were characterised by extensive political activities, socialist/Marxist political orientations and secessionist goals (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988; Sarvananthan 2018). The LTTE, on the other hand, did not try to gain mass popular support, and remained a purely military organization, prioritizing secrecy and internal discipline, and having the maximalist goals of territorial secession under the group's sole leadership (Mampilly 2011). In 1985 the LTTE proclaimed to be the sole legitimate representative of the Tamil struggle, declared the other militant groups as traitors and started an assassination and military campaign against them (Klem and Maunaguru 2017; Thiranagama 2011b). By 1988, the LTTE defeated or absorbed the other groups, despite their alliance with the IPKF (Cronin-Furman and Arulthas 2021; Smith 2011). In doing so, the LTTE based its legitimacy entirely on military prowess. The Tigers positioned themselves as the most effective Tamil group and the sole force capable of protecting Tamils from the Sri Lankan army (Cronin-Furman and Arulthas 2021; Terpstra and Frerks 2017).

The dynamics of the Sri Lankan conflict were significantly influenced by the emergence of India as a key external party in the negotiation process. Despite initial reluctance, India eventually decided to assist Tamil militants due to strong political pressure from Tamil Nadu. Simultaneously, it exerted pressure on the Sri Lankan government to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. Initial devolution proposals for the Northern and Eastern Provinces, such as the 1983 "Annexure C" and the 1985

"Thimpu talks" proposals, were rejected by the Sri Lankan government due to fears of provincial secession. Moreover, Tamil militant groups adopted an increasingly maximalist stance, including the creation of a contiguous North-Eastern province designated as the homeland of the Tamil nation. Subsequent negotiation rounds, such as the 1985 'Draft Framework of Accord and Understanding' and the 1986 Bengaluru summit, saw proposals for merging Tamil-majority areas by splitting the Eastern province into three smaller provinces (Tamil-majority Batticaloa, Sinhala-majority Trincomalee, and Muslim-majority Amparai). However, these rounds failed as well due to the LTTE's rejection of proposed settlements and the establishment of an autonomous government in its controlled areas. (Agashe 2023).

Finally, the Sri Lankan government reached an agreement with India in the form of the 1987 Indo-Lankan Accord. The agreement envisaged extensive devolution of powers for Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern Provinces, which would be merged into a unified N-E Province. However, it was met with resistance from both the Sinhalese population, who felt betrayed, and the LTTE, which opposed any solution that did not explicitly include Tamil Eelam. The merger was a long-standing demand of Tamil nationalist groups, and it must be understood in terms of the viability of a future self-governing Tamil entity. Indeed, the Northern and Eastern Provinces were intertwined in terms of "topography, population trends, and productive potential", and any independent or autonomous entity excluding the Eastern Province would be economically unviable and at risk of being controlled by the Sinhalese government. (Shastri 1990a).

At the same time, Muslim parties started making demands for local autonomy. As part of the Indo-Lanka accord negotiations, in 1986 the Sri Lankan government and prominent Muslim leaders signed the December 19th Proposals. The agreement stated that the North-Eastern merger would not include the Muslim-majority Ampara District, which would constitute a separate province (Haniffa 2011). The Proposals were never implemented and the minority status of Muslims was not recognized in the Indo-Lanka accord (Taheer 2018). However, as part of the Indo – Lanka accord, the NE province merger "was to be confirmed through a referendum". Considering that the Eastern Province's demography was evenly split between Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, it was clear that the Muslims had the power to tip the scale (Haniffa 2011).

Thus, Muslim elites in the East faced the choice of either pursuing their own form of regionalism based on the Muslim-majority district of Ampara or following Tamils' struggle against the Sinhalese government. Muslims feared the consequences of the N-E merger. First, they would have their demographic strength diluted from 33% of the total Eastern population to 17% in the merged province. Moreover, the Accord contained no provisions to protect the specific interests of the N-E Muslims.

Finally, Muslims feared being identified as 'Muslim Tamils' and therefore having their specific interests diluted in the wider Tamil interests (Knoerzer 1998). At the same time, Muslims had several grievances against the government, whose development schemes were skewing the demographic and economic balance in the East in favour of Sinhalese settlers (Shastri 1990a). These two tendencies were embodied by the two Muslim parties active in the East in the 1980s, the regionalist Sri Lankan Muslims Congress (SLMC) and the pro-Tamil Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) (Thiranagama 2011a).

Concerning the LTTE, control over the Eastern Province was fundamental not just for its economic potential, but also to shift intra-Tamil caste dynamics in favour of the LTTE. Whereas about 40% of Jaffna Tamils belong to the Vellala caste, which has historically constituted the elite of Tamil society, most LTTE militants hailed from the Eastern Province and belonged to lower castes (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988). However, the merger would have been possible only if the Muslims agreed to it. Although the viability of the referendum was unclear, in any case, the LTTE had "prove to the world[52] of the Tamil ethnic contiguity of the Northern and Eastern provinces". As noted by Ali (2004), in the ethnically mixed Eastern province only if "the Muslims become Tamils then the equation changes radically in favour of Tamil Eelam". Thus, the LTTE was deeply aware of the importance of the Muslim constituency for tipping the balance in the Eastern Province (Thiranagama 2011a). After initially acquiescing to the Indo – Lanka accord and the IPKF presence, the LTTE immediately rejected it, announced that it would "take over the civil administration in Jaffna" and continue fighting against the rival Tamil groups, which allied with the IPKF (Jayasinghe 1989). Then, the LTTE positioned itself as a protector of the Tamil population against the arbitrariness of the IPKF and other Tamil groups, both of whom suffered from a lack of discipline vis-à-vis civilians (Lilja 2009).

The Northern and Eastern Muslim Constituency: A Contested Field

Sri Lanka is a diverse and pluralistic country. According to the 1981 census, the largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka was the Sinhalese, who constituted 73.9% of the total population. The second largest ethnic group was the Sri Lankan Tamils, who made up 12.7% of the population. The third largest ethnic group was the Sri Lankan Muslims, accounting for 7.1% of the population. The fourth largest ethnic group was the Indian Tamils, mostly Hindus of Indian origin and comprised 5.5% of the population. Muslims[59] are considered a distinct ethnic group. They live in all Sri Lankan provinces, with a larger

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[52] It must be noted that the LTTE was also gradually losing international legitimacy. Whereas in the early 1980s, the Tamil cause attracted "considerable support" from the international community, that was lost with the LTTE's use of child soldiers and suicide bombers (Smith 2011).

[59] The Muslims in Sri Lanka originate from subsequent migrations of Arab, Persian and South Indian Muslim traders to Sri Lanka. The last wave of migration from South India was the most influential, and for this reason, they speak Tamil as their main language.

concentration in the East. During the 1980s, Muslims held the balance of power between ethnic groups in the Eastern province, consisting of 42% Tamils, 32% Muslims and 26% Sinhalese.

Figure 3 Administrative Division of Sri Lanka (Source: UN Department of Field Support)

Legend:
- Sinhala-speaking Buddhists (Sinhalese)
- Sinhala-speaking Catholics (Sinhalese)
- Tamil and Sinhala-speaking Muslims (Moors)
- Tamil-speaking Hindus (Sri Lankan Tamils)
- Tamil-speaking Hindus (Indian Tamils)
- Tamil-speaking Catholics (Sri Lankan Tamils)
- Malay-speaking Muslims (Malays)
- Christians of Dutch and Portuguese descent (Burghers)

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D.S. Division and Sector level according to 1981

Census of Population and Housing

Figure 4 Distribution of Sri Lanka's Language and Religious Groups in 1981 (Copyright: Sergey Kondrashov)

Sri Lankan Muslims are generally considered characterized by their efforts to develop a distinct identity based on Islam (McGilvray 1997) because they realized "that their interest lies in holding fast to […] Islam and not to any ethnic category" (A. Ali 1997). According to Imtiyaz, this should be understood as a reaction to "demographic anxiety" and "competition with the Tamils for control over economic and land resources" (Imtiyaz 2020). However, Muslim identity in the Eastern Province was not distinctly separated from Tamil identity until the 1990s. There, Muslims lived both in contiguous areas where they constituted a plurality (for example, in the Ampara district) and also scattered in villages in Tamil-majority areas (McGilvray and Raheem 2007). Northern and Eastern Muslims are mainly agrarian, and "constitute an ethno-religious social formation distinct from the Muslims in other parts of the island" (Taheer 2018). Northern and Eastern Muslims share "historically-rooted commonalities of language, social organisation and cultural practices" with the Northern and Eastern Tamils (McGilvray 1998). Due to a "fragmented settlement pattern" of Muslim and Tamil villages, the two communities were interdependent and bonded "economically, socio-culturally and politically" (Agus Yusoff, Hussin, and Sarjoon 2014, 204). Moreover, Tamil was also the language of religion, as Muslims "gathered their religious knowledge mostly through literature written in Tamil and published in South India" (A. Ali 1986, 166). The commonalities between Tamils and Muslims in the N-E were so strong that southern Muslims chastised their co-religionaries from the north for "living like Tamils" (Saroor and Thiruvarangan 2021).

The economic and political interests of the Muslims in the North-East were also different from Muslims' interests in Colombo. Historically, Sri Lanka's Muslims utilized their demographic distribution, which made them pivotal in electoral contests in many districts, to secure "concrete material enticements" from the central government. These enticements encompassed ministerial positions, support for religious education, and a redistribution of university admission quotas (Shastri 1990b). As argued by Ali (1984), Muslims "came to realize that by playing politics between the two major communities and between major parties they can achieve maximum benefits". However, Muslims and Tamils in the Northern and Eastern Provinces shared common grievances against the government. Government-sponsored agricultural projects in the Eastern Province opened up large areas to cultivation made available mostly to Sinhalese families from other provinces, resulting in drastic changes in the province's demographics. The Sinhalese population rose from 13% to 25% of the total in the 1953-1981 period, and new projects were threatening to further alter the balance (Shastri 1990a). This demographic encroachment had a tangible impact on local dynamics, as Muslims feared "losing their religious and language freedoms" (A. Ali 1986, 166). For example, these districts were "dominated by Sinhala administrators", making it difficult for the Tamil-speaking population to access government services in the area (Agus Yusoff, Hussin, and Sarjoon 2014, 203). Finally, communal

violence was not solely directed at Tamils but also targeted Muslims. Several incidents occurred during the late 1970s across the country. In the most severe case, in 1976, local police shot and killed Muslims inside a mosque while attempting to quell a Sinhalese-Muslim riot in the city of Puttalam (A. Ali 1986, 161–62).

For these reasons, while Muslims living in the rest of the country traditionally voted for the main Sinhalese ethnic parties, many Eastern Muslims joined Tamil nationalist parties such as the Federal Party (FP) and later the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) (Spencer et al. 2015). All Tamil nationalist organizations from the 1950s to the 1980s claimed to represent the 'Tamil-speaking' nation, explicitly including Muslims in it (Taheer 2018). Despite the claims of some scholars that the term 'Tamil-speaking peoples' was never successful (Haniffa 2007; Mohan 1987), several pieces of anecdotal evidence seem to indicate that "Tamil nationalism […] included Sri Lanka Tamils in the eastern region, Indian Tamils and Sri Lanka Moors from a range of social classes" (Stokke and Ryntveit 2000). For example, in 1976, several prominent Muslim politicians signed the Vaddukoddai Resolution, in which a coalition of Tamil and Muslim parties (including the MULF) formally declared their intention to create a separate state for the Tamil "nation". Among them, M.H.M Ashraff, who would later become the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader, famously declared "if elder brother Amirthalingam [the TULF leader] failed to get Tamil Eelam, the younger brother Ashraff will get it" (Mohamed Ismail, Rameez, and Mansoor 2004; Spencer et al. 2015).

Large numbers of Muslims sympathized with Tamil militant groups at the onset of the war, although most harboured reservations about their potential status in a Tamil State (Thangarajah 2003). During the late '70s and early '80s, many Muslims joined student groups advocating for Tamil freedom and a national homeland, later transitioning into Tamil groups (UTHR 1990, 57). This sentiment was underscored by a 1985 commentary noting the participation of Muslims in militant groups (Q. Ismail 1985, 833). Similarly, one of the founders of the SLMC indicated that Muslim youth from all social classes were joining the LTTE in significant numbers (Zuhair 2009). Furthermore, Muslims assumed leadership roles within Tamil militant groups, with militants occasionally finding refuge in Muslim villages (Nuhman 2007). Significantly, it was a Muslim family that sheltered LTTE leader Prabhakaran during the hostilities with the Indian Peacekeeping Forces (Farook 2009). Financial support from affluent Muslims also bolstered Tamil militant groups (Mohammed Ismail, Abdullah, and Fazil 2004), leading to the elevation of some Muslim militants to prominent positions (Thiranagama 2011a, 265). Local mosque leaders, recognizing the gravity of Muslim militancy, mobilized efforts to dissuade youth from joining militant ranks (Spencer et al. 2015).

The Sri Lankan government tried to prevent Muslims from sympathizing with the Tamil groups by "provoking and exacerbating" interethnic violence in the Eastern Province (McGilvray 1998). It did so by arming local paramilitary groups such as the Home Guards and the Muslim Jihad (UTHR 1990, 57), both responsible for attacks on Tamil civilians (Frerks and Klem 2004; Nuhman 2007). In 1985 a racial incident in a town in the Northern Province sparked "a series of riots" between Tamils and Muslims across large sections of the Eastern Province (A. Ali 1986, 164), most probably exacerbated by the intervention of Muslim militias sent by the Government (Hoole 2021). From 1987 onwards political assassinations and attacks against the Muslim community constantly escalated (Agus Yusoff, Hussin, and Sarjoon 2014, 204). Following the IPKF intervention, the Eastern province fell under the control of Tamil militant groups, who lacked discipline and mistreated and alienated the Muslim population. (Thangarajah 2003). As a result, Muslim support for the Tamil cause sharply declined, and "several Muslims left [Tamil armed groups] and formed the core of the Jihad" (UTHR 1990, 57). However, a significant percentage of Eastern Muslims still looked at the LTTE as the group more capable of protecting their interests, or at least the least harmful. The LTTE positioned itself as a protector of the Tamil-speaking population against the arbitrariness of the IPKF and other Tamil groups (Lilja 2009). These groups "became chiefly associated with the harassment of Muslims". For this reason, "support for the LTTE grew amongst both Muslims and Tamils" and "Muslims became perhaps the most important source of material help for the LTTE" (UTHR 1990, 58). According to Thiranagama (2011a), the "LTTE survived the IPKF offensive chiefly due to the material support of the Eastern Muslims". Thus, when the LTTE wrestled the Eastern Province from the IPKF's control in 1989, "the size of the LTTE's Muslim following took people by surprise" (UTHR 1990, 58).

The LTTE's discourse: Muslims as part of the Tamil nation

Sustained Muslim support for the LTTE was produced by sustained propaganda efforts. The LTTE had to "prove to the world[60] of the Tamil ethnic contiguity of the Northern and Eastern provinces" to prove the legitimacy of their secessionist claims. In the ethnically mixed Eastern province only if "the Muslims become Tamils then the equation changes radically in favour of Tamil Eelam" (A. Ali 2004). Thus, the LTTE was deeply aware of the importance of the Muslim constituency for tipping the balance in the Eastern Province and engaged in extensive efforts to reinforce the notion of "Tamil-speaking"

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[60] It must be noted that the LTTE was also gradually losing international legitimacy. Whereas in the early 1980s the Tamil cause attracted "considerable support" from the international community, that was lost with the LTTE's use of child soldiers and suicide bombers from the late 1980s onwards (Smith 2011).

Muslims (Thiranagama 2011a). The analysis of the LTTE's political programme and pamphlets released during the 1980s reveals the extent of these efforts.

The LTTE's political programme adopted in the 1980s was strongly inspired by Marxism-Leninism, which informed also the LTTE's stance towards the country's other ethnic groups. Regarding their stance towards the Sinhala people, the programme envisioned Tamil liberation as a prerequisite for wider emphasis that the LTTE is "a revolutionary ally of the oppressed and exploited Sinhala working class" against the "Sri Lankan state fascist state", whose racist ideology were "preventing class unity between the Sinhalese and Tamils". The LTTE called for "the progressive forces" of the Sinhalese people to fight against racism and to acknowledge Tamils' right to self-determination to finally be able to "mobile...against the state power". They also pledged to guarantee all democratic rights to their "Sinhala brethren who wish to live with the Tamils in the liberated Eelam state" (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam 2004) [61]. However, as the conflict progressed, this stance gradually evolved towards staunchly nationalist rhetoric. In the late 1980s, references to "the ancient Kingdom of Jaffna[62], Tamil tradition, culture, and language" became central to LTTE discourse. LTTE publications in the late 1980s called for the protection of "the Tamil homeland" from the Sinhalese, referred to as *mlechchas*, the Sanskrit term for impure and casteless outsiders (Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1988).

Conversely, the LTTE maintained an inclusive discourse towards Muslims throughout the 1980s. The LTTE's programme considered Tamil-speaking Muslims a separate ethnic group, but an "integral part of the Tamil national formation" because Tamil and Muslims had "common economic life, common homeland, common language and interests". The LTTE's programme stated that Muslims could protect their ethnic and religious identity only through a "unified struggle" with the Tamils. Only the establishment of an independent state would bring about the "solution to the problems of the Tamils and Muslims". In the envisaged Eelam state, the LTTE guarantees the safety, well-being and economic prosperity of the Muslim people and pledges to "safeguard and promote their religo-cultural identity" (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam 2004). In the following years, the LTTE produced several pamphlets to celebrate Muslim militants' activities (Farook 2009) and to emphasize Tamil and Muslims' common interests and grievances. For example, the analysis of the LTTE pamphlet "Muslims and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Struggle" (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam 1987)[63] reveals the LTTE's efforts to depict the Tamil Eelam struggle as inclusive and beneficial for the Muslim

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[61] NB: the source is from the 2004, but it includes the political programme adopted by the LTTE in the early 1980s

[62] The Jaffna Kingdom (1215–1619) was a medieval kingdom ruled by a Tamil dynasty and centered around the Jaffna peninsula, in the Northern part of the country.

