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Alliance Formation and Rebel Co-Governance in North-East Syria: The Case of the PYD and the Syriac Union Party

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This research aims to investigate the relationship between rebel alliance strategies and the emergence of forms of governance during civil wars. Previous studies on alliance formation during civil conflicts have highlighted the impact of factors such as the balance of power and the likelihood of victory on rebel groups' decision-making. Through an examination of the alliance strategies employed by groups in North-East Syria, this study finds that during the early stages of multiparty civil wars, rebel groups evaluate factors such as ideological compatibility, long-term goals, and overall strategies in relation to the various parties involved in order to determine the most suitable alliance. Furthermore, it is observed that rebel alliances may be reinforced through formal agreements of co-governance and power sharing. By examining the case of the Syrian conflict, this study found that minor parties such as the Syriac Union Party (SUP) allied with the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) after evaluating the ideological compatibility and strategic goals of the other actors involved in the conflict. On the other hand, the PYD shared power with minor parties as part of its strategy for consolidating control over its core territories. This alliance was formalized through a power-sharing agreement, which enabled the creation of self-government institutions in North-East Syria. The findings of this study provide insight into the different alliance formation strategies employed by rebel groups and how they shape the creation of rebel governance institutions.

Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?

Yes

What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?

International Relations (Conflict Studies)

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