Ethnic Cleavages and Irregular War:
Iraq and Vietnam

STATHIS N. KALYVAS
AND
MATTHEW ADAM KOCHER

The conflict in Iraq has been portrayed as "ethnic" civil war, a radically different conflict from "ideological" wars such as Vietnam. We argue that such an assessment is misleading, as is its theoretical foundation, which we call the "ethnic war model." Neither Iraq nor Vietnam conforms to the ethnic war model's predictions. The sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni militias is not simply the outcome of sectarian cleavages in Iraqi society, but to an important extent, a legacy of U.S. occupation. On the other hand, although Vietnam was a society riven by ethnic cleavages, the Vietnam War also fails to conform to the ethnic war model. We show that there is no necessary overlap between ethnic conflict and ethnic war. Some ethnic conflicts evolve into ethnic wars, and others develop dynamics virtually indistinguishable from those of ideological civil wars. We suggest that the state's role is essential in transforming conflicts into either ethnic or irregular wars. We conclude with an analysis of the current situation and future prospects in Iraq.

Keywords: *civil wars; ethnic conflict; political violence; Iraq War; Vietnam War*

In discussing the conflict in Iraq, it is impossible to overlook the current (December 2006) high levels of violence perpetrated by Shia and Sunni militias against individuals belonging to "rival" sects. However, the way in which this

violence has been interpreted and incorporated into both policy-oriented and theoretical debates is highly problematic. Typically, abuses of civilians by sectarian militias are depicted as instances of a generalized intercommunal civil war between monolithic Shia and Sunni communities. In turn, this interpretation serves to substantiate an understanding of Iraqi politics based on the supremacy of sectarian (or ethnic) cleavages,[1] which then feeds into a view of ethnic conflict as intractable and different from other types of violent conflict, including those motivated by class or ideology. For example, in an influential article, Stephen Biddle argued against using lessons from the Vietnam War in designing policy for Iraq, because "the conflict in Iraq today is a communal civil war, not a Maoist 'people's war', and so those lessons are not valid."[2] Major policy recommendations are derived from this analysis, ranging from the implementation of extreme decentralization[3] to the partition of Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines.[4] It is also acknowledged that such outcomes may well result in massive ethnic cleansing as individuals migrate, willingly or not, to their new ethnic "homelands."[5]

In this article, we challenge this type of analysis, which we call the "ethnic war model." We do so in two ways: empirically, by demonstrating that this model gets both Iraq and Vietnam wrong, and theoretically, by showing that the distinction between ethnic and ideological civil wars rests on faulty theoretical foundations and miscodes many ethnic conflicts. We contrast ethnic war to irregular war and ask why some ethnic conflicts turn into ethnic wars and others into irregular wars.

More specifically, we show that salient ethnic cleavages do not always result in ethnic civil wars. By relying on a unique data set, the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), we demonstrate that even in a classic ideological war such as the Vietnam War, ethnicity came to play a more significant role than is generally appreciated. Thus, comparing Vietnam and Iraq is hardly the "category mistake" that it is made out to be.[6] Second, we show that extrapolating from ethnic cleavages to the type of civil war is deeply problematic. Because the ethnic war model undertheorizes the links between cleavages and war, it miscodes an important subset of civil wars. We show that many ethnic conflicts evolve into irregular wars, and therefore, display dynamics that are virtually indistinguishable from civil wars that are coded as ideological.[7] Last, we discuss why ethnic cleavages express themselves sometimes in an ethnic civil war and sometimes in an irregular civil war. We find little merit in arguments that stress the "depth" of ethnic cleavages. We argue, instead, that the key factor accounting for the divergent outcome is the presence of a unified state structure: unified states are likely to subsume ethnic cleavages into irregular wars, whereas the fragmentation of the state structure is more likely to allow the transformation of ethnic cleavages into ethnic war.

Overall, this article suggests that an important policy debate rests on faulty and misleading conceptual foundations. Of course, this is far from the only problematic aspect of the way the Iraq conflict has been understood. Much as the current

conflict in Iraq is dominated by a misleading emphasis on the twin concepts of terrorism and sectarianism, debates about the war in Vietnam were likewise distorted by a single-minded focus on communism and colonialism. Despite its recurrence, the nexus between cleavages and civil war remains poorly specified and understood.

We proceed as follows. In the first section, we discuss the distinction between ethnic and ideological civil war and the ethnic war model. In the second section, we turn our attention to Iraq and make three points: first, the sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni militias is not the only conflict taking place in this country; second, this conflict is not simply the outcome of the deep and intractable sectarian cleavages prevalent in Iraqi society; and third, a key reason why the sectarian conflict has emerged with such force and violence is to be found in the handling of this country's occupation by the United States. In the third section, we show that although Vietnam was a society riven by ethnic cleavages, the Vietnam War fails to conform to the ethnic war model; we then ask why Vietnam looked different from Iraq. In the fourth section, we turn to the theoretical discussion of the relation between cleavages and violence, and in section five we show that not all ethnic conflicts become ethnic wars and we provide an argument that stresses the structure of the state rather than the depth of cleavages. We conclude, in section six, by drawing the implications of our analysis for the future of Iraq.

ETHNIC VERSUS IDEOLOGICAL CIVIL WAR

A superficial juxtaposition of the wars in Iraq and Vietnam would inevitably reveal the ethnic character of the former and the ideological dimension of the latter. Indeed, the role of ethnicity seems much more pronounced in Iraq than it ever appears to have been in Vietnam. This dissimilarity has been used to make the case for the need to distinguish between "ethnic" (or "communal") and "ideological" (or "people's") civil wars. Consider Biddle's contrast between these two types:

A Maoist people's war is, at bottom, a struggle for good governance between a class-based insurgency claiming to represent the interests of the oppressed public and a ruling regime portrayed by the insurgents as defending entrenched privilege. Using a mix of coercion and inducements, the insurgents and the regime compete for the allegiance of a common pool of citizens, who could, in principle, take either side. A key requirement for the insurgents' success, arguably, is an ideological program—people's wars are wars of ideas as much as they are killing competitions—and nationalism is often at the heart of this program. Insurgents frame their resistance as an expression of the people's sovereign will to overthrow an illegitimate regime that represents only narrow class interests or is backed by a foreign government. Communal civil wars, in contrast, feature opposing subnational groups divided along ethnic or sectarian lines; they are not about universal class interests or nationalist passions. In such situations, even the government is typically an instrument of one communal group, and its opponents champion the rights of their subgroup over those of others. These conflicts do not revolve around ideas, because no

pool of uncommitted citizens is waiting to be swayed by ideology. (Albanian Kosovars, Bosnian Muslims, and Rwandan Tutsis knew whose side they were on.) The fight is about group survival, not about the superiority of one party's ideology or one side's ability to deliver better governance.[8]

This distinction is not new; it has been elaborated by several authors, most notably Kaufmann,[9] who also argues that ethnic cleavages produce "ethnic" or "intercommunity" civil wars, whereas ideological cleavages result in "revolutionary" or "ideological" civil wars.[10] The former entail a competition between the government and the rebels for the (flexible) loyalties of the people, whereas the latter are a competition between well-defined and mutually exclusive groups. We call this argument the "ethnic war" model.

A key implication of this model is the impossibility of defection between rival sides. Whereas ideological wars entail such a possibility, ethnic wars foreclose it. In ideological conflicts, everyone is a potential recruit for any side; the conflict is informed by individual loyalties that are quite fluid and changeable, with the same population's serving as the shared mobilization base for both sides. In sharp contrast, ethnic civil wars entail recruitment from exclusive ethnic pools. People cannot "escape their identity"—Serbs cannot become Albanians, whereas communists can turn into anticommunists. The ethnic war model provides the basis for a number of empirical conjectures: ethnic civil wars are said to cause mass violence, including ethnic cleansing, while third-party intervention is said to be possible in the case of ideological wars but not in the case of ethnic wars.[11]

But does Iraq conform to the ethnic war model? It turns out that the fit is far from ideal: the clear and salient sectarian cleavage in Iraq coexists with competing dimensions and conflicts. Furthermore, the connection between the depth of cleavages and the type of war hides a potential source of endogeneity: ethnic cleavages are further activated and deepened by the war, rather than war merely reflecting already deep ethnic cleavages.

IRAQ

This section makes three points. First, the sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni militias is far from the only violent conflict in Iraq. Second, this conflict is not simply the outcome of deep and intractable sectarian cleavages in Iraqi society. Third, a key reason why the sectarian conflict has emerged with such force lies in the U.S. occupation.

First, sectarian violence is hardly the only (and possibly not the dominant) form of violence in Iraq. At the end of 2006, Iraq was the site of at least five conflicts, underscoring the view that civil wars are typically aggregations of multiple, highly fragmented conflicts.[12] Besides the anti-American insurgency in the country's Sunni heartland, one could also take note of the sectarian strife between Shia

and Sunni militias centered primarily in and around Baghdad, the conflict between Arabs and Kurds mainly in Mosul and Kirkuk in northern Iraq, the factional strife among rival Shiite militias in the south, and the clashes among criminal mafias, contraband gangs, and rogue party militias.[13] The multitude of conflicts waged by tens of different armed groups should give pause to analysts speaking about "Sunni" and "Shia" as if they were unified and monolithic groups commanding the full allegiance of the entire population; it also highlights the extent to which the Iraqi state remains more of a fiction than a reality across Iraq.

Positing a dichotomy between "Maoist people's war" and a "communal civil war" is misleading in the case of Iraq since the two coexist and apparently feed on each other. The nationalist and Islamist Sunni insurgents are waging a war against U.S. forces and their local collaborators, using a combination of selective violence (where they enjoy a measure of territorial control) and indiscriminate violence (mostly via suicide bombings) in areas where such control eludes them. This conflict displays all the characteristics of ideological wars and irregular insurgencies, including considerable intraethnic violence. Sunni insurgents have killed thousands of Sunnis who are actual or suspected collaborators of the United States as well as representatives and employees of the present Iraqi government and its security forces. That the insurgency has escalated into a full-fledged civil war according to the definitions and violence thresholds used in standard political science analysis is beyond doubt.[14] At the same time, the insurgency is geographically limited to particular regions of the country. But then, so are most civil wars: rarely do they take place simultaneously across the entire territory of a country.

Sectarian violence has exploded for a number of reasons, including indiscriminate insurgent violence against prominent Shia targets and factional strife among Shia organizations. Thousands have been killed in bombings or have been abducted and executed by rival sectarian militias. This violence has also caused substantial population movement in mixed areas of Baghdad and elsewhere as individuals are either expelled or flee to seek protection among members of their own group.[15] While the potential for a full-fledged communal war is clearly there, this violence has yet to reach the massive proportions and comprehensive extent of the Bosnian ethnic cleansing campaigns or the Lebanese Civil War; rather, it is for the moment somewhere on a continuum anchored at one end by full-fledged ethnic war of the Lebanese or Bosnian type and at the other end by ethnoreligious riots and pogroms such as those that have taken place in India or Indonesia. Whether the violence moves toward one or the other end depends very much on the ability of the Iraqi state and its U.S. sponsors to control the militias that have emerged in post-Saddam Iraq.

An interesting and important question, and one obscured by debates on the dichotomy between "Maoist people's war" and a "communal civil war," is exactly how the emergence of intercommunal strife affects the intensity of the insurgency against U.S. forces—and vice-versa. Judging from the available evidence so far,

it would appear that the sectarian strife has caused neither a decline of the insurgency nor a significant shift in its goals and tactics. Journalistic reports point instead to an increase in the number of roadside bombs planted in Iraq, offering more evidence that the anti-American insurgency has continued to strengthen.[16]

Second, many analysts appear to have missed the extent to which the current sectarian violence is itself the cause of sectarian polarization rather than simply its consequence. Indeed, a multitude of journalistic reports documents the extent to which an existing and real but nonviolent cleavage is turning into the dominant feature of individual life and identity precisely because of the ongoing violence.[17] Likewise, a substantial historical literature points out that although existing and real, sectarian divisions were neither the only nor always the dominant cleavage in Iraq.[18] It is wrong, therefore, to assume that this cleavage is the only possible social basis of Iraqi politics, much as scholars of the Rwandan and Bosnian conflicts have shown that ethnic violence cannot be traced to deep ethnic divisions alone.[19] Indeed, several scholars of ethnic conflict have provided evidence undermining the view that ethnic violence is secreted from ethnic animosity and have argued instead that ethnic violence is instead a major instrument in shaping and consolidating ethnic cleavages over other dimensions of politics.[20]

Third, much recent writing about Iraq stresses the fact that both the ongoing insurgency and the sectarian violence were not inevitable outcomes of Iraq's social makeup but can be traced directly to the way in which the United States handled the occupation of Iraq.[21] It seems safe to argue that the U.S. invasion and occupation triggered the reactivation and sharpening of the sectarian cleavage, which has taken on a new and constantly evolving form (we develop this point below).

