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Refugee Repatriation and Conflict: Evidence from the Maximum Pressure Sanctions

Christopher W. Blair
Benjamin C. Krick
Austin L. Wright

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Christopher W. Blair† Benjamin C. Krick‡ Austin L. Wright§

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Abstract

How does refugee return shape conflict in migrants' destination communities? We argue that conditions inducing repatriation bear critically on the consequences of return. When refugees return because of worsening conditions in host countries, they are often marginalized and destitute. In this setting, mass return risks amplifying conflict in returnee-receiving communities. We test this theory leveraging the Trump administration's sudden re-imposition of sanctions on Iran in 2018. These "Maximum Pressure" sanctions decimated the Iranian economy and spurred mass return of Afghan refugees from Iran. Exploiting historical returnee settlement patterns and the plausibly exogenous timing of the sanctions, we estimate the causal effect of large-scale refugee repatriation on violence. We find that the returnee influx increased insurgent violence in returnees' destination communities. We find suggestive evidence for an opportunity cost mechanism. Sanctions-induced currency depreciation reduced household incomes in returnee-receiving areas, lowering reservation wages and driving up insurgent recruitment. We also find evidence that Iran retaliated against the sanctions by escalating support for Afghan insurgent factions. While insurgent violence increased in repatriation communities, there was no effect on communal conflict.

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†Department of Politics, Princeton University, chris.blair@princeton.edu.

‡Department of Political Science, Duke University, benjamin.krick@duke.edu.

§Harris School of Public Policy, The University of Chicago, austinlw@uchicago.edu.

1 Introduction

By the end of 2023, more than 43 million people were displaced across international borders (UNHCR, 2023).[1] These forcibly displaced people (FDP) face acute risks from war, repression, food insecurity, and climate change. Increasingly, FDP flee long-run, multidimensional political and socioeconomic crises, raising the specter of protracted displacement. 66% of global FDP face multi-year displacements to low or middle-income host countries, and the average refugee spends 10–26 years displaced abroad (UNHCR, 2023). Compounding this dire situation is the fact that most FDP come from marginalized backgrounds, and are targeted specifically because of their ethnic, religious, political, or other identities.

The international community prioritizes repatriation—return of displaced people to their origin communities—as the preferred solution for refugees (Zieck, 1997; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). In the ideal-typical case, FDP return home when conflicts and political instability abate in their origin countries (Hathaway, 1997; Alrababa'h et al., 2023). In this circumstance, safe and dignified repatriation becomes feasible because improving conditions at origin allow displaced people to realize fundamental rights and reintegrate (Bradley, 2013; Long, 2013). Most extant work examines the consequences of return in this classical case (e.g., Verwimp and Muñoz-Mora, 2018; Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020). Yet, global repatriation patterns belie the assumption that return is only likely to occur when security improves in origin countries. For instance, nearly 325,000 refugees returned to Ukraine in 2023, notwithstanding active hostilities in the country (UNHCR, 2023). Over the past three decades, 76% of all returnees have repatriated to countries suffering ongoing hostilities

[1] We use the term forcibly displaced people (FDP) to refer to people forcibly displaced across international borders. FDP include: refugees, who are individuals recognized as having fled their homes for reasons specified in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; asylum-seekers, who are individuals seeking refugee status; refugees under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); and other individuals in need of international protection as designated by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

(Figure A-1).[2]

Repatriation to conflict-affected origin communities occurs for various reasons. Some FDP may choose to return, in spite of conflict risks, because they hold strong, place-based attachments to home and develop expertise in risk assessment (Ghosn et al., 2021), or because they want to affect positive change and contribute to peacebuilding in their origin communities (Müller-Funk and Fransen, 2023). Occasionally, host states and international organizations directly incentivize return to conflict-affected origins through cash inducements intended to lower mobility costs and improve returnees' reintegration prospects (Blair and Wright, 2024). Increasingly, however, FDP return to origin countries—despite ongoing violence and absent aid-based incentives to repatriate—because of worsening conditions in host countries (Chimni, 2004; Schwartz, 2022). In particular, refugees may repatriate because of anti-migrant repression, policy restriction, or economic crises in asylum countries. If hosting conditions become sufficiently severe, the costs and risks of remaining in exile may exceed the costs and risks of return to conflict-affected origins (Omata, 2013; Onoma, 2013).

Despite the increasing incidence of mass refugee return as a result of worsening conditions in host countries, little existing work credibly examines how returnees fare when they repatriate in these circumstances. Does mass, coerced return exacerbate violence in origin communities?[3] Building evidence on this question is important for conflict prevention, development, and humanitarian policymaking, as well as for research on displacement. Both theoretical and empirical challenges have hampered progress. Theoretically, scholars have tended to overlook large-scale returns to conflict-affected countries because existing frame-

[2]Specifically, 76% of repatriates returned to countries where organized political violence caused at least 25 battle-related deaths in the same year. Nearly 41% of repatriates returned to countries where organized political violence caused at least 1000 battle-related deaths in the same year.

[3]We refer to returns that occur because of worsening host conditions as "coerced." This is because pressures FDP face in these settings attenuate the voluntariness of their return decisionmaking. In the case of anti-migrant repression or policy restriction, returns may be directly coerced by state agents. Economic crises in host countries may indirectly coerce repatriation by evaporating refugees' livelihoods, yielding unlivable conditions.

works treat repatriation as a phenomenon that only occurs when conditions improve at origin (Black and Koser, 1999; Zakirova and Buzurukov, 2021). Empirically, disentangling the consequences of refugee return to conflict-affected origin countries must confront two inferential hurdles. First, when and where returnees migrate is endogenous to security conditions in prospective destinations. Because return decisions are shaped by wartime violence (Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020; Beaman, Onder and Onder, 2022), few quantitative studies have been able to credibly estimate the downstream effects of repatriation on subsequent conflict.[4] Second, we lack granular microdata on refugee repatriation and conflict in most fragile, violent settings (Zakirova and Buzurukov, 2021, p. 4461).

In this paper we craft a theory linking the political and socioeconomic consequences of return with the context in which return occurs. While individuals' return decisions are complex and idiosyncratic (Omata, 2013; Alrababa'h et al., 2023), we identify three major conditions under which large-scale return movements occur: (1) improving conditions at origin; (2) exogenous shifts in mobility costs; and (3) worsening conditions in host countries. In the first, conventional case, mass return is possible because improving conditions in origin countries, like economic booms or the end of wars, raise the relative benefits of return. As noted above, this is the setting that has received the most attention in extant research. In the second case, mass return is possible because programmatic interventions reduce its costliness, for instance by subsidizing transportation back to origin communities, making repatriation more affordable (Gerver, 2018).[5] In the third case, repatriation occurs, despite substantial risks of return, because of escalating costs associated with remaining in a host country. Each of these return drivers has a unique effect on returnees' socioeconomic endowments. FDP returning to improving home conditions (context 1) or with economic assistance (context 2)

[4]See Blair and Wright (2024) for an exception.

[5]Credit is a non-negligible constraint on migration. Recent policies in Pakistan and elsewhere have aimed at facilitating repatriation by providing returnees with cash transfers to ease reintegration (Blair and Wright, 2024).

are generally better-off, while FDP returning because of worsening host conditions (context 3) are often impoverished. Different consequences of repatriation result from these distinctive contexts. Focusing on the third context, we argue vulnerable returnees fleeing negative conditions in host countries are likely to exacerbate conflict in fragile origin settings.

To test this theory we examine the large-scale repatriation of Afghans from Iran in 2018. These returns were induced by the Trump administration's sudden withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and consequent re-imposition of counterproliferation sanctions on Iran.[6] These Maximum Pressure sanctions caused sweeping economic devastation throughout Iran, reducing GDP by $153 billion and increasing inflation by 21 percentage points. Currency depreciation pursuant to the sanctions disproportionately harmed the roughly 3 million Afghan migrants residing in Iran at the time, many of whom occupied cash-based jobs in the informal sector. Using a novel combination of observational and survey-based measures, we validate that the sanctions negatively affected Afghan migrants, and significantly increased returns to Afghanistan. The scale of repatriation following the sanctions was unparalleled: more than 610,000 Afghans spontaneously returned in the nine months after the sanctions were announced, exceeding the number of documented returns in all other settings worldwide by 1.5 times over the same period. We identify the causal effect of mass repatriation by exploiting the unanticipated re-imposition of the sanctions, in tandem with historical returnee settlement patterns, in a difference-in-differences framework. Consistent with qualitative accounts of military planners (Department of Defense, 2018) and Afghan returnees themselves (Bengali, Mostaghim and Faizy, 2018), we find that sanctions-induced returns increased militancy overall.

We consider two main mechanisms underpinning this result. First, we explore a classical political economy account of rebel recruitment based on opportunity costs (Collier and

[6]The JCPOA, more commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, was agreed by the Obama Administration. This agreement relaxed comprehensive sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program (section A.7).

Hoeffler, 2004; Dube and Vargas, 2013). Poor conditions in the licit economy lower the opportunity cost of armed mobilization (Bueno de Mesquita, 2013), increasing rebel recruitment and combat capacity. In our context, Afghan migrants in Iran suffered a significant, negative welfare shock as a result of sanctions. The magnitude of this shock was sufficiently large to spillover to non-migrants in communities to which returnees repatriated.[7] We provide evidence of deteriorating economic conditions in Afghan communities more exposed to repatriation. To understand whether sanctions-induced destitution fueled violence by increasing insurgent recruitment, we examine tactical shifts in combat. Insurgents' tactical choices are dictated by their resources. With ready access to cheap recruits, insurgents can engage in more high-risk and sophisticated attacks, which can only be perpetrated by large teams of combatants (Iyengar, Monten and Hanson, 2011). Consistent with this intuition, we find that the overall increase in violence in returnee-receiving areas was driven by an increase in labor-intensive tactics. Combined with evidence of economic immiseration in returnee-exposed communities, this result represents suggestive evidence for an opportunity cost mechanism.

Second, foreign sponsorship often directly augments insurgent capacity, increasing militant violence. With outside arms and funding, insurgents can engage in more and deadlier attacks (Blair, 2024*b*). Iran may have retaliated against US sanctions by escalating covert support for Afghan militant factions, driving up anti-government violence in the communities to which Afghan migrants repatriated. We develop several novel measures of clandestine Iranian support, and find some evidence for this dynamic. Repatriation coincided with a greater increase in levels of violence in returnee-receiving areas along covert Iranian facilitation routes.

Turning from insurgent to social conflict, we document no distinguishable increase in

[7]Remittances are one channel through which the negative welfare shock experienced by Afghans in Iran spilled over to affect non-migrants in Afghanistan (Department of Defense, 2018).

communal violence associated with the 2018 return shock. This result contrasts with a large body of evidence that suggests repatriation increases criminality and social strife (e.g., Petrin, 2002; Schwartz, 2019). As implied by our theory, one reason for the disjuncture between our findings and those of previous studies is the fact that we evaluate a context in which returns were spontaneous and driven by worsening conditions in a host country. When returns occur under cash-for-repatriation schemes or because of improving conditions in origin communities, returnees and their non-migrant neighbors are likely to compete over land, housing, and jobs in destination communities (Van Leeuwen and Van Der Haar, 2016). Jealousy and resentment over returnees' preferential access to aid may also compound communal tensions (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2022; Breslawski, 2024). In contrast, destitute returnees repatriating as a result of economic crises or host government coercion are more likely to elicit sympathy and goodwill from non-migrant neighbors in their origin communities (Peisakhin, Stoop and van der Windt, 2024). In supplemental analyses we also highlight the moderating impact of local institutions for dispute resolution. Returnees who repatriate to communities with strong, informal adjudication mechanisms are better able to avoid entanglement in communal disputes.

Our study advances the research program on forced displacement in a number of key ways. First, we offer an important conceptual contribution by providing a typology of return contexts, and developing a theory about how and why the consequences of repatriation are linked with the conditions under which return occurs. Prior work focuses primarily on the consequences of refugee return that occurs because of improving conditions in origin countries (Schwartz, 2019; Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020) or as a result of cash-for-return programs (Blair and Wright, 2024). In this literature, and the broader scholarship on displacement, evidence is mixed regarding whether and why FDP mitigate (Kreibaum, 2016; Zhou and Shaver, 2021) or exacerbate (Lischer, 2006; Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006) conflict. We highlight an overlooked phenomenon whereby mass returns occur as a result of worsening

conditions in host countries. When FDP are forced to repatriate to fragile and conflict-affected origins by economic crises and host state repression, return risks enflaming conflict.

Second, by distinguishing varieties of violence in one setting, we make important progress in crafting generalized theories of conflict. Existing research recognizes diverse types and tactics of political violence that occur during war, ranging from anti-government attacks and counterinsurgent repression to land disputes and social conflict (Wood, 2003; Kalyvas, 2006; Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2011; Albertus, 2020; Biddle, 2022). Yet, these outcomes tend to be studied in isolation. We estimate quantities of interest related to rebel and communal violence in a single subnational setting. We also offer important support for classical, political economy theories of conflict. By disaggregating tactics of violence, we document evidence consistent with an opportunity cost account of rebel recruitment—insurgents escalate employment of labor-intensive tactics in response to mass return of destitute FDP. Our findings comport with well-known qualitative accounts (Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo, 1989; Lischer, 2006), and highlight the nuanced ways displacement shocks, resources, and local institutions interact to shape wartime violence in its various forms.

Third, our study provides new evidence of negative externalities associated with sanctions, an important foreign policy tool. A body of scholarship highlights the negative humanitarian consequences of sanctions, particularly for vulnerable populations (Weiss et al., 1997; RezaeeDaryakenari, Asadzade and Thies, 2024). In our case, sanctions intended to restrain Iran's nuclear capabilities inadvertently boosted militancy in Afghanistan and immiserated displaced populations regionally. Moreover, by shaping patterns of displacement and repatriation, sanctions can cause significant spillovers to neighboring countries. We are among the first to highlight migration as an unintended downstream consequence of sanctions (see also Idrobo, 2024).

Finally, in spite of its policy significance, repatriation is difficult to assess empirically because returnees' decisions are fundamentally endogenous to patterns of conflict. Motivated

by Rozo and Vargas (2021), we leverage a quasi-experimental design to credibly estimate the effects of repatriation on conflict. We offer the first plausibly causal evidence on the consequences of refugee return induced by worsening conditions in a refugee-hosting country. Identifying the consequences of repatriation is crucial given the prevailing view that return is the best available solution to forced displacement (Bradley, 2013; Long, 2013). To understand the effects of mass refugee return, policymakers must take seriously the unique contexts within which repatriation occurs. Doing so is central for devising policies to improve livelihoods and mitigate risks associated with displacement during and after conflict. Achieving sustainable, safe, and dignified solutions for FDP, requires careful, measured consideration of the contextual dynamics returnees and their non-migrant neighbors face.

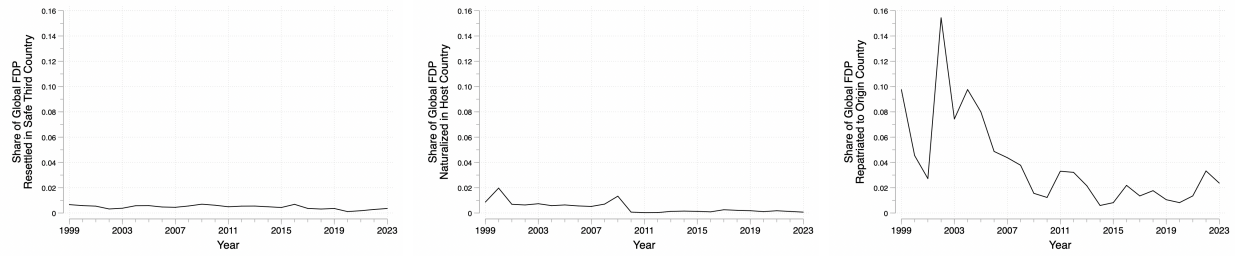
2 Durable Solutions

To address the needs of the world's displaced, the international community defines three "durable solutions": (1) *resettlement* in developed, Global North countries; (2) *naturalization* and permanent integration in Global South countries of asylum; or (3) *repatriation* to origin countries when safe and dignified return becomes possible. Facilitating access to these durable solutions for refugees is critical for international security, economic development, and upholding normative and international legal commitments on refugee protection. Unfortunately, the world's FDP face a fundamental solutions deficit. Over the past 25 years, no more than 16% of FDP have been able to access any durable solution (Figure 1). The collapse of the international solutions architecture is particularly apparent over the past decade; since 2013, fewer than 3.8% of global FDP have been resettled, naturalized, or returned home. As UNHCR Commissioner Filippo Grandi put it, "forced displacement is outpacing solutions for those on the run" (UNHCR, 2022).

Important political trends underlie the refugee solutions deficit. Resettlement to Global North countries is hampered by rampant xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-refugee back-

lash (Dancygier, 2010; Hangartner et al., 2019). Public concern about alleged cultural and economic threats posed by migrants has driven widespread, mass opposition to resettlement (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014), while globalization has also weakened the pro-migration consensus in developed economies (Peters, 2017). Hence, despite facially liberal commitments to refugee inclusion, developed states have restricted resettlement (Betts, 2009). Since 2000, resettlement rates have never exceeded 0.7% of global FDP stock.

Figure 1: Access to Durable Solutions for Refugees



Note: From left to right, the panels respectively plot annual shares of the world's FDP who were resettled to a safe third country, permanently naturalized into a host country, or repatriated to an origin country. Data come from the UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database.

Naturalization in Global South host countries is similarly rare. Fewer than 2% of global FDP have been permanently integrated in developing countries of asylum in the post-2000 period. Both weak state capacity and low political willingness constrain opportunities for naturalization. The first barrier is institutional—75% of FDP reside in low- and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 2023) with under-developed and under-resourced structures for migration management (Norman, 2020). The bureaucratic and administrative burden of refugee naturalization is significant, and though Global North countries often promise to underwrite costs, these commitments are rarely fulfilled. When Tanzania attempted a large-scale naturalization of Burundian refugees, promised funding from developed states fell through, undermining the effort (Blair, Grossman and Weinstein, 2022*a*, p. 372). Political support for naturalization is also tenuous. While many Global South states have implemented lib-

eral displacement policies intended to encourage local integration and refugee-self-reliance, citizenship remains politically contentious (Blair, Grossman and Weinstein, 2022*b*). Naturalization campaigns often succumb to political and electoral pressure from policymakers and publics concerned about identity and other sociotropic considerations (Milner, 2014; Ghosn, Braithwaite and Chu, 2019).

Given these challenges, refugee repatriation is generally regarded as the preferred solution for FDP. Policymakers tend to favor return because, unlike resettlement or naturalization, it places no legal or fiscal responsibilities on third or refugee-hosting countries (Harrell-Bond, 1989; Chimni, 2004). FDP tend to favor return because it allows them to realize fundamental rights related to citizenship and belonging (Bradley, 2013; Long, 2013). As with the other durable solutions, however, refugee repatriation has declined over time. This trend is a direct consequence of the growing duration of wars and sociopolitical crises. Since 2001, civil conflicts, which produce a majority of the world's refugees (Shaver et al., 2024), have become longer and more complex, involving multiple belligerent parties and frequent foreign intervention (Howard and Stark, 2018; Blair et al., 2022). Insecurity is the chief deterrent of voluntary repatriation (Blitz, Sales and Marzano, 2005; Alrababa'h et al., 2023), so naturally, protracted conflicts are a key barrier to return. Indeed, standard models of returnee decisionmaking treat war-related violence and destruction as the foremost impediment to repatriation (Koser, 1997; Black and Koser, 1999; Zakirova and Buzurukov, 2021). Conventional wisdom, then, suggests refugee return is most likely when conditions improve at origin. This view informs critical international repatriation policies predicated on the notion that FDP should return home when the underlying causes of their displacement are alleviated, such as when wars end (Hathaway, 1997; Zieck, 1997).

Existing research on the political, social, and economic consequences of return migration tends to focus on this ideal-typical situation, when FDP repatriate *after* the conclusion of civil strife and mass violence in their origin countries (e.g. Verwimp and Muñoz-Mora,

2018; Schwartz, 2019; Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2021, 2022).[8] Other work considers the consequences of refugee return spurred by exogenous reductions in mobility costs, rather than improving conditions at origin (Gerver, 2018; Blair and Wright, 2024). These perspectives neglect the fact that FDP may also return to origin countries *despite* ongoing violence and *absent* aid-based incentives to repatriate (Ghosn et al., 2021; Müller-Funk and Fransen, 2023).

Worsening conditions in host countries represent one of the most common reasons FDP repatriate to conflict-affected origin countries. In particular, utility-maximizing models of migrant decisionmaking (e.g., Hanson and McIntosh, 2016) suggest that FDP may return to wartorn origin countries when circumstances in host countries become sufficiently severe, for instance because of anti-refugee repression, policy restriction, or economic crises in countries of asylum. Under these conditions, the relative benefits of return may exceed the costs and risks of remaining in restrictive and impoverished host countries (Omata, 2013; Onoma, 2013). Repatriation in this context may actually be a risk-mitigation strategy (Kaiser, 2010). Cases abound of return resulting from restrictive or unlivable conditions in host countries. For example, in 2023 more than 550,000 Afghan refugees repatriated from Pakistan to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan under pressure from Pakistani government coercion (IOM, 2024). More generally, asylum countries interested in reducing their hosting burdens have innovated restrictive tactics—like manipulating status determination procedures—intended drive FDP home without formally violating their protection obligations (Chimni, 2004; Schwartz, 2022).

[8]We use the term "ideal-typical" in the Weberian sense. We do not make any normative judgment about whether FDP should return at the conclusion of conflict in their origin countries. Our point is merely that international policymakers and most scholars view return at the end of conflict as the most common situation when mass repatriation occurs.

Table 1: Characterizing Global Refugee Return Waves, 1974–2018

Year	Country of Origin	Country of Asylum	# of Returnees	Primary Reason for Return	Year	Country of Origin	Country of Asylum	# of Returnees	Primary Reason for Return
1974	Pakistan	Bangladesh	104,320	Improving Conditions at Origin	1996	Burundi	D.R. Congo	105,653	Worsening Conditions at Host
1978	D.R. Congo	Angola	107,640	Improving Conditions at Origin	1996	Rwanda	Burundi	127,473	Worsening Conditions at Host
1979	Cambodia	Vietnam	120,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	1996	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	776,521	Worsening Conditions at Host
1979	Myanmar	Bangladesh	150,680	Worsening Conditions at Host	1996	Rwanda	Tanzania	506,073	Worsening Conditions at Host
1980	Angola	D.R. Congo	200,000	Reduction in Mobility Costs	1997	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	178,429	Worsening Conditions at Host
1980	Cambodia	Thailand	175,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	1998	Liberia	Cote d'Ivoire	100,563	Improving Conditions at Origin
1980	Zimbabwe	Mozambique	150,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	1998	Liberia	Guinea	135,786	Improving Conditions at Origin
1982	Chad	Cameroon	133,080	Reduction in Mobility Costs	1998	Sierra Leone	Guinea	115,000	Improving Conditions at Origin
1982	Uganda	D.R. Congo	110,000	Reduction in Mobility Costs	1999	Afghanistan	Iran	161,094	Reduction in Mobility Costs
1984	Ethiopia	Rwanda	242,140	Worsening Conditions at Host	1999	Serbia/Kosovo	Albania	435,790	Improving Conditions at Origin
1985	Ethiopia	Sudan	115,520	Improving Conditions at Origin	1999	Timor-Leste	Indonesia	127,528	Improving Conditions at Origin
1986	Ethiopia	Somalia	104,430	Improving Conditions at Origin	1999	Serbia/Kosovo	North Macedonia	233,400	Improving Conditions at Origin
1986	Ethiopia	Sudan	109,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	2000	Afghanistan	Iran	215,566	Reduction in Mobility Costs
1991	Afghanistan	Pakistan	175,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	2002	Afghanistan	Iran	376,247	Improving Conditions at Origin
1991	Iraq	Iran	1,333,860	Improving Conditions at Origin	2002	Afghanistan	Pakistan	1,569,248	Improving Conditions at Origin
1991	Sudan	Ethiopia	370,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	2003	Afghanistan	Iran	269,391	Improving Conditions at Origin
1992	Afghanistan	Iran	216,600	Improving Conditions at Origin	2003	Afghanistan	Pakistan	375,526	Improving Conditions at Origin
1992	Afghanistan	Pakistan	1,360,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	2004	Afghanistan	Iran	454,547	Improving Conditions at Origin
1993	Mozambique	Malawi	345,086	Improving Conditions at Origin	2004	Afghanistan	Pakistan	424,477	Improving Conditions at Origin
1994	Afghanistan	Iran	226,669	Worsening Conditions at Host	2004	Iraq	Iran	191,648	Improving Conditions at Origin
1994	Afghanistan	Pakistan	102,658	Worsening Conditions at Host	2005	Afghanistan	Iran	289,647	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Burundi	Tanzania	271,087	Worsening Conditions at Host	2005	Afghanistan	Pakistan	461,118	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Mozambique	Malawi	624,467	Improving Conditions at Origin	2006	Afghanistan	Iran	243,648	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Mozambique	Zimbabwe	102,753	Improving Conditions at Origin	2006	Afghanistan	Pakistan	143,019	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Rwanda	Burundi	338,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	2007	Afghanistan	Pakistan	365,663	Reduction in Mobility Costs
1994	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	450,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	2008	Afghanistan	Pakistan	274,200	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Rwanda	Uganda	210,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	2010	Afghanistan	Pakistan	109,383	Worsening Conditions at Host
1994	Rwanda	Tanzania	210,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	2011	Cote d'Ivoire	Liberia	135,109	Improving Conditions at Origin
1995	Afghanistan	Iran	194,287	Worsening Conditions at Host	2011	Libya	Tunisia	148,951	Improving Conditions at Origin
1995	Afghanistan	Pakistan	153,274	Worsening Conditions at Host	2013	Syria	Turkey	140,756	Worsening Conditions at Host
1996	Afghanistan	Pakistan	140,390	Worsening Conditions at Host	2016	Afghanistan	Pakistan	381,275	Reduction in Mobility Costs
					2018	Syria	Turkey	177,282	Worsening Conditions at Host

Note: We code all cases in which UNHCR records $\geq$ 100,000 registered refugee returns in a dyad-year. We consult primary and secondary sources (detailed in Table A-1) to make a determination about the primary reason for return of refugees in each wave. We characterize the primary reason for return based on how humanitarians, migrants, policymakers, and scholars describe collective incentives for repatriation in each scenario. These characterizations are ideal-typical. Of course, within each wave returnees hold diverse and mixed motives for repatriating at the individual- or household-level.

3 Refugee Repatriation Contexts

To advance our understanding of refugee repatriation, we systematize a typology of three common scenarios under which mass return occurs: (1) improving conditions in origin countries; (2) a reduction in mobility costs; and (3) worsening conditions in host countries.[9] This typology is both general and ideal-typical. We define repatriation contexts on the basis of the primary, *collective* reason motivating return of large groups of FDP. Individual and household return decisions are complex, multifaceted, and motivated by various and competing considerations (Omata, 2013; Hamlin, 2014; Ghosn et al., 2021). Our typology characterizes the broad structural opportunities, constraints, and pressures prospective returnees are subject to when making individual repatriation decisions. We also focus on characterizing the primary factor motivating the *modal* returnee within a given return wave. Inevitably, some individuals repatriating in a mass return situation will be incentivized for reasons distinct from those that motivate most other contemporaneous returnees. For example, while most returnees from Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2016 were induced by a cash-for-repatriation scheme, a smaller number of refugees were forced back by Pakistani police extortion (Blair and Wright, 2024). In Table 1 we examine major waves of refugee repatriation since 1974, and code the primary driver of return within each wave according to our typology.

Improving Conditions in Origin Countries In the classical case, returnees migrate home in response to improving conditions, such as economic booms or the end of wars, in their origin countries. Security conditions at home play the most important role in explaining refugees' intentions to return (Beaman, Onder and Onder, 2022). Alrababa'h et al. (2023) introduce a risk threshold framework, showing that refugees do not consider the possibility

[9]Our typology builds from Alrababa'h et al. (2023).

of repatriation until they perceive their country of origin as safe.[10] A marked improvement in security, facilitated by events such as negotiated settlements, local peace agreements, political transitions, or the deployment UN peacekeepers (Bove, Di Salvatore and Elia, 2024), may induce refugee return. Additionally, positive economic shocks and other improvements in livelihoods at origin may also attract refugee returnees. Improving labor market conditions, commodity price shocks, international aid programs, post-conflict reconstruction, and land restitution may all encourage repatriation (Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020; Weber and Hartman, 2022).

