geographical "safe areas" to turn themselves into independent, centralized institutions, with steadfast leaders who are secure from assassination, will eventually win the war for territorial control. Otherwise, the pressure on patrons to out-bid their rivals in order to keep their followers, and to attract new ones, will lead them to extol violence even when it would seem to harm their ultimate political cause. No matter how strong the enemy or how good the peace deal that is offered, they will keep on fighting; if they manage to defeat that enemy in a war of attrition, the militia leaders will then turn against each other.

In the empirical chapters of the book, Sinno demonstrates in great detail how these arguments fit the case of Afghanistan. Through painstaking research, he has identified the organizational structure of each major militia group in several different time periods. He convincingly explains, using only these simple structural variables and their evolution across time, why the anti-Soviet militias convinced Moscow to withdraw, why they then turned on each other instead of establishing a stable new Afghan state, why the Taliban succeeded in routing them, why the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud was crucial for Taliban efforts to control the country, why the Taliban were so easily thrown back by the U.S.-led invasion force after September 11, and why the Taliban have managed to reconstitute themselves now into a strong fighting force using the safe-area of the Pakistani tribal frontier. In the closing chapter, Sinno uses multivariate statistics to demonstrate that his model fits not only Afghanistan, but a total of 41 wars involving 133 organizations.

The book therefore accomplishes a crucial social science goal: it develops a parsimonious and generalizable theory that explains a wide range of behavior, without the need to resort to other variables (such as religion, ethnicity, ideology, or unique factors of anthropology or history). Sinno concludes with a set of predictions about other cases, using his findings to provide useful advice for policymakers. While he only mentions in passing the relevance of his findings for the Middle East, it is striking how well his arguments seem to explain ongoing conflicts everywhere from the Palestinian territories to Iraq. For all of these reasons, this book has great value, despite being a difficult and sometimes frustrating read.

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The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order
by Parag Khanna. New York, Random House, 2008. 496 pp. $29.00.

In his ambitious attempt to make sense of the world order of the early twenty-first century, Parag Khanna, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, has produced a book that is arguably as chaotic and confusing as the world it seeks to explain.

According to Khanna, the "second world" that forms the centerpiece of his study constitutes a burgeoning group of geopolitically salient countries, ranging from Afghanistan to Venezuela, that simultaneously straddle the economically wealthy and politically stable first world and the impoverished and politically unstable third world. On the one hand, these states possess a wealthy elite living a modern lifestyle and boast cosmopolitan capital cities, but on the other hand, they are also characterized by authoritarian and corrupt political leaders and staggering poverty. Khanna contends that these are the "tipping point" states that will determine the future balance of power between the world's three foremost "empires," the United States, the EU, and China (p. x).

Nearly the entirety of the book consists of Khanna's accounts of his extensive travels throughout the second world, with each of its 31 chapters devoted to a different country or cluster of neighboring countries. Although Khanna confidently maintains that "I never left a country until I had developed a sense of its meaning on its own terms … I stayed until I saw the world through their eyes" (p. xi), the fruits of his experiences can hardly be conveyed, since each chapter/country is allotted a mere handful of pages (for example, Russia receives six, Afghanistan and Pakistan together get seven, and surprisingly, India does not even receive its own chapter). Consequently, just as the reader begins to be immersed in the particularities of a given place, Khanna abruptly whisks her off to another one. The result is a bewildering flurry of facts, observations, and commentaries that seem to flash by at the speed of light. Some of these, such as Khanna's discussions of China's efforts to cultivate geopolitical allies and energy suppliers throughout Central Asia and Latin America, are astute and revealing. Others, however, are crude and unseemly, such as his claim that Latin American culture "implicitly asks, 'Why tell the truth when you can lie instead?'" (p. 130).

Regrettably, the analytical framework that Khanna devises to place his empirical material into context is equally muddled. In the introduction, Khanna careens wildly, from a truncated discussion of empires and great powers, to a comparison of Arnold Toynbee's and Oswald Spengler's opposing views on the future of Western civilization, to a debate on whether the international system is more accurately depicted as a realm of geopolitics or of globalization, to his explication of the term "second world." The general incoherence of this section is only compounded by the author's frequent resort to awkward and, in some cases, completely inscrutable phrasing (for example, "Like individuals, nations have a head, a heart, and a stomach, and the way to the first two is often through the third") (p. xxiv). Khanna reserves much of the conclusion for the delivery of a hyperbolic indictment of America's capacity not merely to maintain its global hegemony, but also to forestall its own slide into the second world. By contrast, he is nearly silent on the many challenges that inhibit the respective abilities of the EU and China to mount a successful near-term challenge to America's global primacy.

Published works that fuse personal travelogues with historical insights and commentaries on current affairs have considerable potential to both enlighten and entertain. On both counts, *The Second World* falls short of the standards set by exemplars of this literature such as Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* or Thomas Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem*.

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Nations, States, and Violence *by David D. Laitin. New York, Oxford University Press, 2007. 168 pp. $27.95.*

Nationalism and ethnic politics meet revisionism in this slim volume featuring key insights from David Laitin's three decades of work on these issues. For readers unfamiliar with Laitin's ideas, this book offers a concise introduction, with clear and compelling examples. Scholars already acquainted with Laitin's work, however, will find little that is new. They will probably also notice that much in terms of methodological discussion and explicit hypothesis testing has been condensed or omitted. Such readers may nevertheless find the book a useful tool for introductory courses on nationalism and ethnic politics.

The book begins with the claim that there is no consistent relationship between a state's demographic makeup and its likelihood of experiencing civil war. Laitin argues that the likelihood of violence in ethnically heterogeneous settings is high only where the state is "weak"—meaning that it lacks capacity to provide basic public goods and to guarantee the physical security of all citizens—and where disadvantaged minority groups are concentrated in territorial enclaves. Under all other conditions, Laitin finds that ethno-linguistic heterogeneity is more strongly associated with the absence of violent conflict. The balance of the book is a functionalist exploration of how cultural and linguistic identities form and become politically salient, and how they can be expected to condition behavior.

Laitin's account is profoundly anti-primordialist. In his framework, "cultures" are historically contingent equilibria that emerge from individual efforts to coordinate actions within social groups. These equilibria are grounded in openly shared beliefs about how other recognized members of the group can be expected to behave. Such beliefs, Laitin explains, can arise from prior interactions, common descent, or shared responses to symbols and practices. Where the expected marginal benefit from acquiring additional languages and cultural repertoires becomes sufficiently high, rational individuals will choose to make such investments for themselves and their children—particularly where they observe others doing so. Laitin describes these processes as "tipping phenomena," since the resulting equilibria are binary: either everyone within a specified setting has incentives to acquire a given repertoire, or no one does (p. 37).