



ROADBLOCKS: MARKERS OF CONTROL AND CONTESTATION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

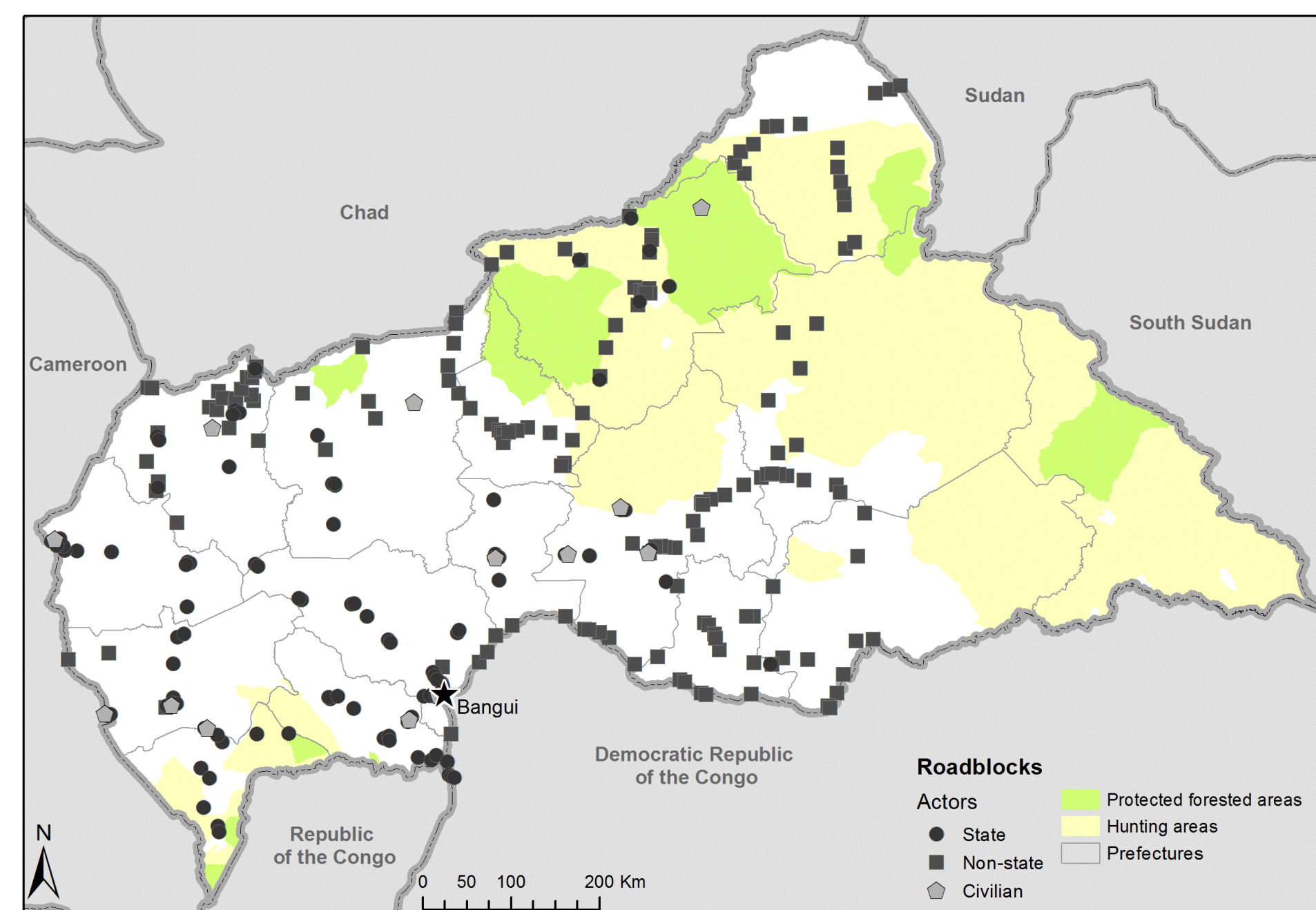


The Political Economy of Conflict — Authority Fragmentation and Stabilization in the Central African Republic (CAR), 2017

