Security Transitions

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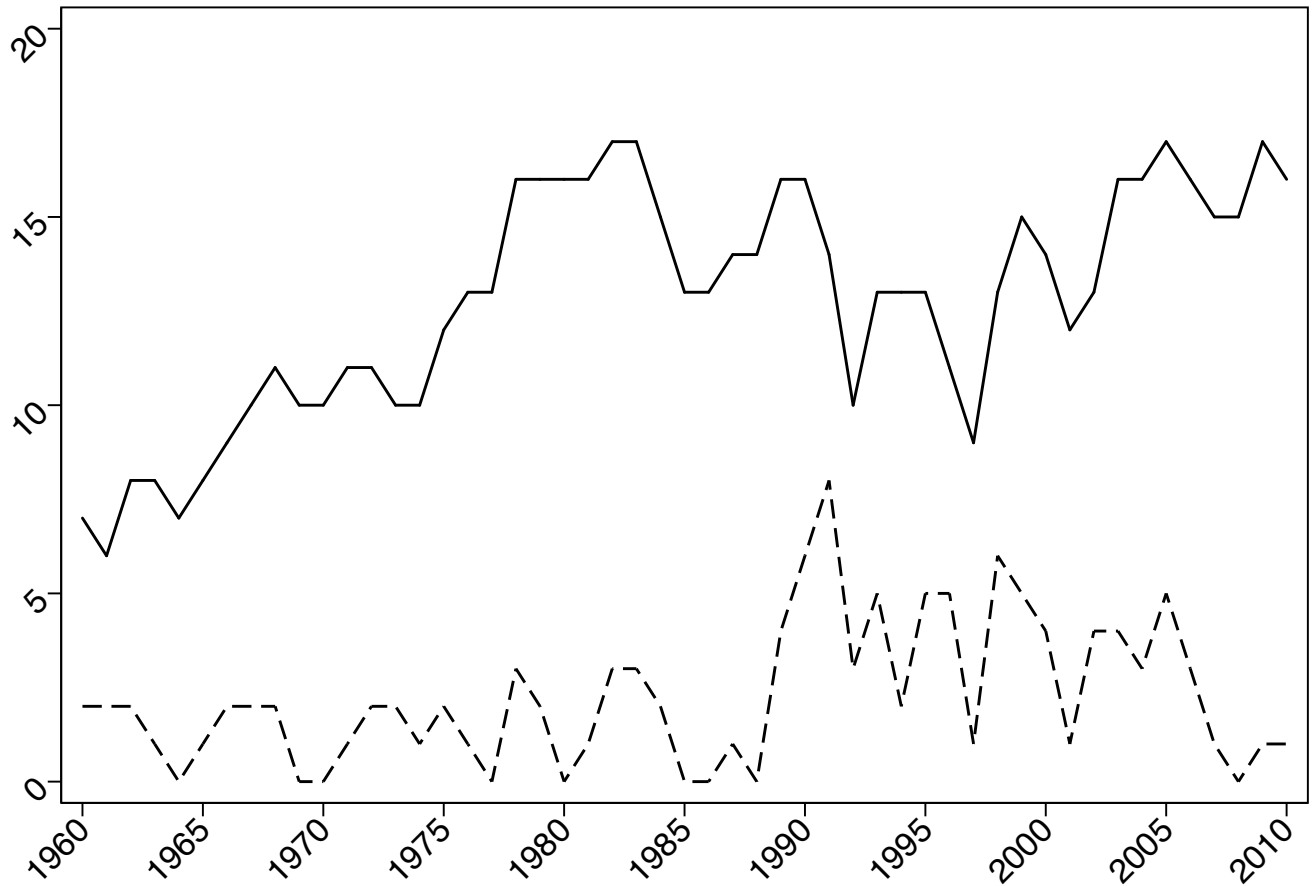
Foreign military occupations, 1960-2010



stock of military occupations = solid line; -1*flow = dashed

from Collard-Wexler (2013)

Motivation

- Since 1960, 115 foreign military occupations have *ended*
  - Regime change, suppression of armed groups, implementing peace agreements, ...
  - Even today, important policy issue as a large number of occupations remain active (Russia, Turkey, ...)

