



Why displacement? Colombia

POL 126

Prof. Juan Tellez

TODAY

Early history

The land question

The drug trade

Drone pilots

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/09/podcasts/the-daily/drones-airstrikes-military-ptsd.html>

Colombia - early history



The world's oldest war

1964 – ???

200k+ dead,
6+ million **displaced**



Four things:

The (left-wing) guerrillas

Land

The (right-wing) paramilitaries

Coca

Independence

Spanish empire collapses,
Colombia independent

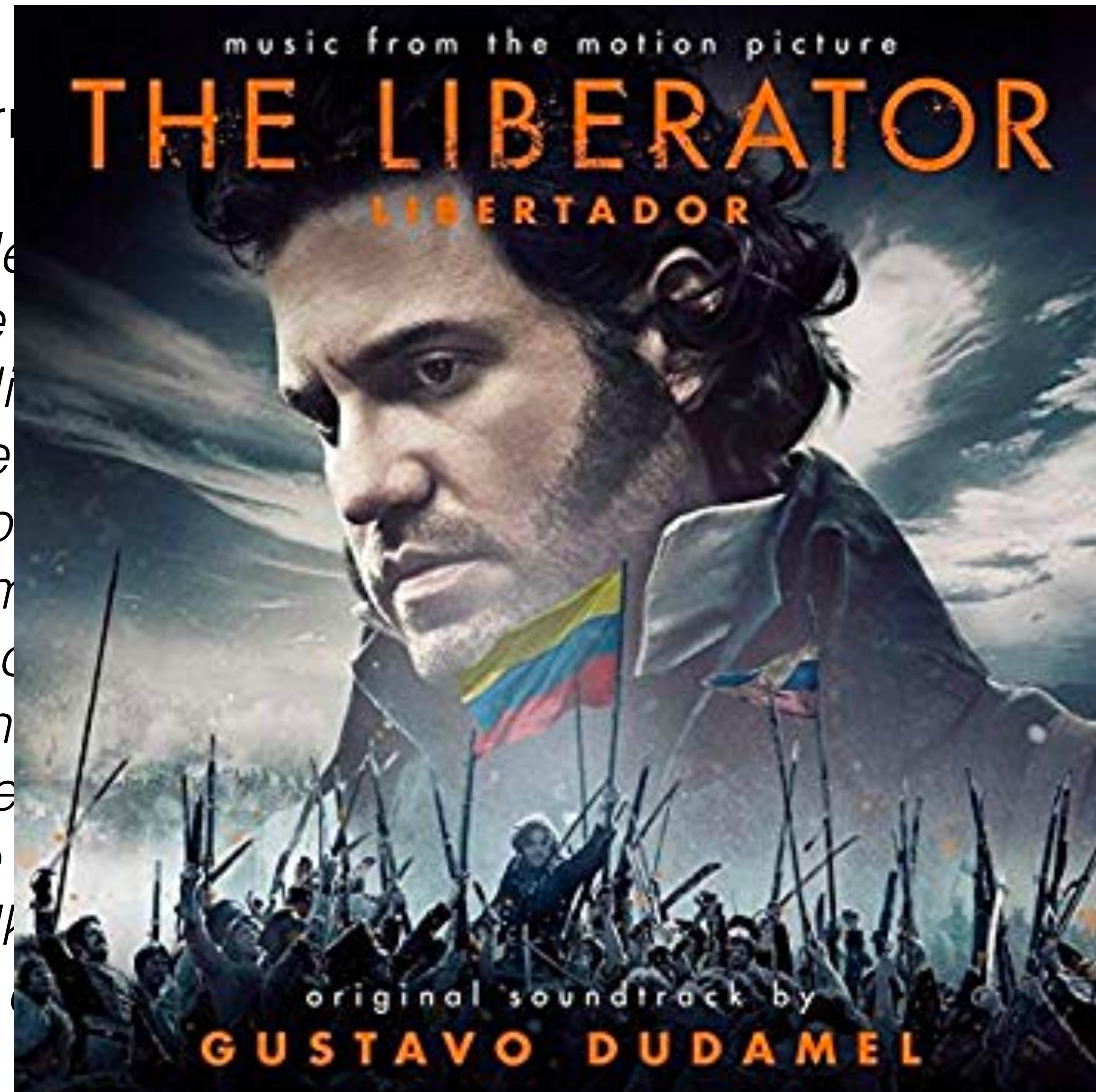


Simon Bolívar, Latin America's
“George Washington” but better

Manuela Saenz

Letter explaining to cur

*"You, sir, are an excellent
only regret that you are
you would honor Bolivia
honorable because he
do not live by social con
us. So leave me be, m
again in Heaven, but no
boring man. Up there in
be so English, because
you people, who make
without grace--who walk
laughing...but*



Manuela Saenz

Early politics

In LA, new republics hold elections between:

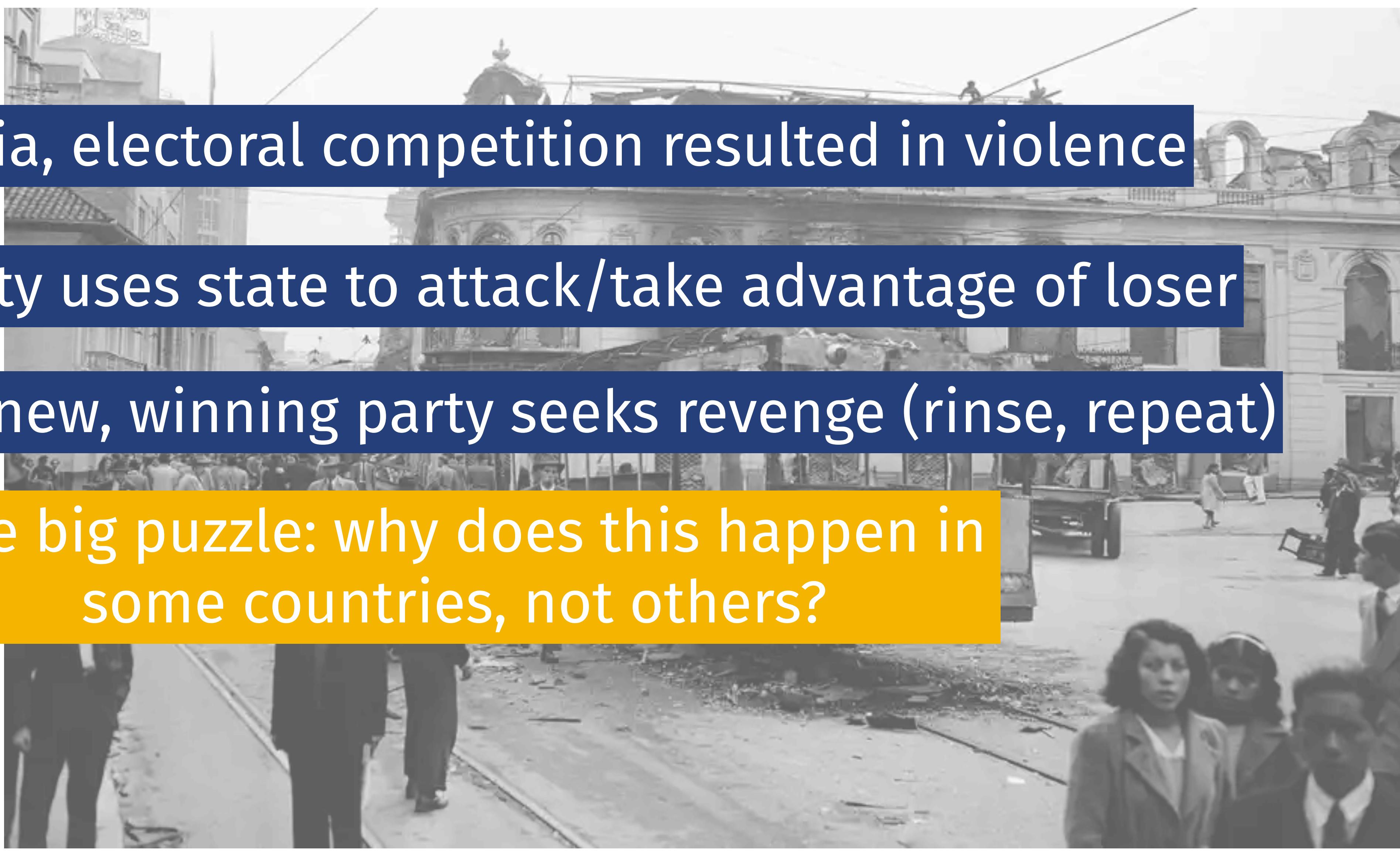
Liberals
(think: libertarian)

