

A wide-angle historical painting depicting a chaotic battlefield. In the foreground, soldiers in blue uniforms are seen in formation, some advancing. The ground is littered with debris, sandbags, and fallen soldiers. In the middle ground, a massive explosion or fire dominates the center, sending a large plume of smoke and flames into the air. The background shows more soldiers and a hilly landscape under a cloudy sky.

How are wars fought? COIN tactics

POL 126

Prof. Juan Tellez
Spring 2022

TODAY

COIN tactics

Audience costs

Private militias

State tactics

State tactics

Like rebels, states have tradeoffs in use of violence

Tradeoffs: fighting the enemy, alienating the local population (on whom so much depends!)

Similar dynamics between **selective** and **indiscriminate** violence

Selective violence: decapitation

States will expend considerable effort trying to **kill or capture leaders** (decapitation)

Information that brings to justice...

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
Up to \$25 Million Reward

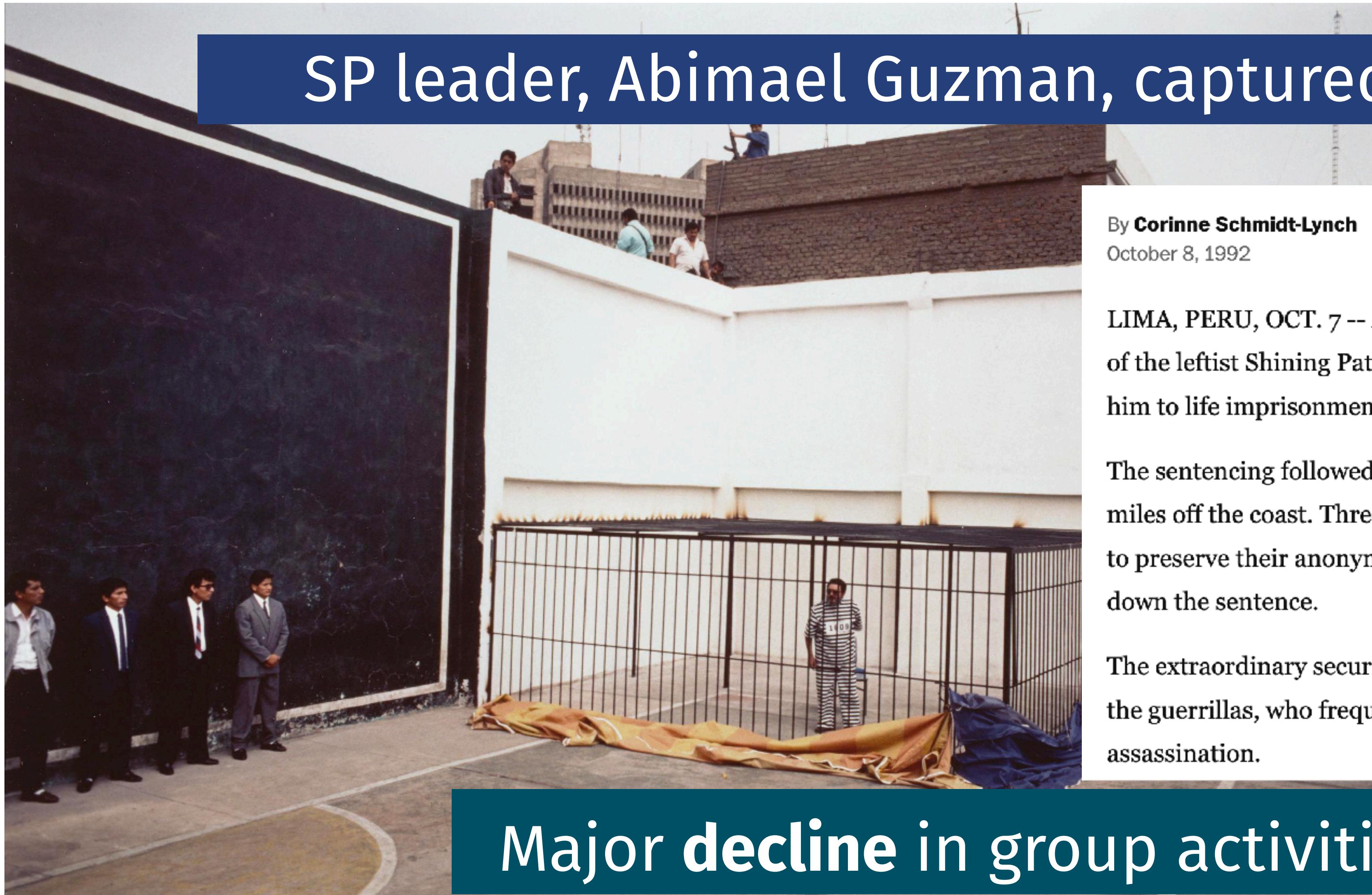


Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also known as Abu Du'a, also known as Ibrahim 'Awwad Ibrahim 'Ali al-Badri, is the senior leader of the terrorist organization Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The threat that al-Baghdadi poses has increased significantly since the Department of State's initial \$10 million reward offer for

How might this **help**? Could this **backfire**?