[63] Original pamphlet titled "முஸ்லீம் மக்களும் தமிழீழ விடுதலைப் போராட்டமும்". Translation commissioned by the author

community. The appeals made to the Muslim community encompassed material, identity-based, and security-related concerns, emphasizing shared ethnicity, cultural ties, economic interests, and the need for protection against perceived threats posed by Sinhalese nationalist policies.

The pamphlet declared, "Muslims are an inseparable part of the Tamil national community. Like other Tamils who have embraced Hinduism or Christianity, Muslims, though followers of Islam, remained ethnically Tamil." It also argued that "Sinhalese nationalist policies" had a detrimental effect on Eastern and Northern Muslims, focusing on land grabs and demographic shifts leading to a decline in the Muslim population in certain areas due to the Sinhalese influx. The Sinhalese government was presented as a threat to the Muslims' security and advocated for their participation in the Tamil struggle to safeguard their interests and future. Economically, the pamphlet addressed the loss of land, educational and employment opportunities, and security, leading to a dire state for Muslims. It asserted, "Having lost their land, educational and employment opportunities, and security, our Muslim brothers and sisters lived in a state of constant fear and had been pushed into a pitiable condition." The pamphlet argued that aligning with the Tamil cause could improve the socio-economic life and safety of Muslims, stating, "Muslims, united with the Tamil nationality, would find a bright future. This solution alone would enable Muslims to nurture their religion, strengthen their cultural uniqueness, improve their socio-economic life, and ensure their safety." Furthermore, the pamphlet noted the participation of Muslim youth as fighters in the Tamil Eelam Liberation Struggle. The pamphlet concluded by asserting that within an independent Tamil Eelam, Muslims would have the opportunity to nurture their religion, strengthen their cultural uniqueness, and improve their socio-economic standing.

The 1988 Power-sharing Agreement

In this context, the LTTE signed the July 1988 power-sharing agreement with the MULF. The negotiations for this agreement took place in Chennai, headed by key representatives from both sides and resulted in recognizing Muslims in Sri Lanka as a distinct ethnic group within the totality of Tamil nationality (Keethaponcalan 2009, 175). The agreement confirmed the merging of the North and East provinces upon the basis of a "compensatory representation agreement" (UTHR 1991). The signatories stated that the agreement was "brokered on the basis of eastern concerns" (Thiranagama 2011a, 125). Moreover, the agreement was followed by another document produced by the LTTE, which reaffirmed that their "determination to preserve every inch of our homeland itself is an expression of Muslims' grievance and is a tangible step toward protection of Muslim rights", and that for this reason, Muslims should stand with the LTTE in their struggle to "safeguard their own land" and "survive as people" (Amerdeen 2006, 101).

The main provisions of the power-sharing agreement were as follows:

- The LTTE acknowledged that the Muslims are "a distinct ethnic group" and that the NE provinces are their "traditional homeland" as well. The Muslims of the N-E Provinces "have the right to enjoy the same ethnic rights, concessions, opportunities, and freedom as enjoyed by the rest of the Tamil-speaking people", with the LTTE responsible for their 'security, equality, and freedom' (Clause 7).

- Muslims' interests would be safeguarded by a "power-sharing agreement" that would not "undermine the territorial integrity of the homeland of Tamil-speaking people". This included the stipulation that in future land distribution, Muslim people would be entitled to significant percentages in various areas, and that job opportunities in the public sector would be proportionate to their population in each district (Clause 6 and Clause 9-10).

- The agreement ensured political and administrative representation, stating that Muslims would be entitled to not less than 30% of the representation in the Provincial Council and the Cabinet and that political, administrative, and developmental units should be created in predominantly Muslim areas (Clause 8 and Clause 14).

- It was agreed that "both, the LTTE and the MULF, will extend their co-operation for the full implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement," and that the 13th Amendment to the Constitution regarding Provincial Councils was unacceptable as it did not meet the basic political aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim people (Clause 4).

- Educational provisions were specified, with commitments to organize private educational facilities for the Muslim community up to the pre-university stage and to establish an Islamic University (Clause 11).

- The agreement included a "decolonization policy" to redress the adverse effects caused by government colonization, ensuring that no legislation affecting the rights of the Muslim people would be passed by the Provincial Council unless three-fourths of the Muslim representatives vote for it (Clause 12 and Clause 15).

- It was recognized that "the forthcoming election for the Provincial Council of the Tamil-speaking Province should be based on a voters' list compiled in a manner that would be fair and justifiable," and that there should be an interim administrative government until proper elections are held for the Provincial Council (Clause 16-18)." (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam 1988).

The agreement contained several provisions encompassing the Economic, Military, Political and Territorial domains of power-sharing.

Political Power-sharing: The agreement ensured the inclusion of the Muslim community in governance through clauses guaranteeing at least 30 per cent representation in the Provincial Council and Cabinet (Clause 8), and the reservation of a Deputy Chief Minister position for a Muslim (Clause 13). These measures directly address constitutional provisions for representation and inclusive governance. The agreement does not explicitly mention election provisions, proportional diplomatic representation, or the adoption of hybrid legal systems.

Institution	Observable Elements	LTTE – MULF Agreement
Government	Inclusion of other ethnic groups in governance	Inclusion in governance via 30% representation in Provincial Council and Cabinet
Constitution	Constitutional provisions for representation	Deputy Chief Minister position for Muslims
Elections	Election provisions	Not mentioned
Diplomatic Mission	Proportional diplomatic representation	Not mentioned
Law	Hybrid legal systems	Not Mentioned

Table 4 Political Power-sharing Observable Elements

Territorial Power-sharing: The agreement promotes territorial autonomy through the creation of administrative and developmental units in Muslim-majority areas (Clause 14), embodying the devolution of power to local governments. The emphasis on proportional representation in elections (Clause 16) supports this local autonomy. The agreement's provision for education reform, such as the establishment of an Islamic University (Clause 11), indicates local control over education systems. The devolution of power to local courts is not mentioned.

Institution	Observable Elements	LTTE – MULF Agreement
Government	Devolution of power to local government	Creation of administrative and developmental units in Muslim-majority areas
Constitution	Enshrinement of local autonomies	Indirect reference through local governance structures
Elections	Proportional representation in local governance	Indirect reference
Education	Local control over education systems	Local control over education systems
Justice	Devolution of power to local courts	Not mentioned

Table 5 Territorial Power-sharing Observable Elements

Military Power-sharing: The agreement is less explicit in military power-sharing. There is no clear reference to the creation of local security forces/militias or the integration of Muslims into the command structure of the armed forces. The designation of the LTTE as protectors of the Muslim population hints at no form of military power-sharing.

Institution	Observable Elements	LTTE – MULF Agreement
Policing/Security	Creation of local security forces/militias	Not Mentioned
Armed Forces	Integration in command structure	Not Mentioned

Table 6 Military Power-sharing Observable Elements

Economic Power-sharing: The agreement is specific in its economic power-sharing provisions. Clauses 9 and 10 guarantee proportional land distribution and public sector job opportunities, directly addressing proportional resource allocation and land reform. The decolonization policy outlined in Clause 15 aims to rectify the effects of government colonization, indicating a focus on the protection of property rights, particularly in housing and land. However, the agreement does not provide provisions on local taxation rules or specific aid provisions.

Institution	Observable Elements	LTTE – MULF Agreement
Resource Rights	Proportional resource allocation	Proportional public sector job opportunities
Land Reform	Proportional land allocation	Proportional land distribution
Taxation	Taxation rules	Not Mentioned
Welfare/Aid	Aid Provision	Not Mentioned
Housing	Protection of property (housing and land)	Decolonization policy addressing housing and land rights

Table 7 Economic Power-sharing Observable Elements

The content and the phrasing of the agreement are significant for several reasons. On the one hand, the LTTE positioned itself as the Muslims' protector, but it had to concede that they are "a distinct ethnic group". For the LTTE, the agreement could be seen as a pragmatic approach to consolidate power and legitimacy, particularly in the Eastern Province, where the demographic composition is more ethnically diverse. On the other hand, the MULF recognized the LTTE as the guarantor of Muslims' interests in the North-East. From the perspective of the MULF, the agreement served as a formal acknowledgement of the Muslim community's distinct identity and political aspirations. The MULF's recognition of the LTTE as a protector and guarantor of Muslim interests highlights a tactical alliance, possibly driven by the necessity to secure the rights and safety of Muslims in a highly volatile environment. Moreover, by signing the agreement the MULF endorsed the narrative that Muslims were part of the broader Tamil nation. The agreement's provisions for power-sharing, land redistribution, education, and political representation indicated a move towards institutionalizing the rights and representation of Muslims in the region by granting considerable rights, especially compared with the LTTE's authoritarian stance towards its Tamil constituency and the other Tamil militant groups.

Tipping the Balance: The SLMC's Conquest of the Muslim Constituency

The SLMC was created in 1981 by M.H.M. Ashraff "to absorb the Muslim youths and prevent the spread of the LTTE amongst the Muslims in the East", as declared by one of its founders (Zuhair 2009). According to the SLMC General Secretary, Muslim youth did not know "their identity, because they were also talking Tamil, and they were also categorized under the Tamil-speaking people" (Johansson 2019, 62). The SLMC strongly advocated for a distinct Muslim identity, separated from the Tamils.

The SLMC successfully coordinated with local mosque leaders[68] to employ a religious identitarian discourse remarking (specifically Eastern) Muslims' distinctiveness from Tamils. Owing to this religious, rather than ethnic-based, identity, the SLMC successfully established itself as a voice of the Eastern Muslims and wrestled away Muslims' support from the LTTE (A. Ali 2001).

These principles were enshrined in the SLMC constitution. Its guiding principles stated that "The Holy Quran and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet shall be the supreme [guidelines] of the Party", establishing a clear religious foundation for the party's ideology and activities and emphasizing its distinct Islamic identity. The party adopted symbols strongly associated with Islam, such as the star and crescent and the green flag "with the emblem La-ilaha-illallah Muhammadur-rasoolullah". The party's objectives were shaped by Islamic principles as well. Among the Party's goals were "To seek solutions to the socio-economic and ethnic problems of Sri Lanka based on the tenets of Islam and "To preserve and promote the Shariah Laws and to encourage the members of the party and others to adopt their code of Shariah Laws in their private and community life", highlighting a commitment to Islamic legal and moral frameworks (SLMC n.d.). Thus, it can be argued that the SLMC's adoption of Islamic symbols, principles, and objectives, as reflected in its constitution and guiding principles, underscores its deliberate efforts to cultivate a distinct and separate Muslim identity, firmly rooted in Islamic tradition and values.

Likewise, the public speeches[69] of the SLMC leader Ashraff aimed at differentiating Muslim identity and grievances from the Tamil's. Ashraff did so by highlighting the political marginalization of Muslims in Sri Lanka and concerns about attempts to undermine the Muslim community, thereby emphasizing the separateness between Muslim and Tamil grievances. For example, in a speech criticizing the administrative changes in the Eastern Province, he stated: "The Muslims who were 33 per cent in the Eastern Province, the only province where Muslims were in a considerable majority, were reduced overnight to 17 per cent" (Hakeem 2005a, 235). These proposed changes were framed as a direct threat to "the political leadership of the Muslims, […] the Muslim youth, and […] the Muslim economy" (Hakeem 2005a, 319). He advocated for Muslim self-rule through "the creation of a Muslim-majority Provincial Council" (Hakeem 2005a, 236) as the only solution to these threats against the Muslim community. This emphasis on numerical representation and community-specific political solutions shows the SLMC's efforts to advance a distinct political identity and aspirations. Ashraff balanced the assertion of a distinct Muslim identity with expressions of national loyalty. He

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[68] Eastern Muslims were characterized by being "in close contact with the mosque; and therefore quite under the influence of the priest [sic]" (Q. Ismail 1985, 833)

[69] The following quotes are extracted from the SLMC publication "Ashraff in Parliament", a curated collection of the speeches delivered by M.M. Ashraff from 1989 to 1990.

proclaimed, "I am first a Sri Lankan, second a Sri Lankan, and third a Sri Lankan" (Hakeem 2005b, 214), showcasing a dual identity - strongly Sri Lankan, yet distinctly Muslim. The use of Islamic principles in framing the SLMC's policies was another cornerstone of Ashraff's strategy to foster a distinct Muslim identity. He stated, "The Holy Koran […] and the supreme life of the Holy Prophet are the guidelines of our party" (Hakeem 2005b, 20), aligning the party's vision with Islamic teachings. For instance, he referred to Islamic principles even in the context of war, highlighting that "even in a war the Holy Quran does not permit or condone a Muslim killing women, invalids, and innocent [people]" (Hakeem 2005a, 170), thus differentiating the Muslim community's ethical stance. Ashraff's speeches frequently referenced Islamic law and morality, further distinguishing the Muslim community's legal and ethical framework. He proposed Islamic solutions to socio-economic issues, as evident in his advocacy for an interest-free economy, which he believed was "the only solution to the economic problems (Hakeem 2005b, 27). Moreover, he emphasized the role of Islamic teachings in moral and social issues, as seen in his stance on homosexuality, where he quoted the Quran to underline the community's moral position (Hakeem 2005a, 111). This alignment with Islamic doctrines marked a clear distinction from other ethnic identities in Sri Lanka.

The SLMC made its electoral debut in the November 1988 Provincial Council elections[70], with a platform based on Muslim identity and the creation of a new Muslim-majority province (Amerdeen 2006). These elections represented an unequivocal sign that Muslims did not support Tamil nationalism anymore. The LTTE expressively demanded both Tamil and Muslim communities to boycott the 1988 election, and only the SLMC, the EPRLF[71] and the UNP[72] contested. Communities voted along ethnic lines to such an extent that the results "looked similar to an ethnic census" (Knoerzer 1998). As shown in the election data charts in Tab. 5 and Tab. 6 (De Silva 1989), the SLMC became the main opposition party in the NE province, notably capturing 95% of the Muslim votes (Amerdeen 2006, 165). The party repeated its success at the 1989 parliamentary elections (De Silva 1990, 83–85).

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[70] Sri Lankan electoral law allows political parties to run for elections only if they meet a minimum number of registered party members.
[71] Tamil nationalist coalition supported by the Indian Peace Keeping Force
[72] The United National Party (UNP) is one of the two main Sinhalese parties.

Name of Political Party	Batticaloa	Ampara	Trincomalee	Total Votes obtained by each Party
Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front	126,946 (74,76%)	45,754 (31,89%)	42,530 (54,5%)	215,230 (55%)
United National Party	756 (0,45%)	7,300 (5,09%)	//	8,056 (2,06%)
Sri Lanka Muslim Congress	42,100 (24,79%)	90,436 (63,03%)	35,502 (45,5%)	168,038 (43,94%)
Turnout	79,41%	54,94%	52,80%	

Table 8 1988 Provincial Elections results in the Eastern Province (Author's elaboration from Sri Lanka's Electoral Commissioner's 1989 Report (De Silva, 1989, p. 61))

Name of Political Party	Batticaloa	Digamadulla[73]	Trincomalee	Total Votes obtained by each Party
Tamil United Liberation Front[74]	55,131 (35,49%)	43,424 (20,32%)	12,755 (12,56%)	111,310 (23,70%)
Independents	47,916 (30,84%)	//	25,239 (24,85%)	73,155 (15,58%)
Sinhalese Parties[75]	15447 (9,94%)	108,000 (50,53%)	45,700 (39,99%)	169,147 (36,01%)
Sri Lanka Muslim Congress	36,867 (23,73%)	61,325 (28,69%)	17,884 (17,61%)	116,076 (24,71%)
Turnout	78,16%	84,45%	69,90%	

Table 9 1989 Parliamentary Elections results in the Eastern Province (Author's elaboration from Sri Lanka's Electoral Commissioner's 1990 Report (De Silva, 1990, pp. 83–85))

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[73] The Digamadulla Electoral District is located in the Eastern Province and includes several Muslim-majority towns such as Ampara, Sammant

[74] The TULF was backed by several of Tamil militant groups rival to the LTTE (the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front – ENDLF, the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front – EPRLF, and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization – TELO)

[75] Total number of votes obtained by all Sinhalese parties

Several factors explain the SLMC's success. The SLMC successfully addressed Muslims' concerns regarding their material, economic, and political status. First and foremost, from 1985 onwards Muslim-Tamil violence in the East precipitated a "very significant change" in public attitudes (Lewer and Ismail 2011). The conflict left Muslims with the choice of either siding with the Tamil militants, facing reprisal from the Army and severing their connection with the broader Sri Lankan Muslim community, or denying their Tamilness and facing the consequences against Tamil militants (A. Ali 2001). Muslims feared that under LTTE rule they would face discrimination in education and employment, as it happened to Indian Muslims in Tamil Nadu (A. Ali 2001). Moreover, Muslims felt alienated by the increasingly Hindu-centric discourse of the LTTE, whose "adoption of new myths and symbols of Tamil heroism" had "no appeal" among the Muslims (Zackariya and Shanmugaratnam 1997). Finally, the LTTE's strategy towards Muslims, marked by the banning of the SLMC and resorting to force against Muslim self-assertiveness, rapidly eroded support. These repressive tactics deepened feelings of separateness among Muslims and contradicted the LTTE's earlier stance as protectors, leading to a loss of trust and support. The LTTE's economic interventions and targeted violence against Muslim policemen in the East, particularly in Amparai District, further alienated the Muslim community, exacerbating tensions and resentment (UTHR 1990, 58).

