The use of mass violence in civil war

A case study of the Armed Islamic Group and the Algerian civil war

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Words: 10991
12/01/2017

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Abstract

Civil conflict has been around for centuries and the number of civil wars has not been declining. Many theories regarding civil war and insurgent groups have been formed, amongst which many discussing the use of violence. This research involves a single-case study that applies two of these theories: the social-institutional theory developed by Staniland (2009) and a theory developed by Wood (2010), to the case of the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) in the Algerian civil war. The GIA is an insurgent group that was extremely violent towards civilians, especially in 1997 and 1998. No consensus exists among scholars as to why it was so violent. This study aims to provide an explanation of the violent behavior of this rebel group. On the basis of Staniland's and Wood's theories, two independent variables have been identified. The first one is internal fragmentation, indicating how internally divided an insurgent group is. The second one is relative rebel capacity, referring to the military capability and resources a rebel group controls in relation to the government. As there was a peak of violence, this study applies process-tracing to analyze events as they unfold over time and to establish whether there are any changes that may have led to the increased use of violence by the GIA. The empirical analysis has established that internal fragmentation has increased during the Algerian civil war and that this has influenced the GIA's use of violence as it led to a loss of support. This loss of support, which was also partly due to the GIA's increasingly weak relative capacity, led to the GIA's use of indiscriminate violence towards civilians as a last resort recruitment tool. Thus, both independent variables contributed to the surge of violence. For future research on the GIA, it is important to take the role of other insurgent groups and the role of ideology into account, as these may also have been important in the increase of violence by the GIA.

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Introduction

Since the 1950s, the number of long-term civil conflicts has increased (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). A civil conflict is generally defined as a conflict between different groups in a state that has resulted in a minimum of 1000 deaths per year. One side of the conflict generally comprises government combatants fighting against one or multiple groups of insurgents. In the period of 1945 until 1999, it has been estimated that over 16 million people have died due to the consequences of civil war. Whereas interstate wars are a rarer occurrence now than they were in the last centuries, the number of intrastate wars has not decreased. Especially after the independence of former colonies in the 1950s and after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, many civil wars have begun (Hironaka, 2005). Much has been written on the causes of civil conflict and the behavior and organization of the rebel groups participating in these conflicts. Conflicts can arise from ethnic, economic or political grievances (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Horowitz, 1985). Rebel organizations and their behavior can also vary widely and many different explanations exist as to why it does. Rebel groups vary in size, in their control of resources, in their use of violence and in the amount of support they receive from civilians and from external sources.

One topic in civil war literature which has been frequently discussed but on which no consensus exists, is the relation between the internal structure of the rebel organization and rebel violence. External circumstances, such as control over territory and the set-up of rebel governance, have often been taken into account, but not enough has been discussed in terms of how the structure of the rebel organization can impact rebel violence (Kalyvas, 2006; Mampilly, 2001). How do rebels recruit new members, how are the relations amongst each other, and how do they control their resources or lack thereof? Rebel groups with seemingly similar organizations have engaged in violent practices against civilians on different levels (Hultman, 2014). Thus, there is inconsistent violent behavior across different rebel movements on which no agreed upon explanation exists. With the dominating focus being on the impact of external factors, the following question needs to be asked:

RQ: How does the internal structure of a rebel movement influence its use of violence?

A particularly interesting case that is in need for an answer to this question is the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a violent insurgent group active in the Algerian civil war. This group has engaged in extremely violent acts against civilians, especially towards the end of the civil war. This is curious, considering that the group initially did not portray such high levels of violence and as one would expect that insurgent groups need to maintain civilian support in order to be successful (Kalyvas,

2006). For our understanding of civil conflict and the use of violence it is important to determine what the motivations were for the GIA to perpetuate such levels of violence. This is especially important considering that groups such as ISIS, who are still active today, display strong parallels with the GIA in their use of indiscriminate violence and their use of ideological justifications (Kepel, 2002; Kibble, 2016). Therefore, enhancing our understanding of the GIA might also provide greater understanding of ISIS' violent behavior towards civilians and of other relevant insurgent groups that might be active at some point in the future. The GIA and the Algerian civil war therefore serve as the subject of this research, taking the form of a single-case study.

Important theories regarding the influence of the internal structure of an insurgent group on their use of violence are discussed in the next section. One of these theories is Weinstein's resource curse theory, which fails to provide an explanation for the GIA's violent behavior. Therefore, this study applies two other theories that might be able to provide alternative explanations of the GIA's violence in the Algerian civil war and that form the basis for two hypotheses. These theories are Staniland's social-institutional theory (2009), which addresses whether internal fragmentation is likely to lead to an increase of violence towards civilians, and a theory developed by Wood (2010), which suggests that weak relative rebel capacity leads to increased violence. Both theories are elaborated on in the theoretical framework. Thereafter, process-tracing as well as the conceptualization and operationalization of the variables are discussed in the method section. This is followed by an empirical analysis of the Algerian civil war and of the important events and developments that the GIA experienced during these years. This analysis indicates that both independent variables, internal fragmentation and weak relative capacity, had an influence on the use of violence by the GIA. These results are discussed in the empirical analysis section and in the conclusion, which recaps the main findings and their implications.

Theoretical framework

One of the most well-known theories in civil war literature is Weinstein's resource curse (2009). In his research, Weinstein takes a closer look at how the resource base influences the behavior and character of the rebel movement. He argues that the presence of economic endowments impacts the recruitment process of rebel organizations (p.599). If an insurgent groups experiences resource wealth, it can draw recruits by rewarding them with short-term material incentives. These recruits, according to Weinstein's argument, are opportunists that are not disciplined and not committed to the long-term goals of the organization. These low-commitment recruits are more likely to engage in looting and violent activities, as these practices will result in the obtainment of material rewards

which is the main motivation of these individuals for participating in the rebel organization (Weinstein, 2009, p.600). Weinstein consequently argues that resource-poor rebel movements are more likely to recruit members on the basis of social ties and that these recruits are highly committed, more disciplined and less likely to engage in violent activities. Thus, the availability of resources, which can be in the form of natural resources but also in the form of external funding, would increase the likelihood of violent behavior of rebels. Weinstein therefore calls this the 'resource curse' (2009, p.599).