Reduction in Mobility Costs Programmatic interventions provide a second major impetus for return. In particular, humanitarian actors and host state governments increasingly employ cash-for-return schemes designed to subsidize repatriation by reducing transportation costs and offering reintegration support (Gerver, 2018). In these cases, repatriation is directly incentivized. Because information and financial barriers prevent refugees from returning home (Koser, 1997), programs that reduce repatriation costs by offering monetary assistance or information may facilitate return. These "assisted returns" are promoted through government and humanitarian programs, such as media campaigns and large-scale cash transfers. Cash-based interventions in particular may succeed in spurring return by increasing the financial returns to repatriation, and by increasing liquidity for financially-constrained migrants interested in repatriating. Blair and Wright (2024) evaluate one such program implemented in Pakistan in 2016, and find that an unconditional cash grant promoted Afghan repatriation, despite the fact that hostilities continued to rage in Afghanistan.

Worsening Conditions in Host Countries Deteriorating economic, political, and social conditions in a host country may also prompt mass return. In particular, if conditions

[10]This threshold is individual-specific. Risk perceptions are partly explained by individuals' exposure to violence before initial displacement (Ghosn et al., 2021).

in a host country become sufficiently severe, refugees may opt (or be forced) to repatriate even if negative conditions prevail in their origin countries. Hosting conditions can worsen in two common and non-mutually exclusive ways. First, host countries may face economic and political instability unrelated to the arrival or presence of FDP. 75% of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries in the Global South (UNHCR, 2023). These states are highly vulnerable to negative economic shocks, regional instability, and climate change. Disasters, recessions, and other shocks that threaten refugees' physical integrity and livelihood opportunities may induce large-scale repatriation (Camarena, 2016). Second, conditions for refugees may worsen due to targeted anti-migrant policies imposed by host governments. In particular, host state policymakers often scapegoat refugees for various political and economic problems (Milner, 2009; Onoma, 2013), and pursue restrictive policies aimed at repelling FDP (Rausis, 2023) or forcing resident refugees out (Chimni, 2004; Schwartz, 2022). Elites' anti-refugee rhetoric can also enflame popular anti-migrant xenophobia, significantly reducing quality of life for FDP in host communities. In extreme cases, host countries roll-back social service provision and use direct repression to coerce repatriation (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Pakistan offers one recent example. In late 2023, the Pakistani government implemented the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, which saw the mass deportation of nearly 700,000 undocumented Afghan migrants.

4 Repatriation Contexts and Consequences

How does mass repatriation shape conflict in returnee's destination communities? Existing evidence is highly mixed. In some settings, returnees upset fragile intracommunal dynamics, exacerbating poverty, crime, and social strife (Petrin, 2002; Fransen, Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2017; Verwimp and Muñoz-Mora, 2018; Schwartz, 2019). In other cases, repatriation can serve as an engine for peacebuilding, development, and human capital accu-

mulation (Harild, Christensen and Zetter, 2015; Bahar et al., 2024). A third possibility is that return has heterogeneous effects on conflict, blunting some forms of violence while exacerbating others (Blair and Wright, 2024).[11]

The typology of return contexts outlined above can help us make sense of these mixed findings. Specifically, to resolve ambiguity over the consequences of repatriation we consider differences resulting from different drivers of return. Our core argument is that the conditions inducing repatriation bear key implications for the effects of return on conflict. The main way context matters is by shaping refugee returnees' access to important economic and social resources. At the moment of return, these endowments play a crucial role in facilitating or hampering returnee reintegration.

In settings where return occurs because of improving conditions in origin countries, or because of aid-based inducements, returnees are likely to hold positive economic and social endowments. Reintegration should be easier for these returnees in consequence. For one, returnees repatriating to capitalize on favorable political and economic conditions at origin, or because of direct cash support, are more likely to return with productive assets, including skills acquired and wages earned in asylum countries (Kreibaum, 2016; Fransen, Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2017; Bahar et al., 2024). Blair and Wright (2024) offer direct evidence that encashed returnees can bolster local economies in origin communities, dampening militancy by raising opportunity costs. This finding is consistent with scholarship documenting important, community-wide positive externalities of aid to displaced people (Lehmann and Masterson, 2020; Zhou and Shaver, 2021). Socially, refugees returning to fragile origin communities because of improving conditions may contribute to social cohesion, institution-building, and feelings of hopefulness (Müller-Funk and Fransen, 2023). All of this suggests anti-government violence is likely to decline in communities exposed to repatriation induced by improving conditions or cash-for-return interventions. Effects on communal violence are less obvious.

[11] We offer a comprehensive survey of literature on how displacement affects violence in section A.2.

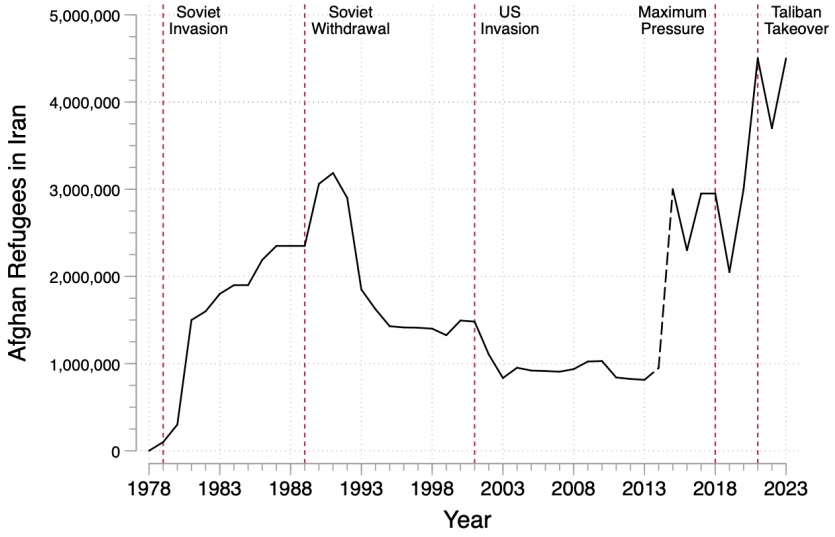
Competition between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors for land, jobs, and housing is a major risk factor for social strife. Where returnees are prosperous or encashed, this competition may be alleviated (Harild, Christensen and Zetter, 2015; Van Leeuwen and Van Der Haar, 2016), lowering attendant risks of communal strife. On the other hand, if reintegration policies or programmatic interventions disproportionately benefit stayees or returnees, parochial jealousy may exacerbate social conflict (Schwartz, 2019; Breslawski, 2024).

Conversely, consider the situation of returns prompted by worsening conditions in asylum countries. In this case, refugees face negative hosting conditions prompted by economic crises, sociopolitical instability, or anti-migrant xenophobia and repression. Individuals returning under these circumstances are likely to face severe financial constraints resulting from recession-related job losses and discriminatory restrictions on labor force participation (Naseh et al., 2018). Rent hikes, price-gouging, and police extortion may all compound refugees' economic situations in restrictive asylum countries (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Negative hosting conditions are also likely to depress refugees' mental and physical well-being (Silove, Steel and Watters, 2000; Hilbig and Riaz, 2022), social capital (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2022), skill acquisition, and educational attainment (Abdelgadir and Fouka, 2020; Testa, 2021). Research suggests that the combined effect of these conditions is to render displaced people traumatized, socially-isolated (Gade, 2020), risk-tolerant (Voors et al., 2012), and predisposed to violence (Couttenier et al., 2019). Upon repatriating to fragile origin communities, then, returnees fleeing worsening host conditions face multiple challenges. Destitution and risk-tolerance may render these individuals ripe targets for insurgent recruitment (Haer and Hecker, 2018). Similarly, social exclusion could hamper returnees' reintegration, raising communal frictions between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors, particularly if the former lack access to informal institutional safety-nets and local dispute resolution mechanisms (van Houte, 2017; Schwartz, 2019). This argument motivates the following prediction:

H_1: When worsening conditions in a host country induce refugee repatriation, return is associated with increasing conflict in origin communities.

We offer initial, descriptive support for our argument in section A.4 of the appendix, where we analyze the relationship between mass return and conflict in a large global sample. Examining the major repatriation waves identified in Table 1, we find that returns induced by worsening conditions in host countries are positively correlated with violence in origin countries.[12] To more formally test our theory we examine repatriation to Afghanistan.

Figure 2: Afghan Refugee Stock in Iran



Note: The plot depicts stocks of Afghan refugees in Iran over time. For the period from 1978–2014, we plot data from the UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database, which records the number of registered Afghan refugees in Iran. Starting in 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) began estimating numbers of undocumented Afghans in Iran. For the period from 2015–2023 we report the combined sum of undocumented and registered Afghan migrants in Iran.

[12] In this paper we focus on the consequences of repatriation induced by worsening host conditions because this is the major category of repatriation least studied in extant literature. Nevertheless, our broad theory implies a corollary expectation—that returns induced by improving conditions in an origin country or programs to reduce mobility costs should be associated with declining militancy. Future work should examine this dimension of our theory, which we bracket here for tractability. Blair and Wright (2024) offer initial evidence that cash-for-return schemes reduce insurgent conflict in returnees' destination communities.

5 Context

Since 1979, when Soviet forces invaded, Afghanistan has suffered four decades of civil war. Over this time, Afghanistan has been the single largest source of FDP worldwide (Figure A-3). As of 2023, more than 6.4 million Afghans are displaced abroad, comprising the largest refugee population globally. 59% of these Afghan refugees—3.8 million people—are hosted in Iran, making it the largest contemporary host country for refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2023). The (almost entirely Afghan) refugee population in Iran has ranked in the top-ten largest worldwide each of the past 43 years. In 2018, the focal year we study, nearly 3 million Afghans resided in Iran, including 951,000 registered Afghan refugees and more than 2 million undocumented Afghan migrants.[13] In Figure 2 we plot the stock of Afghan refugees in Iran over time.

Displacement and repatriation dynamics between Afghanistan and Iran are characterized by waves. Episodes of violence in Afghanistan spur flight into Iran. Spikes in displacement coincide with the Soviet invasion in 1979, the mujahideen civil war after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, and the Taliban takeover in 2023.[14] While fluctuating security conditions primarily drive outflows to Iran, economic and political conditions play a key role in repatriation (Siavoshi, 2022). Major return waves followed the collapse of the Soviet-backed communist government in 1992 and the US invasion in 2001.[15] In both cases, returns were precipitated by improving conditions in Afghanistan itself. Identifying how refugee return affects conflict

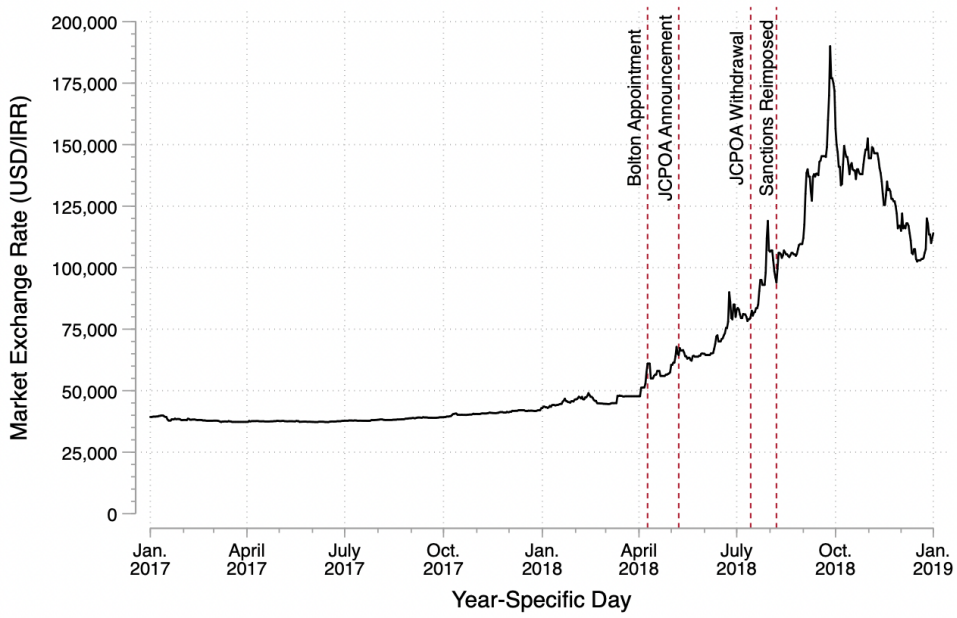
[13] While these undocumented Afghan migrants are not formally recognized as refugees or asylum-seekers, they generally meet the standard for refugee protection, having fled war in Afghanistan (Naseh et al., 2018). Flows of undocumented Afghans to Iran are emblematic of mixed migration (Hamlin, 2014), since many of these migrants both flee conflict and seek work.

[14] All repatriates to Afghanistan since 1979 have returned to a fragile, conflict-affected origin, so many Afghan FDP suffer repeat displacement, returning and then facing recurrent rounds of forced out-migration (van Houte, 2017).

[15] In Figure 2, periods of repatriation are marked by large declines in the refugee stock in Iran. Figure A-4 directly plots numbers of refugee returns from Iran to Afghanistan. Sharp, wave-like dynamics are typical of displacement and return in many settings (Holland and Peters, 2020).

in returnees' destination communities is challenging precisely because of interdependence between these trends in violence and displacement.

Figure 3: The Maximum Pressure Campaign Caused Massive Currency Depreciation



Note: The plot shows the daily market exchange rate between the US dollar (USD) and the Iranian rial (IRR) as reported on `Bonbast.com`. Dashed red lines mark key developments in the Maximum Pressure campaign and the broader US–Iranian relationship. On April 10, 2018, the day after Bolton's appointment, the Iranian government announced an official exchange rate fixed at 42,000 IRR to 1 USD in an attempt to halt depreciation. Although this official rate was maintained through 2019, it had little ameliorative effect because banks refused to sell artificially cheap dollars. Consequently, Afghan migrants (and Iranian citizens) rushed to informal traders to sell rials at free market rates (Bezhan and Parsa, 2018).

To study the causal effect of refugee return on conflict, we leverage a sudden, large-scale negative shock to the Iranian economy, which precipitated a significant increase in the number of spontaneous Afghan returns from Iran in 2018. Importantly, this shock resulted from escalating tensions between the US and Iran, rather than as an endogenous response to conflict in Afghanistan. Worsening economic conditions in Iran were specifically spurred by the Maximum Pressure campaign initiated by the Trump administration against Iran

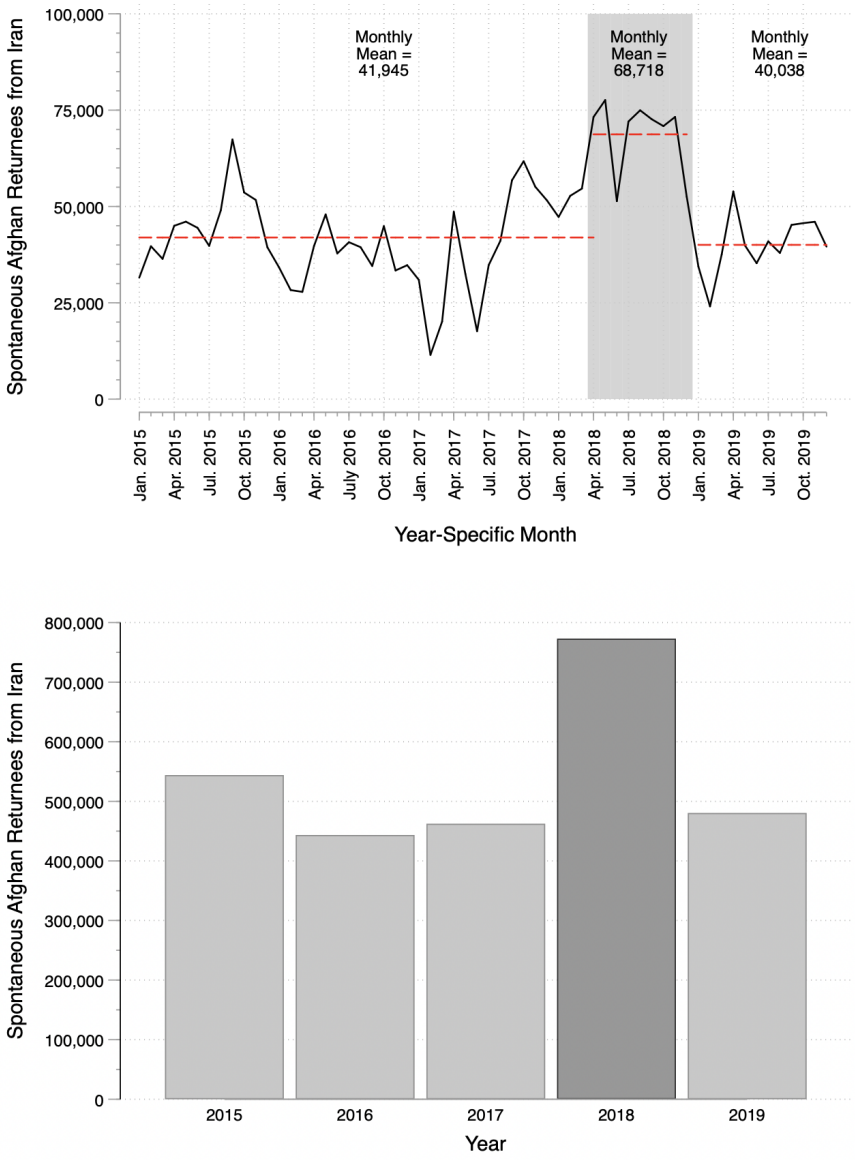
in April 2018.[16] Under the Maximum Pressure policy, the US abruptly and unilaterally withdrew from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), better known as the Iran nuclear deal, negotiated in 2015 by the Obama administration. Upon withdrawing from the JCPOA, the Trump administration re-imposed sweeping sanctions against Iran, targeting key military and nuclear programs, and the financial and petroleum export sectors. The most immediate consequence of the Maximum Pressure campaign was a severe depreciation of the Iranian currency. As reflected in Figure 3, foreign exchange markets responded immediately and drastically to the Trump administration's policy. Between March 2018, just before the policy announcement, and December 2018, nine months after the start of the campaign, Iran's currency depreciated 138%. Beyond depreciation, Figure A-5 highlights a number of other severe economic consequences of the Maximum Pressure campaign. Consequent to the JCPOA withdrawal and re-imposition of sanctions, Iranian GDP fell by $153 billion, petroleum production fell by 1.1 million barrels per day, and inflation surged 30–39%.

Figure 4 reveals that deteriorating economic conditions triggered by the sanctions campaign on Iran spurred more than 618,000 Afghans to repatriate in 2018.[17] From April–December 2018, nearly 69,000 Afghans returned each month. This rate of repatriation was more than 160% of the monthly, pre- (2015–2017) and post-policy (2019) mean levels of

[16] See section A.7 for background. We date the start of the Maximum Pressure policy to April 9, 2018, when President Trump appointed John Bolton, a well-known anti-Iran hawk, as National Security Advisor (Fitzpatrick, Ellman and Izewicz, 2019). Bolton had publicly advocated against the JCPOA for months prior to becoming National Security Advisor, and foreign exchange markets began moving in response to his appointment (Figure 3), which portended US withdrawal from the JCPOA. Linking the start of the pressure campaign to Bolton's appointment is also intuitive in the context of Afghan refugee decisionmaking, since the appointment induced anticipatory depreciation of the Iranian rial in currency markets. Afghan refugees were highly attuned to currency markets because most worked cash-based jobs while sending remittances home to family in Afghanistan. Hence, repatriation decisions were directly linked to market exchange rates (Bengali, Mostaghim and Faizy, 2018; Hoseini and Dideh, 2022). Less than one month later, on May 8, 2018, President Trump officially announced unilateral US withdrawal from the JCPOA, which formally took effect on July 14, 2018. Between July 28–November 5, 2018, sanctions were re-imposed.

[17] Statistics shared by IOM staff suggest that 773,125 Afghans repatriated from Iran in 2018, including 618,463 during the Maximum Pressure period.

Figure 4: The Maximum Pressure Campaign Induced Large-Scale Refugee Return



Note: In the top panel, the solid line shows spontaneous returns of Afghans from Iran by month. Dashed red lines respectively denote mean levels of returns before, during, and after the Maximum Pressure period. Gray bars denote the initial period of the 2018 sanctions campaign. In the bottom panel, bars show annual levels of spontaneous returns from Iran, with the darker bar denoting 2018, the focal year. All return data are extracted from reports compiled by IOM border monitoring staff.

return.[18] More importantly, the bulk of these returns occurred during the fighting season

[18]We focus on the Maximum Pressure effort in 2018. Officially, counterproliferation sanctions remained in effect

in Afghanistan, which runs from April–October. In this period, the Taliban engaged in a wide-ranging recruitment drive, hiring a large cadre of part-time fighters to assist with local offensives (Giustozzi, 2019).[19] Refugee returnees formed an important historical source of these recruits (Harpviken and Lischer, 2013).

Qualitative reports from the period corroborate that this repatriation shock was precipitated by the economic collapse in Iran. For instance, representatives of the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation noted, "[i]t's easy. More sanctions equal more returnees" (quoted in Glinski, 2020). Similarly, US Defense and State Department officials warned that "the Iranian economic downturn caused by US sanctions drove outward migration [from Iran] in 2018" (SIGAR, 2021, p. 113) and that "96% of the [2018] returnees [we]re economic migrants leaving Iran because of the collapse of the value of Iran's currency and resulting decrease in demand for unregulated labor" (SIGAR, 2018, p. 127-128).[20]

To validate these descriptive patterns and provide suggestive evidence of an Afghan migratory response to the Maximum Pressure policy, we study data from Iran's Labor Force Survey (LFS). Usefully for our purposes, the LFS is nationally representative, and covers Iranian citizen and Afghan migrant households in Iran. The survey's rotating panel design allows us to measure sample replacement, which occurs when a household is replaced because its members are no longer present at the stable address at which they were based in previous rounds. As Hoseini and Dideh (2022, p. 6-7) describe, replacement is highly suggestive of

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in 2019 and after. We characterize 2019 as the "post-policy" period because currency markets had priced in the effect of the US pressure campaign by this point. Refugee returns were driven by rapid depreciation of the Iranian rial in 2018. The rial remained weak but largely stable in 2019, and repatriation flows reverted to historical mean levels.

[19]Recruits enlisted during the fighting season were generally income-motivated, and remained near their home communities, mobilizing for several hours a day to support combat activities led by the Taliban's professional fighting forces (Malkasian, 2021).

[20]In the latter quote, the term "economic migrants" refers to the fact that Afghan returnees from Iran in this period were motivated to repatriate because of economic conditions. This phrase is not intended to imply that those individuals who returned to Afghanistan in 2018 did not face conflict-related displacement pressures when they initially migrated to Iran.

household out-migration, although it can also result from rental turnover or death. In Table A-2 we find that Afghan migrant households in Iran were disproportionately likely to be replaced in the LFS during the Maximum Pressure period, consistent with increased sample turnover resulting from repatriation in response to the policy shock.

Table 2: Maximum Pressure Returnees Cite Poor Economic Conditions as Key Push Factor

	Reason for Return: Poor Economic Conditions in Host			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.058*	0.062**	0.058*	0.056*
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS				
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender		Yes	Yes	Yes
Age		Yes	Yes	Yes
Education		Yes	Yes	Yes
Income		Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity		Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira		Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity			Yes	Yes
Marital Status			Yes	Yes
Dwelling			Yes	Yes
Respondent Comfort				Yes
Interview Order				Yes

Note: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Maximum Pressure returnee is an indicator for undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan between April–December 2018. Country of asylum, month of return, and registration status fixed effects absorb constituent terms of the interaction that comprises our indicator for Maximum Pressure returnees. Gender is an indicator for male (vs. female) respondents. Age, education, and dwelling have five categories. Income has 10 categories. Urbanicity is an indicator for urban (vs. rural) respondents. Tazkira is an indicator for respondents with an Afghan national identity card. Ethnicity has 23 categories. Marital status and respondent comfort have four categories. Interview order captures the order of interviews within sampling points. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

Several other pieces of evidence support our contention that large-scale Afghan returns from Iran in 2018 were chiefly motivated by an economically-significant worsening of conditions owing to the Maximum Pressure shock.[21] First, qualitative evidence suggests that

[21]Some Afghans repatriating during the Maximum Pressure period were deported by Iranian authorities (Figure A-6). However, we find no general evidence that returnees during the policy period were more likely to

Afghan migrants living in Iran at the time of the policy announcement primarily worked in informal, cash-based jobs, rendering them disproportionately exposed to attendant currency depreciation (Naseh et al., 2018; Hoseini and Dideh, 2022). As Afghan refugees interviewed by Bengali, Mostaghim and Faizy (2018) in Iran explained, "[t]he decline of the rial is cutting our purchasing power" and "[i]f the rial continues to fall, [we] will also go back." In Table A-4 we confirm this anecdotal evidence using data from the LFS. We find that the Maximum Pressure shock increased unemployment of Afghans in Iran, and that corresponding Afghan migrant job losses were concentrated in informal, cash-based sectors. Second, in Table A-5 we document broader declines in Iran-based Afghan migrants' livelihoods, including negative effects of the pressure policy on gross incomes, wage rates, and working time. Together, these tests bolster our argument that when worsening conditions in host countries precipitate repatriation, returnees are likely to have fewer economic endowments to facilitate reintegration. Finally, using unique data from the Survey of Afghan Returnees (Table 2) we offer direct evidence of a link between negative economic conditions in Iran and repatriation to Afghanistan. Afghans who repatriated from Iran during the Maximum Pressure campaign were 6.3–6.8 percentage points (pp) more likely to attribute poor economic conditions in Iran as the primary reason for their return. We find no evidence that other push or pull factors disproportionately motivated these repatriates (Tables A-3, A-6 – A-7).

6 Research Design

In this section we describe our microdata and estimation strategy. Summary statistics for all variables are described in Table A-8 – A-9.

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cite anti-refugee coercion as a reason for return. Rather, respondents pointed to poor economic conditions in Iran as their main reason for repatriating. Iranian deportations largely targeted single Afghan male seeking laborers, and were a coercive tool designed to protect Iranian workers from job competiton (Bezhan and Parsa, 2018).

6.1 Combat Records

We draw on sensitive-but-unclassified military records cataloguing insurgent and counterinsurgent combat engagements in Afghanistan between 2016–2018. The data come from the International Distributed Unified Reporting Environment (INDURE), a military platform populated using detailed significant activity (SIGACT) reports logged by Afghan and NATO security forces. Data are time-stamped, geo-referenced, and include details about tactics, units, and casualties. These data are most directly comparable to SIGACTs data described in Shaver and Wright (2017). However, whereas extant combat records from Afghanistan cover the period from 2006–2014, our records cover the period after the 2014 NATO transition. For the period of time we study, these data represent the virtual "universe" of insurgent-related violence (Weidmann, 2016, p. 211), and offer a substantial improvement in coverage and precision over media-based collection efforts.[22]

To understand how refugee return shapes conflict, we focus on insurgent-initiated attacks against Afghan security forces or their NATO partners.[23] The detailed nature of our conflict microdata allows us to track several types of insurgent activity, including direct fires, complex attacks, indirect fires, and explosive hazards. Direct fire attacks are line-of-sight, close combat operations, like frontal assaults on convoys or patrolling troops. Complex attacks are attacks perpetrated by enemy units using multiple distinct weapons systems (e.g., direct fire and explosives). Indirect fires consist of rocket and mortar attacks perpetrated at long-range. Explosive hazards include improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines.[24] We depict the spatial distribution of these attacks in Figure 5.

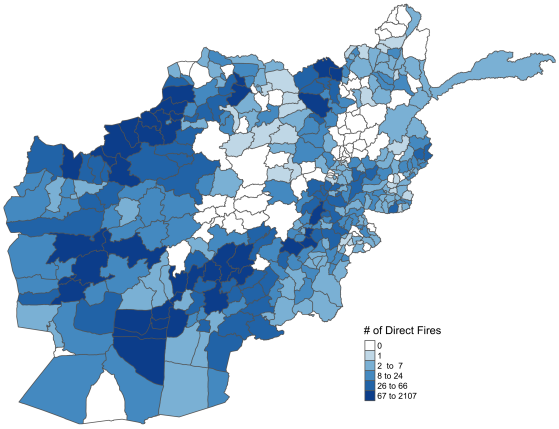
[22]Section A.14 describes the data. INDURE records 46,918 SIGACTs between January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2018. Over the same period, the UCDP-PRIO open-source tracker (GED) records just 8,629 violent events.

[23]We consider violence against other targets in Table A-32.

