



# Why civil war? Identity

POL 126

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Spring 2022

# TODAY

Identity and salience

Groups and competition

Ethnic conflict

# Identity and salience

# The Conflict in Northern Ireland

English have weak control of Ireland for centuries

1600s: Crown takes from Irish (Catholics) and gives to English/ Scottish Protestants in **Ulster**, violence follows

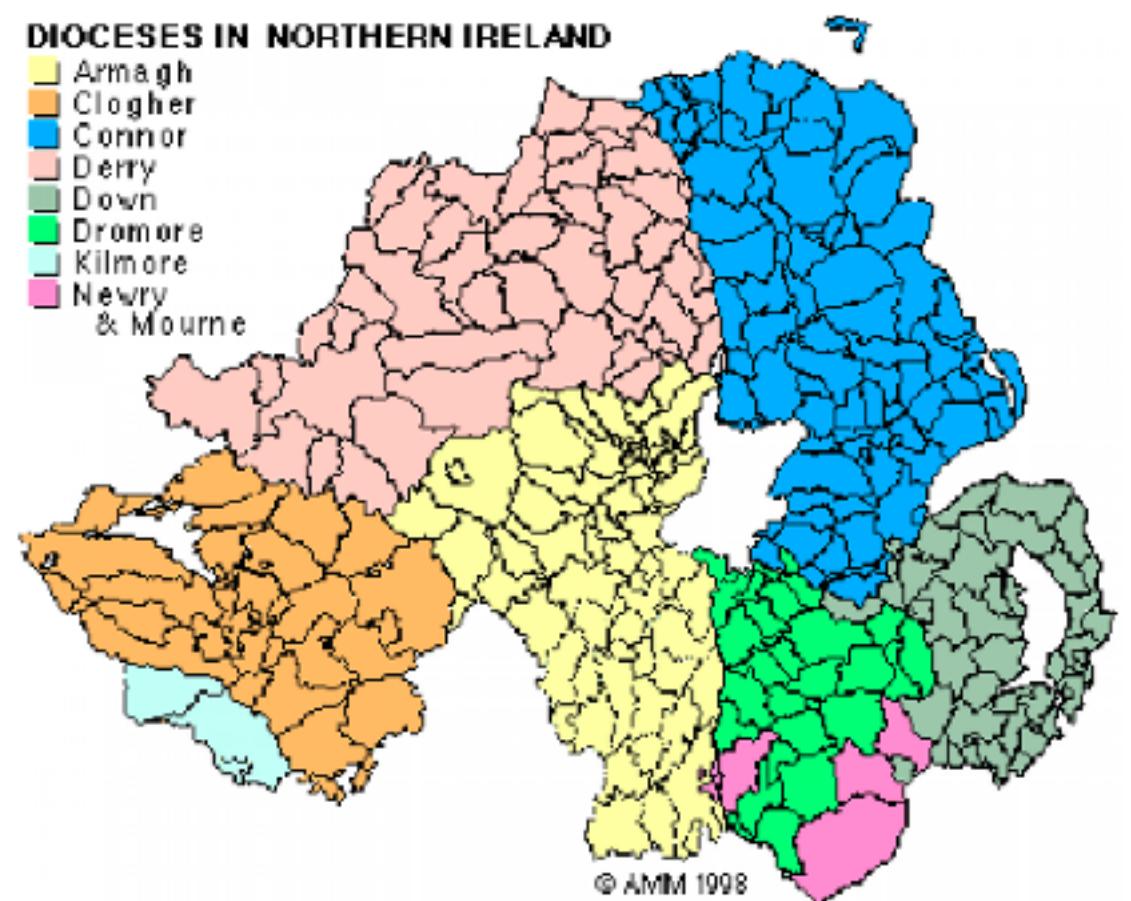
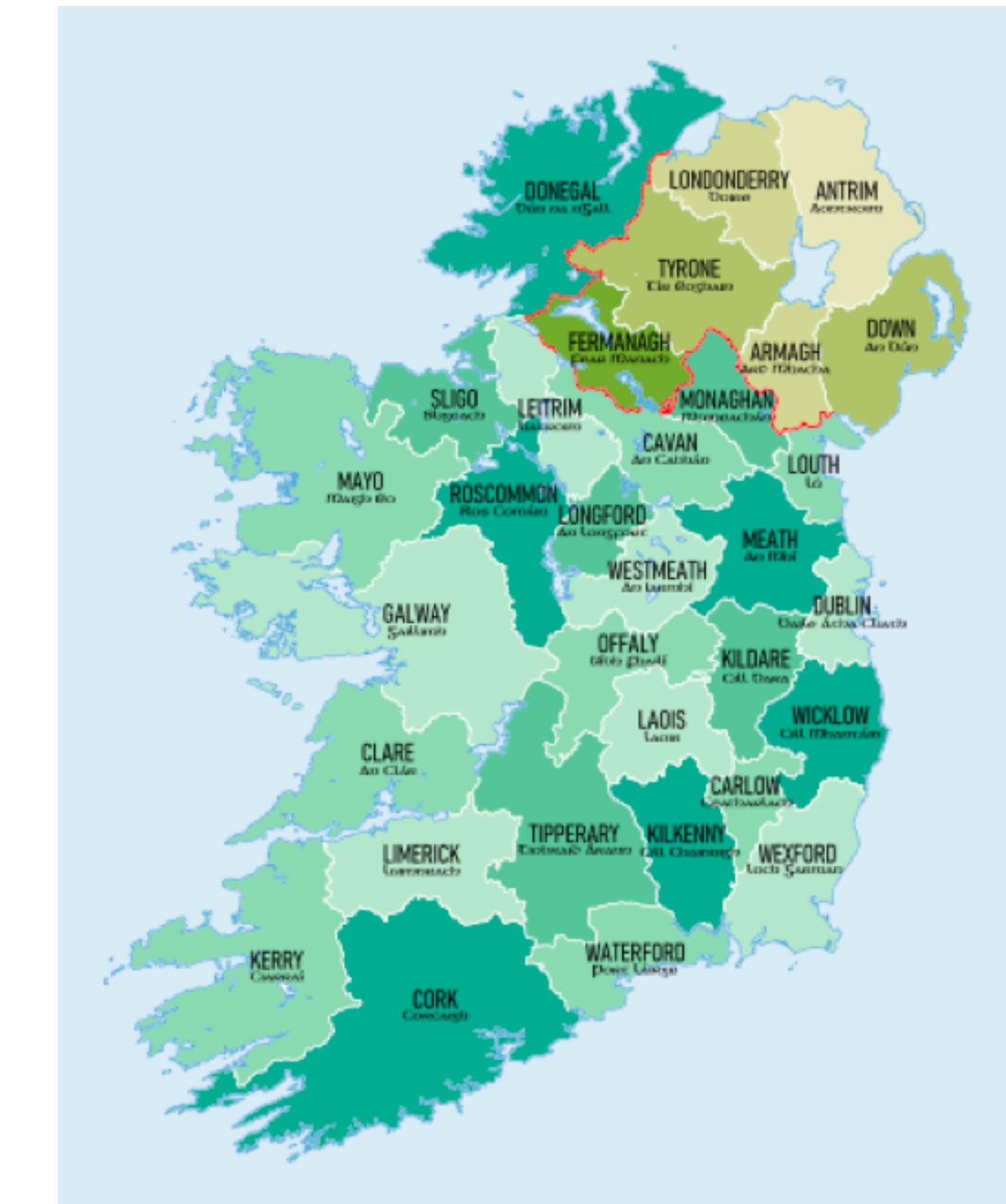
1916: Easter Rising, Irish Republicans war for independence