Forney has also studied how rebel movements recruit new members (2015). He responds to Weinstein's resource curse theory by arguing that it is not explanatory of every rebel movement. Forney argues that rebel movements face an informational problem when recruiting new members and that this problem can be overcome (p.2). As Weinstein (2009) has discussed, material rewards might be incentives for potential members to join an insurgent group and they might lie about their motivations to join (p.603). Another reason that Forney mentions of why individuals might want to join a rebel organization is through the seduction of power and the attraction of having a weapon (2015, p.3). However, recruiters can address these selection problems and filter out these opportunist rebels by screening the potential recruit through social networks. This approach would allow financially viable rebel movements to still recruit members who are committed to the long-term goals of the organization, and to deflect opportunistic joiners. Thus, contrary to what Weinstein argues, Forney does not believe that the access to valuable resources determines whether low-quality recruits that are more likely to abuse civilians join the movement, but rather that it depends on the recruitment processes of the rebel movement itself and whether informal informational networks are used.

Kalyvas has also critiqued Weinstein's resource curse theory (2007). In his book *Inside Rebellion*, Weinstein has provided evidence for his theory through several case studies (2007). Kalyvas has pointed out some weak points in Weinstein's argument and criticizes some of the cases he has used as evidence for his resource curse theory (2007, p.1147). Kalyvas argues that the causal link between the availability of resources and the abusive behavior of insurgents is not clearly established. The process of how indiscipline emerges in low-commitment rebels has not been convincingly causal and as Kaylvas rightly asks (2007, p.1148): if the organization financially rewards its opportunists members, why does there remain a need to exploit civilians? Two other important points that Kalyvas mentions in his critical review of Weinstein's study, is that Weinstein does not discuss any alternative theories that could explain rebel behavior and that the importance of the role of the state is not taken into account.

A theory that looks at rebel violence and that does take into account the role of the state in civil war, is Wood's study on the rebel organization's capability (2010). His research aims to answer the question of why insurgents target civilians by looking at insurgent capacity (p.2). His argument is the opposite of what Weinstein argues with the resource curse theory. According to Wood, weak insurgent groups –weak meaning lacking military capability and resources- are likely to target civilians as the rebel group lacks the selective incentives to receive support. Strong rebel groups on the other hand, defined as strong due to their financial and military capacity, are less likely to perpetuate violence against civilians because they are likely to get civilian support by providing selective incentives (Wood, 2010, p.9). Unlike Weinstein, Wood also takes the role of the state into account. The amount of resources of a rebel group alone is not enough in determining its use of violence against civilians. Rather the relative amount of resources in comparison with the capability of the state is an important determinant (p.11).

Wood's argument relies on the premise that all rebel movements seek civilian support (2010). Whether they have access to resources determines whether they get this support and whether they get new recruits or not. If the insurgent group is weak and therefore lacks support, the insurgent group would be likely to treat civilians violently as a last resort recruitment tool (Wood, 2010, p.9). Violence functions as a deterrence: it is used to prevent defections and to punish those who do not support the insurgents. The capacity of the state has an influence on these processes, for as long as the insurgent group is weak *relative* to the state, it will struggle to raise support and will sooner resort to violence in order to increase recruitment.

The arguments discussed above all focus on the impact of the availability of (natural) resources on recruitment and consequent rebel behavior. Staniland offers the social-institutional theory to balance this line of thinking (2012). Contrary to Weinstein, Staniland argues that the way rebels use their resources and how they will treat civilians depends on the structure of the rebel movement. According to his social-institutional theory, the social networks, institutions and social ties that exist when a rebel movement is formed will determine in what way the movement is shaped and how it is affected by resource wealth. Staniland distinguishes between socially cohesive and heterogeneous rebel movements (2012, p.143). Whether a movement is fragmented or not depends on the social ties on which it is built: horizontal ties between the leaders of the movement and vertical ties between the leaders and the local communities (p.150). If horizontal and vertical ties are strong, the rebel group will set up strong central control and build robust local institutions within the rebel movement. Pre-existing social ties enhance trust within the movement and the conduit of a clear purpose. The lures of material gain are mitigated by organizational monitoring and discipline (p.153). If horizontal and vertical ties are weak however, the rebel group is unable to establish

central control. Due to internal divisions and the inability to create local institutions, there is a lack of monitoring and ideological unity. Indiscipline and defiance emerge at the local level. In such a fragmented organization, rebels are more likely to abuse civilians and to resort to violence.

Whereas Weinstein introduces his resource curse theory in a convincing way alongside a presentation of several cases that support the theory, he also names some outliers that do not seem to fit his theory. One of these is the civil war in Algeria that lasted from 1992 to 2000 (Weinstein, 2007). During this war, the insurgent group GIA (Armed Islamic Group) was resource-poor yet engaged in high levels of violence towards the civilian population, which is contrary to what the resource curse theory would suggest. As Kalyvas has pointed out (2007), Weinstein fails to acknowledge other theories such as the ones mentioned above that might provide a theoretical explanation of the violent behavior of the resource-poor GIA in the Algerian civil war (p.1149). Therefore, this research will do so and apply Staniland's and Wood's theories to this specific case.

It is important to note that these theories are also not without their flaws and may not lend themselves perfectly for this study. Wood for instance uses a quantitative approach of which the research design cannot be copied for this study, considering the focus here is on a single case (2010). Wood also acknowledges that his theory does not take some possible important factors into account, such as the influence of external foreign aid and the formation of insurgent alliances (Wood, 2010, p.26). Nevertheless, his theory can still offer a comprehensive understanding of the use of violence towards civilians. Staniland's social-institutional theory has been very well-received among other scholars. Although there are some cases that would not be explained by this theory, Staniland acknowledges these and they do not limit the explanatory power of this theory (Masullo, 2015).

In order to determine whether these two theories can explain the massacres committed by the GIA, two hypotheses are formed. As Staniland's theory argues that pre-existing ties lead to the establishment of social institutions and this in turn would lead to less abusive treatment of civilians, this study will test whether internal fragmentation within rebel groups is linked to more abusive behavior (2012):

- H1: If a rebel movement is characterized by internal fragmentation, it is more likely to engage in violent acts against civilians.