In short, while no one would take issue with the fact that sectarian violence is a reality in Iraq, the description of Iraq as the site of an exclusively ethnic war caused by deep ethnic cleavages is overblown and problematic.

VIETNAM

Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, Vietnam is the analogy that has drawn the most sustained fire—not surprisingly, given the outcome of that conflict. U.S. officials denied that the two wars could be compared and that lessons from the former could be applied to the latter. Just before her visit in Vietnam in November 2006, Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State, declared that historical parallels between the two conflicts were neither helpful nor right.[22] Stephen J. Hadley, the president's national security adviser, struck a similar note when he suggested that the "domino effect" that Americans worried about in the 1960s and 1970s was nothing compared to the problems that could result from a defeat in Iraq.[23] This perspective translated into policy choices. In his book *Fiasco*, about the war in Iraq, Thomas Ricks describes a July 2003 meeting in Baghdad between Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, and a defense

consultant and retired Marine colonel named Gary Anderson, who had recently written a *Washington Post* op-ed warning that the United States faced the prospect of a protracted guerrilla insurgency. At that time, the Bush administration was still dismissing such claims and describing the nascent insurgency as acts of desperation by a few isolated "dead-enders." Bremer indicated that he was not particularly interested in the issue and had not given much thought to counterinsurgency. "Mr. Ambassador, here are some programs that worked in Vietnam," Anderson said, having in mind the popular forces that were used as village militias in South Vietnam. It was the wrong word to put in front of Bremer. "Vietnam?" Bremer exploded. "Vietnam! I don't want to talk about Vietnam. This is not Vietnam. This is Iraq." Anderson recalls that "that was pretty much the end of the meeting."[24] However, while superficial or impressionistic analogies between the Iraq and Vietnam wars are abundant,[25] little effort has been expended to explore the parallels and differences between the two conflicts analytically rather than by simply tallying up differences and similarities.[26]

It turns out that the Vietnam War, parallel to the Iraqi situation, displays a potential that has been forgotten since the end of this conflict, and thus, neglected so far: the presence of significant ethnic and sectarian cleavages. These cleavages constituted an important part of the conflict and entered into the strategic calculations of the rival political actors. As Samuel Huntington pointed out at the time, "a relatively high degree of Government control [in Vietnam] is in large part the product of communal—ethnic and religious—organizations."[27]

It is not easy to characterize the Vietnam War in a simple way, because of its duration and complexity: it was a civil and an interstate war as well as an irregular and a conventional war involving a variety of actors over time. Historically, the conflict is a composite of three successive wars: it began as a resistance war during the Japanese occupation of Vietnam, pitting mostly communist insurgents against the Japanese, the Vichy French, and their local collaborators. Following World War II, it mutated into an anticolonial war against the French (1946–54), undergoing various periods and ending in a compromise that saw the country's partition. The North became communist, while the South turned toward the West, with the Americans replacing the French as its main sponsors. A third war began in 1959 as an insurgency against the South Vietnamese dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem, with the communist party at the heart of the rebellion. This war eventually drew in large conventional armies from North Vietnam and the United States, and it became a principal battleground of the Cold War.

Unlike the current presentation of the Vietnam War as a purely ideological or anticolonial war, observers at the time noted or even emphasized its ethnic elements.[28] To begin with, communist parties in general, and in Vietnam in particular, had "manifested a marked proficiency at manipulating ethnic forces for their own ends."[29] The Viet Minh's challenge against the Japanese first and the French later depended on the support or consent of ethnic minorities. In fact, the initial

territorial sanctuary (or "base area") in which the organization was nurtured and grew during the Second World War was not in ethnically Vietnamese territory but in an area inhabited by ethnic minorities (the Tho and other Tai peoples). Later on, North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) made extensive efforts to attract South Vietnamese ethnic minorities, including the active recruitment and training of ethnic cadres in their native language and the insertion of the promise of autonomy in their program.[30] This decision was informed by the fact that although constituting more than 85 percent of the population of Vietnam, the ethnic Vietnamese were concentrated in less than 30 percent of the territory.[31] Eventually, however, villages inhabited by minority ethnic and religious groups were thought to be more resistant to subversion "because the people were motivated to defend themselves" against the communists, rather than being coerced by the U.S. or South Vietnamese militaries.[32] In his comprehensive history of the war as fought in one Vietnamese province, Elliott notes, "Much of the support for the French came from [religious] sects such as the Hoa Hao and the Cao Dai, which [were] comprised largely of poor peasants, making any analysis of the conflict based purely on class difficult."[33]

Was the war in Vietnam therefore "about" ethnicity? Or was it about ideology, class, or foreign domination? We argue that sharp distinctions along these analytic axes are at best problematic. By the same token, merely noting this empirical and conceptual complexity does not advance our understanding of *how* ethnicity is implicated in war. In this section, we use a unique and valuable database, the HES, to demonstrate how the theoretical disaggregation of the previous sections can bear systematic empirical fruit. Since these data are not widely known, we first describe and justify our use of the database. Second, we briefly describe the ethnic and religious composition of mid-twentieth-century Vietnam, and we demonstrate from cross-sections of the data that ethnicity was systematically associated with each side's ability to control localities, at least in the later stages of the Vietnam War. Finally, we introduce additional complexity into our analysis by showing how ethnic affiliation was partially endogenous to the course of the war itself. Thus, we show that observers of the Vietnam War were much like contemporary analysts of the Iraq case in reifying temporary configurations of forces as stable patterns of ethnic allegiance.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Department of Defense pioneered the use of quantitative analysis for operational purposes. The attempts to quantify the battlefield became notorious because of the reliance on enemy "body counts" as a measure of military effectiveness. Less well known is a series of linked data-collection efforts developed to evaluate the success of counterinsurgency programs. Beginning in 1967, Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), began compiling the HES, a monthly and quarterly rating of "the status of pacification at the hamlet and village level throughout the Republic of Vietnam."[34] In a war without

frontlines, the HES was designed as a way to measure and map who controlled what, and why.[35]

Each province, district, village, and hamlet in South Vietnam was given a unique HES identification number and located by spatial coordinates (in theory, to within a 100-by-100–meter grid square). With the cooperation of local officials, U.S. military advisors completed extensive questionnaires on a variety of military, political, economic, social, and cultural variables. The questionnaires were subsequently digitized on IBM punchcards and processed on mainframe computers to produce monthly status reports. Following the war, the data were preserved by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), resulting in a database that describes the shifting face of an irregular battlefield in unparalleled detail.

Some limitations of the database are worth mentioning. First, the HES went through three versions, the first of which was coded in a highly subjective manner and lacks data on ethnic composition, among other important factors. Second, some time periods and regions did not make it into the NARA collection. From the second and third versions of the HES, we have cross-sections for July–January 1969; July–January 1971; and all of 1973. In addition, we have data on the ten northernmost provinces of South Vietnam for all of 1972. One unfortunate consequence is that we lack data on some of the most violent and contested periods of the war. Finally, there are good reasons to be suspicious of the *absolute levels* of government control reflected in the data; both South Vietnamese and American actors probably gave unduly optimistic representations of "progress." For this reason, we use the data only to make cross-sectional or temporal comparisons within Vietnam.[36]

As it is today, the majority of the population of mid-twentieth-century Vietnam was Vietnamese-speaking and Buddhist. There were, however, several other demographically significant ethnolinguistic and religious identity groups. Catholicism was brought to Vietnam by Jesuit missionaries long before the French conquest. Conversion was an important means of advancement within colonial society,[37] and large numbers of Indochinese natives embraced the religion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the non-Vietnamese highland peoples of the region practiced animist tribal religions, though by the time the HES was compiled, many had converted to Catholicism. Vietnam also had two very substantial latter-day sects, the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao. Cao Dai was a syncretic sect with a Catholic-flavored organizational structure and a doctrine rooted in elements of both Eastern and Western religions.[38] Founded in the 1920s and centered in Tay Ninh province near the Cambodian border, Cao Dai drew adherents from both elite and peasant backgrounds; it was "a combination of clandestine nationalist group, militant religious order, and traditionalist movement."[39] Hoa Hao was a form of Buddhist populism, founded in 1939 by a monk named Huynh Phu So; the geographical base of this group was in the western Mekong Delta region.[40] Hoa Hao was strongly egalitarian, had limited doctrinal

Table 1
Religious Affiliation and Control in South Vietnam, July 1969

	None/ Other (%)	Animist (%)	Cao Dai (%)	Catholic (%)	Hoa Hao (%)	Buddhist (%)	Total (%)
Government controlled	1,170 (66.18)	482 (50.79)	182 (59.28)	495 (60.44)	511 (80.60)	2,533 (44.93)	5,373 (53.12)
Contested	273 (15.44)	257 (27.08)	70 (22.80)	208 (25.40)	79 (12.46)	1,457 (25.84)	2,344 (23.17)
Rebel controlled	325 (18.38)	210 (22.13)	55 (17.92)	116 (14.16)	44 (6.94)	1,648 (29.23)	2,398 (23.71)
Total	1,768 (100.00)	949 (100.00)	307 (100.00)	819 (100.00)	634 (100.00)	5,638 (100.00)	10,115 (100.00)

Note: $\chi^2(10) = 537.57$; $Pr = 0.000$.

development, and was also nationalist and anticolonial at its inception.[41] Vietnam also had very small Muslim, Hindu, and Protestant populations, which we overlook in our analysis for the sake of simplicity.

In addition, Vietnam has three demographically significant ethnolinguistic minorities: Khmer, Chinese, and Montagnards. *Montagnard* is a catch-all term for the aboriginal ethnolinguistic populations of the Vietnamese highlands. They constitute a "group" only in opposition to the Vietnamese majority and in virtue of their traditional swidden agricultural practices. Khmer is the dominant language of Cambodia; most of the Khmer in Vietnam live in the Mekong Delta, close to the Cambodian border. Ethnic Chinese, also called Hoa, were and continue to be highly concentrated in the urban centers of Vietnam, especially in Ho Chi Minh City and Cholon. As in other parts of Southeast Asia, the ethnic Chinese of the Vietnam War era were heavily involved in commerce and manufacturing.

In Tables 1 and 2, we highlight two temporal cross-sections drawn from the HES (July 1969 and December 1971). Both tables examine variation in control conditional on hamlets' "primary religion."[42] The variation is characteristic of what we found across the entire database. For both periods, the data indicate sharp differences in the South Vietnamese government's ability to control localities depending on their religious characteristics. In the first period (Table 1), NLF forces controlled nearly 30 percent of predominantly Buddhist hamlets but only 14 percent and 18 percent of Catholic and Cao Dai hamlets, respectively. The government controlled 75 percent more Hoa Hao hamlets than orthodox Buddhist hamlets. Predominantly animist hamlets were somewhat more likely than Buddhist localities to fall into the government camp during this period.

By late 1971, the government of South Vietnam and U.S. forces had gained considerably across the board, but sharp ethnic differences remained (Table 2).[43] The government still controlled a significantly higher proportion of predominantly Catholic and Hoa Hao hamlets than orthodox Buddhist or Animist hamlets.

Table 2

Religious Affiliation and Control in South Vietnam, December 1971

	None/ Other (%)	Animist (%)	Cao Dai (%)	Catholic (%)	Hoa Hao (%)	Buddhist (%)	Total (%)
Government controlled	610 (88.92)	1,041 (79.65)	364 (87.50)	889 (92.32)	673 (96.97)	6,565 (84.12)	10,142 (85.44)
Contested	66 (9.62)	115 (8.80)	46 (11.06)	68 (7.06)	18 (2.59)	819 (10.49)	1,132 (9.54)
Rebel controlled	10 (1.46)	151 (11.55)	6 (1.44)	6 (0.62)	3 (0.43)	420 (5.38)	596 (5.02)
Total	686 (100.00)	1,307 (100.00)	416 (100.00)	963 (100.00)	694 (100.00)	7,804 (100.00)	11,870 (100.00)

Note: $\chi^2(10) = 281.82$; $Pr = 0.000$.

Table 3

Ethnolinguistic Identity and Control in South Vietnam, July 1969

	None/ Other (%)	Khmer (%)	Chinese (%)	Montagnard (%)	Vietnamese (%)	Total (%)
Government controlled	218 (71.48)	129 (25.85)	150 (91.46)	597 (52.41)	4,368 (51.20)	5,462 (51.34)
Contested	56 (18.36)	180 (36.07)	9 (5.49)	287 (25.20)	1,911 (22.40)	2,443 (22.96)
Rebel controlled	31 (10.16)	190 (38.08)	5 (3.05)	255 (22.39)	2,253 (26.41)	2,734 (25.70)
Total	305 (100.00)	499 (100.00)	164 (100.00)	1,139 (100.00)	8,532 (100.00)	10,639 (100.00)

Note: $\chi^2(8) = 1.7e + 03$; $Pr = 0.000$.

Predominantly Cao Dai localities fell somewhere in between. While in the first period, Buddhist hamlets had been most congenial to rebel control, by late 1971, predominantly animist hamlets had the highest proportion controlled by rebels.