# Partition

1920s: Ireland gains independence

But **Ulster** to remain with England, and thus Northern Ireland is born



# Life in Northern Ireland

Catholics in Northern Ireland face discrimination:

- Housing
- Jobs
- Voting
- Police

Organize movement modeled after African-American civil rights movement (1960s)



# The Troubles (1968-1998)

Series of shootings, riots, bombings in Northern Ireland

Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA)

Ulster Defense Force and Ulster Volunteer Force

3,500 people died



# An end to the conflict?

1998 agreement brings end to conflict

Changes to government,  
civil rights legislation



Peace walls in Northern Ireland

# Maybe not...



## 'IRA' claims responsibility for Derry car bomb

Updated / Tuesday, 29 Jan 2019 13:28



Bomb detonated outside the courthouse in Derry on 19 January



# Derry Girls

4  
Comedy

# Identity exercise

Write down 5 key identities  
("Categories" you share with others)

Now cross out the one that matters least

Cross another off

And another

Yup, one more

# In groups

What's in your top 5? What was most important in the end?  
Any patterns?

Can you imagine picking something else if you lived in a different state, or country?

If your top identity was under attack would you feel the need to defend?

# Identity and salience

We all have identities that link us to broader **groups**

But they don't all matter to us much; at least not all the time

The extent to which an identity is important is its **salience**

How do identities become more/less **salient**?

# Salience and grievances

Is being a **minority** group enough?



Economic/social oppression → salience

# Not just the poor

Salience can increase when benefit to **group-level** demands



Catalonia  
wealthiest part of Spain



Santa Cruz department in Bolivia  
~30% of National GDP

# In general

*“Competition for resources can heighten ethnic tensions for both more prosperous groups, who may desire to **secede to insulate themselves from the redistributive demands by others**, and less prosperous groups, who **may prefer [redistribution]**”*

Lake (2017)

# Groups and competition

# Competition and salience

**Herders:** mobile cattle-ranchers,  
need to graze

**Farmers:** stationary, need land for crops

Laws banning **grazing** in the North, violence, &  
bad climate have pushed herders South



# Land conflicts and violence

Herder accidentally (or maybe not?) **grazing** on farmer land

**Sporadic** fights, murders as herders graze on farmer's land  
But today we see **planned** attacks and **militias**

Land conflicts have turned into a **Christian vs. Muslim** thing, why?

Herders tend to be **Muslim**  
Farmers tend to be **Christian**



# Security dilemma in Nigeria

Rumors of scattered cases of **herders**, from **the North**, killing farmers

Government absent

How do farmers respond?

Organize, arm for **self-defense** with other **Southern** farmers

How is this **perceived** by herders?