From Inclusive to Violent: LTTE Consolidation Strategies in Face of the SLMC

Several key changes prompted the LTTE to switch to violent consolidation strategies. In 1990 the LTTE was in a much stronger position than at any earlier stage of the war, having become "the dominant power in the North-East" (UTHR 1991). Following the final defeat of rival Tamil groups, the LTTE achieved hegemony over the Tamil constituency, and could "set out to adjudicate who is a properly patriotic Tamil" (Thiranagama 2022). The 1988-1989 election results signalled the Eastern Muslims' unequivocal rejection of the Tamil national project. According to the LTTE's ideological understanding of the conflict, the elections signalled that Muslims could not be incorporated into the Tamil (imagined and material) community. They had become "traitors to their ethnicity" (Haniffa 2011), and as such had to be treated like the other 'traitors', those belonging to the rival Tamil militant groups. Recognizing that they could not win over the Muslims, the Tigers "introduced a campaign to ethnically cleanse the North Eastern Province" (Knoerzer 1998) and aimed to establish a "mono-ethnic Tamil space" in the Northern Province, the only feasible area for such a project (Thiranagama 2011a). According to one of the SLMC founders, this was a direct consequence of the LTTE's failure "to give leadership to the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the East" and of the emergence of SLMC "as the sole voice" of Eastern Muslims (Zuhair 2009). After the IPKF withdrew from Sri Lanka, the LTTE took over their positions and established control over both the Northern Province and (for a few weeks) the Eastern Province (Bavinck 2011). The attacks against Muslims escalated in the second half of 1990,

with several massacres occurring over a span of weeks: The attacks against Muslims escalated in the second half of 1990, with several massacres occurring over a few weeks: Ondaatchimadam on July 14, 1990; Kattankundy Mosque on August 3, 1990; Akkaraipattu on August 4; Eravur on August 12 (Farook 2009). According to Fuglerud (2003), the attacks on Muslims in 1990 seemed "motivated by a deliberate wish to destroy the local relationship between the two communities". Finally, in October 1990, the LTTE forcibly expelled the entire Muslim population from the Northern Province. Within a matter of days, the entire Muslim population, about 50,000-80,000 people, was forcibly expelled and their properties were looted by the LTTE (UTHR 1991).

Conclusion

In this case study, I have analysed the LTTE's strategies in the context of the Sri Lankan civil war, particularly its power-sharing agreement with the MULF and the subsequent shift in relations with the Muslim Tamil-speaking minority. The LTTE initially engaged in inclusive consolidation strategies, including the power-sharing proposal, as a response to their limited control over the Tamil constituency and the need for local support in the face of challenges from other groups and the IPKF intervention. This strategy was allowed by an ideology that accommodated the inclusion of Muslims as part of a common Tamil-speaking nation. However, the emergence and influence of the SLMC, advocating for a distinct Muslim identity and gaining political traction, altered the LTTE's perception of Muslims. The SLMC's successful campaign and electoral victories challenged the LTTE's narrative and claim over the Eastern Province, prompting a significant shift in the LTTE's approach. As Thiranagama stated, unlike the Sinhalese and the Tamils, Muslims of Sri Lanka "have no one place that is considered Muslim […] The wide-ranging regional dispersal of Muslims across Sri Lanka [means that] there can be no 'Muslim homeland" (Thiranagama 2011a, 109). The political project of the SLMC must be situated in this context: trying to create a Muslim homeland in the Eastern Province, centred in the only overwhelmingly Muslim area, that is, the Ampara district. However, in doing so, the SLMC entered into competition with the LTTE's state-building project, based on the territorial contiguity of the North and Eastern Province. For this reason, the Tamil and Muslim "state formation projects" inevitably entered a collision course. The SLMC's electoral success meant that the LTTE's claim to the Eastern Province could not gain legitimacy in the eyes of either the Sri Lankan government or the international community (Shastri 1990b). The local Muslim population, increasingly aligning with the SLMC, gradually diverged from the LTTE's sphere of influence. This shift was marked by the LTTE's transition from inclusive strategies to violent territorial consolidation, culminating in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the Northern Province. This radical shift can be understood as a reaction to

the perceived betrayal and the threat posed by the emerging Muslim political identity, as the LTTE sought to maintain its dominance and territorial integrity.

Chapter 7: The PYD and the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria

Rebel power-sharing in the Syrian Civil War

 The Syrian uprising in 2011 was a complex process involving a variety of actors and networks[76]. The violent response of the Assad regime led to the formation of several local armed groups, which were fragmented and differentiated according to external sponsorship, local social capital, and ideological orientation (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017, 26–30). The conflict has been described as a "semi-sectarian civil war" (Phillips 2015) or as "a proxy conflict organized along ethno-sectarian lines" (Heydemann 2013). Local and foreign actors mobilized the population along ethnic and religious lines, producing targeted violence[77] against civilians. Not only ISIS but also Syrian rebel factions, the Syrian government and foreign non-state actors such as Hezbollah used ethnic/religious-based discourse to mobilize their supporters, fight the rival groups and target outgroup civilians (Balanche 2015, 2018a; Burch and Pizzi 2020). In this context, cooperation between members of different groups is particularly unlikely due to distrust and commitment problems (McLauchlin 2018).

Among the various actors that shaped this landscape, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) played a significant role in Northern Syria. The PYD emerged as a major political force among the Kurds and gradually expanded its territorial control to cover most of North-East Syria. The other actors considered in this analysis are the Syriac Union Party, a small nationalist Christian Party mainly active in the Jazira region, and the Arab Shammar tribe. Their interactions and alliances significantly influenced the trajectory of the opposition and the broader political dynamics in Syria. The PYD seized control of Kurdish majority areas of the North of Syria in 2012 due to the regime's withdrawal and the activity of its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG). The PYD seized control of the territory. Due to the YPG's successes against ISIS, the Global Coalition against Daesh started supporting the YPG and oversaw the creation of the Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition including Arabs, Kurds and Christians which eventually wrestled control of the whole of North-Eastern Syria from ISIS. At the same time, the PYD established self-governance institutions under the so-called Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), a complex system of political institutions in which religious communities reportedly enjoy great degrees of autonomy, and the different ethnic groups are represented at every institutional level (Holmes 2019; Knapp and

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[76] For the Syrian conflict, see (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017; Daoudy 2020; Mazur 2021b). For international actor's involvement in the conflict, see (Hinnebusch and Saouli 2019; Phillips 2020), for the Syrian Kurds, (Allsopp 2015; Tejel 2008)

[77] The mechanisms through which armed groups engage in categorical violence against outgroup civilians have been outlined by, among others, (Fjelde and Hultman 2014; J. Goodwin 2006).

Jongerden 2016, 2020; UNSCWA 2020). Although the actual representativeness of such institutions is disputed (Balanche 2020; Özçelik 2019), the AANES represents a case of power-sharing institutions created during civil wars.

The case study focuses on the process that led to the alliance between the PYD, the SUP and the Shammar tribe, and the creation of the first core of these political institutions in the Jazira region[78] (2011-2014). It must be noted that the study does not discuss the events after the 2014 siege of Kobane by ISIS. That event marked the beginning of the International Coalition military support to the PYD and its allies, which led to the creation of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the eventual defeat of ISIS (2015-2019). The leading up to the creation of the SDF was marked by the US need to demonstrate that they were not arming a Kurdish group linked to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), but rather a multi-ethnic coalition (Barfi 2016). Thus, it could be argued that the activities of the SDF may have been the product of a sponsor-proxy relationship. Instead, by focusing on the 2011-2014 period I can avoid considering the element of foreign sponsorship[79], and I can focus on the other elements object of my case comparison. The alliance between these groups and the establishment of rebel governance institutions in Jazira have had significant implications for the political landscape and the broader Syrian conflict. Despite the sectarianization of the conflict and the general commitment problems deriving from the conflict environment, these groups institutionalized their alliance through co-governance agreements and the creation of power-sharing institutions.

Identity-based groups in the Early Syrian Conflict

Syrian Kurds composed about 10-15% of the pre-war Syrian population (Balanche 2018a). They do not form a homogenous group, but they are concentrated in three areas near the Turkish border, isolated from each other: the north of Jazira, Jarablus and Afrin (Tejel 2020, 22). Due to historical demographic patterns and policies of forced Arabization[80] carried out by the Syrian government (Gunter 2013), Syrian Kurds lack territorial contiguity. In the Jazira region, Kurds do not form territorial contiguous settlements but live alongside sizeable non-Kurdish communities such as Arabs, Christians and others (Lowe 2014, 230).

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[78] I use here the Kurdish administration terminology. The region's official administrative designation by the Syrian government would be Hasaka province

[79] The PYD/YPG "had no contacts with Western governments" until the end of 2014 (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021, 44)

[80] These policies included the revoking of citizenship for 120'000 Kurds in 1962 and the creation of an Arab cordon through government-sponsored resettlement of Arab tribes in the Jazira region.

Syrian Kurdish parties can be divided between pro-PKK[81] and pro-KDP[82] parties. Kurdish political activity in Syria started in 1957 with the foundation of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, sponsored by the Kurdish nationalist movement of Iraq. Despite numerous splits, all the KDP-S successor parties retain their connection to the KDP's ideology and leadership (Halhalli 2018). Historically, these Kurdish parties demanded political, social and cultural rights (Allsopp 2015, 28).

JaziraJaziraThe Democratic Union Party (PYD) was founded in 2003 by Syrian members of the PKK. The PYD follows the ideology of the PKK, democratic confederalism, promoting direct democracy, inclusion and representation of all ethnic groups, feminism, and cooperative economy (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012; Novellis 2018; Tax 2016). The first open activity of the PYD in the Jazira region was in 2004 in the context of the Qamishli riots, which represented the largest demonstrations in Syria's recent history before the 2011 uprising[86] (KurdWatch 2009). The PYD had strong support in the Kurdish communities of Afrin and Kobane, due to the links of these communities with the Kurds in Turkey, and the strong support networks established by the PKK[87] in the previous decades (Tejel 2020, 29). On the other hand, parties connected to the KDP had stronger support in the Jazira region, which borders Iraq (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021, 25). The Syrian regime managed its relationship with the Kurdish population through methods of co-optation and intimidation, and by fostering disagreements and conflict among the local groups. The Kurdish parties, mostly revolving around notable families, acted as "a channel between the regime and Kurdish populations". At the beginning of the conflict, the PYD was the best organized of the Kurdish parties due to the networks previously created by the PKK (Mazur 2021a, 229–31), and it reportedly organized capillary clandestine networks to mobilize the local population and take control of the territory in case of the regime's collapse[88].

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[81] Kurdistan Workers' Party, transnational militant group founded by Abdullah Ocalan in 1978. Formerly a Marxist-Leninist militant secessionist group, the PKK underwent an ideological shift and aims to create self-governing communities within the existing states' borders.

[82] Kurdistan Democratic Party, it is the governing party of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Founded by Mustafa Barzani in 1946, aims to establish an independent Kurdish state.

[86] In 2004, Al-Qamishli, home to Kurds, Arabs, and Christians, saw massive protests ignited by attacks from Arab fans during a football match. The subsequent day's march to honour the dead turned into riots against security forces and spread to other Kurdish cities. While initially non-sectarian, the protests eventually adopted a markedly Kurdish-nationalistic character. In 2005, further nationalist demonstrations were prompted by the death of a Kurdish Shayk. The protests were met with stern resistance by local Arab tribes and the Syrian forces, who targeted Kurdish properties leaving Arab and Christian ones unscathed (KurdWatch 2009).

[87] Hafez al-Assad allowed the PKK to operate in Syria since 1980 as leverage against Turkey. Eventually, the PKK was expelled from Syria in 1998 due to the regime's rapprochement with Turkey. The PKK's strong support bases in the Afrin and Kobane regions constituted the core support areas for the PYD as well (Mazur 2021a).

[88] Interview with KN (pseudonym), international civilian volunteer (Italy, 2022)

Syrian Christians are divided into 11 religious denominations, Orthodox and Catholic. They are dispersed over the whole country, with significant concentrations in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia and Al-Hassakah (Fahmi 2018, 5). The Assad regime presented itself as the only guarantor of Christians' security and identity against the threat of radical Islamism, and they were granted religious freedom, access to education and representation in state institutions. On the other hand, Christians faced political and economic marginalization, as they were excluded from the inner circles of power and suffered from corruption, nepotism and poverty (Fahmi 2018). Whereas in the rest of the country Christians tend to identify as Arabs, in Eastern Syria they see themselves as a distinct national group. This affirmation of a distinct identity put them at odds with the "regime's lack of acceptance of open expression of non-Arab identity" (Al-Tamimi 2014). Their pre-war population amounted to 200'000 in the Jazira region (about 20% of the total population), of which 40'000 in Qamishli (Oehring 2017, 20; Sido 2016)

The Syriac Union Party was founded in 2005 to represent the Assyrian and Syriac Christians of Syria (Oehring 2017, 13) and as a reaction to the political turmoil following the Qamishli riots[89]. The main goal of the SUP, according to its members, is to have Syriacs "be recognized as a national group with the right to use their own language, Neo-Aramaic" (Drott 2013b; Zurutuza 2014). The SUP represents the Syrian branch of the Dawronoye movement, a transnational Syriac political movement founded in the 1980s based on "left-wing secular nationalism". The party considers itself as the representative of all Aramaic-speaking Christians (Schmidinger 2020, 49). Before 2011, the party conducted covert activities in Syria to politicize the Christian population on their Syriac national identity[90], and had a core group of militants based in Northern Iraq[91]. The SUP represents only part of the region's Christians. A sizeable number of Christians identify as Arabs and support the government's ability to protect their communities (Hadaya 2020).

Finally, Arab tribal formations also play an important role in the Jazira region. Tribes play an important role in the so-called Syrian Steppe, "which constitutes 55%" of Syria's territory (Dukhan 2014, 20) Arab Syrian tribes can be described as: "groups tied in networks of kinship, and these bonds provide the tribal members with a solidarity and cohesiveness". These groups are not internally homogenous, but "based on the opposing and parallel segmentation of units at various levels", with a "layered outlook of alliances and enmity among tribes" (Chatty 2010, 29–30). After Syria's independence, Baathist governments strongly limited tribes' access to power. From the 1970s

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[89] Interview with Sanharip Barsom, co-chair of the SUP (online, June 2023)
[90] Interview with Sanharip Barsom, co-chair of the SUP (online, June 2023)
[91] Interview with S.M. Mosa, a founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, January 2023)

onwards, Hafez and then Bashar al-Assad co-opted tribal leaders to exercise indirect rule over Syria's periphery and used them to counterbalance both Islamists and the Kurds (Khaddour and Mazur 2017). As a result, the tribal system engaged in a dialogic relation with the state, which "depends on tribal systems for authority" and, conversely, "the tribal system of authority is maintained" through the favours granted by the state (Dukhan 2018, 3–4). Thus, relations between the Kurds and the Arab tribes in the Jazira region have historically followed a similar pattern. The Shammar tribe, which moved to the region in the 19th century, had historically maintained good relations with local Kurds, which supported them against other local tribes (Heras and O'Leary 2013) such as the Sharabia, "a long-time rival of the Shammar", which settled in Kurdish areas in the 1970s. Reportedly, the Shammar was " the only tribe that refused to attack the Kurds" during the 2004 Qamishli uprising (Drott 2014b).

Kurdish and Christian parties in the context of the Syrian uprising

The first stage of the Syrian conflict was marked by mass protests and the violent repression of the government. In the first months of 2011, the Syrian opposition created several coalitions, committees and fronts to represent the protests and the growing armed groups active in the country. Whereas Syria as a whole already experienced severe armed clashes, with about 11'000 non-state fatalities in 2011, violence in Kurdish areas was very limited, with only 21 deaths (Mazur 2021a, 226). Thus, most of the activity was at the political level.

 During the first years of the conflict, a large number of groups and coalitions representing civil society groups, political parties, influential individuals, and foreign interests formed both in Syria and abroad. For this analysis, I will focus on the political blocs which initially saw the active participation of the PYD and other Kurdish groups: the Syrian National Council (SNC) and the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB).

The National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB) was formed in June 2011. It was a coalition of non-armed, Syrian-based opposition parties and included leftist and Marxist Arab opposition parties, the Syriac Union Party and four Kurdish parties, among which the PYD and the KDP. It was founded to unify the opposition's demands and organize peaceful anti-regime protests. Their founding principles include non-violence, avoiding foreign military intervention, and rejecting religious and sectarian instigation. The NCC's initial demands included the release of political prisoners, army withdrawal from cities, constitutional amendments, the lifting of the state of

emergency, and prosecution of those responsible for violence. They also put forth a political program for the formation of an interim government and key reforms, including drafting a new constitution, introducing democratic laws, compensating victims of the revolution, and addressing the Kurdish issue (Syrian Observer 2012). Its stance vis-à-vis the protest can be summarised as "the three Nos", that is "no to violence, sectarianism and foreign interventions" (Bishara 2022, 207–10). In the meantime, the opposition in exile formed a series of committees that eventually became the Syrian National Council. Despite several efforts to create a unified coalition, the opposition in exile and armed groups' representatives formed the Syrian National Council (SNC) in October 2011 without the support of the NCB. The SNC was composed of secular and nationalist parties, Kurdish parties and local coordination committees and received support from Turkey, Qatar and some Western countries. However, it was strongly influenced by Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017, 147–48). The main goal of the parties composing the SNC was the fall of the Assad regime, by armed means if necessary. In fact, the SNC did not accept the NCB's requests to reject armed violence and foreign intervention.

