



Why civil war? Greed

POL 126

Prof. Juan Tellez
Spring 2022

2002 Iraqi presidential election



← 1995

October 16, 2002



Nominee [Saddam Hussein](#)

Party Ba'ath Party

Alliance NPF

Popular vote 11,445,638

Percentage 100%

**President before
election** [Elected President](#)
Saddam Hussein

Ba'ath Party

TODAY

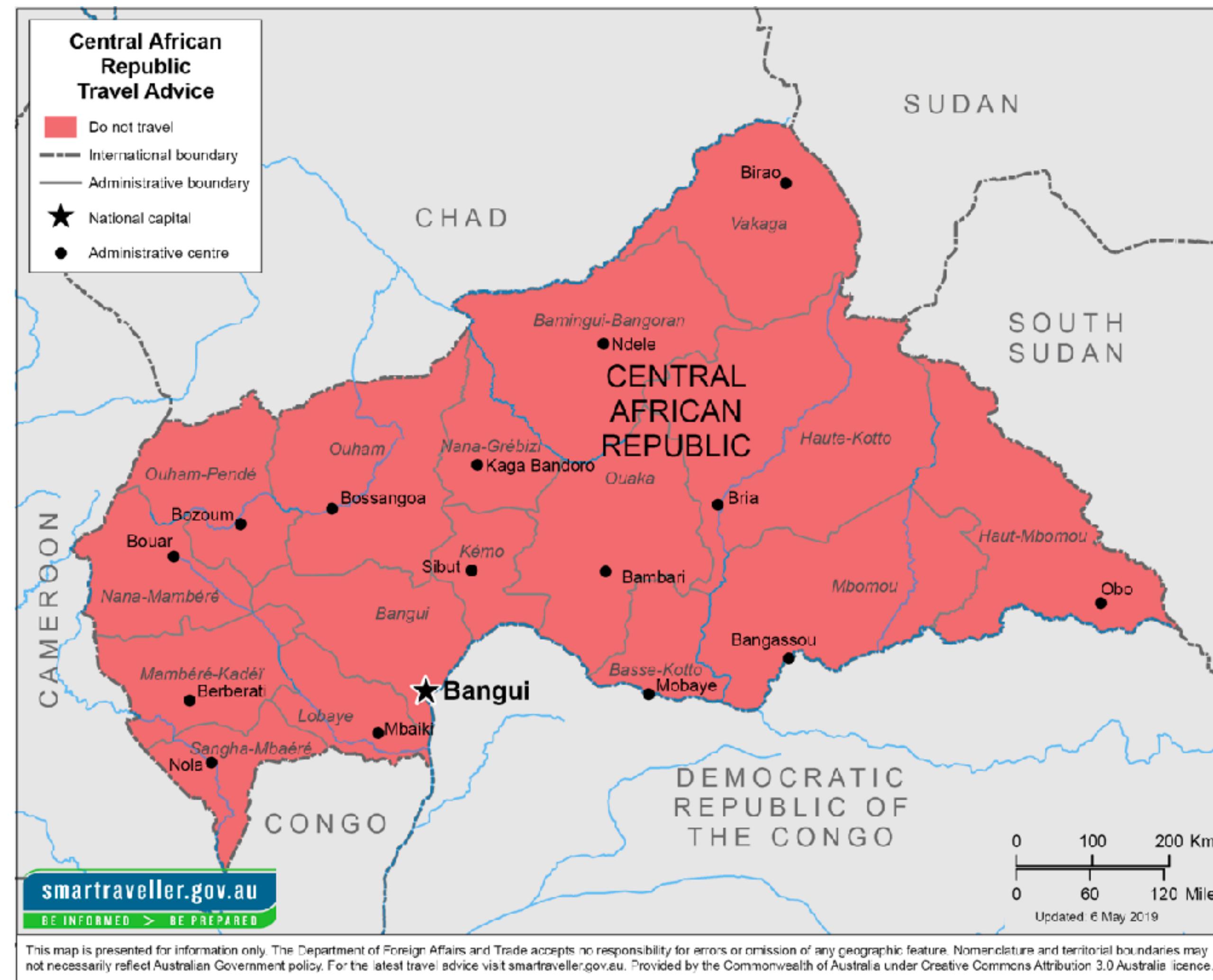
The greed and grievance debate

Resources and conflict

Political economy of conflict

Greed and grievance

Central African Republic



Mineral conflict in the CAF



“New” civil wars

Scholars woke up in the 90s and thought wars looked different

Small groups, unclearly defined

Seemingly no ideology

Heavy involvement in **resource extraction**

Compare CAF to Peru



Rebel motives

E 1		
OLD	W V	
<i>Old Civil Wars</i>		<i>New Civil Wars</i>
Causes & motivation	collective sense of grievance broad popular support contrary to state's policies	private loot lack of popular support gratuitous violence
Support		
Violence		



What truly motivates rebels? Is it **grievances**?
Or “**greed**”?

Greed and grievance in civil war

By Paul Collier* and Anke Hoeffler†

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What do Collier and Hoeffler claim about the **causes** of civil wars?

How do they **back up** their claims?