**Outcome:** mobilized and armed groups along ethnic lines

# Posen's Security Dilemma

Under state of anarchy (no state),  
Groups provide own protection

Steps taken to protect group (e.g., arming)  
perceived as **threatening** to other groups,  
even if intention is **defensive**

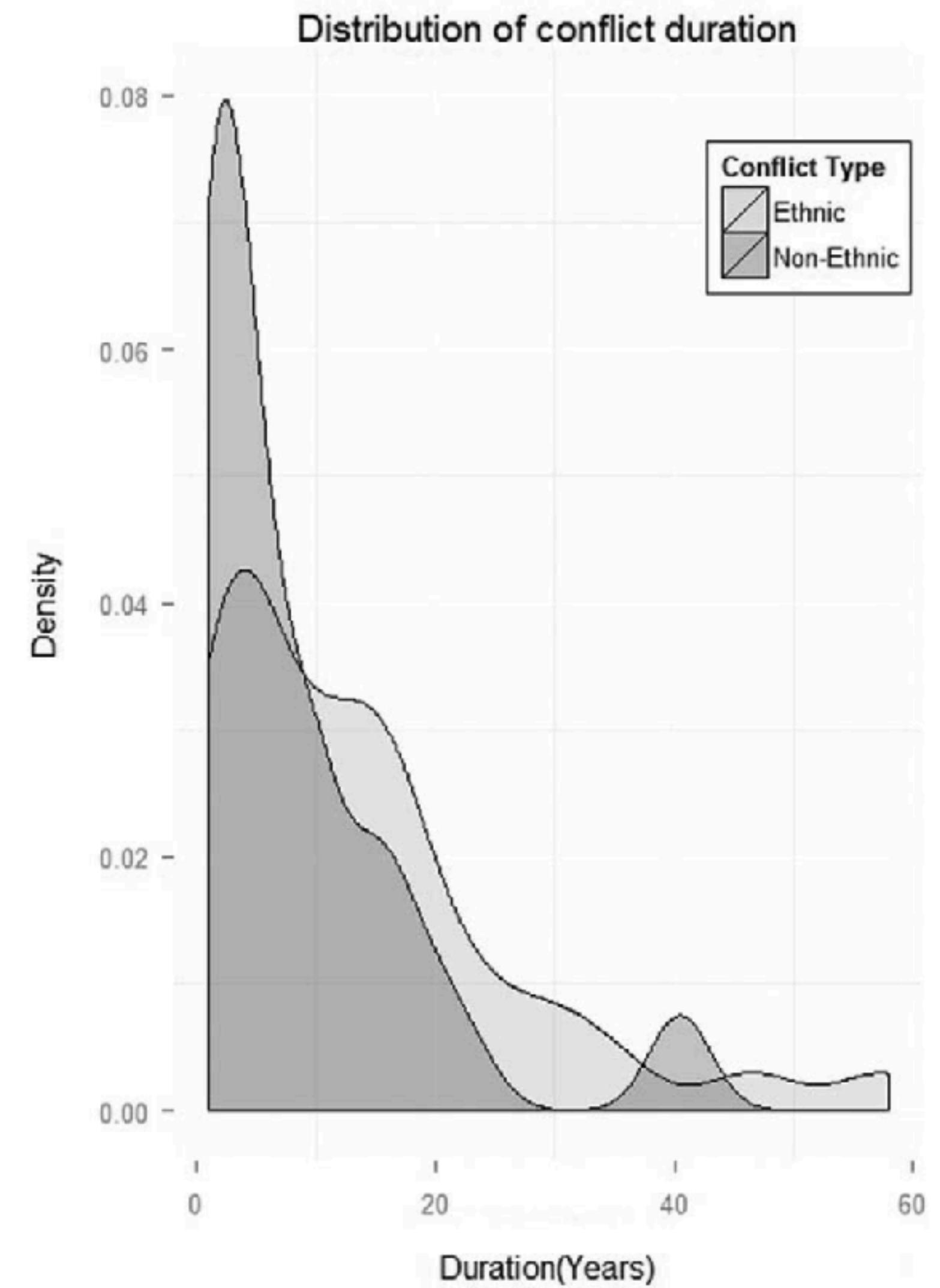
The **security dilemma** – steps to improve own security create  
reactions that ultimately make you less secure

# Ethnic conflict

# Ethnic conflict

How are ethnic conflicts different from non-ethnic conflicts?  
(Walter and Denny)

What makes ethnic groups particularly good at mobilization?



# Groups and mobilization

Imagine I agree to curb final exam so that top student gets 100% (e.g., top student has a 90 → + 10% for everyone)

Loophole: if everyone gets **same grade** → everyone gets curve → everyone gets 100%

How difficult would it be to coordinate on loophole?

Imagine I instead curved **within** fraternity/sorority; easier!  
Why?

# Costly (in-group) cooperation

Renters, landlords,  
chiefs

Tribe of renter  $\neq/\neq$  tribe of  
landlord  $\rightarrow$  **higher rent**