In Tables 3 and 4, we repeat the exercise for ethnolinguistic identities. Overall, the data suggest that religion was more strongly associated with control than was ethnolinguistic identity. Both tables suggest little difference between ethnically Vietnamese and Montagnard hamlets. The government controlled virtually all predominantly Chinese localities in the first period and 100 percent in the second period. Strikingly, primarily Khmer-speaking hamlets were only half as likely as Vietnamese or Montagnard hamlets to be government-controlled in the first period.[44] By December 1971, a slightly *higher* proportion of these hamlets was in the government camp. In other words, we see that a very strong probabilistic association between identity and control in one temporal cross-section can reverse its

Table 4
Ethnolinguistic Identity and Control in South Vietnam, December 1971

	None/ Other (%)	Khmer (%)	Chinese (%)	Montagnard (%)	Vietnamese (%)	Total (%)
Government controlled	133 (93.66)	438 (89.02)	184 (100.00)	1,205 (81.69)	8,244 (85.34)	10,204 (85.37)
Contested	8 (5.63)	38 (7.72)	0 (0.00)	110 (7.46)	979 (10.13)	1,135 (9.50)
Rebel controlled	1 (0.70)	16 (3.25)	0 (0.00)	160 (10.85)	437 (4.52)	614 (5.14)
Total	142 (100.00)	492 (100.00)	184 (100.00)	1,475 (100.00)	9,660 (100.00)	11,953 (100.00)

Note: $\chi^2(8) = 627.08$; Pr = 0.000.

sign in a second cross-section only two years later—evidence of the "endogenous" dynamics of the war.

While the contingency table analysis suggests that the war had a strong ethnic dimension, is the association between ethnicity and control robust, or is it merely a statistical artifact of other factors? To address this possibility, we estimated several parametric models, introducing some important control variables. First, some identity groups in Vietnam lived disproportionately in urban or rural areas: for instance, Montagnards and Animists were overwhelmingly rural, while the Chinese were concentrated in urban areas. Since government control was also associated with cities and towns, these identities could be acting as proxies for demography. Second, given the ideological dimensions of the Vietnam War, we should expect to find the development level highly associated with rebel control; if development is also associated with certain identity groups, it may undermine our claims. To capture this dimension, we use a simple additive index built from several questions in the HES that evaluate approximate percentage of hamlet households that possess radios, televisions, and motor vehicles.[45] Finally, the geography of Vietnam was extremely mountainous, and therefore presumably favorable to guerrilla warfare, in the central cordillera, while the southern Mekong Delta was generally flat and open. These geographical niches were also differentially associated with ethnic and religious groups. To capture "rough terrain," we use a measure constructed using geographical information systems (GIS) techniques that captures the local variation in altitude around each hamlet.[46]

Table 5 gives the results of these additional analyses, which rely on much larger data sets than were used in the cross-tabulations. Models 1 and 3 are ordered logits, using the same three-valued dependent variable as the contingency tables above and incorporating monthly fixed effects. Models 2 and 4 use the five-valued measure of control that was collapsed for the contingency table analysis. These are generalized

Table 5
Determinants of Control in the Vietnam War: July–December, 1969 and 1971

	Model 1 1969 Ordered Logit	Model 2 1969 GLS ar(1)	Model 3 1971 Ordered Logit	Model 4 1971 GLS ar(1)
Other/no majority religion	–0.584** (0.027)	–0.172** (0.021)	–0.698** (0.047)	–0.037** (0.014)
Animist	–0.551** (0.041)	–0.212** (0.031)	–0.714** (0.052)	–0.066** (0.021)
Cao Dai	–0.728** (0.050)	–0.138** (0.037)	–0.332** (0.064)	–0.011 (0.020)
Catholic	–0.410** (0.031)	–0.183** (0.027)	–0.655** (0.047)	–0.076** (0.017)
Hoa Hao	–0.542** (0.035)	–0.303** (0.031)	–1.216** (0.080)	–0.384** (0.020)
Other/no majority ethnicity	0.620** (0.079)	0.198** (0.051)	–0.483** (0.156)	–0.035 (0.035)
Khmer	0.410** (0.035)	0.242** (0.036)	–0.177** (0.052)	0.028 (0.023)
Chinese	–0.365** (0.124)	0.024 (0.085)	–0.622** (0.206)	–0.207** (0.040)
Montagnard	–0.099* (0.040)	–0.089* (0.035)	–0.601** (0.051)	–0.120** (0.023)
Urban	–0.779** (0.039)	–0.463** (0.034)	–1.343** (0.077)	–0.328** (0.014)
Development index	–0.364** (0.009)	–0.168** (0.006)	–1.025** (0.018)	–0.232** (0.006)
Rough terrain	–0.002* (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.004** (0.001)	0.004** (0.001)
August	–0.016 (0.030)		0.101** (0.036)	
September	0.089** (0.029)		–0.134** (0.037)	
October	–0.111** (0.029)		–0.163** (0.037)	
November	–0.069* (0.029)		–0.267** (0.037)	
December	–0.179** (0.029)		–0.414** (0.038)	
Constant		3.074** (0.016)		1.997** (0.008)
Cut 1	–0.960 (0.028)		1.248 (0.028)	
Cut 2	0.396 (0.028)		2.677 (0.031)	
N	54,952	54,952	66,131	66,131
rho		0.144		0.247

Source: Hamlet Evaluation System, United States Department of Defense.
Note: GLS = generalized least squares.
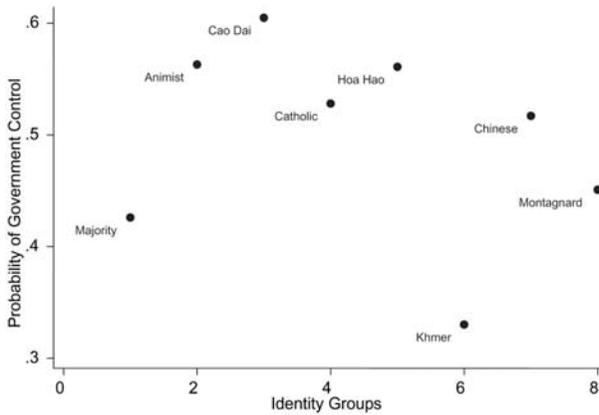*p < .05; **p < .01.

Figure 1A.   Probability of government control by identity group (1969).
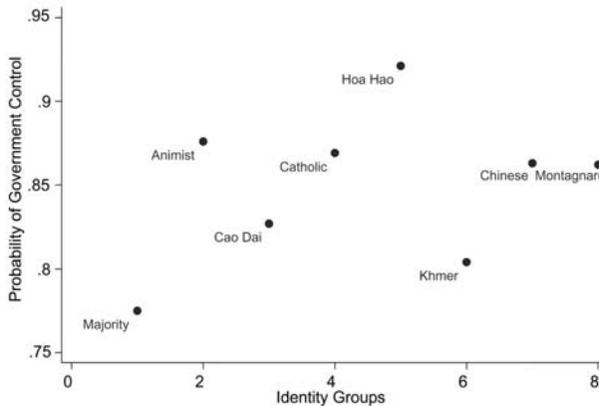

Figure 1B.   Probability of government control by identity group (1971).

least squares (GLS) random-effects models, assuming a one-period autoregressive process and treating the dependent variable as approximately continuous.

Although the additional variables are, as expected, important determinants of government versus rebel control, in general, our measures of local ethnic predominance continue to be statistically significant and substantively important. Chinese, Cao Dai, and Khmer identity each fail to reach statistical significance in one out of four models. The rest of the coefficients are highly significant.

In Figures 1A and 1B, we report a series of simulations of the probability of government control conditional on each religious or ethnic identity (for the ordered logit models) in 1969 and 1971. In all cases, we assume a rural hamlet with mean

development level and mean terrain.[47] Note also that the groups are arrayed along the *x* axis in an arbitrary way so that they can be compared to each other.

First, we simulate a "majority model," which assumes a predominantly Vietnamese Buddhist hamlet and has a 0.43 probability of government control for 1969. Hamlets of all the minority religious groups had *at least* a 23 percent greater probability of being in government control. The ethnolinguistic minorities were more like the majority than religious minorities. As expected, Khmer hamlets were significantly *less* likely to be in government control, Chinese had a higher probability, and Montagnards were statistically indistinguishable from the majority. The results are somewhat weaker for 1971, which is unsurprising given that all hamlets were much more likely to be under government control in that period. Majority hamlets had a 0.76 probability of falling under government control; in this period, the religious minority most similar to the majority, the Cao Dai, had a 7 percent greater probability of government control. The Hoa Hao, the most different from the majority, had a probability 19 percent greater than the majority. In 1971, all the ethnolinguistic minorities had a significantly greater probability of being in government control. All the 95 percent confidence intervals are quite small. Taking account of a very likely autoregressive effect in Models 2 and 4 does not materially affect the results.

Both the contingency table analysis and multivariate models buttress our claim that the Vietnam War had a significant ethnic dimension. NLF control had a strong association with the majority Buddhist religious identity; areas where religious minorities were demographically dominant were far more likely to fall under government control. The effect of ethnolinguistic identity, though less pronounced, was also noteworthy. Like the civil wars in Chechnya, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir, generally taken to be of a different species than Vietnam, the relationship between ethnicity and control was important yet probabilistic. Localities (and presumably their populations) could and did pass from the control of one side to the other. As Biddle maintains, the opposing sides did compete for the allegiance of the same people, yet their success in doing so seems to have depended importantly on those people's identities.[48]

We can reject the purely ideological interpretation of Vietnam, yet the question remains: why did ethnicity come to play such an important role in structuring a conflict that was framed by both sides as nationalist and ideological? In fact, the political history of both religious and ethnolinguistic groups is quite complex, and it is clear from the historical sources that characterizing any of them as per se anticommunist or pro-government would be a grave error. Several of these groups, as collectives, collaborated extensively with the Vietnamese Communist Party at some point between the early 1940s and 1975; likewise, many individual Party members came from minority backgrounds. Yet, at the same time, they preserved an independent power base and aggressively pursued their political interests.

For instance, the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai sects not only actively assumed political positions, they were also able to develop strong paramilitary armies to such an extent that a close observer stressed in 1955 the "considerable influence of religious sects and politico-confessional groupings." These sectarian armies emerged during and after the Japanese occupation, taking advantage of the vacuum of power. When the French colonialists returned, they were surprised to find "real lordships" (*feodalités*) that had managed to create solidly established, semi-independent fiefdoms.[49] Initially, both the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao allied themselves with the Viet Minh, but eventually, they severed their links, having realized that they could not maintain their autonomy within the rigid communist structure. The Cao Dai constituted a "highly disciplined and hierarchical homogeneous block": it was "simultaneously a religious and a paramilitary group," and this duality was the basis of "their vast political ambition." With 1.5 million members and a fifteen thousand–strong militia army in the mid-1950s, they became a major military actor in the French "pacification operations" that took place in the late 1940s. The Hoa Hao also fought a "bloody and effective war" against the Viet Minh and were able to field a militia of 12,500 men. After the independent militias of the Cao Dai and Hoa Hao became a target of the consolidating Diem regime in 1955 and were largely suppressed as independent military forces, elements of both groups again formed alliances with the NLF. The sects retained a pronounced local presence that could be easily mobilized when the communist insurgency emerged as the main threat. Both groups largely defected from the NLF after Diem's assassination in 1963.[50]

South Vietnamese Catholics had an equally specific trajectory. In spite of the association with France, the nationalist Viet Minh had many Catholic members, especially early on.[51] However, following the partition of Vietnam in 1954, a large proportion of the northern Catholic community fled to the South as part of a wave of 900,000 refugees. According to Pike:

For the Diem government, the Northern refugee pool became a major manpower recruitment pool, many of these people were trained, efficient, dedicated, and, in addition, uninterested in Southern political infighting. The GVN's [Government of Vietnam] civil service soon became asymmetrical, too sectarian, too exclusively Northern; Diem was accused of "loading the government with Catholics," which most of the Northerns were, yet the refugees were the only source of trained personnel available.[52]

These Catholics formed a homogeneous community highly integrated with and loyal to the state, especially in the regime of the Catholic Ngo Dinh Diem.