The pivot

Grievances are common but civil wars are **rare**

More fruitful to focus on factors
that make rebellion **possible**

Huge interest in **resources** and
their effect on rebellion

Resources and conflict

Resources and conflict

Resources
facilitate rebellion

Resources
motivate rebellion

Means to an end

End in itself

Fund a broader political
agenda

Organize solely to extract
rents

Rebellion as crime

Conceptualize rebellion as a kind of criminal enterprise



Illegal timber in Cambodia



Oil extraction in Niger Delta



Coca in Colombia

Rebellion as crime

Decision to wage war as a cost-benefit calculation

Civil wars will take place when there is **stuff worth stealing + opportunity to steal**

People will organize into groups to extract those resources, much like **criminal orgs**

The cost-benefit calculus

General

Examples

Benefits?

Opportunity?

Value of good
(rents)

Lootability

State power

Gold, oil (?),
diamonds (?),
timber

Weak states,
terrain, markets

Rents: no “wheat wars”

TABLE 1

Highly-value resources fuel conflict

Natural resource	Selection criteria
Gold	Conflict literature, unit value
Diamonds	Conflict literature, unit/lootability of some types value
Gemstones	Conflict literature, unit value, lootability
Chromite (chromium)	Unit value, strategic resource
Tantalite (coltan: tantalum and columbium)	Conflict literature, unit value, strategic resource
Oil	Conflict literature, economic value
Natural gas	Conflict literature
Timber (types not yet specified)	Conflict literature, unit value of some types, lootability
Drugs	Conflict literature, unit value, illicit commodity
Oil pipelines	Conflict literature

Lootability

Not all resources are created equal
when it comes to war

Resource **characteristics** make
them more or less **lootable**

Lootable – ease of access +
fungibility to cash

Ease of access: diamonds

What's the difference between “primary” and “secondary” diamonds?

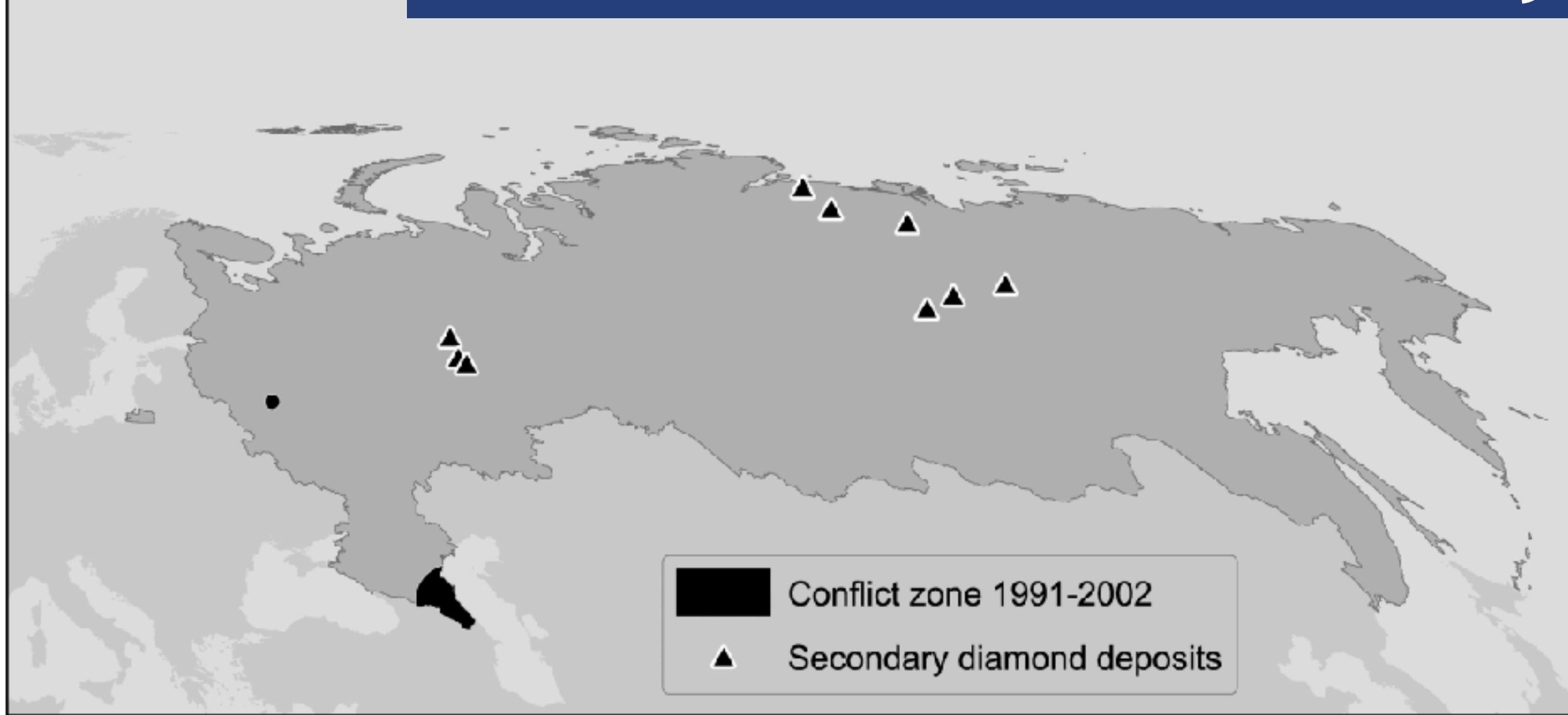


FIGURE 4 Conflict and secondary diamond deposits in Russia. Sources: The sources are the same as for Figure 3.