Example: Shining Path

SP leader, Abimael Guzman, captured in 1992



By **Corinne Schmidt-Lynch**

October 8, 1992

LIMA, PERU, OCT. 7 -- A military court convicted Abimael Guzman, leader of the leftist Shining Path guerrillas, of high treason today and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The sentencing followed a closed 10-day trial at an island naval base four miles off the coast. Three naval officers and a military prosecutor, all hooded to preserve their anonymity, conducted the trial. A naval judge handed down the sentence.

The extraordinary security measures were taken to prevent intervention by the guerrillas, who frequently have targeted judges and prosecutors for assassination.

Major decline in group activities

Example: the Sinaloa cartel

2007-2010: suffers multiple decapitations



Sandra Ávila Beltrán



Jesus Reylando
Zambada



Ignacio Coronel
Villareal

Major **increase** in violence

Why?

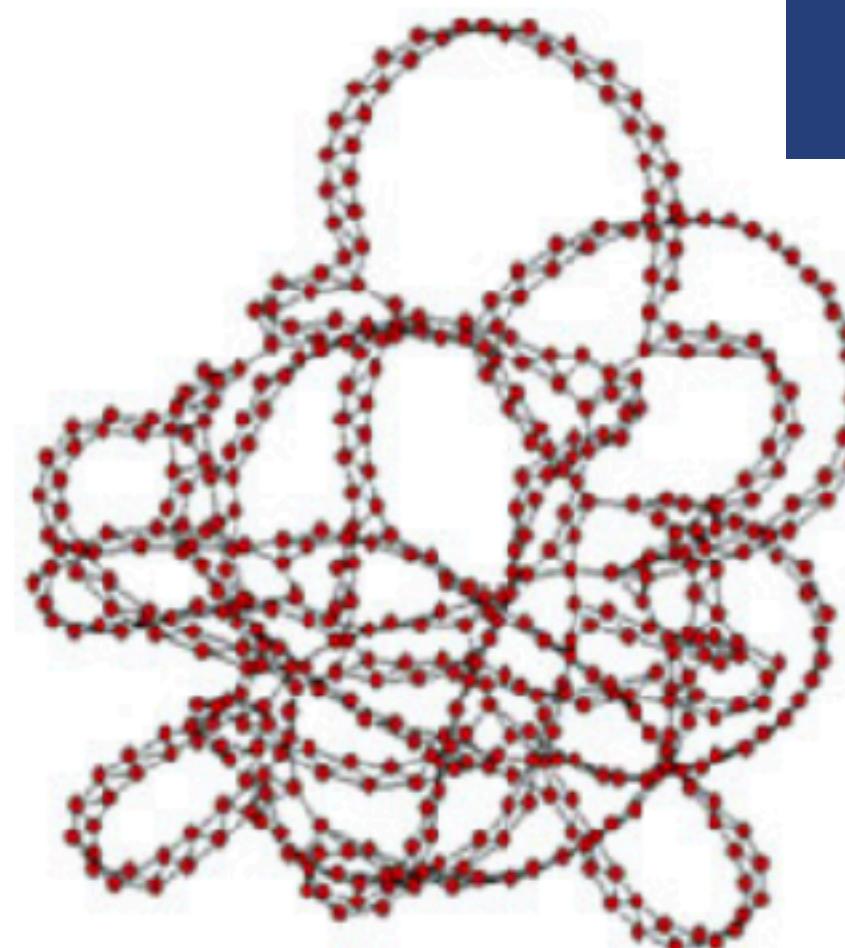
Why might decapitation seem to “work” in one case and not the other?

Siegel on repression tactics

What does Siegel argue that the effect of repression should depend on?

