# Civil wars II

Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2024

# Greed & opportunity



Gold mine in Ituri, DRC

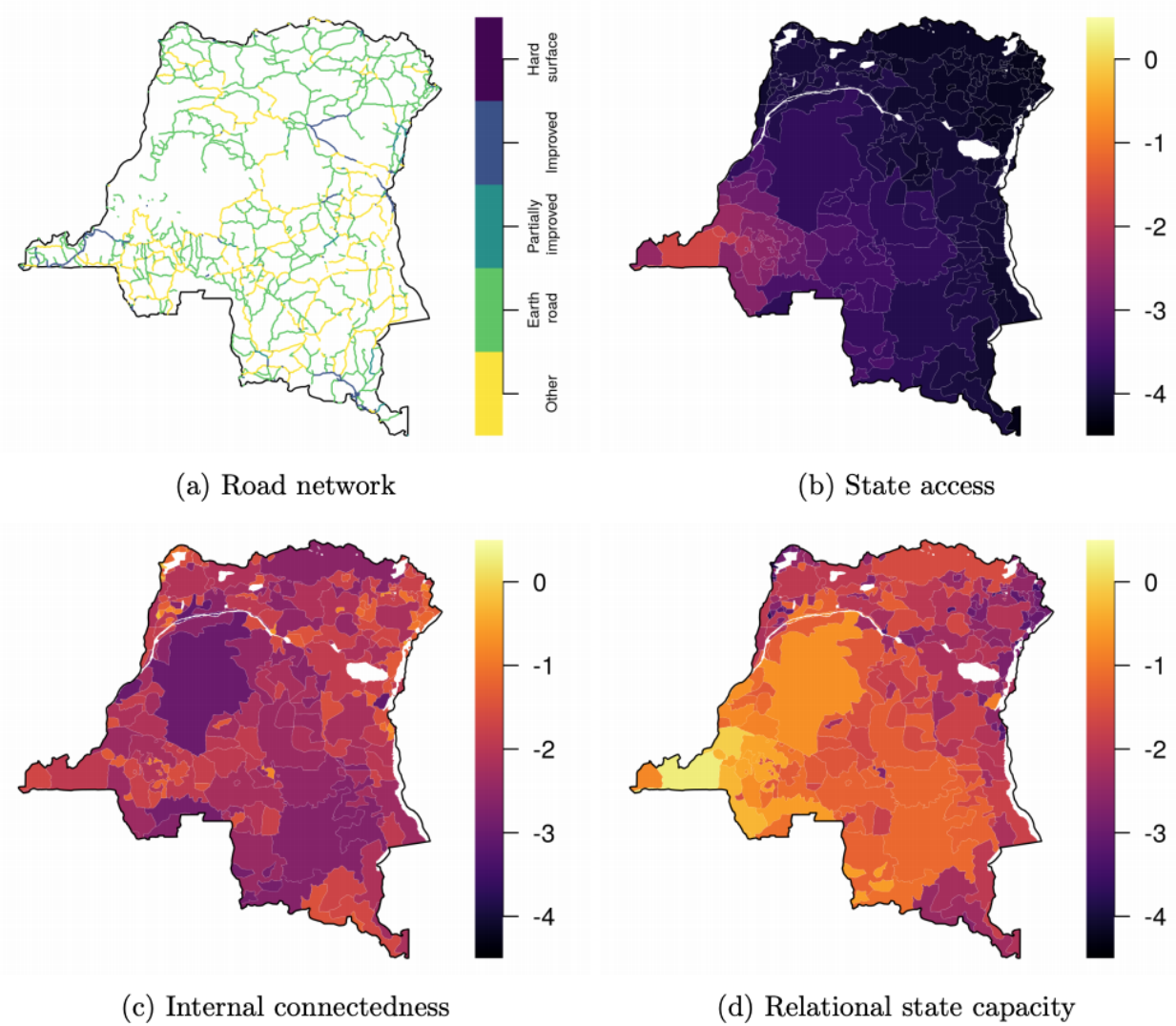
# Greed & opportunity

- Difference between *greed* and *opportunity explanations*
- Importance of state capacity



Hindu Kush, Afghanistan

# Greed & opportunity




(a) Road network

(b) State access

(c) Internal connectedness

(d) Relational state capacity

(Müller-Crepon *et al.*, 2020)

# Greed & opportunity: what they have in common

- Ruling out *motivational* factors related to ideology, religion, ethnicity, inequality...
- Previous explanations based on grievances do not work
- Grievances are ubiquitous, so they can't explain anything
- Empirical results: no effect of ethnic fractionalization
  - → Ethnic fractionalization: probability that two randomly drawn individuals belong to the same ethnic group (more ethnic groups, higher fractionalization)

# What are grievances?



- Outrage and historical rebellions

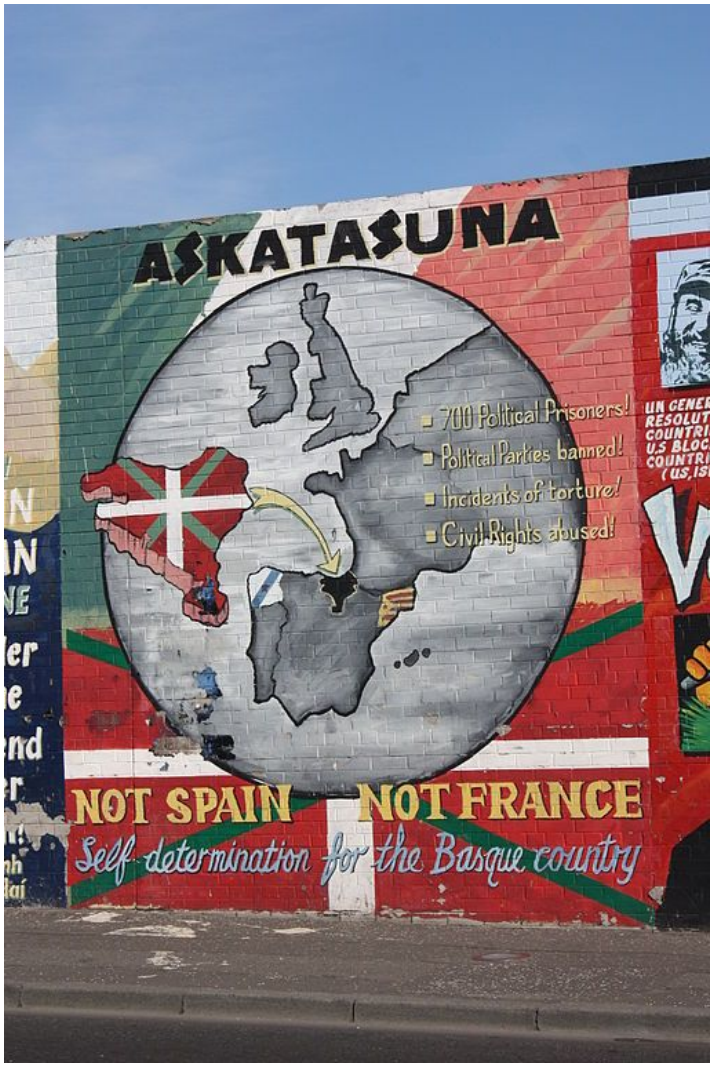
# What are grievances?