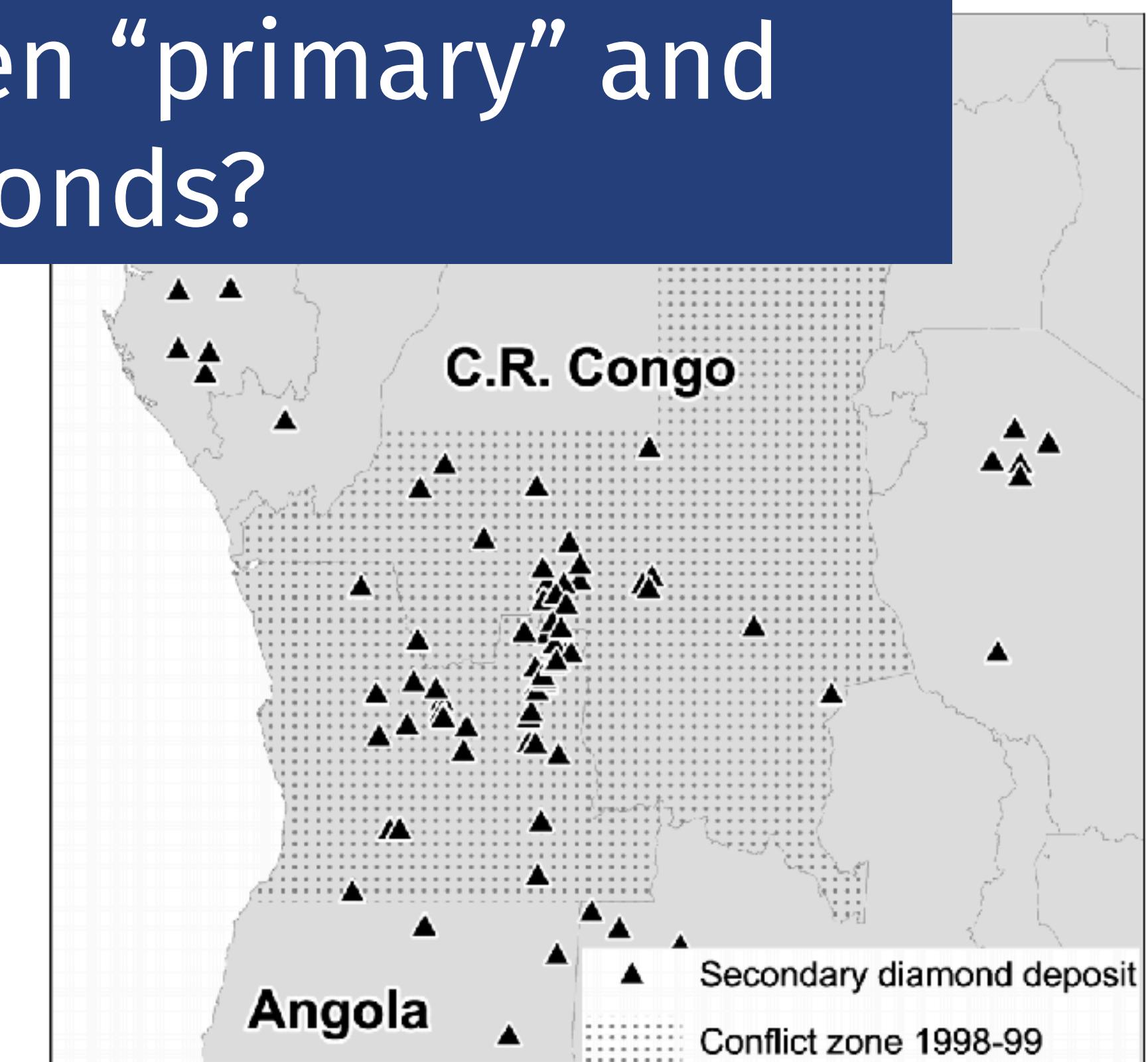
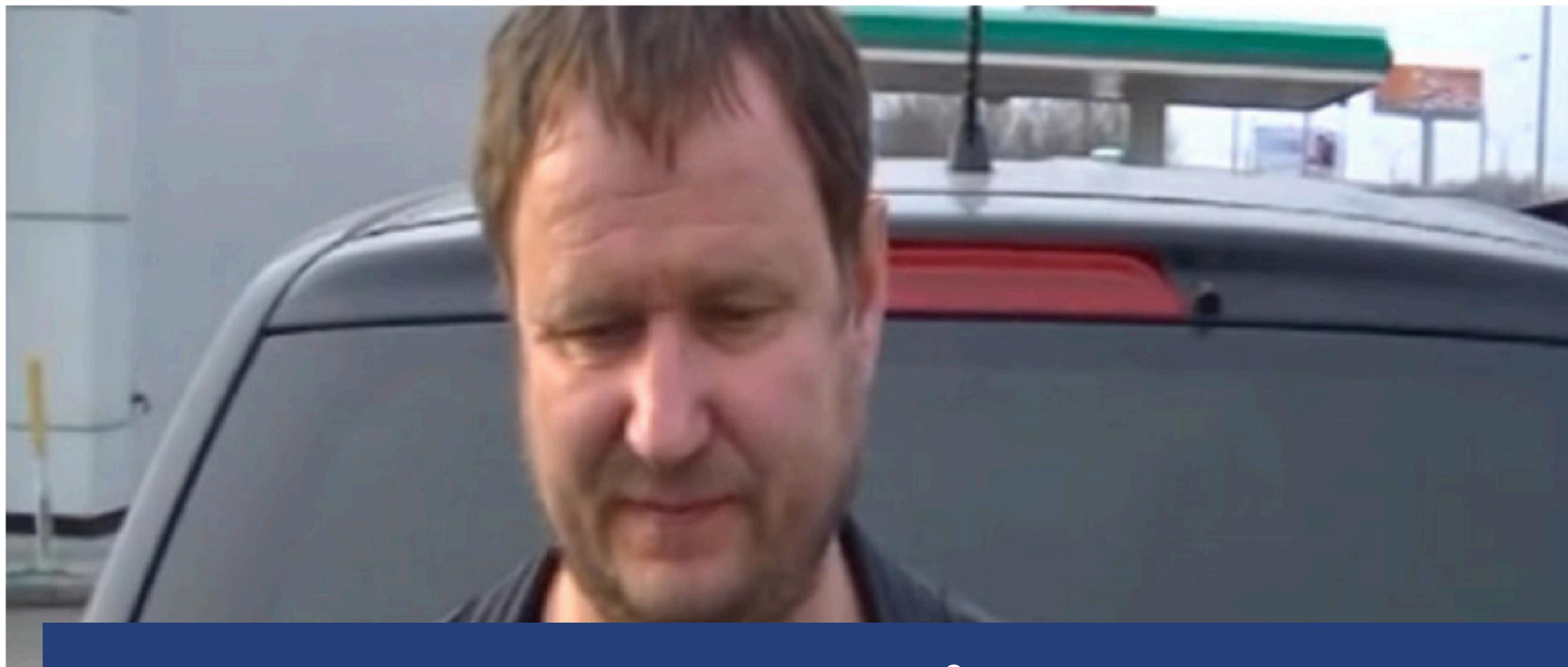