Likewise, each Montagnard tribe had its own peculiar history of collaboration with one or more parties in Vietnam. Some Montagnard tribes were a crucial part of the Viet Minh coalition during the Japanese occupation and the anticolonial war: the communist base areas and lines of communication were all located in Montagnard territory, and many tribesmen fought as guerrillas.[53] Yet, Pike reports
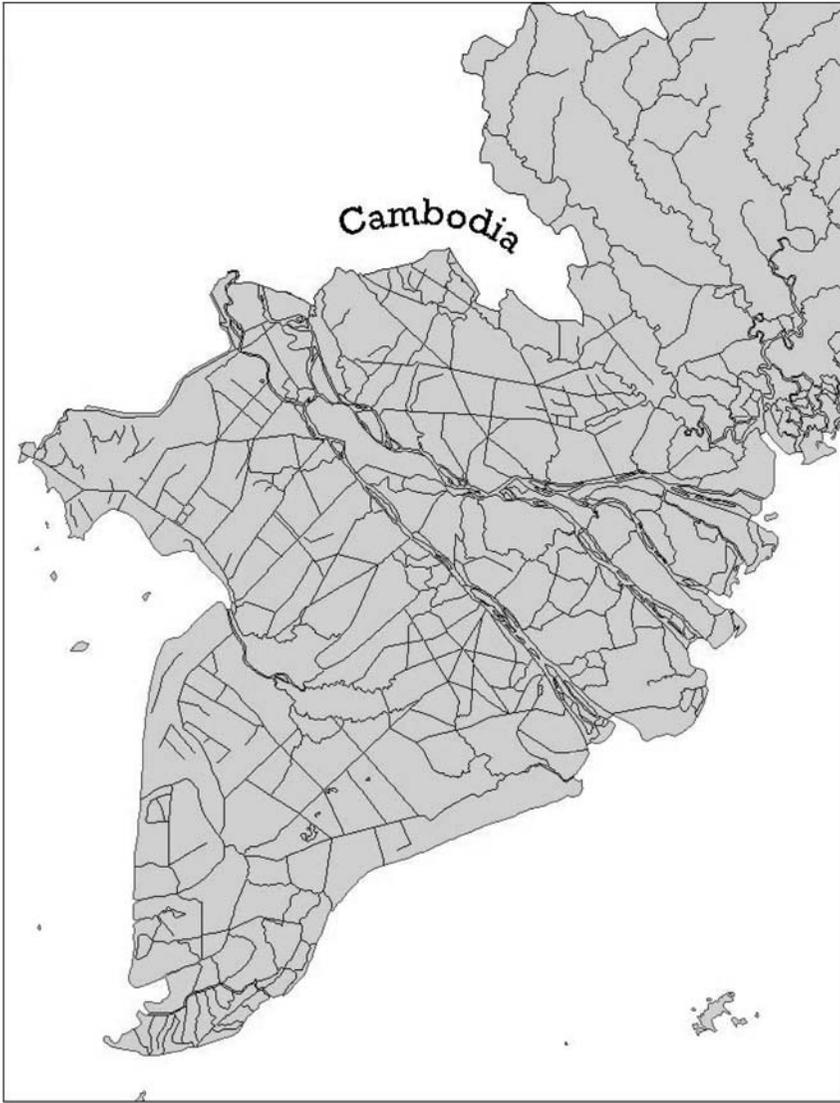
Figure 2. Map of the Mekong Delta, Southern Vietnam, July 1969.

that American Special Forces teams sent to the highlands in the early 1960s "swung whole tribes away from the NLF."[54]

The Hoa Hao were highly associated with a type of human ecology that is very difficult to control for statistically: the river network of the Mekong Delta. The relationship between religious affiliation, control, and the rivers can, however, be examined visually using GIS methods.[55] Figure 2 displays the major waterways of the
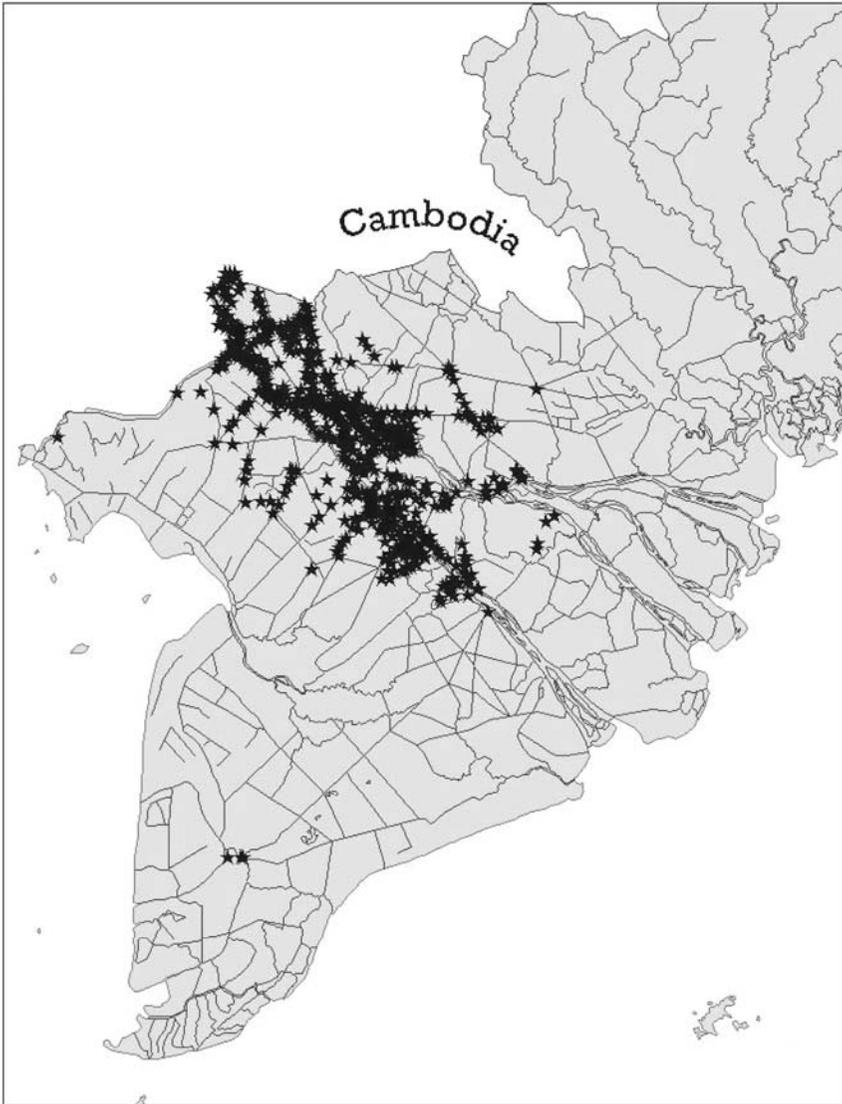
Figure 3.   Hoa Hao hamlets, Southern Vietnam, July 1969.
Source: Hamlet Evaluation System, U.S. Department of Defense.

Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam. Figure 3 displays the geographical distribution of predominantly Hoa Hao hamlets in this region in July 1969; note that the vast majority lies directly along the two main navigable channels of the Mekong. The maps suggest that easy contact by water transportation probably played an impor-tant role in the diffusion of the Hoa Hao teachings outward from the home village
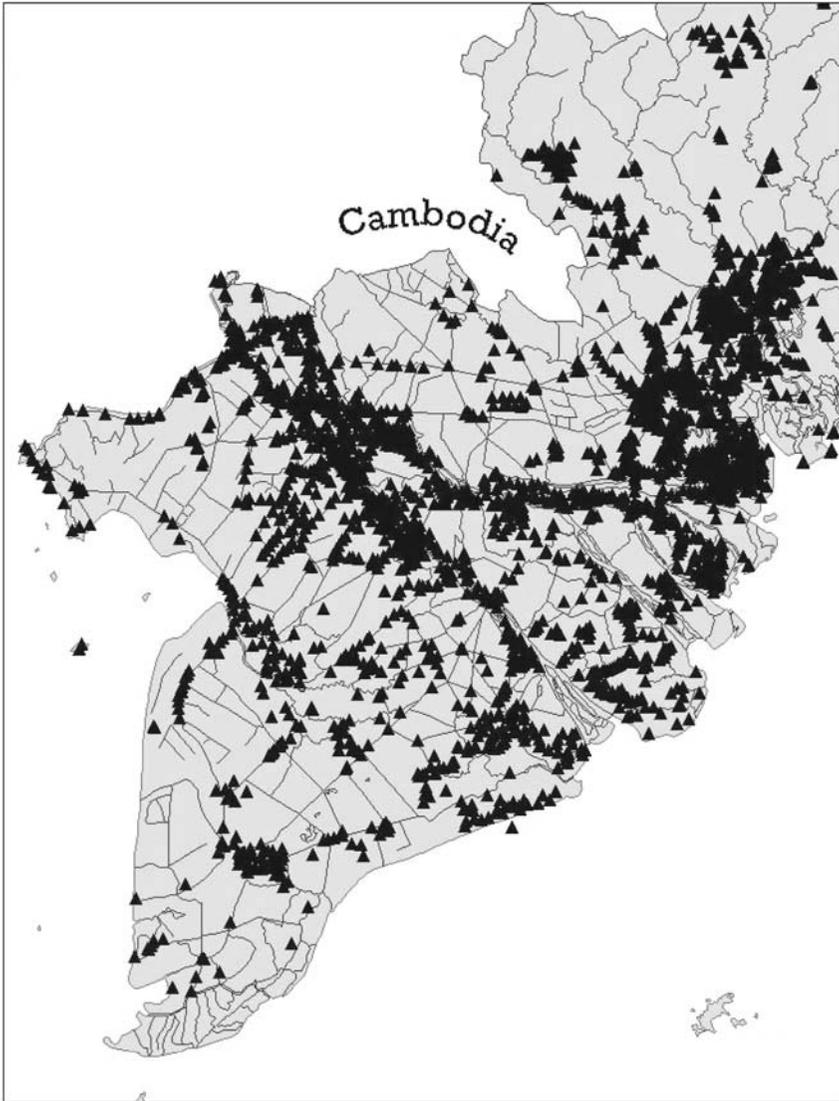
Figure 4. Government control, Southern Vietnam, July 1969.
Source: Hamlet Evaluation System, U.S. Department of Defense.

of the sect's founder near the Cambodian border. Figure 4 (using the same measure of control as in the contingency table analysis) shows the distribution of government-controlled hamlets in the same region; note the evident northwest–southeast axis and the clear association with the river. By contrast, NLF-controlled hamlets (Figure 5) in the Delta follow an axis transverse to the Mekong.
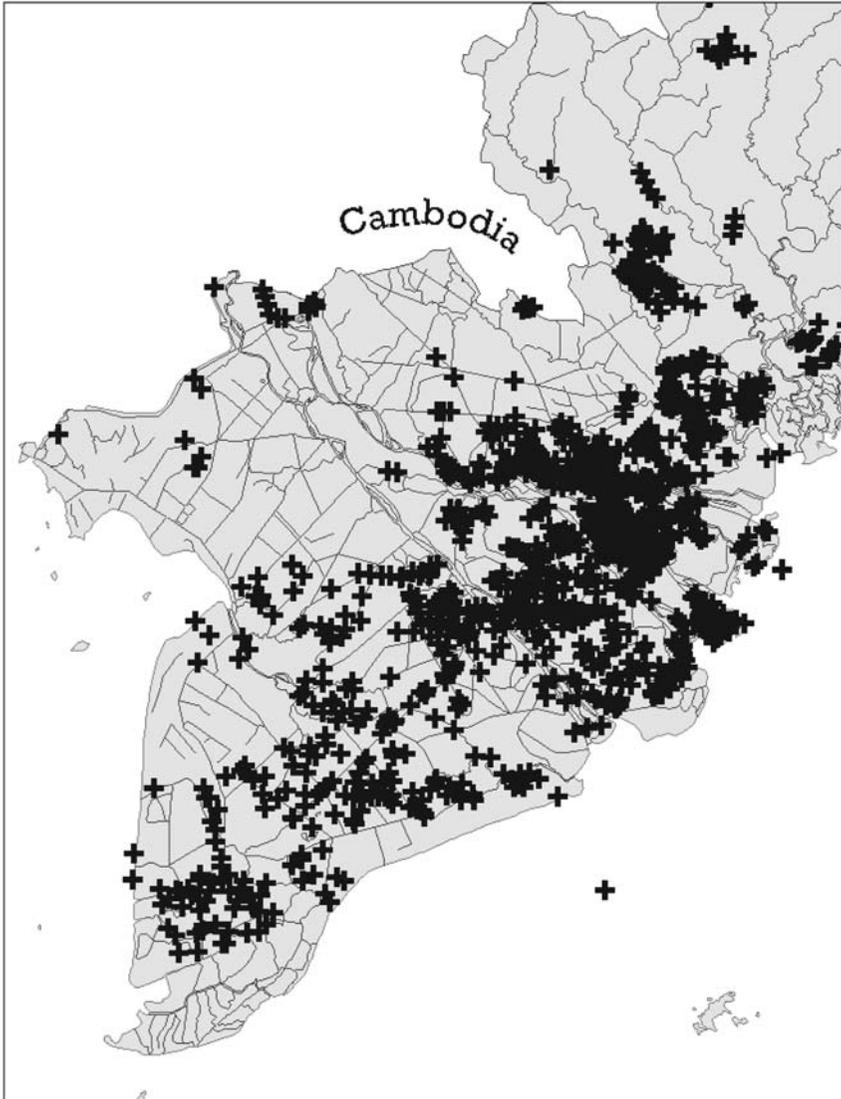
Figure 5.   Rebel control, Southern Vietnam, July 1969.
Source: Hamlet Evaluation System, U.S. Department of Defense.