Based on Wood's theory (2010), the second hypothesis is formed as follows:

- H2: If a rebel movement is characterized as having relative weak capacity, it is more likely to engage in violent acts against civilians.

Method

The case: GIA and the Algerian civil war

To find an answer to the research question, this research uses a qualitative approach by employing process-tracing in a single-case study of mass violence by the GIA during the Algerian civil war. The Algerian civil war lasted from 1992 until 2000 (Kepel, 2002). In 1992, national elections were held which the popular Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) was expected to win, due to its victories in the local and provincial elections in 1990 and 1991. To prevent the FIS from winning the elections, the Algerian army staged a coup and banned the FIS (Harmon, 2014). What ensued was a civil war between the Algerian government and several Islamic insurgent groups, among which the GIA is the most well-known. The GIA, an insurgent group with a strong Islamic ideology, engaged in a high level of violent acts towards civilians. The GIA declared total war against the government and other fighting parties. There was an escalation of violence, especially in the form of massacres in multiple village raids, during 1997 and 1998 (Mellah, 2004; Hafez, 2000). Considering this peak of violence during these years, the focus of the analysis will be on finding explanations for the changes that may have occurred between the start of the civil war and the rise of violence in 1997 and 1998.

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria is chosen for this single case study as it is one of the four outliers that Weinstein discusses (2007), making it an atypical case for this theory. The fact that it does not fit the resource curse theory imposes the need to consider other possible explanations. As Weinstein has pointed out, the GIA was resource-poor yet extremely violent (2007). Wood's theory will be used to determine whether a causal link exists between the lack of resources and the surge in violence, whereas Staniland's theory will be employed to determine whether internal fragmentation has led to rebel violence.

Process-tracing

To explain the use of violence by the GIA, this research employs process-tracing. Process-tracing can be used to analyze a series of events, or a singular event (Collier, 2011, p.825). This case study deals with a recurring event: massacres of civilians by the GIA in 1997 and 1998. Process tracing focuses on events as they unfold over time (Van Evera, 1997). For this reason this research technique is very useful to analyze the mass violence by the GIA. As the GIA was already actively fighting in 1992, something between 1992 and 1997 is likely to have changed that led the GIA to use violence on such a large scale. By looking at the GIA during these years, this research aims to determine whether there is a causal link between the independent variables, internal fragmentation and relative rebel capacity, and the dependent variable, violent behavior against civilians.

Conceptualization & operationalization

The dependent variable in both hypotheses is the intensity and frequency of violent rebel behavior. There are two independent variables. The independent variable in H1 is the level of internal fragmentation in the group. The independent variable in H2 is the level of rebel capacity. The intervening variable in H2 is civilian support.

First, the concept of violence has to be defined. As Hultman has pointed out, violence can take many different forms and one can distinguish between looting, killings, sexual violence, torture and mass killings such as genocide (2014, p.290). This research focuses on indiscriminate violence perpetuated against civilians. Indiscriminate violence is violence that is perpetuated against individuals irrespective of their behavior or stance in the conflict (Kalyvas, 2006, p.142). The dependent variable of indiscriminate violence will be observed through the number of total civilian deaths by killings, massacres, or terrorist attacks by the GIA.

Internal fragmentation within the group can be defined as the strength of the horizontal and vertical ties within the rebel organization. Staniland distinguishes between groups with four different levels of social cohesion (2014, p.6). The first is an integrated group, characterized by leadership unity and discipline at the center of the group that translates into compliance at the local level. The second can be labeled as a vanguard group, characterized by strong central control but weak local control. The third group, parochial, is defined by weak central control and strong local control. Lastly, fragmented groups, which Staniland (2012) argues are more likely to be violent, are defined by a lack of ideological unity at the leadership level and lack of control over members of the rebel group at the local level. This study addresses the horizontal and vertical ties within the GIA since its creation until the massacres in 1997 and 1998. Is there control and authority from the top (vertical) and do the leaders (horizontal) of the organization work together?

Rebel capacity is the second independent variable studied in this research. This variable can be defined as the level of resource wealth, financial power, and military might that the rebel group holds. If rebel capacity is weak, the insurgent group is not rich in resources and it is not capable of providing security to its members. Relative rebel capacity refers to this capacity in relation to the state's capacity, which is defined in the same manner. To observe the independent variable 'relative weak capacity', this study looks at the GIA's and the Algerian government's access to resources: do they receive international support? Do they have access to natural resources? Can they reward supporters with financial resources? Do they control a large military force?

Lastly, civilian support or lack thereof is the intervening variable in Wood's theory (Van Evera, 1997). If rebel capacity is low, the rebel group will lack in civilian support and this will lead to the use

of violence according to the theory. Civilian support can be defined as the degree of civilian loyalty to the GIA. Civilian support will be observed by looking at how many people are willing to join the GIA or the government forces, or support them through financial resources or by providing information. Defections will also be taken into account. Important to establish is the time period of any possible changes in these variables and whether a link between these independent variables and violence can be identified.

Data

The data used for this study consists of secondary sources. Scholarly articles, books, and newspaper articles are a valuable source but also reports by humanitarian organizations that have done work in Algeria during the war and reports by the United Nations and the Algerian government are extremely useful to this study. Testimonies of civilians or ex-members of the GIA will be used as well. By drawing information from this variety of sources, this study draws a picture of the changes the GIA experienced during the first five years of the Algerian civil war.

Empirical analysis
Internal fragmentation

The first hypothesis, based on Staniland's theory, states that internal fragmentation within an insurgent group would lead to a lack of monitoring and control, which would in turn lead to the use of violence against civilians. To test this hypothesis, it is important to take a look at the pre-existing social ties and what the situation in Algeria was before the war actually started. During the 1980s, Islamists in Afghanistan were fighting the Soviet Union, and amongst these Islamists were many Algerians who returned to Algeria after the battle was won (Shabafrouz, 2010). In 1988 there had been demonstrations in Algeria against the government, which resulted in riots and in the establishment of a new constitution allowing other parties to participate in the government elections (Algerian Constitution, 2008). At the time, the Algerian economy was not doing well and there was a mistrust of the Algerian government (Shabafrouz, 2010; Takeyh, 2003). The people turned to Islamism for a solution, especially lower-income civilians, and the Islamic FIS (Front Islamique du Salut) received a lot of support during the elections. Upon the coup d'état, part of the FIS split into different factions, one of which formed the GIA (Kepel, 2002). Alongside dissidents of the FIS, many Afghan returnees were amongst the founders of the GIA, whose experience led them to believe that armed force could bring down an illegitimate government (Takeyh, 2003, p.69). Next to these 'Afghan veterans' and former FIS members, former militants of the Mouvement Islamique Armé, one of the first violent Islamist movement in Algeria which had been led by Mustafa Bouyali in the 1980s,

joined the GIA (Stone, 1997). Thus, the group consisted of different factions who each had slightly different ideological views, which will be further illustrated below, and different experiences.