According to Bishara, there were two main differences between the two coalitions. First, the NCB did not want to associate with "any explicit call for bringing down the regime" and "outright rejection of all dialogue". Second, while the SNC "had pinned its hopes on foreign intervention", the NCB "still believed there was a chance of a negotiated settlement with the regime" (Bishara 2022, 210). Due to the NCB's moderate positions vis-à-vis the regime, the SNC "declared itself the sole representative of the Syrian revolution, both in Syria and abroad" (ACRPS 2011), and was eventually recognized by the Friends of Syria Group[92] as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, granting it humanitarian and financial assistance (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017, 151). The SNC strongly rejected any agreement with the PYD, due to their perceived "connections to the PKK and the regime" (Schmidinger 2018, 157).

At the same time, the Arab tribes were divided between allegiance and opposition to the regime. The split was both geographical and within the tribes. On the one hand, tribal networks strongly supported protests in Daraa, Homs, Hama and Deir Ez-Zor. In Daraa, it was a tribal delegation that tried to negotiate the liberation of the children arrested after writing anti-regime slogans, the triggering event of the Syrian revolution. Members of confederations such as the "Aneza, Shammar and Baggarah" formed the Syrian Arab Tribes Council in 2011, a coalition which promptly joined the Syrian National Council. According to Dukhan, it was the Tribes' Council that rejected Kurdish Demands at the 2012

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[92] An international coalition supporting the Syrian opposition

Cairo Conference (Dukhan 2014). On the other hand, Assad successfully maintained tribal allegiances throughout the conflict, by promoting tribal leaders to top military positions and granting land and cash allowances. The regime promoted "tribal conferences" in Homs, Tartous and Raqqa for tribes to renew their allegiance (Dukhan 2014).

In 2012, the opposition faced internal and external challenges, attempting to forge coalitions and alliances while also experiencing divisions and disagreements regarding their vision, strategy, and representation. In February 2012, the Friends of Syria Group, an international coalition supporting the Syrian opposition, was formed. They recognized the SNC as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and called for an end to violence and a political transition. Humanitarian and financial assistance was pledged to the opposition. (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017, 150) Kurdish parties played a significant role, seeking to balance their relations with the Arab opposition, the regime, and regional actors (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017; Mansour 2012). The Kurdish National Council (KNC), also known as ENKS from its Kurdish name Encumena Niştimanî ya Kurdî li Sûriyê, was established on 26 October 2011 in Qamishli, after the withdrawal of these parties from the NCC (Carnegie Middle East Center 2012). As reported by both Allsopp (2015) and Mazur (2021a), the council was a concerted effort to unite the disparate Kurdish opposition groups under one banner. This strategic positioning was a move to assert the Kurdish bloc's importance in negotiating with other Syrian opposition groups and to counter the growing influence of the PYD. The council was explicit in attributing the Syrian crisis to the regime, recognizing the situation as a revolution. It promoted the establishment of a secular, democratic, pluralistic, parliamentary, and decentralized country. The KNC positioned the Kurdish people as natives of their historical land, and demanded their constitutional recognition as a key component of the Syrian population and Kurdish self-determination. It rejected any form of dialogue with the regime (Allsopp 2015; Mazur 2021a). The concept of neutrality was considered also as a main point of rupture between the PYD and the KNC, which instead wanted to openly oppose the regime[93].

These political dynamics intertwined with the dynamics on the ground. The first months of 2011 saw protests and demonstrations in Kurdish areas of Syria as well. These protests were policed by the PYD, which prevented direct attacks against government offices and symbols (Crisis Group 2013). The stance of the PYD has been explained either as a result of an agreement with the Assad regime

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[93] Interview with Abdulhakim Bachar, first president of the KNC (Erbil, 2023)

(Netjes and van Veen 2021) or as being coherent with the NCB's political stance[94]. Likewise, in cities such as Hasakah, Arab tribes initially quelled the protests to maintain local peace (Dukhan 2014).

Only as the Syrian uprising gained momentum, did Kurdish political parties respond by forming their own platforms. The PYD started creating a complex organizational structure, with the stated goal of being "able to take over from the Baath administration the moment the regime collapses" (Tanir, Van Wilgenburg, and Hossino 2012). These structures included the Peoples Council of Western Kurdistan (PCWK), an elected local assembly of 320 members formed in December 2011 to provide social services in Kurdish areas, and the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM), a coordinating body led by the PYD aiming to implement "grassroots democracy" (Darwish 2015; Gunter 2014, 110–11; Rashid 2017, 10–11). These two organizations formed "The Governing Bodies of Regions and Cities", which started creating a parallel government system in villages under Kurdish control (Crisis Group 2013; Darwish 2015). Moreover, the YPG started operating in the PYD strongholds of Kobane and Afrin (Rashid 2017, 15), raising concerns by setting up checkpoints and allegedly detaining political activists. This and reported clashes between PYD and KNC supporters led to claims of the PYD colluding with the regime, possibly aiming to curb Kurdish political activity (Allsopp 2015). Supposedly, the Syrian government gave the PYD leeway in exchange for preventing FSA activities in the area[95]. The PCWK founding declaration included supporting a peaceful democratic movement to transform the political system, rejecting foreign interference, unifying Kurdish parties and youth organizations, and conducting free elections for local councils. Notably, the document stopped short of calling for regime change or specific Kurdish rights, but committed to democratic social institutions and promoting the Kurdish language (Allsopp 2015). In this period, the political project pursued through the PCWK markedly addressed Kurdish national grievances, calling for the creation of schools and language centres to teach Kurdish, and for the restoration of Kurdish names in the region (Crisis Group 2013).

Whereas the PYD sought to control territory by creating parallel political institutions, the pro-KDP Kurdish parties pursued a negotiation strategy with the Syrian National Council. However, the SNC repeatedly rejected the Kurdish parties' requests to add "an annexe on the rights of Syrian Kurds" to its political programme. For instance, Kurdish representatives left the opposition's National Salvation Conference of July 2011 because it refused "to remove Arab nationalist language" from the constitution (Mazur 2021a, 235). In October 2011 one of the SNC leaders stated that "Syria is an Arab state…there is no discussion about this"(Allsopp 2015). In

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[94] Interview with Salih Muslim, co-chair of the PYD (online, April 2023)
[95] Interview with MR, local prominent expert of Kurdish affairs (Erbil, February 2023)

November 2011, the Syrian National Council rejected the Kurdish National Council (KNC)'s demand for federalism in post-Assad Syria. Tensions escalated when the SNC leader likened Syrian Kurds to "immigrants in France", implying their outsider status in Syria. Although the SNC finally agreed to recognize Kurds as a distinct ethnic group in a new constitution in December 2011, negotiations between the SNC, KNC head Abdul Hakim Bashar, and Iraqi Kurdistan president Masud Barzani in Erbil in January 2012 ended without agreement on the KNC's desire for formal autonomy. The relationship between the KNC and SNC further soured in early April 2012, after the SNC released its "National Charter: The Kurdish Issue in Syria", which excluded the recognition of a Kurdish nation within Syria, a provision that was in the final draft statement of the "Friends of Syria" meeting held in Tunisia in February 2012 (Daher 2016). The final breaking point was at the Cairo meeting in July 2012, when the SNC refused the inclusion of any reference to "the Kurdish people in Syria"(Sary 2016, 9). The SNC president considered territorial autonomy unfeasible as it would prevent the participation of the other ethnic groups of the highly heterogeneous Kurdish areas (Mazur 2021a). This led to the KNC's withdrawal from unity talks with the SNC, and accusations of Turkey exerting excessive influence over the SNC's policy (Daher 2016).

According to Sary (2016, 10), the KNC's diplomatic failure "weakened its quest for legitimacy among Kurdish constituents". Thus, the KNC broke negotiations with the SNC and engaged with the PYD. The KRG leader Massoud Barzani[96], who sponsored efforts to unite the Kurdish factions and defuse potential inter-Kurdish conflict, brokered the Erbil agreement between the KNC and the PCWK. The agreement stipulated the formation of the Supreme Kurdish Committee (SKC), a de facto interim administrative body for Syrian Kurdistan (Lowe 2014, 227–29). The agreement had several power-sharing mechanisms. The SKC were to be equally composed of PCWK and KNC members, subcommittees would oversee the administration of the areas, and the YPG would be put under the control of the SKC to form a joint armed force with KNC fighters (Mansour 2012). The agreement was mutually beneficial to both parties because, on the one hand, the PYD was "strong locally but isolated regionally", on the other hand, the KNC lacked "both popular support and a military force", and the SNC was perceived as hostile towards Kurds (Crisis Group 2013, 25). Subsequently, on the 19th of July 2012, the PYD began acquiring control of Kurdish districts[97]. Control was quickly gained over the majority of Kurdish areas including several mixed cities therein[98]. In these areas, the PYD

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[96] President of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq and leader of the KDP

[97] The Syrian authorities withdrew from these areas without fighting

[98] Including the cities of Kobane, Afrin, Amude, Derik, parts of Qamishli, al-Ma'abde, Ayn al-Arab, Ras al-Ayn, Dirbasiyeh, and the Kurdish-majority Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh districts of the city of Aleppo (Tanir, Van Wilgenburg, and Hossino 2012)

started providing security and essential services (Lowe 2014, 227–29; Tanir, Van Wilgenburg, and Hossino 2012). However, during this period "important sectors of the population in Jazira remained uninvolved", and the Syrian regime maintained significant political support in Arab and Syriac neighbourhoods (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016).
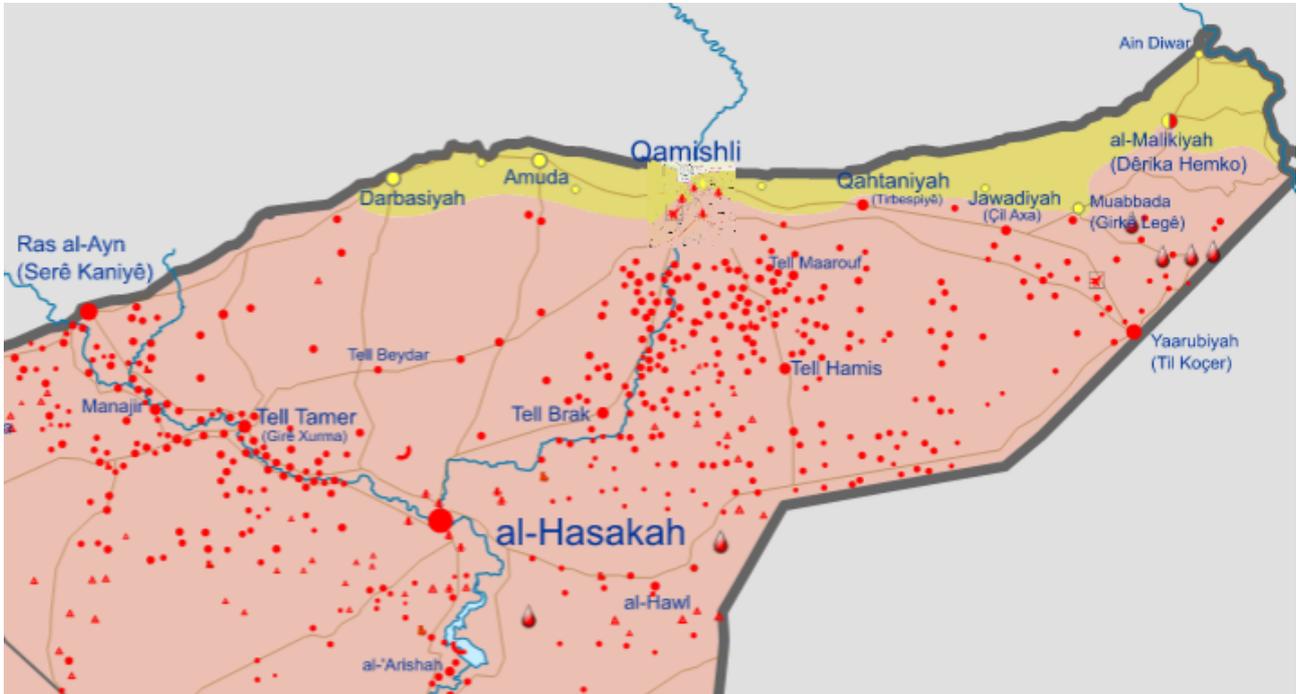

Figure 5 The Jazira region in August 2012. Yellow areas under the PYD, Red areas under the Syrian government (source: Wikimedia)

The political divergencies between the PYD and the rest of the Syrian opposition affected the battlefield as well. The PYD stated its neutrality towards both the regime and the rest of the opposition. However, the YPG's military confrontation with other armed groups in 2012 was marked by several clashes and offensives. In August 2012, the FSA announced the formation of military councils in Hasakah and Qamishli and attacked regime positions. The PYD denounced these actions as a product of "Turkish intelligence activities" (Tanir, Van Wilgenburg, and Hossino 2012).

Syrian jihadist groups battled the YPG for control over border crossings and the oil fields east of Qamishli, and they viewed the Kurds as "ideological enemies" (Gunes and Lowe 2015, 6). In September 2012, the YPG clashed with the FSA over the control of Ras al-Ayn, a mixed Kurdish-Arab town in the Hasakah province. In October 2012, the YPG fought against Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham in Aleppo province, who considered the Kurds as infidels and apostates (Netjes and van Veen 2021). After months of clashes, the YPG and the FSA reached a ceasefire agreement in Ras al-Ayn in January 2013. The agreement was mediated by Kurdish political parties and tribal leaders, and aimed to end the hostilities and establish a joint administration (Netjes and van Veen 2021).

However, the agreement was fragile and violated by both sides on several occasions. After Jabhat al Nusra gained prominence the Ras al-Ayn, the YPG resumed conflict and expelled other groups from the town in July 2013 (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021, 25–31). The battle lasted for six months. During the fighting in Ras al-Ayn, hundreds of Kurdish fighters joined the YPG. At the same time, the so-called "Islamic State" (ISIS) began taking over parts of Syria. As a result, these two events "removed the possibility of any other force forming enough strength to face the YPG", which "turned out to be the force that was protecting the Kurds and other minority groups from the extremist groups and military chaos" (Rashid 2017, 12–13). The battle of Ras al-Ayn sparked a wider Kurdish-Jihadi conflict that extended to other areas (Al-Tamimi 2013), and led to the definitive rupture with the Free Syrian Army. The YPG accused the FSA of collaborating with Islamist groups and attacking Kurdish civilians, while the FSA accused the YPG of collaborating with the Syrian regime and oppressing Arab civilians (Netjes and van Veen 2021). In March 2013, the YPG seized the Rumeilan oil fields from the Syrian regime, preventing the advancing FSA from taking control of the area (Deiri 2013).

The Jihadist offensive led to their encirclement of the regions of Jazira and Kobane over the course of 2013 (Schmidinger 2018, 101). This offensive produced several consequences. For example, in March 2013 the border town of Yaroubiya was conquered by a coalition of ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and tribal groups such as the Ahrar al-Jazira brigade, belonging to a sub-lineage of the Shammar (Heras 2013). Al-Yarubiya was in a strategic position: the border town constituted a potential supply route and source of trade with Iraq, opening the way to the smuggling of supplies and heavy weapons Knights and Van Wilgenburg, 2021, pp. 25–31). The importance of the town was not lost to the Syrian opposition. This may explain why Ahmad al-Jarba, a competitor for the leadership of the Shammar tribe and connected to the Ahrar al-Jazira brigade, was nominated president of the Syrian National Council a few months after the conquest, in July 2013 (Dukhan 2014). However, reportedly most Arabs did not sympathize with the Islamists and sought help from the YPG to reconquer the city (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). The conflict also alarmed Christian communities in the region, which had to "face the reality that the rebels leading offensives […] are primarily of jihadi orientation", and thus had to understand which actor could "guarantee their protection and interests" (Al-Tamimi 2014). According to a YPG commander, the YPG stood as the protector of all ethnicities, and due to the YPG-Jihadi conflict, "Syriacs began to join the defence units" (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). Both the Shammar tribe and the Syriac Military Council fought together with the YPG (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021, 25–31), According to SUP members, this conflict "proved necessary to develop more connections between the groups" (Drott 2013b). The PYD was aware of the importance of these ethnic ties: in other areas where the Kurdish population was geographically

dispersed, such as the Aleppo and Raqqa provinces, the YPG had "suffered serious losses" such as their expulsion from the town on the Turkish border Tel Abyad in August 2013 (Al-Tamimi and al-Kifa'ee 2013).
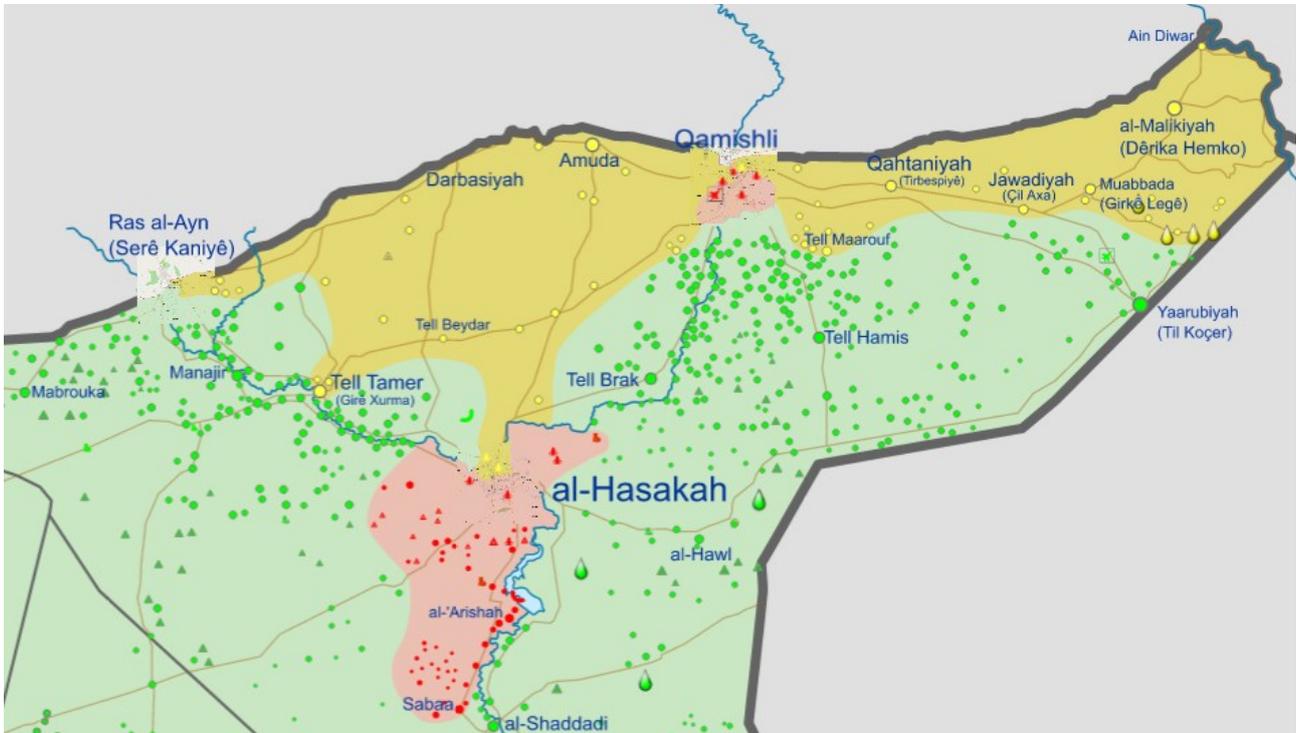