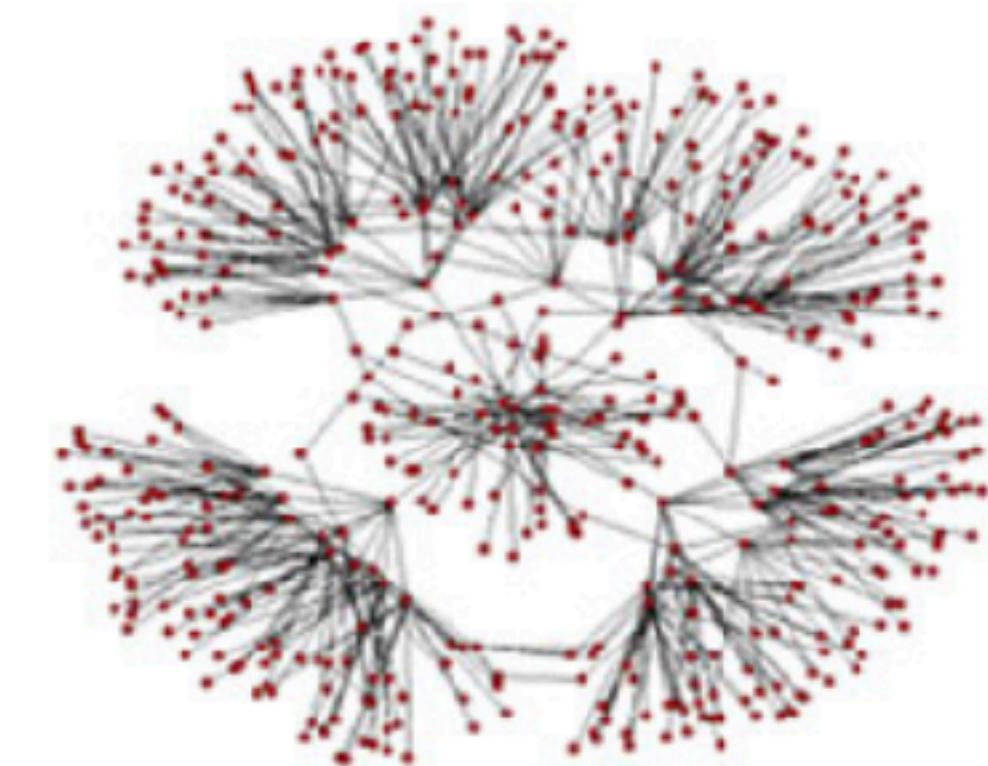
Networks and repression

Sinaloa?



(a) Small World

SP?



(d) Hierarchy



(b) Village (Clique)



(c) Opinion Leader

COIN tactics likely depend on structure of group and support base – but do states know what this looks like?

Audience costs

Audience costs

States have their own unique challenges when it comes to civil war

Most states have **domestic audiences** – supporters, special interests, the electorate, etc – with **preferences** over war