The factions were unified into the GIA under the leadership of Abdelhaq Layada. Layada was the first emir –or leader- of the GIA. Layada has described the structure of the GIA as having a emir at the head of the group and consisting of multiple militias ranging from 10 to 50 men, each led by a regional or local emir (Zerrouky, 1995; Forestier, 1994). The GIA's structure was that of a pyramid. The different militant groups are separated from each other and contact goes through the emirs (Zerrouky, 1995). Furthermore, the emir had an advisory council at its disposal (Kepel, 2002).

The GIA was mainly a salafist movement (Brynjar & Åshild, 2001), based on what the GIA believed to be the true Islam (Kepel, 2002). The GIA was very hostile towards the FIS, because the FIS refused to employ violence towards the Algerian state. In an interview with *Al Chahada*, Layada aimed to unify the other Islamist movements under his command, by quoting the Quran: "he among you who pays allegiance to them [the enemy], is one of their number" (Kepel, 2002, p.261)*. With this quote he implied that those who would support the Algerian regime would be considered an enemy of the GIA. After Layada's arrest in 1993, he was succeeded by Mourad Si Ahmed, better known as Djafar al-Afghani. Under his leadership, the level of violence started to rise. Al-Afghani extended the GIA support base outside Algeria and was greatly aided by the publication of a weekly GIA bulletin called *Al-Ansar*, which was published in London, both in Arabic and in English, and expressed the GIA's views (Mellah, 2001; Kepel, 2002; Shabafrouz, 2010). It was maintained by Abu Mousab and Abu Qatada, two London-based GIA supporters (Kepel, 2002; Joscelyn, 2014). This bulletin gave the GIA international credibility, included many references to the Quran to justify the GIA's acts and to claim responsibility for them, and was used as a recruitment tool. For instance, in 1993 Al-Afghani declared in *Al-Ansar* that godless foreigners as well as godless Algerians were legitimate targets for the GIA (Kepel, 2002, p. 264; Robinson, 2002). A year earlier the GIA's targets had been limited to government officials and military personnel (Hafez, 2000).

Al-Afghani was killed in 1994 and his successor was Cherif Gousmi. During his command, he accomplished a unification of different Islamist troops. The groups that joined the GIA were the FIDA (Front Islamique du Djihad Armé), the MEI (Mouvement de l'Etat Islamique) and the FIS. However, it must be noted that other leaders of the FIS denied that Abderrazaq Redjem, who joined the GIA on behalf of the FIS, had authority to do so. In response to this unification, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) was created, which represented a military branch of the FIS (Kepel, 2002; Hafez, 2000). The AIS operated with different ideological justifications than the GIA did and took a less extremist stance. This insurgent group considered jihad as *a* means to establish an Islamic state, but not as *the* means,

which the GIA did consider it to be (Hafez, 2000, p.582). Moreover, its methods and targets were different from the GIA's: the AIS distinguished between political opponents, whereas for the GIA everyone working for the state was automatically an enemy. After the AIS formation, the GIA was also in constant battle with this group next to fighting the Algerian government (Hafez, 2000; Kepel, 2002).

The leader of the FIDA, Mohammed Said, was a djazarist, which was a different strand of Islam than the Salafist (Tawil, 2011; Kepel, 2002; Wiktorowicz, 2001). Salafists are characterized by "a desire for religious purification" (Wiktorowicz, 2001, p.66), whereas djazarists are more moderate and pragmatic and do not condemn cooperation with non-Islamist groups. Mohammed Said was a very popular leader and had a lot of influence within the GIA amongst its djazarist members (Kepel, 2002, p.265).

In 1994, Gousmi, the emir of the GIA, was killed. Mahfoud Tajine, a djazarist and a supporter of Mohammed Said, was appointed as the new emir. However, the salafist members of the GIA did not want a djazarist at the head of the group and staged a coup to overthrow Tajine. He was replaced by Djamel Zitouni. Ali Benhadjar, a former local emir of the GIA, said the following about the appointment of Zitouni as the new emir:

> He wasn't a senior member of the GIA or even one of its leading activists. He made his name suddenly, through two operations: one against the French embassy [housing complex] in Aïn Allah and the other against some coastguards when he seized a Dushka machine gun. Word soon got around within the GIA that it was Zitouni who was responsible [for the coastguard attack], while the media reported that he had killed some policemen in the assault on the embassy. That's why his name came up [as a possible GIA leader] when Gousmi was killed. But some of the GIA's Shura Council members were up in the mountains at the time; they put forward Mahfoud Tadjine's name as an acting emir until the entire council could meet and either confirm his appointment or select someone else. However, Zitouni's supporters objected and came out in force, very nearly sparking a conflict up in the mountains. They said that they refused to accept Tadjine as their emir, because he was a Djazarist and a member of the Movement for the Renewal of Civilisation. Other people located at the same base sided with them, and together they managed to impose Zitouni as their choice of emir. (…) Zitouni became the GIA emir through a conspiracy. (Tawil, 2001, Chapter 8).

The quote describes how there was no agreement on the appointment of Zitouni as the new emir of the GIA. It further illustrates that the disputes on the leadership level of the GIA were especially evident amongst the Salafists and the Djazarists. In 1995, the GIA murdered Mohammed Said. The

consequence of the coup and the death of the popular Said was that many people within the GIA left the group, some of whom joined the AIS, and that some split from the GIA and formed a new organization, such as the Islamic League of Preaching and Jihad (LIPJ) (Kepel, 2002, p.270; Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p.306). In 1996, Abu Mousab and Abu Qatada declared in *Al-Ansar,* which they published, that they no longer had any alliance to the GIA (Chaliand & Blin, 2007). The bulletin was thereafter operated by Abu Hamza until 1997 (Kepel, 2002, p.272).