The geography of religion and control suggests two possible causal pathways. The first is that the observed statistical relationship between Hoa Haoism and government control is spurious: both are caused by the underlying variable of geography. The river network was a major line of communication in the Mekong Delta. The government may have devoted more resources to defending the hamlets along

it (as it did, for instance, with Highway 7, the main land route connecting the Delta with Saigon),[56] or it may have found it easier to supply, monitor, and reinforce the local militias operating on the river than it did the hamlets accessible only by land. Under this account, the association between Hoa Hao and government control was accidental. The second possibility is that geography indeed determined the spread of Hoa Haoism, while Hoa Haoism determined government control as an intervening variable (through an organization capable of competing with the NLF for adherents or the maintenance of ethnoreligious militias, as Lewy and Huntington maintained). The results are inconclusive: both mechanisms could be equally important. The visual analysis, however, tends to undermine a simple model of religious anticommunism leading to government control. All in all, this analysis demonstrates why the complex dynamics connecting ethnicity, geography, and war should be studied systematically rather than assumed away.

It is worth stressing here that the presence of an ethnic dimension underneath an ideological conflict is not unique to Vietnam but has characterized many ideological conflicts including Marxist-inspired revolutions. Conversely, there is extensive evidence that a substantial part of collaboration with the Nazi occupation regimes during the Second World War was based on ethnic cleavages.[57] This suggests that what makes an ideological war "ideological" has perhaps less to do with objective conditions and more with framing strategies.[58]

In sum, our analysis of the ethnic cleavage in Vietnam shows that (1) ethnicity is a key component that cannot be overlooked in analyzing the dynamics of the Vietnam War, (2) the ethnic component of the Vietnam War did not turn into an ethnic or intercommunal conflict, and (3) ethnic identity is associated with different types of behavior throughout the war, suggesting the strong endogenous dynamics of the war over the more simplistic view that associates ethnic identity with only one type of behavior, and hence, conflict. This analysis demonstrates the importance of taking the dynamics of war seriously and resisting the impulse of attractive yet misleading extrapolations from ethnic cleavages to ethnic war.

Our analysis of Vietnam and its juxtaposition with Iraq lead to an obvious observation. In Vietnam, real and significant ethnic cleavages were encapsulated in what became a conflict primarily defined in terms of ideology (communism and nationalism) and a war that displayed all the characteristics of irregular war (see below). In contrast, a nationalist and/or ideological insurgency against the United States in Iraq, displaying many of the elements characterizing irregular wars, coexists with an ethnic war between sectarian militias that looks like an aggregation of ethnic pogroms. Hence the question, why do some conflicts encapsulate ethnic cleavages while others do not? A common answer would point to the depth of ethnic cleavages: deep ethnic cleavages are said to produce situations such as the sectarian violence taking place in Iraq, while more superficial ethnic cleavages are compatible with Vietnam-like dynamics. We challenge this argument in two ways. First, we theorize the actual connection between ethnic cleavages and civil

war and show that arguments that make ethnic divisions a precondition of ethnic civil war miss the endogeneity of identity to violence. Second, we put forward a different argument that links state structure and type of civil war. More specifically, a unitary state is likely to produce wars that look like Vietnam, whereas a fragmented state is likely to be associated with wars that look like Iraq, *irrespective of the presence of ethnic cleavages*.

In a different formulation, understanding why ethnic cleavages sometimes express themselves through communal conflict or "ethnic war" (with massive indiscriminate violence, including ethnic cleansing) and sometimes through irregular war articulated around either an ethnic or a nonethnic dimension (with the option of individual defection available and violence that is often selective in form) requires an analysis of the precise ways in which cleavages link to war and violence,[59] a topic usually assumed rather than studied. We turn to this in the following section.

CLEAVAGES AND VIOLENCE

We identify two major theoretical claims about the ways in which cleavages are connected with violence. The first posits that violence in civil wars flows primarily from preexisting and deep animosities; hence, ethnic violence flows directly from ethnic animosity, ideological violence from ideological divisions, and so on. Put otherwise, violence is a direct outgrowth of the cleavages that inform the war. This we call the *exogenous cleavages thesis*. Although this claim informs accounts of both ethnic and nonethnic violence, it is particularly relevant for the former, because ethnic cleavages are seen as inherently deeper than nonethnic ones.[60] This claim is central to the interpretation of the present Iraqi conflict as a communal one. In fact, the entire ethnic war model rests on the exogenous cleavages thesis since it assumes a direct and unproblematic link between ethnicity and violence: the violence of ethnic civil wars is often referred to as ethnic violence. However, this claim is less trivial than it appears. For instance, coding violence between individuals of different ethnicities as ethnic can easily produce an invalid interpretation of this violence as motivated exclusively by ethnicity, and hence, as being an instance of violence between ethnic groups.[61]

A competing theoretical claim posits a different link between cleavages and violence by stressing the mediating effect of war: civil war may cause violence in a way that is relatively autonomous from the cleavages that led to the war in the first place. This we call the *endogenous-cleavages thesis*. This thesis posits that the violence observed during a civil war is not necessarily only a reflection of existing cleavages but may create new ones or give new content to existing ones. In other words, the violence of the war may have a "feedback" effect: it may cleave society more than preexisting cleavages have, and oftentimes in new and different ways. In an apt formulation, civil war "widens the fissures and augments

the stresses that exist in every human society . . . It divides and confounds loyalties, it fortifies some, it weakens others, and it evokes new loyalties."[62] This is also consistent with Brubaker and Laitin's formulation: "Even when violence is clearly rooted in preexisting conflict, it should not be treated as a natural, self-explanatory outgrowth of such conflict, something that occurs automatically when the conflict reaches a certain intensity, a certain 'temperature.'?"[63] This process is likely to take place in both ethnic and nonethnic civil wars. In the former, it is usually described as the *ethnicization* or *ethnification* of politics or the *reification* of sectarian or ethnic cleavages.

Systematic empirical evidence about the extent to which these two claims apply is quasi-nonexistent.[64] In fact, they are observationally equivalent at the macro level. Moreover, estimating the exact effect of the nature of cleavages on violence is very difficult and subject to substantial methodological obstacles, because the depth of cleavages cannot easily be measured independently of the war and its violence.[65]

Nevertheless, existing empirical research provides little support for the validity of the exogenous cleavages claim: Brubaker and Laitin conclude their discussion of the available evidence by pointing out that "We lack strong evidence showing that levels of conflict (measured independently of violence) lead to higher levels of violence."[66] Using survey data, Laitin also found that the "cultural antipathies" in several post-Soviet territories fail to distinguish the republics that experienced rebellion from those that did not.[67] High levels of social, religious, or ethnic polarization appear unrelated to the outbreak of civil war, and hence, the concomitant mass violence.[68] In another review of the literature, Fearon and Laitin conclude that cultural distance (a term equivalent to ethnic polarization) is not "a powerful factor explaining violent ethnic conflict" and reject both versions of the exogenous cleavages thesis. "We cannot assume," they point out, "that any of the countries examined contained, prior to the violent conflict, 'deeply riven' groups with fundamentally 'incompatible values'. These studies contain little to support the view that the cultural content of ethnic differences by itself fosters ethnic violence."[69]

An indirect way to test the exogenous cleavages claim is to assume that ethnic cleavages are axiomatically deeper than nonethnic ones. The test would then be a comparison between levels of violence caused by the two types of war. However, such a test faces important challenges, including measurement issues and the isolation of the effects of cleavages from a variety of factors that lead to violence within a war, from technology to international norms. Nevertheless, comparisons of aggregate levels of violence produced by ethnic and nonethnic civil wars tend to show no significant difference in levels of violence.[70] As for the anecdotal record, it suggests that there is no reason to think that ethnic cleavages are more likely to cause higher levels of violence: nonethnic civil wars can be extremely violent. Up until recently, extreme violence was primarily associated with ideological rather than ethnic polarization. As a nineteenth-century French

counterrevolutionary rebel put it, "Excesses are inseparable from wars of opinion."[71] The violence of recent nonethnic civil wars in Latin America has been horrendously high. If it were the case that ethnic cleavages are deeper than nonethnic ones, the available empirical evidence would undermine the link between ethnicity and levels of violence.

Even in the absence of systematic evidence, there are additional methodological and theoretical reasons to question the tendency to automatically link cleavages and violence. Indeed, this link is open to three inference biases: it extrapolates from the aggregate to the individual level, it privileges target information as opposed to base-rate information, and it assumes unitary actors.

The link between prewar polarization and violence implies an underlying theory of action in two steps: (1) a person is victimized because of her membership in a group that (2) is targeted because of its position on the dimension that motivates the conflict. In this formulation, prewar polarization explains both why a group is targeted and why its members are victimized.[72] This link is usually assumed rather than subjected to empirical investigation. Either we observe a specific action (e.g., a Serb victimizing an Albanian) and infer from it that (ethnic) polarization explains this particular action, or observing polarization around a given cleavage at the macro level, we assume that all individual acts of violence are directly caused by this cleavage. However, this inference is based on a premise akin to that of ecological fallacy: in the absence of individual-level data about particular acts of violence, we tend to extrapolate from the aggregate down to the individual level. This extrapolation can be and often is fallacious. For instance, Boudon has shown that even in a homogeneous society of equals, it is possible to generate processes of competition (and hence, violence) that would on the aggregate level appear as having been generated by deep cleavages.[73] Likewise, Dion has pointed out that competition effects between groups may be merely byproducts of a selection bias: even in a world where ethnicity plays no role whatsoever in defining either the likely interactions among individuals belonging to different groups or the proclivity of these individuals to engage in violence, we would still see significant violence, wrongly perceived as resulting from ethnic competition, when this interpretation is supported by a dominant framing.[74]

These problems do not disappear even in the presence of incomplete individual-level data about violence; the kind of information readily available is typically insufficient for drawing a reliable inference about the motivations behind it. For example, the observation that an individual landowner was killed by rebels does not suffice to establish that this act was motivated by the class cleavage. To establish whether this is indeed the case, we need detailed information about the actual motivation behind this particular act of violence—not just the motivation of the perpetrators but also the motivation of those who ordered the action. It is also necessary to address the widespread fallacy of truncation—of ignoring the importance of base-rate information because it is "remote, pallid, and abstract"

in favor of target information that is "vivid, pressing, and concrete."[75] In other words, we need to establish the ratio of observed victimization and observable (but usually ignored) rates of nonvictimization within the same population: how many landowners were killed and how many not bothered—and why? If just one landowner was killed (and if, moreover, a landless peasant was *also* killed by the same actor), then we ought to question arguments linking the violence to the class cleavage. Furthermore, a person may be victimized for multiple reasons, that is, both because of her group membership and a particular action that may or may not be connected to this membership. For example, Griffin found that in the hands of the Chinese Communists, class was "a particularly flexible tool . . . only to be selectively applied when convenient for political purposes."[76] She summarizes the Chinese Communists' rules for the treatment of counterrevolutionaries in the "Kiangsi Soviet" in 1932: "While a person's class status would affect his punishment, it was not a sufficient condition for classifying him as a counterrevolutionary. Rather, a person's actual behavior was to be considered."[77] Furthermore, it is often the case that a person is victimized both because of politics (her identity *and* actions) and because of nonpolitical causes such as personal animosities and conflicts. Finally, the motivation behind an act of violence may be exclusively criminal or personal—completely unrelated to the cleavage informing the conflict yet coded as such because of its external characteristics.