Conservatives
(think: monarchists)

Free trade, civil liberties

Tradition, church

Puzzle I: A history of violence



In Colombia, electoral competition resulted in violence

Winning party uses state to attack/take advantage of loser

Next time: the new, winning party seeks revenge (rinse, repeat)

The big puzzle: why does this happen in some countries, not others?

Why violence?

One theory: “winner-take-all” system → abuse

USA (today)

President

Congress

Governors,
mayors

Cabinet,
executive

Colombia (back then)

President

Congress

Governors,
mayors

Cabinet,
executive

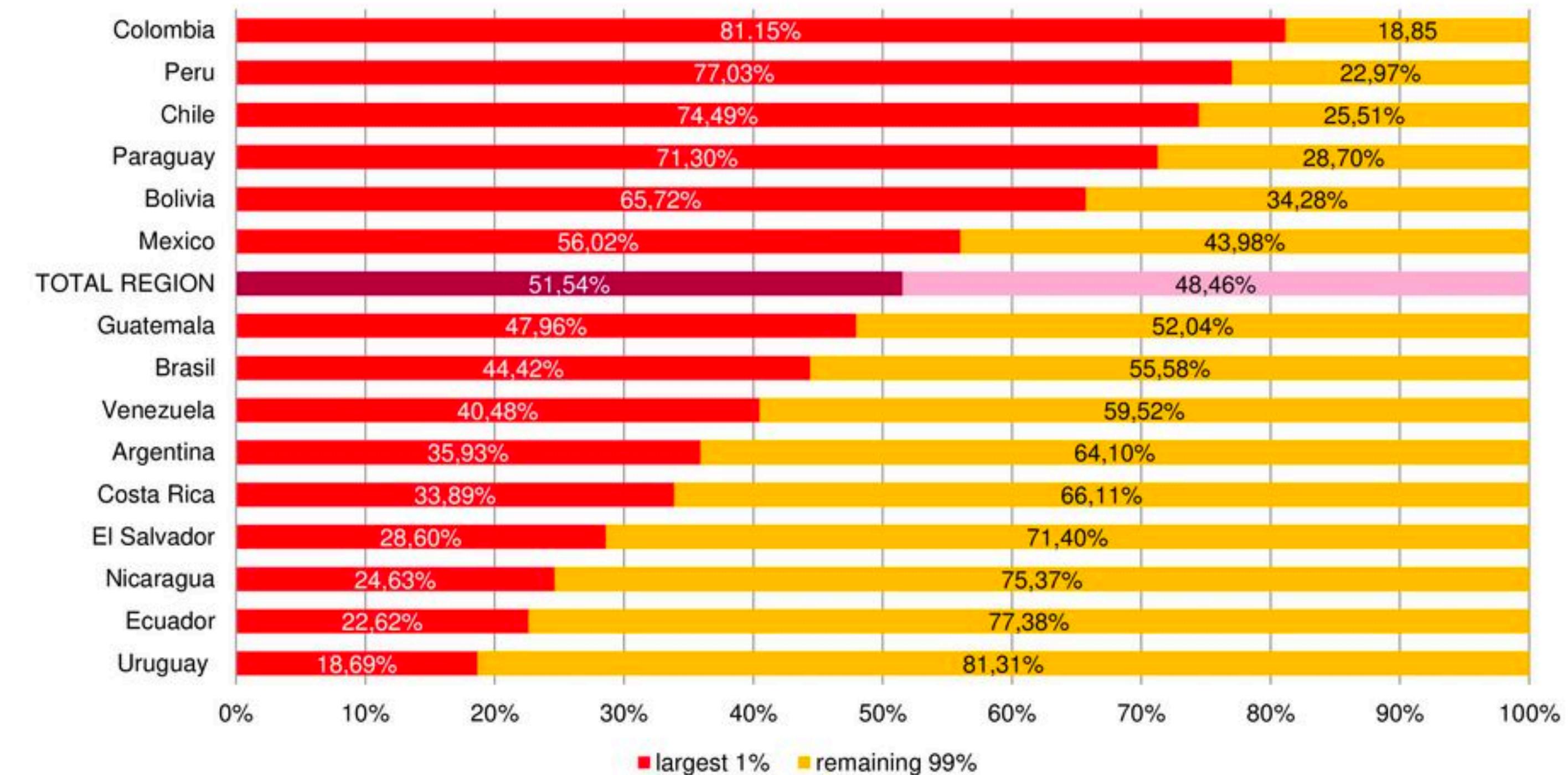
The land question

The land problem

Highly **unequal** ownership
of land in Colombia
(and elsewhere)

Why is **land** so important
in the developing world?