As the coup and the murder of Said demonstrate, the central leadership of the organization was divided, indicating that horizontal ties were fragmented. During its formation, the GIA was already made up of different groups with different ideologies and experiences (Shabafrouz, 2010; Stone, 1997; Kepel, 2002). This increased with the unification with the FIDA, the MEI, and the FIS (Hafez, 2000). As the discussion above has shown, the GIA was increasingly fragmented in the years leading up to 1997 and 1998, which were the two years that saw the most violence against civilians. As data from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) illustrates, the GIA was responsible for a minimum of 2000 and maximum of 15,000 civilian deaths in 1996, whereas the minimum in 1997 and 1998 rose to 3000 and 4000 deaths respectively, with a maximum for both years of 20,000 civilian deaths at the hands of the GIA (Lacida & Gleditsch, 2005). Not only disagreement on the leadership level increased in the run-up to these violent years. Moreover, as the formation of splinter groups shows, vertical ties were also weak.

Staniland's theory suggests that weak vertical and horizontal ties would lead to a lack of control and indiscipline within the group (2014). This would lead members of the group on the local level to disregard orders from the leadership and to violently exploit civilians for their own advantage. However, this social-institutional theory does not explain the increase of violence against civilians by the GIA. There is little evidence that GIA members on the local level decided on their own to use violence against civilians, and even if they did, it would probably not have been condemned by the GIA leadership. The use of (indiscriminate) violence was ordered by the leaders of the GIA and was advocated and justified in various bulletins such as *Al-Ansar.* For instance, in 1997, the GIA issued the following statement offering a justification for its use of violence in *Al-Ansar*: "All the killings and slaughter, the massacres, the displacement [of people], the burnings, and the kidnappings are an offering to God." (Hafez, 2000, p.590).

In a manifesto, one of the GIA´s spiritual leaders declared the following:

> For the whole (Muslim) community is on call, and the whole community is called upon to join the ranks of the mujahidin… The issue is one of unity of God (tawhid) versus polytheism, and a clash between faith and infidelism... Whoever lags behind, or cowers, or leans toward

tameness... or says I cannot, or says that those leaders are not infidels.. or professes spurious

excuses, is an offender deserving punishment and he has fallen into great danger. (Hafez,

2000, p.587).

This quote illustrates that the GIA condemned anyone who did not join their ranks as infidels, even if they were Muslim. By labeling those who did not support the GIA as infidels, the GIA created justification for violence conducted towards these individuals. As violence and killings were ordered and justified by the GIA, its use cannot be fully explained by internal fragmentation and a lack of control. Moreover, these weak horizontal and vertical ties were in part weak because of this use of violence and disputing ideas on the justification of its use. For example, Mustapha Karatali split from the GIA and formed a splinter group in 1995 and explained the split as follows: "We flocked [to the mountains] to die as a persecuted people, not as persecutors or perpetrators of killing the innocent" (Hafez, 2000, p.589). The impact of disputing ideas on the use of violence is further discussed in the analysis on the variable of relative capacity.

As the independent and the dependent variable of Staniland's social-institutional theory are both present in the Algerian civil war, the theory at first sight seems to provide a possible explanation for the surge of violence by the GIA in 1997 and 1998. An increase in internal fragmentation within the organization could be identified over the years: disagreement between different ideological strands within the GIA, a coup within the movement, the murder of its own members, and the formation of splinter groups illustrate this. However, the mass violence by the GIA was not perpetuated due to a lack of internal control and monitoring, and therefore hypothesis 1 cannot be confirmed. However, though internal fragmentation has not led to violence through the mechanisms the social-institutional theory suggests it would, it did have a role in the surges of mass violence in 1997 and 1998, which will be further discussed in the analysis of the role of weak relative capacity. Important to note is that even though the social-institutional theory could not account for the mass violence by the GIA, it may be applicable in this case when applied to GIA looting behavior. Following the same logic as when discussing violence, Staniland's theory is also applicable to rebel looting. Moreover, the Algerian case might indicate that the theory might actually be more applicable to looting than to violence. Though small scale violence on a local level might also be explained by the social-institutional theory, the theory does not seem very applicable to mass violence.

Weak relative capacity

In order to test the second hypothesis that was based on a theory by Wood, the independent variable 'weak relative capacity' by the GIA has to be identified. This is defined by Wood as military capability and access to resources in relation to the government's capacity (2010). His theory suggests that an insurgent group's weak relative capacity would lead to a lack of civilian support which would lead to the use of mass violence as a last resort recruitment tool.

As Weinstein has acknowledged, the GIA was not a resource-rich group (2009, p.315). Algeria's natural resources include oil and gas, and to a lesser extent also iron ore, uranium and lead (OPEC, 2016). The GIA has not been in control of the oil and gas fields in Algeria (Martinez, 1998). Resources were acquired by the GIA in different ways. One of these was through the control of smaller areas (Dalacoura, 2011, p.120). These areas were usually based in mountainous areas, where the GIA would profit from local economic activity, either with or without the approval of its local owners (Rubin, 2010, p.215). Initially in 1992 and 1993, the GIA still had the civilians' support, as the Muslim majority was united in its anger toward the Algerian government who halted the elections a year earlier. Thus, during those years civilians were more likely to voluntarily support the GIA and to offer donations, though this decreased over the following years (Martinez, 1998, p.140; Kepel, 2002, p.262). The GIA was mainly reliant upon support from and exploitation of petty traders, such as bakers, jewelers, grocers and other merchants (Martinez, 1998, p.109). However, in 1993, the Algerian regime introduced an official property tax (Nashashibi et al., 1998, p.22). This increased the burden on the petty traders and left less room to support and finance the GIA. Moreover, in 1992 and 1993, the GIA also collected money by robbing banks and other stores (Martinez, 1998, p.106; Brynjar & Åshild, 2001, p.16; Robinson, 2002). However, in 1994 this became increasingly difficult, as the government had passed a legislation that allowed private firms and banks to provide security to their establishments and the right to bear arms (Permanent Mission of Algeria, 2008, p.130; Martinez, 1998, p.106). These government regulations made it increasingly difficult for the GIA to acquire the resources they needed. Another reason why they lost civilian support during these times is that, whereas the GIA's ideology and the goal of an Islamist state appealed to former FIS supporters right after the coup in 1991, their targets of violence and their approach to achieving this state did not resonate with everyone. A petty trader in 1994 clarified: "They cut two young people's throats and placed their heads at the crossroads. That is no good, that. I think that if they go on doing that, people won't be with them anymore" (Martinez, 1998, p.109). Thus, the petty trader warns the GIA that this kind of use of indiscriminate violence would lead to a loss of support.