- How do military occupations end?
  - Typically some political pressure to limit the role of ground troops in scope and time
  - Security transitions: gradual withdrawal of occupying forces and redeployment of weaponry to local allies
  - Foreign-to-local transitions are difficult to manage & survival of elements that triggered the military occupation in the first place
  - Crucial for subsequent economic and political development and yet we know little about how interventions end & lack of data

This paper

- In this paper, we study the security transition from international to local forces in the Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan (2011-14)
  - NATO's operation Enduring Freedom: $1.07 trillion USD

    (French GDP $\approx$ $2.7 trillion USD)

- Exceptionally granular data, recently declassified (Shaver and Wright, 2016)
  - SIGACTs: catalogue of attacks carried against int'l forces
  - ANQAR survey: perceptions of security

- Empirically, we explore two stages of the transition
  1. **Announcement**: public announcement of districts to be transitioned from ISAF to Afghan forces (staggered rollout)
  2. **Physical withdrawal**: actual ISAF base closures (variation with respect to logistical hubs)

This paper

- (Many) ambiguous effects:
  - + Shift away from well-trained and resourced military
  - + Legitimacy of local forces and strength of institutions
  - − Local knowledge, extraction of information
  - − Insurgents might find more difficult to mobilize and extract resources

- We find the following pattern
  1. **Announcement**: significant drop in violence and improvement in civilian perception of security
  2. **Physical withdrawal**: **complete reversal** with increase in violence and perceptions of security

  ⇒ Consistent with "lying low" strategic behaviour: insurgent drawing forces down until ISAF has transitioned out

This paper

"America's enemies must never know our plans or believe they can wait us out."

— Donald J Trump, August 2017

Spillovers

- We pay particular attention to the issue of conflict displacement
  - Insurgency can, and possibly is, strategically reallocating efforts throughout the transition process

    (potential outcome is affected by treatment assignment to other units)

    (Inherent violation of SUTVA hypothesis)
  - This paper is the first to leverage new econometric techniques to directly tackle the issue of spatial spillovers
  - We leverage the work by de Paula, Rasul and Souza (2019)

    Use the data to discipline and estimate the pattern of spatial spillovers of conflict

    Then use that information to directly control for displacement effects
  - Part of a larger agenda: Souza (2015), Lam and Souza (2016, 2019), Derksen and Souza (2020)

Related literature

- How insurgencies *emerge*?

  Fearon and Laitin (2003), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Miguel et al. (2004), Bazzi and Blattman (2014), Berman et al. (2015)

- State capacity is central

  Besley and Persson (2009, 2010), Powell (2013), Gennaioli and Voth (2015), Esteban et al. (2015), Sanchez de la Sierra (2017), Condra et al. (2018)

- Mixed evidence of development interventions

  Berman et al. (2011), Fetzer (2014), Beath et al. (2013) vs Crost et al. (2014), Sexton (2016), Nunn and Qian (2014)

- After-war effects

  Bellows and Miguel (2006), Blattman (2009), Fearon et al. (2009), Voigtlander and Voth (2012), Jha and Wilkinson, (2012), Vanden Eynde (2015), Cilliers et al. (2016), Bauer et al. (2016)

$\Rightarrow$ Much less on the transition out of the conflict

Roadmap

1. **Background and data**
2. Results: announcement
3. Results: physical withdrawal
4. (Ruling out) mechanisms
5. Conclusion & policy relevance