The inference biases we discussed above are facilitated by the assumption of unitary actors, that is, actors that fully overlap with the population they claim to represent. Hence, one typically finds interchangeable references to Sunni insurgents in Iraq and the Sunnis in general or to the Vietcong and the Vietnamese peasants in general. Bizarre terms such as "domestic groups" have been coined to point to these clusters of organizations and population groups.[78] However, to speak of unitary actors when studying civil war violence is to go awry from the outset. This is clearly at odds with empirical micro-level evidence suggesting that groups (including ethnic ones) are more often than not internally divided, that much violence is generated from within the group, and that violence is used to internally police the group and achieve the "overlap" between political actor and underlying group that is so often taken for granted.[79] Even the extreme situation of every relevant individual's merging into her group requires a prior understanding of the actual process of merging as demonstrated by Kuran or Petersen.[80]

The endogenous-cleavages claim is likewise underresearched—at least until recently. Of course, the fact that civil war produces more (and new) division, hatred, and violence and that violence acquires a logic of its own, disproportionate to or even independent of the war's causes, is well known.[81] In René Girard's formulation, "As rivalry becomes acute, the rivals are more apt to forget about whatever objects are, in principle, the cause of the rivalry and instead to become more fascinated with one another. In effect the rivalry is purified of any external stake and becomes a matter of pure rivalry and prestige. Each rival becomes for

his counterpart the worshipped and despised model and obstacle, the one who must be at once beaten and assimilated."[82] This insight can be traced back to Thucydides, who pointed to "the violent fanaticism which came into play *once* the struggle had broken out . . . *As the result* of these revolutions, there was a general deterioration of character throughout the Greek world . . . Society *had become* divided into two ideologically hostile camps, and each side viewed the other with suspicion."[83]

A way to establish the extent to which violence is caused by war-related factors that are also independent of cleavages is to carefully trace the sequence of the polarization–violence cycle. Many ground-level observers of civil wars (e.g., Cohen in Bosnia) have pointed out how, for most people, lethal hatred is a consequence of the war rather than its cause.[84] Darby finds that in Northern Ireland, "physical polarization was followed by ideological polarization."[85] Political entrepreneurs are well aware of this fact and often try to provoke violence against the people they try to represent so as to generate the polarization that may be initially lacking. A remarkable, if limited, piece of evidence is a documentary film produced by the Norwegian anthropologist Tone Bringa, titled "We Are All Neighbors."[86] Present in a mixed Croat–Muslim village in central Bosnia as the war between Croats and Muslims raged, Bringa was able to observe the process whereby ethnic polarization between local Croats and Muslims follows, rather than causes, violence. Even more interestingly, we witness how the villagers reconstruct their past experience of ethnic interaction in light of the violence that took place. Unfortunately, such work is rare. Studies of ethnic violence are predominantly works of retrospective reconstruction whereby past polarization is inferred from present violence.

Additionally, it is possible to look for specific mechanisms consistent with the endogenous-cleavages thesis and search for empirical evidence about their presence. There is substantial evidence in favor of two such mechanisms. Endogenous cleavages emerge first out of revenge and second out of a myriad of local cleavages, which are activated by the civil war.

A first mechanism of endogenous cleavages is revenge, probably the most recurring element in descriptions of violence in civil war contexts. Revenge is often a key motivation both for joining organizations and acting in violent ways. Escalating violence is individually or collectively motivated by the desire to avenge a previous act of violence perpetrated in the context of the civil war (as well as nonviolent acts, such as humiliation, perpetrated in the same context). It is this particular aspect that often gives civil war violence its irrational glow and lends support to the perception that violence has become "an end in itself rather than a means to political ends."[87] Revenge is probably the central theme of the civil war novels and memoirs.[88] It is also an omnipresent theme in the recollections of participants in civil wars, who often describe a vicious and escalating cycle of retaliatory violence in the most dramatic terms.[89] Kalyvas provides considerable evidence that

instances of personally motivated revenge in both intraethnic and interethnic violence are far from marginal.[90]

A second mechanism of endogenous cleavages is related to local cleavages. Many ethnographic and micro-level historical studies of civil wars describe messy and fluid processes operating at the local level with a considerable degree of autonomy from the national level. In fact, there is substantial evidence suggesting that much violence during civil wars is related to local, often nonpolitical conflicts rather than cleavage structures at the national level.[91] Take the quintessential ideological (or even class-based) civil war, the French Revolution. Cobb summarizes his meticulous reconstruction of local political conflicts as follows:

It was a question of chance, of local power groups, of where one stood in the queue, of at what stage ambitions had been satisfied, of how to leap-frog over those in front. This is where external events could be easily exploited; the Paris political labels when stuck on provincial backs, could mean something quite different . . . The labels might not even come from Paris; they could be of more local origin. In the Loire, "federalism" was brought in from the outside, by groups of armed men riding in from Lyon. But the experience of "federalism" and the subsequent repression directed against those who had collaborated with it, enabled one power group—of almost exactly the same social standing and wealth—to oust another in those towns that had been most affected by the crisis.[92]

Because local conflicts are often articulated in the language of national cleavages, many observers (often even participants as well) code them erroneously.[93] Indeed, local cleavages often must be articulated in the language of national cleavages so as to be acted on and justified. Typically, foreign powers and occupiers fail to understand these local cleavages and misinterpret them systematically. Rory Stewart, a former British Foreign Service officer with extensive experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, remarked in an article that many of the failures in Afghanistan and Iraq arise from the American-led coalition's lack of trust in local politicians and their tendency to overrule local leaders, reject local compromises, and force through their own strategies. This is a problem, he adds, because the Westerners' capacity is limited: they have little understanding of Afghan or Iraqi politics and rely too heavily on troops and money to solve what are fundamentally local political and religious problems.[94] The title of Stewart's article? "Even in Iraq, All Politics Is Local."

The main implication of this section is that the mere observation of violence between members of different groups does not suffice to establish that this violence is an instance of "group violence." Positing violence as an outgrowth of cleavages ignores interaction effects, spurious effects, and nonobserved variables. In Iraq, for example, the murder of unarmed Sunni civilians is routinely ascribed to their identity per se, without any attempt to interrogate whether or not their behavior played any role in causing them to become a target (for example in the context of local feuds or criminal competition). As a result, complex processes entailing the interaction of personal, local, and political dynamics are

brushed aside, and "sectarian violence" becomes a convenient conceptual umbrella. Observers who tend to establish the "depth" or "intensity" of cleavages by observing ongoing violence run the risk of ignoring an important causal effect operating in the opposite direction. It would seem that the emphasis on prewar cleavages (and their depth) may be related to the tendency of unsophisticated observers to link the violence of the war with prewar polarization on the basis of casual observation.

Since it is problematic to infer the type of violence (and hence, war) from the type of cleavages and since the war may endogenously shape cleavages and affect the type of such violence, it follows that we need to pay closer attention to the role of the war itself. This is our task in the following section.

ETHNIC WAR AS IRREGULAR WAR

The majority of civil wars are fought by means of irregular, as opposed to conventional, warfare. Irregular warfare is a method of fighting that can be linked to many different agendas, including revolutionary, separatist, or purely opportunistic ones. There are two basic, related differences between conventional and irregular warfare. First, there is generally an absence of clear frontlines; boundaries are porous. Second, and partly in consequence, irregular fighters and their supporters are not easily identifiable (they usually don't even wear uniforms) and are hard to locate.

Kalyvas provides a theoretical link between irregular warfare and violence.[95] A key implication of his argument is that violence can be used strategically to shape individual behavior, namely to induce collaboration and deter defection. Viewed from this perspective, wars in which ethnic cleavages are salient do not differ from other irregular wars so long as one actor (typically the government) is interested in inducing insurrectionary ethnic minorities to collaborate.

Recall the ethnic war model. Ethnic wars diverge from irregular wars in four ways.[96] First, territorial control is irrelevant. This is the case because each side can mobilize only members of its own group and only in friendly, controlled territory, while military control does not guarantee the loyalties of the people. The dynamics of the war are therefore likely to be determined mainly by preexisting geographical patterns of settlement. Second, defection is not an option. Third, information about the identity of every civilian is public (it is possible to reliably tell friend from foe). Violence will, therefore, be indiscriminate rather than selective: group identity, rather than individual actions, is the criterion of targeting. Since civilians know this and since they cannot escape their identity, they will either fight or flee in anticipation of a slaughter—no matter what their real preferences may be. In other words, ethnic war is built on the logic of the "security dilemma."[97] Fourth, ethnic civil wars are not "guerrilla quagmires" but conventional wars with clear frontlines. Guerrilla operations are discarded in favor of

conventional war. Note the contrast with the standard model of irregular war, in which territorial control is key, the defection option exists, violence will also be selective, and there are no clear frontlines.

What would violence look like in a world where identities are deep, unchangeable, and transparent? More specifically, what are the empirical predictions of this view with regard to the spatial distribution of violence? Clearly, violence will be very low in areas inhabited by the political actor's own ethnic group and very high (1) where a political actor grabs land inhabited mainly by ethnic others ("territorial conquest") and (2) where two political actors fight for control of an ethnically mixed area. Assuming that the distribution of the population matches the degree of control (i.e., homogeneous areas are controlled by one actor and mixed areas are fought over), we should observe no violence in homogeneous areas and much violence in contested areas. This pattern, however, would be ultimately unstable. Violence would be so high and civilians such easy targets in contested areas that these areas would quickly become segregated in a fashion reflecting the distribution of power. Once areas are controlled (conquered) by one actor, violence would decrease (and so would ethnic diversity). Eventually, the situation would resemble an interstate war between two nation–states, with two ethnically homogeneous quasi-states fighting a war of territorial conquest. Irregular war would turn into conventional war (a war with clear fronts), albeit fought, to some varying degree, by militias. Any changes in borders (control) would affect the ethnic composition of the area accordingly. In short, ethnic wars should produce ethnic cleansing or genocide following the ebb and flow of military operations, themselves determined to a large extent by patterns of ethnic settlements and the (largely concomitant) resources of the political actors. Indeed, this approximates the Bosnian war, the Lebanese war, or the war in Abkhazia—among others. However, this only partly fits Iraq, where a substantial amount of violence is taking place in the so-called Sunni triangle, a mostly homogeneous area. Furthermore, a recent study of mortality patterns in Iraq after the 2003 invasion suggests a distribution of violent death types that supports an interpretation of the violence as being much more selective than is usually assumed.[98]

The evidence for this distinctive dynamic of ethnic war is rather spotty in cross-national terms. Many civil wars with ethnically salient cleavages do not look like Bosnia or Lebanon. Consider the civil wars in Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Turkey (the Kurdish insurgency), and Chechnya—among others. Although these wars qualify as ethnic ones (insurgents fight for secession, and competing groups recruit primarily from different ethnic groups), they fail to conform to the predictions of the ethnic war model. First, territorial control is largely endogenous to the war: territorial control matters, and in fact, one side (the incumbent) manages to control substantial parts of the territory inhabited by members of the rival ethnic group without expelling or exterminating it. Second, the war is irregular rather than conventional. Military control shapes individual behavior, and individuals may even

cross ethnic lines and fight against their own when given the chance. Third, not every member of the "disloyal" ethnic group is a target. In fact many people find that they are safer when living under the complete control of their ethnic rivals. Tamils in the Sinhalese-controlled capital of Sri Lanka (Colombo), Kashmiris in New Dehli, Kurds living in Istanbul, and Chechens in Moscow have generally enjoyed acceptable levels of safety during the civil war. Where there *is* violence, in contested rural areas, it does not take the form of ethnic cleansing or genocide.[99] In other words, the ethnic war model clearly overpredicts the intensity and reach of violence in these wars.[100] An additional set of cases that fails to conform to the ethnic war model contains wars against colonizers (Algeria, Indochina, Rhodesia, the Dutch East Indies, Angola, and Mozambique, for example) and occupiers (e.g., Germany and Japan during the Second World War). Although these wars were informed by deep ethnolinguistic, religious, or racial cleavages between colonizer and colonized or occupier and occupied, armies on both the rebel and incumbent sides recruited actively from the native population, ethnic cleansing was rare or nonexistent, and support for the contending armies did not break cleanly along the major ascriptive cleavage.

Clearly, the ethnic war model fails to correctly predict the dynamics of many civil wars informed by ethnic cleavages. In those wars, at least one political actor (usually the state) seeks to control the "underlying" population of the ethnic rival rather than exterminate or remove it. This actor aims to obtain the collaboration of civilians who are "bundled" with the insurgents. Despite claims positing the impossibility of defection, such defection is possible *provided it is actively solicited*. Defectors do not lose their ethnic identity, but alter it (through the addition of qualifiers such as "moderate," "loyal," "anti-extremist," etc., or through migration to another identity dimension). The pattern that emerges consists of armies systematically recruiting among their ethnic rivals, individuals switching sides, and civilians collaborating with the army of their ethnic rivals. Motivations for defection are usually complex and do not always involve "conversion." Consider the thoughts of an IRA cadre who, for a while, became an agent of the British in Northern Ireland:

Of course, no ideological conversion had taken place: I had not become a supporter of the system which I had spent the previous six years fighting, even though in a practical sense I had become its agent. I was simply so morally and emotionally exhausted that I had become like an empty vessel floating in whatever direction my weakness and fear would take me, guided only by the controlling hand of my policeman saviour.[101]

In addition, the policing of ethnic-group boundaries turns out to require considerable (intraethnic) violence; this violence tends to be selective as it targets individual "collaborators" who transgress the norms of ethnic identity. Such violence indicates the failure of armed groups to determine the behavior of the population on the basis of its ethnic identity. Instances of intraethnic violence demonstrate that

ethnic identities can be poor indicators of individual behavior: for instance, Kurdish rebels must identify Kurds who collaborate with the Turkish security forces.