It is during the following years that the GIA started to actively destroy state property and state enterprises, such as the state-controlled transport and pharmaceutical companies (Martinez, 1998, p.121). Due to the GIA demobilizing state business, the private economy got a boost because private actors could take over work that was previously conducted by the state (Rubin, 2015, p.215). However, this was also directly in the interest of the GIA, seeing as if these private actors would have been unable to make money, the GIA would not have been able to exploit these private actors and firms. In 1994, a driver of a privately owned vehicle reported the following:

> They stop cars, lorries, buses...They ask for your papers. If you don't work for the state, you have nothing to fear. Otherwise, for state-employed drivers, they seize your lorry and if they let you live, you can say, "Hamdou lillah" [thank God]. (…) They never touch privately-owned lorries, they ask who you are working for, where you are coming from, who you are delivering to. But they take the goods from you sometimes and say, "We'll tell your boss that it's we who took them, you have nothing to fear". (Martinez, 1998, p.213).

Though these private actors could increase their revenue and the GIA could benefit from this, civilians were forced to pay higher prices (Martinez, 1998, p.121). As mentioned above, the transport industry was one of the main targets for the GIA. By destroying state buses and trains for instance, the GIA reduced the number of options for the public to use transport controlled by the state and also made this an increasingly unsafe way to travel as these buses and trains were still GIA targets. However, using private transport cost almost twice or three times as much. Thus, whereas the private traders benefited from this and the GIA thereby enriched their pool of private firms and actors to exploit, civilians suffered under these circumstances as their expenses went up (Martinez, 1998).

The GIA financed its organization by exploiting the population's resources, and related to this exploitation was the GIA's so-called 'Islamic tax' (Kepel, 2002, p.263). This tax was implemented in 1994 (Takeyh & Gvosdev, 2004, p.49). What used to be a voluntary tax turned into an obligation in 1996 when the GIA threatened to kill those who did not pay it (Hafez, 2000, p. 587).

Thus, the GIA was mostly dependent on the resources of the population, though it did not require its cooperation. Aside from this source, the GIA also had support networks outside of Algeria. It received weapons and finances from its Algerian diaspora in Europe. Especially from France, from where recruits also travelled to Algeria to join the GIA (Brynjar & Åshild, 2001, p.28). Initially, the GIA also had ties to other Islamist (terrorist) networks, that were located in Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Pakistan, of which the most well-known one is Al-Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2002, p.124). However, Bin Laden withdrew his support of the GIA in 1996, as he did not agree with the killing of other Muslims

(Vittori, 2008, p.323). Along with Al-Qaeda, Hassan Hattab, who was the head of the GIA network in Europe, also withdrew his support. Furthermore, Abu Mousab and Abu Qatada, who were publishing the weekly GIA bulletin *Al-Ansar* at that time, also detached themselves from the GIA (Chaliand & Blin, 2007, p.307). This led to a decline in the support for and increased distrust of the GIA in Europe, as many of the GIA's potential supporters there had been reached through *Al-Ansar.* Thus, it is clear that the GIA received the most civilian support during 1992 and 1993, but that this declined after the implementation of multiple government regulations and due to the existence of differing views on what appropriate targets were. This decline of resources started in 1994, along with the decline of support which only declined further over the years. Thus, the GIA's capability decreased between 1993-1997. What remains important to take into account however, is how the government's capability developed during these years in order to determine the GIA's *relative* capability.

In the 1980s, oil prices were falling and as the Algerian regime was mainly dependent on its oil revenue, it saw its funds decline (Takeyh, 2003, p.62). As a response to this economic decline, the Algerian government opted for privatization strategies from 1994 onwards (Majumdar & Saad, 2005, p.21). Along with the announcement of the privatization of 500 companies, the government also issued financial reforms. Since 1990 already, there has been an increased involvement of national and international banks in Algeria. The goal of these reforms was to reduce state power and to increase modernization and competition between privatized companies.

Next to these domestic approaches to improve its national economy, the Algerian government was also greatly aided by the international community. In 1993 and 1994, as the regime's revenue declined, the government negotiated with the IMF to reschedule its debt (Martinez, 1998, p.92). The Structural Adjustment Programme was launched, which was a prerequisite for the debt rescheduling and which involved the implementation of national policies such as the termination of state subsidies on consumer goods and the liberalization of trade. In 1994 and in 1995, the Algerian regime also received credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In 1995, this amount totaled around $1,8 million dollars (IMF, 1995). This aid allowed the regime to allocate money to finance its counterinsurgency but also to improve its domestic economic and social policies (Martinez, 1998, p.179). France supported the Algerian regime all throughout the civil war, which is not surprising as these countries had close ties due to Algeria being a former colony of France and considering France was also a direct target of the GIA (Akacem, 2004, p.158).

Important for the Algerian regime's financial position during the war is also the fact that though the GIA did destroy some state property, it did not destroy the state's oil and gas industry. This was to the regime's advantage, as it was mainly dependent on these industries. The oil and gas industries accounted for almost 95% of the state's revenue (Martinez, 1998, p.121). Moreover, many

foreign investors were involved in the oil industry, whose support of the regime was tied to this involvement. When the war started in 1992, the regime was almost financially bankrupt due to the falling oil prices at that time. Thanks to domestic changes and policies and international financial aid, the state's financial position grew stronger from 1994 onwards, entailing that thereby the GIA's *relative* capacity decreased.