% OF LAND HELD BY LARGEST 1% OF FARMS IN LATIN AMERICA

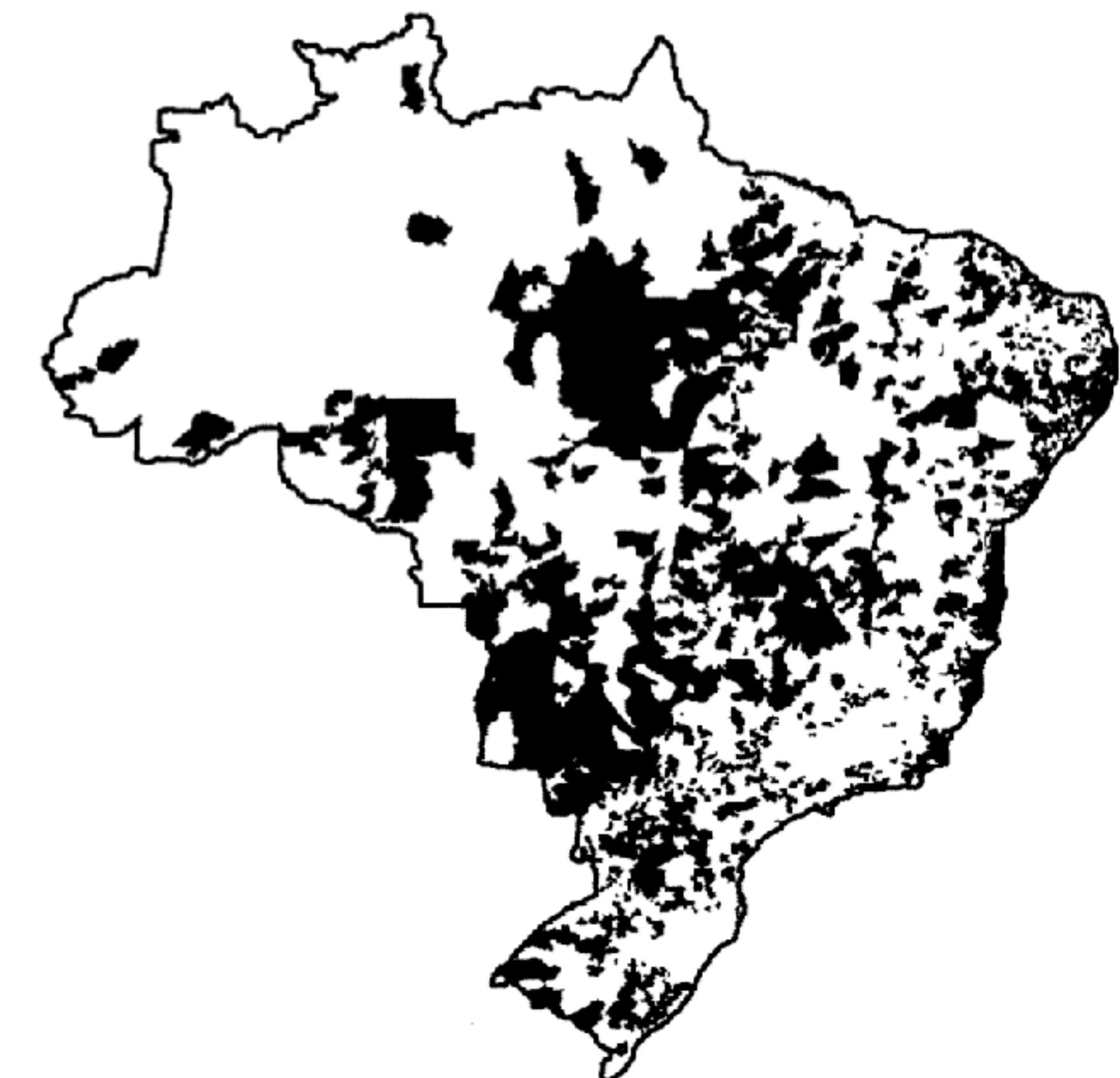


Land and conflict

Strong association
between land inequality
and conflict all over the
world

Why **land**, as opposed to
other assets?

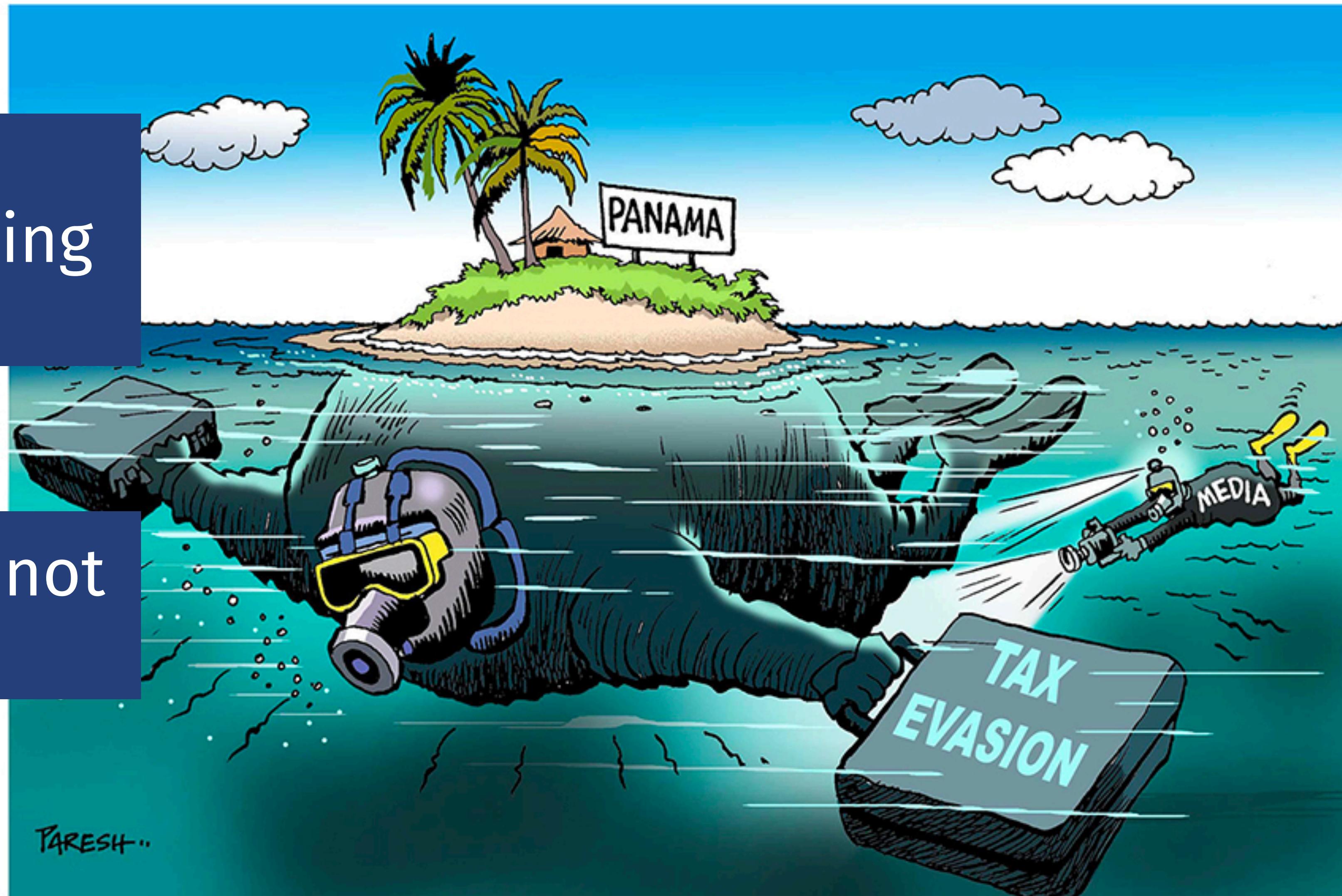
FIGURE 1.—MAP OF RURAL CONFLICT



Note: Municipalities that experienced at least one occupation between 1988 and 2004 are shaded black.
Nonshaded municipalities did not experience land invasions.

