Critical Thinking Assignment: KKK and Game Theory

(1) How is it possible that a terrorist organization in the U.S. gained ½ million members during Reconstruction (1865-1877), then almost disappeared, then grew to 3-9 million members just after WWI (1915-1925/1944), only to shrink and then re-emerge again in the 1950s with perhaps with a membership in the tens of thousands? Does game theory help to explain this cyclical growth and why, in particular, violent lynching was seen as fair by different sectors of white America in each cycle? Who were the key stakeholders in what were perceived to be zero-sum games in each of these three cycles of KKK growth? What specifically was fundamentally at stake (privileges that were fought over) in each cycle? What was the larger non-zero sum game that blocked and reversed KKK growth in each cycle? What underlying cause does KKK violence share with the Eugenics movement?

Answer this question based on lecture 9 notes (on KKK), extracts from Wikopedia below, and "Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction Era" in the Georgia Encyclopedia: http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-694

Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction Era

From 1868 through the early 1870s the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) functioned as a loosely organized group of political and social terrorists. The Klan's goals included political defeat of the Republican Party and the maintenance of absolute white supremacy in response to newly gained civil and political rights by southern blacks after the Civil War (1861-65). They were more successful in achieving their political goals than they were with their social goals during the Reconstruction era.

Origin

The KKK was formed as a social group in Tennessee in 1866. The name probably came from the Greek word kuklos, meaning "circle."

Klan was an alliterative version of "clan," thus Ku Klux Klan suggested a circle, or band, of brothers. With the passage of the Military Reconstruction Acts in March 1867, and the prospect of freedmen voting in the South, the Klan became a political organization. Former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest probably served as the Grand Wizard, or overall leader, of the Klan and certainly played a significant role in its organized spread in early 1868.

In Georgia conservative whites, frustrated with their political failures during 1867, began to look for new ways to defeat their Republican enemies and control the recently enfranchised freedpeople. For many, the KKK and its public political wing, the Young Men's Democratic Clubs, offered a chance to take action. In February and March 1868, General Forrest visited Atlanta from Tennessee several times and met with prominent Georgia conservatives. Forrest probably helped organize a statewide Klan structure during these visits. By the summer of 1868, the Klan was widespread across Georgia...
The Ku Klux Klan in Action

The Klan's organized terrorism began most notably on March 31, 1868, when Republican organizer George Ashburn was murdered in Columbus, Georgia.

Over the following months Klan-inspired violence spread throughout Georgia's Black Belt and into the northwestern corner of the state. Most Klan action was designed to intimidate black voters and white supporters of the Republican Party. Klansmen might parade on horseback at night dressed in outlandish costumes, or they might threaten specific Republican leaders with violence. Increasingly during 1868 these actions became violent, ranging from whippings of black women perceived as insolent to the assassination of Republican leaders. It is impossible to untangle local vigilante violence from political terrorism by the organized Klan, but it is clear that attacks on blacks became common during 1868. Freedmen's Bureau agents reported 336 cases of murder or assault with intent to kill on freedmen across the state from January 1 through November 15 of 1868.

The political terrorism was effective. While Republican gubernatorial candidate Rufus B. Bullock carried the state in April 1868 elections, by November Democratic presidential candidate Horatio Seymour was in the lead. In some counties the contrast was incredible. In John Reed's Oglethorpe County, 1,144 people had voted Republican in April, while only 116 dared to vote Republican in November when Reed's armed Klansmen surrounded the polls. In Columbia County armed Klansmen not only intimidated voters but even cowed federal soldiers sent to guard the polling place. Not surprisingly, while 1,222 votes had been cast in Columbia County for Republican governor Rufus Bullock in April, only one vote was cast for Republican presidential candidate Ulysses Grant in November 1868. Similar political terrorism and control of the polling places help account for Georgia's quick "redemption" and return to conservative white Democratic control by late 1871.

Klanlike violence was also used to control freedpeople's social behavior, but with less success. Black churches and schools were burned, teachers were attacked, and freedpeople who refused to show proper deference were beaten and killed. But, black Georgians fought their attackers, rebuilt their churches and schools, and shot back during attacks on their communities. While these attacks surely terrorized some freedpeople, they failed to destroy the cultural and social independence blacks had gained with emancipation.