When the civil war started in 1992, the GIA initially had former FIS supporters and Islamist sympathizers on its side. At that point, the Algerian government was not prepared to wage a counter-insurgency war. In 1992 and 1993, units of the regular army, the Algerian gendarmerie, and the Direction Générale de la Surêté Nationale (DGSN) were in charge of fighting the insurgent groups (Martinez, 1998, p.149). However, they were not trained to do so. From 1993 onwards, an army corps was active that was specialized in counter-insurgency. When it was created, it consisted of approximately 15,000 men, which rose to 60,000 men by 1995. One of its tactics to fight the GIA was to encircle the territories that the GIA controlled to prevent anyone from leaving these areas. The consequence of this – as was the regime's pursued goal- was that the civilians living in these areas would grow discontented with the presence of the GIA emirs, who were unable to provide for these citizens and were often exploiting them (Martinez, 1998, p.150).

In 1994, the financial situation of the Algerian government had improved and this opened up budget to also finance militia groups to fight against the Islamist insurgent groups. These militia groups were partly formed due to government encouragement and the provision of equipment, but also as a response of civilians to the threat the GIA posed to them, which grew over the years (Amnesty International, 1997). There were different militia groups active. Some were tolerated by the government, whereas others were directly under its authority (Martinez, 1998, p.151). These militia groups were allowed by the Algerian regime to kill insurgents. An Algerian citizen was quoted in 1996:

> Now things have changed, it's no longer the Moudjahidin who cut off heads, it's the militiamen. If the militiamen go on long like that, in two or three years they will have killed all the Moudjahidin. It is because of the militiamen that Moudjahidin have surrendered, because the government says, "There will be justice and rahma (clemency) for 'terrorists' who surrender", and on the other side the generals say to the militiamen, "When you find them, cut their throats". Those who went to the maquis (insurgents) out of fear prefer to give themselves up before the militiamen catch them. (Martinez, 1998, p.152).

Thus, this quote shows that the government, through the activity of the militia groups, was gaining power over the GIA. Additionally, the quote suggests that fear of the militias also led to GIA

members defecting from the group.

Whereas some joined the militias to get revenge for a family member or friend murdered by the GIA, others also joined the militia groups as this provided security from the insurgents (Kalyvas, 1999, p.268). Moreover, the government set up the Commune Guard, whose job it was to patrol cities and areas that were controlled by the government. For young Algerian men, this was an appealing job as it was paid and it did involve high risks (Martinez, 1998, p.153). As the government increasingly controlled more of these areas that previously had belonged to the GIA and as the GIA tactics increasingly disengaged civilians and even GIA members from the insurgent group, the number of GIA defections rose (Kalyvas, 1999, p.263).

What can be established from the discussion above is that the GIA's economic and military capacity declined in the period between 1993 and 1997, whereas the government's economic and military capacity increased during the same period. Thus, it can be concluded that the GIA's relative capacity decreased. What remains to be established is whether this declining relative capacity is the variable that has led to the peak of violence in 1997-1998.

First of all, the GIA's relative capacity did decline in the years leading up to their surge of violence. According to Wood's theory (2010), if a rebel group has weak capacity relative to the state, it is likely to face difficulties in raising civilian support and will therefore be more likely to resort to violence against civilians as a last resort recruitment tool. In January 1997, at a time that the number of massacres carried out by the GIA was high, the insurgent group issued the following statement in their bulletin: "There is no neutrality in the war we are waging. With the exception of those who are with us, all others are apostates and deserve to die." (Wiktorowicz & Kaltner, 2003, p.91). Moreover, Antar Zouabri, who was appointed as the sixth emir of the GIA in 1996, said: "In our war, there is no neutrality. Except for those who are with us, all others are renegades." (Takeyh, 2003, p.70). These quotes entail that anyone who did not actively support the GIA was automatically considered an enemy.

In 1997, Abu Hamza published a manifesto on behalf of the GIA which was entitled '*The Sharp Sword*' (Kepel, 2002, p.272). This manifesto provided justifications of the killings done by the GIA and blamed the Algerian population of being resistant to the jihad. It argued that, as Muslims, the Algerian society should wage war against non-believers and that they should join the GIA in its battle. Furthermore, it stated that the majority of people had "forsaken religion and renounced the battle against its enemies" (Kepel, 2002, p.272). In another communiqué that year, Zouabri declared all those Algerians that did not join the GIA as impious. Those who did not support the GIA were seen as apostates and deserved to be killed (Evans & Philips, 2007, p.223).

These statements were made in the years that the GIA's violence against civilians was at its peak. They specifically urged the Algerian population to join the GIA and threatened to punish them with violence or death if they chose not to do so. The process over the years shows that while the GIA's relative capacity became increasingly weak, it increasingly failed to maintain and attract civilian support, and its use of violence increased. The timing of these events and the statements that the GIA has made illustrate that its use of violence was mainly employed as a last resort recruitment technique, as Wood's theory would suggest (2010). The GIA's violence against civilians in 1997 and 1998 was used as punishment and was a reaction to its loss of access to resources and to the various splits from the group. Its aim was to refrain other GIA members from defecting and threatening the population into supporting the GIA.

The only process that is not fully explained by Wood's theory is the loss of support as a consequence of a loss of resources. According to Wood's theory, insurgent groups with strong capacity are more likely to attract a civilian support base. Thus, this theory would suggest that when an insurgent group's capacity decreases, the support it receives would also decrease. In the case of the GIA, though the weakening capacity and the loss of support can be observed, the last one does not necessarily seem to follow from the first. The relative weak capacity has partially been responsible for the loss of support: the lack of financial resources led to civilians being extorted and being forced to pay higher prices for goods normally provided by the state. Also, youths were attracted by financial rewards and the provision of security by militias set up by the Algerian regime, and the strength of these militias also damaged the support base of the GIA (Martinez, 1998). However, as the analysis of internal fragmentation has shown, internal divisions within the GIA were also for a large part responsible for the loss of support. These internal divisions have been discussed in the previous section and illustrate that there were differences in ideology within the organization and that there were different ideas on the use of violence and on who were considered to be legitimate targets. This internal fragmentation increased in the period from 1992 to 1997 and led to many defections from the insurgent group and to the formation of splinter groups (Hafez, 2000).