INTRODUCTION

Roadblocks are a key mechanism for conflict funding in the Central African Republic (IPIS, 2017), enabling armed groups, state, and civilian actors alike to collect taxes on transiting goods and resources. But while they have enabled researchers to assess control over trafficking corridors in the country and region, never have roadblocks been studied *alongside* conflict or natural resources data, in order to determine authority consolidation or contestation in strategic areas. As the CAR conflict (2012-present) has continued fragmenting since the 2014 disbanding of the Séléka coalition (which came to power by force in 2013), armed groups now occupy up to 80% of the country's territory.

Roadblocks in the Central African Republic, 2017



METHODOLOGY

Roadblock mapping:

- Geo-referenced points of roadblocks (IPIS, 2017) onto map of CAR.

Contestation in strategic areas and near significant roadblocks:

- Plotted conflict events (ACLED, 2017) by X-Y coordinates; calculated conflict density (Kernel smoothing, search radius = 60 km).
- Composite score of proximity to natural resource sites, adding Euclidian distance to mining sites (IPIS) weighted 50%, protected areas, and hunting zones (WRI) each weighted 25%.
- Composite score of contestation in strategic areas, adding conflict density to natural resource proximity (10=highest).
- Extract values to points for contestation near significant roadblocks.

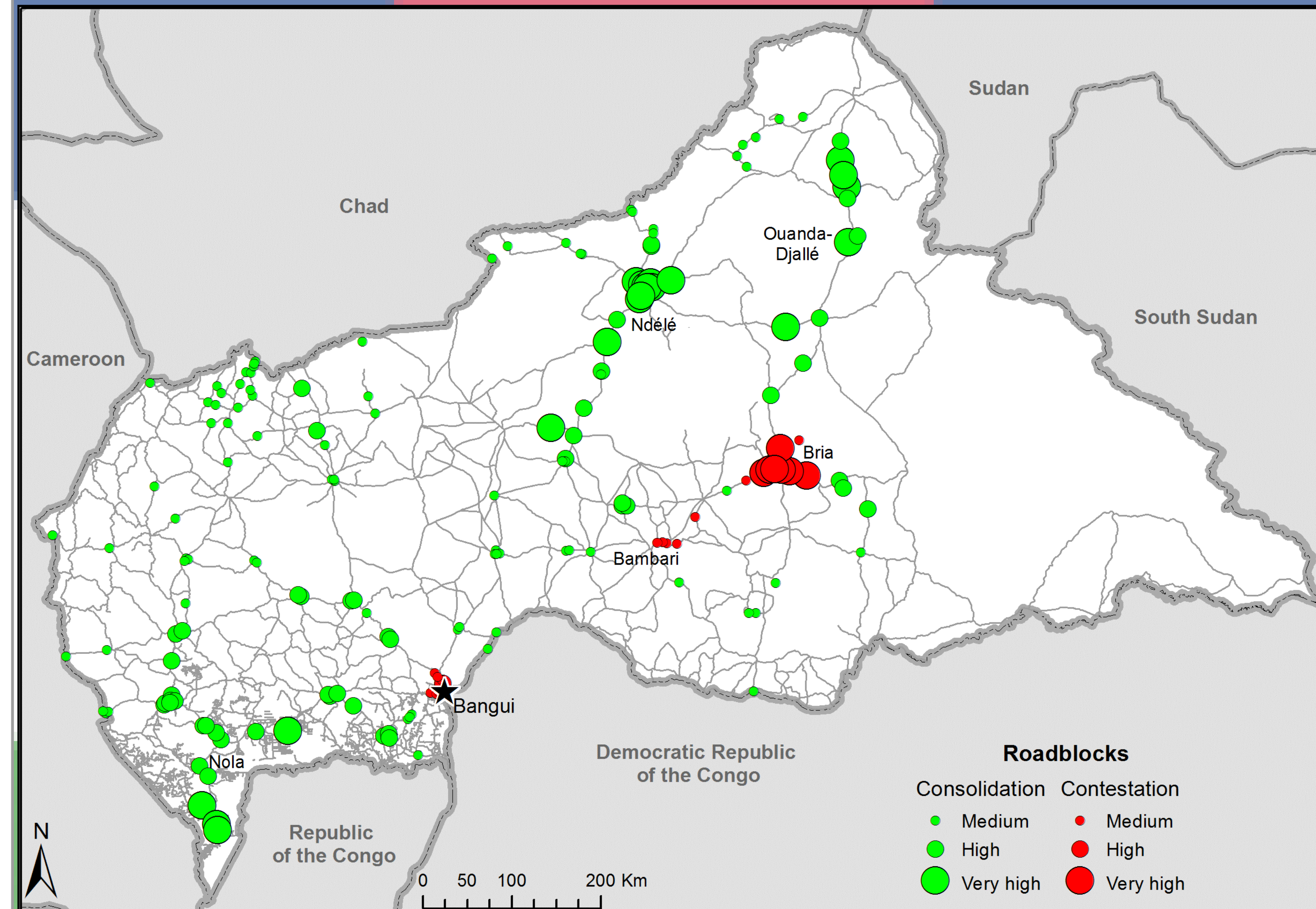
Consolidation in strategic areas and near significant roadblocks:

- Reclassify conflict density 1 (high) to 5 (low).
- Composite score of consolidation in strategic areas, adding reclassified conflict data to natural resource proximity (10=highest).
- Extract values to points for consolidation near strategic roadblocks.

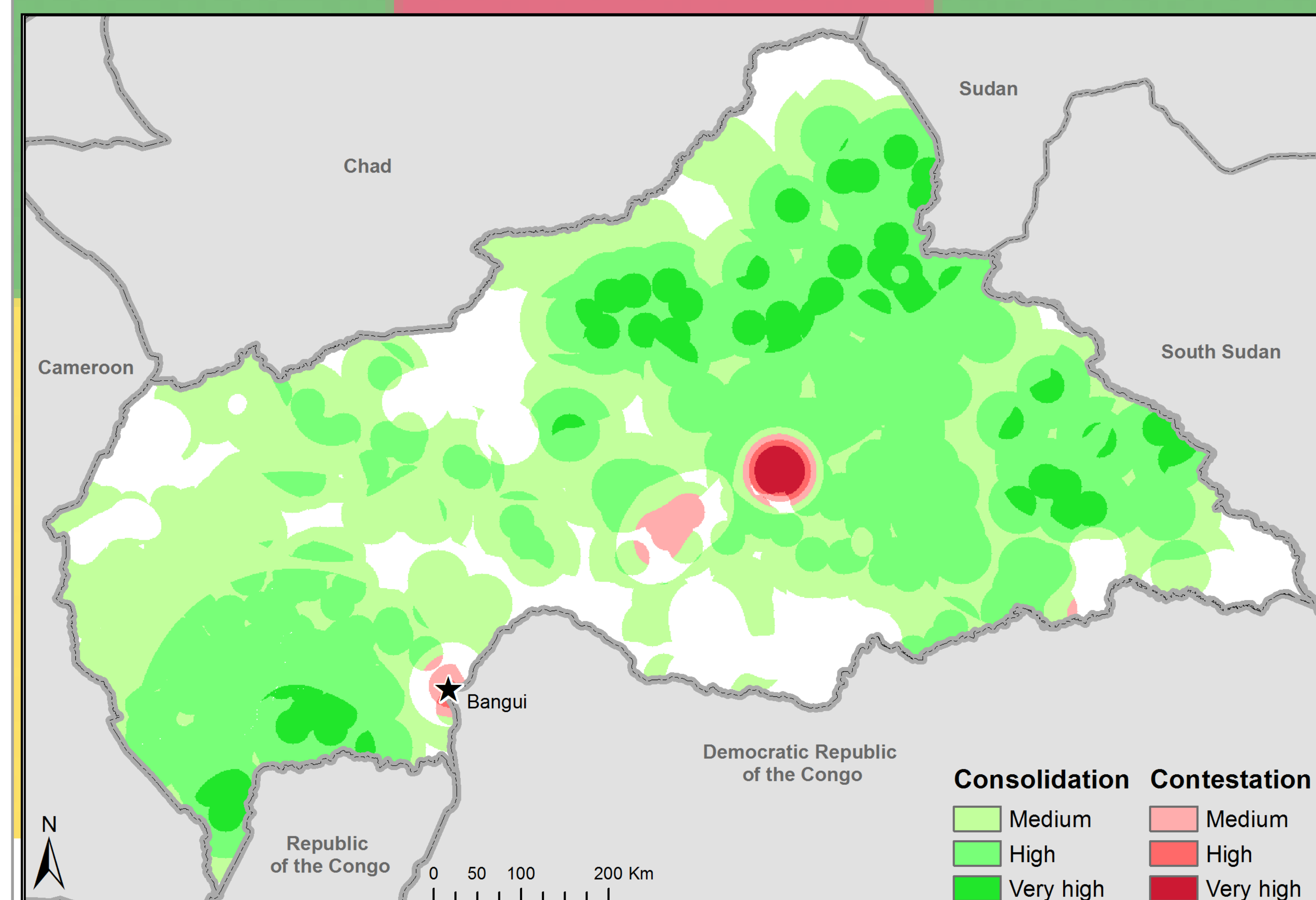
Cartographer: Archibald S. Henry; GIS for International Applications DHP P207; May 8th, 2018.