Domestic audiences can play a big role in COIN

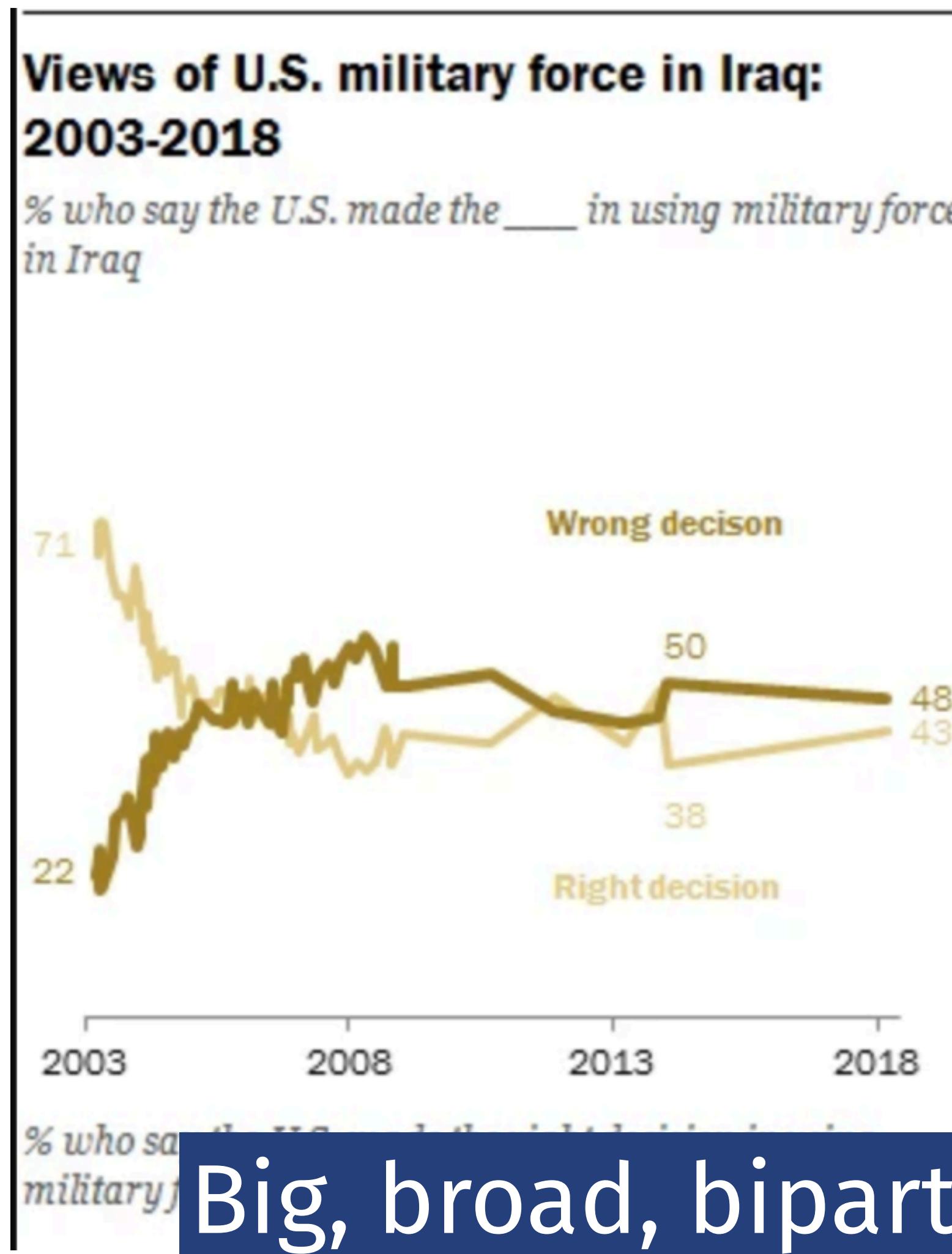
9/11 and American foreign policy

How old were you?

(Arguably) most important political event in 21st century

Precursor to war in Afghanistan, Iraq

Support for war



Edward Snowden on 9/11 and why he joined the army: 'Now, finally, there was a fight'

In an extract from his memoir, the US whistleblower shares his experiences on the day the twin towers fell - and the aftermath that led him to join up



Against

Big, broad, bipartisan support for war after 9/11

Grievances and foreign policy

The unofficial boycott of French wine in the US has cost the country an estimated US\$112m (£64m), according to an official study.



Russian ballets cancelled across UK amid Ukraine crisis

The Russian State Ballet of Siberia is latest company to have UK performances pulled

• Russia-Ukraine war latest news: follow live updates



The Russian State Ballet of Siberia performed in Northampton on Friday. Photograph: PR handout

August 3, 2002 8:00PM EDT

U.S.: 'Hague Invasion Act' Becomes Law

White House

AP Wirephoto

Thomas Friedman on Iraq



Publics can allow/incentivize states to pursue harsher COIN

Vicious cycle

The militants reasoned that selective attacks against government bullies would provoke the government into excessive and nondiscriminatory retaliation against all Basque residents . . . the escalating spiral of government repression and civilian resistance would culminate with a Spanish government no longer able to afford an extensive, expensive and permanent occupation of the Basque country.” (2002, 73)



And rebels **know** this: violence → repression → violence

Audiences and resolve

Audiences can also hinder a state's **resolve** for fighting (casualties, HR violations)

This is easily **observable** by rebels

Victory for rebels = can they **hold out** long enough?

THIS DAY IN **HISTORY** | MARCH 16 ▾

1968

March 16

Vietnamese villagers killed by U.S. soldiers in My Lai Massacre



On March 16, 1968, a platoon of American soldiers brutally kills as many as 500 unarmed civilians at My Lai, one of a cluster of small villages located near the northern coast of South Vietnam. The crime, which was kept secret for nearly two years, later became known as the [My Lai Massacre](#).

Soviet war in Afghanistan



Soviet Union kept war in Afghanistan a secret for years

This led to many absurdities. In 1980, according to the writer Vladimir Voinovich, the censor objected to a passage in a film about Sherlock Holmes in which Holmes deduces that Watson has returned disillusioned from the Second Anglo-Afghan War: instead he was said to have returned from a war ‘in some Eastern country’.²⁷

THE ANSWERS SHOULD BE FAIRLY AND STIMULATING.