Last, and contrary to the ethnic war model's predictions, nonethnic identities are not always "relatively soft." The Spanish Civil War is an example of a nonethnic civil war in which mostly ideological polarization (somewhat correlated with class in certain areas, the secular–religious divide in others, and ethnicity in yet others) ran extremely deep. Indeed, the violence of the Spanish Civil War often took quasi-genocidal aspects. For instance, Diaz-Balart and Rojas Friend describe the violence exercised by the victorious side of the Spanish Civil War as "often" intended to fulfill extermination purposes.[102] Likewise, Ranzato and de la Cueva show that the persecution of the Catholic clergy by the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War reveals a desire to exterminate as many priests as possible simply because they were priests.[103] If caught by one side, sympathizers of the opposite side would almost always be killed. Many people, in other words, could not escape their identity, which was often rather transparent without being ascriptive.[104] Hundreds of thousands of Republicans and their families fled the country after the war was won by the Nationalists.[105] Likewise, hundreds of thousands of White Russians, Nationalist Chinese, or anticommunist Vietnamese fled their countries when their side was defeated.

In short, the fact that a considerable subset of ethnic conflicts takes the form of irregular wars with dynamics that do not diverge significantly from nonethnic civil wars undermines the ethnic war model. The question, then, is why do some ethnic conflicts evolve into irregular wars and others turn into ethnic wars? Our conjecture is that this has less to do with the depth of ethnic cleavages and more with the extent to which the state remains a unified structure.

Strong, unified, states tend to approach violence in a binary way: they either repress or terrorize their population short of war (violence is "off the equilibrium path"), or when they are militarily challenged by rebels, ethnic or nonethnic alike, they are able to mobilize their population, including members of the rebellious minorities. The case of India suggests how a unified state that faces an ethnic challenge on its periphery is able to mobilize the population, including members of the rebellious ethnic minority; the example of Vietnam shows that the South Vietnamese state, despite its many internal contradictions, was able to mobilize a variety of groups, including its many ethnic and religious minorities. In contrast, the example of Iraq suggests that the Iraqi state is incapable of performing such a task. If Vietnamization was a tall order for Vietnam, Iraqization is an even more difficult one for Iraq. Comparing the massive U.S. involvement in Vietnam with the inadequate (at best) U.S. presence in Iraq only reinforces this point.

Two possible mechanisms are at work. The first one is suggested by the endogenous-cleavages thesis. Insofar as a state is able to counter the ethnic claims of the rebels and mobilize part of their social basis, the ethnification of the war (which is usually desired by the rebels) can be mitigated or averted. The second

mechanism entails a selection process: strong states are able to eliminate weak
and badly organized challengers—hence, civil wars between a strong state and a
weaker but well-organized challenger will take the form of irregular war; in con-
trast, weak and fragmented states lower the threshold of military contestation and
invite badly organized challengers; both may be forced to rely on the "cheapest"
mobilizable networks, including ethnic ones. This conjecture would explain the
allocation of ethnic conflicts in either the irregular war or the ethnic war category
without referring to the depth of ethnic cleavages and while accounting for the
observation that the ethnic war model coincides so often with state collapse.

WHAT FUTURE FOR IRAQ?

Since the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, analogies to the Vietnam War
have emerged in both academic and popular discourse. These analogies tend to
point to the outcome of the Vietnam War as "evidence" of how the Iraqi "quag-
mire" is likely to end or underscore the many paths toward atrocity.[106] Of late, a
"dis-anology" has come to occupy a prominent place in the debate: Vietnam was
an ideological war, while Iraq is an ethnic one. Hence, military and political
lessons derived from the Vietnam experience are not relevant to understanding
Iraq. More specifically, if Iraqi politics and warfare amount to an ethnic census,
there is no point trying to convince (or coerce) Sunni Iraqis into supporting (or
obeying) a majoritarian government. The best one can hope for is an armed and
vigilant modus vivendi, perhaps unwritten by American firepower. Failing that,
partition and "population exchange" is a likely, and perhaps desirable, result.

We object to this portrait of the war in Iraq on both theoretical and empirical
grounds. Although there is overwhelming evidence that ethnic cleavages have
become a central structuring mechanism of the conflict, this fact does not by itself
entail the inevitability of massive and indiscriminate violence or the impossibility
of a unified and multiethnic Iraq.

The ethnic war model is radically underspecified in the literature. Wars in which
ethnicity is implicated take a variety of forms and cannot be reduced to intercom-
munal violence. Many wars, including those such as the Vietnam War that are usu-
ally coded as "ideological," have a crucial ethnic dimension without degenerating
into genocidal violence or ethnic cleansing. Likewise, class-based wars or cam-
paigns of state terror have been some of the most brutal and indiscriminate con-
flicts in recent history: Spain, China, the Soviet Union, or Cambodia, for example.

Cleavages and their insertion into violence have specific histories; they are
almost certainly endogenous to the course of the war itself. In Iraq, the invasion
and the subsequent radical program of political transformation carried out by the
United States (with highly inadequate means) destroyed Iraq's only remaining
multiethnic and national institutions: the bureaucracy, the army, and the Ba'ath
Party. The collapse of the Ba'athist government left a vacuum that has yet to be
filled—what the journalist Anthony Shadid has aptly described as the chaos

unleashed when the Americans arrived.[107] In his detailed account of White House politics, Woodward describes the reaction of Brent Scowcroft to the handling of Iraq by the Bush administration:

He concluded that the administration was doing the unthinkable, repeating the mistakes of Vietnam. Few people knew more about Vietnam than Scowcroft, who had worked on Vietnam for Presidents Nixon and Ford. He felt there was even less of a chance of building an Iraqi army that would fight than there had been three decades earlier when they were trying to build up the South Vietnamese army, which had existed as a powerful, even almost autonomous force in Vietnam in its own right. In Iraq, the armies were all connected in one way or another to the Shiites, the Sunnis or the Kurds. It was a political catastrophe.[108]

Indeed, the security vacuum that accompanied this institutional void opened the door for a variety of ruthless entrepreneurs to use violence to reshape politics along communal lines.

How does Iraq differ from Vietnam? First, the main combatants are weak and fragmented on both sides in terms of their ability to directly control the country. Second, fragmentation often leads to the use of indiscriminate violence and the strategy of provocation as methods of factional consolidation. Comparing the war in Iraq to the one in Vietnam points to ways ethnic conflict can be harnessed by irregular war, in which the use of indiscriminate violence against an entire ethnic group makes it impossible to gain compliance from that group. Faced with indiscriminate violence from the government, individuals are better off joining an insurgency.[109] In contrast, an irregular war involving a would-be Weberian state willing to gain the compliance of the entire population calls for a very different strategy, one of discrimination in violence and the deployment of "alliances" between the central state and local groups.[110]

The United States finds itself in a contradictory situation. The irregular war model points to an obvious strategy for a political actor fighting an insurgency: mobilization and state building. In Iraq, this includes a vigorous policy of "Iraqization."[111] However, such a strategy entails fully empowering the well-organized Shiite domestic actors (such as the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SCIRI] or the Da'wa Party), who might succeed in subduing the insurgency and forging a new national government. Such an option contradicts a key American geopolitical goal, namely the isolation of Iran. In fact, the fears expressed about "Iraqization" (e.g., Biddle's "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon") are related more to these geopolitical issues and less to the future of Iraq per se. In any case, such decisions are usually subject to narrow windows of opportunity: state capacity requirements can quickly become extremely hard to fulfill if challengers are allowed to grow unchecked.

In the absence of the emergence of a strong state, we are likely to witness the persistence of the insurgency coupled with increasing sectarian violence as the

main domestic actors fail to function in a Weberian fashion. The interaction of these processes is likely to produce further fragmentation, especially as the multitude of foreign actors currently involved in the conflict becomes more active and the U.S. presence further erodes. Proposals to decentralize or partition Iraq are likely to speed up the process of fragmentation and attendant violence rather than stop it. This is why policy makers should resist calls to forcibly partition Iraq. To begin with, partition has not been a major demand of either Shi'ite political parties and militias or of Sunni guerrillas. Partition demands a solution for intermixed communities, of which there are many in central Iraq. In general, population exchanges have a bloody history. The definition of new boundaries can reignite violence; this is a particularly acute problem along the Kurdish–Arab frontier, where control over the oilfields surrounding Kirkuk would be a crucial demand for both successor states. Furthermore, each of the major communities (Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurd) has multiple armed factions: Barzani's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) among the Kurds; SCIRI, Da'wa, and the Sadr faction among the Shi'ites; and a welter of local guerrilla bands and tribal militias within the Sunni community. We should expect a partition to reorient political cleavages to reflect the struggle for power among existing militias and parties. Partition may result in three distinct civil wars. For instance, the major Kurdish factions have waged war against each other in the past, up to and including forming alliances with the despised Iraqi and Turkish governments to gain advantage over the other group. The existing borders of Iraq are no more or less "artificial" than any other state's; Iraq has simply been subjected to a far higher degree of external interference in its affairs than most states, which has inhibited national consolidation.

The seeming intractability of contemporary Iraq's ethnic conflicts is less a permanent state of affairs and more a temporary configuration of forces occasioned by war, state collapse, and foreign occupation. Scholars and policy makers should pay less attention to supposedly intractable cleavages and more to the internal dynamics of violent conflict.

NOTES

1. Throughout this article, we follow the current political science convention that extends to the term *ethnic* the meaning of ascriptive—hence, covering cleavages associated to religion, sect, or cast. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 17-18.

2. Stephen Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 2 (2006): 2-14.

3. Leslie Gelb, "Last Train from Baghdad," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2006): 160-65.

4. Peter Galbraith, *The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War without End* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); Chaim Kaufmann, "Separating Iraqis, Saving Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2006): 156-60.

5. Kaufmann, "Separating Iraqis, Saving Iraq."

6. Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon."

7. A few civil wars are fought conventionally; the great majority, however, are irregular ones. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Warfare in Civil Wars," in *Rethinking the Nature of War*, ed. Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2005), 88-108.

8. Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon," 5.

9. Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security* 20, no. 4 (1996): 136-75; Chaim Kaufmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars: Why One Can Be Done and the Other Can't," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (1996): 62-100.

10. By cleavage, we mean the salient system of group classification in a society and its conflicts. Civil wars motivated by religion are "ethnic" only when they implicate ethnic religious "groups," as opposed to being deployed around the religious–secular divide (as in the Spanish or Algerian civil wars). Ethnic civil wars are often referred to as "identity" civil wars, as if nonethnic civil wars did not involve identities. Likewise, the use of the terms *ideological* and *revolutionary* for nonethnic civil wars is problematic: ethnic concerns are primarily ideological and potentially revolutionary.

11. Kaufmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars."

12. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

13. Solomon Moore and Louise Roug, "Deaths across Iraq Show It Is a Nation of Many Wars, with U.S. in the Middle," *Los Angeles Times*, October 7, 2006, sec. A, p. 1.

14. For an extensive discussion of definitions and violence thresholds, see Nicholas Sambanis, "What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (2004): 814-58.

15. See for example, Ellen Knickmeyer and Muhanned Saif Aldin, "Families Flee Iraqi River Towns on 4th Day of Sectarian Warfare," *Washington Post*, October 17, 2006, sec. A, p. 1.

16. Michael Gordon, Mark Mazzetti, and Thom Shanker, "Bombs Aimed at G.I.'s in Iraq Are Increasing," *New York Times*, August 17, 2006, sec. A, p. 1.

17. Sudarsan Raghavan, "Distrust Breaks the Bonds of a Baghdad Neighborhood," in "Mixed Area, Violence Defies Peace Efforts," *New York Times,* September 27, 2006, sec. A, p. 1; Sabrina Tavernise, "Many Iraqis Look to Gunmen as Protectors," *New York Times*, October 21, 2006, sec. A, p. 1; Ellen Knickmeyer, "In Balad, Age-old Ties Were 'Destroyed in a Second,' Sectarian Battles Drive Out Sunnis, Create State of Siege," *Washington Post*, October 23, 2006, sec. A, p. 12.

18. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003); Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Hana Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Baathists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

19. Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

20. Georgi Derluguian, *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); V. P. Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2004); David Laitin, "Secessionist Rebellion in the Former Soviet Union," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 8 (2001): 839-61.

21. Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006); Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

22. Helene Cooper, "Rice, on Her Way to Vietnam, Sees No Parallels between That War and Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, November 16, 2006, p. 1.

23. David E. Sanger, "On to Vietnam, Bush Hears Echoes of 1968 in Iraq 2006," *New York Times*, November 17, 2006, p. A12.

24. Ricks, *Fiasco*, 187-88.

25. For example, Christopher Hitchens, "Beating a Dead Parrot: Why Iraq and Vietnam Have Nothing Whatsoever in Common," *Slate*, January 31, 2005, http://www.slate.com/id/2112895/.

26. Robert K. Brigham, *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006).

27. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 646.

28. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*; Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966); Walker Connor, "Ethnology and the Peace of South Asia," *World Politics* 22, no. 1 (1969): 51-86.

29. Connor, "Ethnology and the Peace of South Asia," 57-58.

30. Ibid., 70-72.

31. Ibid., 55.

32. Guenther Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978), 94.

33. David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1975* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), 147.

