The Logic of Violence in Civil War

By analytically decoupling war and violence, this book explores the causes and dynamics of violence in civil war. Against prevailing views that such violence is either the product of impenetrable madness or a simple way to achieve strategic objectives, the book demonstrates that the logic of violence in civil war has much less to do with collective emotions, ideologies, cultures, or “greed and grievance” than currently believed. Stathis Kalyvas distinguishes between indiscriminate and selective violence and specifies a novel theory of selective violence: it is jointly produced by political actors seeking information and individual noncombatants trying to avoid the worst but also grabbing what opportunities their predicament affords them. Violence is not a simple reflection of the optimal strategy of its users; its profoundly interactive character defeats simple maximization logics while producing surprising outcomes, such as relative nonviolence in the “frontlines” of civil war. Civil war offers irresistible opportunities to those who are not naturally bloodthirsty and abhor direct involvement in violence. The manipulation of political organizations by local actors wishing to harm their rivals signals a process of privatization of political violence rather than the more commonly thought politicization of private life. Seen from this perspective, violence is a process taking place because of human aversion rather than a predisposition toward homicidal violence, which helps explain the paradox of the explosion of violence in social contexts characterized by high levels of interpersonal contact, exchange, and even trust. Hence, individual behavior in civil war should be interpreted less as an instance of social anomie and more as a perverse manifestation of abundant social capital. Finally, Kalyvas elucidates the oft-noted disjunction between action on the ground and discourse at the top by showing that local fragmentation and local cleavages are a central rather than peripheral aspect of civil wars.

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Publication of this book has been aided by the generosity of the Yale Center for International and Area Studies.
Τῆς Ἀγγελικῆς
We are so little accustomed to treat social phenomena scientifically that certain of the propositions contained in this book may well surprise the reader. However, if there is to be a social science, we shall expect it not merely to paraphrase the traditional prejudices of the common man but to give us a new and different view of them; for the aim of all sciences is to make discoveries, and every discovery more or less disturbs accepted ideas.

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*

No one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs, and it is at first sight surprising that violence has been singled out so seldom for special consideration.

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*

Le nouveau ne se produit jamais par simple interpolation de l’ancien.

Michel Houellebecq, *Les particules élémentaires*
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This book is the outcome of an unexpected disruption. In 1997 the United States Information Agency told me that I had to spend two years in Greece because of a visa regulation. At the time I was teaching at NYU and did not welcome this prospect. Yet my forced stay in Greece led to exploratory fieldwork that eventually impelled me to shift altogether my research agenda toward the study of civil war and violence. I am indebted to Roger Petersen for discussing with me this fascinating topic just before my departure for Greece and to Adam Przeworski for supporting with enthusiasm what seemed at the time like a highly improbable research venture.

Once in Greece, I relied on a network of friends for my first contacts. Yannis Apostolopoulos, Dimitra Hadjiangelaki, Kostas Heliotis, and Vangelis Kombotis proved immensely helpful. Tasoula Vervenioti was instrumental in convincing me that interviews were both possible and valuable – against the opposite advice I had received from several professional historians in Greece. My friend Nikos Argyropoulos was helpful and supportive, as always. George Mavrogordatos wisely mixed encouragement and criticism. I cannot thank Marina Tsouloucha enough; she, over many years, helped me mine the riches of the Historical Archive of the Argolid. I also thank H. F. Meyer and G. Th. Mavrogordatos for sharing some of the archival material they collected, and the Near East Foundation for retrieving and making available to me the *Village Social Organization in Greece* study.

More people than I can possibly list here listened to my arguments in formal or informal settings, invited me to seminars and workshops where I presented my research, read my work, and offered comments. I want to single out just a few: Lars-Erik Cederman, Kanchan Chandra, Jim Fearon, Manolis Galenianos, Diego Gambetta, Michael Hechter, Macartan Humphreys, Matt Kocher, David Laitin, Nikos Marantzidis, Nikolay Marinov, John Roemer, Nicholas Sambanis, Ignacio Sanchez Cuenca, Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl, Steven Shewfelt, Jim Vreeland, and Elisabeth Wood. Ana M. Arjona was particularly helpful during the final stretch, as were Sandy Henderson and Abbey Steele, who helped edit the manuscript.
Four anonymous reviewers provided valuable feedback. Margaret Levi supported this project from its early stages, as did Lew Bateman. I thank them all.