For years there were indeed no proper memorials. The fallen were not greeted on their return with military honour and municipal ceremony as – one soldier, Andrei Blinushov, bitterly noted at the time – they would have been in America. Instead they were returned to their families by night, buried in hugger-mugger, in a miasma of threats of retribution if the shroud of secrecy was broken. Official edict was tempered by individual acts of humanity, as it often is in Russia. But few government decisions were so bitterly resented as this one.

The public and COIN tactics

Public grievances/anger can motivate or augment war-aims

They can also constrain war + incentivize rebel hold-out

Domestic audiences can also **distort** COIN tactics

COIN distortion

Imagine COIN can dedicate resources to two strategies:

Publicly observable

Large-scale arrests, detentions,
Security provisions
(airport metal detectors)

Indiscriminate, less effective

Publicly unobservable

Covert operations,
disruption of funding
networks

Precise, more effective

Recent debates over the proper geographical division of counterterrorism resources demonstrate the problem of rent seeking in counterterrorism policy. The argument has been made that, for reasons of political patronage, counterterrorism resources have been diverted to states that face little or no terrorist threat. For instance, the *New York Times* reports that in 2004, Wyoming received a counter-

Commentators have also expressed concern about the government focusing on publicly observable programs due to political expediency. In a recent *Newsweek* interview, security expert Bruce Scheier articulated this critique, describing certain counterterrorism expenditures as “an enormous waste of money” and explaining: “Politicians tend to prefer security countermeasures that are very visible, to make it look like they’re doing something. So they will tend to pick things that are visible even if they are less effective.”¹⁰

Domestic audience concerns →
over-allocation to **visible** yet ineffective policy

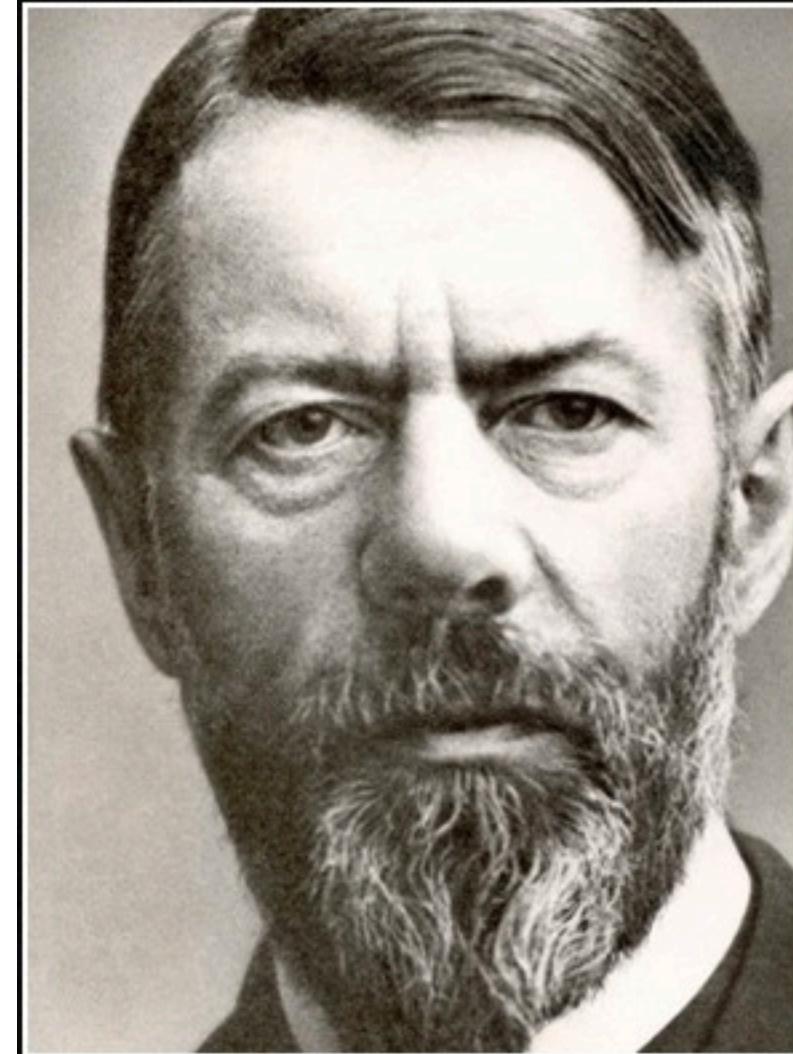
Private militias

Private militias in Mexico



States and violence

Used to thinking about states as fixated
On holding **monopoly on violence**



A government is an institution that holds a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.