- Outrage and contemporary revolutions

# Grievances & ideology in the greed perspective

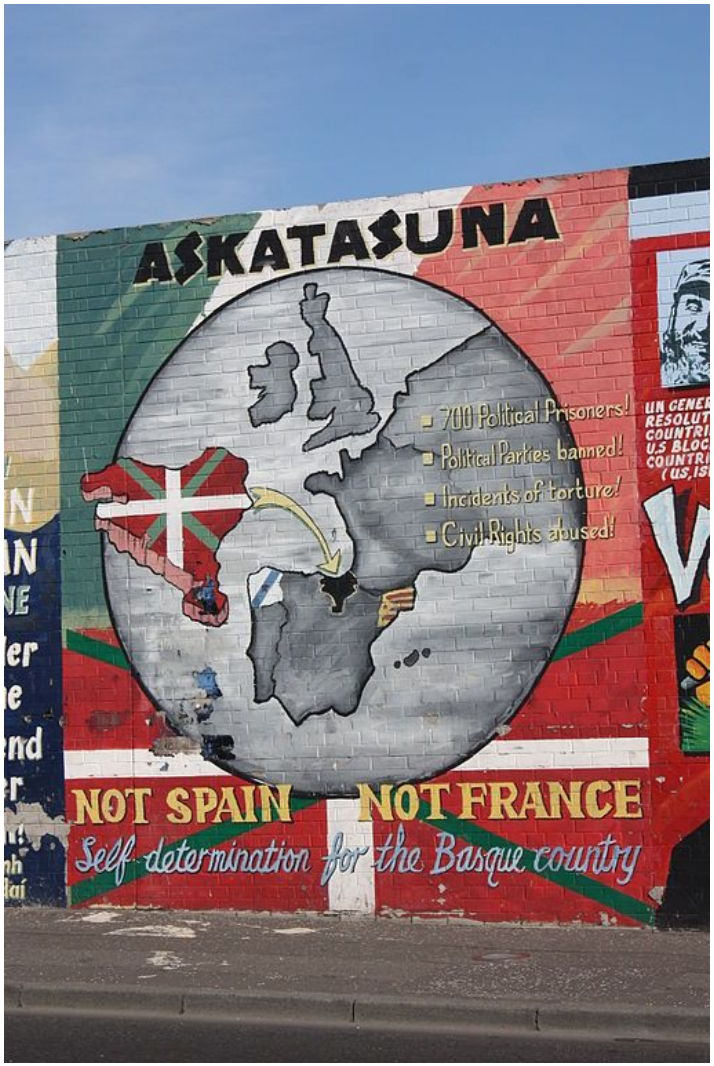
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- But **no real effect**, meaning: we won't be able to predict the outbreak of civil wars based on the existence of grievances




Mural in Belfast

# Grievances & ideology in the greed perspective

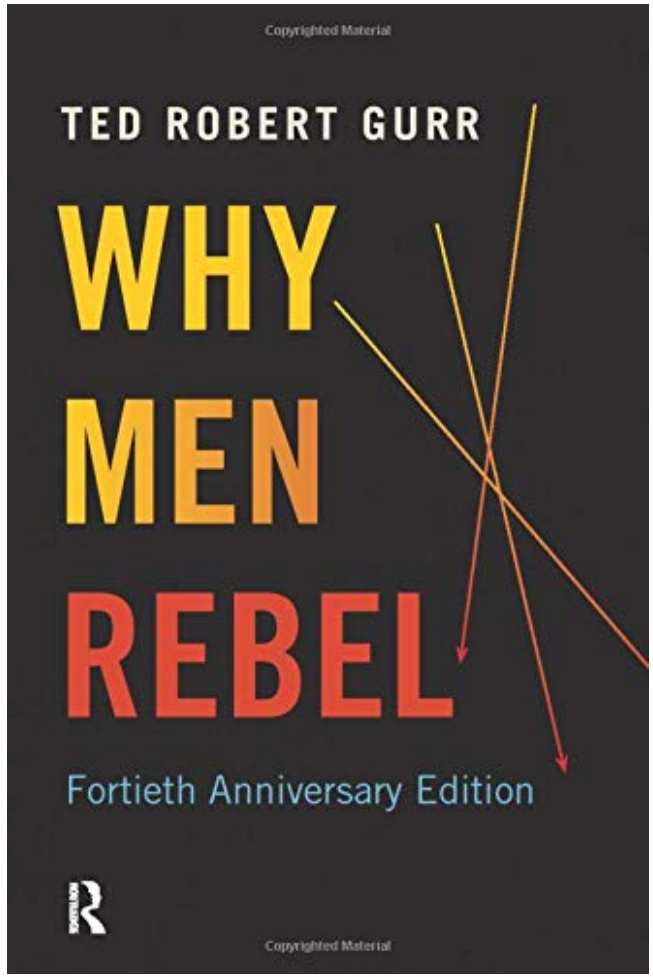
- Rebels 'wrap' themselves in ideology
- But **no real effect**, meaning: we won't be able to predict the outbreak of civil wars based on the existence of grievances
- Is this true?




Mural in Belfast

# The first wave of grievance studies

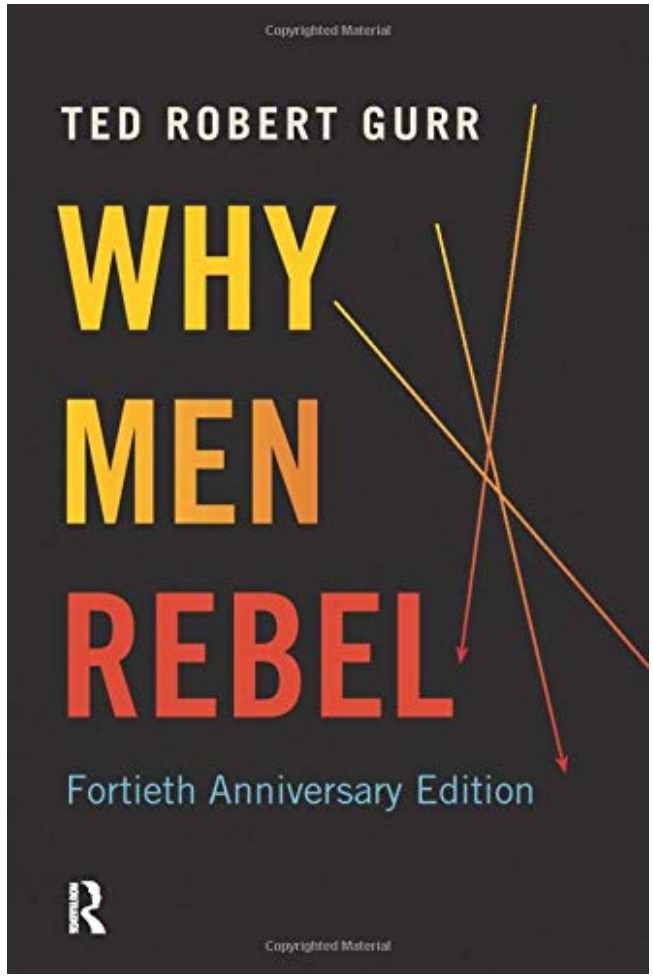
- Context in the 60s: violence and revolution in the 'Third World,' civil rights movement in the US
- **What brings men and women to rise against 'unjust' regimes?**