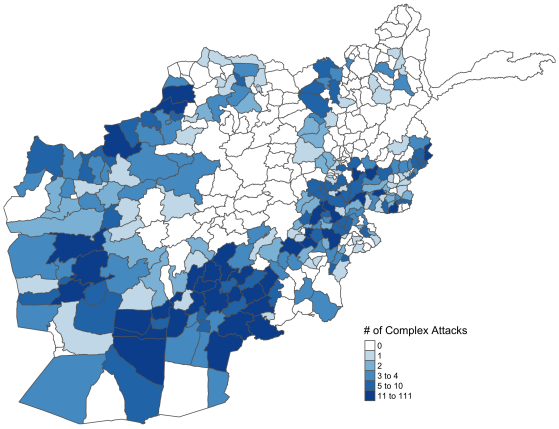
[24]We focus on detonated rather than emplaced hazards because IEDs/mines can only achieve intended effects when they are successfully exploded. Results are substantively similar when we study emplaced hazards.

Figure 5: Insurgent Violence During the Maximum Pressure Campaign

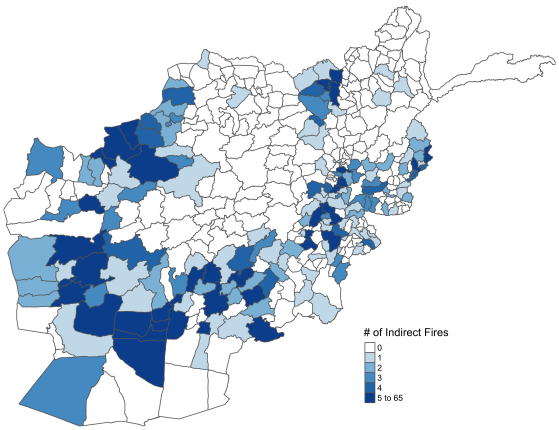
(a) Direct Fires



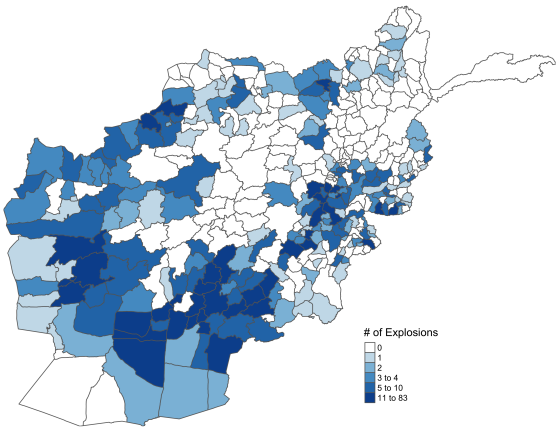
(b) Complex Attacks



(c) Indirect Fires



(d) IED/Mine Explosions



Note: Panels shade districts by the intensive margin of insurgent violence between April – December 2018.

6.2 Returnee Survey

To supplement our military records, we draw on rich, individual-level survey data from the Asia Foundation's Survey of Afghan Returnees (SAR). The survey was fielded in 2018–2019 across 65 districts in Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul, Balkh, and Herat Provinces.[25] The

[25]We provide additional details about survey administration in section A.12 and summary statistics in Table A-9. Survey results are interspersed throughout (e.g., Table 2), and corroborate key elements of our main analyses. In Table A-10 we present difference-in-means comparing Maximum Pressure returnees to other returnees. Sanctions-induced repatriates are more likely to be young men from non-Pashtun ethnic backgrounds. These differences are intuitive because the policy disproportionately impacted Afghan refugees

sample is population-proportional-to-size, and can be taken as representative of returnees in the five sampled provinces. We use information on respondents' country of asylum, date of repatriation, and registration status to triangulate Maximum Pressure repatriates.

The survey helps us validate that returnees were impacted by negative economic externalities of the Maximum Pressure sanctions, and enables us to assess social conflict in returnees' destination communities. To measure community relations between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors ("stayees") we construct a multi-item index using inverse covariance-weighting (Anderson, 2008).[26] This index combines responses to six questions about returnees' local relations, including: experiences of (1) disputes and (2) discrimination; whether neighbors (3) invite returnees to community events; and perceptions that neighbors are (4) helpful, (5) respectful, and (6) friendly. Together these items capture returnees' subjective feelings of social exclusion and exposure to direct communal violence.[27]

We also consider how social ties and local dispute resolution institutions moderate the relationship between sanctions-induced return and communal conflict. We measure social ties using information from the survey about whether returnees reside in proximity to their familial kin. To capture the strength of informal adjudication institutions, we use a survey-based measure of reliance on local councils for dispute resolution. Scholarship on returnee reintegration underscores the important role kinship and local institutions play in easing communal tensions (Schwartz, 2019).

Additional Surveys Apart from the SAR, we exploit a range of additional surveys to bolster our empirical strategy. As noted above, results from the Iran LFS and Iran Household Expenditure and Income Survey (HEIS) validate that Afghan refugees were disproportion-

working in the *informal sector* (primarily young men) and residing in Iran (primarily ethnic Tajiks or Hazaras).

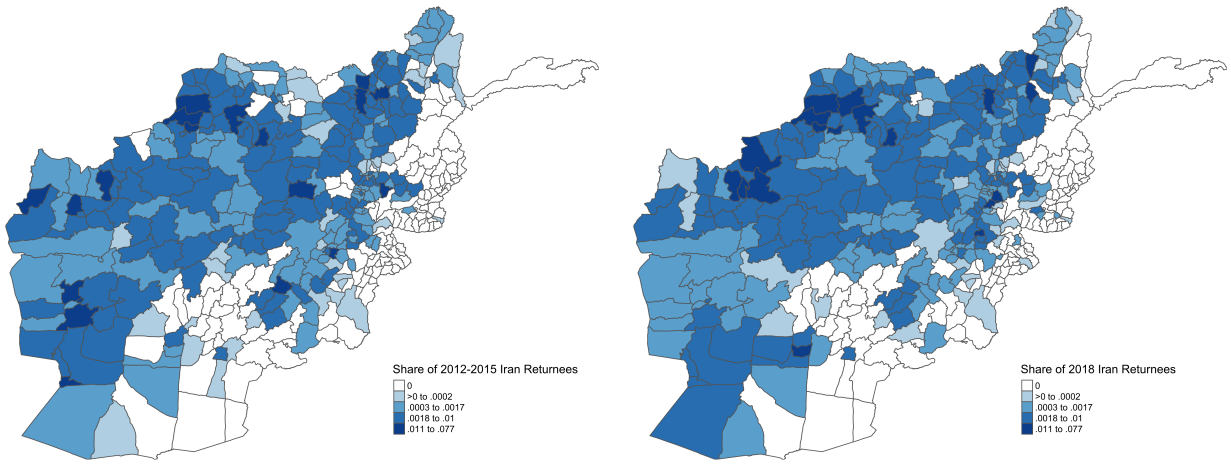
[26] Section A.16 describes our strategy for measuring social conflict. Results are substantively similar using principal component analysis.

[27] In alternative specifications we also develop and consider a measure of communal conflict using administrative data from a government conflict tracker (Figure A-9).

ately exposed to negative economic consequences of the Maximum Pressure policy in Iran. To further support our primary findings based on administrative microdata and the SAR, we also use the nationally-representative Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research (ANQAR) survey (section A.17). Results from ANQAR allow us to assess mass perceptions of security and economic conditions in returnees' destination communities.

6.3 Refugee Repatriation

Figure 6: Spontaneous Refugee Returns from Iran



Note: In the left panel, districts are shaded by their share of all spontaneous returnees repatriating from Iran between 2012–2015. In the right panel, districts are shaded by their share of all spontaneous returnees repatriating from Iran in 2018. These measures are highly correlated (Pearson's $\rho = 0.77$).

We also assemble granular data on spontaneous and documented refugee returns to Afghanistan. Data were shared by the IOM-Afghanistan office, and detail repatriation patterns at the district-level within Afghanistan over time.[28] We supplement these microdata with information on total monthly return flows into Afghanistan logged by IOM border

[28]Refugees who register with UNHCR prior to repatriating are called "documented," while those who return without UNHCR facilitation are considered "undocumented" or "spontaneous." Because the Iranian government manages registration and documentation-related processes for refugees, few Afghans repatriate from Iran through the formal UNHCR channel. IOM is hence the lead actor tracking spontaneous repatriation in Afghanistan. For tracking purposes, IOM defines returnees as "Afghan nationals who ha[ve] moved abroad for at least six months and have now returned to Afghanistan."

monitoring staff responsible for tracking movement along known migration corridors into and out-of Afghanistan.

We primarily focus on patterns of spontaneous Afghan repatriation from Iran using data from the IOM's district-level Baseline Mobility Assessment (BMA), a product produced under the Displacement Tracking Matrix initiative. The BMA is based on a comprehensive, retrospective field assessment undertaken by IOM staff in collaboration with key community informants. To generate these records, 122 IOM-Afghanistan staff assessed 13,187 villages across every district of Afghanistan using 82,923 key informant interviews. Overall, these data allow us to map settlement patterns of spontaneous Afghan refugee returnees by country of asylum and year of repatriation.[29] Working with the IOM-Afghanistan office, we obtained a confidential version of the district-level BMA, which IOM staff pre-processed in order to identify unique settlement patterns of returnees from Iran.[30] In Figure 6 we plot historical settlement patterns of returnees from Iran between 2012–2015, and observed settlement patterns of returnees from Iran during the Maximum Pressure period in 2018.

We rely on the earliest available district-level data, covering repatriation from 2012–2015, to measure historical returnee settlement patterns (Figure 6). Formally, we measure: $\frac{\text{District Returns}_{2012-2015}}{\text{Total Returns}_{2012-2015}}$. Multiplying these shares by the total, national-level inflow of undocumented returnees from Iran over time gives a measure of predicted repatriation across district-months (Card, 2001; Boustan, 2010). As reflected in Figure A-11, predicted and observed returns are highly correlated (Pearson's $\rho = 0.66$), suggesting 2012–2015 returnee settlement patterns are a good proxy for 2018 returnee destinations.

[29]IOM pools returnees who repatriated between 2012–2015, the earliest years in the data. Hence, we observe country-specific repatriation settlement patterns for individuals who returned to Afghanistan in 2012-2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018.

[30]In public-facing BMA releases, returnees from Iran and Pakistan are pooled, making it possible to identify general repatriation settlement patterns, but not host country-specific settlement patterns.

6.4 Empirical Strategy

To identify the causal effect of refugee return on conflict, we combine historical returnee settlement patterns and the unexpected timing of the Maximum Pressure campaign. This approach resembles the identification strategy of Rozo and Vargas (2021) and Blair and Wright (2024), who also leverage temporal shocks to estimate the effects of migration. Our measure of exposure to repatriation during the Maximum Pressure policy is similar to a Bartik instrument, where cross-sectional variation is interacted with an otherwise exogenous time-series shift (Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin and Swift, 2020). Because we estimate the reduced-form effects of repatriation on conflict using a measure of historical returnee settlement patterns, our main approach is equivalent to an intent-to-treat design.

We start from a generalized difference-in-differences framework. As noted above, district-level shares of 2012–2015 spontaneous returns from Iran define cross-sectional exposure to 2018 returns. Temporally, the Maximum Pressure campaign provides a time-series shock to repatriation from Iran. We identify the causal effect of return on conflict by combining these features in the following reduced-form, least squares equation:[31]

$$Y_{d,t+1} = \delta(\text{2012-2015 Returnee Share}_d \times \text{Maximum Pressure}_t) + \alpha_d + \beta_t + \mu(X_d \times \beta_t) + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where d indexes districts and t indexes year-specific months. $Y_{d,t+1}$ are conflict-related dependent variables. 2012-2015 Returnee Share$_d$ is the share of Afghan refugees spontaneously returning from Iran to district d in 2012–2015, relative to all spontaneous returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015.[32] Maximum Pressure$_t$ is an indicator for months during the Maximum Pressure campaign (April–December 2018). δ is the coefficient of interest,

[31] Instrumental variables estimates are substantively similar (Table A-22). In Table A-13 we study correlates of historical returnee settlement patterns. To mitigate concerns about endogeneity of past settlement patterns, we explore additional sources of cross-sectional variation in returnee exposure in Table 4.

[32] We z-standardize 2012–2015 shares for interpretability.

and captures whether the campaign induced a differential shift in violence in districts more heavily exposed to returns. α_d and β_t are district and year-specific month fixed effects, which respectively absorb time-invariant differences across districts and common time shocks affecting all districts. X_d is a vector of pre-treatment, district-level controls, which we interact with year-specific month fixed effects to account flexibly for pre-treatment heterogeneity in observables. ϵ are robust, district-clustered standard errors. In the primary estimation sample we study the period from 2016–2018.[33]

Our strategy rests on two identifying assumptions. First, we assume that in the absence of the 2018 Maximum Pressure policy, districts more exposed to return would experience common trends in outcomes. Differential trends could be driven by a number of factors, including anticipation of the policy. Anticipation is unlikely since President Trump's appointment announcement of JCPOA withdrawal was sudden and unexpected, triggering a sharp increase in repatriation. Nonetheless, we follow the suggestion of Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin and Swift (2020), and provide graphical evidence of parallel pre-trends in Figure A-12. We illustrate these pre-policy trends using the event study method introduced in Sun and Abraham (2021, p. 180-181), excluding two pre-policy periods. This design helps account for secular and potentially non-linear pre-trends (Borusyak, Jaravel and Spiess, 2024). Encouragingly, violence is consistently parallel in the pre-treatment period.[34] Our strategy also assumes that the return shock did not systematically coincide with other policy changes that could drive the focal effects. In Table A-14 we show that sanctions-induced returns did not impact two potentially-confounding policies: security force deployments or counterinsurgent aid spending.

[33] We also complement our district-level analyses with survey evidence. The estimating equation for our survey-based analyses is reported in section A.20.

[34] Compared to the binary case, continuous treatments require stronger identifying assumptions (Callaway, Goodman-Bacon and Sant'Anna, 2024). Table A-23 confirms we find substantively similar results using a binary decomposition of the treatment variable, which takes a value of 1 for districts above the median returnee share, and 0 otherwise.

7 Results

7.1 Insurgent Violence

In Table 3 we assess the effect of refugee return on insurgent violence. Columns 1-5 evaluate the extensive margin of combat, and columns 6-10 consider violence per 100,000 district residents. Columns 1 and 7 represent our most basic difference-in-differences estimates. In columns 2 and 8 we introduce controls for the ethnic composition of each district, which absorb differences in violence and return across ethno-sectarian regions of Afghanistan.[35] In columns 3-5 and 9-11 we incorporate a large battery of controls, including measures related to agricultural productivity, economic development, transportation infrastructure, and humanitarian aid. In columns 6 and 12 we add lagged violence trends to further account for past security conditions in destination communities. Across specifications we document a large, substantively meaningful escalation in violence in areas more exposed to refugee repatriation. A one-standard deviation increase in returns during the Maximum Pressure period was associated with a 1.5–2.5 percentage point (pp) increase in the probability of insurgent conflict, and an increase of 0.7–1.5 attacks per 100,000 residents.

Three additional pieces of evidence build confidence in this baseline finding. First, in Table A-15 we document a large, stable, and precise increase in levels of insurgent-initiated attacks. Second, using data from a representative survey we find a parallel worsening of *perceived* security conditions in returnees' destination communities (Table A-16). Third, we establish that increasing violence in return-impacted communities corresponded with important shifts in local authority. Table A-17 reveals that a one standard deviation increase in

[35]Historically, most Taliban fighters were Pashtun, while most Afghan returnees from Iran were non-Pashtun (e.g., Tajik). Nevertheless, the Taliban leadership understood itself as representing Afghan Sunnis regardless of ethnic descent, and made conscious efforts to recruit and embed within non-Pashtun communities in northern and western Afghanistan by 2016–2018 (Giustozzi, 2019).

Table 3: Refugee Repatriation and Insurgent Violence

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs											
	Extensive Margin						Per 100k Population					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.025**	0.017**	0.017**	0.016**	0.016*	0.015*	1.185***	1.296***	1.469***	1.351***	1.366***	0.701***
	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.386)	(0.332)	(0.382)	(0.369)	(0.378)	(0.218)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Ethnic shares are: the share of each district that speaks Pashto and the share of each district that speaks Dari. Accessibility controls are: distance to the border and travel time to the provincial center. Economic controls are: provincial unemployment, provincial GINI coefficient, population-normalized nightlights, and travel time to the Ring Road. Agricultural controls are: opium poppy suitability. Aid controls are: per capita spending on the National Solidarity Program; and per capita spending by the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives. Opium poppy suitability is a one-year lagged measure. All other controls are pre-shock (measured 2012–2015) variables interacted with year-specific month fixed effects.

exposure to repatriation corresponded with a 1–6pp increase in the probability that a district would fall under Taliban control. Overall, these results accord with prominent accounts about how large-scale displacement and return shocks risk exacerbating militant conflict (Lischer, 2006; Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006).

Robustness We further validate our findings with several robustness tests. First, the main threat to inference in our design is endogeneity in the demand-pull component of return migration. Our baseline models define district-level exposure to refugee returns using 2012–2015 shares of returnees, which could be correlated with contemporary conflict through various pathways. For instance, earlier returnees could have persistent effects on violence in destination communities. Alternatively, combatants could anticipate repatriation during the Maximum Pressure sanctions by observing historical returnee settlement patterns and strategically allocating fighting resources in preparation. We show that districts more exposed to returnees from Iran were not on differential trajectories of violence prior to the Maximum Pressure sanctions (Figure A-12), and include an array of pre-treatment controls to account for differences in observables across districts. We are also sanguine because we

find that districts more exposed to returns in 2012–2015 were initially safer (Table A-13), implying our estimates are conservative. Nevertheless, we verify that our core results are robust to: balancing highly-impacted and unimpacted districts on predictors of initial settlement patterns (Table A-19); controlling for measures of historical conflict (Table A-20); and incorporating additional covariates related to the pretreatment ethnoreligious composition of districts (Table A-21).

Second, our baseline models define district-level exposure to refugee returns using 2012–2015 returnee shares. An alternative is to define cross-sectional exposure to refugee return using the geographic (straight-line) proximity of Afghan districts to the nearest Iranian border crossing.[36] In 2018, returnees from Iran passed through one of two main crossings in Hirat (Islam Qala) or Nimroz (Milak). To reduce travel costs, most returnees resided in Afghan districts closer to these crossings (Glinski, 2020). In Table 4 we re-estimate our core specifications using this alternative measure. Our estimates are precise and larger in magnitude. During the Maximum Pressure period, a one standard deviation increase in proximity to an Iranian border crossing was associated with a 4.9–6.2pp increase in the extensive margin of insurgent violence, and an increase of 2–4.4 attacks per 100,000 residents.

Table 4: Robustness Using an Alternative Measure of Repatriation Exposure

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs											
	Extensive Margin						**Per 100k Population**					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Proximity to Iran Returnee Border Crossing x Maximum Pressure	0.062***	0.060***	0.059***	0.054***	0.053***	0.049***	4.357***	4.363***	4.015***	3.975***	3.926***	1.970***
	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.988)	(0.998)	(0.831)	(0.857)	(0.812)	(0.349)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Proximity to Iran returnee border crossing is the standardized, straight-line distance of each district centroid to the nearest border crossing through which Iranian officials channeled Afghan repatriates during 2018. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. For a description of other covariates, see table notes from Table 3.

[36] Unlike road distance, which could be endogenous, straight-line distance is unrelated to contemporary conditions in sending or receiving communities (Boustan, 2010).

Third, it is also possible to define exposure to Maximum Pressure repatriation using an instrumental variables approach rather than the reduced-form approach we take in Table 3. To instrument for observed inflows of refugee returnees from Iran, we craft a measure of predicted returns. As in Card (2001), this predicted measure is generated by interacting our focal, cross-sectional exposure variable (2012–2015 returnee settlement patterns) with the monthly, nationwide inflow of refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan.[37] First-stage estimates in columns 1-2 of Table A-22 establish that our measure of predicted returns is highly correlated with actual repatriation; these results lend confidence in our baseline specification, which leverages the same cross-sectional variation as our predicted return measure. F-statistics suggest our instrument is strong and relevant. In columns 4, 6, 8, and 10 of Table A-22, two-stage least squares estimates reveal that a one standard deviation increase in sanctions-induced returns increased the extensive margin of insurgent violence by 2.8–5pp, and increased insurgent attacks by 1.8–2.7 per 100,000 residents.

Finally, a variety of additional tests in the supplemental appendix build confidence in the robustness of our results. In Table A-23 we confirm the main effects hold when we re-estimate our focal specifications using a treatment indicator, which takes a value of 1 for districts above the median of 2012–2015 shares, and 0 otherwise. In Table A-24 we also extend the panel to include district-months in 2019, when repatriation waned but the Maximum Pressure sanctions on Iran remained in-effect. In Table A-25 we estimate a series of placebo tests in which we examine the effects of undocumented returns from Iran versus effects of other categories of forcibly displaced people, such as returnees from Pakistan. Our theory posits that conditions at the moment of return matter for refugee reintegration, and that positive effects of repatriation on conflict should be driven by destitute returnees fleeing the Maximum Pressure sanctions on Iran. Table A-25 confirms that violence escalated

[37] To account for the fact that returnee reintegration may be easier in more populous districts, we normalize our measures of predicted and observed returns by district population, and z-standardize both measures for interpretability.

disproportionately in communities receiving undocumented returnees from Iran during the Maximum Pressure period, but not communities receiving comparable inflows of internally displaced people or repatriates from Pakistan.

7.2 Communal Violence

Beyond insurgent violence, our theory anticipates that *communal* conflict will also be particularly severe in districts receiving Maximum Pressure returnees. In mass repatriation scenarios spurred by negative hosting conditions, returnees are likely to be impoverished, marginalized, and socially-isolated (Hilbig and Riaz, 2022). Upon repatriating, these individuals may strain local labor and housing markets and compete with stayees over resources (Harild, Christensen and Zetter, 2015; Schwartz, 2019). Social conflict in return-impacted communities is particularly likely to erupt over land disputes (Van Leeuwen and Van Der Haar, 2016; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2021).

In Table 5 we study communal relations between Maximum Pressure repatriates and their non-migrant neighbors using data from the SAR in an estimation given by equation A1. Columns 1-4 examine an index of relations between returnees and stayees, which accounts for self-reported experiences of social conflict and perceptions of local belongingness. In columns 5-8 we study the constituent item of this index most directly related to communal violence—experiences of disputes. Across specifications we find no evidence that Maximum Pressure returnees experienced worse communal relations. If anything, sanctioned-induced repatriates report modestly better relations with stayees in their destination communities. We also find that Maximum Pressure returnees were 3.6–4pp less likely to suffer violent communal disputes. We corroborate these survey-based estimates in Table A-26 using observational data we assembled on the incidence of social strife in Afghanistan.[38]

[38]The estimates from Table 5 are also robust to controlling for additional covariates related to historical conflict and household sociodemographics (Tables A-27 – A-28).

Table 5: Returns Did Not Worsen Relations With Non-Migrant Neighbors

	Returnee–Stayee Relations							
	Positive Neighborhood Contact (Index)				**Experienced a Communal Dispute (=1)**			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.088*	0.068	0.060	0.070	-0.043**	-0.039*	-0.039*	-0.043*
	(0.052)	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS								
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Age		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Education		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Income		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Marital Status			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Dwelling			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Social Desirability				Yes				Yes
Interview Order				Yes				Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Maximum pressure returnee is an indicator for undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan between April–December 2018. Country of asylum, month of return, and registration status fixed effects absorb constituent terms of the interaction that comprises this indicator. Gender is an indicator for male (vs. female) respondents. Age, education, ethnicity, and dwelling have five categories. Income has 10 categories. Urbanicity is an indicator for urban (vs. rural) respondents. Tazkira is an indicator for respondents with a national identity card. Marital status has four categories. Social desirability is a four-category measure of respondent comfort. Interview order captures the order of interviews within sampling points. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

This result contrasts with previous studies that find repatriation increases communal conflict (e.g., Schwartz, 2019; Blair and Wright, 2024). Future work is needed to understand variation in social violence after refugee return; however, we believe our focus on repatriation contexts is useful for reconciling our findings here with mixed conclusions in other scholarship. We anticipated that impoverished repatriates might strain labor and housing markets or be excluded from local dispute resolution institutions, increasing communal tensions. An alternative possibility suggested by our results is that the largest risks of communal conflict emerge when repatriates return because of improving conditions at origin or through aid-based inducements. In these latter contexts, economic shocks and parochially-targeted aid

may intensify competition, jealousy, resentment, and social unrest. For instance, after the Lebanese Civil War, mass return occurred in the context of an olive oil price shock, spurring competition between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors over valuable cropland (Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020). Similarly, when policies see aid parochially-targeted toward returnees, as in the context of cash-for-repatriation schemes (Blair and Wright, 2024), or toward stayees, as in some post-war settings (Schwartz, 2019), jealousy between privileged and marginalized groups can precipitate violent competition (Breslawski, 2024). These dynamics are less salient in contexts where return is driven by negative hosting conditions, since these contexts typically see neither competition-inducing positive economic shocks nor parochial assistance. While our findings are consistent with this argument, more work is needed to better understand variation in communal strife during mass repatriation episodes.[39]

8 Extensions

We consider two extensions, which illustrate additional implications of our theory, and illuminate why repatriation during the Maximum Pressure period increased insurgent but not communal conflict.

8.1 Opportunity Costs

Our theory posits that when mass repatriation occurs because of worsening conditions in a host country, returnees often lack economic and social endowments important for peaceful reintegration. Classical political economy accounts give one reason destitute returnees may worsen militancy: poverty and unemployment render these individuals and their non-

[39]In the supplemental appendix we explore one additional reason repatriation may not have exacerbated communal conflict in our setting—strong, local institutions. In rural communities in western Afghanistan, where most Maximum Pressure returnees repatriated, community life is governed by informal institutions, including elder shuras, jirgas, and other village-level deliberative councils (Barfield, 2010; Murtazashvili, 2016). We develop a survey-based measure of the strength of these dispute resolution institutions, and find that our main estimates on communal violence are heterogeneous. Return only exacerbates social strife in areas with weak informal institutions (Table A-29).

migrant neighbors ripe for recruitment into insurgent organizations (Grossman, 1991). The logic is simple—local economic conditions shape violent mobilization by altering the amount of labor supplied to insurgency versus formal employment.[40] Worsening conditions in the licit economy reduce the opportunity costs of rebellion and the reservation wages of potential insurgents (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Bueno de Mesquita, 2013; Bazzi and Blattman, 2014). Consequently, negative economic shocks afford rebels greater opportunities for recruitment (Dube and Vargas, 2013; Wright, 2020), particularly where they hold independent income sources (Vanden Eynde, 2018). Motivated by these propositions, counterinsurgents implement diverse welfare and humanitarian assistance programs, including community-driven development and unemployment insurance schemes, precisely to stimulate the licit economy and thereby constrain militant recruiting (Berman, Felter and Shapiro, 2011; Iyengar, Monten and Hanson, 2011).[41]

In the context we study, there are several complementary channels through which this opportunity cost mechanism could operate to explain increasing insurgent violence in repatriation-exposed communities.[42] First, the Maximum Pressure campaign decimated Afghan migrant livelihoods in Iran, reducing returnees' real and perceived economic well-being at the moment of repatriation (Tables 2, A-4, A-5). Consequently, upon repatriating to Afghanistan, these unemployed and impoverished returnees may have directly mobilized into the Taliban,

[40] Of course, many factors beyond financial circumstances, including risk tolerance, predispositions toward violence, and ideological commitments, influence individuals' decisions regarding labor allocation. In the setting we study, we anticipate weak ideological motivations for insurgent mobilization, since most returnees from Iran were non-Pashtun. Pashtuns formed the Taliban's traditional recruitment base; hence, non-Pashtuns held weaker identity-based incentives for participation. Nevertheless Taliban commanders were attempting to diversify recruitment pools in western Afghanistan in the period we study (Giustozzi, 2019). Future work should consider the ways ideology, risk aversion and attitudes toward violence might interact with repatriation contexts to shape incentives for violent mobilization.

[41] Counterinsurgent aid programming is also used for information-buying. Vanden Eynde (2018) formalizes how opportunity cost and information-centric perspectives can be integrated. We explore how the Maximum Pressure shock shaped civilian informing in Table A-34.

[42] We cannot disentangle whether the increase in insurgent violence is more attributable to mobilization of returnees or their non-migrant neighbors, and qualitative sources suggest both occurred (Department of Defense, 2018; Glinski, 2020).

which was recruiting for the summer offensive at the start of the Maximum Pressure period (section A.33). As US defense officials cautioned at the time: "absorbing the 500,000-plus returnees in 2018... will carry heavy economic and social support burdens in Afghanistan's less stable western provinces. Of the returnees, 96 percent are unskilled or semi-skilled single male laborers under age 30, a population that could be vulnerable to recruitment into extremist groups or the illicit economy" (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 28).