End of the First Ku Klux Klan

There is no clear date for the demise of the first KKK's activities in Georgia. While John B. Gordon may have left the Klan by late 1868, Klan activity clearly continued throughout 1869 and 1870. After Democratic triumph in the state elections of 1870 and aggressive federal intervention in 1871 and 1872, the formal Klan organization began to fade away. Local Klanlike groups continued to engage in racial and political terrorism, often calling themselves minutemen or rifle clubs, but they lacked larger organizational ties or even commonality of purpose. A romanticized memory of the first KKK legitimated their activities and, combined with the growing power of a Lost Cause mythology, contributed greatly to Georgians' acceptance of vigilante violence and lynching well into the twentieth century. By the 1890s many men proudly claimed to have ridden with the Klan and thereby saved Georgia and the South from "Negro domination." This romanticized vision of the Klan was celebrated in popular novels and laid the foundation for the more openly organized Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the second Ku Klux Klan, founded in Atlanta in 1915.
Suggested Reading


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http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amERICANEXPERIENCE/features/general-article/grant-kkk/

**EXTRACT (BELOW) FROM: PBS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. “General Article: Rise of the Ku Klux Klan.”**

In the time leading up to the 1868 presidential election, the Klan's activities picked up in speed and brutality. The election, which pitted Republican Ulysses S. Grant against Democrat Horatio Seymour, was crucial. Republicans would continue programs that prevented Southern whites from gaining political control in their states. Klan members knew that given the chance, the blacks in their communities would vote Republican.

Across the South, the Klan and other terrorist groups used brutal violence to intimidate Republican voters. In Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings was even higher. And in Louisiana, 1000 blacks were killed as the election neared. In those three states, Democrats won decisive victories at the polls.

Nevertheless, the Klan's violent actions proved to many Northerners that the South had not learned its lesson in the recent war. In this way, the Klan's activities actually backfired. People realized that harsher laws would have to be passed in order to stop the violence and protect Southern blacks. And those laws were soon in coming.

In the 1868 presidential election, Republican Ulysses S. Grant won. . . . Many Northerners, disgusted by Klan violence, lent their support to the *Fifteenth Amendment*, which gave the vote to black men in every state, and the First Reconstruction Act of 1867, which placed harsher restrictions on the South and closely regulated the formation of their new governments.

http://www.history.com/topics/ku-klux-klan

**SECOND KKK: EXCERPT (BELOW) FROM HISTORY.COM: “KU KLUX KLAN”**

*Revival of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915 (after having almost disappeared after withdrawal of Union army in 1877)*

In 1915, white Protestant nativists organized a revival of the Ku Klux Klan near Atlanta, Georgia, inspired by their romantic view of the Old South as well as Thomas Dixon's 1905 book "The Clansman" and D.W. Griffith's 1915 film "Birth of a Nation." This second generation of the Klan was not only anti-black but also took a stand against Roman Catholics, Jews, foreigners and organized labor. It was fueled by growing hostility to the surge in immigration that America experienced in the early 20th century along with fears of communist revolution akin to the Bolshevik triumph in Russia in 1917. The organization took as its symbol a burning cross and held rallies, parades and marches around the country. (http://www.history.com/topics/ku-klux-klan). The second Ku Klux Klan has claimed at least
15% of America’s population, which numbers to 4 to 5 million men by the mid-1920s. The Klan also branched out of the United States and established an operation in Saskatchewan, Canada by 1926-1928, subsequently attacking immigrants from Eastern Europe. (http://kukluxklan.net/kkk-history 

The Great Depression in the 1930s depleted the Klan's membership ranks, and the organization temporarily disbanded in 1944. The civil rights movement of the 1960s saw a surge of local Klan activity across the South, including the bombings, beatings and shootings of black and white activists

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THIRD KKK:

Beginning in the 1950s, for instance, individual Klan groups in Birmingham, Alabama, began to resist social change. . . by bombing houses in transitional neighborhoods. There were so many bombings in Birmingham of blacks' homes by Klan groups in the 1950s that the city's nickname was "Bombingham".[24]

During the tenure of Bull Connor as police commissioner in the city [Birmingham], Klan groups were closely allied with the police and operated with impunity. When the Freedom Riders arrived in Birmingham, Connor gave Klan members fifteen minutes to attack the riders before sending in the police to quell the attack.[24]

In states such as Alabama and Mississippi, Klan members forged alliances with governors' administrations.[24] In Birmingham and elsewhere, the KKK groups bombed the houses of civil rights activists. In some cases they used physical violence, intimidation and assassination directly against individuals. Many murders went unreported and were not prosecuted by local and state authorities. Continuing disfranchisement of blacks across the South meant that most could not serve on juries, which were all white.


(end of extract from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan 

In the period following the civil rights movement: The Ku Klux Klan has not gone away. Klan groups are still the most common type of hate group in the United States with estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Klan members.