Figure 6 The Jazira region in March 2013. In yellow, areas under the PYD. In green, areas under the Syrian rebels. In red, areas under the Syrian government (Source: Wikimedia)

The Shammar Tribe

The armed conflict strengthened tribal militias, due to the influx of defectors from the Syrian army and the possession of weapons received from the regime in previous years. In the beginning, the Arab tribes were divided, some offering open support to the government, others choosing neutrality, or providing support to the rebels (Dukhan 2018). In the fight for the control of Ras al-Ayn during the first half of 2013, the YPG formed local alliances with the Arab Shammar tribes, specifically the Jarba sub-tribe of the Shammar (Knights and Van Wilgenburg, 2021, pp. 25–31). This period also witnessed the involvement of tribal communities like the al-Sharabiyya and al-Zubayd, opposing Islamist militias in Ras al-Ain. These Arab militias weren't incorporated into the YPG, instead, they operated under its command (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021, 25–31). The leader of the Shammar in Jazira, Humaydi Daham al-Hadi, formed the Sanadid forces to recapture the city of al-Yaroubiya. Post their formation, the Sanadid agreed to fight as an autonomous force within the YPG structure. The Sanadid Forces emerged controversially as the primary Sunni Arab tribal militia and Shammar-

mobilized armed group, displacing the FSA-affiliate Liwa Ahrar al-Jazirah. Critics claim that Shaykh Humaydi's militia acted in coordination with Kurdish forces against Liwa Ahrar al-Jazirah to control cross-border trade at al-Yaroubiyah, control oil resources in the Tal Alo area, and prevent the rise of a rival armed organization (Heras 2015). Moreover, the alliance with the YPG benefited the Shammar tribe as it maintained its independence while receiving modern weaponry. Notably, the special nature of the PYD-Shammar agreement is exemplified by the fact that such privileges were not granted to tribes that later allied with the YPG, like the Sharabiyya tribe of Qamishli (Balanche 2018b). Al-Hadi declared that the alliance was born out of necessity to fight the Jihadi groups in the area (Hubbard 2015), while an official in the self-administration explained the alliance with the PYD's need to protect the "border of the Jazira" (Van Wilgenburg 2015). Moreover, this partnership held great symbolic value for the PYD, as it lends credibility to their plans for including Arab tribes in their political agenda. In return, Dahham and the Shammar tribe benefit from local security and control over oil revenue. However, this relationship has caused tensions with other tribal communities in the area. The alliance has caused tensions due to a perceived imbalance of power. Other tribal communities feel marginalized and apprehensive about the increasing influence of the Shammar tribe, leading to an uneasy coexistence marked by competition and suspicion. Other Arab tribes have shown a preference towards dealing directly with the PYD rather than with the Shammar, leading to the fragmentation of Arab tribal communities and casting doubt on the PYD's claims of representing the Arab tribes' will (Khaddour and Mazur 2017).

Consolidation of Alliances through power-sharing

The response of Christians to the Syrian conflict was diverse. Most Christians in Kurdish areas adopted pro-regime and neutral stances or decided to emigrate, whereas others joined the Syriac Union Party (Fahmi 2018). Initially, the SUP operated independently from the PYD due to concerns about a possible "Kurdification" of the region (Drott 2013b). After the PYD took control of Kurdish areas, the SUP created the Sutoro security forces and established checkpoints to protect Christian neighbourhoods in the towns of Al-Qahtaniya (Tirbespiyê), Al-Malikiyah (Derik), Qamishli and Hasakah (Oehring 2017, 13; Zurutuza 2014). The Sutoro played an active role in providing "armed protection" for anti-regime protests carried out by the Syriacs (Drott 2013c). The SUP officially formed its armed branch the Syriac Military Council (SMC) on the 8th of January 2013, with the purpose of defending their people's rights "to live decently and remain in their historical land" (Syriac Union Party 2013)

The alliance between the PYD and the SUP must be also understood in the context of the "precarious equilibrium" existing in both the most important cities of Jazira, al-Hasaka and Qamishli. Al-Hasakah

was divided between YPG-controlled Kurdish neighbourhoods and regime-controlled Arab neighbourhoods, while the Christian areas were split between the regime and the SUP. Likewise, the Kurds controlled most of Qamishli, but the regime retained control of the main administrative buildings in the city centre, the airport and the Arab neighbourhood. Moreover, the regime successfully managed to create a split within Qamishli's Sutoro. The split led to the formation of a pro-regime Christian security force sharing control of Christian neighbourhoods with the SUP (Schmidinger 2018, 116–17). Reportedly, Christians of Qamishli preferred the regime because considered the protector against Muslims and because several Christians were employed in the local government[99]. For these reasons, the area, and the city of Qamishli in particular, was considered to have "the potential for severe ethnic and religious strife" (Drott 2013a).

The PYD was aware of the high risk of conflict in the multi-ethnic Qamishli compared to the preponderantly Kurdish and pro-PYD Afrin and Kobane (Crisis Group 2013). During these months, the PYD engaged in a long negotiation process to convince the SUP leadership to join their governance project. According to a founding member of the Dawronoye, during this period the SUP engaged in a review of the ideology, goals and behaviour of the opposition parties and armed groups active in the Syriac-populated areas, to form "a national front of Northern Syria" against "the FSA and Jabhat al Nusra" [100]. To build trust, pro-PKK Syriac Turks were sent to negotiate with the SUP. The first point agreed upon was pursuing the so-called third way, that is neutrality towards both the Syrian regime and the opposition[101]. The third way, as reportedly stated by the PYD co-chair, "is based on the organization of society and the formation of cultural, social, economic and political institutions in order to achieve the people's self-administration"(Sary 2016). The second term of the alliance regarded the PYD's proposed democratic confederalist framework as a model to administer the region[102][103]. The SUP and the PYD agreed on a series of conditions to the alliance, such as "common leadership, economic partnership, participation in the defence, prevention of demographic change", so that SUP members would "always be represented in the government" and the diplomatic delegations. Ultimately, the SUP accepted the alliance to have a "real partnership in the decision-making process" due to sharing "common enemies and common values". The alliance was born to face the attacks from "radical Islamic groups" whose perceived goal was to "clear the area of Syriacs

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[99] Interview with KN, international civilian volunteer (Italy, 2022)

[100] Interview with S.M. Mosa, a founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, January 2023)

[101] Interview with SN, a Syrian Kurdish intellectual close to the leadership of the PYD and the KNC (Erbil, January 2023)

[102] Interview with Sanharip Barsom, co-chair of the SUP (online, June 2023)

[103] Interview with Salih Muslim, co-chair of the PYD (online, April 2023)

and Kurds". By officially establishing the principles and practices on which to build the power-sharing institutions of North-East Syria, the agreements institutionalized the alliance[104].

Finally, the Syriac Military Council announced its official alliance with the YPG in January 2014, to defend "Syriacs, Kurds, Arabs and others" of the Jazira region from the "extremist […] ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and others" attempts to enter the Jazira region (Al-Tamimi 2014). The alliance entailed further integration of the SUP within the PYD government structure, and integration of Sutoro into the Kurdish local security system (Drott 2014c). Although the Syriac forces counted at most a thousand fighters (Ramezani 2013), it still constituted a significant addition to the YPG coalition. In fact, at the beginning of 2013 the YPG could count about 3'000 fighters (Knights and Van Wilgenburg 2021), although the numbers increased significantly in the following months. At the same time, SUP members started joining the PYD's government structure. For example, in January 2013Jazira, SUP member Elizabeth Gawrie was elected deputy minister of the Jazira region (Van Wilgenburg 2015). In July 2013 the PYD announced that it would declare autonomy of the Kurdish regions and hold elections, and announced that the project would involve "all Kurdish parties and minorities such as Armenians, Assyrians and Arabs" (Hevian 2013). On August 13th the PYD announced the formation of a legislative and administrative body for the region, and in September 2013 the Rojava council announced the creation of a constitutional committee and an interim government composed of members of all parties. The PYD narrative of the conflict states that the "people of Rojava" aimed to maintain neutrality to avoid being drawn into the larger Syrian conflict, and in this process, they also endeavoured to self-govern, involving the Kurds and other communities in the region. According to pro-PYD sources, the creation of political institutions involved a long deliberative process carried out by multiple committees, all composed of Kurds, Christians, Arabs and other components of the region. Among the organizations participating in the process at this stage, are listed a large number of Kurdish parties and civil society organizations[105], the Syriac Union[106] and Syriac civil society organizations[107], small Arab parties[108] and independents "from the Kurds, Arabs Syriac, Chechnya" (Ramo 2015). Finally, a "democratic autonomous project" was announced in January 2014, with the drafting of the "Charter of the Social Contract" a de facto constitution of the region (Darwish 2015).

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[104] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)
[105] Most of which were created by or connected to the PYD
[106] Confirmed by Sanharib Barson, co-chair of the SUP (online, June 2023)
[107] The Syriac Youth Union, Syriac Cultural Society, Syriac Academics Union, Syriac Women Union, the Syriac Language Authority
[108] such as the Arab Socialist Movement (already part of the NCB) and the Arab National Commission

The PYD could have not consolidated control over the Jazira region without the support of other components of the region[109]. The YPG cadres openly acknowledged that "territorial control would have been impossible without coopting the other local social components". According to an international volunteer, the PYD did not possess enough human capital to exercise strong control over the society, hence the strategy to mobilize civil society and ally with other groups[110].

The process of alliance-making and institution-building with the other components of Jazira coincided with the PYD's repression of its Kurdish competitors. The PYD on several occasions attacked the party offices of the KNC in Rojava and repressed street demonstrations. For example, in May 2013 the PYD's security forces arrested several members of the KNC who had undergone military training in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq by the KDP. Then, at the end of June, the YPG opened fire on a protest organized against the arrest of KNC activists in the city of Amuda (Human Rights Watch 2014). Reportedly, the PYD "also detained dozens more and burned down youth and cultural centres of the rival Kurdish Yekiti and Azadi parties"(Gunter 2014, 108). Finally, the KNC re-joined the SNC on the 28th of August 2013. KNC president Abd al-Hakim Bashar was made vice president of the SNC as part of a 16-article agreement, which included "constitutional recognition of the Kurds as well as the name of the "Syrian Arab Republic" being changed to the "Syrian Republic", and Kurdish membership of the SNC committees (Hevian 2013). According to a KNC member, "as soon as the KNC joined the SNC", the PYD started reaching out other groups and created new committees without involving the KNC (International Crisis Group 2014, 15). Due to these episodes, persisting disagreements over the stance vis-à-vis the regime, and the preferred form of government, the preparatory work was not coordinated with the KNC, which strongly opposed the development of these institutions. Although Barzani sponsored new negotiations between the KNC and the PYD in the following months, no lasting agreement was reached (Schmidinger 2018, 129,193, 222).

The Democratic Autonomous Administration (DAA) was finally established in January 2014, with the creation of three self-governing regions: Jazira, Afrin and Kobane. Humaydi Daham al-Hadi, leader of the Shammar's Sanadid Forces, was appointed as co-governor of the Jazira region. The DAA's constitution, known as the Social Contract, declares that the DAA is a "confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Assyrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Chechens, Circassians, Muslims, Christians, Yezidis, and the different doctrines and sects". The Social Contract also guarantees the rights of these

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[109] All my interviewees agreed on this point.
[110] Interview with KN international civilian volunteer (Italy, 2022)

groups to teach and learn their native languages (Allsopp and Van Wilgenburg 2019; Schmidinger 2020).
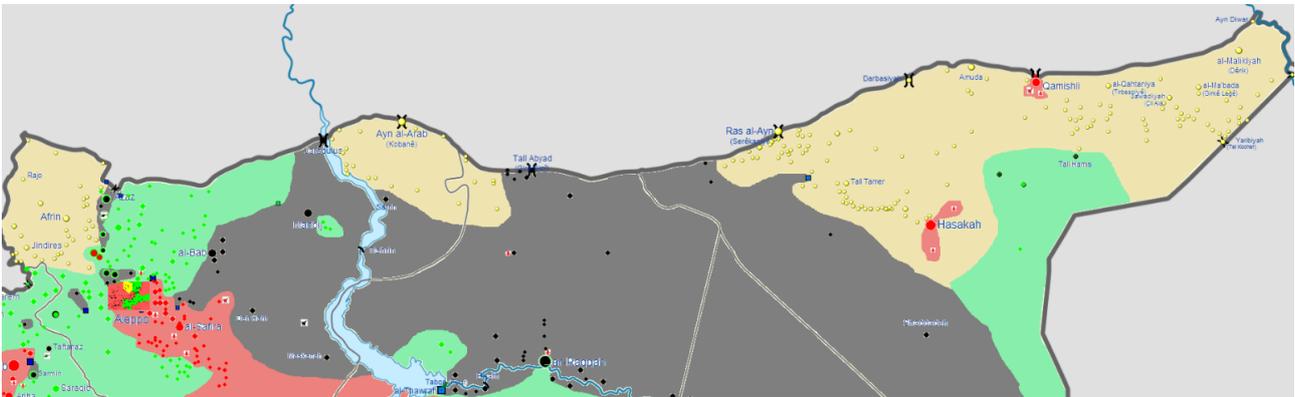

Figure 7 Northern Syria in March 2014. In yellow, are the three regions under PYD's control. In green, is the Syrian rebels. In black, ISIS. In red, the Syrian government (Source: Wikimedia)

Rebel governance institutions in PYD-controlled territories

The main political institutions created by the PYD were the aforementioned PCWK, a system of governing bodies, and the TEV-DEM, the coordinating body. After the PYD took control of major Kurdish cities in July 2012, the PCWK became the political organ responsible for overseeing the self-governance structures. According to my fieldwork research, the system of government was divided into four levels:

- **The Commune:** This is the most fundamental unit of the PCWK system. A commune typically consists of 30–500 households and primarily handles the essential needs of the populace. All residents are eligible to attend the assembly meeting that takes place every one or two months, where they discuss their concerns. A coordinating board is elected biannually or annually to manage the commune, consisting of two co-chairs (a man and a woman) and representatives from each of the commissions at the base level. The commune is also responsible for solving local issues; if an issue surpasses its capacity, it is escalated to the neighborhood council.

- **The Neighborhood:** This is the next tier, comprising 7–30 communes. The neighbourhood council is formed by the coordinating boards from each of the communes. It forms commissions in eight areas and elects its coordinating board and male co-chair. The female co-chair is chosen by the women's council at the neighbourhood level. Non-members of the People's Council can also join the commissions at this level.

- **The District:** This is the third level that includes a city and its surrounding villages. The neighbourhood councils are represented at the district level by their boards. The district council forms area commissions and elects co-chiefs. The TEV-DEM, the coordinating body of a district council, is constituted of 20–30 people. Political parties, NGOs, and social movements usually enter the council system at this level. Its most relevant sub-organizations, such as the Youth and Women's Organizations, adopt the same organizational structure as the larger bodies[111]

- **The PCWK:** This is the highest level, comprised of all the district councils. It forms the People's Council of West Kurdistan (PCWK). At its inception in August 2011, the TEV-DEM for all of Rojava was elected, consisting of 33 people who, along with other activists, became members of the eight commissions for all of Rojava. Attacks by IS and other groups have resulted in each canton having its own PCWK, TEV-DEM, and eight commissions. (Allsopp and Van Wilgenburg 2019; Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016; Schmidinger 2018).