FIGURE 3 Conflicts and secondary diamond deposits 1998–1999 in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Source for the diamond data: Gilmore et al. (2005). For the conflict zones: unpublished data collected by Halvard Buhaug. For an earlier version using circular conflict zones, see Buhaug and Gates (2002) and the conflict data posted on www.prio.no/cscw/ArmedConflict.

Opportunity: weak states

Russian Gangster Jailed for Contract Killings in 1990s 'Aluminum Wars'

By [Peter Spinella](#)
April 27, 2015



A weak or **collapsing** state –
lootability increases

Controlling workers

A REPORTER AT LARGE MAY 31, 2021 ISSUE

THE DARK SIDE OF CONGO'S COBALT RUSH

Cell phones and electric cars rely on the mineral, causing a boom in demand. Locals are hunting for this buried treasure—but are getting almost none of the profit.

By Nicolas Niarchos

May 24, 2021



Rebels rely on workers to extract resources — but what if worker effort difficult to observe?

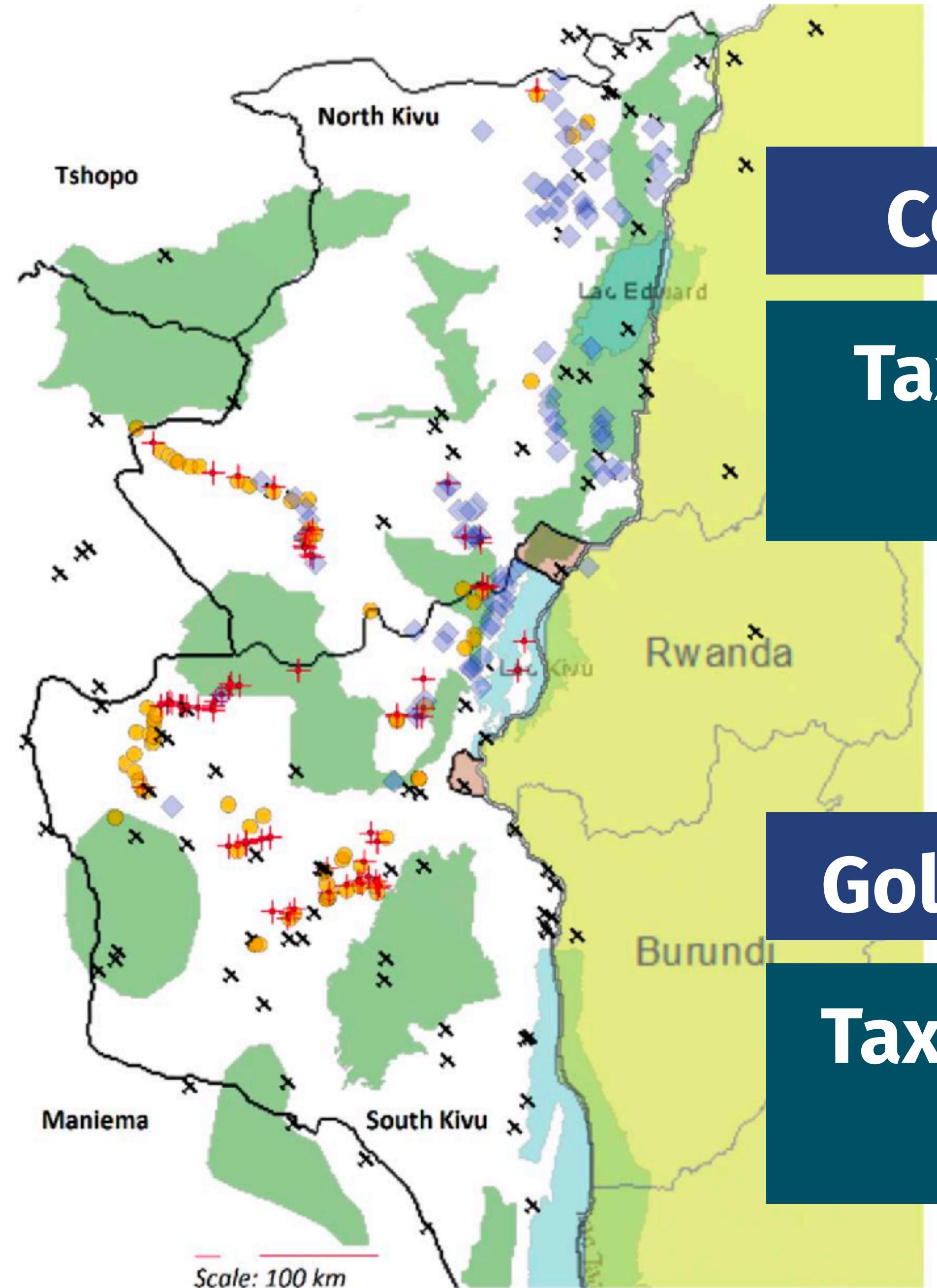
Lootability and workers

**On the Origins of the State: Stationary
Bandits and Taxation in Eastern Congo**

Raúl Sánchez de la Sierra

University of Chicago

Study of rebel groups controlling gold
and coltan mines in the DRC



Coltan – big, bulky, hard to conceal

Tax production at the mine, based on weight

Gold – small, portable, easy to conceal

Tax consumption in the villages, assign work permits

Lootability and duration

Wars in countries with **lootable resources** last longer

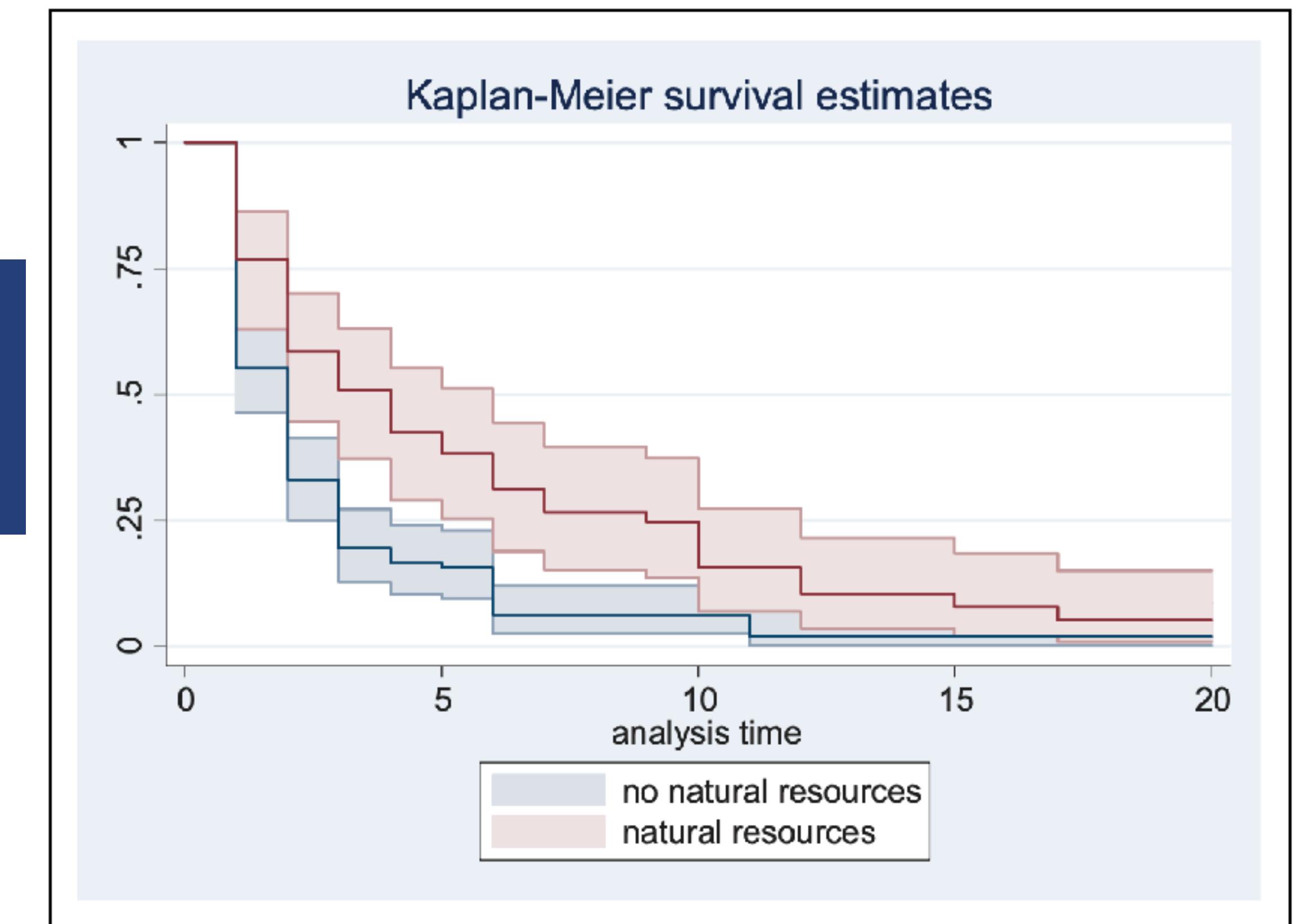


Figure 1. Survival estimates of armed conflict by natural resource exploitation, 1990