34. Under the South Vietnamese administrative system, the "village" was a well-defined territorial unit. The term *hamlet* was used to identify clusters of habitation within villages. In some areas, hamlets were fixed to a particular surveyed and bounded territory; in other places, the "same" hamlet could shift location from place to place within a village. See Civil Operations and Rural Development Support, Research and Analysis Directorate (CORDS/RAD), Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), Document No. DAR R70-79, CM-01B (Saigon: Military Assistance Command Vietnam, NARA 3-349-81-001). The average Vietnamese village contained five hamlets.

35. The HES was originally an attempt to systematize and digitize a less formal prior practice of the South Vietnamese government to assign letter ratings of the security status at the local level. See National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Hamlet Evaluation System (HAMLA) and Hamlet Evaluation System 1971 (HES 71), Records Group 330 (Washington, DC: Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, NARA 3-330-75-141). Indeed, the South Vietnamese communists themselves developed a similar quantitative system for hamlet evaluation (Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*, 856-58).

36. For further technical details on the HES, see Matthew Kocher, *Human Ecology and Civil War* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2004).

37. Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 188-90.

38. Bernard B. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness, 1953-66* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 142.

39. Pike, *Viet Cong*, 12.

40. Some sources associate Hoa Hao with Theravada Buddhism, in contrast to the dominant Mahayana Buddhism of Vietnam.

41. Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness*, 150.

42. We define *control* as a monopoly on overt governmental functions. As a proxy for this concept, we use the HES security submodel 3A (collapsed from five categories to three), which is an index composed of a variety of questions about the presence or

absence of government or rebel personnel or activity in the area of the hamlet. These "models" are indices constructed through sequential applications of Bayes' Rule. In effect, the prior value of the model is adjusted to reflect the probability of observing each individual item response conditional on the prior.

43. The extremely high proportion of government-controlled hamlets will come as a surprise to many readers, given the common wisdom that the United States lost the Vietnam War during the Tet Offensive of 1968. However, there is wide agreement in historical sources that the United States and the South Vietnamese government controlled most of South Vietnam by the end of 1971. See, for instance, Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage, 1988), 722; Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*. Some of this government advantage was lost as a result of the 1972 Easter Offensive, and South Vietnam eventually fell to a breakthrough of the North Vietnamese conventional army in 1975.

44. This is consistent with Connor's observations: In the early 1960s, the Montagnards had been wooed by the promises of the Vietcong because of their resentment of Ngo Dinh Diem's forced assimilation policies. By 1969, however, this trend was being reversed. See Connor, "Ethnology and the Peace of South Asia," 73.

45. Although far from a perfect measure of development levels, television and radio antennae and motor vehicles are highly visible by air or in short visits to hamlets. During this period in Vietnam, televisions, radios, and motor vehicles were all luxury items to a greater or lesser degree. The index has a Cronbach's alpha of .69 in the 1969 data and an alpha of .76 in the 1971 data. Note: the 1969 data do not include the variable for radios.

46. See Kocher, *Human Ecology and Civil War*, for technical details on the construction of this measure.

47. In other words, all simulations reflect "typical" hamlets in all respects except ethnicity. We also assume the month of July. Altering the month does not change the results materially. Some of the differences between groups narrow slightly; this is an artifact of improving government control generally.

48. Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon."

49. A. M. Savani, *Visage et Images du Sud Viet-Nam* (Saigon: Imprimerie Française d'Outre Mer, 1955), 71.

50. Pike, *Viet Cong*, 68-69. Besides these two sects, many smaller militias emerged in the 1940s, including the Mafia-like Binh Xuyên, the Barai nationalists, the Phat Dao Buu Son Ky Huong, and the Tinh Do Cu Si Phat Hôi. See Savani, *Visage et Images*, 71-105.

51. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*, 188.

52. Pike, *Viet Cong*, 58-59.

53. Gerald C. Hickey, *Shattered World: Adaptation and Survival among Vietnam's Highland Peoples during the Vietnam War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

54. Pike, *Viet Cong*, 205.

55. Visual inspection has one principal drawback: it does not allow us to estimate the relative importance of the variables examined. See Matthew Kocher, *Human Ecology and Civil War*, for technical details on the GIS used to construct these maps.

56. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

57. R. V. Burks, *The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Kostas Gemenis, "Armed Collaboration, 1939–1945: Explaining Variation among Ethnic Groups" (unpublished paper).

58. Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,' Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003): 475-94.

59. By violence, we mean the intentional victimization of civilians, the primary indicator being homicides (another indicator is the mass deportation of civilians).

60. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 47; and Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 108.

61. Douglas Dion, "Competition and Ethnic Conflict: Artifactual?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 5 (1997): 647. Note, as well, that the violence of interstate wars is never referred to as "ethnic violence," even when the nation–states involved are composed of populations with distinct ethnic identities.

62. F. A. Voigt, *The Greek Sedition* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1949), 75.

63. Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 426.

64. "That political violence can be ethnic is well established, indeed too well established; how it is ethnic remains obscure . . . Sustained attention needs to be paid to the forms and dynamics of ethnicization, to the many and subtle ways in which violence—and conditions, processes, activities, and narratives linked to violence—can take on ethnic hues." See Brubaker and Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," 427.

65. A possible testable formulation is as follows: the deeper the divisions, the more violent the resulting civil war. Kalyvas finds that prewar polarization in Greece, as measured by prewar electoral returns, does not predict levels of violence during the civil war, as measured by homicide rates, controlling for a host of other factors. See Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Incorporating Constructivist Propositions into Theories of Civil War" (unpublished paper, 2005).

66. Brubaker and Laitin, "Ethnic and Nationalist Violence," 426.

67. David D. Laitin, "Secessionist Rebellion in the Former Soviet Union," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 8 (2001): 839-61.

68. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-86. The issue has not been settled yet. See J. G. Montalvo and Marta Reynal-Querol, "Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict and Civil War," *American Economic Review* 95, no. 3 (2005): 796-816; and Halvard Buhaug, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rod, "Modeling Conflict in Center-Periphery Dyads" (unpublished paper, 2006).

69. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 860.

70. Roy Licklider, "Early Returns: Results of the First Wave of Statistical Studies of Civil War Termination," *Civil Wars* 1, no. 3 (1998): 126-27.

71. Quoted in Roger Dupuy, *Les Chouans* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), 237.

72. The actual micromechanisms of victimization may vary to include anything from goal-oriented action at the mass level (elimination, secession) to emotions (hatred, dehumanization), symbols and rituals, and goal-oriented action at the individual level (private profit, criminality).

73. Raymond Boudon, "The Logic of Relative Frustration," in *Rationality and Revolution*, ed. Michael Taylor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 245-67.

74. Dion, "Competition and Ethnic Conflict."

75. Deborah Bennett, *Randomness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 3.

76. Patricia Griffin, *The Chinese Communist Treatment of Counterrevolutionaries: 1924-1949* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 144.

77. Ibid., 34. Note that a person's behavior may not necessarily be predicted by her status.

78. Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Steven David, "Internal War: Causes and Cures," *World Politics* 49, no. 4 (1997): 552-76.

79. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*; David Laitin, "National Revivals and Violence," *European Journal of Sociology* 36 (1995): 3-43.

80. Timur Kuran, "Sparks and Prairie Fires: A Theory of Unanticipated Political Revolution," *Public Choice* 61, no. 1 (1989): 41-74; Roger Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

81. Gabriele Ranzato, ed., *Guerre Fratricide: Le Guerre Civili in Età Contemporanea* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1994), xlii-xliii; Georg Simmel, *Conflict* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955[1908]), 30.

82. René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), 26.

83. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 236-45 (emphasis ours).

84. Roger Cohen, *Hearts Grown Brutal: Sagas of Sarajevo* (New York: Random House, 1998).

85. John Darby, "Intimidation and Interaction in a Small Belfast Community: The Water and the Fish," in *Political Violence: Ireland in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. John Darby, Nicholas Dodge, and A. C. Hepburn (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1990), 101.

86. Tone Bringa, *We Are All Neighbors*, produced and directed by Debbie Christie (Public Media/Films Inc., 1993), videocassette, 52 min.

87. Martha Crenshaw, "The Effectiveness of Terrorism in the Algerian War," in *Terrorism in Context*, ed. Martha Crenshaw (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 473-513.

88. For example, see Camilo José Cela, *Mazurka for Two Dead Men* (New York: New Directions, 1992).

89. Tracy Chamoun, *Au Nom du Père* (Paris: J.-C. Lattès, 1992), 23.

90. Kalyvas, "Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

91. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

92. Richard Cobb, *Reactions to the French Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 123.

93. Paul Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

94. Rory Stewart, "Even in Iraq, All Politics Is Local," *New York Times*, July 13, 2006, sec. A, p. 23.

95. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

96. Kaufmann, "Intervention in Ethnic and Ideological Civil Wars."

97. Biddle, "Seeing Baghdad, Thinking Saigon"; Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27-47.

98. Suicide bombs and air strikes each account for about 12 percent of violent deaths, "other ordnance/explosion" accounts for about 14 percent, and gunshots account for 56 percent. Although guns may be used in indiscriminate violence, they are usually much more selective than bombs. See G. Burnham, R. Lafta, S. Doocy, and L. Roberts, "Mortality after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-sectional Cluster Sample Survey," *The Lancet* 368, no. 9545 (2006): 1421-28.

99. Population displacement and refugee flight differ from ethnic cleansing in two fundamental respects: first, populations may move toward areas controlled by the ethnic other rather than outside its territory (e.g., Kurds move to Turkish cities, not outside

Turkey); and second, it is generally understood that once the insurgents are defeated, they may have the option of returning to their homes.

100. Interestingly, because the patterns of violence predicted do emerge far more consistently in situations of mass riots and pogroms, we suspect that perceptions about the role of ethnic cleavages in civil wars are heavily influenced by invalid inductive extrapolations from riots (and a few high-profile civil wars such as in Yugoslavia) to the entire universe of ethnic civil wars.

101. Eamon Collins (with Mick McGovern), *Killing Rage* (New York: Granta Books, 1999), 280.

102. Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart and Antonio Rojas Friend, *Consejo de Guerra: Los Fusilamientos en el Madrid de la Posguerra (1939-1945)* (Madrid: Compañía Literaria, 1997), 15.

103. Ranzato, *Guerre Fratricide*; and Julio de la Cueva, "Religious Persecution, Anticlerical Tradition, and Revolution: On Atrocities against the Clergy during the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (1998): 355-69.

104. There are many ways to identify "ideological" identities in nonethnic environments. In countries where one party boycotted elections, such as post–World War II Greece and Colombia, individual electoral cards carry information about whether a person voted or not—hence, about his or her ideological identity. See Tina Rosenberg, *Children of Cain: Violence and the Violent in Latin America* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 41. The class cleavage may also carry visible marks. During the Russian Civil War, the whites would sometimes shoot workers, recognized by their "callused hands" (Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution (1917-1921)* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], 665). Similar practices are reported in Spain and Korea.

105. Nonethnic civil wars can produce high levels of segregation. As a man from heavily secessionist Independence, Missouri, wrote his brother, "All the people are leaving here that are for the Union" (Quoted in Fellman, *Inside War*, 74). Lear reports that the anti-Japanese guerrillas in the Philippines "encouraged the migration of loyal Filipinos from the enemy-controlled areas to the unoccupied districts" (Elmer Lear, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, Leyte, 1941-1945*, Data Paper No. 42, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1961], 120). A pro-Japanese administrator reported, "At present there are only 30 families in the *población* and our efforts to increase the number of returning families meet with little success because guerrilla elements controlling the barrios outside the *población* are prohibiting or preventing the people to come in, or have contract with the authorities. They threaten to kill, kidnap, punish, or inflict injuries to those who are attached to, and cooperate with, the present regime" (Ibid., 208).

106. Caleb Donaldson and Martha Minow, "Relearning Vietnam's Painful Lessons," *The Boston Globe*, August 14, 2006, sec. A, p.11.

107. Anthony Shadid, "This Is Baghdad. What could be worse?" *Washington Post*, October 29, 2006, sec. B, p. 1.

108. Bob Woodward, *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 419.

109. Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, "How Free Is 'Free Riding' in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem" (working paper, 2006).

110. Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

111. A strong state could be federal or decentralized; however, a loose association of a Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish entity, such as that advocated by Gelb in "Last Train from Baghdad," does not amount to a strong state.

Stathis N. Kalyvas (stathis.kalyvas@yale.edu) is Arnold Wolfers Professor of Political Science and director of the Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence at Yale. His current research focuses on civil war, using micro-level data from Vietnam and Colombia. He is the author of The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe *(Cornell University Press, 1996), which received the J. David Greenstone Prize, and* The Logic of Violence in Civil War *(Cambridge University Press, 2006).*

Matthew Adam Kocher (matthew.kocher@cide.edu) is profesor/investigador in the Department of International Studies, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), Mexico. His research interests include state building, nationalist and ethnic politics, political violence, and geographical information systems (GIS). His PhD dissertation, Human Ecology and Civil War*, was the recipient of the American Political Science Association's 2006 Gabriel A. Almond Award for the best dissertation in comparative politics accepted in 2004 or 2005.*