Ted Gurr (1970)

# The first wave of grievance studies

- Context in the 60s: violence and revolution in the 'Third World,' civil rights movement in the US
- **What brings men and women to rise against 'unjust' regimes?**
- Focus on psychological mechanisms
- 'Relative deprivation:' frustration over unmet expectations of material wellbeing triggers violent behavior
  - → In other words: 'I'm not getting what I deserve'



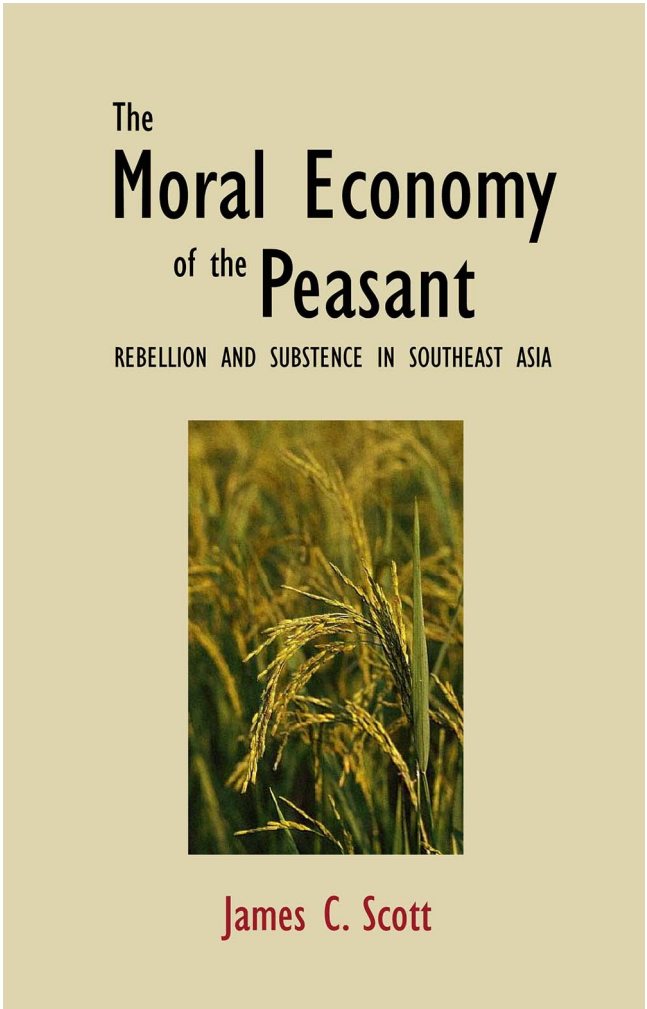

Ted Gurr (1970)

# The first wave of grievance studies

- Different from previous sociological accounts of mob behavior, irrational mass behavior, etc
- Influenced by the ideological conflict of the Cold War
- Civil wars interpreted as ‘peasant revolutions’ or ‘social revolutions’

# The first wave of grievance studies

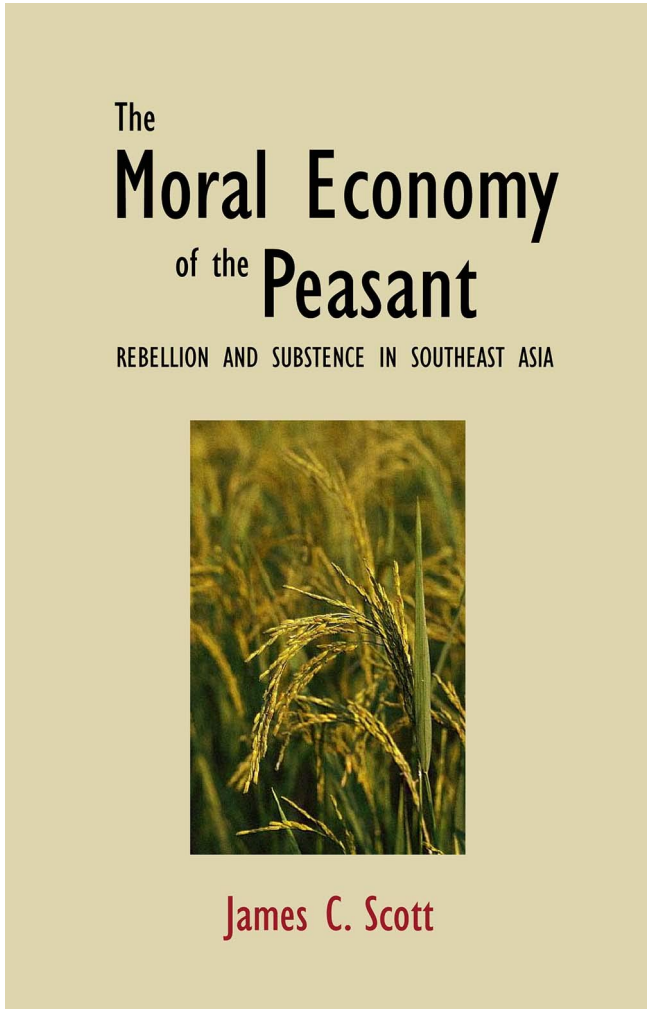
- Studying rebellions in Southeast Asia in the 1930s
- Background: Subsistence economy, social reciprocity
- Traditional (feudal) moral economy that preserved subsistence, social preference for stability




James C Scott (1976)

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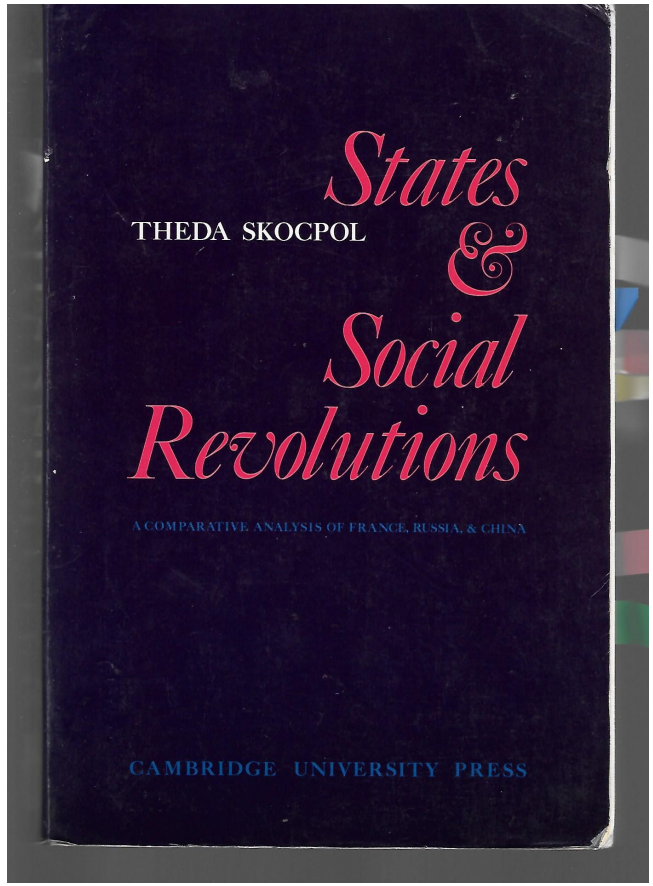
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- Market-based transformations destroy this moral equilibrium and breed rebellion