Resources and rebellion

Resources can motivate rebellion, but
not all resources

Characteristics of natural resources make
them more or less **lootable**

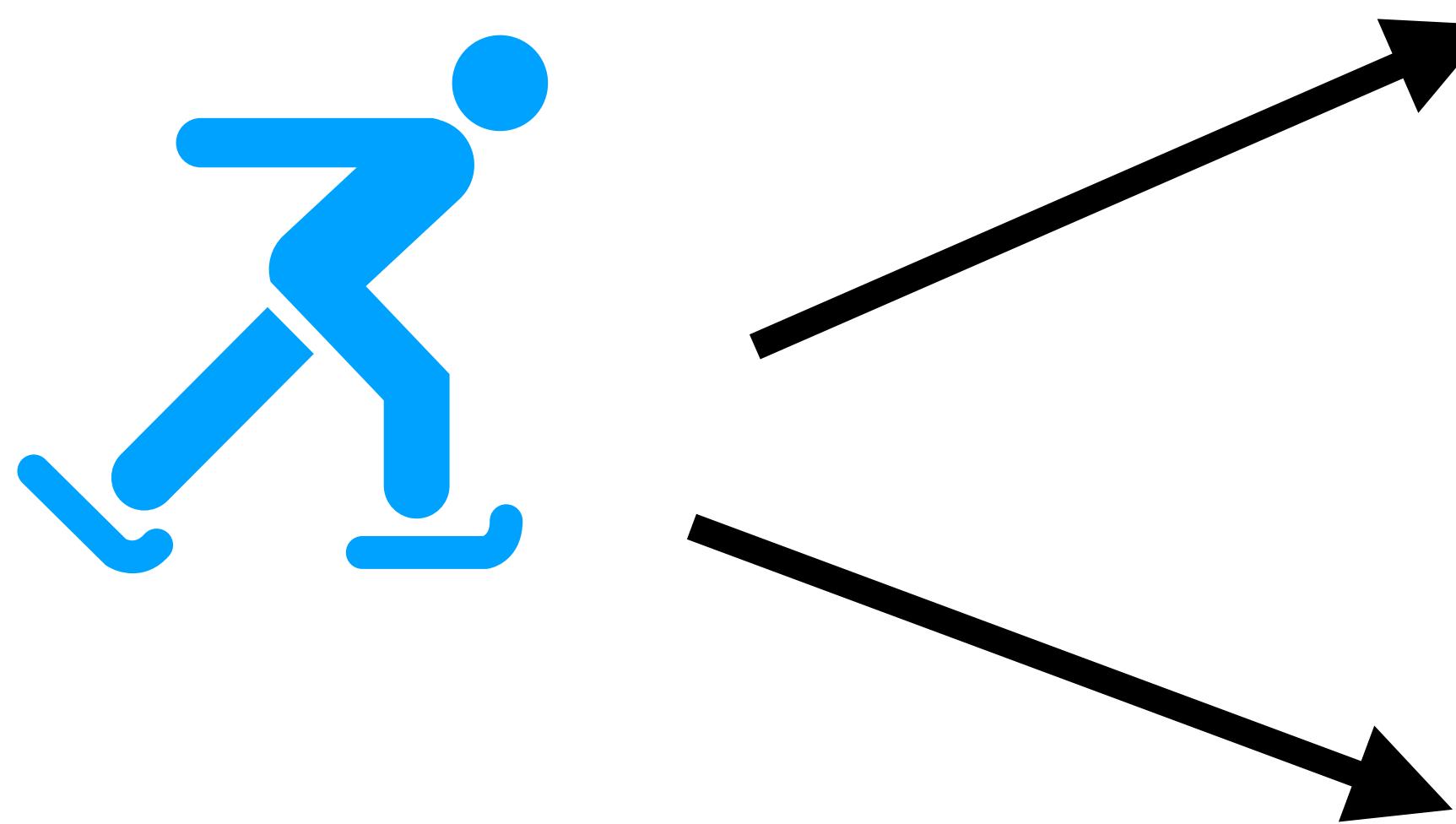
Political economy of conflict

Economics of war

Decision to rebel can't be considered in a vacuum; decision is relative to other choices

The other things you could be doing instead of waging war (e.g., working) is the **opportunity cost** of rebellion

Opportunity costs of rebellion



Returns to **rebellion**

Returns to **labor**

Fighting, working

Returns to labor

Economic growth

Employment

Higher wages

Returns to **rebellion**

“Lootable” resources