Moreover, in January 2014 the three cantons declared Democratic Autonomy and formed a transitional administration, also referred to as a democratic-autonomous administration (DAA). These DAAs comprised a legislative council elected for a four-year term, an executive council with two co-chairs, and the supreme constitutional court, forming the administrative infrastructure of a canton. Within the DAAs, the executive councils allocated ministries to various parties to ensure active participation across the political spectrum. As a result, new ministries were established to expand party involvement. In Cizîrê's DAA, for example, there are 22 ministries, equal to the combined total of Kobanî and Afrîn. The PCWK parties, though considerably influential in the cantons, held less than half of the ministries in Cizîrê, with the PYD holding a minority in all three cantons (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). Regarding provisions for minorities' representation, reportedly Syriacs are "always represented in the government" and must be included in all the diplomatic delegations abroad. The leadership positions of every office and government body should be shared between Kurds, Syriacs and Arabs[112]. Finally, Kurdish, Arab and Syriac effectively became the official languages of the self-administration and started to be employed in all official buildings and documentation in the Jazira region (Schmidinger 2020). Despite these provisions guaranteeing political representation, the influence of the SUP over the self-administration's decision-making

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[111] Interview with K.N., international civilian volunteer in the PYD (Italy, 2022)
[112] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)

process declined over time. Arguably this is an effect of the demographic decline of Christians in the area[113].

The system of local assemblies and communes is intended to apply to all regions of the self-administration, with the leadership of the councils given to a member of the majority ethnic group in the area and the co-chair and deputy positions given to other groups[114]. Anecdotal evidence seems to confirm that Syriacs "head the communes of the neighbourhood which they primarily reside in"(B. Ali 2016) and that there has been an effort to create Arab branches of these organizations[115] The system is based on feedback decision-making between the local councils and the provincial administrations. According to an international volunteer who participated in the neighbourhood communes in Qamishli, the decision-making process does follow the mechanisms prescribed by democratic confederalism, based on feedback decision-making between the local councils and the provincial administrations[116]. The Communes, as the most basic unit of society in Rojava, were designed to be the vehicle of self-governance, solving problems and mediating disputes at a grassroots level. However, the transition from a traditional government structure to this self-managed society was fraught with challenges. Many still viewed these structures as typical government agencies, seeking bureaucratic solutions rather than utilizing them as resources for self-organization (B. Ali 2016). These new institutional forms led to confusion and overlaps between the roles of the councils, the executive, judiciary, and security bodies. Moreover, the limits of advisory roles remain unclear, which can be attributed to the fact that the administration laws and regulations are still evolving. The power of the councils encompasses mostly local issues, whereas matters related to security, economy, and diplomacy are discussed at the central level [118]. According to Sary (2016, 14), the security forces "continue to lead and bypass other organizational structures, citing security reasons", obstructing the decentralized local institutions and affecting the decisional process(Sary 2016, 14).

Regarding the education sector, the system has been reformed with language medium options now including Kurdish, Syriac, or Arabic. Syriac-language instruction was introduced in September 2013 (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). Christian schools have the right to use the regime curricula, the only internationally recognized, with additional content based on Ocalan's ideology. Notably, the Syriac curriculum makes no mention of Kurdistan, while the Arab curriculum contains elements of

[113] Interview with Samuel Sweeney, founder of the NGO Mesopotamia Relief Foundation, operating in the Khabur Valley, N-E Syria (online, 2023)
[114] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)
[115] Interview with K.N., international civilian volunteer in the PYD (Italy, 2022)
[116] Interview with C.F., international volunteer in self-administration governing structures (Italy, 2022)
[118] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)

standard Arab nationalism[119]. Science units follow the government curriculum, while the language of education depends on the majority population in a given area. It was also revealed that the history unit has been opened for discussion to change its Arab nationalist point of view, with committees consistently working on it[120].

Regarding the administration of justice, the courts established in NE Syria must have three prosecutors (Kurd, Arab and Syriac), and the offices of the judiciary attending to real estate matters must have officers from all three groups. The purpose of this provision is to make sure that a Christian judge has a say in cases about Christian-owned land or property, to make sure that it will not be confiscated. Moreover, all the administrative bodies and committees overseeing land and property issues must have Christian members as well[121]. To avoid possible abuses, Christians cannot sell land to non-Christians, and Christian lands are not confiscated by the Administration in the same way that other lands are[122]

It must be noted that many self-government institutions exist only in towns or neighbourhoods where there is enough critical mass for local participation[123]. Reportedly, a considerable minority of the non-Kurdish population still held favourable views of the Ba'ath regime and perceived participation in the PCWK as being hostile to the state (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). For example, Arab villages populated by tribes settled by the Syrian government in the 1970s have reportedly rejected the institutions and ideology of the PYD, and the party does not enforce its government system there[124]. It was reported that even some villages onthe outskirts of Qamishli rejected the Autonomous Administration and remained under the Syrian government's control[125]. Moreover, only a minority of the Christian community joined the system. For example, in the predominantly Christian Khabur Valley area, the council system is not implemented[126]. Initially, only the Chaldeans in Al-Malikiyah and the Syriac Union Party had chosen to participate in the district council as part of TEV-DEM. This participation led to a gradual shift in the attitudes of some Syriacs toward the Kurds (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). Observers on the ground noted that by January 2014 "a large portion of the Syriac community" sided with the PYD and was "slowly being integrated" into the autonomous administration (Drott 2014a). Arabs also opted to join the PCWK, but cumulatively, the non-Kurd participants constituted no more than 20 per cent of the non-Kurdish population (Ayboga, Flach, and

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[119] Interview with Samuel Sweeney, founder of NGO based in the Khabur valley (online, 2023)
[120] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)
[121] Idem
[122] Interview with Samuel Sweeney, founder of the NGO Mesopotamia Relief Foundation, operating in Northern Syria
[123] Interview with M.C. international volunteer in the YPG (Italy, 2022)
[124] Interview with C.F., international volunteer in the self-administration governing structures (Italy, 2022)
[125] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)
[126] Interview with Samuel Sweeney, founder of NGO based in the Khabur valley (online, 2023)

Knapp 2016). In fact, other Arab tribal communities sided with the regime due to their fear of increasing Kurdish power and a potential resurgence of Shammar's dominance (Khaddour and Mazur 2017). Reportedly, some of the lack of participation is due to the complexity of the system, judged positively by the Christians but seen as "overly complicated" [127].

Land property previously owned by the state has been reportedly redistributed to farmers' cooperatives (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016). Reportedly, in some areas such as Al-Malikiyah, these cooperatives took also possession of land owned by large landowners who had left the country[128]. Although the self-governance local institutions such as the People's Houses controlled "the least profitable economic networks", the PYD retained direct control of the lucrative "supply of flour, oil and raw materials" (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017, 172). According to Sary, although wheat provision was controlled by the Self-Administration, "merchants and importers…became the decisive power in the market"(Sary 2016, 13). However, it seems that in some but not all towns bread production and distribution is handled by the Administration through cooperatives[129]. At the same time, the security forces are reportedly involved in activities such as trade and transportation (Sary 2016, 12). The PYD proved effective in providing services to all sectors of the population. For example, Khalaf reported that the PYD provided "fuel, education, job provision, electricity, water, sanitation, customs, healthcare, education, and security" and distributed daily items like bread, gas cylinders and sugar. However, reportedly the PYD monopolized bread production and did "not allow others to provide such services without its permission" (R. M. Khalaf 2016, 17,19). In general, all the organizations connected to the Tev-Dem receive basic products from the Administration[130]. The local councils took over the food distribution system of the previous municipal administrations. They set price controls over basic items and oversaw the construction of flour mills (Ayboga, Flach, and Knapp 2016) The communes function also as distribution centres of other primary goods[132]. Reportedly, Syriacs had raised concerns about the PYD's attempts to monopolize the stockpile of wheat and barley products, which would allow total control over flour and bread production and distribution[133]. Bread represents the main source of calories in the region and it is fundamental for a family's sustenance. For this reason, control of bread production and distribution is both political and economic (B. Ali 2016).

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[127] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)
[128] Interview with K.N., international civilian volunteer in the PYD (Italy, 2022)
[129] Idem
[130] Idem
[132] Idem
[133] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)

Is It Really Power-sharing?

The case study of the PYD-controlled territories demonstrates a complex system of power-sharing and governance, echoing the theoretical aspects of rebel power-sharing that have been outlined in the previous chapter. This comprehensive assessment will categorize these elements according to economic, military, territorial, and political power-sharing.

Economic Power-sharing

Economic power-sharing in the PYD-governed Kurdish territories continues to evolve, with decentralization and distribution of economic resources being key points of focus. Local councils have remained in charge of food distribution systems, upholding price controls over essential items, and overseeing the building of flour mills (Ayboga, Flach and Knapp, 2016). The redistribution of land, which includes property previously owned by the state and land from absentee large landowners, has been transferred to farmer cooperatives, signalling a transformative shift in land ownership patterns. These cooperatives have reportedly taken control of land even in areas like Al-Malikiyah (Ayboga, Flach and Knapp, 2016). However, the PYD's centralized control over key economic resources such as the supply of flour, oil, and raw materials continues to pose challenges (Baczko, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay 2017).

There is some indication that the PYD allows limited economic autonomy in the regions it controls. For example, the security forces' involvement in trade and transportation and the merchants and importers' dominance in the market indicate some decentralization (Sary, 2016). Despite these points, there are concerns over the PYD's attempts to monopolize critical resources such as wheat and barley, which are fundamental to local bread production. This control of bread production and distribution carries significant political and economic implications (Ali, 2016).

The PYD-Shammar alliance has brought about new dynamics in economic power-sharing. As part of the partnership, the Shammar tribe is given local security and control over oil revenue (Balanche, 2018b). However, this preferential treatment has caused tensions with other tribal communities, leading to an uneasy coexistence marked by competition and suspicion (Khaddour and Mazur, 2017).

Institution	Observable Elements	Present in Case Study
Negotiate Resource Rights	Proportional allocation of resource extraction revenues, Land reform provisions	Yes, the Shammar controlled a share of oil revenues
Taxation	Rules for local taxation	No Data available
Welfare/aid	Provision of aid to communities belonging to other groups	No Data available
Housing	Protection of all groups' property	Yes, Special provisions to protect Christians' properties

Tab. 10 Economic Power-sharing Observable Elements

Military Power-sharing

The military power-sharing model in the PYD-controlled territories remains somewhat unclear. Some tribes have formed militias, and rather than being incorporated directly into the YPG, they have often operated under its command (Knights and Van Wilgenburg, 2021). This system appears to allow some level of autonomy while maintaining a degree of command and control under the PYD/YPG.

A notable example of this is the alliance with the Shammar tribe, particularly the Jarba sub-tribe. The formation of the Sanadid forces led by Humaydi Daham al-Hadi was a significant event. Instead of merging into the YPG, the Sanadid forces agreed to fight as an autonomous force within the YPG's structure (Knights and Van Wilgenburg, 2021). The alliance between the PYD and the Shammar tribe had significant mutual benefits. The Shammar tribe maintained its independence and received modern weaponry, while the PYD gained a valuable ally in its efforts to control the region and protect the "border of the Jazira" (Van Wilgenburg, 2015). The military power-sharing also extends to the Syriac Union Party (SUP) which formed the Sutoro security forces and the Syriac Military Council (SMC). The relationship with the SUP led to the SUP operating checkpoints and providing armed protection for Christian neighbourhoods, which, in turn, strengthened the Christians' representation and role in regional security (Zurutuza, 2014; Oehring, 2017, p. 13). Both the SMC and the Shammar forces undergo military training with the YPG and at their own military camps. According to an informant, the Shammar tribe agreed to train its militias at the SMC military camps[134]. However, the preferential treatment towards the Shammar tribe and the alliance's role in local resource control caused tensions

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[134] Interview with S.M. Mosa, founding leader of the Dawronoye movement (Erbil, 2023)

with other tribal communities, leading to a perceived imbalance of power. Consequently, other Arab tribes preferred dealing directly with the PYD rather than with the Shammar (Khaddour and Mazur, 2017). Thus, while the power-sharing approach appears to offer some inclusion and autonomy for these groups, it has also fostered tensions and fragmentation among Arab tribal communities.

Institution	Observable Elements	Present in Case Study
Policing/Security	Creation of ethnically/religious connotated local security forces/militias	Yes, the Sanadid forces were formed by the Shammar tribe and the Syriac Union Party (SUP) created the Sutoro security forces.
Armed Forces	Integration of groups in the command structure	Yes, the Sanadid and the Syriac Military Council agreed to fight as an autonomous force within the YPG structure.

Tab. 11 Military Power-sharing Observable Elements

Political Power-sharing

The political power-sharing strategy of the PYD includes the forging of alliances with key actors such as the Syriac Union Party (SUP) and the Shammar tribe. The SUP exercise local political influence in the Christian neighbourhoods of towns such as Al-Qahtaniya (Tirbespiyê), Al-Malikiyah (Derik), Qamishli and Hasakah (Zurutuza, 2014; Oehring, 2017, p. 13). The alliance with the Shammar tribe lent credibility to the PYD's plans for including Arab tribes in their political agenda (Khaddour and Mazur, 2017). However, this relationship has caused tensions with other tribal communities, suggesting that the political power-sharing model may not be uniformly effective across all groups.

The representation of different ethnicities, genders, and religions at co-chair positions across various decision-making bodies is a clear reflection of this inclusivity. The PYD mandates the inclusion of Christian representatives to ensure their rights are protected. The representation of Syriacs in the government and their inclusion in all diplomatic delegations abroad speaks to the constitutional provisions for minority representation (Schmidinger, 2020a). The education system is now designed to include language medium options such as Kurdish, Syriac, or Arabic, reflecting an attempt at inclusivity. Christian schools are allowed to use the internationally recognized regime curricula with additional content based on Ocalan's ideology. Changes are also underway to revise the Arab nationalist perspective of the history unit in the curriculum (Ayboga, Flach and Knapp, 2016). In the administration of justice, courts established in Northeast Syria are required to have three prosecutors

(Kurd, Arab, and Syriac). Offices of the judiciary attending to real estate matters must have officers from all three groups. This system protects each ethnic group's land and property rights and prevents potential abuses. The rights of Christian landowners, for instance, are particularly safeguarded as Christians can only sell land to other Christians. Despite this, divisions remain, particularly in the cities of Jazira, al-Hasaka and Qamishli. There, the regime retained some control, particularly over Arab and Christian neighbourhoods, with Christians in Qamishli largely preferring the regime due to employment in the local government and perception of the regime as a protector against Muslims (Drott, 2013a; Schmidinger, 2018, pp. 116–117).

Institution	Observable elements	Present in Case Study
Government	Inclusion of other ethnic groups into the rebel government	Yes, the Shammar tribe and the Syriac Union Party (SUP) were included in the government structure.
Constitution	Presence of provisions for the representation, protection of other groups	Yes, the Democratic Autonomous Administration (DAA)'s constitution, known as the Social Contract, declares that the DAA is a "confederation of Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, Assyrians, Turkmen, Armenians, Chechens, Muslims, Christians, Yezidis, and the different doctrines and sects".
Elections	Specific provisions to ensure the representation of other groups	Not mentioned
Political Parties	Proportional allocations of funds	Not mentioned
Diplomatic Mission Abroad	Proportionality among the members of diplomatic missions abroad	Yes, Members of the SUP are always present in diplomatic missions abroad
Education	Provisions to ensure other groups' over language and curricula	Yes, the education system has been reformed with language medium options now including Kurdish, Syriac, or Arabic.

Justice	Protection of the rights of minority groups	Yes, the courts established in NE Syria must have three prosecutors (Kurd, Arab and Syriac).
Law	Adoption of hybrid legal systems	Not mentioned

Tab. 12 Political Power-sharing Observable Elements

Territorial Power-sharing

The territorial division of power in the PYD-controlled areas shows a four-tiered system of governance, ranging from local communes to the highest level of the PCWK. This model ensures decentralization and territorial power-sharing, allowing local governance and power-sharing at the smallest unit - the commune - and escalating issues that exceed its capacity to the neighbourhood, district, and ultimately to the PCWK (Ayboga, Flach and Knapp, 2016; Schmidinger, 2018; Allsopp and Van Wilgenburg, 2019). Territorial power-sharing efforts faced additional challenges due to the particular arrangement with the Shammar tribe and the Sanadid forces, which intensified inter-tribal competition and suspicion, leading to fragmented relations among Arab tribal communities (Khaddour and Mazur, 2017). Many tribes preferred dealing directly with the PYD rather than the increasingly influential Shammar, casting doubt on the PYD's claims of representing Arab tribes.

Institution	**Observable Elements**	**Present in Case Study**
Government	Devolution of power to local government units	Yes, the system of government was divided into four levels: The Commune, The Neighborhood, The District, and the PCWK.
Constitution	Enshrinement of local autonomies into law	The Social contract does not explicitly refer to the local autonomies
Elections	Quotas for minorities' representation	Not mentioned
Education	Local governments' power over local education systems	Yes, the language of education depends on the majority population in a given area.
Justice	Devolution of power to local courts	Not mentioned

Tab. 13 Territorial Power-sharing Observable Elements

Discussion

The PYD-SUP alliance can be seen as a strategic response to the power dynamics of the Syrian conflict. Both groups, facing threats from radical Islamic groups, saw the benefits of an alliance outweighing the costs of competition. Moreover, both groups agreed from the beginning on the framing of the conflict. confirming that ideological proximity is another factor influencing rebel alliances. The shared values and common enemies of the PYD and SUP facilitated their alliance. This aligns with the theory that ideological proximity can foster inter-rebel cooperation. Both groups had a shared interest in countering radical Islamic groups and preserving their communities.