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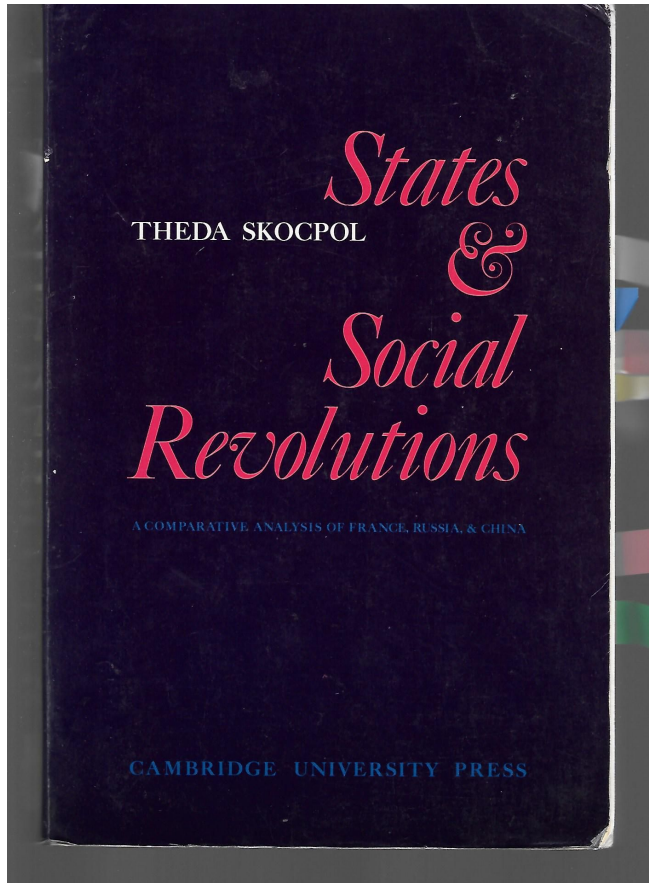
- Studying the French, Russian, and Chinese Revolutions
- Social revolutions as a radical transformation of social and political structures
  - → A *rebellion* would be a revolt without changes, a *political revolution* would only change institutions




Theda Skocpol (1979)

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- Studying the French, Russian, and Chinese Revolutions
- Social revolutions as a radical transformation of social and political structures
  - → A *rebellion* would be a revolt without changes, a *political revolution* would only change institutions
- Why? Revolutions as a product of class struggle combined with the collapse of the old state




Theda Skocpol (1979)

# The first wave of grievance studies

*No social group is more conservative than a landowning peasantry and none is more revolutionary than a peasantry that owns too little land or pays too high a rental.*

Samuel P Huntington (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*, p. 375.

# The first wave of grievance studies

- In all these accounts there is the related idea that rebellions emerged out of anger and frustration

# Early criticism

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- Rational action theory (Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*): free riding problem, why would I individually contribute to the struggle?
- The role of culture and social groups (Michael Hechter, Donald Horowitz): not about frustrated individuals, but about group comparisons

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- All this set the stage for the micro-economist approach and the greed/opportunity perspectives

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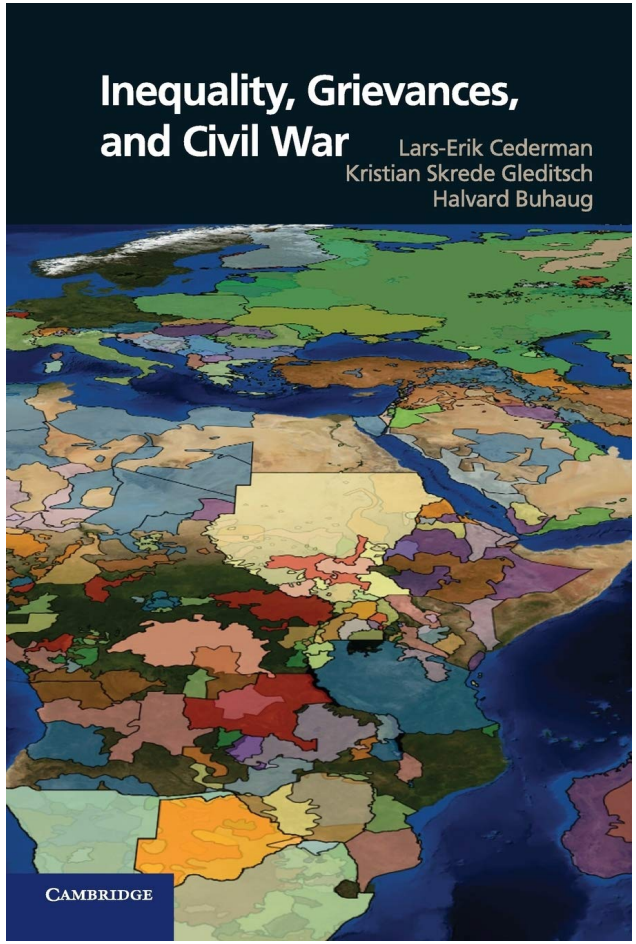
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- Structuralist approach and motivation
  - → Collective action theory and resource mobilization
  - → Why motivation based on material incentives but not on non-material ones?
- Ethnic conflict and the state
  - → Where's the state in the ancient hatreds view?
  - → Ethnic conflict is usually *about* controlling the state

# The new grievance perspective

- Building on previous theories of grievances (Gurr) and social/ethnic groups (Horowitz, Hechter)
- Vertical and horizontal inequalities
  - → Inequalities not between individuals but between culturally defined groups
- Nationalism and inequality
- Not captured by ethnic fractionalization, inequality measures (e.g. Gini), etc




Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug (2013)