I started this project at NYU, began writing while at the University of Chicago, and completed the book at Yale. All three institutions provided an excellent intellectual and professional environment. The European University Institute and the Juan March Institute hosted me at crucial times, allowing me to make significant headway; for this, I am very grateful to Daniel Verdier and José Maria Maravall. The H. F. Guggenheim Foundation funded my research in northern Greece, part of which is included here. Thanks to Chrysostomos Mantzavinos and Christoph Engel, I was able to prepare the manuscript for publication in the wonderful environment of the Max Planck Institute for Research in Collective Goods in Bonn. I am very grateful to Ian Shapiro and the Yale Center for International and Area Studies for their support in publishing this book.

I was fortunate to include parts of this book in graduate seminars I taught at Chicago, Juan March, and Yale. My students took my work apart ruthlessly, sending me back repeatedly to fix the problems they identified; this bespeaks the quality of their feedback and their contribution to the final project.


I acquired many friends among the people I interviewed, but I am particularly indebted to the Kalymniou, Skinochoritis, and Yannakou families for their warm hospitality and friendship. At the same time, I owe many thanks to all the people who opened their doors to me in Greece. Many were initially distrustful, but they grew friendly as the conversation went on; they spoke with passion, emotion, and great intelligence about their lives, their beliefs, their suffering, their hopes. This was a life-changing experience for me. This book does very little justice to their remarkably rich and cogent recollections. I am already at work on another book that will be based directly on their stories, as well as the stories that I recovered from the archives.

I would not have been able to carry out this research without the emotional and material support of my parents, Nikos and Margarita Kalyvas, to whom I am, once more, deeply grateful. The book is dedicated to Angeliki Louvi, who was there throughout the entire project, from conception to end. I need not say more, for she already knows.
**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMFOGE</td>
<td>Allied Mission for Observing the Greek Elections</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARVN</td>
<td>Army of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASKI, KKE</td>
<td>Archive of Contemporary Social History, Archive of the Communist Party of Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLO</td>
<td>British Liaison Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAN</td>
<td>Municipal Archives of Nafplio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS/AEA</td>
<td>Directorate of Army History, Archive of National Resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSE</td>
<td>Democratic Army of Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAM</td>
<td>National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDES</td>
<td>National Democratic Greek League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EES</td>
<td>Greek National Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>EGP</td>
<td>Guerrilla Army of the Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EKKA</td>
<td>National and Social Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELAS</td>
<td>National Popular Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF</td>
<td>Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>National Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>Revolutionary Army of the People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA</td>
<td>Basque Fatherland and Liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FECCAS</td>
<td>Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLN</td>
<td>Front of National Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMLN</td>
<td>Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRELIMO</td>
<td>Liberation Front of Mozambique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRETLIN</td>
<td>Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIA</td>
<td>Armed Islamic Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVN</td>
<td>Government of the Republic of Vietnam</td>
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Abbreviations

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<td>HAA/DAN</td>
<td>Historical Archive of the Argolid, Municipal Archives of Nafplion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAA/EDD</td>
<td>Historical Archive of the Argolid, Special Court of Collaborators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HES</td>
<td>Hamlet Evaluation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INLA</td>
<td>Irish National Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRA</td>
<td>Irish Republican Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JVP</td>
<td>People's Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>KKE</td>
<td>Communist Party of Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTTE</td>
<td>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MI5</td>
<td>British domestic intelligence service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPAJA</td>
<td>Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
<td>Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRLA</td>
<td>Malay Races Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTLD</td>
<td>Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Freedoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDF</td>
<td>National Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEF</td>
<td>Near East Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>nongovernmental organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKVD</td>
<td>People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>New People's Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPFL</td>
<td>National Patriotic Front of Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPLA</td>
<td>Organization for the Protection of People's Fighters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORDEN</td>
<td>Nationalist Democratic Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASOK</td>
<td>Panhellenic Socialist Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEEA</td>
<td>Political Committee of National Liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Popular Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKK</td>
<td>Kurdistan Workers’ Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPF</td>
<td>Popular Party of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Institutional Revolutionary Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO, FO</td>
<td>Public Records Office, Foreign Office Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO, HS</td>
<td>Public Records Office, Special Operations Executive Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RENAMO</td>
<td>Mozambican National Resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Security Battalion</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West Africa People's Organization</td>
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<td>UNITA</td>
<td>National Union for the Total Independence of Angola</td>
</tr>
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<td>UVF</td>
<td>Ulster Volunteer Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vietcong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCI</td>
<td>Vietcong Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZSt.</td>
<td>Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen</td>
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