Second, the opportunity cost mechanism could also account for increasing recruitment of non-migrants in returnee-receiving communities. There are at least two reasons to anticipate that negative economic externalities of the Maximum Pressure shock spilled over to returnees' non-migrant neighbors. For one, 30% of households in western Afghanistan received remittance income from Afghan refugees working in Iran (Figure A-16). As currency devaluation spurred mass repatriation, remittances from Iran to Afghanistan simultaneously evaporated. Yuan (2018) estimates the corresponding loss of remittance income in 2018 at $500 million, or 2.8% of Afghanistan's GDP. Lost remittance income could directly lower reservation wages of individuals within remittance-receiving, non-migrant households in repatriation-exposed communities.[43] A second way the Maximum Pressure shock may have reduced economic welfare (and reservation wages) of non-migrant households is indirect. In the period we study, the economy of western Afghanistan was highly-dependent on trade with Iran, which declined precipitously during the Maximum Pressure campaign (Department of Defense, 2018). In addition, the large influx of repatriates from Iran marked a local labor supply shock, reducing wages, working-time, and licit employment opportunities of non-migrants in returnee-receiving areas.[44] These regional economic externalities of the

[43]Table A-30 confirms that the effect of return we estimate is not solely attributable to the Maximum Pressure campaign's negative effect on remittances. The effect of repatriation on violence holds while controlling for remittance dependence.

[44]The Taliban paid salaries through opium revenue, insulating insurgent recruitment from the broader economic collapse in western Afghanistan (section A.33).

Maximum Pressure campaign may have compounded non-migrants' incentives for part-time insurgent mobilization during the fighting season.

We test several implications of this argument. First, we validate that the repatriation shock spurred worsening economic conditions in return-exposed Afghan communities. In Table 6 we use data from the ANQAR survey to examine mass perceptions of the local economy.[45] We specifically study an attitudinal index that combines self-reported indicators of employment, labor market satisfaction, and food security. We cannot determine whether individual respondents were returnees or non-migrants in return-impacted communities, so we focus broadly on district-level exposure to the Maximum Pressure repatriation shock. Consistent with a widespread decline in economic conditions in returnee-receiving areas, we find that sanctions-induced returns reduced full-time employment, labor market satisfaction, and food security. Nor are these effects merely attitudinal. In Table A-31 we examine nighttime luminosity, a validated proxy for wealth and growth, and find that it also declined in repatriation-receiving communities.

Evidence of worsening economic conditions in returnee-receiving communities is consistent with the opportunity cost mechanism we elaborate, particularly in tandem with our main finding that insurgent violence also increased in these communities. We cannot directly observe insurgent recruitment, so to build further evidence for the argument we follow the approach of Iyengar, Monten and Hanson (2011) and examine tactical heterogeneity in combat. Variation in the tactics and targets of insurgent violence is informative because not all forms of violence are equally labor-intensive. If reservation wages fall enough to bolster insurgent mobilization, militant attacks will increase, and this increase should be driven by labor-intensive tactics, such as frontal assaults and complex ambushes, which require significant numbers of fighters to perpetrate. We also expect that insurgent cells flush with recruits

[45] Blair (2024*a*) takes a similar approach. Absent reliable administrative data on economic conditions, these questions allow a next-best assessment.

Table 6: Returns Reduced Perceived Economic Welfare

	Perceptions of Economy					
	Multi-Item Index (ICW)			Constituent Items (=1)		
	(1) Perceived Economy	(2) Perceived Economy	(3) Perceived Economy	(4) Employed Full-Time	(5) Satisfied with Labor Market	(6) Food Security
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	-0.037***	-0.037***	-0.036***	-0.011***	-0.004*	-0.013**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)
Observations	158390	158390	158390	158390	158390	158390
Clusters	397	397	397	397	397	397
PARAMETERS						
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socioeconomic Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Household Size		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Desirability			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012-2015. Gender is an indicator for male (vs. female) respondents. Age is each respondent's age in years. Education has eight categories. Socioeconomic status has five categories. Ethnicity is an indicator for Pashtun (vs. non-Pashtun) respondents. Household size is the number of individuals living in a respondent's household. Social desirability covariates include comfort and comprehension, which each have four categories, and a measure of the number of individuals present during the interview. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

will be more lethal, and will allocate more effort to attacking harder targets, like government bases, which are better defended and hence riskier to strike without large numbers of recruits to replace losses.

We use supplemental details in the INDURE records to distinguish insurgent combat operations by tactic, target, and lethality and test these expectations. Our inquiry is motivated by rich contextual knowledge about Taliban force employment (Sonin and Wright, 2024). In terms of tactics, we observe direct fires, indirect fires, complex attacks, and explosive hazards (Figure 5). We characterize direct fires, indirect fires, and complex attacks as relatively labor-intensive, since these operations required larger teams of combatants moving in coordination. In contrast, explosive violence was capital- but not labor-intensive; roadside bombs required sophisticated technological inputs, but could be emplaced by small cells or lone individuals working at night along convoy routes. In terms of targets of violence, we

observe insurgent attacks against Afghan government forces, NATO forces, civilians, and rival insurgent cells. Given the superior firepower they could bring to bear, attacks against Afghan and NATO troops were far harder and riskier to perpetrate without large combatant teams. Finally, we study lethality using casualty records attached to INDURE that document the number of counterinsurgent forces killed or wounded in each attack. If the Maximum Pressure shock lowered reservation wages, increasing insurgent recruitment, we should see insurgents deploying larger attack teams capable of inflicting more harm against counterinsurgents, and especially more harm from labor-intensive operations.

Table 7: Returns Increased Insurgent Reliance on Labor-Intensive Tactics

	Tactical Variation								**Tactical Substitution**	
	Extensive Margin				**Per 100k Population**				**Labor-Intensive Share**	
	(1) Direct Fires	(2) Complex	(3) Indirect Fires	(4) Explosives	(5) Direct Fires	(6) Complex	(7) Indirect Fires	(8) Explosives	(9)	(10)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.019*	0.030***	0.017***	0.024***	0.575***	0.099***	0.065**	0.077***	0.017**	0.017**
	(0.010)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.207)	(0.034)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurgent-Initiated Violence (=1)										Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012-2015. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April through December 2018, when the US initiated it's sanction campaign against Iran. For a description of other covariates, see table notes from Table 3.

We test these expectations in sequence. In Table 7 we examine tactical heterogeneity in the effect of repatriation. Violence escalated in repatriation-exposed areas across all tactics, both on the extensive margin and in per capita terms. This spike in violence reflects the unprecedentedly large-scale escalation the Taliban initiated during the 2018 fighting season, which saw a significant insurgent push into northern and western Afghanistan. Still, we find evidence of a relative composition shift in insurgent violence. A one-standard deviation increase in exposure to the repatriation shock was associated with a 1.7pp increase in the share of all insurgent attacks that were labor-intensive. We provide additional evidence in

Tables A-32 and A-33, which respectively examine effects of sanctions-induced repatriation on target selection and lethality. In repatriation-receiving communities during the Maximum Pressure period, insurgents attacked more hard targets and caused more counterinsurgent casualties through labor-intensive tactics. All together, these results are most consistent with an opportunity cost mechanism. The Maximum Pressure shock worsened economic conditions in communities to which refugees repatriated, increasing insurgent recruitment and violence.

8.2 Foreign Subversion

We also consider a second reason insurgent violence may have escalated in returnee-receiving areas following the repatriation shock—Iranian subversion.[46] Insurgents regularly receive support, including arms, financing, and safe haven, from external patrons during civil wars (Howard and Stark, 2018). With external resources, militants can perpetrate more and deadlier violence (Blair, 2024*b*). In the period we study, Iran was a major sponsor of militancy throughout the Middle East, funneling training, materiel, and weapons to a network of proxies in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and elsewhere. Countering this Iranian covert support was a major, stated goal of Trump administration officials advocating the Maximum Pressure strategy. Indeed, the fact that the JCPOA did nothing to limit Iran's regional proxy forces was one of the most important criticisms of the deal when it was first signed (Fitzpatrick, Ellman and Izewicz, 2019).

In Afghanistan, Iran backed Taliban cells in border regions of southwestern Afghanistan, where Iranian officials sought to undermine U.S. and NATO forces. From at least 2009, Iran supported Taliban factions with funds, training, and arms, including mortars, machine guns, sniper rifles, rockets, and explosive technology (Stancati, 2015). U.S. officials assessed that this assistance was designed "to counter the U.S. and Coalition military presence" and was

[46]This mechanism could operate in conjunction with the opportunity cost mechanism elaborated above.

"calibrated ... to provide enough aid to maintain influence with the group without enabling the Taliban to threaten the Afghan government in Kabul and return to power" (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 27).

Ironically, given its stated goal of countering Iran-backed militancy, the Maximum Pressure campaign may have actually exacerbated Iranian subversion in Afghanistan. Specifically, in the face of renewed sanctions, Iranian commanders may have retaliated against the U.S. by ratcheting up Taliban violence in Afghanistan, threatening American and NATO forces and hampering the Trump administration's efforts to negotiate a withdrawal (Azizi, Golmohammadi and Vazirian, 2020). As Kugelman (2018) foresaw at the time, "scuttling the nuclear deal and sanctioning Tehran could cause America's unending war in Afghanistan, Iran's eastern neighbor, to escalate violently ... [since] Iran has a strong incentive to increase military support to the Taliban, a persistent thorn in America's side."

Two channels of Iranian subversion are relevant. First, independent of the flow of refugee returnees, Iran may have increased material support to Taliban cells based in western Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2019). This dynamic could manifest in the form of rising violence in returnee-receiving communities, since Iran's chief covert connections were with Taliban factions based near the Afghanistan-Iran border, where most Afghan returnees repatriated in 2018. Second, Iranian officials may have enlisted refugee returnees as a vector for transmitting support to Taliban factions in Afghanistan. Even before the start of the Maximum Pressure campaign, Iranian commanders attempted to build influence networks by recruiting and training Afghan refugees in Iran (Stancati, 2015), an effort undertaken to hedge in case the JCPOA collapsed (Loyd, 2018). When sanctions-induced currency devaluation decimated Afghan refugee livelihoods in Iran, Iranian officials may have used the opportunity to expand refugee recruitment, in line with the opportunity cost mechanism. In interviews, some returnees reported direct Iranian solicitation: "[I] was approached by an Iranian intelligence officer. 'He asked me how much money I made, and [said] that he would double my

salary if I went to work for them [Iran-backed Taliban] in Afghanistan..." (Stancati, 2015).

To investigate these pathways we use military intelligence records to develop a novel measure of clandestine Iranian support for the Taliban. Specifically, we exploit maps released by U.S. Central Command through Freedom of Information Act requests. These maps document pretreatment locations of: (1) the facilitation routes Iranian covert operatives used to transport trained recruits and arms to Taliban cells in Afghanistan; and (2) the sites of Taliban attacks involving explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs), an Iranian-made shaped charge designed to penetrate U.S. armor. Combining this information, we define a cross-section of Afghan districts where local Taliban units received Iranian support prior to the Maximum Pressure shock (Figure A-17).

Table 8: Refugee Return and Iranian Support

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs					
	Extensive Margin			**Per 100k Population**		
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4) Baseline	(5)	(6)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.015*	0.015*	0.015**	0.701***	0.576***	0.578***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.218)	(0.194)	(0.193)
Iranian Support x Maximum Pressure			-0.002			4.521***
			(0.021)			(1.722)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS						
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iranian Support		Yes			Yes	

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012-2015. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April through December 2018, when the US initiated it's sanction campaign against Iran. Iranian support is an indicator that takes a value of 1 for districts along Iranian facilitation routes or where EFPs had been employed, and 0 otherwise. For a description of other covariates, see table notes from Table 3.

If Iran retaliated to the Maximum Pressure campaign by escalating support for insurgents

in Afghanistan, we anticipate a particular rise in anti-government violence in areas where Taliban cells had received prior Iranian support. Results in Table 8 comport with this expectation. Columns 1 and 4 present our baseline estimates from Table 3. In columns 2 and 5 we control for Iranian support by flexibly interacting our pre-treatment measure with year-specific month fixed effects. Encouragingly, the positive effect of repatriation on insurgent violence holds, conditioning on Iranian support. Then, in columns 3 and 6 we interact our Iranian support measure with an indicator for the Maximum Pressure period. These models allow us to examine whether violence increased disproportionately in districts linked to Iranian support networks during the Maximum Pressure campaign. While we find a large, positive, and precisely estimated effect of repatriation on insurgent violence across models, we also see that, at least in per capita levels, violence drastically increased in Iran-connected areas, consistent with the notion of Iranian retaliatory subversion. As a final test, we also re-estimate or focal specification (column 4 of Table 8) in separate sub-samples defined by our indicator of Iranian support. In per capita levels, insurgent violence increased in repatriation-exposed communities connected and unconnected to Iranian support; however, the increase associated with repatriation was distinguishably larger in returnee-receiving communities also integrated into Iranian support networks.[47]

These results raise two important implications for future research. First, refugee return cannot be viewed solely as a bilateral phenomenon involving origin and host countries. Regional and global geopolitical dynamics intersect with specific repatriation contexts to shape the consequences of return. Our results suggest that Iran strategically retaliated for U.S. sanctions by ratcheting up support for the Taliban, particularly in areas of Afghanistan to which refugees returning from Iran were repatriating. Second, these estimates highlight an

[47] In returnee-receiving areas unconnected with Iran, the effect of repatriation on conflict was 0.606 ($p < 0.001$). In returnee-receiving areas connected with Iran, the effect of repatriation on conflict was 3.255 ($p = 0.076$). Comparing these estimates, the effect of repatriation on conflict was significantly greater in return-exposed districts tied to Iranian support networks ($\beta = 2.649$, $p < 0.001$).

overlooked externality of sanctions—repatriation and regional economic decline—and an important way sanctioned countries might retaliate against sanctioners—through violent covert action.

9 Conclusion

Scholarship on the ways forced displacement affects armed and communal conflict has proliferated in the past two decades. Findings in the field are highly-varied, with some studies suggesting that displacement can be a stabilizing force and others finding that large-scale displacement may undermine peace. While the impact of refugee repatriation is nuanced, existing scholarship fails to provide a unified framework to account for heterogeneous effects across contexts. In this article, we address this gap by developing a typology of return contexts and a theory about why the consequences of return hinge on the specific conditions of mass repatriation. We identify three significant catalysts that drive mass refugee return: improving conditions in origin countries; exogenous shocks to the costs of mobility; and deteriorating conditions in refugee-hosting countries. We argue that these different contexts shape returnees' social and economic endowments, with implications for whether return exacerbates or alleviates conflict. Our theory specifically predicts that return will have destabilizing effects when deteriorating conditions in host countries induce refugee repatriation. Our parsimonious typology of mass return sheds new light on the important-but-neglected fact that refugees often repatriate to fragile, conflict-affected origin countries. While repatriation is the international community's preferred solution to displacement crises, the ideal-typical repatriation context—return to improving conditions at origin—is far from the modal repatriation context.

We test our theory in the context of Afghanistan, and find robust support. In spring 2018, the Trump administration launched the Maximum Pressure campaign, reimposing

counterproliferation sanction on Iran and decimating the Iranian economy. In response, 600,000 Afghans refugees returned home from Iran despite ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. Using novel survey and administrative data, we confirm that the Maximum Pressure policy induced large-scale repatriation and validate that Afghan migrants were disproportionately harmed by the sanctions-induced economic shock. Leveraging this repatriation shock, which was exogenous to local conditions in Afghanistan, we estimate the causal effect of return on violence. We show that repatriation intensified insurgent violence but did not spur communal conflict. To investigate the mechanisms driving this relationship, we draw on our broader theory, which emphasizes the role of migrants' endowments at the moment of return. We find suggestive evidence that the mass return of destitute and marginalized migrants strained local labor markets, facilitating Taliban recruitment. We also provide evidence that Iran retaliated against U.S. sanctions by increasing covert support for the Taliban. These findings extend classical scholarship on the political economy of conflict (Dube and Vargas, 2013; Bueno de Mesquita, 2013) and foreign subversion (Blair, 2024*b*) as drivers of militancy.

Our study also highlights two important, overlooked externalities of sanctions: displacement and covert retaliation. In a globalized world, sanctions have emerged as a key tool for foreign policymaking. While existing literature on sanctions recognizes their potential adverse humanitarian consequences within target states, little research highlights ways negative effects of sanctions can spillover across international borders. By spurring migration and exacerbating regional geopolitical competition, sanctions affect a much broader set of outcomes outside targeted countries. Specifically, by affecting the resources available to migrants, sanctions influence repatriation dynamics and can create conditions ripe for instability. Furthermore, sanctions-targeted states may exploit regional spillovers to retaliate against sanctions-imposing states, with violent consequences. We are among the first to highlight displacement as a response to sanctions, and connect this neglected dynamic to conflict in an important case.

These results bear key implications for policymaking. Most immediately, the Trump administration has promised to reinvigorate the Maximum Pressure strategy in its second term in office, using sanctions and other coercive tools to contain Iran (England and Schwartz, 2024). Our results suggest that this strategy may exacerbate displacement in the Middle East, and that Iran may retaliate against renewed U.S. pressure by ratcheting up violence against regional American interests. Afghanistan is likely to be severely-impacted if this policy is enacted. Since the Taliban's 2021 takeover, millions of Afghans have fled to Iran, which now hosts nearly 4.5 million Afghans in a situation the UNHCR describes as the "largest and most prolonged urban refugee crisis in the world" (UNHCR, 2024). Significant sanctions are likely to exacerbate refugee hardships in Iran, potentially triggering another round of mass return to Afghanistan, where there exist dire economic, health, governance, and climatic crises.

More broadly, our research highlights the importance of interventions designed to bolster the livelihoods of displaced people and their non-migrant neighbors. Infrastructural and economic development and local institutions for dispute resolution are key antecedents for safe and dignified refugee repatriation. These lessons are critical for international policymakers and humanitarians. Recent events in Syria underscore this point. Nearly 5 million Syrians remained displaced abroad in 2024. The collapse of the Assad regime has sparked international optimism, suggesting conditions might now allow Syrians, who had lived in fear of the regime, to return home en masse. In Europe, governments quickly moved to capitalize on the opening in Syria, with politicians suspending Syrian asylum claims and advocating Syrian repatriation. Our research highlights the critical risks of this approach. Policies that induce repatriation through anti-refugee coercion may impede safe returnee reintegration in origin countries.

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Supplementary Materials for Refugee Repatriation and Conflict: Evidence from the Maximum Pressure Sanctions

Christopher W. Blair, Benjamin C. Krick, and Austin L. Wright

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Contents

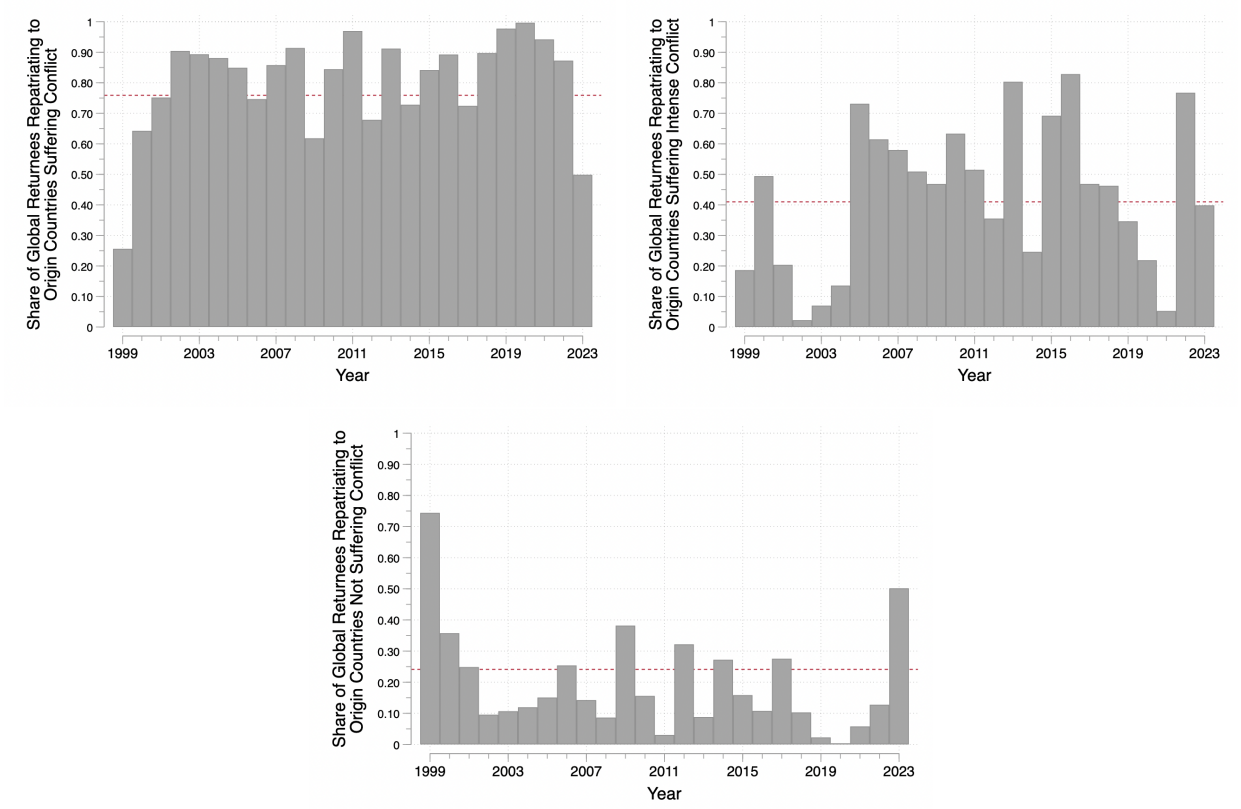
A Empirical Appendix

In this brief empirical appendix, we introduce supplemental results.

A.1 Repatriation to Conflict-Affect Origin Countries

Forcibly displaced people (FDP) often return to origin countries where there remain significant ongoing hostilities and risks of violence (Ghosn et al., 2021). More than 6.2 million Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 2002–2020, despite the incidence of a major civil conflict in the country. Comparable return-to-conflict dynamics emerge in numerous other contexts around the world.

Figure A-1: Refugee Repatriation to Conflict-Affected Versus Conflict-Free Origins



Note: The top left panel plots the annual share of global refugee returnees repatriating to an origin country suffering conflict causing at least 25 annual battle-related deaths. The top right panel plots the annual share of global refugee returnees repatriating to an origin country suffering conflict causing at least 1000 annual battle-related deaths. The bottom panel plots the annual share of global refugee returnees repatriating to a conlict-free origin country. Dashed red lines in each plot mark the average share across years.

A.2 How Displacement and Return Affect Conflict

In fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings, the potential impacts of mass displacement on security are significant and diverse. Prior work has focused on two related outcomes: armed conflict and social strife. Existing scholarship offers rich but often contradicting findings on how displacement affects these outcomes, suggesting that FDP may variously exacerbate or dampen militant and communal violence. Lehmann (2020) provides an excellent overview of this literature, and theoretical perspectives on how displacement, aid, and violence intersect. We help adjudicate these perspectives in the context of Afghanistan.

Displacement and Militancy The effect of civil conflict in spurring large-scale forced displacement is well-known. But displacement may also serve as a cause of conflict. For one, refugee flows can spur conflict spillovers from origin countries into neighboring regions where refugees flee. Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006) show that displacement can broaden rebel networks, and contribute to the cross-border diffusion of arms, ideologies, and combatants. Refugee encampments may serve as particularly dangerous conduits for insurgent recruitment and training (Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo, 1989; Lischer, 2006). For instance, the Afghan Taliban grew from a network of settlements and madrassas for Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Harpviken and Lischer, 2013). Militants embedded among displaced populations can also manipulate humanitarian aid (Lischer, 2006), instrumentalize ethnicity (Whitaker, 2003), and conscript vulnerable youths into rebel organizations (Haer and Hecker, 2018). Consequently, refugee flows are associated with increased terrorism (Milton, Spencer and Findley, 2013), though much of this effect is because displaced people are targets, rather than perpetrators, of violence (Onoma, 2013; Fisk, 2018).

Many of the same dynamics are magnified in the case of refugee repatriation. Where militants have infiltrated refugee populations abroad, mass return can give fighters cover to re-enter origin countries for attacks (Harpviken and Lischer, 2013). When refugees return to contested or insurgent-held communities, governments may engage in preemptive repression (Stein and Cuny, 1994), sparking further conflict and repeated flight (van Houte, 2017). Conditions in origin countries can also drive returnees to support militants. Poor and low-skilled repatriates are often forced into itinerant or illicit jobs (Petrin, 2002; Fransen, Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2017), making them ripe targets for rebel recruitment (Haer and Hecker, 2018). Price shocks resulting from mass repatriation also reduce the opportunity costs of rebellion (Camarena, 2016*a*). Further, repatriation can strain fragile institutions in origin countries (Camarena, 2016), increasing dissatisfaction with the state (Schultz, 2011; Lakhani and Amiri, 2020). Even where returnees support government forces, violence may increase as insurgents launch retributive attacks to deter collaboration (Seefar, 2019). Humanitarian aid to refugees may also reduce the number of potential fighters, as Masterson and Lehmann (2020) find in Syria.

Displacement and Social Conflict In addition to militancy, refugee return may affect social conflict. As Schwartz (2019, p. 110) notes, "conflict between returning and non-

migrant populations after civil war is a nearly ubiquitous issue for societies recovering from such wars." Return-induced competition over jobs (Petrin, 2002), housing (Harild, Christensen and Zetter, 2015), and land (Schwartz, 2019) may spur criminality and communal strife. In countries like Afghanistan, where livelihoods are tied to agriculture, property disputes are a particularly common source of grievance. In these settings, violent land clashes have erupted between returnees and host community members (Van Leeuwen and Van Der Haar, 2016; Kamminga and Zaki, 2018; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2021). These clashes have significant welfare implications. Economically, they may destroy the productivity of land by increasing contamination with mines or damaging irrigation infrastructure (Seefar, 2019). Socially, land conflicts are likely to metastasize into broader tribal disputes or honor feuds, which can spur recriminatory killings (Murtazashvili, 2016). Property disputes can also exacerbate insurgent violence (Albertus, 2020), especially where returnees or hosts ally with militants to combat alleged usurpers (Lakhani and Amiri, 2020).

If local elites politicize identity (Whitaker, 2003) or make threats to dissuade demographic change (Camarena and Hägerdal, 2020) in response to returnee inflows, repatriation can spur ethnic conflict. Migration status (i.e., returnee or stayee) may itself take on identity salience if policies attach privileges to those collective categories. For instance, when government regulations were perceived as benefiting returnees in Burundi, violent cleavages erupted between returnee and non-migrant community members (Schwartz, 2019). This dynamic is especially likely to unfold over humanitarian assistance. Marginalized hosts frequently clash with FDP who they believe hold disproportionate access to aid (Breslawski, 2024).

Displacement and Stability A third approach emphasizes the contributions of displaced people to security and stability. Above all, this perspective views returnees as a source of human capital, and hence an engine for peacebuilding and development (Loescher, 1996). Past experiences of violence foster emotional attachments to home (Blitz, Sales and Marzano, 2005), as well as self-efficacy and expertise in risk assessment (Ghosn et al., 2021). These factors make returnees a crucial asset for post-conflict reconciliation. Returnees' familiarity with hardships of war may also lead them to oppose future violence (Lakhani and Amiri, 2020).

Developmental contributions of returnees can also foster stability. Zhou and Shaver (2021) show that large, concentrated populations of FDP reduce local conflict by improving economic conditions. Humanitarian assistance targeting FDP may raise living standards for whole communities (Kreibaum, 2016). Aid spillovers from displaced beneficiaries to non-migrant neighbors also improve community relations, increase market exchange, and foster positive social contact (Lehmann and Masterson, 2020). In Afghanistan, some non-returnee urban poor have benefited from infrastructural investments targeting repatriates (Harild, Christensen and Zetter, 2015). Additionally, returnees may bolster production in destination communities by bringing back skills acquired while displaced (Bahar et al., 2024). Under these conditions, refugee return can reduce conflict.

A.3 Coding Global Refugee Return Waves

In Table 1 we classify major refugee repatriation waves worldwide from 1974–2018. We consult primary and secondary sources to make a determination about the primary reason for return of refugees in each wave. We characterize the primary reason for return based on how humanitarians, migrants, policymakers, and scholars describe collective incentives for repatriation in each scenario. These characterizations are ideal-typical. Of course, within each wave returnees hold diverse and mixed motives for repatriating at the individual- or household-level. The sources we use are described in Table A-1 below.