Flipside – charging **less** to  
“in-group”  
**(Costly cooperation)**

Figure II: Distribution of Household Tribes in Kibera

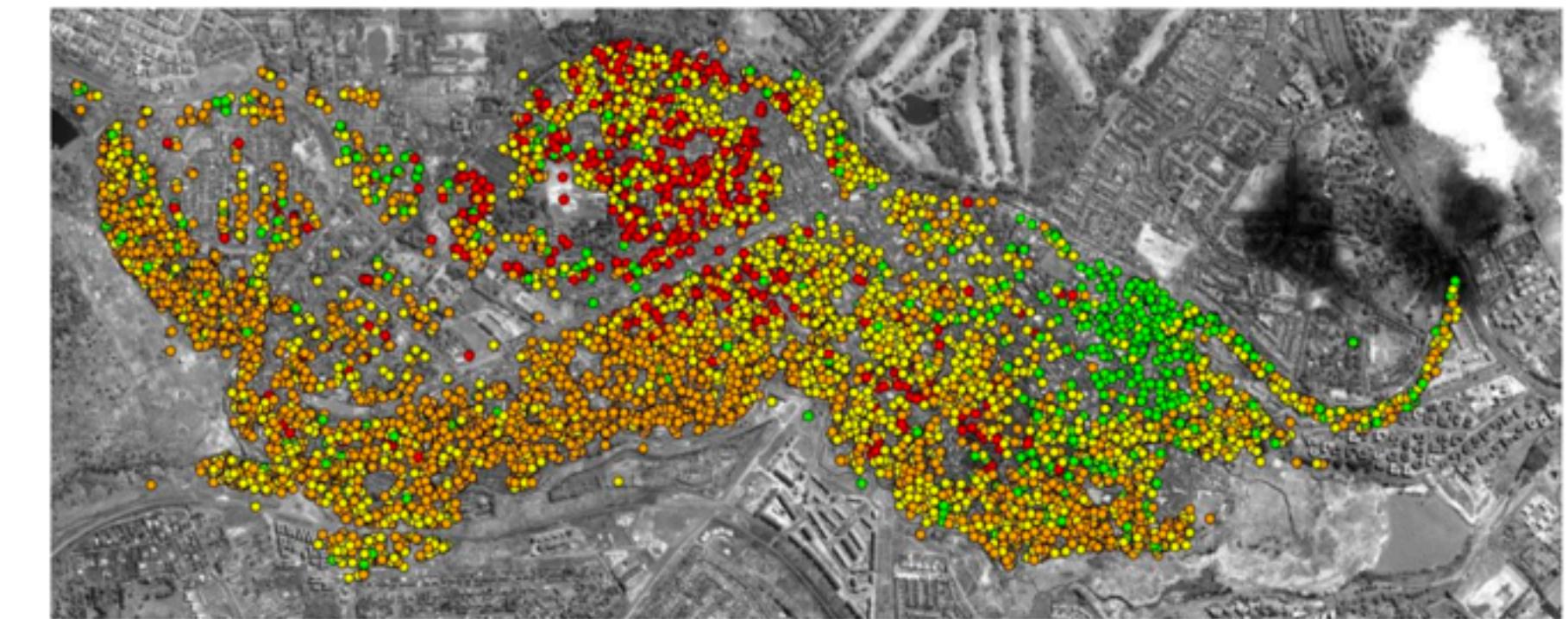
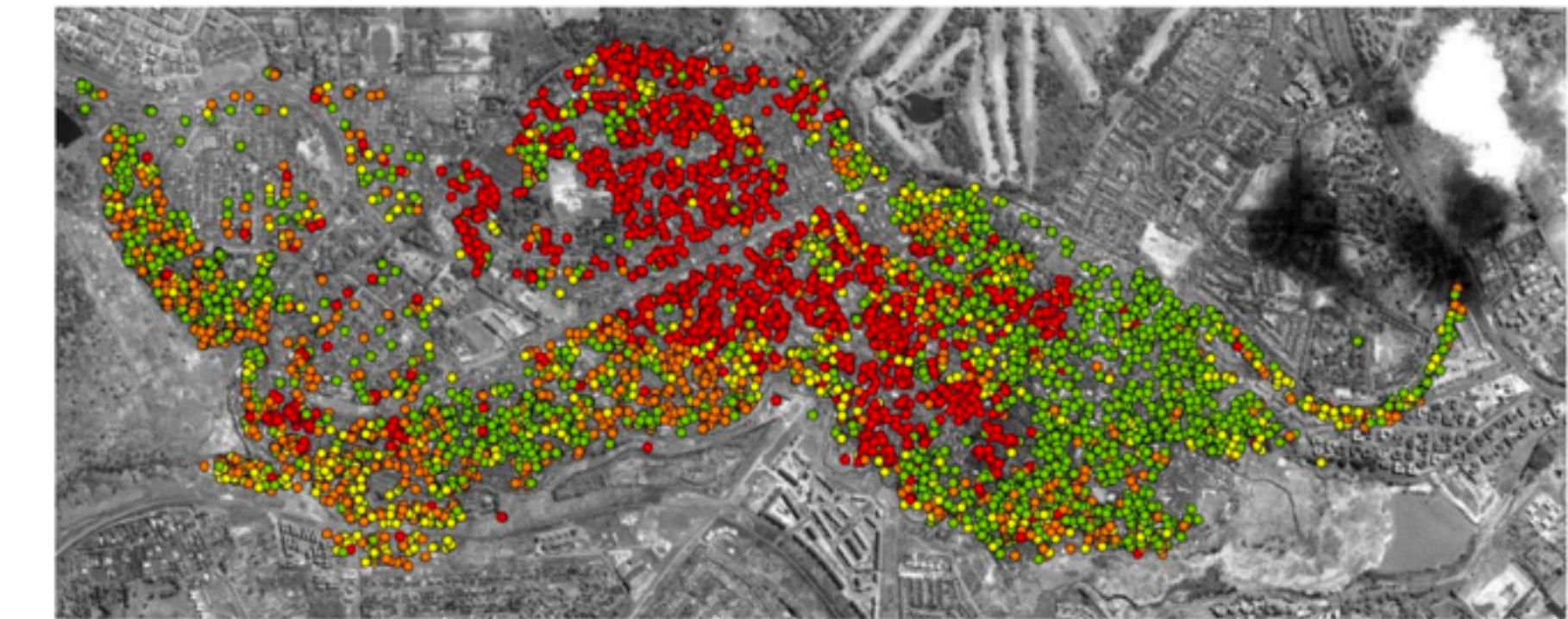