Elites often avoid
redistribution by moving
assets overseas

Land is **immobile** and not
going anywhere

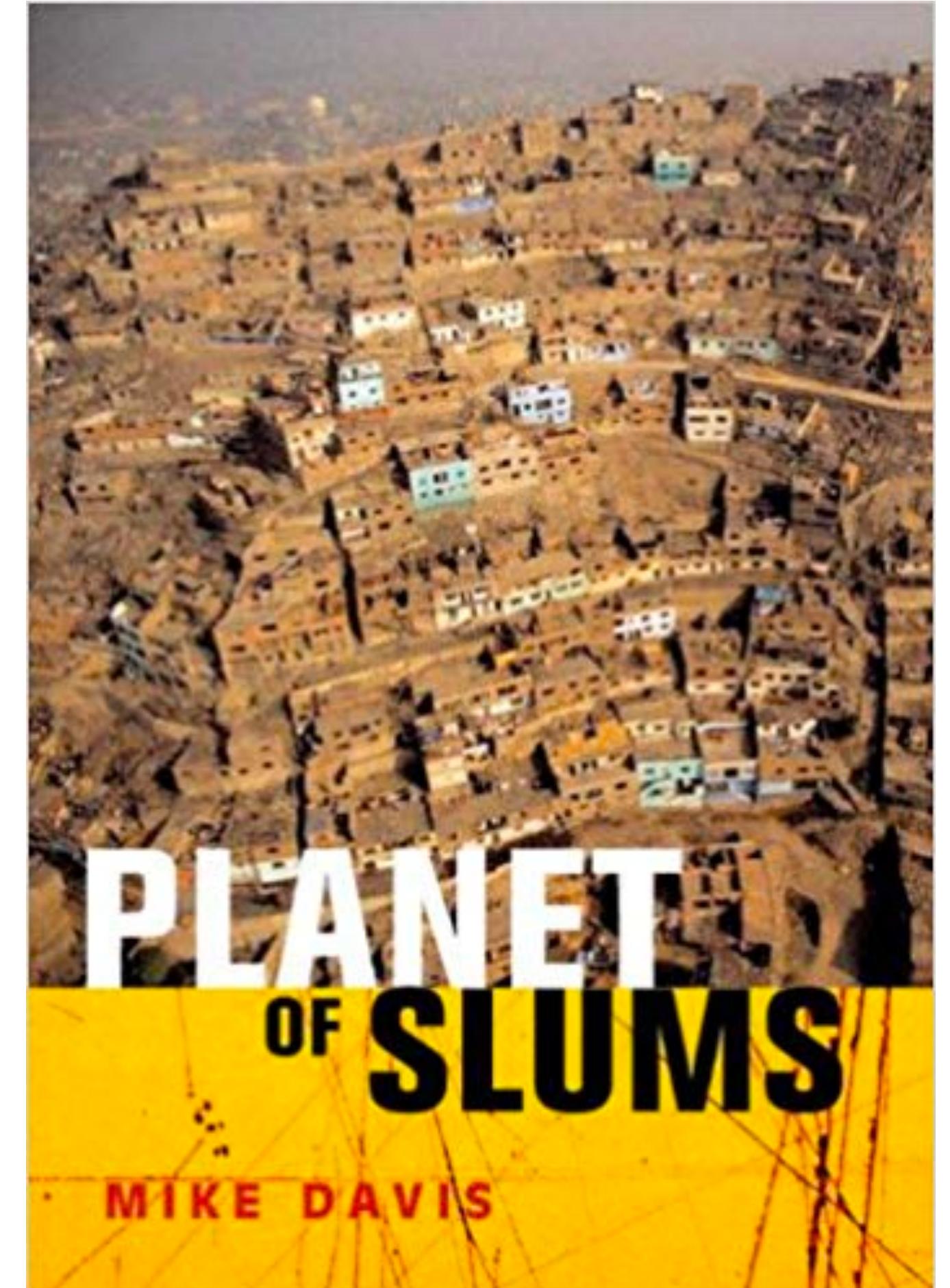


Land invasions

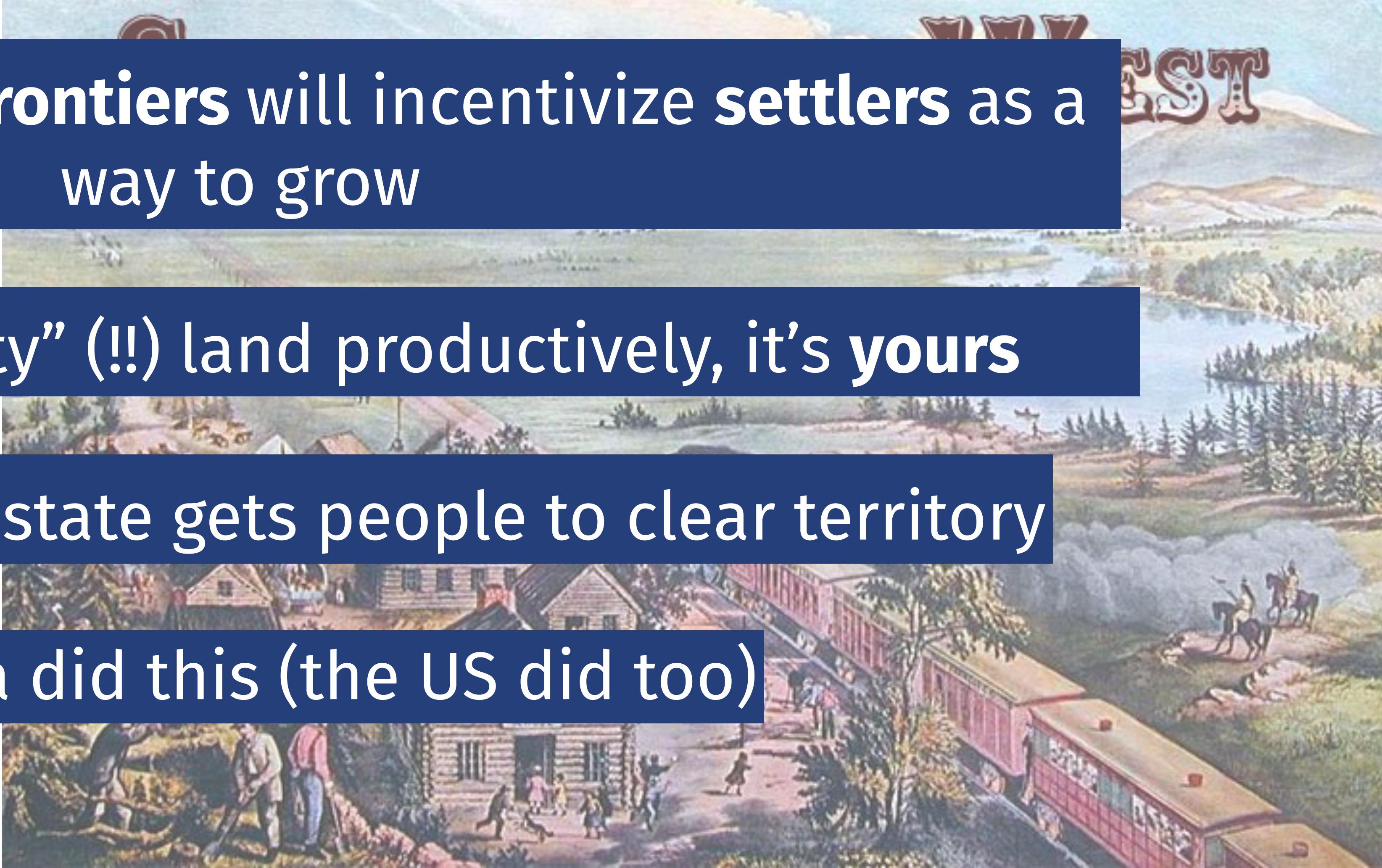
Lacking access to land, peasants often invade or squat on “empty” land