# From horizontal inequalities to conflict

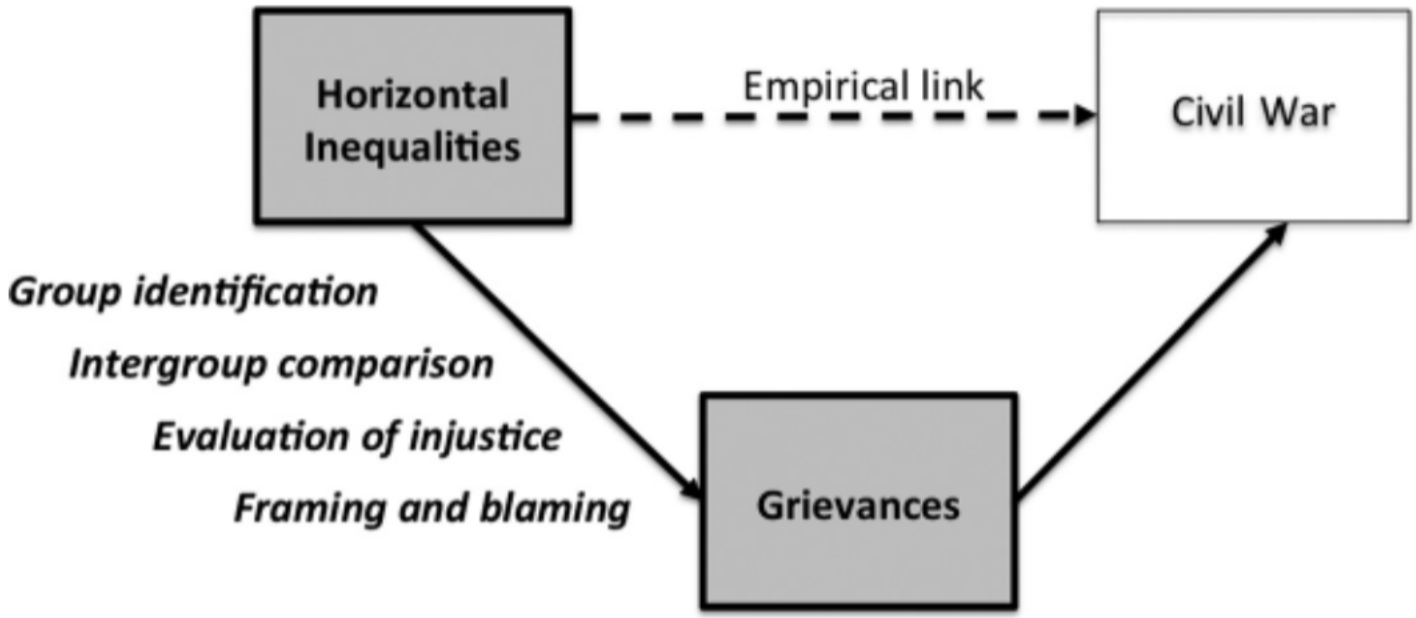



FIGURE 3.2. The causal path from horizontal inequalities to grievances.

*Source:* Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug (2013)

# From horizontal inequalities to conflict

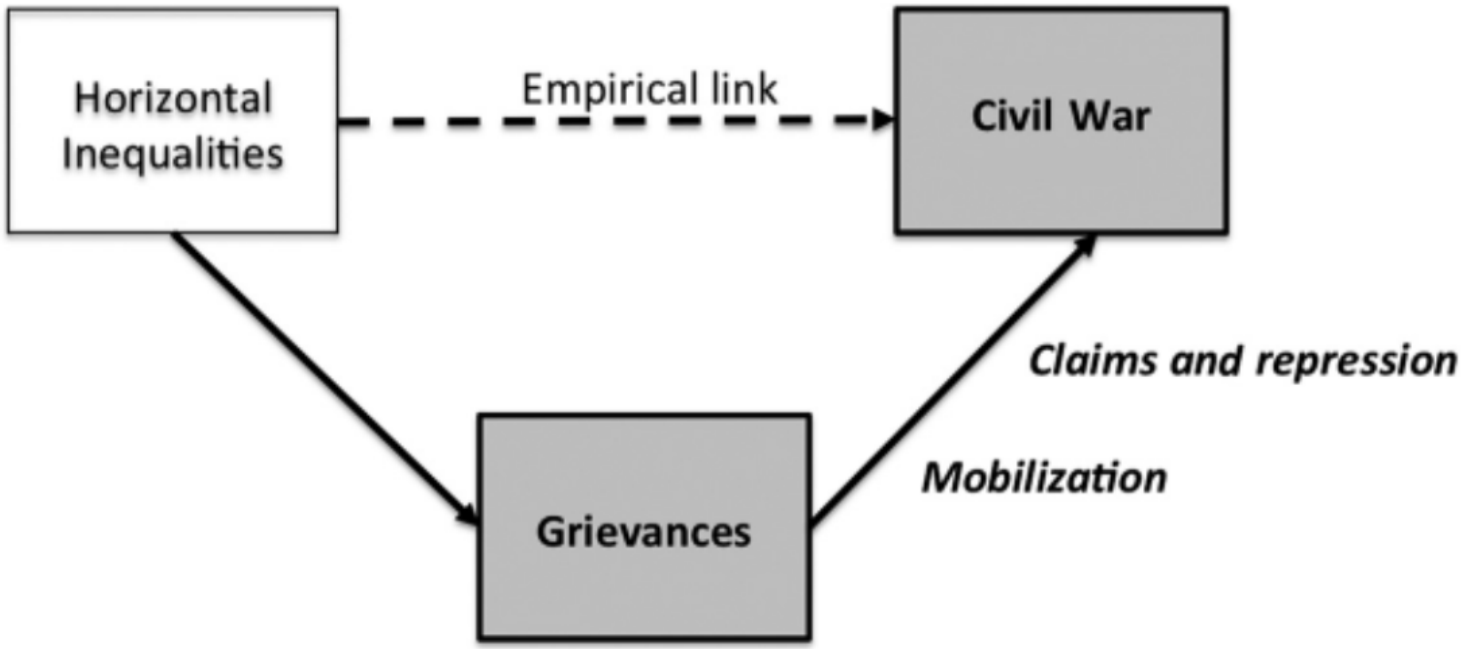
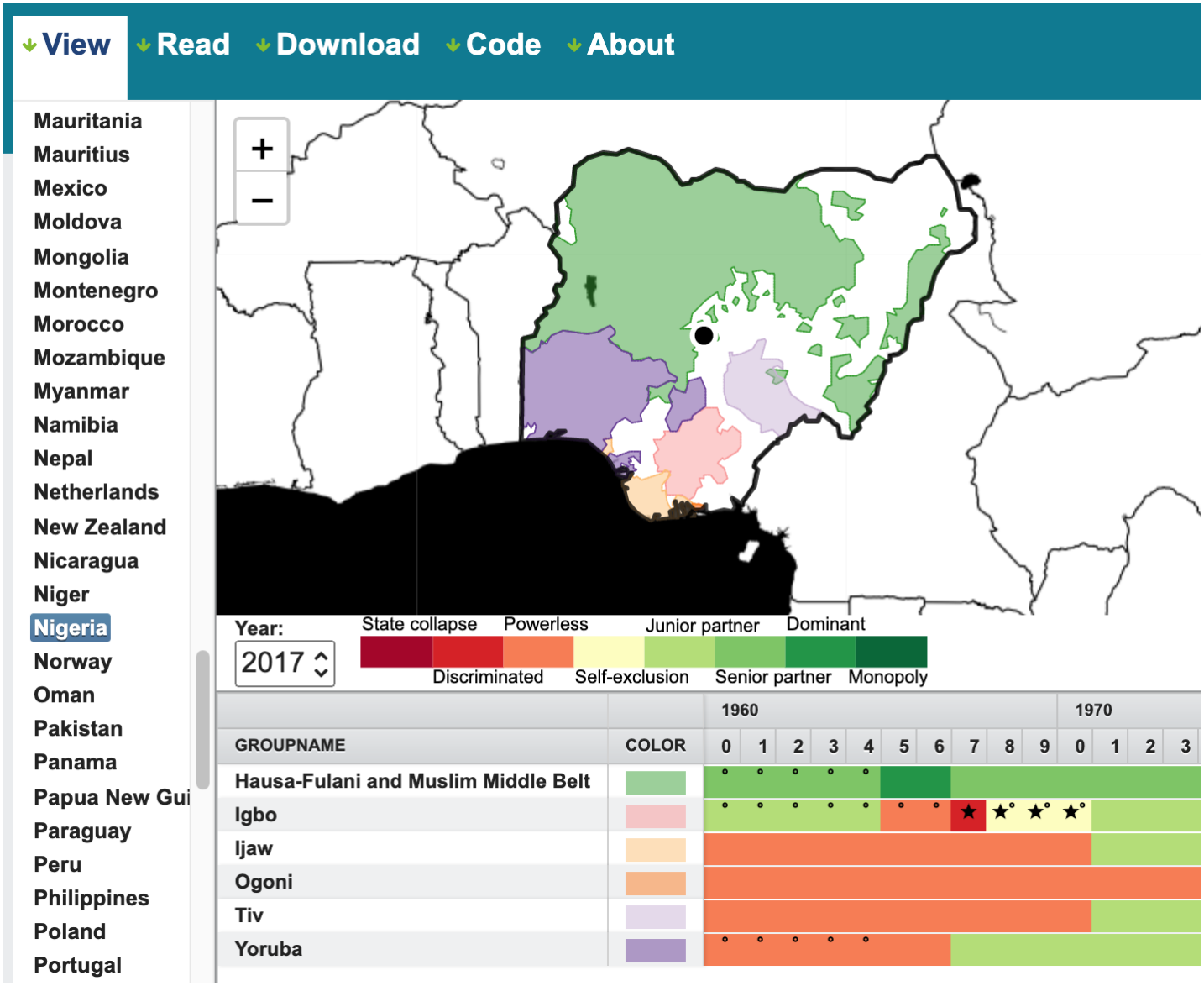