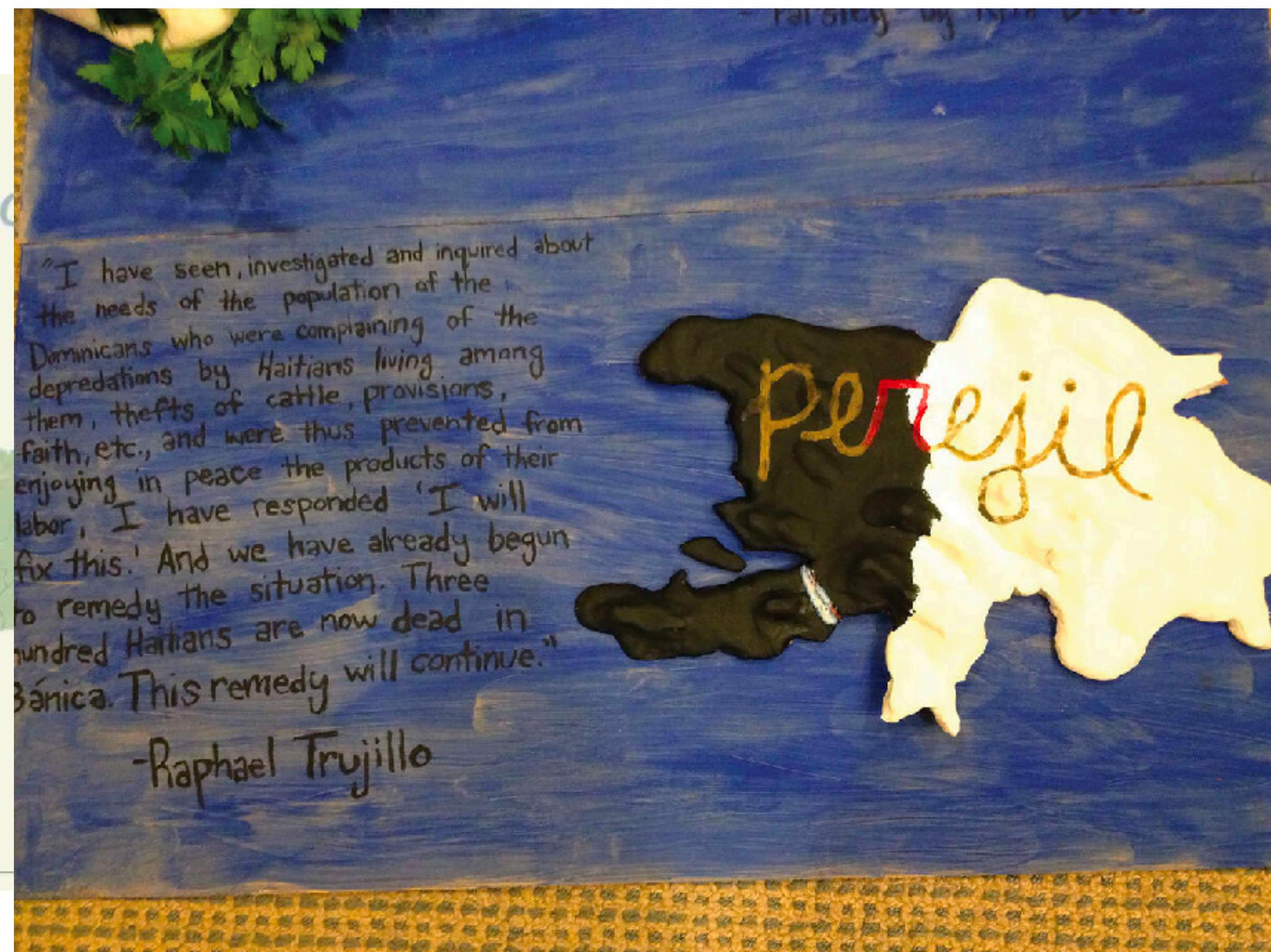
Figure III: Distribution of Landlord Tribes in Kibera



Satellite imagery of Kenyan slum  
Stoker et al (2014)

# Groups and identification

(Even very subtle) ethnic markers, customs, etc., make in-group members easier to identify