Table A-1: Sources for Global Refugee Return Waves, 1974–2018

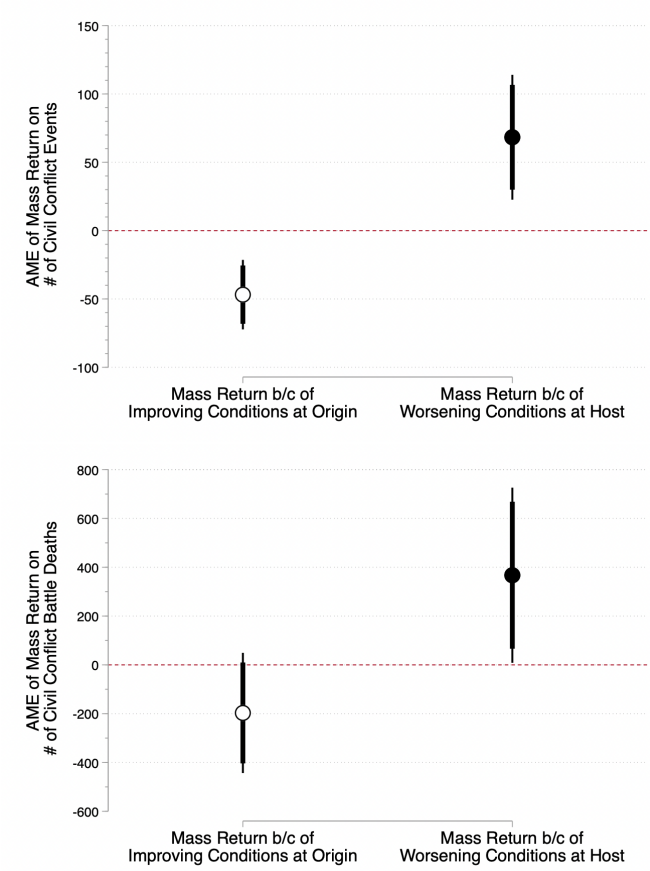
Year	Country of Origin	Country of Asylum	# of Returnees	Primary Reason for Return	Sources
1974	Pakistan	Bangladesh	104,320	Improving Conditions at Origin	Farzana (2009)
1978	D.R. Congo	Angola	107,640	Improving Conditions at Origin	The Washington Post (1978)
1979	Cambodia	Vietnam	120,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000)
1979	Myanmar	Bangladesh	150,680	Worsening Conditions at Host	Crisp (2018)
1980	Angola	D.R. Congo	200,000	Reduction in Mobility Costs	UNHCR (1980)
1980	Cambodia	Thailand	175,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	Cutts (2000, p. 92)
1980	Zimbabwe	Mozambique	150,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Powell (2013)
1982	Chad	Cameroon	133,080	Reduction in Mobility Costs	UNHCR (1983)
1982	Uganda	D.R. Congo	110,000	Reduction in Mobility Costs	Crisp (1986)
1984	Ethiopia	Rwanda	242,140	Worsening Conditions at Host	Prunier (1995)
1985	Ethiopia	Sudan	115,520	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, 115)
1986	Ethiopia	Somalia	104,430	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 115)
1986	Ethiopia	Sudan	109,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 115)
1991	Afghanistan	Pakistan	175,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Marsden (2003)
1991	Iraq	Iran	1,333,860	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 216)
1991	Sudan	Ethiopia	370,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	Birnir et al. (2004)
1992	Afghanistan	Iran	216,600	Improving Conditions at Origin	Black and Koser (1999)
1992	Afghanistan	Pakistan	1,360,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Black and Koser (1999)
1993	Mozambique	Malawi	345,086	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 148)
1994	Afghanistan	Iran	226,669	Worsening Conditions at Host	Naseh et al. (2018)
1994	Afghanistan	Pakistan	102,658	Worsening Conditions at Host	Ruiz (2004)
1994	Burundi	Tanzania	271,087	Worsening Conditions at Host	HPN (1994)
1994	Mozambique	Malawi	624,467	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 148)
1994	Mozambique	Zimbabwe	102,753	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 148)
1994	Rwanda	Burundi	338,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	USCR (1997)
1994	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	450,000	Worsening Conditions at Host	USCR (1997)
1994	Rwanda	Uganda	210,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	USCR (1997)
1994	Rwanda	Tanzania	210,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	USCR (1997)
1995	Afghanistan	Iran	194,287	Worsening Conditions at Host	Rajaee (2000)
1995	Afghanistan	Pakistan	153,274	Worsening Conditions at Host	Ruiz (2004)
1996	Afghanistan	Pakistan	140,390	Worsening Conditions at Host	Ruiz (2004)
1996	Burundi	D.R. Congo	105,653	Worsening Conditions at Host	USCR (1997)
1996	Rwanda	Burundi	127,473	Worsening Conditions at Host	USCR (1997)
1996	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	776,521	Worsening Conditions at Host	Pottier (1999)
1996	Rwanda	Tanzania	506,073	Worsening Conditions at Host	USCR (1997)
1997	Rwanda	D.R. Congo	178,429	Worsening Conditions at Host	Pottier (1999)
1998	Liberia	Cote d'Ivoire	100,563	Improving Conditions at Origin	USCR (1998)
1998	Liberia	Guinea	135,786	Improving Conditions at Origin	USCR (1998)
1998	Sierra Leone	Guinea	115,000	Improving Conditions at Origin	Lister (1998)
1999	Afghanistan	Iran	161,094	Reduction in Mobility Costs	USCR (1999)
1999	Serbia/Kosovo	Albania	435,790	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 241)
1999	Timor-Leste	Indonesia	127,528	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 237)
1999	Serbia/Kosovo	North Macedonia	233,400	Improving Conditions at Origin	Cutts (2000, p. 141)
2000	Afghanistan	Iran	215,566	Reduction in Mobility Costs	Ghani, Malekian and Sun (2024)
2002	Afghanistan	Iran	376,247	Improving Conditions at Origin	Human Rights Watch (2013)
2002	Afghanistan	Pakistan	1,569,248	Improving Conditions at Origin	Marsden (2003)
2003	Afghanistan	Iran	269,391	Improving Conditions at Origin	Human Rights Watch (2013)
2003	Afghanistan	Pakistan	375,526	Improving Conditions at Origin	Marsden (2003)
2004	Afghanistan	Iran	454,547	Improving Conditions at Origin	Human Rights Watch (2013)
2004	Afghanistan	Pakistan	424,477	Improving Conditions at Origin	Barlas (2022)
2004	Iraq	Iran	191,648	Improving Conditions at Origin	Van Engeland-Nourai (2008, p. 146)
2005	Afghanistan	Iran	289,647	Worsening Conditions at Host	Siavoshi (2022)
2005	Afghanistan	Pakistan	461,118	Worsening Conditions at Host	Ghufran (2006)
2006	Afghanistan	Iran	243,648	Worsening Conditions at Host	Siavoshi (2022)
2006	Afghanistan	Pakistan	143,019	Worsening Conditions at Host	Ghufran (2006)
2007	Afghanistan	Pakistan	365,663	Reduction in Mobility Costs	IRIN (2008)
2008	Afghanistan	Pakistan	274,200	Worsening Conditions at Host	IRIN (2008)
2010	Afghanistan	Pakistan	109,383	Worsening Conditions at Host	IRIN (2010)
2011	Cote d'Ivoire	Liberia	135,109	Improving Conditions at Origin	Bruni et al. (2017)
2011	Libya	Tunisia	148,951	Improving Conditions at Origin	Aghazarm et al. (2012)
2013	Syria	Turkey	140,756	Worsening Conditions at Host	Makovsky (2019)
2016	Afghanistan	Pakistan	381,275	Reduction in Mobility Costs	Blair and Wright (2024)
2018	Syria	Turkey	177,282	Worsening Conditions at Host	Makovsky (2019)

Note: We code all cases in which UNHCR records $\geq$ 100,000 registered refugee returns in a dyad-year.

A.4 Repatriation Contexts and Conflict in Global Perspective

In Figure A-2, we offer descriptive, cross-national evidence for our theory. To do so, we assemble a country-year panel, and study refugee repatriation shocks from Table 1. We define indicators for the incidence of mass returns resulting from improving conditions at origin and from worsening conditions at host. Using data from the Armed Conflict Dataset (Davies et al., 2024), we examine the correlation between mass return contexts and political violence. Mass returns resulting from worsening conditions in host countries are positively associated with the incidence and severity of civil conflict. The opposite holds true for returns induced by improving conditions at origin.

Figure A-2: Refugee Repatriation to Conflict-Affected Versus Conflict-Free Origins

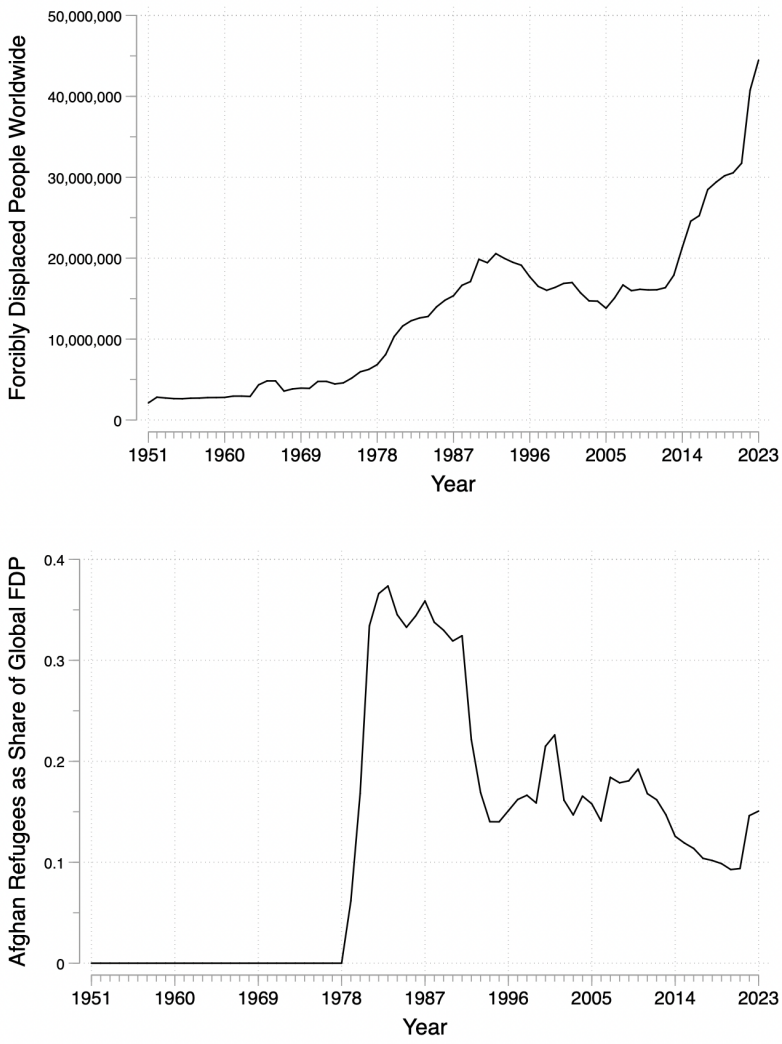


Note: In both panels we plot the average marginal effect of mass return on conflict. Estimates are from a Poisson regression of repatriation context on conflict. In top panel we examine the number of conflict events in a country-year. In bottom panel we examine the number of battle-related deaths in a country-year. All results are from Poisson regressions of the following form:
$Y_{d,t+1} = \delta(\text{Improving Conditions at Origin}_{d,t}) + \gamma(\text{Worsening Conditions at Host}_{d,t}) + \alpha_d + \beta_t + \mu(X_{d,t}) + \epsilon$,
where d indexes countries and t indexes years.

A.5 Global Refugee Stock

In the top panel of Figure A-3 we plot the number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and people in refugee-like situations worldwide since 1951. As of 2023 there are roughly 44 million people forcibly displaced across international borders. In the bottom panel of Figure A-3 we plot the share of all FDP originating from Afghanistan. As of 2023, more than 15% of the world's refugees are Afghan. In the focal year we study, 2018, there were about 30 million refugees worldwide, of whom more than 10% were Afghan.

Figure A-3: Number of Refugees Worldwide and Share of World Refugees from Afghanistan

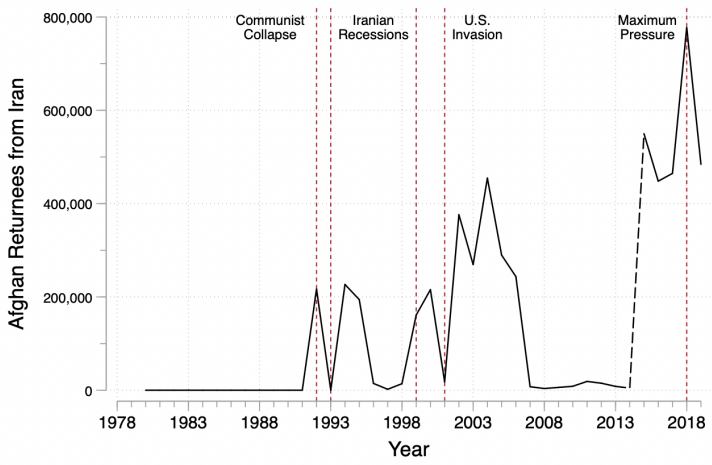


Note: The top plot depicts the number of refugees worldwide over time. The bottom plot depicts the over time share of all refugees who originated from Afghanistan. All data come from the UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database.

A.6 Afghan Returns from Iran

In Figure A-4 we plot the number of refugee returnees from Iran back to Afghanistan. For the period from 1978–2014, we plot data from the UNHCR's Refugee Population Statistics Database, which records the number of documented Afghan returnees from Iran. Starting in 2015, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) began estimating spontaneous repatriations of Afghans from Iran. Hence, for the period from 2015–2023 we report the combined sum of spontaneous and registered Afghan returns from Iran.

Figure A-4: Afghan Refugee Returns from Iran



Note: The plot depicts stocks of Afghan repatriates from Iran over time. Data on spontaneous repatriation is only available from 2015 onward. The dashed line in 2014 marks the shift in data sources.

A.7 Background on Maximum Pressure Campaign

The Iran nuclear deal, better known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was negotiated between 2013–2015 between Iran, the US, the UK, the European Union, France, Germany, Russia, and China. Under the terms of the deal, Iran agreed to significant limits on its nuclear development and capabilities in exchange for broad relief from international counterproliferation sanctions. In particular, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpiles of medium-enriched uranium, reduce its stockpiles of low-enriched uranium, reduce its number of gas centrifuges, halt construction of heavy-water facilities, and allow access by monitors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to all Iranian nuclear facilities (Fitzpatrick, Ellman and Izewicz, 2019). Proponents touted the deal as a landmark achievement for the Obama administration, and hailed the JCPOA for helping avert Iranian nuclear weapons development (Parsi, 2017; Tajbakhsh, 2021). Critics argued that the deal was marred by a number of significant deficits. In particular, JCPOA opponents warned that the agreement's sunset provisions would delay but not prevent Iranian nuclear development, and that by

failing to address Iranian ballistic missile capabilities or support for regional proxy forces, the deal risked emboldening a belligerent and dangerous Iranian regime (Kroenig, 2018). Other critics also cautioned that changing domestic political pressures could undermine the durability of the agreement (Khalaji, 2015).

During the presidential campaign in 2015–2016, candidate Donald Trump made a number of provocative statements about the JCPOA, calling it a "disaster" and "the worst deal ever negotiated." Ultimately, his commitment to rolling back or renegotiating the terms of the JCPOA and ratcheting up pressure on Iran became a signature campaign promise. As he declared in a March 2016 campaign speech, "[his n]umber-[o]ne priority" would be to "dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran" (Torbati, 2016). Upon his election, Trump also gave positions in his administration and wider advisory corps to notable Iran hawks critical of the JCPOA, including Mike Pompeo, Robert O'Brien, Brian Hook, John Bolton, and Elliot Abrahms (Spinelli, 2020). Yet, despite a firm anti-Iran coalition coalescing within the Trump administration by 2017, President Trump continued to re-certify the terms the JCPOA in April and July 2017 (Baker, 2017), and stopped short of withdrawing from the deal in October 2017, despite failing to re-certify at that point (Horsley and Keith, 2017).

Given this context, by spring 2018 survival of the JCPOA appeared tenuous; nevertheless, absent serious US threats to renew sanctions, the Iranian economy continued to grow. For the Afghan refugees based in Iran, this point is central. Many Afghan refugees were working cash-based jobs in Iran while sending remittances home to family in Afghanistan, and consequently, their decisions about whether to remain in Iran were directly linked to "the exchange rate that is instantly visible to them" (Hoseini and Dideh, 2022, p. 8). These refugee households could not anticipate the sudden currency depreciation that followed Trump's appointment of John Bolton, a highly prominent and vocal critic of the JCPOA, as National Security Advisor in April 2018. Having lobbied against the JCPOA for years in the Washington foreign policy community and think-tank circuit, Bolton's appointment portended the pressure strategy the Trump administration adopted. Foreign exchange markets in Iran began moving in direct response to Bolton's appointment, over fears he had succeeded in convincing Trump that the JCPOA "remain[ed] palpably harmful to American national interests" and that its termination "should be the highest priority" (Baker, 2017).

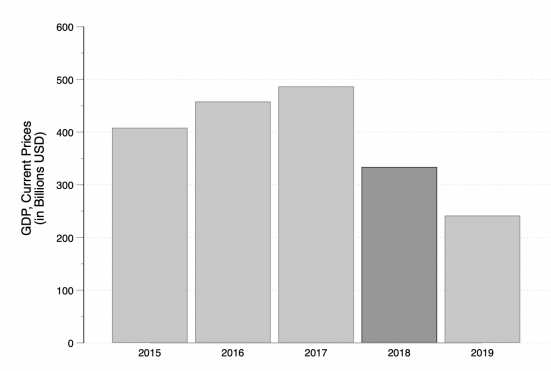
The nominal goal of the Trump administration's Maximum Pressure strategy, as elaborated by Kroenig (2018), was: "to offer Iran's leaders a sharp choice. If Iran refuses to return to the table and agree to shut down its enrichment programme, then its regional ambitions will be obstructed, its economy will remain under sanction, its territory will be subject to military threats, and it will remain an international pariah. Alternatively, the United States stands ready to offer Iran a fair deal." Although the re-imposition of sanctions damaged the Iranian economy, the pressure strategy also incentivized more aggressive Iranian resistance. Consequently, Iran escalated proxy violence throughout the Middle East, and expanded covert efforts to grow its nuclear program (Azizi, Golmohammadi and Vazirian, 2020).

A.8 Consequences of the Maximum Pressure Campaign

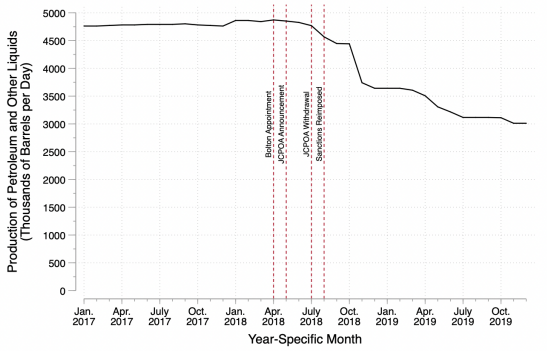
The impacts of the Maximum Pressure campaign were far-reaching and severe for the Iranian economy. In Figure A-5 we chart substantial reductions in GDP and petroleum production, and increases in inflation. Iranian GDP declined by more than $153 billion from 2017 to 2018 (panel a). Petroleum production fell by 1.1 million barrels per day from March–December 2018 (panel b). Iranian inflation increased 30% year-on-year in 2018 (panel c). Relative to 2017 levels, consumer prices increased precipitously, surging 39% by the end of 2018 (panel d).

Figure A-5: Economic Consequences of the Maximum Pressure Campaign

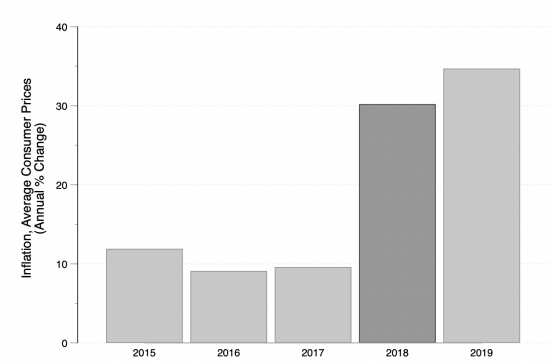
(a) Gross Domestic Product (GDP)



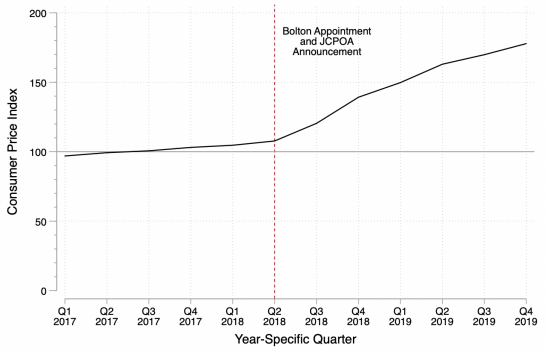
(b) Petroleum Production



(c) Inflation



(d) Consumer Price Index (CPI)



Note: The plots show the economic impact of the Maximum Pressure campaign. Panel (a) shows GDP declined. Panel (b) shows petroleum production fell. Panel (c) shows inflation increased year-on-year. Panel (d) shows the rise in consumer prices.

A.9 Household Replacement in the Iranian Labor Force Survey

To build evidence that the Maximum Pressure sanctions induced refugee repatriation, we use rich, individual- and household-level data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS). Fielded by the Statistical Center of Iran quarterly since 2005, the LFS is based on a sampling frame defined by Iran's quinquennial population census. The target population is the set of privately and collectively-held residences throughout Iran. Questionnaire design and wording follow best-practices defined by the International Labour Organization. The LFS relies on a stratified, two-stage cluster sampling approach, and yields nationally- and provincially-representative samples of urban and rural households. Critically for our purposes, the LFS distinguishes Iranian citizen and Afghan migrant households. Iranian enumerators employ rotation sampling following a "2-2-2" pattern. This means that sampled households are enumerated four times every two years in a repeating pattern. Specifically, sampled households are interviewed in two successive quarters, then excluded from the sample for two consecutive quarters, then resampled in the next two consecutive quarters, and so on. Hoseini and Dideh (2022) and Ghahroodi (2023) provide more details on the LFS methodology.

Given the rotating panel design, we define an indicator for sample replacement. This measure takes a value of 1 for individuals unable to be recontacted because LFS enumerators found that they no longer resided at their previous, stable address in Iran, and 0 otherwise. Individuals and households can be replaced for a number of reasons, including migration, death, rental turnover, or employment-related mobility. Hoseini and Dideh (2022) show that repatriation is the main reason for sample replacement among Afghan households in the LFS. Consistent with an increase in Afghan repatriation during the Maximum Pressure campaign, we find that Afghan migrant households in Iran were 6.4–12.4 percentage points more likely to be replaced during the sanctions program.

Table A-2: Afghan Households Were Disproportionately Replaced in the Iranian LFS

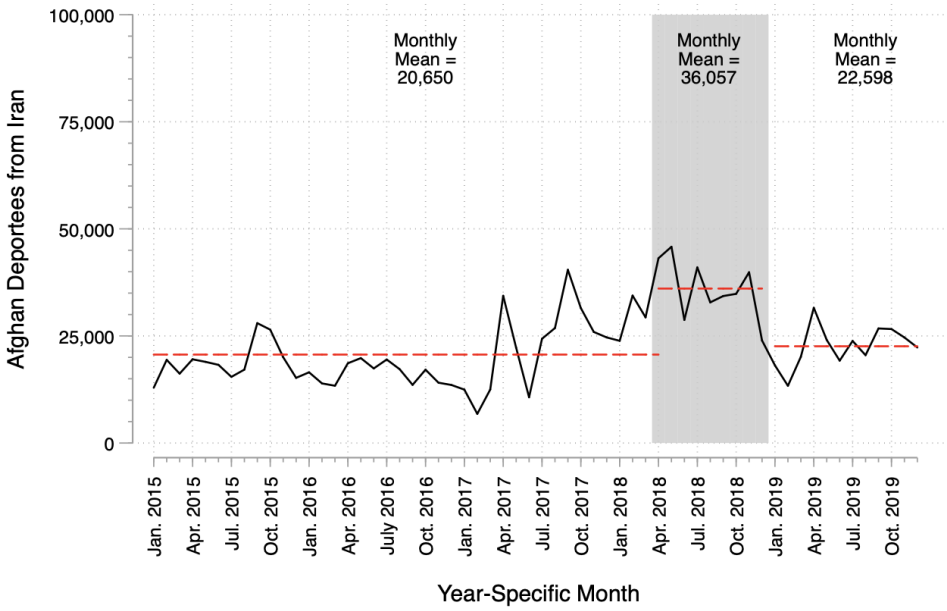
	Individual-Level				
	Sample Replacement (=1)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Afghan Migrant in Iran x Maximum Pressure	0.064**	0.064**	0.064**	0.064**	0.124***
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.019)
Observations	1059538	1059538	1059538	1059538	1059538
PARAMETERS					
Nationality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demograhic Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes
Employment Status				Yes	Yes
Household FE					Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, province-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Afghan migrant in Iran is an indicator for Afghan respondents in the LFS. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Demographic controls are age, gender, education, urbanicity, and an indicator for heads of household. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

A.10 Anti-Refugee Coercion in Iran

At a number of key points in the past two decades, the Iranian government has pursued anti-refugee coercion, using police and border security forces to deport Afghans. As Human Rights Watch (2013) and Siavoshi (2022) document, an economic logic motivates changes in the intensity of Iranian deportations. During economic downturns and recessions, Iranian policymakers increase deportations of Afghan refugees to alleviate labor market pressure from refugees on Iranian citizens. During economic booms, deportations slow as a concession to Iranian businesses interested in hiring cheap labor supplied by Afghan refugees (Siavoshi, 2022).

Figure A-6: Deportation of Afghan Refugees from Iran



Note: The plot shows the number of Afghans deported from Iran by month. Dashed red lines respectively denote mean levels of deportation before, during, and after the Maximum Pressure period. Gray bars denote the initial period of the 2018 sanctions campaign. All return data are extracted from reports compiled by IOM border monitoring staff.

Given these patterns, we would expect Iranian deportations of Afghans to increase during the 2018 US pressure campaign. As Siavoshi (2022, p. 214-215) suggests, because of "the steady and dramatic devaluation of Iran's currency," Iranian "migration policies shifted back towards repatriation," and "the language of... deportation appeared in the discourse of some government officials." In line with this discussion, we document a small increase in the monthly rate of Afghan deportations during the Maximum Pressure campaign (Figure A-6). To the extent Afghan deportees from Iran, like the broader pool of Afghan returnees during the 2018 return shock, were repatriating with few economic or social endowments,

then deportees and other (ordinary) returnees should have similar effects on the trajectory of conflict in their origin communities.

To further assuage potential concerns, we present evidence in Table A-3 from the Survey of Afghan Returnees. We consider two main outcomes: (1) "Reason for Return: Deported or Forcibly Removed," which takes a value of 1 for respondents who reported that they were forcibly evicted from Iran, and 0 otherwise; and (2) "Reason for Return: Government Policy Restriction," which takes a value of 1 for respondents who reported that they were forcibly evicted from Iran or otherwise had their official documentation and status revoked, and 0 otherwise. We find no evidence that individuals repatriating from Iran during the Maximum Pressure policy were more likely to report being deported or forcibly removed. Nor were these individuals more likely to cite restrictive Iranian government policies on status security as a motivation for repatriating.

Table A-3: Maximum Pressure Returnees Do Not Cite Coercion as a Key Push Factor

	Reason for Return: Deported or Forcibly Removed				**Reason for Return: Host Government Policy Restriction**			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.002	-0.003	0.001	0.004	-0.044	-0.049	-0.044	-0.042
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS								
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Age		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Education		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Income		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Marital Status			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Dwelling			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Respondent Comfort				Yes				Yes
Interview Order				Yes				Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 2.

A.11 Quantifying Economic Impacts on Refugee Households

To investigate economic effects of the Maximum Pressure policy on Afghan migrant households in Iran, we use data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS) and the Iranian Household and Expenditure Survey (HEIS). In the first step we validate qualitative reporting (Bengali, Mostaghim and Faizy, 2018) suggesting that Afghan refugees in Iran were disproportionately exposed to the sanctions-induced currency depreciation by virtue of the fact that they primarily occupied cash-based jobs in the informal sector. In Table A-4 we use data from the LFS to examine the employment status of Afghan heads-of-household who remained in Iran at the time of the Maximum Pressure policy shock. Among these non-returnee Afghans who remained in Iran, unemployment increased 2.1 percentage points. Afghan migrants' job losses were concentrated in low-skilled occupations in the informal sector. In these sectors, Afghans' employment dropped 3.5 percentage points.