FIGURE 3.3. The causal path from grievances to civil war onset.

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# Measuring grievances




Ethnic Power Relations dataset (https://growup.ethz.ch/)

# Testing the effect of grievances

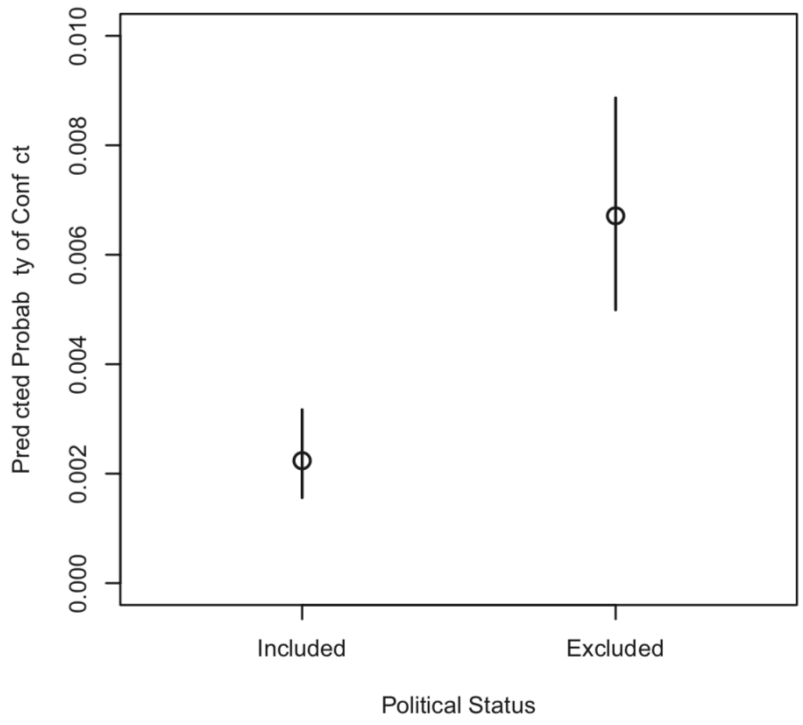



FIGURE 4.2. Comparing the effect of power access status on civil war onset.

*Source:* Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug (2013)

- Being excluded from government linked to increased probability of conflict

# Testing the effect of grievances

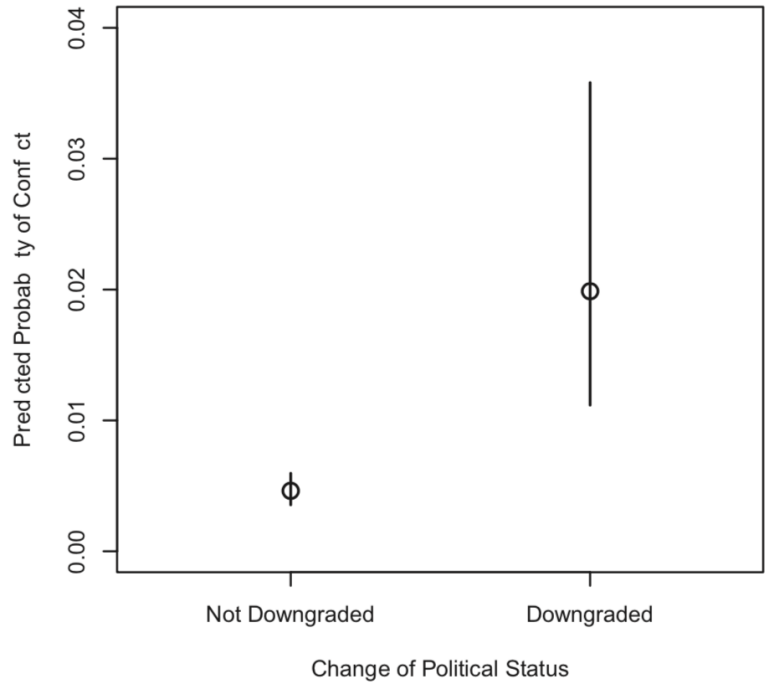



FIGURE 4.4. The effect of status reversals on the probability of civil war onset.

*Source:* Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug (2013)

- Losing status linked to increased probability of conflict

# Internal vs external factors

- All these explanations focus on factors that change across countries
  - $\rightarrow$ Different from e.g. historical explanations of war we saw 2 weeks ago
- Importance of the international system as well

# The Cold War effect

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- How global factors affected the *technology of rebellion*

  Balcells & Kalyvas (*APSR*, 2010)

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- Remember the types:
  - → Irregular conflicts (guerrilla groups against conventional armies)
  - → Conventional civil wars (all conventional armies, clear frontlines)
  - → Symmetric non-conventional
- Q: Did the change in the international system (end of Cold War) affect the way civil wars are fought?