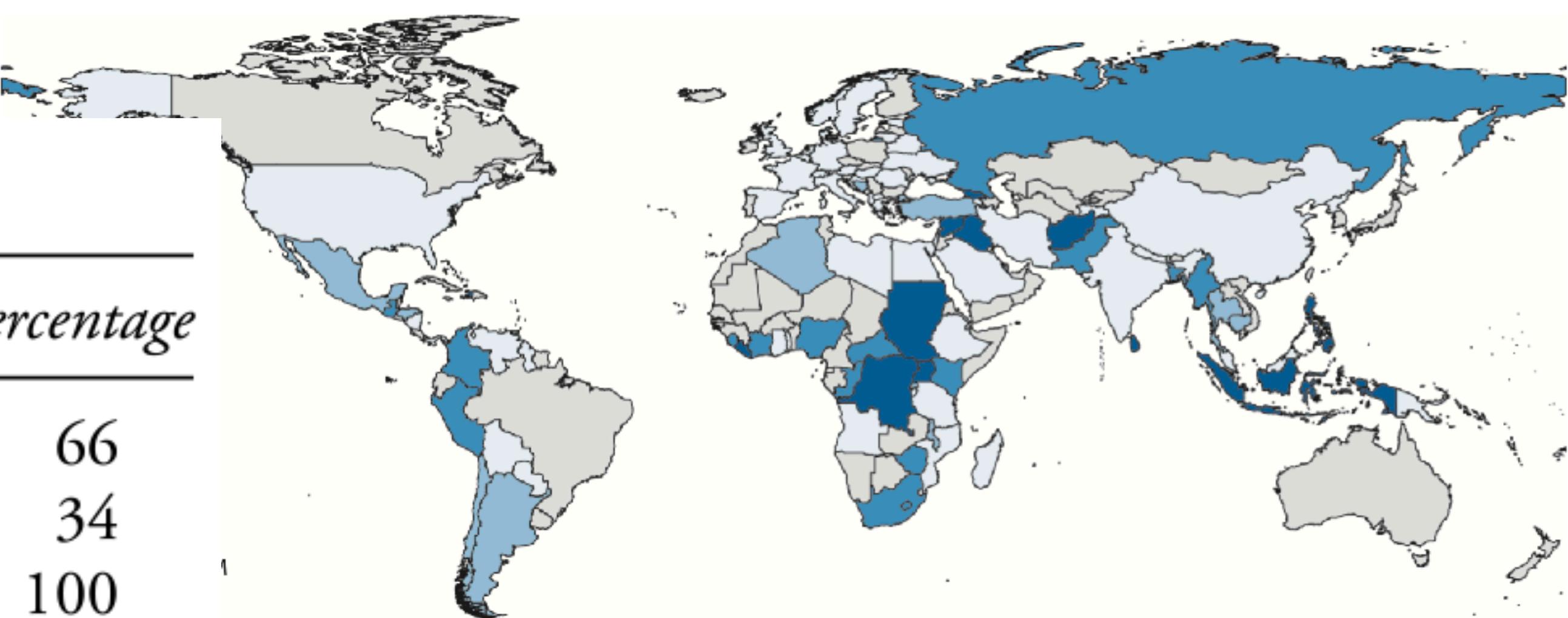
— Max Weber —

AZ QUOTES

Pro-government militias (PGMs)

Table I. PGM types

Type	Freq.	Percentage
Informal PGMs	218	66
Semi-official PGMs	114	34
Total	332	100



Informal progovernment militias (PGMs), 1981–2007. Data exclude Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Lebanon, and Somalia.

Yet all over the world, states form
(or allow?) private militias to fight in wars

What are informal and semi-official PGMs?

Private militias: tradeoffs

“Cheap” (from public perspective) additional forces

Shield own troops from casualties (public)

Deniability of violence (public)

But big **principal-agent** problems

Militias may not listen, are unaccountable,
And may have their own agendas

Excessive violence

Militias → government-sponsored killings, torture, and disappearances more likely



Location Nisour Square, Baghdad, Iraq

Coordinates 33.30222°N 44.35639°E

Date September 16, 2007

12:00 pm (UTC+03:00)