# Ethnic mobilization

Ethnicity provides basis for commonality, social networks

**Reciprocity** of good behavior and **punishment** of “shirkers”  
easier *within* groups

**Ease of identification** (harder to hide or mimic)

Lower **barriers** to collective action

# Ethnic grievances

(Colonial) division of power  
along ethnic lines – **grievances**



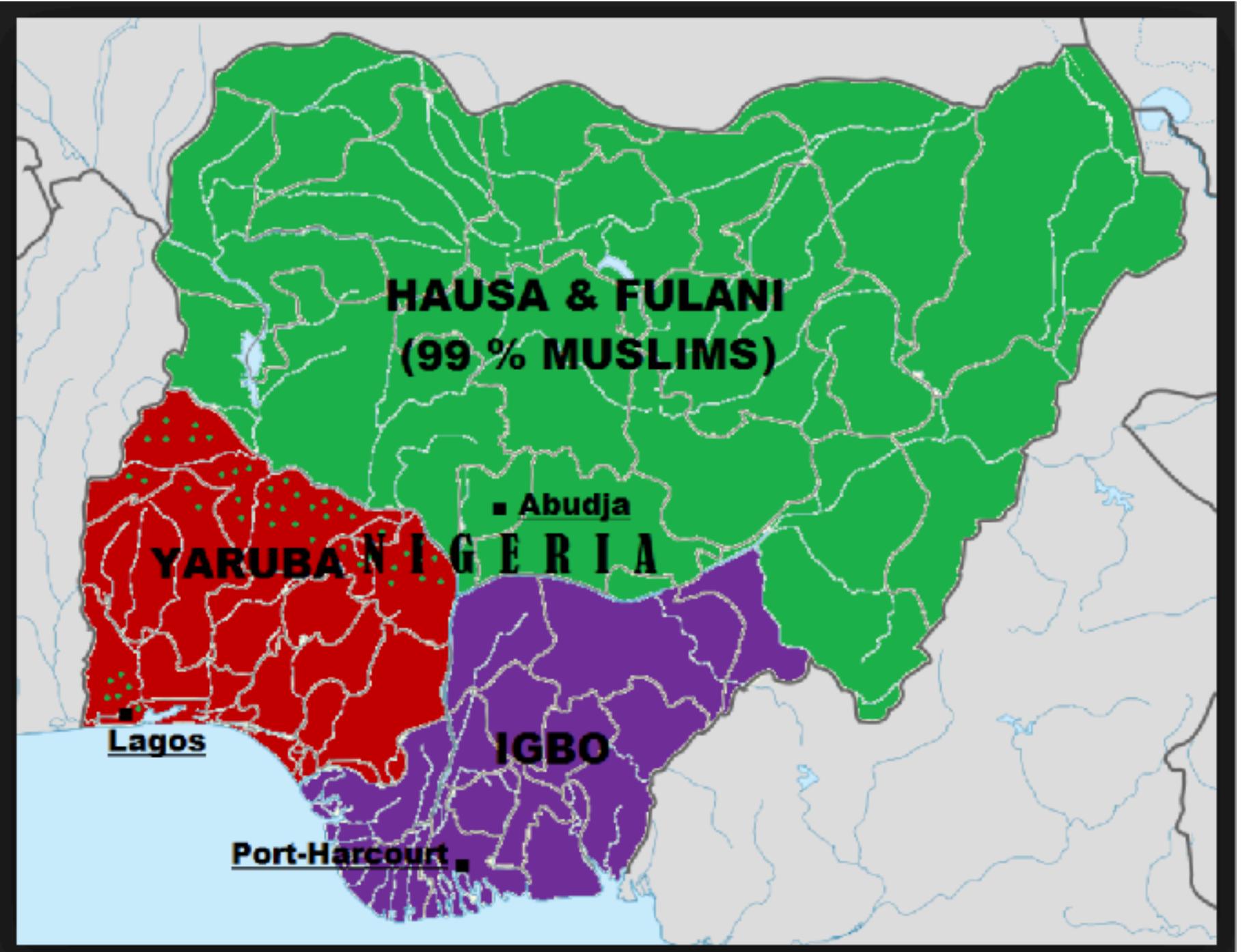
Scramble for Africa  
Yinka Shonibare

# Nigeria

British empower **Hausa** at  
expense of Yaruba and Igbo

Igbo pursue independence —  
Biafra War

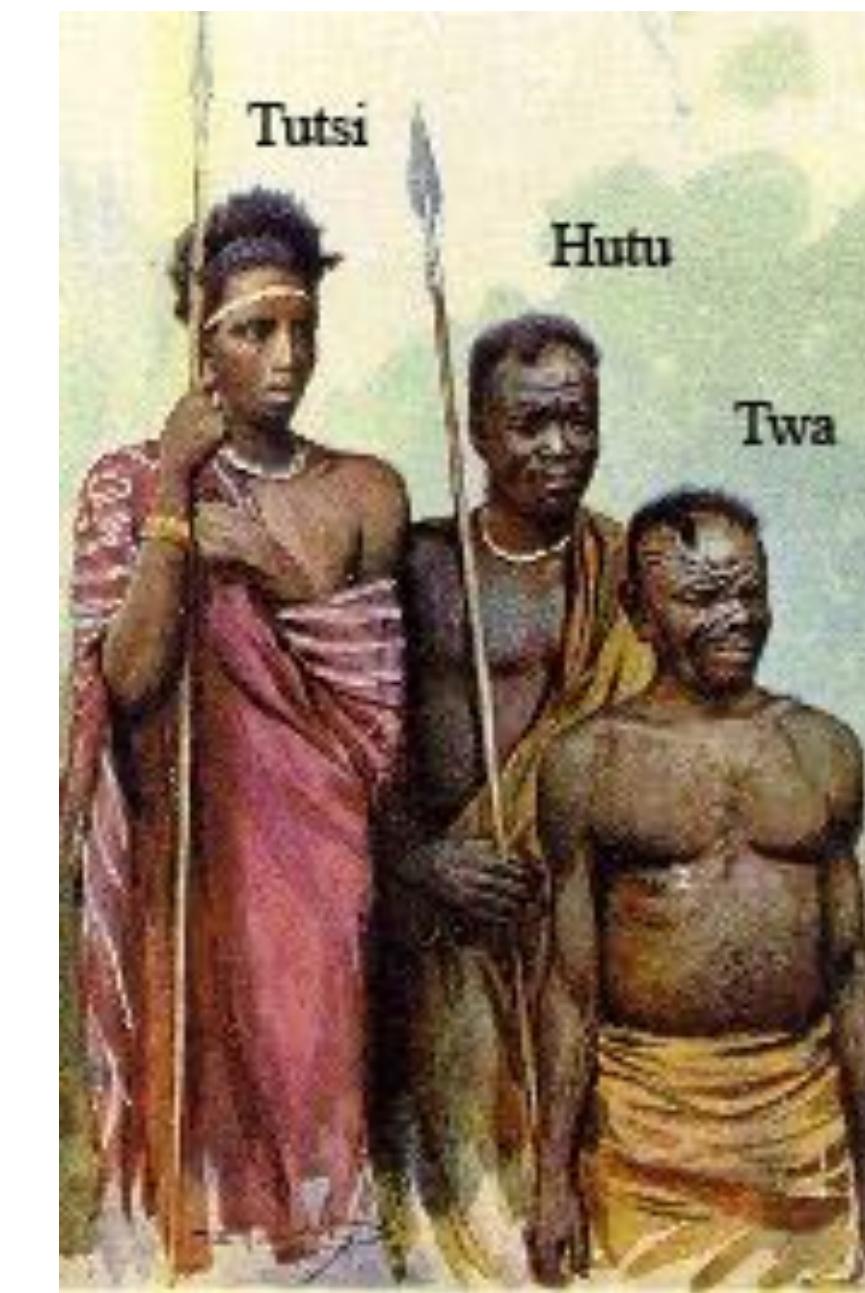
You should read: *Half of a  
Yellow Sun*