Conflicts with owners as state is unable (or unwilling) to adjudicate

What to do?



Settler-expansion



Countries with big **frontiers** will incentivize **settlers** as a way to grow



Go out, use “empty” (!!) land productively, it’s **yours**



Landless get **land**, state gets people to clear territory



Colombia did this (the US did too)

Puzzle II: land conflict

Landless go to **frontier**, settle land

Elites follow right behind –
take land (by force, legal trickery)

Cycle repeats – frontier plagued by violence

Why not (to same extent) in the US?



The setting

Very unequal society

Cycles of violence as government changes hands

Difficult to protect life or property –
Capture of state by elites

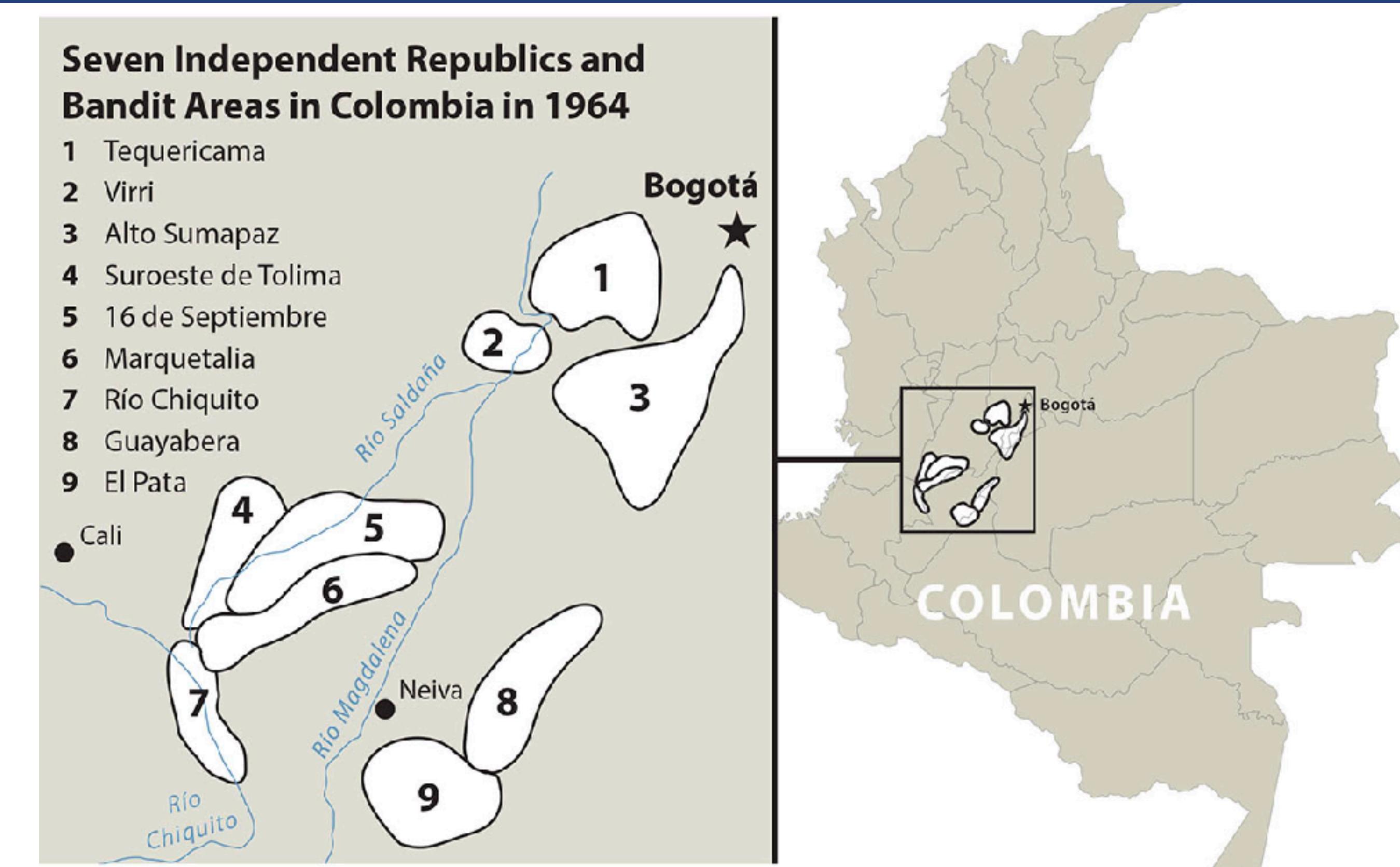
The conflict

The Cuban Revolution



Cold War + Cuban Revolution made many believe revolution via irregular warfare was **feasible**

In response: communists in 50s/60s (and others) organize peasant defense “enclaves” (mini-states)



In the 1950s: liberals and conservatives make pact – go after enclaves

The FARC



Enclaves destroyed; some flee into the mountains, form the FARC

Guerrillas and the land question

Peasants with nowhere to live
squat on private/public land

Legislation to redistribute land
thwarted or ignored by elites

Guerrillas help **organize**
land invasions, protect **squatters**



Why would guerrillas do this?

Fight over land

Greed?

vs.