Deaths 17

Injured 20

Pro-Government Militias and Human Rights

823

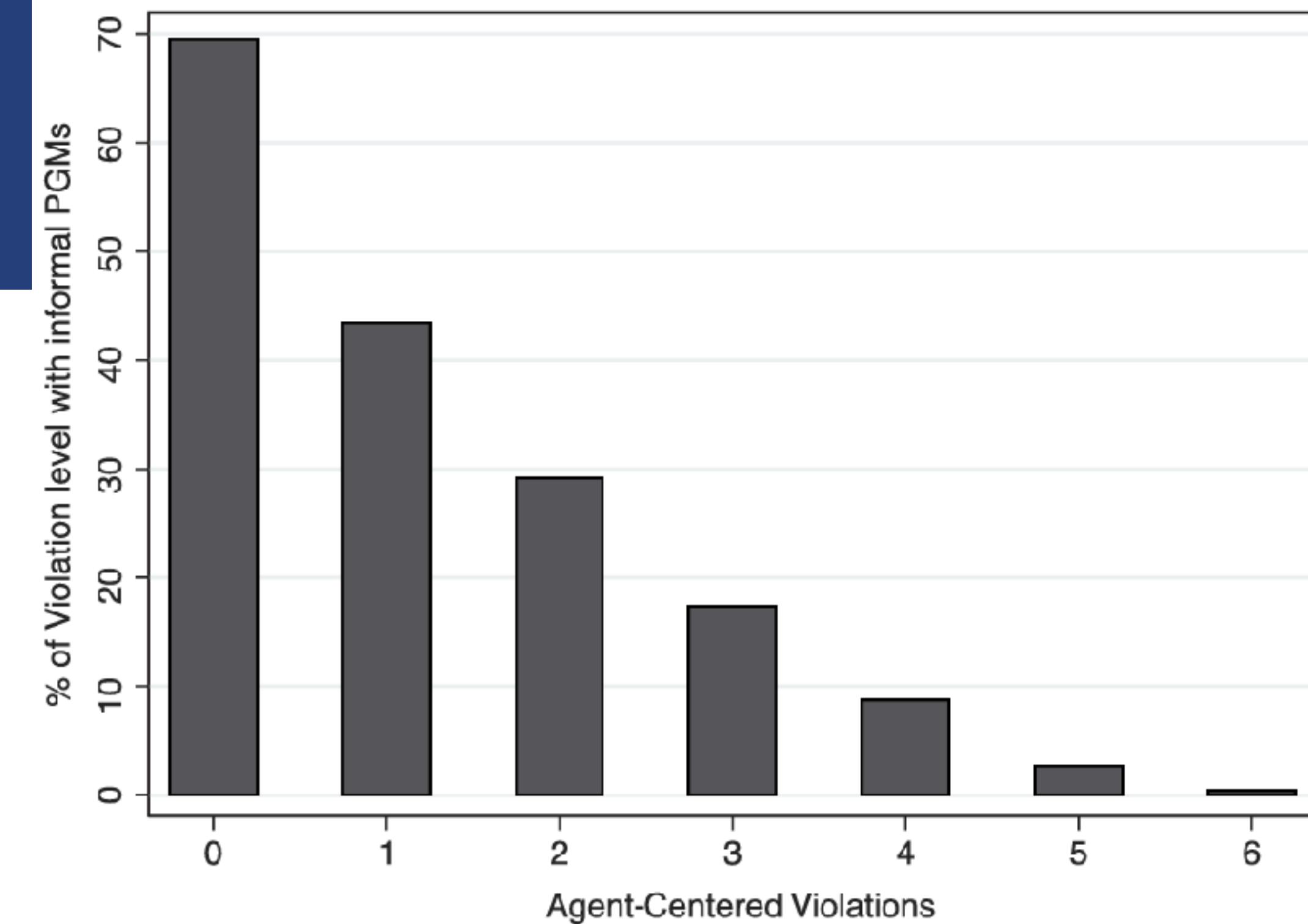


FIGURE 1 Informal pro-government militias and agent-centered violations, 1982–2007.

