Technical Change in Wartime in South Vietnam (1967-1972)

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ABSTRACTS

Casual observers of what the Vietnamese call the "American War" are generally surprised to learn that significant rural economic growth took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s. South Vietnam's experience with "Green Revolution" technology, however, demonstrated that economic development is possible even in conditions of acute political instability and low intensity conflict. Highly divisible products for which local demand exists can diffuse into the countryside, improve farm families' lives, and lift a rural economy. Perhaps the most important finding in this essay is that the new technology diffused well beyond the scope of the government program that introduced it, and that both seeds and chemicals crossed military and political frontiers. This has implications for development planning as well as for theory. It supports the old idea that the market at times can diffuse technology more efficiently than a government or NGO development program. And it confirms that peasant farm families in much of South Vietnam grasped opportunities to maximize their incomes within levels of risk they deemed acceptable. Scholars and policy makers may argue the finer points of the Green Revolution, but a large portion of South Vietnam's farm families expressed their support for the technology by taking on increased risk and investing in new inputs during a short, tumultuous period.

dans un contexte de très forte instabilité politique et de guerre, là du moins où les opérations militaires restent d'intensité limitée. Les semences nouvelles et les produits chimiques qu'elles requièrent se sont, en effet, répandus bien au-delà de la zone que le gouvernement avait entendu couvrir, au-delà même des frontières militaires et politiques. L'article discute des conséquences théoriques et pratiques du fait que, dans de telles conditions, une grande part de la population agricole du Sud-Vietnam a, malgré tout, opté pour la technique nouvelle.