Sources: World Resources Institute (2013); International Peace Information Service (2017); Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (2017), ESRI. Projected Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 33N Transverse Mercator.

Authority Consolidation/Contestation Near Significant Roadblocks, 2017



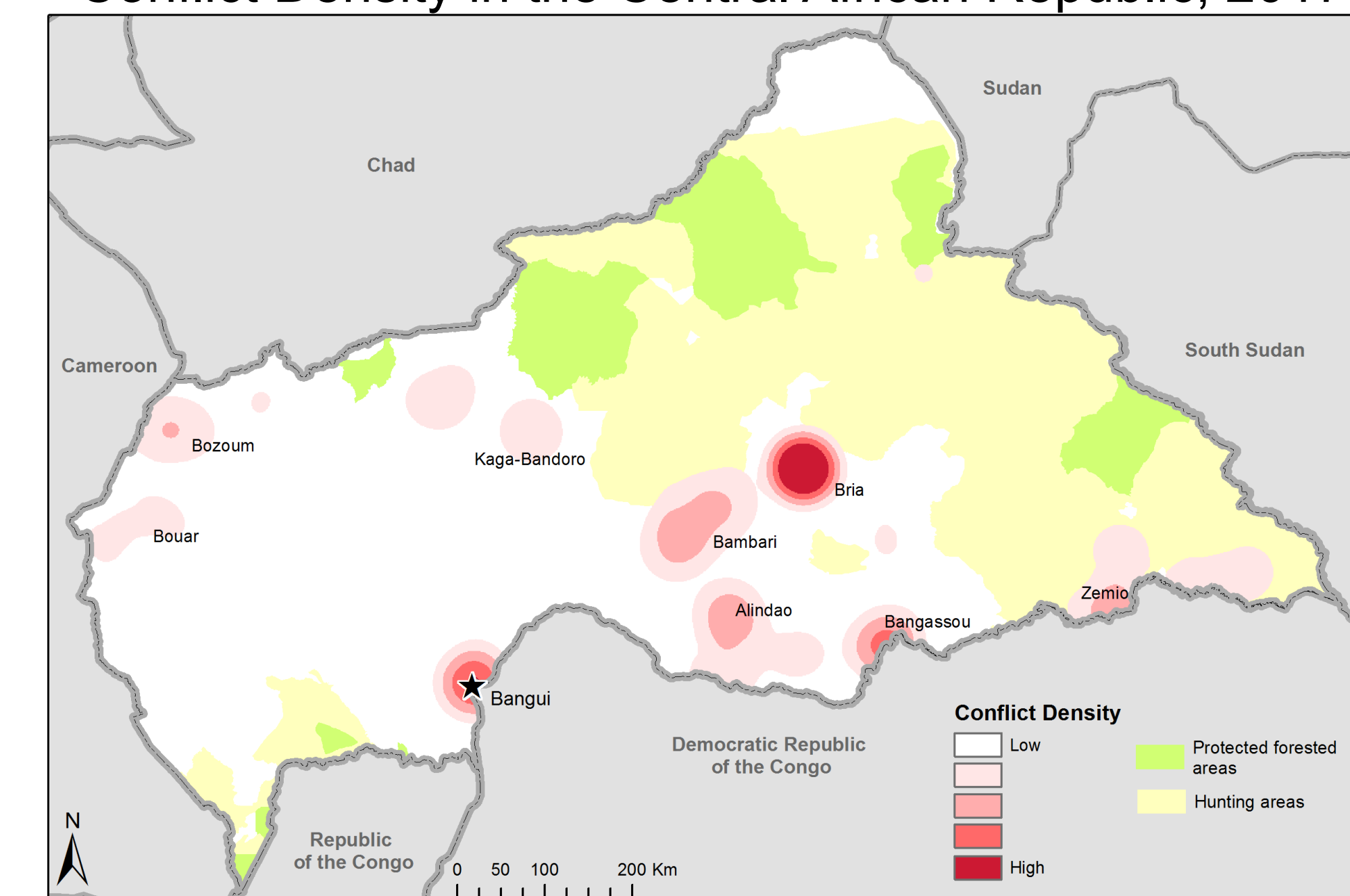
Authority Consolidation/Contestation in Strategic Areas Nationwide, 2017



CONCLUSION

The most strategic roadblocks in the country (measured by proximity to natural resources) exhibit authority consolidation by armed actors, with the exception of Bria in Haute-Kotto prefecture, Bambari in Ouaka prefecture, and around the capital Bangui. Consolidation is most pronounced in the Northeast, held by ex-Séléka groups, and the Southwest, controlled by the government and anti-Balaka militia. These results are consistent with current trends in the conflict, but also challenge the idea that Bangui is 'stabilized' and the narrative of permanent conflict 'fragmentation' beyond the capital—instead suggesting a stabilization of authority in much of the country.

Conflict Density in the Central African Republic, 2017



Authority Consolidation in Strategic Areas Nationwide

Raster score	Cell count	Km ²	Proportion Total Area	Percent Total Area (Country)
3	250	250000	0.000399	0.04%
4	1587	1587000	0.00253	0.25%
5	7335	7335000	0.011694	1.17%
6	19101	19101000	0.030453	3.04%
7	95419	95419000	0.152128	15.21%
8	209744	2.10E+08	0.334397	33.44%
9	247758	2.48E+08	0.395003	39.50%
10	46036	46036000	0.073396	7.34%

LIMITATIONS

Not all valuable resources in CAR could be accounted for in the calculations due to data constraints, and proximity to natural resource sites cannot be the only measure for roadblock significance. The flow of other goods, including licit and illicit ones, also provide armed actors funding opportunities. Ideally, a comprehensive calculation of 'significance' should consider proximity to resources, but also road traffic and vehicle flows, population centers, and regional trade routes. Nevertheless, this research remains a good starting point to assess trends of conflict fragmentation and authority consolidation in the country.