Low accountability

States with weaker accountability measures → more militias

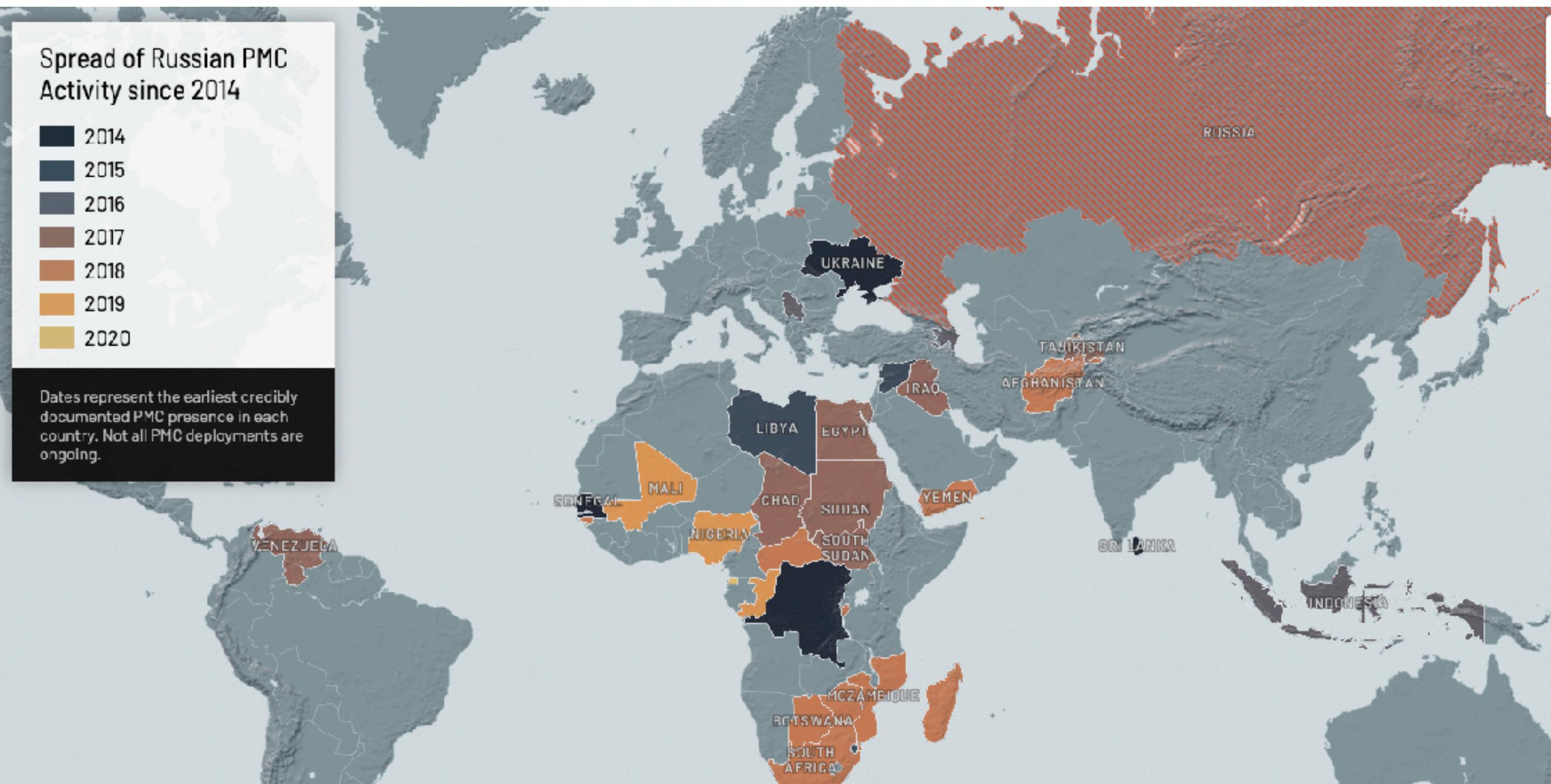


Table 1. A Logit Analysis of Informal Government–Militia Linkages.

	Model 1	Model 2
	Disorder model	Accountability avoidance
<i>Disorder</i>		
Strikes	0.38 (0.28)	
Riots	0.23 (0.24)	
Demonstrations	0.62** (0.22)	
Guerrilla attacks	0.50* (0.24)	
Civil violence	1.12*** (0.22)	
Civil war	0.36 (0.32)	
<i>Control variables</i>		
Economic development	-0.65*** (0.10)	
Population	0.33*** (0.07)	
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.10 (0.32)	
<i>Domestic accountability</i>		
Weak democracies		0.52** (0.20)
Strong autocracies		-0.39 (0.28)
Strong democracies		0.47 (0.32)
<i>International accountability</i>		
Distance to democracy		0.19* (0.10)
Aid from democracies		0.24*** (0.03)
Aid from autocracies		-0.09*** (0.02)
Intercept	-1.86* (0.95)	-5.70*** (0.65)
N	3,270	3,270

Defiant militias

Militias can take on a life of their own

Once can of worms is open, closing is not easy

Mexican vigilantes protest against plans to disarm them

⌚ 7 April 2014



Vigilantes have been in virtual control of a number of towns in Michoacan since the beginning of 2014

Vigilante groups in Mexico have protested against moves by the security forces to disarm them.

Open questions

Are militias **causes or consequences** of weak states?

So complicated!

Like rebels, states have to navigate complex wartime strategy

Additional (?) factor: what will domestic audiences think?

Audiences can pull, push, and distort COIN

Militias are a way out – but have their own baggage

New homework

Scatterplots + trend-lines

New variables – calculate rates