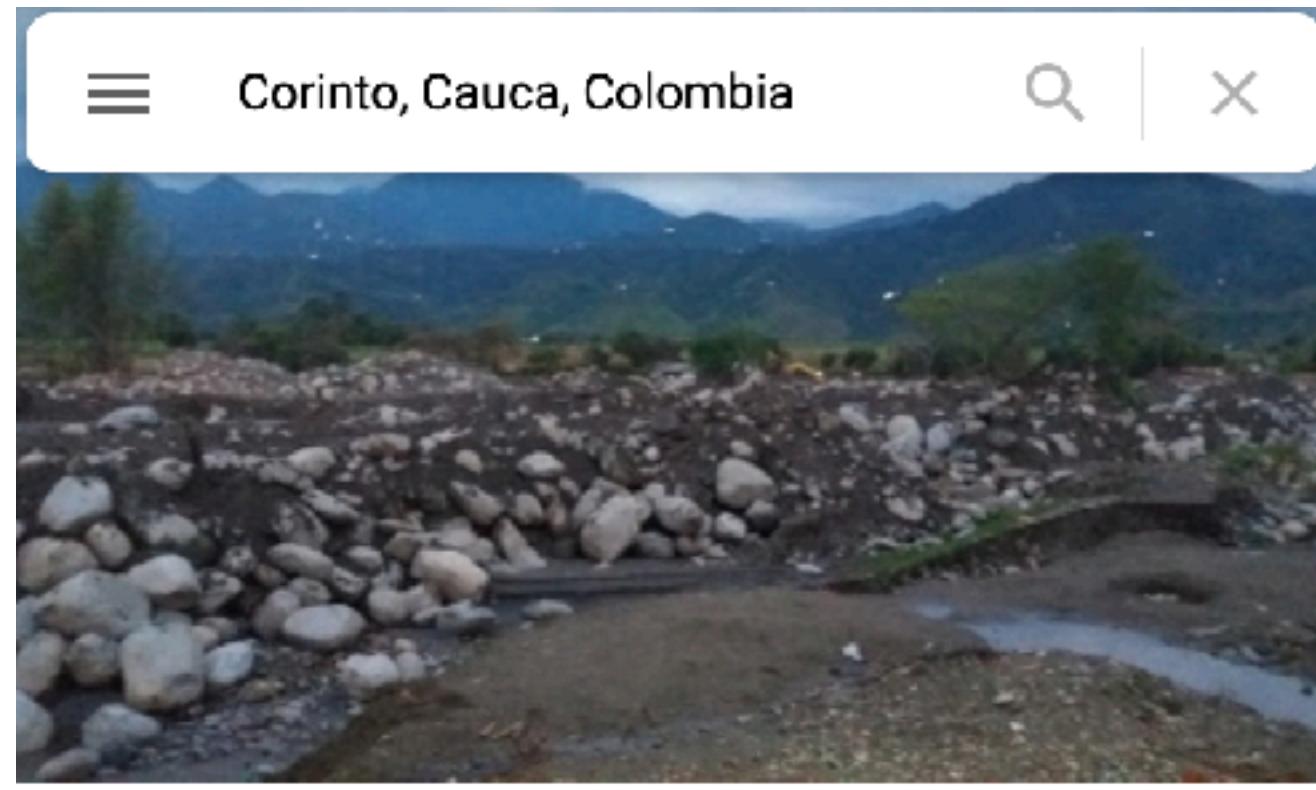
Grievance?

How could we tell?

Irregular war: 1970s-1980s



Groups swell in size; **control territory**; ambushes, extortion, kidnappings



Corinto

Cauca
Colombia

Cloudy · 76°F
11:54 AM



Directions



Save



Nearby



Send to your phone



Share

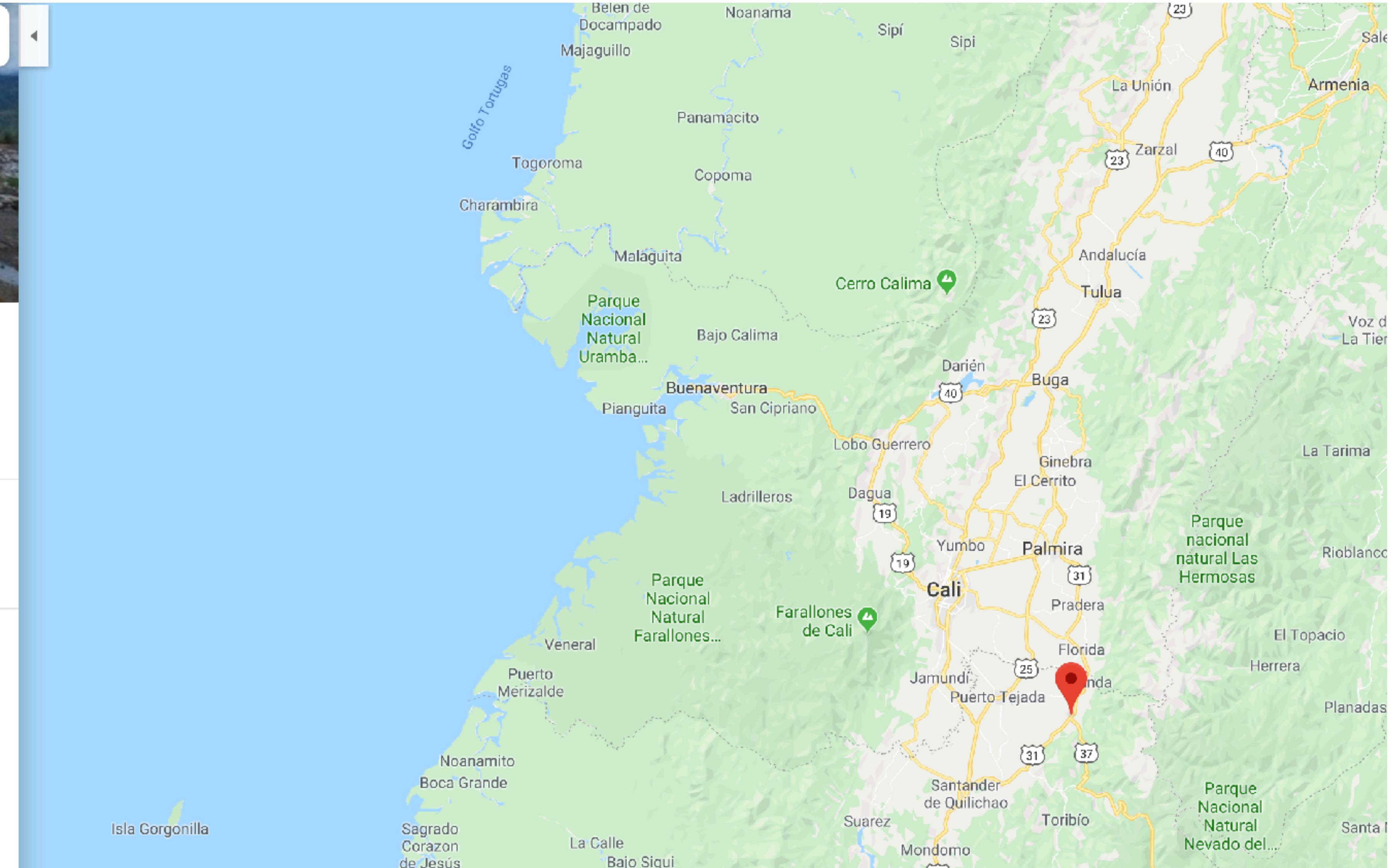
Photos



Photos



Photos



FARC dominated for 20-30 years



FARC (mostly) demobilize in 2016

Q: “You were here before and after the FARC. What has been the biggest change since they left?”