“Taxing” the locals,
expropriation

Dube and Vargas show the effect of commodity shocks on conflict *depends*; on what?

And *how* do they show this?

Commodity Price Shocks and Civil Conflict: Evidence from Colombia

OEINDRILA DUBE

New York University

and

JUAN F. VARGAS

Universidad del Rosario

First version received November 2010; final version accepted October 2012 (Eds.)

The effect of prices

Prices for a good go up →

Good becomes more loatable
– **returns to rebellion**

Wages go up – **returns to labor**

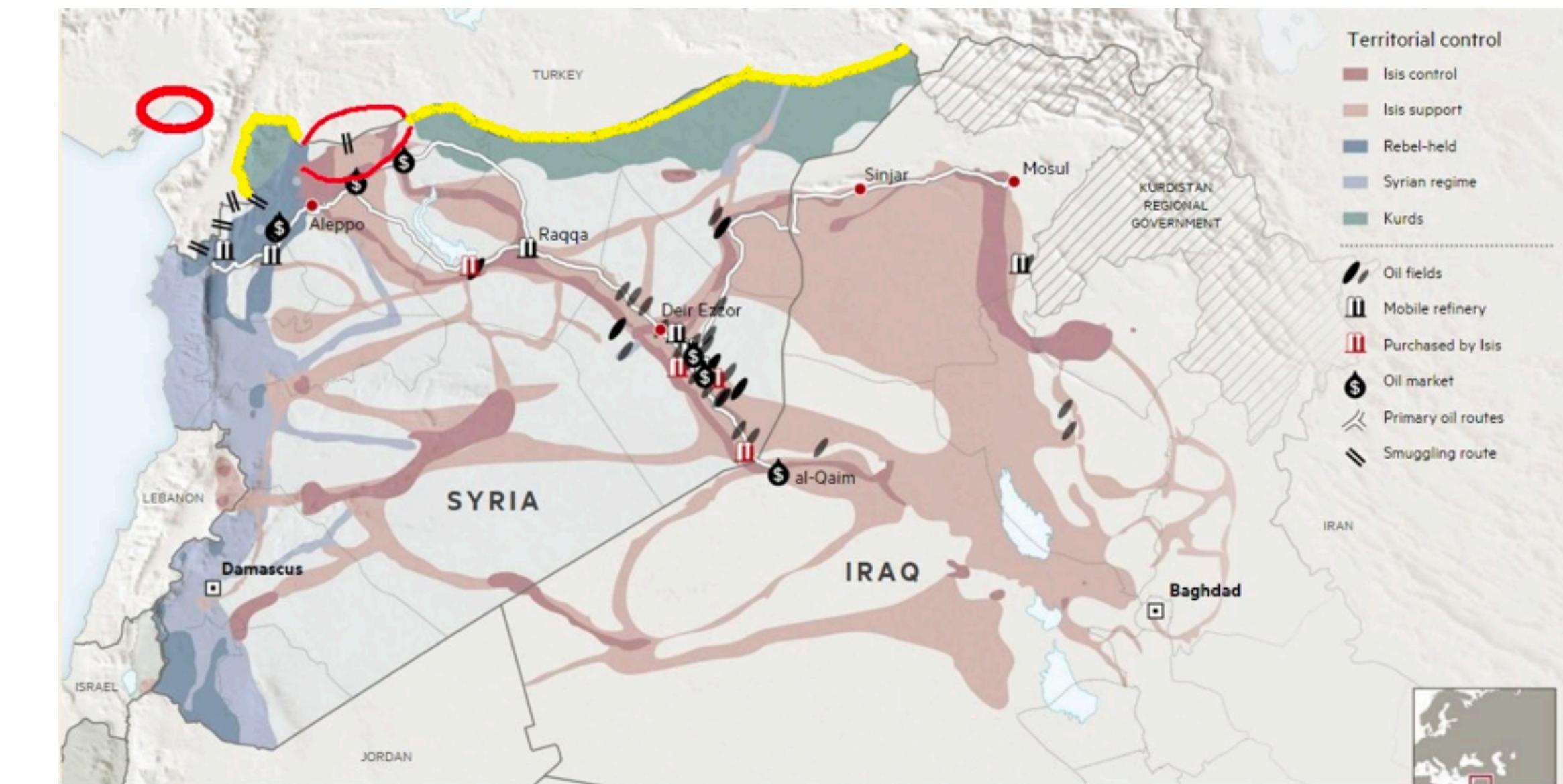
Increase or decrease in
conflict? Depends on the
(factor) inputs

Rapacity and oil

Puzzle: why one or the other?