Although the intervening variable of loss of support was not solely explained by the independent variable of weak relative capacity, it did explain the use of mass violence as a means of recruitment (Wood, 2010). Other scholars also do not deem the use of indiscriminate violence as irrational. Downes has argued that indiscriminate violence against civilians can be used by an insurgent group to demonstrate their power and to illustrate that the government – or other warring parties- are unable to offer protection (Downes, 2007, p.438; Hultman, 2014, p.292). Kalyvas has also argued, similar to Wood's theory, that indiscriminate violence is used by insurgent groups when they lack resources, which also includes access to information, to employ selective incentives and

punishments (2006, p.114). Many scholars have argued that the use of indiscriminate violence by insurgents is counterproductive, but this does not exclude the use of this type of violence, as insurgents may still employ it with the rationales explained above. The GIA has used indiscriminate violence on a large scale and this has proved to be ineffective, as they lost support. As Kalyvas has argued: when violence is used indiscriminately, civilians cannot influence whether they will be a target or not and are thus more likely to join the rival party that could offer them protection (2006, p.143).

Linking the results found when testing H1 and H2 shows that the loss of support was partly caused by internal differences in the organization. The data confirms that weak relative capacity has influenced the decline of support, but also illustrates that internal fragmentation played a role in this. Thus, Wood's theory could be expanded if it would take other factors next to weak relative capability into account that could weaken or strengthen civilian support.

Moreover, Wood's theory discusses the insurgent group's capacity relative to that of the regime they are fighting (2010). However, the GIA was also fighting the AIS, FIS, the GSCP and other Islamist insurgent groups. The GSCP was a splinter group of the GIA, and many GIA members defected to join this group. Others have also joined the AIS, as its ideology was more appealing to them than the GIA's views were. Thus, these groups were also responsible for a loss of GIA support, which illustrates why it is important to take not only the regime, but also other fighting insurgent groups into account when analyzing the violent behavior of one rebel group. This research could be expanded by looking at the GIA's capacity relative to the regime and to other insurgent groups. However, it seems that many defected from the GIA to other Islamist insurgent groups did so not because these other groups had stronger capacity at their disposal, but because they disagreed with the GIA's ideology and methods. For example, Hassan Hattab, who had been a regional emir within the GIA, left the GIA and founded the Salafist Group for Preaching and Struggle (GSCP) in 1996. As a reason for the split Hattab said that the GIA was "spilling the blood of the nation, looting its property and kidnapping its women" (Hafez, 2000, p.589). The case of the GIA is a clear example that illustrates how dependent insurgent groups are on civilian support and how important ideology can be in acquiring and maintaining this support. Sanin and Wood have emphasized the importance of ideology in civil war (2014). Ideology has to be considered in the analysis of different armed groups, as they prescribe an insurgent group's goals and the strategies to reach these goals and as ideology can have "autonomous explanatory power" (Sanin & Wood, 2014, p.214 & p.223). As mentioned before, the goal of the GIA was to establish an Islamic State and they saw jihad as the only way to attain this. Ideology is an important variable to take into account, as many statements the GIA made about justifications for the killings were backed with ideological and religious quotes (Kepel, 2002, p.272).

Conclusion

This research aimed to answer the question "How does the internal structure of a rebel movement influence their use of violence?". Multiple theories exist that discuss possible causal linkages between a rebel movement's internal structure and its use of violence, one of the most well-known ones being Weinstein's resource curse theory. This theory could not account for the GIA's use of violence during the Algerian civil war. This study tested two different theories through two hypotheses to explain the rise of violence in 1997 and 1998. Through process-tracing, by looking at the start of the civil war until the years that the GIA became extremely violent, an assessment could be made of variables that changed over these years. This study found that increasing internal fragmentation within the GIA did not lead to a lack of monitoring and control and therefore did not cause a surge of mass violence on the local level of the organization. The GIA made explicit statements that justified this use of violence. Therefore, the massacres by the GIA in 1997 and 1998 cannot completely be explained by the mechanisms of Staniland's social-institutional theory, although the increase of internal fragmentation did play a role in the loss of support. The second hypothesis, which tested whether a lack of resources led to a loss of civilian support that caused the use of mass violence as a recruitment tool, was largely confirmed. Whereas the intervening variable 'civilian support' was not solely dependent on weak capacity, the loss of support did lead to a surge of violence according to the mechanisms of Wood's theory. Moreover, this analysis identified the relevance of the role of ideology and the role of other insurgent groups. Future research is needed to take a closer look at these factors. This research concludes that the GIA was losing access to resources while the government's capacity grew. The ideological justifications the GIA had for its use of violence also led internal divisions which in turn led to a loss of support. When these defections started, the GIA engaged in mass violence as a last resort recruitment tool in 1997 and 1998, which led to more defections and to more violence during these years. Thus, the answer to the research question is: through the ideology of an insurgent group and through its capacity relative to the government and other insurgent groups, civilian support can be attracted, maintained, or lost, which can lead to the use of violence aimed at controlling this support.

There are alternative views on what explains the use of violence by the GIA. A theory that circulates is that the Algerian government was responsible for the massacres via infiltration in the GIA in order to discredit the GIA (Hafez, 2000, p.575). Multiple authors have mentioned this, though not many have considered it very plausible. As there is a lack of detailed information on the massacres that took place in Algeria in 1997 and 1998, and there is no concrete evidence on these allegations aside from speculations, this study did take not this possibility into account.

For future research on the Algerian case, the ideology of the GIA should be considered as a

variable that might be part of the explanation of the GIA's use of violence. Next to that, the role and the capacity of other active insurgent groups has to be considered, as was discussed above. Lastly, other theories that can offer explanations on how groups lose and attract civilian support may provide additional insights on the defections the GIA experienced.

This study is limited as it does not fully take into account the influence that other active insurgent groups and ideology might have on support. Moreover, this research relies on secondary sources and these may not always be reliable. However, all of the facts presented in the empirical analysis section have been checked across multiple sources. Also, there is limited information available on the massacres of 1997 and 1998, whereas these events might be able to provide most information on how and why this violence was used. Lastly, as it concerns a single-case study, the findings from this study cannot be generalized and applied to other civil wars. Each civil war will have to be looked at individually, but the findings from this case study might offer some understanding on the use of violence in other conflicts.

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