Table A-4: Afghan Migrant Unemployment Rose During the Maximum Pressure Period

	Individual-Level		
	Unemployed (=1)	**Employment by Sector (=1)**	
	(1)	(2) Low-Skill	(3) High-Skill
Afghan Migrant in Iran x Maximum Pressure	0.021*	-0.035*	0.031
	(0.011)	(0.018)	(0.022)
Observations	229406	229406	229406
PARAMETERS			
Nationality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demograhic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Household FE	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, province-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Afghan migrant in Iran is an indicator for Afghan respondents in the LFS. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Demographic controls are age, gender, education, and urbanicity. The sample is restricted to heads-of-household who were not replaced in the LFS sample during the Maximum Pressure period. Low-skill occupational sectors are "Elementary Occupations" or "Craft and Related Trade Workers" as defined in the LFS. High-skill occupational sectors are all other employment sectors. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

For the second step of our inquiry, we consider data from the Iranian HEIS. Fielded by the Statistical Center of Iran annually since 1963, the HEIS is based on a sampling frame defined by Iran's quinquennial population census. The target population is the set of privately and collectively-held residences throughout Iran. The HEIS relies on a three-stage cluster sampling method with strata, where census areas, urban and rural blocks, and households are selected in turn. To ensure representativeness of conditions throughout the year, samples are evenly distributed between calendar months. Consequently, the HEIS yields nationally- and provincially-representative samples of urban and rural households. Hoseini and Dideh (2022) provide more details on the HEIS methodology.

Unlike the LFS, the HEIS does not distinguish Iranian citizen versus Afghan migrant households. To identify Afghan migrants given available information from the HEIS, we follow the approach outlined by Hoseini and Dideh (2022, p. 32). This requires using a series of questions from HEIS to triangulate likely Afghan households. We define an indicator for Afghan refugees that takes a value of 1 if four conditions are met, and 0 otherwise. Specifically, to be considered an Afghan refugee, an individual must report: (1) that they do not receive government cash transfers reserved exclusively for Iranian citizens; (2) that they do not own a house, which Afghan refugees are prohibited from doing; (3) that they do not hold an Iranian passport or conscription completion card, which Afghan refugees are prohibited from doing; and (4) that they do not report any aerial travel to a foreign country.

In Table A-5, we use the HEIS to examine whether Afghan migrants in the survey suffered disproportionate economic losses during the Maximum Pressure period. In column 1 we consider gross income, in column 2 we consider the wage rate, and in column 3 we consider hours worked. Income and wages fell by nearly 0.5 standard deviations, while hours worked declined more than 0.43 standard deviations.

Table A-5: Afghan Migrant Livelihoods Worsened During the Maximum Pressure Period

	Individual-Level		
	Gross Income (IHS)	**Wage Rate (IHS)**	**Hours Worked (#)**
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Afghan Migrant in Iran x Maximum Pressure	-4.230***	-4.213***	-2.440**
	(0.861)	(0.865)	(1.095)
Observations	73815	73815	73815
PARAMETERS			
Nationality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demograhic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, province-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. IHS indicates an outcome is transformed by the inverse hyperbolic sine. Afghan migrant in Iran is an indicator for Afghan respondents in the HEIS. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Demographic controls are age, gender, education, literacy, and urbanicity. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

A.12 Push and Pull Factors Confronting Afghan Returnees

The Asia Foundation's Survey of Afghan Returnees was contracted by USAID and implemented by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR), a subsidiary of the international firm D3. Sayara Research provided third-party field verification. ACSOR hired and trained local enumerators in household and respondent selection, including lessons on how to correctly record answers to questions, culturally-sensitive interview methods, and secure storage of contact information.

Returnees residing in settlements were randomly sampled from a sampling frame based on the IOM Baseline Mobility Assessment. The sample is population-proportional-to-size within each province, and can be taken as representative of returnees in the five sampled provinces. A random walk was used to select households within sampled settlements, and a Kish grid was used to select respondents from within sampled households. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by gender-matched enumerators. The contact rate was 84.60%, the cooperation rate was 89.12%, the response rate was 74.57%, and the refusal rate was 7.10%.

In Table A-6 and Table A-7 we examine responses to the question "why did you return?" We compare respondents who returned from Iran between April–December 2018 to those that returned from Pakistan at any point or from Iran in different time periods. Among potential push factors (Table A-6), Maximum Pressure returnees were only more likely to characterize poor economic conditions in Iran as the factor motivating their repatriation decisions.

Table A-6: Push Factors: Reasons Afghans Refugees Returned

	Reason for Return: Push Factors (=1)				
	(1) Poor Economy	(2) Poor Security	(3) Deported or Forcibly Removed	(4) Host Gov't Policy Restriction	(5) Unwelcoming Conditions
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.056*	0.021	0.004	-0.042	-0.016
	(0.031)	(0.016)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.018)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS					
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dwelling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respondent Comfort	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interview Order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 2.

In Table A-7 we consider self-reported pull factors attracting returnees back to Afghanistan. We believe that of pull factors, the economic collapse in Iran is most likely to be captured by perceptions that the economic situation in Afghanistan was also worsening (or at least not improving). As IOM officials worried, "[t]he Afghan economy itself w[ould] suffer direct and immediate effects" of the sanctions-induced depreciation and broader collapse of the Iranian economy because there would be "[l]ess money coming from working males [in Iran] who are instead returning home to few jobs..." (Bezhan and Parsa, 2018). Strikingly, this is the only factor for which we find a (nearly) distinguishable effect (p = 0.101). Maximum Pressure returnees were 1.4pp less likely to report repatriating to capitalize on favorable economic conditions in Afghanistan. This finding is consistent with our argument that these returns were driven by worsening economic conditions in Iran.

Table A-7: Pull Factors: Reasons Afghans Refugees Returned

	Reason for Return: Pull Factors (=1)						
	(1) Improving Economy	(2) Improving Security	(3) Family Reunification	(4) Welcoming Conditions	(5) Improving Education	(6) Patriotism	(7) Insurgent Recruitment
Maximum Pressure Returnee	-0.014	0.008	-0.022	0.002	0.000	0.001	-0.003
	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.029)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.005)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS							
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dwelling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respondent Comfort	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interview Order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 2.

A.13 Summary Statistics

Descriptive statistics for our core variables are provided here. Table A-8 offers summary statistics for district-based analyses.

Table A-8: Summary Statistics: District Analyses

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Incidence of Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs (=1)	14328	0.494	0.500	0.000	1.000
Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs per 100k Population	14328	5.856	15.856	0.000	347.600
Incidence of Direct Fires (=1)	14328	0.419	0.493	0.000	1.000
Direct Fires per 100k Population	14328	4.351	13.743	0.000	335.978
Incidence of Complex Attacks (=1)	14328	0.180	0.384	0.000	1.000
Complex Attacks per 100k Population	14328	0.964	4.755	0.000	201.103
Incidence of Indirect Fires (=1)	14328	0.113	0.316	0.000	1.000
Indirect Fires per 100k Population	14328	0.395	1.676	0.000	45.537
Incidence of Explosive Attacks (=1)	14328	0.210	0.407	0.000	1.000
Explosive Attacks per 100k Population	14328	0.841	2.731	0.000	79.114
Independent Variables					
Share of 2012-2015 Undocumented Returnees from Iran	14328	0.003	0.006	0.000	0.077
Maximum Pressure	14328	0.250	0.433	0.000	1.000
Control Variables					
Share of Population-Speaking Pashtun	14328	0.456	0.426	0.000	1.000
Share of Population-Speaking Dari	14328	0.382	0.407	0.000	1.000
Distance to Border Crossing	14328	1.046	0.650	0.040	3.018
Travel Time to Provincial Center	14328	97.166	140.265	0.000	1477.900
Provincial Unemployment	14328	11.980	7.346	2.575	35.475
Provincial GINI Coefficient	14328	24.960	4.376	18.050	36.100
Nightlights per Population	14328	0.014	0.968	-0.452	15.364
Travel Time to Ring Road	14328	152.042	162.243	0.000	1474.300
Growing-Season Opium Suitability	14328	0.000	0.906	-1.661	3.174
Spending on National Solidarity Programme per 100k Population	14328	3368029.706	2718397.062	0.000	16963237.223
Spending on USAID Transition Initiatives per 100k Population	14328	197968.755	834657.609	0.000	7307124.832

Note: Observations are district-months in the main estimating sample from 2016–2018.

We complement our district-level analyses with individual-level evidence from the Survey of Afghan Returnees, fielded in two waves in 2018-2019 by the Asia Foundation. We identify 470 spontaneous returnees from Iran during the Maximum Pressure period. In Table A-9 we present summary statistics for these analyses.

Table A-9: Summary Statistics: Survey-Based Analyses

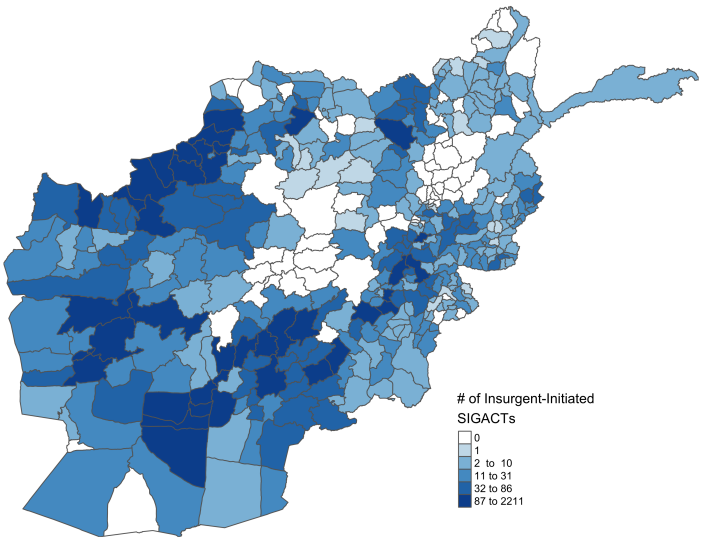
	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Positive Neighborhood Contact	7045	0.040	0.979	-4.523	1.590
Experienced a Communal Dispute	7045	0.121	0.326	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Poor Economic Conditions in Host	7045	0.338	0.473	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Poor Security Conditions in Host	7045	0.098	0.297	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Deported/Forcibly Returned	7045	0.217	0.412	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Host Government Policy Restriction	7045	0.295	0.456	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Unwelcoming Host Community	7045	0.056	0.230	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Improving Economy in Afghanistan	7045	0.011	0.103	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Improving Security in Afghanistan	7045	0.023	0.150	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Family Reunification	7045	0.121	0.326	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Welcoming Conditions in Afghanistan	7045	0.010	0.100	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Improving Education in Afghanistan	7045	0.006	0.076	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Patriotism	7045	0.029	0.168	0.000	1.000
Reason for Return: Insurgent Recruitment	7045	0.005	0.067	0.000	1.000
Independent Variables					
Max Pressure Returnee	7045	0.061	0.239	0.000	1.000
Control Variables					
Host Country: Pakistan	7045	0.563	0.496	0.000	1.000
Host Country: Iran	7045	0.354	0.478	0.000	1.000
Host Country: Elsewhere	7045	0.083	0.275	0.000	1.000
Timing of Return	7045	679.272	17.227	618.000	721.000
Unregistered Return	7045	0.667	0.471	0.000	1.000
Female	7045	0.464	0.499	0.000	1.000
Age	7045	2.347	1.132	1.000	5.000
Education	7045	0.936	1.260	0.000	4.000
Income	7045	2.413	1.854	0.000	9.000
Urban	7045	0.256	0.437	0.000	1.000
Tazkira-Holder	7045	0.854	0.353	0.000	1.000
Ethnicity: Pashtun	7045	0.534	0.499	0.000	1.000
Ethnicity: Tajik	7045	0.291	0.454	0.000	1.000
Ethnicity: Uzbek	7045	0.030	0.171	0.000	1.000
Ethnicity: Hazara	7045	0.105	0.306	0.000	1.000
Ethnicity: Other	7045	0.040	0.196	0.000	1.000
Dwelling: Single Family House	7045	0.749	0.433	0.000	1.000
Dwelling: Shared House	7045	0.228	0.420	0.000	1.000
Dwelling: Single Family Apartment	7045	0.014	0.118	0.000	1.000
Dwelling: Shared Apartment	7045	0.006	0.080	0.000	1.000
Dwelling: Tent	7045	0.002	0.040	0.000	1.000
Relationship Status: Single	7045	0.145	0.352	0.000	1.000
Relationship Status: Married	7045	0.834	0.372	0.000	1.000
Relationship Status: Widow/Widower	7045	0.021	0.144	0.000	1.000
Relationship Status: Divorced/Separated	7045	0.000	0.017	0.000	1.000
Comfort During Interview	7045	1.274	0.478	1.000	4.000
Interview # within Sampling Point	7045	2.983	1.412	1.000	5.000

Note: Observations are individual responses used in the main estimating sample. The positive neighborhood contact index is a z-standardized index constructed by inverse covariance-weighting. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

A.14 Significant Activities (SIGACTs)

Administrative records in the main analyses come from the International Distributed Unified Reporting Environment (INDURE), an unclassified but restricted-access platform maintained by the US Defense Department. Events described in INDURE are sourced from the US military's classified Combined Information Data Network Exchange. The INDURE files cover 2015-2020, and represent a successor dataset to the declassified Significant Activities (SIGACTs) record, which covers the period from 2008–2014. Together, the INDURE and SIGACTS data form the most comprehensive account of insurgent and counterinsurgent operations during the War in Afghanistan (Shaver and Wright, 2017), totalling more than 580,000+ individual events. The data draw from a secure, classified platform populated using highly-detailed combat reports logged by NATO and Afghan troops and police. Equipped with satellite-linked GPS equipment in the field, these forces recorded the geolocation of every reported event at a highly-granular level, and the time-stamp of every reported event down to the minute. Because records were gathered by soldiers in the field, data collection was not subject to access constraints like insurgent territorial control, which plague survey- and media-based event trackers (Weidmann, 2016). While most extant work studies a subset of the SIGACTs data covering insurgent engagements against counterinsurgent forces (e.g. Fetzer et al., 2021; Blair, 2024*b*), the rich INDURE and SIGACTs reports also cover a range of counterinsurgent-initiated operations, police actions, and other notable community events (e.g. Blair, 2024*a*; Sonin and Wright, 2024).

Figure A-7: Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs During the Maximum Pressure Period



Note: Districts are shaded by the intensive margin of insurgent violence. We plot the total number of insurgent-initiated attacks during the Maximum Pressure period from April–December 2018.

A.15 Covariate Balance

In Table A-10 we estimate a series of differences-in-means using data from the Survey of Afghan Returnees. Comparing sanction induced returnees to other returnees reveals few demographic differences. Returnees induced by the Maximum Pressure sanctions lived in smaller households, and were more likely to be non-Pashtun (Tajik or Hazara), male, single, and better educated.

Table A-10: Covariate Balance Between Sanctions-Induced and Other Returnees

	Not Maximum Pressure Returnee	Maximum Pressure Returnee	Difference-in-Means Not Maximum Pressure - Maximum Pressure
# of Returnees in Household	5.479	3.427	2.052***
	(4.347)	(2.814)	
Urban	0.254	0.292	-0.038
	(0.435)	(0.455)	
Female	0.472	0.341	0.130***
	(0.499)	(0.475)	
Age: 18-25	0.256	0.306	-0.050**
	(0.437)	(0.461)	
Age: 26-35	0.351	0.335	0.016
	(0.477)	(0.473)	
Age: 36-45	0.227	0.203	0.025
	(0.419)	(0.403)	
Age: 46-55	0.113	0.113	-0.001
	(0.316)	(0.317)	
Age: 55+	0.052	0.042	0.010
	(0.223)	(0.202)	
Ethnicity: Pashtun	0.560	0.137	0.422***
	(0.496)	(0.345)	
Ethnicity: Tajik	0.270	0.615	-0.344***
	(0.444)	(0.487)	
Ethnicity: Uzbek	0.030	0.028	0.002
	(0.171)	(0.165)	
Ethnicity: Hazara	0.101	0.172	-0.071*
	(0.301)	(0.377)	
Ethnicity: Other	0.039	0.049	-0.009
	(0.195)	(0.215)	
Monthly Income	2.404	2.549	-0.145
	(1.854)	(1.850)	
Education	0.925	1.104	-0.179*
	(1.259)	(1.272)	
Dwelling: Single Family Home	0.750	0.741	0.009
	(0.433)	(0.439)	
Marital Status: Single	0.139	0.234	-0.095***
	(0.346)	(0.424)	
Marital Status: Married	0.839	0.759	0.080***
	(0.368)	(0.428)	
Marital Status: Widowed	0.022	0.007	0.015***
	(0.147)	(0.083)	
Tazkira Holder	0.851	0.898	-0.047**
	(0.356)	(0.304)	
Dispute Resolution Institutions	0.392	0.395	-0.003
	(0.035)	(0.034)	
Resides Near Kin	0.824	0.876	-0.052**
	(0.381)	(0.330)	

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Observations are individual responses used in the main estimating sample. Column 1 presents means and standard deviations (in parentheses) for survey respondents who did not repatriate from Iran during the Maximum Pressure campaign. Column 2 presents means and standard deviations (in parentheses) for survey respondents who repatriated from Iran during the Maximum Pressure campaign. Column 3 presents differences-in-means from a series of regressions, with p-values calculated based on clustered standard errors. Estimates are scaled using sampling weights. Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

A.16 Measuring Communal Violence

Our military records offer a comprehensive portrait of combat between insurgent and counterinsurgent forces. However, these data do not track social conflicts occurring between civilians, tribes, or other groups. We draw on survey-based data to understand communal violence and returnee relations with their non-migrant neighbors in the main analyses. Table A-11 describes the items from the Survey of Afghan Returnees that we use to code the core measure of community relations—an index measuring "Postive Neighborhood Contact" between returnees and stayees. Apart from this index, we also consider specific responses to the first item referenced in the table, a self-reported measure of experiences with communal disputes. Figure A-8 plots the geographic distribution of these measures.

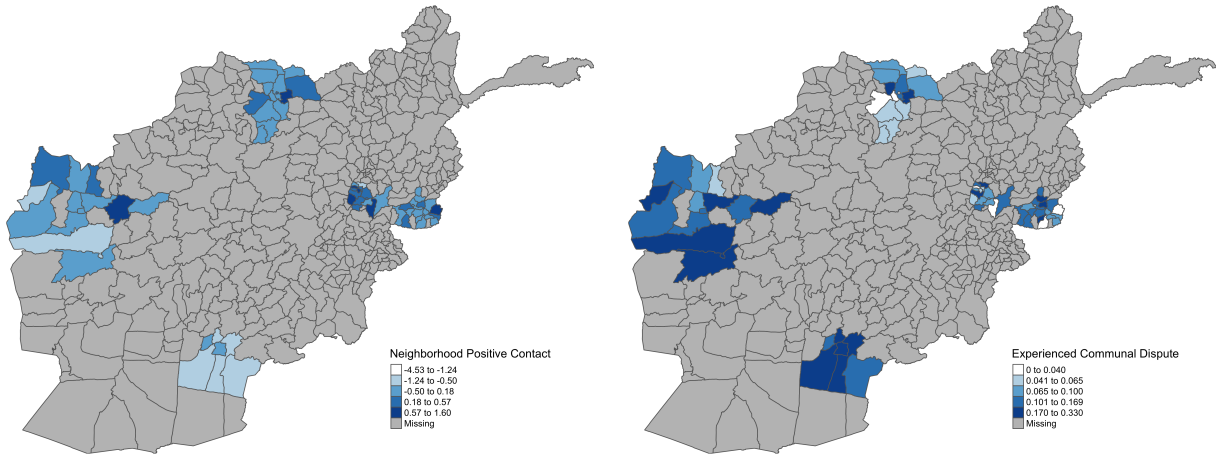
Table A-11: Coding Dependent Variables from Returnee Survey

Variable	Question	Coding	Index
Communal Disputes	Since returning to Afghanistan, have you or family members personally experienced a dispute or conflict with a community member(s)?	No =1	Positive Neighborhood Contact
Non-Discrimination	I have felt discrimination from others in my neighborhood, because of my language or the way I speak	No = 1	Positive Neighborhood Contact
Neighbors Invite	My neighbors invite me to their ceremonies such as wedding and khatm	Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 4	Positive Neighborhood Contact
Neighbors Helpful	I can comfortably go to any of my neighbors for help	Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 4	Positive Neighborhood Contact
Neighbors Respectful	My neighbors respect me and my family	Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 4	Positive Neighborhood Contact
Neighbors Friendly	My neighborhood has been friendly and welcoming	Strongly disagree = 1, Strongly agree = 4	Positive Neighborhood Contact

In supplementary analyses we also consider incidents of communal violence recorded in an original dataset we assembled. To measure communal feuds, we draw on a US government-sponsored conflict tracker, which covers 2016-2018 and combines incidents reported by the Afghan National Police Command Center, open-source media, and embassy-contracted risk analysis firms. For each event in the tracker we observe geographic coordinates, a timestamp, and an incident description. While most events refer to (counter)insurgent violence, a subset of the records cover social strife.

Social conflict characterizes incidents of extra-governmental conflict between informally-organized groups in which neither state nor rebel forces are a primary target or perpetrator. Social conflict excludes conflicts involving pro-government militias, as these groups are formally organized; however, large-scale riots and demonstrates are included as a form of social strife. Government or rebel forces may respond to social violence so long as they are not primary targets. As Murtazashvili (2016) describes, this form of violence includes land and property disputes, honor feuds, and tribal or familial clashes. We use supervised keyword text analysis to search and code events on the basis of incident descriptions. This exercise benefits from standard terminological conventions in each narrative. For instance, most incidents involving insurgent attacks begin "INS conducted [tactic]." Sexton (2016) offers a

Figure A-8: Survey-Based Measures of Communal Conflict



Note: Districts are shaded by the measure denoted in the legend on the bottom right of each plot. The left panel studies a z-standardized index of positive neighborhood contact, where higher values indicate better social relations between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors. The right panel studies the average share of returnees in each district who reported experiencing a communal dispute. The plots study data from the Survey of Afghan Returnees.

similar approach. Most narratives are general, and do not allow us to distinguish types of social conflicts, or to identify specific disputes involving returnees. To illustrate, we describe two incidents below:

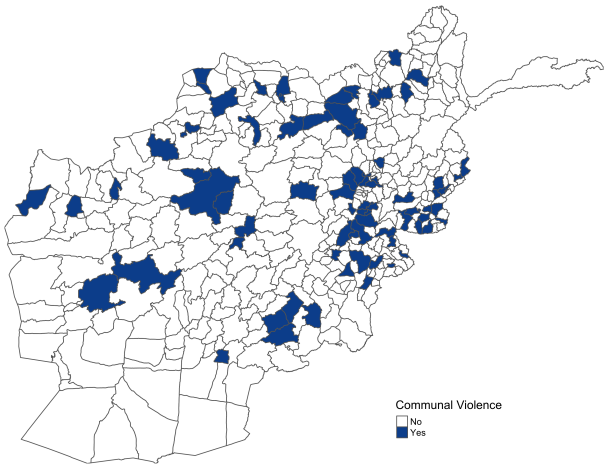
> **Date:** 09:30, 02 July 2018
> **Location:** Deh Bala District, Nangarhar Province
> **Narrative:** "Provincial HQ reported: on 0930L, 02 July 18, due to armed conflict between (02) LNs [local nationals] in Shirwan of the mentioned DC [district center] areas, (02) LNs WIA [wounded-in-action], (06) various weapons were obtained by police and the case is under the investigation."

> **Date:** 08:00, 06 July 2018
> **Location:** Andkhoy District, Faryab Province
> **Narrative:** "0800L, 07 July 18, Provincial HQ reported: approximately (150) LNs and supporters of Nizamuddin Qaisari were conducted demonstration in the mentioned DC [district center] areas; they blocked Bandar-e Aqina to the traffic."

In total, we identify 297 incidents of communal violence across Afghanistan in 2018, including 227 events during the Maximum Pressure period. Although we believe our data represent the most complete accounting of social conflict in Afghanistan during this time, it is likely that this violence is under-reported. Measurement error in these data would

increase the variance of our estimates, reducing precision of our results. To further mitigate possible under-reporting, we study the extensive margin of communal violence in our primary estimations using this alternative measure. Results are substantively similar when we assess communal violence in levels or per capita.

Figure A-9: Administrative Data on Communal Conflict



Note: Districts are shaded by the extensive margin of communal conflict during the Maximum Pressure period from April–December 2018. The measure comes from a government-sponsored conflict tracker.

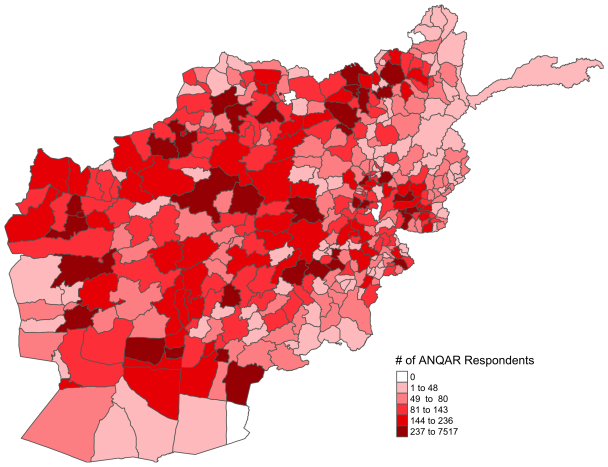
A.17 ANQAR Survey

We supplement analyses of administrative records with analyses of 173,819 individual-level survey responses from the nationally-representative Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research (ANQAR) survey (Figure A-10). We specifically study data from waves 31–43 of ANQAR, covering the 1st quarter of 2016 – the 1st quarter of 2019. ANQAR data were gathered by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR), an Afghan subsidiary of the international research firm D3 Systems, which NATO contracted to design and field various atmospherics surveys. ACSOR was contracted in part because NATO viewed it as a high-fidelity implementing partner: it was led by survey methodologists, and its chairman held a social science Ph.D.

The administrative district was the primary sampling unit in ANQAR, and districts were selected via a probability-proportional-to-size systematic sampling approach. After districts were sampled, secondary sampling units composed of villages were randomly selected. A random walk method was used to identify target households, and a Kish grid was used to randomize respondents within each selected household. Sampled respondents were gender-matched to enumerators, in keeping with local gender norms. Where weather-induced transportation issues (e.g., flooding) or threats to enumerator safety meant ACSOR

could not conduct random selection interviewing, intercept interviews were used to capture responses. Intercept interviews were conducted by male enumerators with male residents of inaccessible districts as they traveled through neighboring, accessible areas of the province.

Figure A-10: Number of ANQAR Respondents



Note: Districts are shaded by the number of ANQAR respondents sampled across waves 31–43.

To better understand how ANQAR was administered, we held several conversations with current or former employees of the contracting agency (NATO) and the implementing partner (ACSOR/D3 Systems). All individuals we spoke with had direct knowledge of ANQAR from time working on the project. Conversation partners included a chairman at ACSOR, a managing director at ACSOR, a project manager at ACSOR, and an operational analyst at NATO's Afghanistan Assessment Group. In all of these conversations, ANQAR staffers highlighted several best-practices they used in survey administration:

- ACSOR teams hired and trained enumerators in every province of Afghanistan. Training covered household and respondent selection, how to correctly record responses, culturally-sensitive interview methods, and secure storage of contact information. Once trained by provincial-level teams from ACSOR, enumerators were assigned to enumerate districts in their province of origin. Consequently, all enumerators spoke local languages in local dialects, and were knowledgeable of important local customs.

- After the sampling set was identified and before fielding each wave, ACSOR entered negotiations with elders in selected villages to secure permission for enumerators to operate. This locally-sensitive approach enabled enumerators to safely conduct fieldwork in areas of weak state reach.

- Under no circumstances were ACSOR enumeration teams accompanied by counterinsurgent or government personnel, including members of NATO, ANSF, ABF, ALP, or other security agencies.

- Field supervisors made note of political, social, or other newsworthy events that occurred during fielding and may have affected the survey. Where interviews may have been impacted, supervisors back-checked responses for quality assurance.

- After fielding, data were screened for keypunching errors. ACSOR randomly selected 10% of survey responses for duplicate entry. Double-punched questionnaires were compared to original questionnaires, and discrepancies were rectified.

- During the data processing phase, D3 examined all responses using a proprietary program called Hunter, which was built to search for patterns or anomalies in the data that may indicate an interview was not properly conducted by an interviewer. Hunter specifically conducted: (1) equality tests to compare interviews for similarities, grouped by interviewer, within sampling point and/or province; (2) "Don't Know" tests of the percentage of "Don't Know" responses for each enumerator; and (3) duplicate tests comparing cases across all interviewers and respondents to check for similarity rates. Across waves on average, fewer than 2.6% of all responses were removed by Hunter.