# The Cold War effect (during & after)

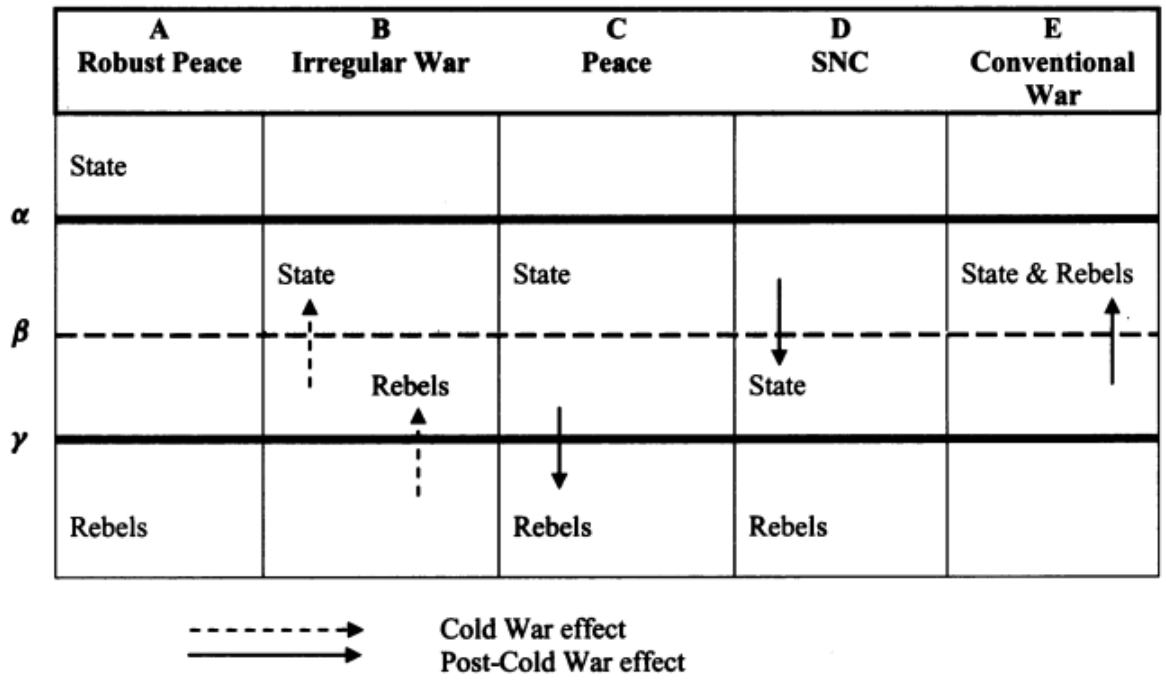
- Main idea: superpower support in 'proxy wars' increased insurgents' capacity, that's why we see so many irregular wars
- How? Material support, ideological support, training...
- Support to both sides
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- After the Cold War, USSR support disappears and US no longer has incentives, and previously existing states collapse and armies fragment
- Consequence? Increase in conventional and SNC wars

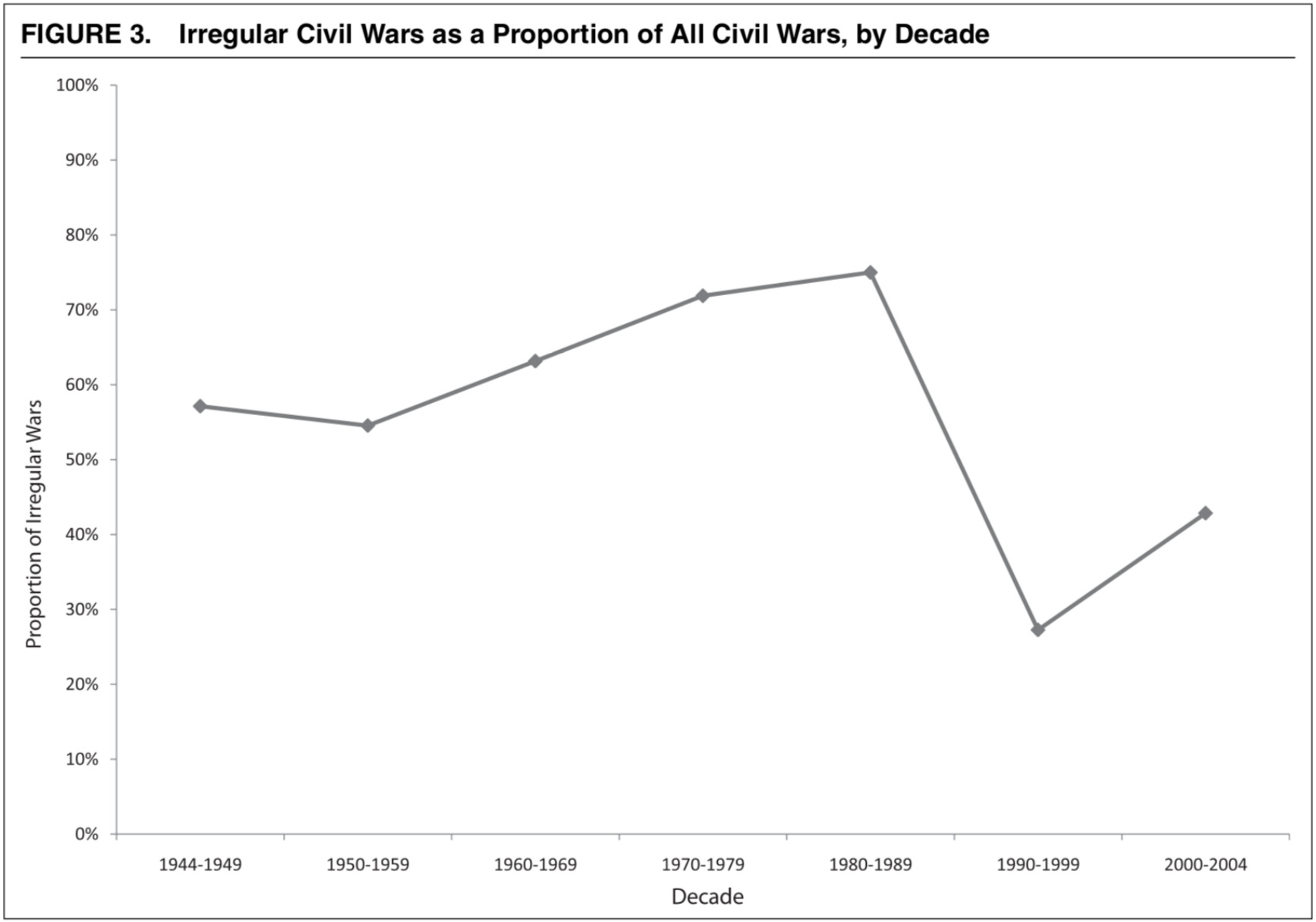
# The Cold War effect (during & after)

**FIGURE 2. Impact of the Cold War on Civil Wars**




- Above $\alpha$: state is too strong (stable peace)
- Above $\beta$: able to use conventional armies
- Above $\gamma$: able to use irregular warfare
- Below $\gamma$: not enough military capacity (bandits, terrorists, etc)