A: “*Social crime* (theft, murder, abuse, people cheating each other) is way up. Before, people would go to the FARC with these problems and [they] would punish criminals, without mercy. Now there is no one to fill that role and we have [low capacity].”



The (right-wing) paramilitaries

Small self-defense
Groups/militias to fight guerrillas

Received direct and indirect
support from state

What tradeoffs does
the state face here?



Paramilitaries

Blend of *formal* and *informal* base

Victims of the guerrillas

Drug traffickers

The military

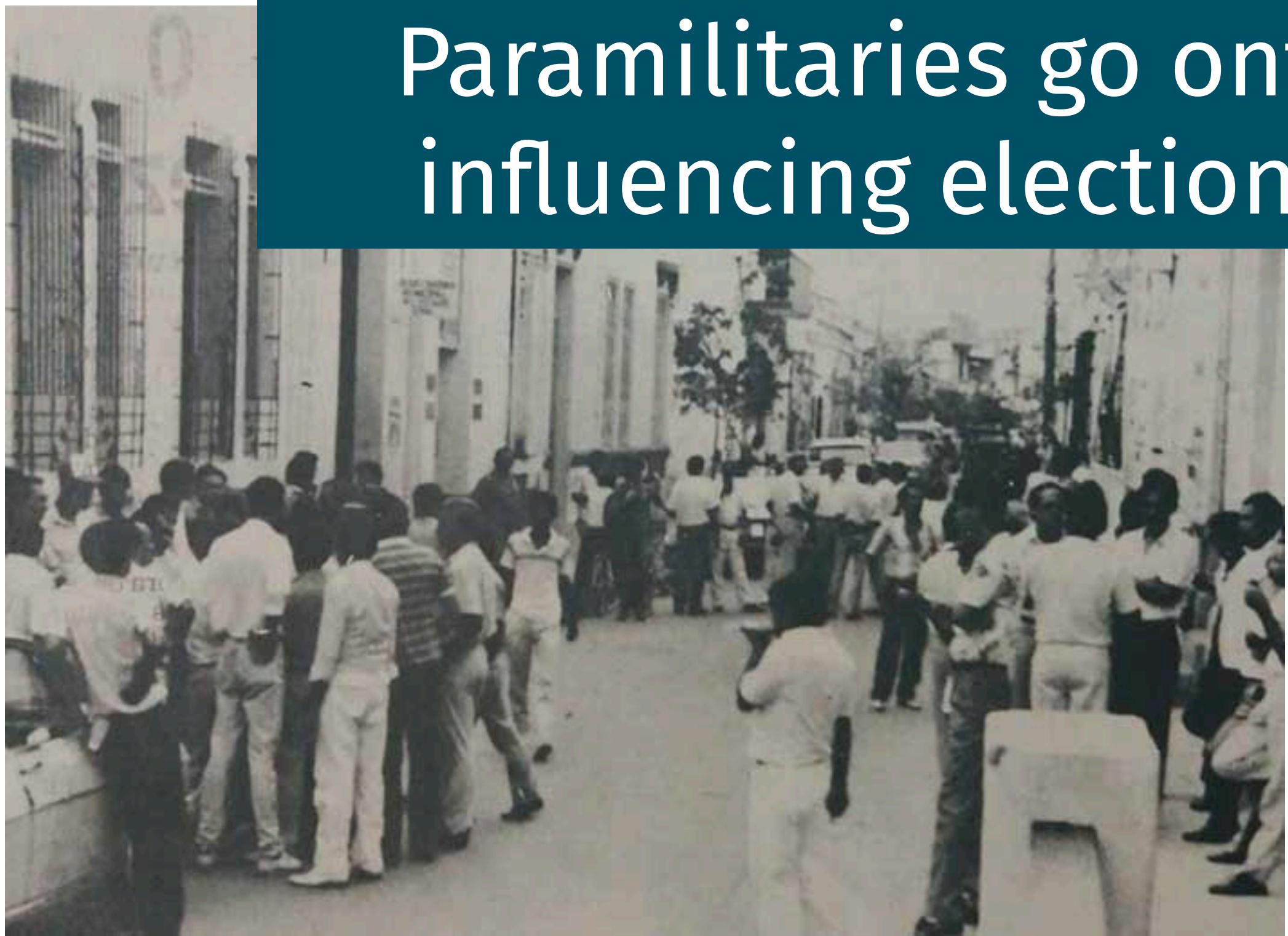
Reminder: militias can have their own agenda

Carlos Castaño,
Founder of largest paramilitary org



Paramilitary agendas

Paramilitaries go onto get involved in drug trade, influencing elections, threatening social leaders