At the same time, the PYD engaged in prolonged negotiations and a short-lived alliance with the co-ethnic KNC coalition. It can be argued that these prolonged attempts were due to the intervention of an external sponsor (Iraqi Kurdistan's President Barzani), and their need for further legitimation (PYD) and military strength (KNC). As per Balcellls (2022) and Pischedda (2021) theories, the alliance was short-lived and the PYD attacked the KNC to ensure control over the Kurdish constituency. At the same time, the negotiations between the NCB and the SNC failed due to complete divergencies in goals and perception of the enemy, and the desired political and territorial configuration of post-conflict society. After having ousted the KNC, the PYD pursued its rebel governance project. As per theoretical expectations (Medina and Sarkar 2022; Stewart 2021), the political institutions reflected the group's democratic confederalist ideology.

The institution-building process coincided with the formalization of the PYD-SUP cooperation both in the political and military areas. The negotiations between the two parties made them align on the same conception of the ideal polity and territorial aspirations. The alliance between the PYD and SUP, representing different ethnic groups, contradicts the theory that co-ethnic rebel groups are more likely to fight each other due to competition over the same resource pool. Instead, the PYD and the SUP institutionalized their alliance through co-governance agreements and the creation of power-sharing institutions: the SUP was included in the political institutions as part of the power-sharing agreement. This was facilitated by the PYD's ideology of democratic confederalism, which promotes direct democracy, inclusion, and representation of all ethnic groups. Initially, the SUP operated independently from the PYD due to concerns about a possible "Kurdification" of the region. The SUP progressively incorporated the PYD's ideology and organizational structure, leading to further integration of the SUP within the Autonomous Administration. These agreements were fundamental for the alliance and were strategically employed to circumvent commitment problems that stem from

ruling over disparate ethnic groups. The alliance prevented possible infighting in Qamishli, the Kurdish de-fact capital, and allowed it to concentrate resources on fighting rival jihadist groups. On the other hand, the SUP gained political representation through the appointment of its members, cultural rights through the use of the Syriac language and control over education, and military protection against external threats.

Chapter 8: Rebel Power-sharing in Civil Wars - Findings and Comparative Analysis

Introduction

This chapter consists of the comparative analysis of the three case studies of Nepal, Sri Lanka and Syria in light of the theory of rebel power-sharing. First, I discuss the formation and consolidation of rebel alliances, highlighting the various factors that influence these processes, such as relative power balance, common threats, external support, ideological proximity, and ethnicity. Second, I present the proposed causal pathway to the establishment of rebel power-sharing institutions, detailing the stages and factors involved. The case studies of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria allow us to explore these theoretical constructs. In Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) led an armed conflict from 1996 to 2006, during which they established control over vast regions of the country. The Sri Lankan case study focuses on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and their failed power-sharing agreement with the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) in 1988. The Syrian civil war, characterized by a complex interplay of various local and foreign actors, provides a backdrop for examining the alliances and governance strategies of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), Syriac Union Party, and Arab Shammar tribe. The chapter concludes with a comparative analysis of the case studies against the theoretical predictions of the rebel power-sharing theory. This analysis serves to validate or challenge the theory's assumptions and predictions, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of rebel alliances and power-sharing in different contexts.

Formation and consolidation of rebel alliances: theory discussion

The theory suggests that the creation and institutionalization of alliances among rebel groups are influenced by several factors, including relative power balance, common threats, external support, ideological proximity, and ethnicity. Formal alliances between rebel groups, even when they share the same ethnicity or ideology, are usually considered temporary and fragile. These alliances are a way in which rebel groups strategically manage the interplay between their strengths and weaknesses. The theory suggests that alliances can be stable only when incentives for defecting do not outbalance those for staying. In other words, rebels would form stable coalitions only when defection is too costly. Successful rebel alliances may produce rebel governance. Stable alliances improve rebels' combat capabilities against the government and coordinate the use of resources, leading to the formation of governance institutions in liberated areas. The degree of this coordination, and thereby

the resulting strength and effectiveness of the rebel alliance, greatly depends on the level of institutionalization within the alliance. Successful rebel alliances can lead to the formation of governance institutions in liberated areas, setting in motion a path-dependent form of organization that may lead to rebel power-sharing institutions depending on the ethnic make-up of the area and the ideological style of the rebels.

Following the formation of alliances, the rebel groups proceed to institutionalize their relationships, building durable links within the alliance to enhance cohesion and discipline. The success of this phase is contingent upon shared goals, trust, and cooperation among the alliance members. However, challenges such as distrust, lack of cooperation, and divergent goals can pose substantial obstacles.

The next phase involves territorial consolidation, where rebel alliances, upon achieving military successes and in the face of government withdrawal, divert resources to consolidate their control over territories and to provide necessary services. The success of this phase hinges on military victories and a lack of robust government presence, while military failures and a strong government presence can pose significant challenges.

With territory under control, rebel groups commence the formation of governance institutions, a phase that involves employing either coercion or co-optation strategies to manage the population, particularly in multi-ethnic areas. Control over territory and the ability to employ effective coercion or co-optation strategies facilitate this process, while a lack of territory control and ineffective strategies may impede progress. The construction and development of governance institutions by rebel groups entail profound ideological considerations. The adopted ideology, which can be shared among alliance members, primarily influences the nature and type of these institutions. However, if ideologies diverge or a shared vision for governance is lacking, such efforts might be hampered. Ideology not only affects the composition of governance institutions but also defines the rebels' governance style. The governance style, in turn, contributes to shaping the rebel institutions according to their strategic choices, ideological orientation, and preferred institutional design. This process helps in setting a path-dependent form of organization.

 Once governance institutions reach a mature state, mechanisms for power-sharing among rebel groups are established. Rebels often rely on coercion to maintain control due to limited trust towards out-group civilians. This approach, while necessary for control, is often costly as it demands substantial manpower for policing the population and hampers recruitment and extraction activities. In response to these challenges, rebels are often incentivized to employ co-optation strategies in

unsecured terrains to reduce distrust and induce community cooperation. These mechanisms often emerge as a solution to prevent societal divisions, factional splits, and internal rebellions by accommodating minority factions.

Comparative Analysis: Theory vs Case Studies

Alliance Institutionalization Theory Predictions

The theory discussed in the previous chapters provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of alliance formation and stability among rebel groups. I argued that alliances are formed to increase combat capabilities against the government and to coordinate the use of resources, often driven by shared ideologies, common threats, and the balance of power among the groups. However, these alliances can be temporary and fragile due to competition over resources and territory. In terms of alliance formation, the formation of alliances is influenced by several factors. These include interactions with local actors, such as relative power balance, common threats, and ethnicity; internal dynamics, such as conflict framing, conception of the ideal polity, and territorial aspirations; and international actors, such as external support. The theory argues that these factors can push rebel groups towards cooperation, leading to the formation of alliances. For instance, rebel groups are more likely to cooperate when facing a severe military threat, leading to the formation of temporary alliances. Similarly, rebel groups with similar political aspirations and shared territorial demands are more likely to form alliances due to lower negotiation costs and shared goals. The stability of alliances is influenced by the same factors that influence their formation. However, the stability of these alliances is also threatened by competition over resources and territory. The theory suggests that in the presence of shared ideologies, common threats, and a balance of power among the groups, alliances may be more stable. However, the absence of these factors can lead to unstable and short-lived alliances. Finally, the presence of foreign sponsorship can lead to more stable alliances due to external enforcement. However, in the absence of foreign sponsorship, alliances may be less stable due to the lack of external enforcement.

In summary, the theory predicts that the formation and stability of alliances among rebel groups are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including interactions with local actors, internal dynamics, and international actors. The theory also suggests that the stability of these alliances is

contingent on the presence of shared ideologies, common threats, a balance of power among the groups, and foreign sponsorship.

Case Study Evidence

Interactions with Local Actors

The relative power balance, common threat, and ethnic factors were all at play in the formation of alliances in Sri Lanka. The other actors in the 1980s were the Sri Lankan government, the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF), the LTTE and other Tamil armed militant groups. was not the only Tamil armed group active in the 1980s. During the presence of the IPKF, Tamil militant groups created coalitions based on the balance of power. While most smaller Tamil groups sided with the IPKF, the LTTE entered into a tacit cooperation with the Sri Lankan government. Moreover, the LTTE preferred to attack co-ethnic militant groups to become the only representative of Tamil grievances.

The CPN-M, recognizing the potential of ethnic grievances as a mobilizing force, sought to incorporate various indigenous ethnic groups into their struggle. They incorporated minority demands into the policies and programs of the insurgency and established different ethnic fronts. The CPN-M created a national counter-narrative insisting on the historical exploitation of the indigenous ethnic groups by the monarchy and promised devolution of power to autonomous regions.

The PYD initially engaged in negotiation strategies with all the other actors. After failed negotiations with the predominantly Arab Syrian National Council, the PYD and the KNC negotiated a short-lived political agreement. However, the relationship with the KNC was characterized by constant conflict. The PYD actively disrupted the KNC political activities in Kurdish areas to prevent the consolidation of a second Kurdish bloc. Eventually, the KNC joined the SNC to counterbalance the power and influence of the PYD. At the same time, the PYD started cooperating with the Syriac Union Party and the Shammar tribe. All three groups were threatened by the Islamist armed groups active in the region. Both the Syriacs and the Shammar tribe were internally split, with respectively a pro-regime and a pro-Islamist faction who contended influence among their constituency.

Internal Dynamics

The LTTE presented itself as the only legitimate representative of the Tamil struggle. Consequently, it targeted all other Tamil militant groups, eventually managing to defeat or absorb them. Moreover, the group had maximalist goals of secession and independence from Sri Lanka and rejected the India-brokered peace accord and the presence of the IPKF. On the other hand, the other parties who had fewer maximalist goals accepted the presence of the IPKF and cooperated with them under a united front. The LTTE tried to include the Muslim population in its ideal polity,

The CPN-M's ideology played a significant role in the formation and stability of alliances. The party's commitment to addressing ethnic grievances was at the heart of their attempt to incorporate indigenous ethnic groups into their struggle. They adopted a strategy of infiltration where no pre-existing groups existed and co-optation where other groups were present. However, the CPN-M's commitment to ethnic representation was questionable as there were only two ethnic minority members in the standing committee, the party's highest body.

Ideological proximity played a role in all the PYD's interactions with other groups. The PYD abandoned negotiations with the SNC due to different visions over the configuration of Syrian society (Arab vs multi-ethnic state) and the stance towards the regime (armed confrontation vs. negotiations). The PYD and the KNC disagreed as well over the proposed political and territorial configuration of Kurdish areas. Finally, the PYD, SUP and Shammar shared the same neutral stance towards the regime and the other rebels. The SUP and the PYD had also the same visions regarding cultural rights for minorities.

International Actors

The presence of the IPKF had a significant effect on Tamil groups' dynamics. While most Tamil rebel groups formed a coalition backed by the IPKF, the LTTE rejected the IPKF presence and sided against the coalition. The CPN-M lacked external support and had to rely entirely on the local population. The Maoists had to resort to insurgent activities such as seizing weapons from police stations, bank robberies, and extortion. Thus, there was no significant influence of international actors. The agreement between the PYD and the KNC was strongly backed by Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (Iraq). However, the KRG supported only the KNC. Thus, there was no common sponsorship effect.

Expectations vs. Outcome

The Alliance Institutionalization Theory would predict that in the presence of shared ideologies (including post-conflict visions and goals), common threats, and a balance of power among the groups, alliances are more likely to form and may be more stable. However, the stability of these alliances is still threatened by competition over resources and territory. In the case of Nepal, the CPN-M was able to form alliances with various ethnic-based organizations, but these alliances were unstable due to ideological differences. The CPN-M incorporated minority demands in their ideology and promised cultural rights and the creation of autonomous regions. However, their main goal remained a class-based revolution, and they aimed to subsume ethnic identities under a united Nepalese nationalism. As a consequence, not all ethnic movements allied with the CPN-M, and some left the ethnic front due to the Maoists' failure to include minorities in the upper levels of the leadership. In the case of the Sri Lankan conflict, the pattern of cooperation and competition between the different armed groups followed the theory's expectations. In the case of the LTTE, the group considered Muslims as part of the oppressed "Tamil-speaking peoples", and actively communicated these ideas through their propaganda. Although there was no military alliance until the power-sharing proposal, the MULF previously sided with Tamil nationalist parties and shared this vision. Regarding the PYD, the group's alliances were influenced both by the presence of common threats and by ideological proximity with the SUP and the Shammar.

Group	Ideological Proximity	Common Threats	Balance of Power	Foreign Sponsorship	Predicted Effect	Outcome
CPN-M	Partial	Yes	Yes	No	More likely to form and maintain alliances	Formed alliances with various ethnic-based organizations, but these alliances were unstable due to ideological differences
LTTE	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	More likely to form and	No Military alliance

Group	Ideological Proximity	Common Threats	Balance of Power	Foreign Sponsorship	Predicted Effect	Outcome
					maintain alliances	
PYD	Partial	Yes	Yes	No	More likely to form and maintain alliances	Formed alliances with SUP and Shammar tribe

Tab. 14 Theory's predicted effect and observed outcomes

In conclusion, the expectations of the first part of the theory matched the outcomes to some extent. The CPN-M was able to form alliances with ethnic groups and incorporate their demands into their political agenda. However, these alliances were characterized by defections and disagreements due to not complete ideological proximity. The CPN-M's commitment to ethnic representation was questionable, and their main goal remained a class-based revolution. The theory predicted the pattern of cooperation and conflict between Tamil armed groups, the LTTE and the IPKF. However, the theorised pathway could not be verified as there were no instances of alliance with other identity-based groups. The formation of the alliance between the PYD, SUP, and the Shammar tribe was significantly influenced by ideological similarities, common threats, and balance of power. Shared views on cultural rights and stance towards the regime fostered mutual understanding. Their shared threat from Islamist groups prompted cooperation, and power balance dynamics prompted the PYD to create a multi-ethnic coalition to balance against other Kurdish and Syrian rebel coalitions.

Rebel Power-sharing Theory Predictions

I argued that power-sharing institutions are the outcome of a causal pathway that begins with the formation of a rebel coalition and culminates in co-governance agreements between identity-based rebel groups and other (armed) actors.

The nature and structure of power-sharing institutions are influenced by several factors. These include the immediate power dynamics between rebel groups, shared external support, ideological proximity, and the need to control a diverse population. These factors can push rebel groups towards co-optation strategies, including power-sharing, as a means to consolidate their control over territories and populations. Moreover, the style of rebel governance, which is influenced by the rebels' ideology, can

affect the number and type of rebel institutions. This, in turn, can lead to the use of specific governance strategies such as power-sharing. For instance, rebel groups with a leftist ideology, such as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) and the Democratic Union Party in Syria, may be more inclined to establish power-sharing institutions as part of their broader strategy to create inclusive governance structures.

The establishment of power-sharing institutions requires a high degree of institutionalization within the rebel alliance. This is because the presence of an institutionalized rebel alliance is a prerequisite for power-sharing institutions. The durability of these institutions can be reinforced by shared external support and ideological proximity, which can foster longer-lasting alliances by offering a unifying vision that goes beyond the immediate benefits of cooperation and outlines a shared goal for a post-conflict society.

In summary, the theory predicts that the design and implementation of power-sharing institutions among rebel groups are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including power dynamics, shared external support, ideological proximity, and the need to control a diverse population. The establishment and durability of these institutions are contingent on the institutionalization of the rebel alliance and the presence of shared external support and ideological proximity.

Case Study Evidence: the CPN-M

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) led an armed conflict from 1996 to 2006, during which they established control over vast regions of the country. The Maoists' approach to governance was characterized by an inclusive strategy towards Nepal's ethnic groups, which they incorporated into their political manifesto and organizational structure.

Power dynamics came into play as the dominant CPN-M co-opted various ethnic groups into their struggle. Recognizing the potency of ethnic grievances as a rallying force, they integrated these groups into the insurgency by creating multiple ethnic fronts and integrating minority demands into their policies and programs. This approach was key to expanding the Maoists' sway and support base, especially in rural and peripheral areas.

The degree of ideological proximity also influenced the establishment of power-sharing institutions. Despite the CPN-M's Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology primarily viewing societal conflicts in terms of class, they successfully tapped into the complex interplay of class and ethnicity-based grievances.

Garnering support and legitimacy from villagers and peripheral populations, their actions against affluent landowners and moneylenders, who traditionally were high-caste Hindus and ethnically distinct from the lower classes, further solidified their position.

The Maoists were also confronted with the complexity of managing a diverse population, steering them towards co-optation strategies. To manage this diversity, they adopted a strategy of infiltration where no pre-existing groups existed and co-optation where other groups were present. the Maoists established local civil administrative structures known as "People's Committees," which represented a crucial aspect of their governance. In these newly established regions, the Maoists ensured that the regional government's leader and the majority of representatives were chosen from the local majoritarian ethnic group. However, the Maoists' influence over civilian populations was often characterized more by intimidation than consent, and challenges were still evident in their governance model, particularly regarding representation at the top levels.

In conclusion, the case of Nepal provides evidence that supports the predictions of the theory. The Maoists' inclusive strategy towards ethnic groups, their establishment of ethnic fronts and autonomous regions, and their implementation of local administrative structures align with the theory's expectations about the influence of power dynamics, shared external support, ideological proximity, and the need to control a diverse population on the design and implementation of power-sharing institutions. However, the case also highlights the complexities and challenges involved in establishing and maintaining such institutions, particularly in terms of ensuring genuine representation and managing the tensions between ideological goals and the realities of ethnic diversity.

Case Study Evidence: The LTTE

The LTTE, a Tamil militant group, signed a power-sharing agreement with the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) in 1988 during the Sri Lankan civil war. However, this agreement was not upheld, and the LTTE eventually expelled all Muslims from the territories under its control.