On behalf of NATO, ACSOR tracked rates of response, cooperation, and refusal for all waves from 16–40. Using these data and following Condra and Wright (2019), we conduct diagnostic tests. Encouragingly, the rate of non-contact is low (mean = 3% across waves), the rate of cooperation is high (mean = 96% across waves), and the rate of refusal is low (mean = 3.5% across waves). These rates of non-contact, cooperation, and refusal are comparable to rates from well-known surveys like the General Social Survey fielded in the US.

As described in Table A-12, we study multiple outcomes from ANQAR. We combine these items into inverse covariance-weighted indices (Anderson, 2008) capturing perceptions of the security and the local economy.

Table A-12: Coding Dependent Variables from ANQAR

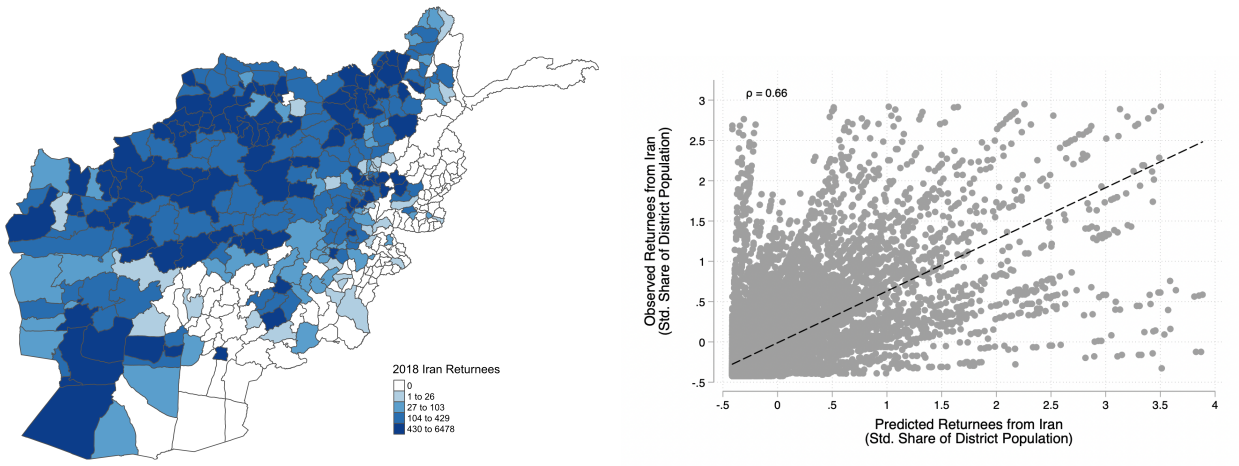
Variable	Question	Coding (=1) if	Index
Village Security	How is the security situation in your mantaqa?	Good	Perceptions of Security
Security Trend	Is security in your mantaqa better, the same or worse than it was 6 months ago?	Better	Perceptions of Security
Safe Traveling	How safe do you feel traveling outside of your mantaqa during the day?	Completely safe OR Mostly safe	Perceptions of Security
Road Security	If you use the Ring Road, how safe do you feel using this road?	Completely safe OR Mostly safe	Perceptions of Security
Security Problem	What do you think is the biggest problem facing your district?	Insecurity OR Anti-Government Elements	Perceptions of Security
Employed Full-Time	What is your job status now?	Working Full-Time	Perceptions of Economy
Satisfied with Labor Market	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the provision of jobs/employment in your area?	Very Satisfied	Perceptions of Economy
Food Insecurity	Have there been times in the past 12 months when you or your family had difficulty finding food?	Yes	Perceptions of Economy

Note: All items are dichotomized to simplify interpretation. The index column denotes which how individual items map to outcome indices.

A.18 Observed Versus Predicted Returns

We predict returns by multiplying 2012–2015 (pre-policy) cross-sectional district shares with the total source-specific flow of spontaneous refugee returnees (Card, 2001; Boustan, Fishback and Kantor, 2010). We then normalize the predicted number of returnees by district population. Predicted and observed returns are highly correlated (Pearson's $\rho = 0.66$). The strong correlation between observed and predicted returns builds confidence in our primary measurement approach—defining cross-sectional exposure to return inflows using 2012–2015 shares.

Figure A-11: Comparing Observed and Predicted Returnee Settlement Patterns



Note: The left panel plots observed repatriation of spontaneous Afghan refugee returns from Iran during the Maximum Pressure campaign. Districts are shaded by the number of returnees to a district from Iran in 2018. The right panel plots the correlation between observed repatriation from Iran normalized by district population, and predicted repatriation from Iran normalized by district population. Predicted repatriation is estimated by multiplying 2012–2015 shares by the total inflow of repatriates from Iran to Afghanistan.

A.19 Correlates of Historical Returnee Settlement Patterns

In Table A-13 we consider correlates of historical, 2012–2015 shares of spontaneous returnees from Iran. The strongest predictor of return share is proximity to the Iranian border, consistent with rational, utility-maximizing models of migrant decisionmaking in which migrants seek to reduce transportation and logistical costs by minimizing distance traveled between origin and destination, or in this case, between asylum country and destination community. Patterns of ethnic settlement are also correlated with shares of repatriates from Iran. Pashtuns dominate eastern and southern portions of Afghanistan along the border with Pakistan, while non-Pashtuns (e.g., Tajiks, Hazaras) dominate portions of western Afghanistan along the border with Iran. Finally, we find a distinguishable negative correlation between historical conflict and returnee settlement patterns. Consistent with research on violence as a deterrent to return (e.g., Alrababa'h et al., 2023), we find that area more affected by historical insurgent violence receive fewer returnees.

Table A-13: Correlates of Historical Returnee Settlement Patterns

	2012-2015 Returnee Share		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Proximity to Iran	0.215***	0.209***	0.223***
	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.058)
Population (in 100k)		0.034	0.030
		(0.021)	(0.018)
Pashto-Speaking Share		-0.403***	-0.293***
		(0.071)	(0.065)
Insurgent Violence			-0.131***
			(0.046)
Counterinsurgent Violence			0.021
			(0.049)
Criminal Violence			0.011
			(0.061)
Territorial Control			-0.121
			(0.081)
Terrain Ruggedness			-0.016
			(0.038)
Opium Poppy Suitability			0.046
			(0.049)
Travel Time to Provincial Center			0.001
			(0.055)
Spending by the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives			0.003
			(0.023)
Spending on the National Solidarity Program			-0.025
			(0.028)
Observations	398	398	398
Clusters	398	398	398

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust standard errors clustered by district are in parentheses. All covariates are measured over the 2012–2015 period.

A.20 Estimation for Survey-Based Analyses

In addition to our main analyses using administrative data on violence, we supplement our results using survey-based analyses of individual-level data from the Survey of Afghan Returnees. The estimating equation for our survey analyses is a least-squares equation of the following form:

$$Y_{i,d,t} = \delta(\text{Maximum Pressure Returnee}_{i,d,t}) + \alpha_d + \beta_t + \mu(X_{i,d,t}) + \epsilon \quad \text{(A1)}$$

where i indexes respondents, d indexes districts, and t indexes survey waves. $Y_{i,d,t}$ are dependent variables capturing returnees' relations with their non-migrant neighbors, including experiences of communal disputes. Maximum Pressure Returnee$_{i,d,t}$ is an indicator for respondents likely to have returned due to the deteriorating economic situation in Iran that resulted from the Maximum Pressure sanctions. We triangulate this measure using information on respondents' country of asylum (Iran), month of repatriation (April–December 2018), and documentation status (undocumented/spontaneous). δ is the coefficient of interest, and captures whether, relative to other Afghan returnees, destitute returnees induced by the Maximum Pressure campaign experienced differential relations with their non-migrant neighbors. α_d and β_t are district and survey wave fixed effects. $X_{i,d,t}$ is a vector of individual-level controls including respondents' country of asylum, timing of return, and registration status, as well as demographic traits. ϵ are robust, district-clustered standard errors. All estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

We also draw on individual-level data from the nationally-representative Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research (ANQAR) survey. We cannot distinguish returnee and stayee households in ANQAR, and instead rely on these data to study broad, district-level attitudinal shifts in response to repatriation. For these analyses we estimate a least-squares equation of the following form:

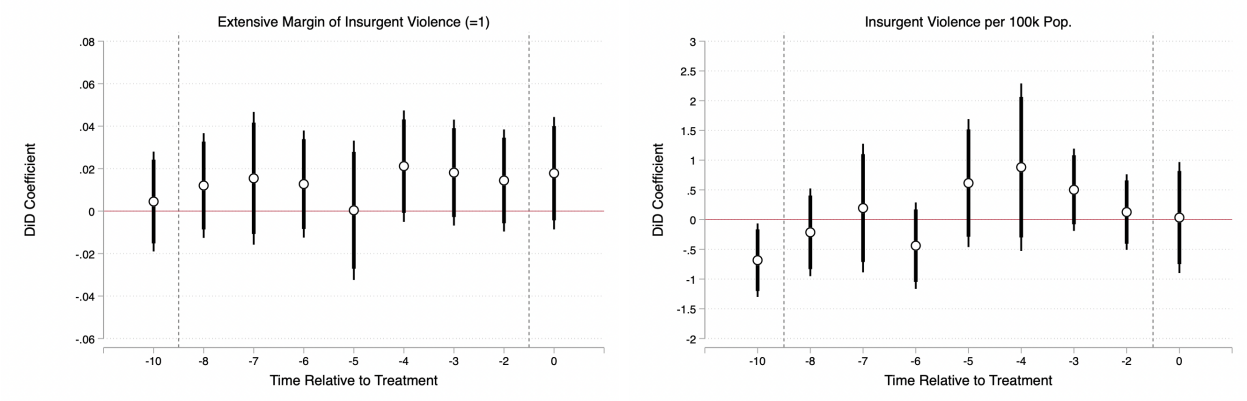
$$Y_{i,d,t} = \delta(\text{2012-2015 Returnee Share}_d \times \text{Maximum Pressure}_t) + \alpha_d + \beta_t + \mu(X_{i,d,t}) + \epsilon \quad \text{(A2)}$$

where i indexes respondents, d indexes districts, and t indexes survey waves (i.e., year-specific quarters). $Y_{i,d,t}$ are dependent variables capturing perceptions of security and the economy. 2012-2015 Returnee Share$_d$ is the share of Afghan refugees spontaneously returning from Iran to district d in 2012–2015, relative to all spontaneous returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. We z-standardize 2012–2015 shares for interpretability. Maximum Pressure$_t$ is an indicator for quarters during the Maximum Pressure campaign (April–December 2018). δ is the coefficient of interest, and captures whether the sanctions induced a differential shift in security and economic perceptions in districts more heavily exposed to returns. α_d and β_t are district and survey wave fixed effects. $X_{i,d,t}$ is a vector of individual-level controls including key demographic traits. ϵ are robust, district-clustered standard errors. All estimates are scaled using sampling weights.

A.21 Identifying Assumptions

Trends in insurgent violence are parallel in the pre-treatment period. Wald tests also suggest pre-trend coefficients are jointly indistinguishable from 0 for both outcomes (left panel: p = 0.943; right panel: p = 0.129).

Figure A-12: Pre-Trends in Insurgent Violence



Note: Bars are 90 and 95% confidence intervals. Plots depict pre-policy trends in insurgent violence. The x-axis denotes time relative to April 2018, when the Maximum Pressure campaign began.

We also consider potential policy changes occurring contemporaneously to the Maximum Pressure campaign and attendant return shock. Encouragingly, we find no evidence that the campaign was associated with shifts in counterinsurgent deployments or aid spending.

Table A-14: The Maximum Pressure Period Did Not Coincide With Other Policy Changes

	Contemporaneous Policy Changes				
	Security Infrastructure				**Aid Spending**
	(1) Base (=1)	(2) Base (#)	(3) ANSF (#)	(4) ANP (#)	(5) Per 100k Pop.
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	-0.003	0.038	0.041	-0.003	-4954.313
	(0.003)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.008)	(19434.322)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
PARAMETERS					
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.22 Intensive Margin of Insurgent Violence

In Table A-15 we examine how Maximum Pressure returns affected the intensive margin of rebel violence. Columns 1-6 use an OLS estimator and columns 7-12 use a Poisson estimator. Some loss of observations occurs in columns 7-12 because some panels are singletons or separated by fixed effects (Correia, Guimarães and Zylkin, 2020).

Table A-15: Repatriation and the Intensive Margin of Insurgent Violence

	# of Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs											
	OLS						Poisson					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.720***	0.924***	0.999***	0.884***	0.897***	0.366***	0.058*	0.057**	0.089***	0.061***	0.066***	0.071***
	(0.267)	(0.232)	(0.236)	(0.231)	(0.229)	(0.110)	(0.030)	(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.020)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	13608	13608	13608	13608	13608	13608
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	378	378	378	378	378	378
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.23 Perceived Security Conditions in Return Communities

We consider several survey outcomes related to perceptions of security conditions (Table A-12). Increasing return exposure corresponds with a significant worsening of perceived insecurity, including worsening perceptions of village security and security while traveling, and heightened perceptions that security is the biggest local problem.

Table A-16: Repatriation and Perceptions of Insecurity

	Perceptions of Security							
	Multi-Item Index (ICW)			Constituent Items (=1)				
	(1) Perceived Security	(2) Perceived Security	(3) Perceived Security	(4) Village Secure	(5) Security Trend	(6) Safe Traveling	(7) Roads Secure	(8) Security Problem
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	-0.029**	-0.029**	-0.029**	-0.011**	-0.007	-0.007*	-0.004	0.007*
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Observations	159648	159648	159648	159648	159648	159648	159648	159648
Clusters	397	397	397	397	397	397	397	397
PARAMETERS								
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socioeconomic Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Household Size		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Desirability			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Social desirability controls are respondent comprehension and comfort as assessed by an enumerator, along with the number of people present during an interview.

A.24 Repatriation and Territorial Control

In Table A-17 we examine how Maximum Pressure returns affected insurgent territorial control. Columns 1-6 study an indicator for insurgent controlled districts, and columns 7-12 use a 5-point categorical measure, where higher (lower) values indicate more insurgent (government) control. The measure of territorial control was provided by ACSOR, the firm responsible for fielding the ANQAR survey. As Wright (2024) describes, the firm assessed territorial control across district-months in Afghanistan by tracking enumerability, including attempts by armed non-state actors to obstruct survey-related fieldwork and enumeration. In Table A-18 we estimate a placebo test, and examine whether repatriation was associated with weather/transport-related barriers to enumerability. There is no reason to expect a systematic correlation between repatriation and these other obstacles to enumeration; encouragingly, we document null effects.

Table A-17: Repatriation and Territorial Control

	Territorial Control											
	Militant Control (=1)						**Militant Control (5-Point Scale)**					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.066***	0.065***	0.064***	0.064***	0.063***	0.006***	0.207***	0.188***	0.202***	0.201***	0.201***	0.032***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.002)	(0.042)	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.010)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

Table A-18: Repatriation Was Not Associated With Other Enumeration Problems

	Weather/Transport Problems in Enumeration (=1)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	-0.006
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.007)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS						
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.25 Entropy Balancing on Pretreatment Covariates

In Table A-13 we examine the correlates of initial (2012–2015) district-level shares of returnees from Iran. Three factors—proximity to Iran, the Pashto-speaking share, and levels of historical insurgent violence—are distinguishable predictors of initial shares. Inferential concerns would arise if these factors affect historical returnee settlement patterns and contemporary violence. To assess robustness, in columns 2 and 5 we add controls for the distinguishable correlates of historical returnee settlement patterns. Specifically, we take time-invariant, district-level measures of proximity to Iran, Pashto-speaking share, and historical insurgent violence, and interact these measures flexibly with time-fixed effects. Estimates on the extensive margin are smaller and indistinguishable, but our results remain large and precise when we consider the effect of repatriation on levels of violence per 100,000 district residents. To further address concerns, in columns 3 and 6 we take an entropy balancing approach that uses weighting to improve covariate balance between treated and control groups (Hainmueller, 2012). We define a treatment indicator that takes a value of 1 for districts with any positive inflow of refugee returnees from Iran, and 0 otherwise. Then, we use entropy reweighting to balance treated and control districts on the three covariates described above (proximity to Iran, the Pashto-speaking share, and levels of historical insurgent violence). We find a precise, distinguishable effect of repatriation on levels of violence per 100,000 district residents when we reestimate the focal specification using entropy weights.

Table A-19: Robustness of Main Results Using Entropy Balancing

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs					
	Extensive Margin			**Per 100k Population**		
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4) Baseline	(5)	(6)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.015*	0.005	0.009	0.701***	0.421**	0.556***
	(0.008)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.218)	(0.166)	(0.164)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS						
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Correlates of Historical Settlement Patterns		Yes			Yes	
Entropy Weights			Yes			Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3. Correlates of historical settlement patterns are proximity to Iran, the Pashto-speaking share, and levels of historical insurgent violence. These controls are pre-shock (measured 2012–2015) variables interacted with year-specific month fixed effects. Entropy weights are balancing weights created as described above.

A.26 Controlling for Additional Covariates

Table A-20 confirms that our core results are robust to controlling for six measures of historical conflict: insurgent-initiated SIGACTs, counterinsurgent-initiated SIGACTs (e.g., air support), criminal-initiated SIGACTs (e.g., robbery), the number of maneuver battalions deployed, territorial control, and rebel governance as proxied by the existence of Taliban courts. Table A-21 confirms that our core results are robust to controlling for six additional measures of ethnoreligious composition or infrastructure: ethnic fractionalization, ethnic polarization, Uzbek-speaking share, Hazara-populated areas, Shia-populated areas, and the presence of IOM infrastructure used in repatriation response. All additional covariates are pre-treatment measures interacted with year-specific month fixed effects.

Table A-20: Robustness of Main Results Controlling for Historical Conflict

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs													
	Extensive Margin							**Per 100k Population**						
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8) Baseline	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.015* (0.008)	0.015** (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015** (0.007)	0.701*** (0.218)	0.737*** (0.215)	0.676*** (0.210)	0.695*** (0.216)	0.699*** (0.217)	0.700*** (0.223)	0.701*** (0.214)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS														
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurgent Violence		Yes							Yes					
Counterinsurgent Violence			Yes							Yes				
Criminal Violence				Yes							Yes			
ISAF Battalions					Yes							Yes		
Territorial Control						Yes							Yes	
Rebel Governance							Yes							Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

Table A-21: Robustness of Main Results Controlling for Ethnoreligious Factors

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs													
	Extensive Margin							**Per 100k Population**						
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8) Baseline	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.011 (0.007)	0.015** (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)	0.016** (0.008)	0.701*** (0.218)	0.669*** (0.220)	0.675*** (0.218)	0.659*** (0.222)	0.716*** (0.209)	0.701*** (0.215)	0.703*** (0.220)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS														
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Fractionalization		Yes							Yes					
Ethnic Polarization			Yes							Yes				
Uzbek Share				Yes							Yes			
Hazara Area					Yes							Yes		
Shia Area						Yes							Yes	
IOM Infrastructure							Yes							Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.27 2SLS Estimates of Conflict on Refugee Return

Our main estimates rely on a reduced-form approach. An alternative approach developed in classical literature on migration is to estimate a two-stage least squares (2SLS) instrumental variable estimator (Card, 2001; Boustan, Fishback and Kantor, 2010) based on a Bartik-style shift-share design (Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin and Swift, 2020). To construct our instrument, we predict the number of refugee returnees from Iran to a given Afghan district over time from 2016–2018. Our instrument for observed inflows of returnees from Iran specifically assigns monthly inflows of Afghan repatriates from Iran in 2016–2018 to Afghan districts proportionally to district-level shares of Afghan repatriates from Iran in the 2012–2015 period. Algebraically, our measure of predicted returns is given by interacting our focal, cross-sectional exposure variable (2012–2015 returnee settlement patterns) with the monthly, nationwide inflow of refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan. Since more populous districts may have higher absorption capacity we normalize our measures of predicted and observed returns by district population, and z-standardize both measures for interpretability. Our instrument is strong and relevant, as indicated in Table A-22.

Table A-22: Instrumental Variable Estimates of Conflict on Refugee Return

	First Stage		**Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs**							
	Iranian Returnees		**Extensive Margin**				**Per 100K Population**			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	1st Stage OLS	1st Stage OLS	OLS	2SLS	OLS	2SLS	OLS	2SLS	OLS	2SLS
Predicted Iranian Returnees	0.217***	0.206***								
	(0.063)	(0.064)								
Iranian Returnees			0.003	0.030	0.002	0.029	0.708	3.348***	0.332	1.485***
			(0.006)	(0.019)	(0.006)	(0.021)	(0.571)	(0.824)	(0.266)	(0.520)
Iranian Returnees x Maximum Pressure			0.075***	0.050***	0.048***	0.028*	3.545***	2.725**	2.177***	1.764**
			(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(1.085)	(1.185)	(0.695)	(0.761)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
Kleibergen-Paap F Statistic				28.481		30.609		28.481		30.799
Cragg-Donald F Statistic				397.030		338.577		397.030		335.509
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Economic Controls		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Aid Controls		Yes			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Lagged DV					Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Predicted Iranian returnees is the population-normalized number of predicted, undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to a given district in Afghanistan in a given month based on our shift-share instrument. Iranian returnees is the population-normalized number of observed, undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to a given district in Afghanistan in a given month. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. See table notes from Table 3 for a description of other covariates.

A.28 Binary Measure of Exposure to Repatriation

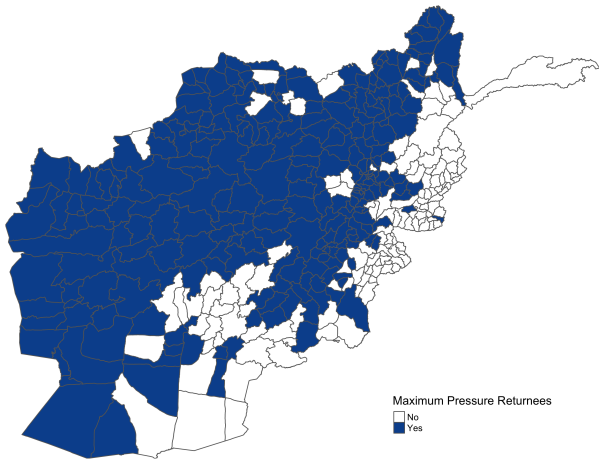
Compared to the binary case, continuous treatments require stronger identifying assumptions (Callaway, Goodman-Bacon and Sant'Anna, 2024). Table A-23 confirms we find substantively similar results using a binary decomposition of the treatment variable, which takes a value of 1 for districts above the median returnee share, and 0 otherwise. This binary decomposition is mapped in Figure A-13.

Table A-23: Binary Measure of Exposure to Repatriation

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs											
	Extensive Margin						Per 100k Population					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
High 2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.099***	0.066***	0.060***	0.051**	0.053**	0.048**	2.328*	2.877**	2.491*	2.700*	2.838*	1.629**
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.021)	(1.322)	(1.236)	(1.410)	(1.481)	(1.465)	(0.769)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. High returnee share is an indicator for districts above the median of the standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. See table notes from Table 3 for a description of other elements.

Figure A-13: Mapping Repatriation Using a Binary Measure of Returns



Note: Districts are shaded by the extensive margin of returnees to a district from Iran in 2018.

A.29 Extending the Sample to Include 2019

The main estimation sample includes district-months from 2016–2018. In 2019 the Maximum Pressure sanctions remained in effect, but Afghan repatriation waned since the Iranian economy stabilized and adjusted to sanctions reimposition by 2019. In Table A-24 we re-estimate our focal specifications, adding an interaction between returnee shares and the longer Maximum Pressure post period, which takes a value of 1 for months from April 2018 – December 2019, and 0 otherwise. Taking this approach we find that effects on the extensive margin are large in both the focal period (2018) and the extended post period (2019). In terms of violence in levels per 100,000 district residents, the effect of mass repatriation on violence is chiefly concentrated in the 2018 period, though remains large and imprecise in the extended post period.

Table A-24: Extending the Sample to Include 2019

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs											
	Extensive Margin						**Per 100k Population**					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.004	0.009	0.009	0.010	0.011	0.010	0.701**	0.683**	1.054***	1.085***	1.117***	0.714***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.336)	(0.280)	(0.259)	(0.255)	(0.239)	(0.153)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure (Long)	0.021**	0.008	0.008	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.484	0.613	0.415	0.296	0.283	0.023
	(0.010)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.375)	(0.374)	(0.328)	(0.306)	(0.312)	(0.134)
Observations	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706	18706
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Maximum pressure is an indicator for April–December 2018, when renewed U.S. counterproliferation sanctions decimated the Iranian economy. Maximum pressure (long) is an indicator for April 2018 – December 2019. See table notes from Table 3 for a description of other elements.

A.30 Accounting for Other Categories of Displaced People

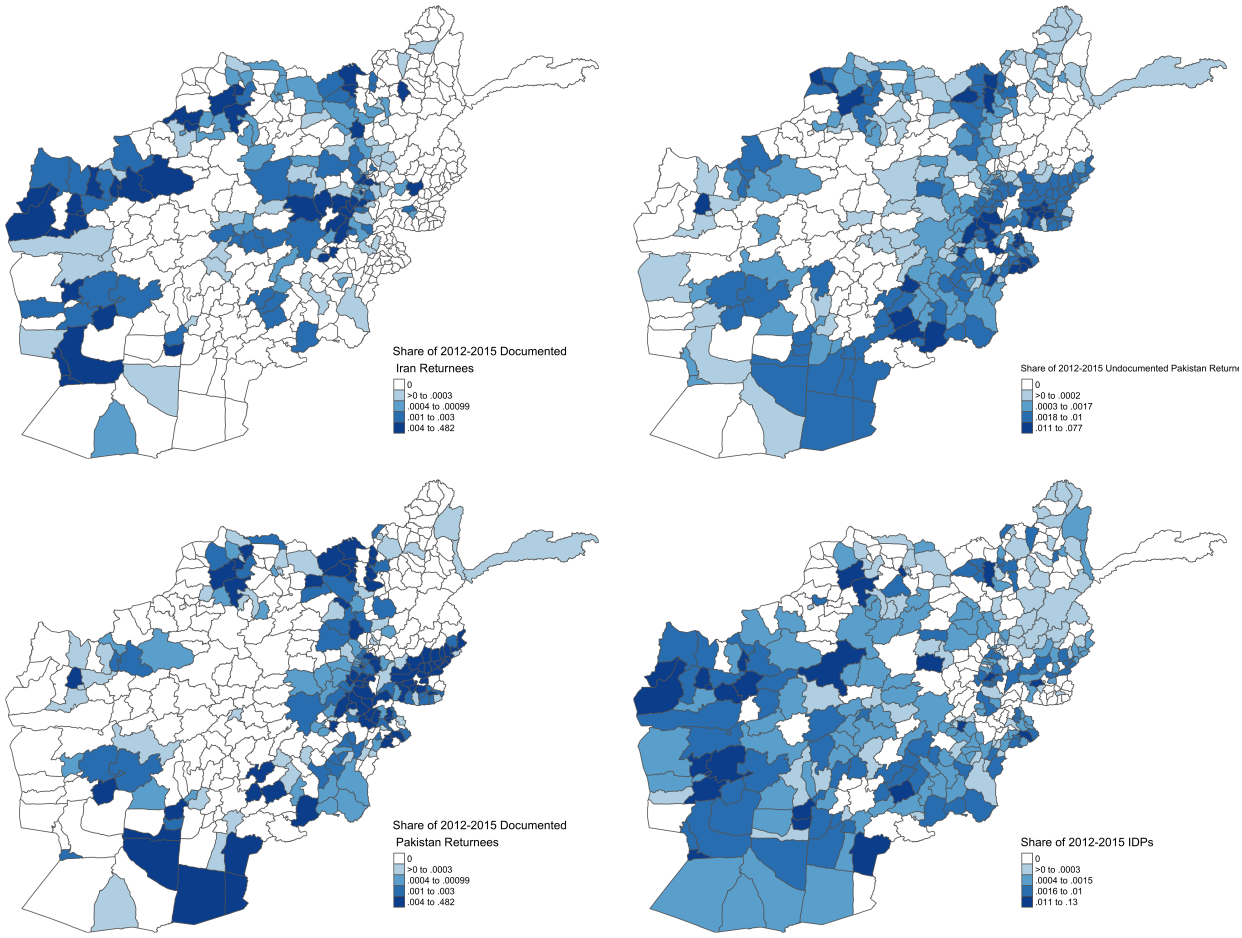
Our main analyses define exposure to undocumented returnees from Iran to Afghanistan using 2012–2015 shares. More than 99.7% of returnees from Iran in 2018 repatriated spontaneously without UNHCR facilitation, so by capturing undocumented Iranian returnees, our reduced-form measure captures exposure to the vast majority of sanctions-induced returnees. However, our data from IOM also identify settlement patterns of documented Iranian returnees, undocumented and documented returnees from Pakistan, and internally displaced people (IDPs). Settlement patterns of these other categories of forcibly displaced people are plotted in Figure A-14. In Table A-25 we show that the main results hold when controlling for shares of documented Iranian returnees, undocumented and documented Pakistani returnees, and IDPs. Moreover, the main effects are specific to undocumented returnees from Iran—those most disproportionately impacted by the economic shock posed by the Maximum Pressure sanctions.