Extortion by ELN



Whole-sale production in ISIL

Back to the debate

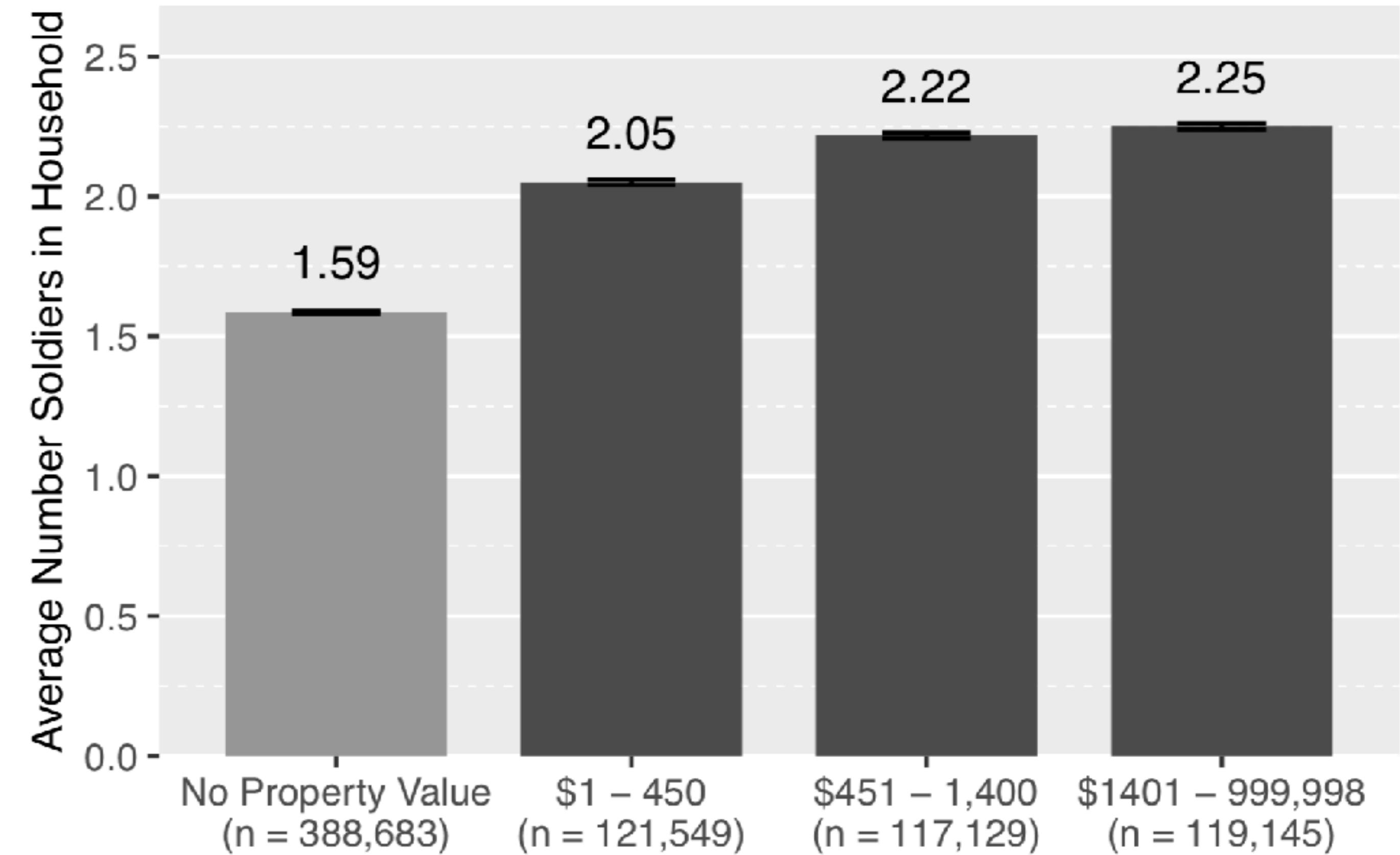
Strong evidence that resources
can facilitate and motivate
rebellion

But is this necessarily **greed**?

Back to the debate

Huff et al (2019) find
wealthier whites →
likelihood of fighting in
American civil war

Is this necessarily a “greed”
story?



Back to the debate

What if looting is “**justifiable**”?



FARC extorting drug-traffickers, large landowners

What if grievances are **about** resources?



Militant groups in Niger Delta belong to persecuted minority

All this to say...

It's complicated

Lootable resources make war possible and may motivate it

But probably not a **sufficient** condition for war

The characteristics of the good
→ behavior