# The golden age of the guerrillas



# The golden age of the guerrillas

**TABLE 2. Civil War Onsets, by Technology of Rebellion (1944–2004)**

| Technology of Rebellion | Cold War | | Post–Cold War | | Both Periods | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N* (1944–90) | % (1944–90) | *N* (1991–2004) | % (1991–2004) | *N* (1944–2004) | % (1944–2004) |
| Conventional | 28 | 27.72 | 22 | 47.83 | 50 | 34.01 |
| Irregular | 67 | 66.34 | 12 | 26.09 | 79 | 53.74 |
| Symmetric nonconventional | 6 | 5.94 | 12 | 26.09 | 18 | 12.24 |
| **Total** | **101** | **100** | **46** | **100** | **147** | **100** |

# Wrapping up: explaining why civil wars break out

- Two key perspectives in academic research and policy-making

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- Greed / opportunity
  - → How **viable** is to launch in insurgency?
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- Greed / opportunity
  - → How **viable** is to launch in insurgency?
  - → Economic and rational analysis of war onset
  - → Dismissing motivational factors (ethnicity, discrimination, etc)
- Grievance / motivation
  - → Effect of **horizontal inequalities** on conflict
  - → Affects decision to fight, recruitment, internal cohesion...
  - → Critique to greed studies: need to measure this properly

# Beyond greed vs grievance

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  - → Opportunistic or *greedy* leaders can co-exist with ideology-motivated participants
- Alternative points of view: e.g., the role of the international system vs explanations that only focus on *domestic* factors

# Beyond conflict onset

- Main focus is on civil war onset, which roughly tries to explain why at some point individuals decide to use organized violence against the state
- But if we care about civil wars because of the human suffering (or even economic consequences), we should look at least at two different things
  - → How long do wars last?
  - → Why do wars break out again? (we'll see this in the postwar week)

# How long do civil wars last?

- Fearon (2004) 'Why do some civil wars last so much longer than others?'
- Two types of particularly long conflicts:
  - → Conflicts where rebel groups receive funding from contraband activities: diamonds, coca, opium...
  - → 'Sons-of-the-soil' conflicts: ethnic minority in the periphery against a dominant ethnic group that supports migrants into the periphery

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- Commitment problems
  - → Why would I stop fighting and reach a negotiated settlement?
  - → Wartime contraband is making me rich even if fighting is costly
  - → I'm sending migrants of my group to your region, which will increase in local power in the future

# How long do civil wars last?

## Colombia's Longest Insurgency and the Last Chance for Peace?

Within the ELN, differing ideologies and visions for the end of conflict may set a time limit on the potential for peace.

December 23, 2019

Mathew Charles

Tweet



# How long do civil wars last?

- But another explanation is that the way a civil war is fought could also impact its duration
- Why did civil wars in Colombia, Guatemala, ... last for so long?
  - → not the same, but why did the Troubles in NI or ETA in Spain last for so long?
- Ideas?

# How long do civil wars last?

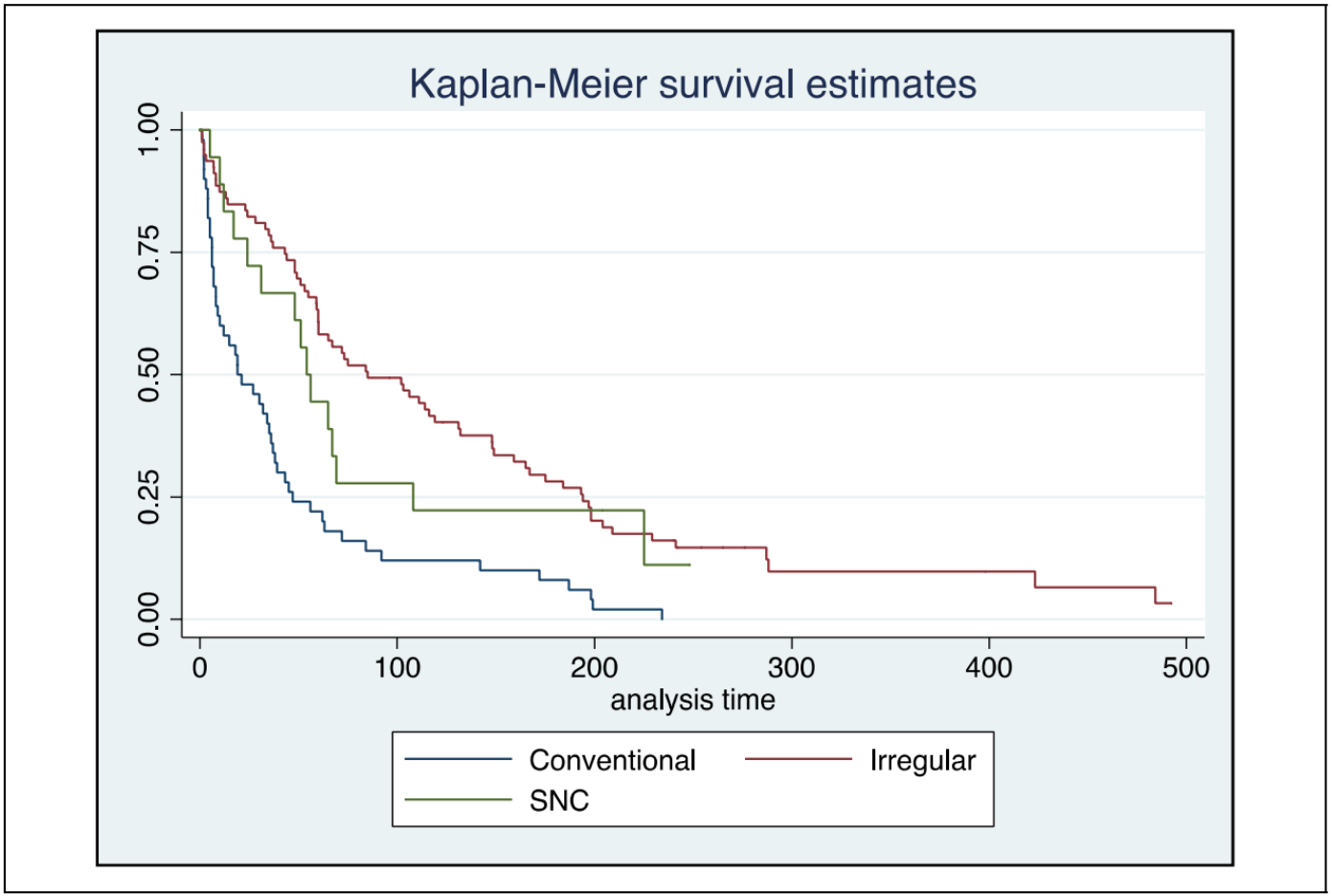



**Figure 1.** Duration of civil wars by technology of rebellion, in months (TR dataset).

- Balcells & Kalyvas (*Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2014)
- Looking at the duration depending on **technology of rebellion**

# How long do civil wars last?

- What about **grievances**?
- How can they impact the duration of wars?
- And can they explain why some conflicts are so durable?

# Next seminar

- Anand Gopal, 'The other Afghan women' (*New Yorker*, Sept 2021)
- Why women turned against the US and supported the Taliban