The LTTE found itself in competition with several other Tamil factions for control over the territory and the struggle against the Sri Lankan government. As part of its strategy, the LTTE declared itself the sole representative of the Tamil struggle, which spurred a campaign against other Tamil groups. This competition influenced the LTTE's decision to strike a power-sharing agreement with the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF), perceived as a viable means to consolidate control over

the ethnically mixed Eastern Province. However, once the LTTE achieved comprehensive control over the Tamil constituency, the need for this power-sharing agreement diminished, leading to its ultimate dissolution. The LTTE's ideology initially embraced the inclusion of Muslims, recognizing them as an integral part of the Tamil nation and vowing to uphold their rights. This ideological proximity proved beneficial in facilitating the power-sharing agreement. However, as the Eastern Muslims began to side with the Muslim regionalist party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), ideological alignment between the LTTE and the Muslims dwindled, catalyzing the agreement's breakdown.

The complexities of managing a diverse population in the Eastern Province, consisting of Tamils, Muslims, and Sinhalese, led the LTTE to leverage the power-sharing agreement as a method to control this diversity. Nevertheless, once the LTTE solidified its control over the Tamil constituency, the necessity to accommodate such diversity dwindled. The LTTE began to perceive Muslims as a threat rather than a group to cooperate with, leading to the termination of the power-sharing agreement. Thus, while initially beneficial, the shifts in power dynamics, ideological proximity, and population control needs eventually led to the collapse of the cooperative endeavour.

Case Study Evidence: The PYD

Within the volatile landscape of the Jazira region, the PYD navigated intricate power dynamics among various factions, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS. In response to shared threats, particularly from jihadist groups, the PYD formed strategic alliances with other identity-based entities, including the Arab Shammar tribe and the Syriac Union Party (SUP). These alliances were instrumental in the PYD's consolidation of control over the region.

The ideological leanings of the PYD, namely the ideology of democratic confederalism with its emphasis on decentralization, multiculturalism, and gender equality, substantially shaped its governance strategy. The group established a complex system of local assemblies and communes, in which leadership positions were shared among Kurds, Syriacs, and Arabs. This level of ideological embodiment in the PYD's governance strategy confirms the theory's proposition of ideology as a significant influence in the design and implementation of power-sharing institutions.

The governance strategy of the PYD also mirrored the diverse demographic composition of the Jazira region. Home to a myriad of ethnic and religious groups - including Kurds, Arabs, Syriacs, and Christians - the region presented a unique challenge to the PYD. In response, the PYD established

power-sharing institutions and made concerted efforts to include these varied groups within its governance structures, which aligns with the theory's prediction about managing diverse populations.

Power dynamics, ideological commitment, and the need to manage a diverse population are all factors that influenced each other and together shaped the PYD's strategic consolidation of control, repression of rival Kurdish factions, and the establishment of power-sharing institutions.

Comparative Analysis: Case Studies Inter-Comparison

The comparative analysis of the three case studies highlighted some limitations of the theorized pathway. First, regarding the mediating effect of the style of rebel governance, the theory correctly predicted that rebels' ideology and goals affect the political institutions created and the nature of power-sharing arrangements. Regarding the CPN-M, the need to create a large coalition against the Nepali government and the multi-ethnic nature of the country led the CPN-M to address ethnic grievances in their political programme. The CPN-M secured the different ethnicities' support by including them in their political institutions, granting cultural rights and territorial devolution. The form of these arrangements was mediated by their ideology. The party had a Maoist ideology, and it did follow Mao's prescriptions for waging a successful insurgency. In line with Mao's thought, the CPN-M mobilized the peasants, formed or co-opted other organizations to create a United Front and created extensive rebel governance institutions in the areas under their control. The Maoists focused on minority groups because they provided a good mass base for guerrilla war, they aimed to subsume ethnic identities within a united revolutionary nationalism. As a consequence, several ethnic organizations left the alliance with the CPN-M due to their failure to include minorities at the upper levels. The PYD as well was influenced in its alliance and governance strategies by the need to consolidate control of the multi-ethnic Jazira region and to form a large coalition to defend against Jihadist groups. In this case, PYD's democratic confederalist ideology already envisioned the creation of a decentralized administrative structure and the participation of all national groups. Thus, the power-sharing institutions created by the PYD closely reflected the group's ideology.

On the other hand, although the LTTE was a militarist nationalist group, it proposed a power-sharing agreement to consolidate control of the Eastern Province. Although their conception of the ideal polity and territorial aspirations envisioned the presence of the Muslims within the proposed Tamil state, the power-sharing proposal is an unexpected outcome. The LTTE considered itself the sole representative of the Tamil struggle and created an authoritarian apparatus in the Tamil areas under its control. This puzzle could be explained by revising the theory on rebel power-sharing and adding other theory-

relevant elements: legitimation strategies and civilian agency. As stated previously, maintaining order through sheer violence usually involves greater costs in terms of manpower and coercion against civilians (Arjona 2017). Thus, scholars assume that rebels prefer to build at least a modicum of institutions to control the territory and to gain access to "population-based resources" (Kasfir 2015; Mampilly and Stewart 2021; Rubin 2020). Indeed, several researchers argued that creating institutions ensures civilians' cooperation, recruitment, and a steady flow of resources, and it is, therefore, the rebels' preferred choice (Arjona 2016; Huang 2016; Kalyvas 2006; Mampilly 2011; Weinstein 2007). Rebels' considerations are also mediated by their relationship with civilians, both those belonging and not belonging to the insurgents' constituency. Studies show that rebels create institutions "precisely where they depend on civilians for material and political support" (Huang 2016, 214), whereas rebel groups "less reliant on local communities" are less likely to provide services and create institutions (Biberman and Turnbull 2018). Rebels perceived as legitimate can focus their resources on military and governance efforts rather than on coercion (Podder 2017). Research showed how "legitimacy is the key variable to explain [rebel] groups' political success" (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015). As argued by Phelan (2021), insurgents engage in legitimation strategies because they "aim to demonstrate themselves as either an alternative to the state or a state/government in waiting". Rebels' strategies aim to "attain legitimacy [by] turning the power of violence into legitimate domination" (Schlichte 2012, 719). Legitimacy can be achieved in several ways. One way is to provide services and distribute resources to the rebels' support base (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Phelan 2021). Another way is to ensure immaterial goods such as stability, order and predictability[136] and to "build incentive systems […] to corral target populations" (Kilcullen 2013, 125). Local and international legitimacy are fundamental when rebels are particularly reliant on the local population for manpower and resources. In this case, social and economic groups, either formally or informally organized, are often "able to negotiate" with rebels "and can have more freedom in doing so" by exerting pressure on the rebels (Glawion 2020, 39). This happens even in cases of strongly ideologically connotated insurgents, as in the case of the Taliban, where "civilians preferences forced [them] to compromise" (Jackson and Amiri 2019). Thus, the LTTE may have decided to propose an institutional setup (power-sharing) that does not belong to the group's ideological repertoire because of the preponderant influence of factors such as the need to increase its legitimacy among Muslims.

As discussed in the case study, rebel groups may propose power-sharing arrangements to ensure the support of multiple ethnic constituencies. Power-sharing agreements guarantee rights and

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[136] Both in absolute terms or compared to the incumbent government or rival groups (Kaltenthaler, Kruglanski, and Knuppe 2022)

representation to the participants, and for this reason, can increase rebels' legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The Sri Lankan case showed that power-sharing does not automatically increase rebels' legitimacy. Despite these attempts, civilians can also reject the rebels' political project. In Sri Lanka, Muslim support for the LTTE gradually decreased, and Muslims used the local elections to express their refusal to the LTTE's nationalist project. They could do so due to the presence of the SLMC, a Muslim political party promoting an alternative political vision regarding the framing of the conflict, ideal polity and territorial aspirations. The SLMC depicted Eastern Muslims as a separate ethnic group victim of both the Tamils and the Sinhalese and advocated for a Muslim autonomous province. Moreover, the LTTE could not prevent the SLMC from engaging in political activities due to not having full control of the Eastern Province. Finally, the MULF was a small party that had limited support among Muslims, and could not give credible alternative avenues or prevent Muslims from voicing their opposition. Likewise, not all the Syriacs and Shammar tribe members considered the PYD governance institutions legitimate. Sectors of these groups voiced their opposition by supporting the Syrian government or other armed groups. However, in this case, there was no alternative group able to challenge the PYD inside the controlled territory, neither politically nor militarily. Indeed, the Syrian government did not challenge the PYD consolidation of power, and the Shammar FSA-affiliate Liwa Ahrar al-Jazirah was defeated in 2013. Moreover, both the Syriac Union Party and Al-Hadi, the leader of the Shammar, enjoyed degrees of support and were able to control and negotiate with their constituencies. Although ISIS and other Islamist groups constituted a serious military threat, they did not constitute an alternative for the Syriacs nor (large sectors of) the Shammar. Thus, sectors of the population considered the self-administration institutions illegitimate, and political institutions were not implemented in the neighbourhoods and towns where they lived, but their opposition had no avenue to be expressed in ways that could have threatened the PYD.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has applied the theory of rebel power-sharing to three case studies: Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria.

In Nepal, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) successfully formed alliances with various ethnic groups, incorporating their demands into their political agenda. However, these alliances were unstable due to ideological differences and the CPN-M's primary focus on a class-based revolution.

The Maoists' governance model, characterized by self-administration models in territories under their control, demonstrated the influence of power dynamics, shared external support, ideological proximity, and the need to control a diverse population on the establishment of power-sharing institutions.

In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) formed a power-sharing agreement with the Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) in 1988. However, the alliance failed due to changing political and military conditions. The LTTE's approach to governance shifted from inclusive to aggressive, leading to increased violence and the forced expulsion of Muslims from LTTE-controlled regions.

In Syria, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) formed alliances with the Syriac Union Party and the Shammar tribe, significantly influencing Syria's political landscape. The PYD established institutions to oversee self-governance structures and implement democratic confederalism, demonstrating the impact of ideological influence on governance.

The rebel power-sharing theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of alliance formation and stability among rebel groups. The theory's predictions were largely confirmed by the case studies, demonstrating the influence of a complex interplay of factors, including power dynamics, ideological proximity, and the need to control a diverse population, on the formation and stability of alliances among rebel groups and the establishment of power-sharing institutions.

However, the case studies also highlighted the limitations of the theory. For instance, the theory's prediction of stable alliances in the presence of shared ideologies, common threats, and a balance of power among the groups was not fully realized in the case of Nepal, where alliances were unstable due to ideological differences. Similarly, the theory's prediction of the establishment and durability of power-sharing institutions being contingent on the institutionalization of the rebel alliance and the presence of shared external support and ideological proximity was not fully realized in the case of Sri Lanka, where the power-sharing agreement failed due to changing conditions. To address these limitations, I proposed to give greater importance to factors such as rebels' legitimacy and civilians' agency.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I aimed to understand the dynamics of rebel governance in multi-ethnic societies, and more specifically, to unravel the factors that contribute to the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars. The question that guided this study is: "What explains the creation of power-sharing institutions by rebel groups during civil wars?" This question is crucial not only to better understand the internal dynamics of rebel groups but also to inform the strategies for conflict resolution and post-conflict state-building processes. Civil wars are a major source of human suffering and instability worldwide, and understanding the mechanisms that foster inclusivity and power-sharing during such conflicts can have significant implications for both academic theory and practical policymaking.

One of the major contributions of this research is the elaboration of a comprehensive framework to understand the complex dynamics of rebel governance in multi-ethnic settings. The study brings into focus the various strategies rebels employ to manage ethnic diversity, ranging from co-optation, to ethnic fronts, and to more formal power-sharing arrangements. It argues that these strategies are not only shaped by the internal structure and ideologies of the rebel groups but also by the complex interactions they have with civilians, other armed factions, and international actors. The research undertaken in this thesis has made several significant contributions to the literature on rebel alliances, power-sharing, and governance, particularly about how rebel groups deal with ethnic diversity in multi-ethnic contexts. The thesis combines theoretical exploration with case studies. This yields a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms of rebel power-sharing in multi-ethnic settings and enriches our understanding of how rebel alliances are formed and governed. In the first half of the thesis, I constructed a theoretical framework for rebel power-sharing. This framework introduces a novel way of understanding rebel alliance formation and governance, identifying shared ideologies, common threats, balance of power, and foreign sponsorship as key factors influencing the stability of alliances. My framework provides a foundational basis for the analysis of the rebel power-sharing dynamics and adds a significant concept to the broader literature on conflict studies, particularly regarding the internal politics of rebel groups.

The insights derived from the case studies show the variability and complexity of inclusive rebel governance in multi-ethnic contexts. They show that inclusive governance is not a deterministic

process but is contingent on a variety of factors, including the internal dynamics of the rebel group, the interplay with civilians, other rebel factions, and international actors, and the influence of ethnic and ideological considerations. The case studies of Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria emphasized that the strategies of rebel groups towards ethnic diversity extended beyond simple alliance formation. I showed how different groups navigated complex ethnic landscapes, manipulated societal divisions, and balanced local and international dynamics to advance their goals. In Nepal, the CPN-M cleverly incorporated ethnic demands into their agenda and established ethnic liberation fronts, which allowed them to represent these groups. However, these alliances were unstable, illustrating the importance of ideological coherence in maintaining alliances. The Sri Lankan case study showed how changing political dynamics and the emergence of new political actors can disrupt power-sharing agreements, leading to further violence. Meanwhile, the Syrian case study illustrated how the Democratic Union Party (PYD) effectively established rebel power-sharing institutions shaped by the group's ideology.

The findings confirmed that rebel groups can use cooperative strategies in dealing with ethnic diversity. I demonstrated how these strategies extend beyond alliance formation including comprehensive power-sharing agreements, and are contingent on complex factors such as shared ideologies, common threats, balance of power, and foreign sponsorship that influence the stability of alliances. My examination of the Syrian case also offered unique insights into the characteristics of rebel power-sharing institutions. Moreover, it showed how a group's ideology shapes the nature of governance institutions and thus also power-sharing. This nuanced understanding of the dynamics of power-sharing in rebel-controlled territories contributes to the broader literature on rebel governance and power-sharing arrangements in conflict settings.

In sum, this thesis contributes to the academic discourse by integrating theoretical frameworks with rich empirical case studies, providing a more nuanced understanding of rebel alliances, power-sharing, and governance in multi-ethnic contexts. My findings highlight the complexities and dynamics inherent in these processes and call for a more context-specific approach to studying them. As such, the thesis offers a valuable resource for researchers and policy-makers interested in conflict resolution, rebel governance, and power-sharing dynamics.

Despite the in-depth analysis and comparative approach used in this thesis, several limitations need to be acknowledged. These limitations might influence the interpretation and generalizability of the study's findings but also offer opportunities for future research. Firstly, this thesis primarily utilizes a qualitative research approach, using case studies from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria. While these case studies provide detailed insights into the dynamics of rebel alliances and power-sharing agreements,

the specific nature of case studies inherently limits the generalizability of the findings. They represent particular contexts and cannot capture the entire spectrum of rebel alliances and power-sharing dynamics globally. Consequently, my results might not be universally applicable to all conflicts where rebel groups form alliances or share power. Secondly, the study's geographical focus on Asia and the Middle East, while providing rich context-specific insights, potentially limits the broader applicability of the findings. Different geographical, socio-economic, and political contexts can significantly influence the dynamics of rebel alliances and power-sharing. Thirdly, although my theoretical approach has proved useful in understanding and explaining many aspects of rebel alliances and power-sharing, the case studies have highlighted a few aspects where the predictions of the theory did not hold. This suggests that the theory might overlook certain factors or processes inherent in the dynamics of rebel alliances and power-sharing. Namely, my study did not examine in depth the role of legitimacy and civilians' agency in shaping rebel alliances and power-sharing arrangements. Understanding these factors could provide a more nuanced view of how rebel groups gain support and maintain alliances, as well as how they manage internal dynamics and negotiate power-sharing agreements. Finally, my work mainly examined the strategic actions of rebel groups and did not focus on the reactions and responses of the state or the international community. This potentially overlooks a significant aspect of conflict dynamics, as the strategies and actions of rebel groups are often shaped in response to state policies and international pressures. In addition, the data collection process was constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the scope and depth of primary data collection through interviews and necessitated a heavier reliance on secondary data. These limitations should be borne in mind while interpreting the conclusions drawn from this study.

Future research directions emanating from my study present fertile ground for expanding and enriching the discourse around rebel alliances, rebel governance, and power-sharing dynamics. My research opens several avenues for scholarly pursuit, each providing an opportunity to advance our understanding of rebel behaviour in the context of multi-ethnic populations. My case studies were limited to Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Syria, representing South Asia and the Middle East. To enhance the generalizability and robustness of my findings, future research should consider examining a broader range of cases, spanning different geographical regions and historical periods. This could include rebel alliances and power-sharing in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, among others. It would allow the capturing of diverse political, economic, and cultural contexts, thus offering a richer and more nuanced understanding of rebel alliances and governance. While my study was primarily qualitative, a quantitative approach could provide valuable complementary insights. Future research

could consider developing measurable indicators for concepts such as alliance stability, power-sharing, and rebel governance. This would allow for the testing of hypotheses and the identification of trends and correlations, which could further substantiate or challenge the findings of my study. Furthermore, my study touched upon the role of legitimacy and civilian agency in shaping alliances and power-sharing, suggesting that these are important areas for further exploration. Future research could delve deeper into these aspects, examining how rebel groups gain and maintain legitimacy, how they engage with civilians, and how civilian responses influence rebel behaviour. This would provide a more bottom-up perspective, enriching our understanding of rebel-civilian dynamics. While my study focused on internal dynamics within the rebel groups, external actors and international factors are also likely to play a significant role. Future research could explore this further, examining how international actors, foreign sponsorship, and geopolitical considerations influence rebel alliances, power-sharing, and governance strategies.

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