Table A-25: Accounting for Other Categories of Forcibly Displaced People

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs							
	Extensive Margin				**Per 100k Population**			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.014*	0.015*	0.015*	0.015**	0.704***	0.705***	0.708***	0.678***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.226)	(0.217)	(0.222)	(0.225)
2012-2015 Documented Iranian Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.003				-0.025			
	(0.002)				(0.105)			
2012-2015 Undocumented Pakistan Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure		-0.002				-0.023		
		(0.012)				(0.218)		
2012-2015 Documented Pakistan Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure			-0.010				-0.290	
			(0.010)				(0.218)	
2012-2015 IDP Share x Maximum Pressure				-0.001				0.108
				(0.007)				(0.226)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS								
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Documented Iranian returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of documented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Undocumented Pakistan returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of undocumented refugee returnees from Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. Documented Pakistan returnee share is each district's standardized share of the sum of documented refugee returnees from Pakistan to Afghanistan in 2012–2015. IDP share is each district's standardized share of the sum of internally displaced people in Afghanistan in 2012–2015. See table notes from Table 3 for a description of other elements.

Figure A-14: Settlement Patterns of Other Categories of Displaced People



Note: In the top left panel districts are shaded by the share of documented returnees to a district from Iran in 2012–2015. In the top right panel districts are shaded by the share of undocumented returnees to a district from Pakistan in 2012–2015. In the bottom left panel districts are shaded by the share of documented returnees to a district from Pakistan in 2012–2015. In the bottom right panel districts are shaded by the share of IDPs in a district in 2012–2015.

A.31 Repatriation Did Not Increase Communal Violence

In Table 5 we use survey evidence to study whether Maximum Pressure returnees report greater exposure to disputes and worse relations with their non-migrant neighbors. This approach uses subjective, self-reported information on communal ties and the incidence of disputes to understand social strife. In Table A-26 we take an alternative estimation strategy that mirrors our baseline difference-in-differences approach. In these models the dependent variable comes from a dataset we assembled using reports from a US government-sponsored conflict tracker known as PiX (Figure A-9). This conflict tracker is tailored to identify incidents of communal violence, and combines events reported by the Afghan National Police Command Center, open-source media, and embassy-contracted risk analysis firms. For each event in the tracker we observe geographic coordinates, a timestamp, and an incident description. We sum these events by district, and evaluate them using the same estimating equation from Table 3. Across specifications, we find imprecise, negatively signed coefficients, corroborating our main result from Table 5. There is no evidence repatriation during the Maximum Pressure period was associated with worsening communal violence.

Table A-26: Communal Violence Did Not Increase in the Maximum Pressure Period

	Communal Violence (PiX)											
	Extensive Margin						**Per 100k Population**					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	-0.004	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	-0.004	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS												
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

We also confirm that the main results from Table 5 hold while controlling for additional covariates related to historical violence and household sociodemographics. In Table A-27 I add four measures of historical conflict: total SIGACTs, insurgent-initiated SIGACTs, counterinsurgent-initiated SIGACTs (e.g., air support), and criminal-initiated SIGACTs (e.g., robbery). Table A-28 confirms that our core results are robust to controlling for four additional measures of respondent sociodemographics: household size, land ownership, neighborhood diversity (i.e., self-reported ethnic composition of a respondent's neighborhood), and reason for repatriating.

Table A-27: Robustness of Communal Results Controlling for Historical Conflict

	Returnee–Stayee Relations									
	Positive Neighborhood Contact (Index)					Experienced a Communal Dispute (=1)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.070	0.074	0.074	0.078	0.073	-0.043*	-0.044*	-0.044*	-0.044*	-0.044*
	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dwelling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Desirability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interview Order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Historical SIGACTs		Yes					Yes			
Historical Insurgent Violence			Yes					Yes		
Historical Counterinsurgent Violence				Yes					Yes	
Historical Criminal Violence					Yes					Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 5.

Table A-28: Robustness of Communal Results Controlling for Additional Sociodemographics

	Returnee–Stayee Relations									
	Positive Neighborhood Contact (Index)					Experienced a Communal Dispute (=1)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.070	0.073	0.070	0.076	0.074	-0.043*	-0.043*	-0.043*	-0.044*	-0.042*
	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dwelling	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Desirability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interview Order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# of Returnees in Household		Yes					Yes			
Landowner			Yes					Yes		
Neighborhood Diversity				Yes					Yes	
Reason for Return					Yes					Yes

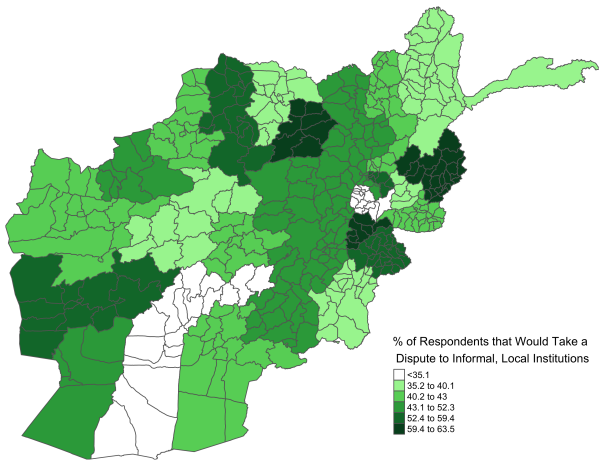
Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 5.

A.32 Informal Institutions, Return, and Communal Conflict

Institutional mechanisms for resolving interpersonal and intra-communal conflicts may blunt tensions between returnees and their non-migrant neighbors. In particular, strong local institutions can facilitate bargaining, monitoring, and enforcement, and thereby stop disputes from escalating to violence (Blattman, Hartman and Blair, 2014; Tajima, 2014). These institutions are particularly relevant in Afghanistan where, after centuries of weak national governance, conflict resolution has been largely devolved to informal, village-level institutions (Murtazashvili, 2016). Shuras, for example, use customary law and traditional norms to litigate disputes between villagers. Reliance on these informal systems for dispute resolution has been reinforced by two decades of failed judicial reform and rampant corruption among government bureaucrats (Barfield, 2010). We anticipate that where these informal institutions for dispute resolution are strong, communal violence in the wake of repatriation may be offset.

Unfortunately, the SAR, from which we draw our main communal relations measure, does not include relevant information on local institutional quality. Instead, we use data from the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People, which was fielded in parallel to the SAR. With waves of the Survey of the Afghan People from 2012–2015, we measure responses to the following question: "If your household were to have a dispute over land, from whom would you ask for help to resolve it?" We define an indicator that takes a value of 1 if respondents stated that they would take a land dispute to "[e]lders of the local shura/jirga" or to the local "malik/khan," and 0 otherwise. Then, we take district averages of this indicator, and use this measure to define the pretreatment, district-level strength of local institutions. Finally, we merge this measure into responses from the SAR.

Figure A-15: Mapping Informal Institutional Strength Using Pre-Treatment Data



Note: Districts are shaded by the average share of households reporting that they would take a dispute to informal, local institutions in the 2012–2015 period.

In Table A-29 we re-estimate our main specifications from Table 5 while adding an interaction between our indicator for Maximum Pressure returnees and our pretreatment, district-level measure of the strength of local institutions. Columns 1 and 6 report our baseline estimates from Table 5 for reference. We find that community relations are heterogeneous by the strength of local institutions. In districts with strong, informal dispute resolution mechanisms, returnees report better relations with their neighbors and fewer experiences of communal disputes. In contrast, returnees from areas with the weakest communal dispute resolution institutions report worse communal relations and are more likely to have experienced violent disputes.

Table A-29: Heterogeneous Effects on Communal Conflict by Local Institutional Strength

	Returnee–Stayee Relations									
	Positive Neighborhood Contact (Index)					**Experienced a Communal Dispute (=1)**				
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) Baseline	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Maximum Pressure Returnee	0.070	-0.771*	-0.866**	-0.831**	-0.887**	-0.043*	0.274**	0.293***	0.297***	0.322***
	(0.056)	(0.430)	(0.429)	(0.413)	(0.413)	(0.022)	(0.103)	(0.105)	(0.102)	(0.105)
Maximum Pressure Returnee x Dispute Resolution Institutions		2.175**	2.365**	2.256**	2.423**		-0.801***	-0.840***	-0.850***	-0.923***
		(1.080)	(1.077)	(1.038)	(1.039)		(0.288)	(0.292)	(0.284)	(0.291)
Observations	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011	7011
Clusters	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	65
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country of Asylum	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month of Return	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registration Status	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gender	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Income	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Urbanicity	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Tazkira	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Marital Status	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Dwelling	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Social Desirability	Yes				Yes	Yes				Yes
Interview Order	Yes				Yes	Yes				Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Robust, district-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Max Pressure is an indicator for undocumented refugee returnees from Iran to Afghanistan between May and December 2018. Country of asylum and registration status by month of return fixed effects absorb consituent terms of the interaction that comprises our indicator for likely program recipients. Urbanicity is an indicator for urban (vs. rural) respondents. Gender is an indicator for male (vs. female) respondents. Tazkira is an indicator for respondents with a national identity card. Age, education, and dwelling have five categories. Income has 10 categories. Marital status has four categories. Country of asylum has three categories. Registration status by month of return has 190 categories. Social desirability is a measure of respondent comfort with four categories. Interview order captures the order of interviews within sampling points. All models include sampling weights.

A.33 Taliban Recruiting

Taliban recruitment dynamics play a central role in our exploration of opportunity costs. As we argue, both refugee returnees and their non-migrant neighbors in repatriation-receiving communities were likely targets of insurgent recruitment during the Maximum Pressure campaign. This argument comports with contemporaneous Department of Defense (2018, p. 28) assessments, which suggested that returnees from Iran in 2018 were "a population that could be vulnerable to recruitment into extremist groups or the illicit economy." To bolster our empirical inquiry we briefly describe key contextual details of Taliban recruitment based on more comprehensive accounts offered by Landinfo (2017) and Giustozzi (2019).

Historically, the Taliban were a Pashtun-dominated group that recruited primarily from Pashtun populations in eastern and southern Afghanistan and southwestern Pakistan. Afghan refugees and refugee returnees were an important source of early recruits, and the Taliban leveraged safe havens and refugee camps in Pakistan to organize, mobilize, and train (Harpviken and Lischer, 2013). Since the Taliban's resurgence and reconstitution in 2006, the group significantly expanded its recruitment efforts, drawing on ethnosectarian and tribal linkages, ideology, and popular discontent with government and NATO forces to attract a committed core of "professional" fighters maintained in full-time combat roles. These professional forces were typically recruited and trained in madrassas in Pakistan, though a smaller number were also mobilized through madrassas in Iran after 2013 (Giustozzi, 2019). The vast majority of these full-time fighters were intrinsically- rather than instrumentally-motivated.

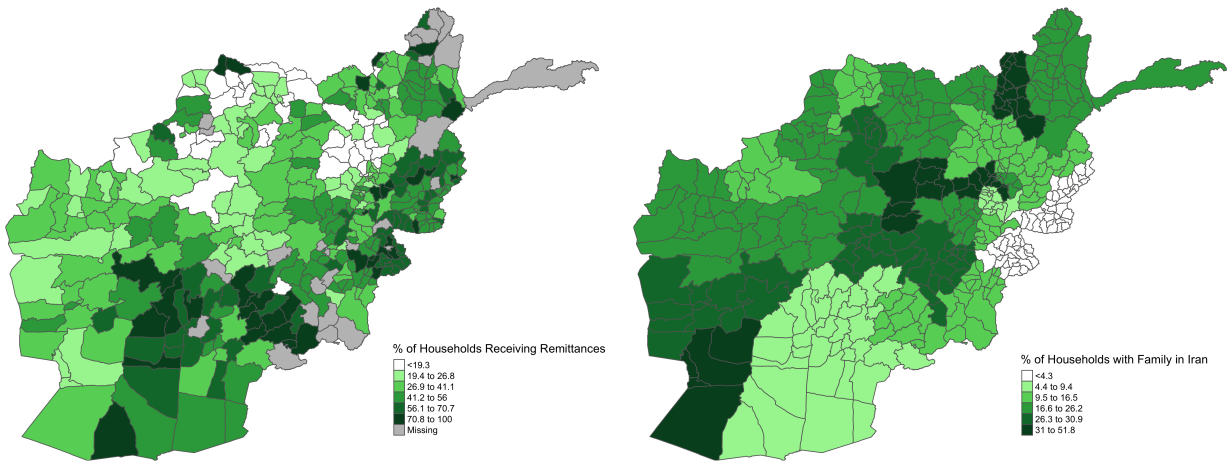
The war in Afghanistan was characterized by seasonality, with significant summertime spikes in violence. This summer escalation reflected the fighting season, typically lasting from April–October, during which time Taliban fighters significantly increased the tempo of offensive operations against counterinsurgent forces. To support summer operations led by their cadre of full-time foot-soldiers, Taliban commanders also recruited a large pool of part-time recruits (Landinfo, 2017). These part-time recruits were typically aged 15–45, and mobilized in their local districts during the summer fighting season to engage in combat activities and perform key logistical roles. Overwhelmingly, these temporary recruits mobilized near their homes, serving for several hours a day in key support tasks. For the most part these part-time fighters were instrumentally- rather than intrinsically-motivated or forcibly recruited; most mobilized to take advantage of high, stable wages offered by Taliban commanders using proceeds from opium production (Landinfo, 2017). From at least 2015, Taliban officials bargained with local elites in northern and western Afghanistan to expand their part-time recruitment of non-Pashtuns, namely Tajiks and Uzbeks, during the fighting season (Giustozzi, 2019).

In 2018, the start of the Maximum Pressure campaign (April 2018) coincided with the start of the Taliban's summer recruitment drive. This marked a particularly dangerous situation, since the campaign spurred returns of destitute young men to western Afghanistan, precisely where Taliban commanders were expanding their mobilization of part-time cadres.

A.34 Remittances and Refugee Repatriation

The Maximum Pressure campaign sparked mass refugee repatriation and reduced remittance transfers from Afghan migrants working in Iran back to their non-migrant neighbors in Afghanistan. We develop novel measures of remittance dependence and familial ties to Iran using pre-treatment survey data. To measure reliance on remittance income we study responses to the question "Does your family currently have income generating either through employment or other means?," which was asked in ANQAR waves from 2012–2015. We define household reliance on remittances as an indicator that takes a value of 1 for respondents who reported that their household receives income from remittance transfers or employment and remittance transfers, and 0 otherwise. Then we take the district-level mean of this indicator over pre-treatment waves. Unfortunately, our measure of remittance reliance does not indicate the source country of remittance flows, which would allow us to examine specific reliance on remittances from Iran. As an alternative we develop a second measure of the share of households reporting that a close relative lives in Iran. We specifically use data from the Survey of the Afghan People, fielded by the Asia Foundation in parallel to the SAR. We study responses to the question "Do you have a family member or close relative that lives abroad?," which was asked in waves from 2012–2015. We define households with family in Iran using an indicator that takes a value of 1 for respondents who reported that they have a close relative living in Iran, and 0 otherwise. Then we take the district-level mean of this indicator over pre-treatment waves. We plot the share of households that reported receiving remittance income in the left panel of Figure A-16 and the share of households that reported a relative in Iran in the right panel of Figure A-16.

Figure A-16: Mapping Remittance Dependence Using Pre-Treatment Survey Data



Note: In the left panel districts are shaded by the average share of households reporting that they received remittance transfers in the 2012–2015 period. In the right panel districts are shaded by the average share of households reporting that they had a family member living in Iran in the 2012–2015 period.

In Table A-30 we ensure that our core results are robust while controlling for remittance dependence and family ties to Iran. These tests help us confirm that the effects we estimate are not solely attributable to the reduction in remittance flows owing to the Maximum Pressure shock. Columns 1 and 6 present our baseline estimates from Table 3. In columns 2 and 7 we control for remittance reliance by flexibly interacting our pre-treatment remittance measure with year-specific month fixed effects. In columns 4 and 9 we take the same approach with our pretreatment family measure. Encouragingly, the positive effect of repatriation on insurgent violence holds, conditioning on remittance dependence and familial connections to Iran. Then, in columns 3 and 8 we interact our pretreatment remittance measure with an indicator for the Maximum Pressure period to examine whether violence increased disproportionately in remittance-dependent districts during the Maximum Pressure campaign. Similarly, in columns 5 and 10 we interact our pretreatment fammily measure with an indicator for the Maximum Pressure period to examine whether violence increased disproportionately during the Maximum Pressure campaign in districts where more households had familial connections to Iran. Across all specifications we continue to find a large, positive, and precisely estimated effect of repatriation on insurgent violence.

Table A-30: Robustness of Main Results While Controlling for Remittance Dependence

	Insurgent-Initiated SIGACTs									
	Extensive Margin					**Per 100k Population**				
	(1) Baseline	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6) Baseline	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.015*	0.014*	0.014*	0.016**	0.016**	0.701***	0.717***	0.718***	0.641***	0.640***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.218)	(0.222)	(0.222)	(0.202)	(0.201)
Reliance on Remittances x Maximum Pressure			-0.091					1.367		
			(0.063)					(1.664)		
Family in Iran x Maximum Pressure					-0.088					4.514
					(0.133)					(2.785)
Observations	14328	13392	13392	14328	14328	14328	13392	13392	14328	14328
Clusters	398	372	372	398	398	398	372	372	398	398
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Remittances		Yes					Yes			
Family in Iran				Yes					Yes	

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. Reliance on remittances is a survey-based measure defined as the average share of households in each district reporting that they received remittance income in the 2012–2015 period. Family in Iran is a survey-based measure defined as the average share of respondents in each district reporting that they had a family member living in Iran in the 2012–2015 period. See table notes from Table 3 for a description of other elements.

A.35 Nighttime Luminosity in Return Communities

Nighttime luminosity is a well-known proxy for income per capita, GDP per capita, and other measures of consumption and economic growth (Chen and Nordhaus, 2011; Henderson, Storeygard and Weil, 2011). In countries like Afghanistan, which lack systematic, administrative or survey data on economic performance, nighttime luminosity is the preferred approach for nowcasting economic output (Saenger, Kapstein and Sircar, 2024). To corroborate our survey-based estimates of declining economic conditions in returnee-receiving communities in Afghanistan, we study remotely-sensed data from the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite Day-Night Band (VIIRS DNB), a sensor aboard the polar-orbiting Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership (Suomi NPP), NOAA-20, and NOAA-21 weather satellites (Elvidge et al., 2017). We draw on a pre-processed product, the monthly cloud-free DNB composite VIIRS nightlights, which offers monthly information on nighttime luminosity at a highly granular spatial level (15 arc seconds at the equator). These data are processed to exclude clouds, natural (versus electric) lighting from fires and volcanoes, and other forms of background noise. Using a nightlights raster, we calculate average nighttime radiance at the district-month level in Afghanistan. Because nighttime luminosity reflects both economic activity and population density, we normalize average radiance by district population. In Table A-31 we find that increasing return exposure corresponds with a distinguishable reduction in nighttime luminosity. This result is highly suggestive of a broader worsening of economic conditions in returnee-receiving areas during the Maximum Pressure period.

Table A-31: Repatriation and Nighttime Luminosity

	Nighttime Luminosity					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	-0.042***	-0.043***	-0.045***	-0.045***	-0.045***	-0.013***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.004)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS						
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.36 Refugee Return and Target Selection

Our data distinguish multiple targets of insurgent violence, including Afghan government forces, U.S. and NATO Coalition forces, civilians, and rival militant organizations. In the main analyses we focus on anti-government violence—that is, insurgent attacks against Afghan or NATO troops. We chiefly focus on anti-government combat because this is the violence measured most systematically in the INDURE data. As we describe in section A.14, there are reasons to think that violence against civilian and insurgent targets is undercounted in our data. These caveats not withstanding, we consider heterogeneity in the effect of Maximum Pressure returns on insurgent target selection in Table A-32.

We anticipate that if the Maximum Pressure repatriation shock reduced reservation wages, facilitating insurgent recruitment, insurgents might respond by escalating their attacks against hard targets like government and NATO forces. Attacks on these hardened and well-defended targets, like counterinsurgent installations, entail higher risks to perpetrators than attacks on civilians or rival insurgent cells (Biddle, 2022). These attacks are easier to perpetrate when insurgents have ample pools of recruits to replace potential losses (Wood, 2014). In Table A-32 we document heterogeneous effects of the repatriation shock on insurgent target selection. Sanctions-induced returns were associated with increasing violence against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and NATO troops. In contrast, fratricidal violence against insurgent competitors was unaffected and attacks against civilians actually declined. Reduced civilian victimization complemented Taliban efforts to expand their influence and build in-roads in non-Pashtun communities in western Afghanistan. In columns 9 and 10 we find that the overall share of insurgent attacks against hard (i.e., government) targets increased 2.5–2.6pp for a one standard deviation increase in exposure to repatriation during the Maximum Pressure period.

Table A-32: Repatriation and Target Selection

	Target Variation								**Target Substitution**	
	Extensive Margin				**Per 100k Population**				**Hard Target Share**	
	(1) ANSF	(2) NATO	(3) Civilians	(4) Insurgents	(5) ANSF	(6) NATO	(7) Civilians	(8) Insurgents	(9)	(10)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.011***	0.014**	-0.022***	0.004	0.022***	0.053***	-0.086**	0.027	0.025***	0.026***
	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.015)	(0.034)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS										
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurgent-Initiated Violence (=1)										Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.37 Refugee Return and Attack Lethality

Our data include detailed casualty reports indicating the numbers of counterinsurgent forces killed and wounded in every attack. Using these records, we calculate the average number of counterinsurgent casualties sustained in every insurgent attack. We also tactic-specific lethality (i.e., the average number of counterinsurgents killed or wounded in attacks of each tactic), and the share of all casualties resulting from labor-intensive tactics (i.e., the share of casualties from direct fires, indirect fires, or complex attacks). Because our conflict micro-data capture the universe of anti-government violence, we have a high degree of confidence in the fidelity of our measures of counterinsurgent casualties.

Lethality rates offer a clearer window into opportunity costs and reservation wages because the lethality of violence is a function of its input intensivity. If the Maximum Pressure repatriation shock worsened economic conditions in returnee-receiving communities, bolstering insurgent recruitment, it should cause insurgents to deploy larger attack teams capable of inflicting more harm against counterinsurgents. In other words, falling reservation wages imply increasing effectiveness of direct and indirect fires and complex attacks. In Table A-33 we document heterogeneous effects of the repatriation shock on insurgent lethality. Overall, insurgent violence became more deadly in repatriation-exposed communities. Lethality rose across the tactical spectrum. In columns 9 and 10 we estimate the share of all casualties resulting from labor-intensive tactics. Consistent with our argument, we find that the overall share of counterinsurgent casualties resulting from labor-intensive attacks increased 3.4pp for a one standard deviation increase in exposure to repatriation during the Maximum Pressure period.

Table A-33: Refugee Return and Attack Lethality

	Baseline Lethality	**Tactic-Specific Lethality**				**Labor-Intensive Casualty Shares**	
	(1)	(2) Direct Fires	(3) Complex	(4) Indirect Fires	(5) Explosives	(6)	(7)
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.065**	0.070*	0.110***	0.038***	0.093**	0.034**	0.034**
	(0.031)	(0.037)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.038)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS							
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Insurgent-Caused Casualties (=1)							Yes

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.38 Refugee Return and Civilian Informing

Information is a paramount constraint on insurgent and counterinsurgent violence (Kalyvas, 2006). With information, belligerents can selectively target adversaries, improving battlefield success (Sonin and Wright, 2022). Local economic conditions shape tip flows from civilians, in addition to the opportunity costs of mobilization. In a market for tips, negative economic shocks reduce the cost of information, increasing civilian collaboration with the government (Vanden Eynde, 2018). Conversely, positive economic shocks raise the price at which potential collaborators are willing to provide information to counterinsurgents. Extending these insights, we explore how the repatriation shock shaped civilian informing. Where whole communities saw economic declines related to the Maximum Pressure shock, immiseration would decrease the price of tips, increasing information flows to counterinsurgents. Afghan forces had primary responsibility for counterinsurgency in the period we study, and these forces were highly budget constrained, meaning small decreases in the price of tips could have large effects on information flows.

We do not observe civilian tips in the INDURE data we use. Instead, we investigate how repatriation affected counterinsurgent bomb neutralizations, an outcome highly sensitive to civilian informing (Blair, 2022; Sonin and Wright, 2022). When civilians provide more information, government forces are better able to interdict explosive hazards before detonation. In columns 1–7 of Table A-34 we study the share of emplaced explosives detected and cleared by government forces prior to detonation. In columns 8 and 9 we examine the incidence and per capita level of successful counterinsurgent bomb clearances. Results suggest that government success in neutralizing insurgent bombs increased in communities exposed to refugee repatriation.

Table A-34: Refugee Return and Counterinsurgent Bomb Neutralizations

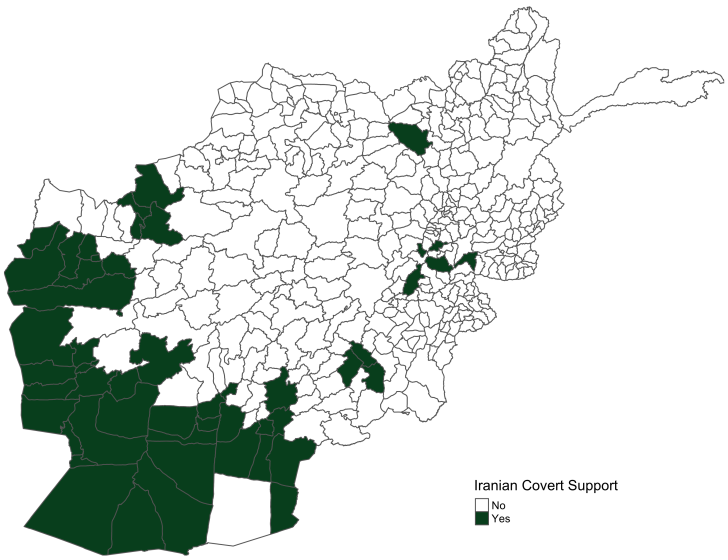
	Success Rate of Counterinsurgent Bomb Clearance Missions							**Counterinsurgent Bomb Clearances**	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8) Extensive Margin (=1)	(9) Per 100k. Population
2012-2015 Returnee Share x Maximum Pressure	0.010*	0.010*	0.010*	0.010*	0.010*	0.010*	0.009*	0.013*	0.050*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.028)
Observations	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328	14328
Clusters	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	398
PARAMETERS									
District FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year-Specific Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Shares		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessibility Controls			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agricultural Controls				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Aid Controls					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged DV						Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Explosives Emplaced (=1)							Yes		

Note: * p <.10, ** p <.05, *** p <.01. See table notes from Table 3.

A.39 Iranian Subversion and Insurgent Sponsorship

Measuring covert foreign support for insurgent groups is empirically difficult because, by its nature, this support is clandestine. To overcome this challenge, we use military intelligence records collected by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and released by U.S. Central Command through Freedom of Information Act requests. The specific intelligence assessments we exploit were produced by the Combined Joint Intelligence Operations Center–Afghanistan, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan, the Regional Command South-West Air Ground Team, the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force 435, and the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization's J2 Open Source Augmentation and Analysis Cell. Across these sources, we identify two relevant indicators of Iranian covert support to local Taliban operatives. First, we digitize a series of maps tracing facilitation routes that U.S. officials identified as the routes Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force commandos used to smuggle trainees and materiel to Taliban cells. Second, we also identify the locations of all incidents U.S. military forensics experts identified as involving explosively formed penetrators (EFPs). EFPs are a highly-lethal shaped charge, and during the Iraq War, Iranian explosives experts produced EFP-technology specifically tailored to destroy U.S. armored vehicles. After sharing this technology with their Iraqi proxies, Iran also began sharing EFP technology with the Taliban from 2009. With a high degree of confidence, U.S. experts attributed all EFPs employed in Afghanistan to Iranian technology. Combining locations of Iranian facilitation routes with known incidents of EFP use allows us to define a pretreatment indicator for districts where Iranian support flowed to Taliban units. We plot this measure in Figure A-17

Figure A-17: Mapping Iranian Support Networks Using Declassified Records



Note: Districts are shaded by the extensive margin of Iranian support to local Taliban cells prior to 2016.

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