# Belgians in Rwanda

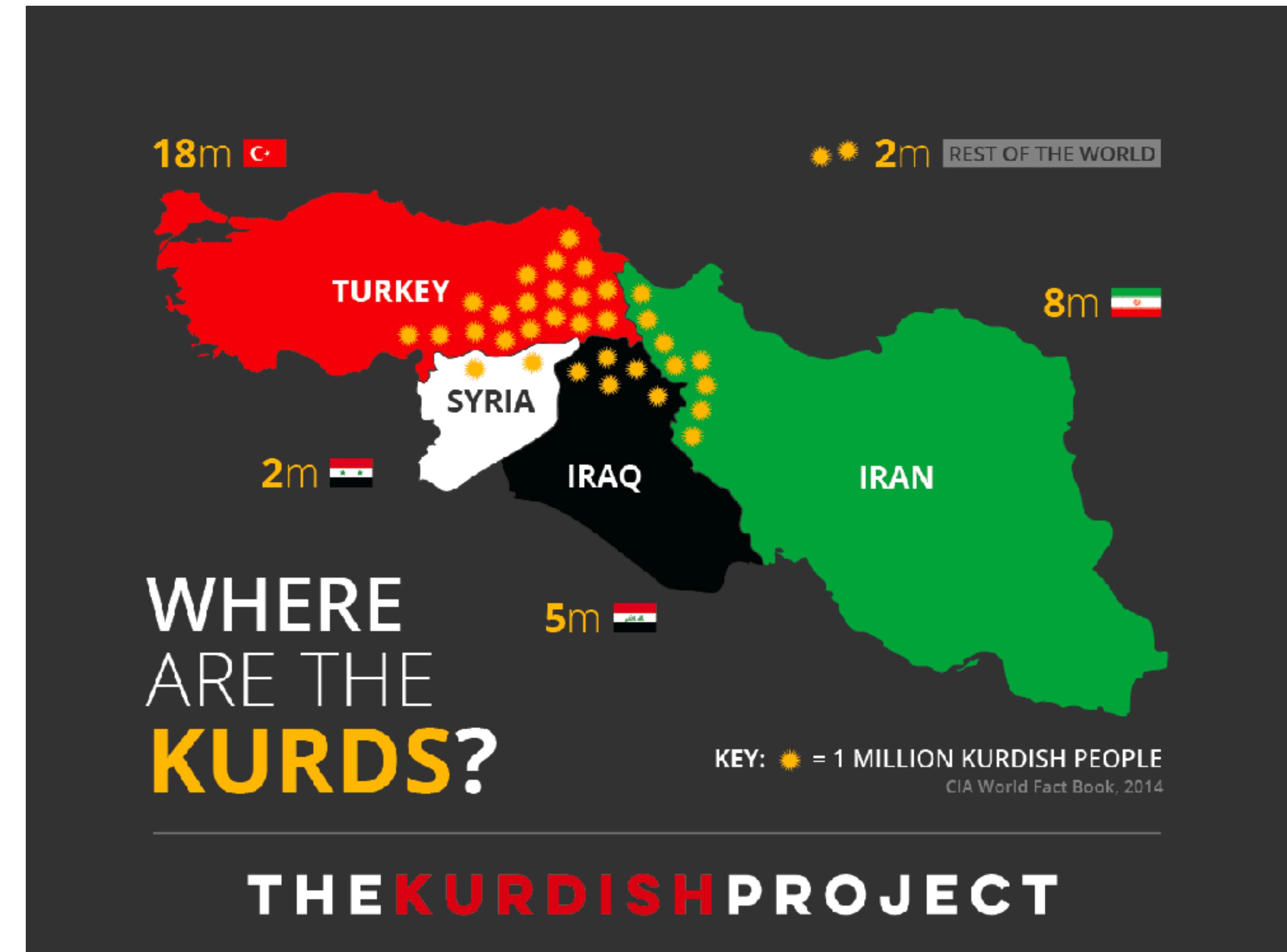
Germans/Belgians empower  
**Tutsi** (based on bizarre race  
science)

Genocide of **Tutsi, Twa** by  
Hutu once latter in control of  
military



# The Kurds

Group split among multiple countries – **vulnerable minority** in each + desire for unity



# Colonial strategy

Why empower **one** group?  
And why so often a **minority**?