1988: Colombia begins electing mayors,
Wave of violence against new parties



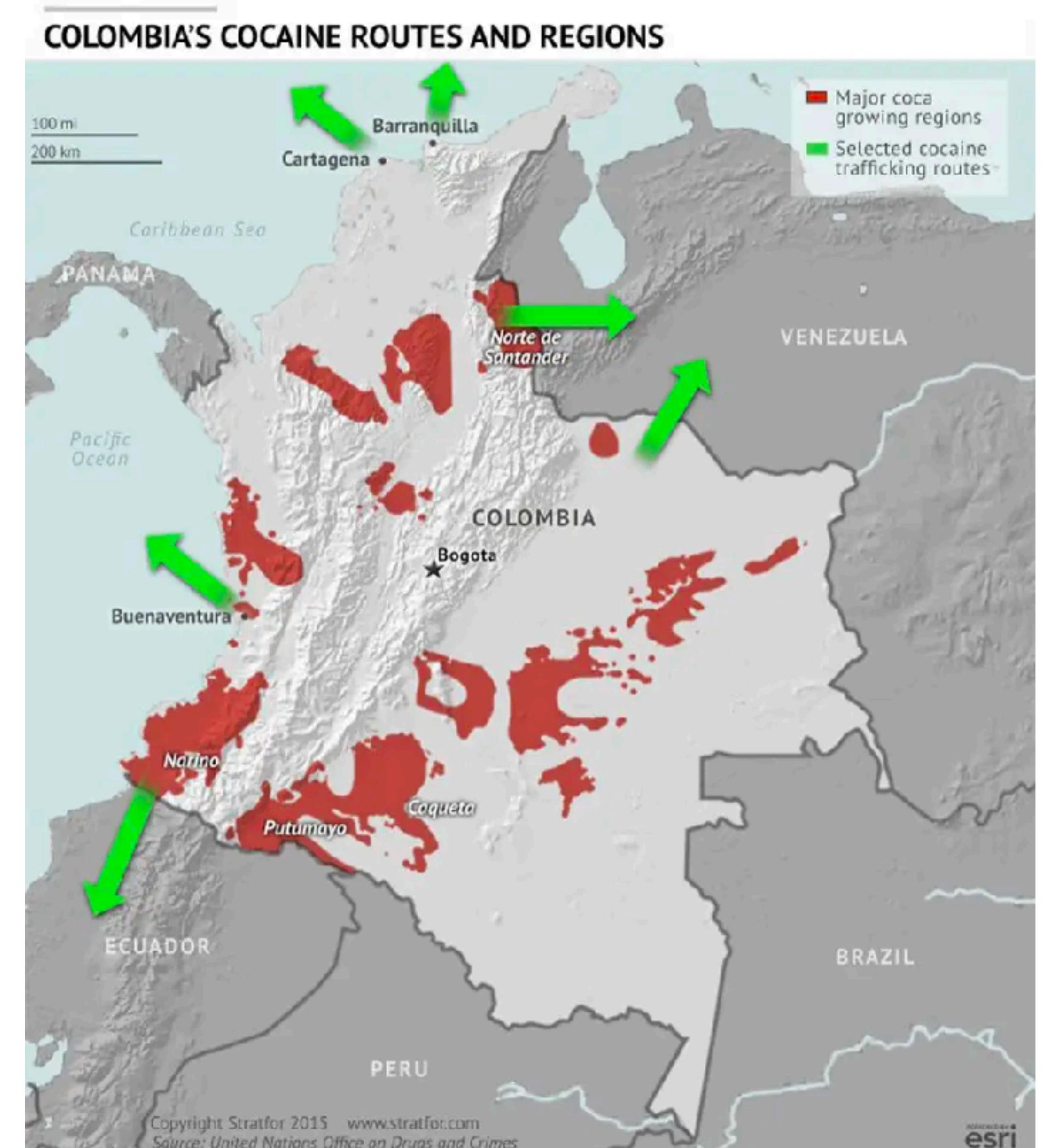
Protest against killing of social
leaders in Colombia

Fuel on the fire: coca trade

Colombia major source
of world's coca

In the 1980s, drug
trafficking cartels
become very powerful

Coca interacts with
conflict in particular ways



Coca and the conflict

At first: guerrillas extort / “protect”
drug traffickers (why them?)

Eventually: go from “guarding” fields
—> production (why?)

Conflict with cartels, paramilitaries
over coca – violence explodes



M-19 kidnap daughter
of the Ochoas

The 90s-2000s



FARC asks forgiveness for killing 79 in 2002 Bojaya massacre

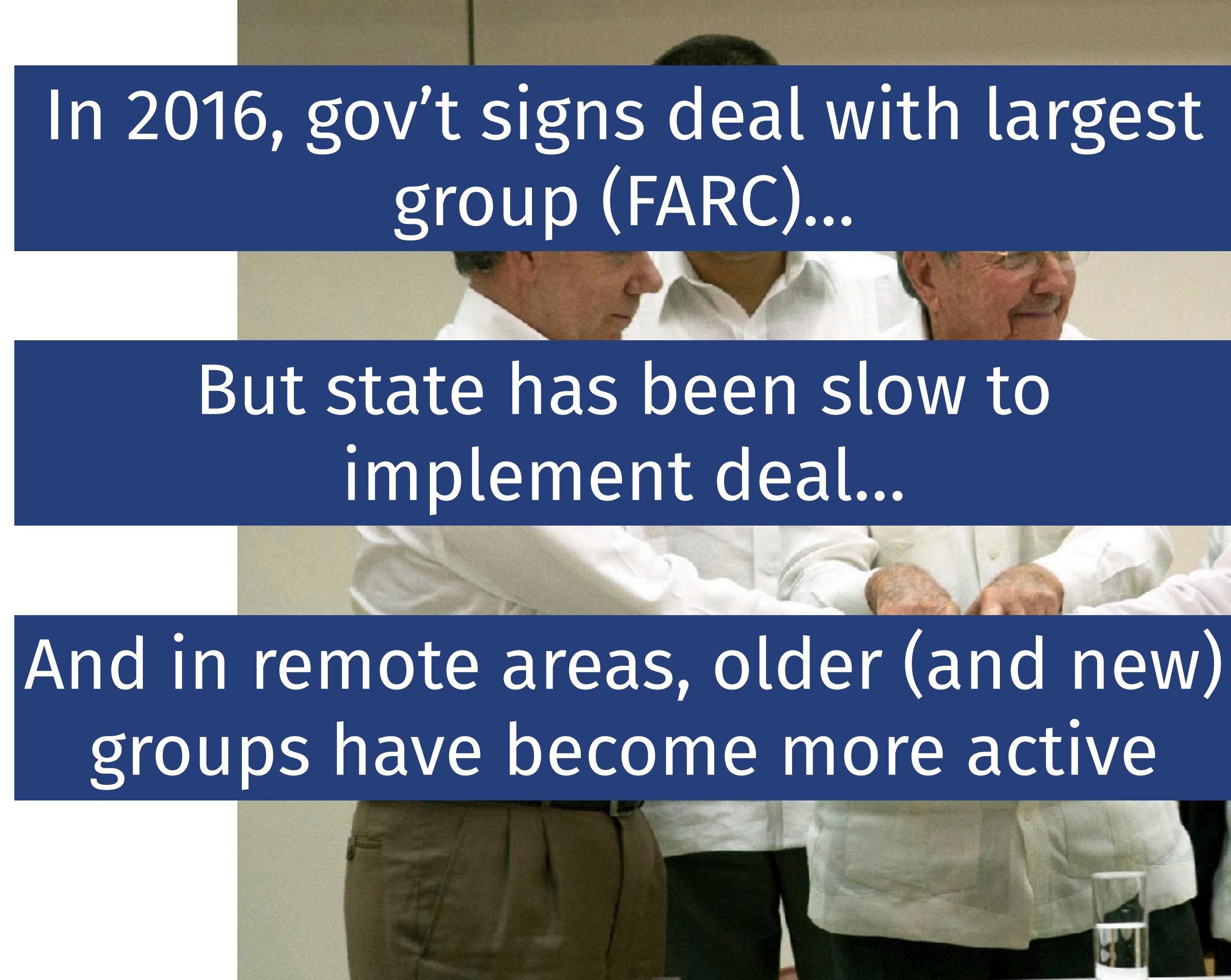
Adriaan Alsema · December 18, 2014 · 00



The church of Bojaya after the FARC massacre. (Image credit: ADN)

Massacres, bombings, assassinations

An uneasy “peace”



In 2016, gov't signs deal with largest group (FARC)...

But state has been slow to implement deal...

And in remote areas, older (and new) groups have become more active

Recap: the absent state

In some ways, Colombia is a story about
the **rule of law and state absence**

State is **absent or predatory** in rural areas,
cannot resolve social problems (**land**),
unwilling to regulate **coca**

Creates room for groups to **form, hold**
territory, contest resources