Colonists want to prevent  
**coordination** and enhance  
**divisions**  
("divide and conquer")

How colonists ruled – effect  
on conflict today

# The effects of colonial rule

## The French



⬆ cultural assimilation  
(Language, history, etc.)

**Centralized rule**  
(Replace local elites w/ French)



## The English



⬇ cultural assimilation

**Decentralized rule**  
(Use local elites as administrators)



Which colonies experienced more conflict after independence? And why?

# Colonial style

English colonies **more likely**  
to experience conflict

Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict  
in Africa\*

ROBERT BLANTON, T. DAVID MASON & BRIAN  
ATHOW

*Department of Political Science, University of Memphis*

English – old/trad elites retain power →  
easier to coordinate

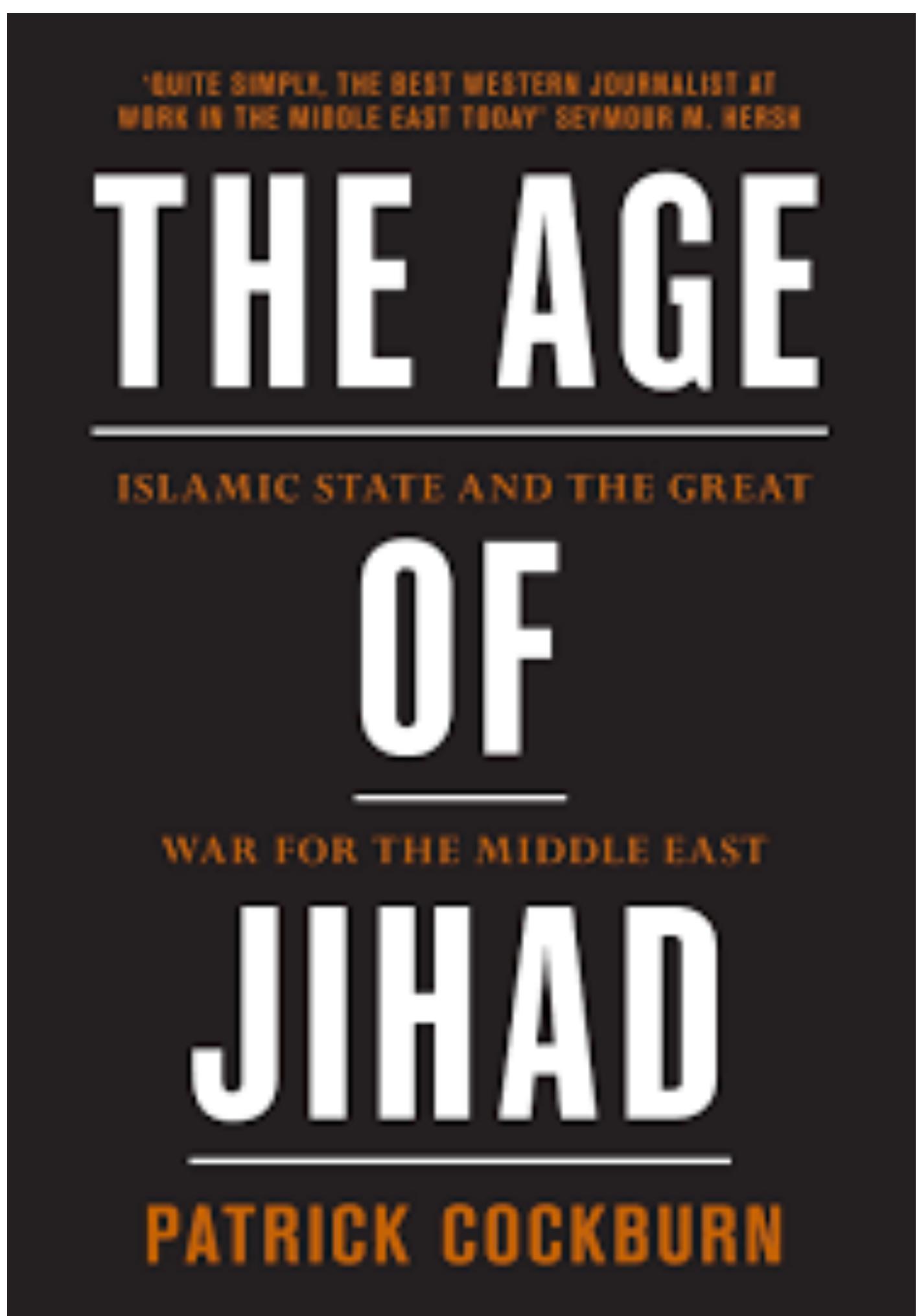
French – old/trad elites replaced/  
assimilated → harder to coordinate

Ability to coordinate is subtle but **key**

# Cockburn in Iraq

Journalist reporting from  
Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria

*Age of Jihad* – diary of his  
time in Iraq



# Cockburn on regime change in Iraq

Sunni-Shi'a relations in Iraq – always bad?

How did the British rule Iraq? How popular was Saddam Hussein?

How did US want to rule Iraq? What would happen if elections were held – why was US nervous about this?

How did US occupation exacerbate tensions?

# Ethnicity: motive or mean?