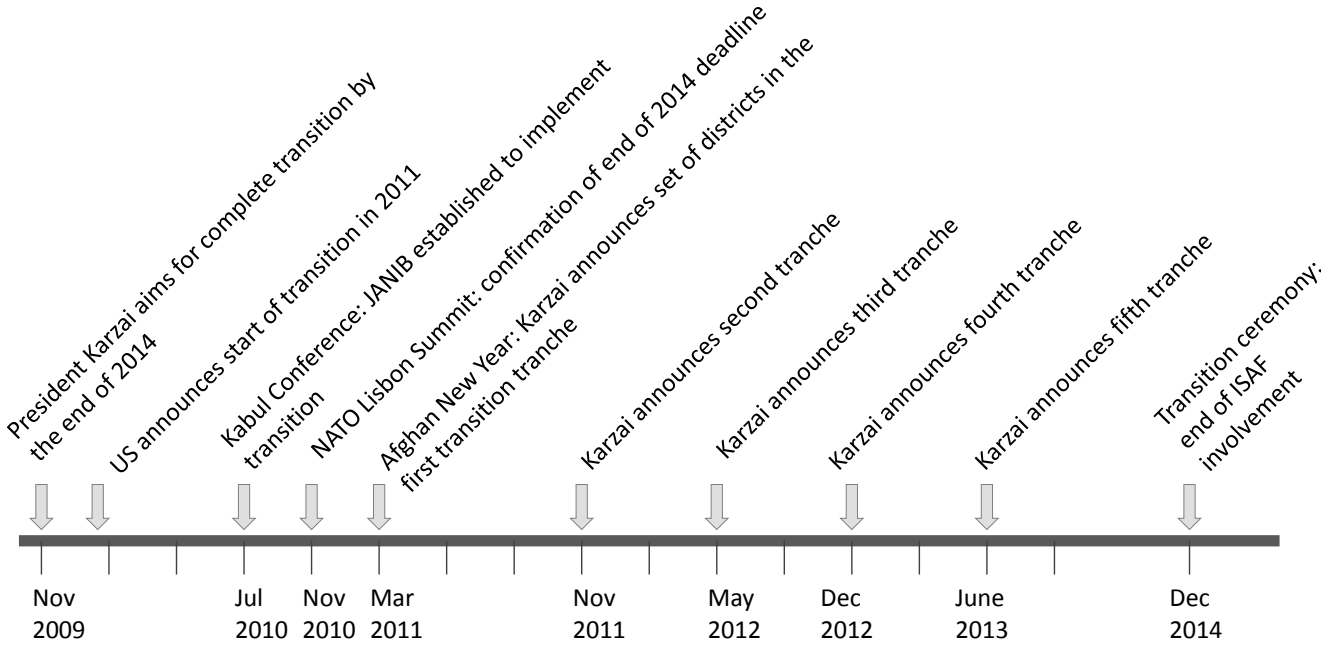
Measuring the security transition

We build a database that marks two particular points in the security transition:

- **Announcement**: the *official security transfer to ANSF* that was announced in tranches
- **Physical withdrawal**: construct a database of NATO/ ISAF base installation closures and handover ceremonies

For (1) we can rely on official data, while for (2) we mine online (social) media and conventional media to construct a location specific dates of withdrawal and base handovers.

Key dates in the transition process



Easy to observe due to public announcement of which districts participate in different transition waves

Key dates in the transition process

- 2001: Start of the intervention in Afghanistan.

  NATO countries operate under the umbrella of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF)

  Mission was conceived as a temporary intervention from the outset

- Nov 2009: President Karzai announces the desire to see a complete transition by the end of 2014

  US announces that the transition process would start in 2011

- July 2010: Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB) established to oversee the transition process

  They select the first transition tranche to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), announced in March 2011

- Nov 2011, May 2012, Dec 2012, June 2013: President Karzai announces tranches 2-5

- Dec 2014: transition ceremony

Assignment of districts to transition tranches

In theory...

- Decided by the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB), driven by the capability of the ANSF to take over local security provision

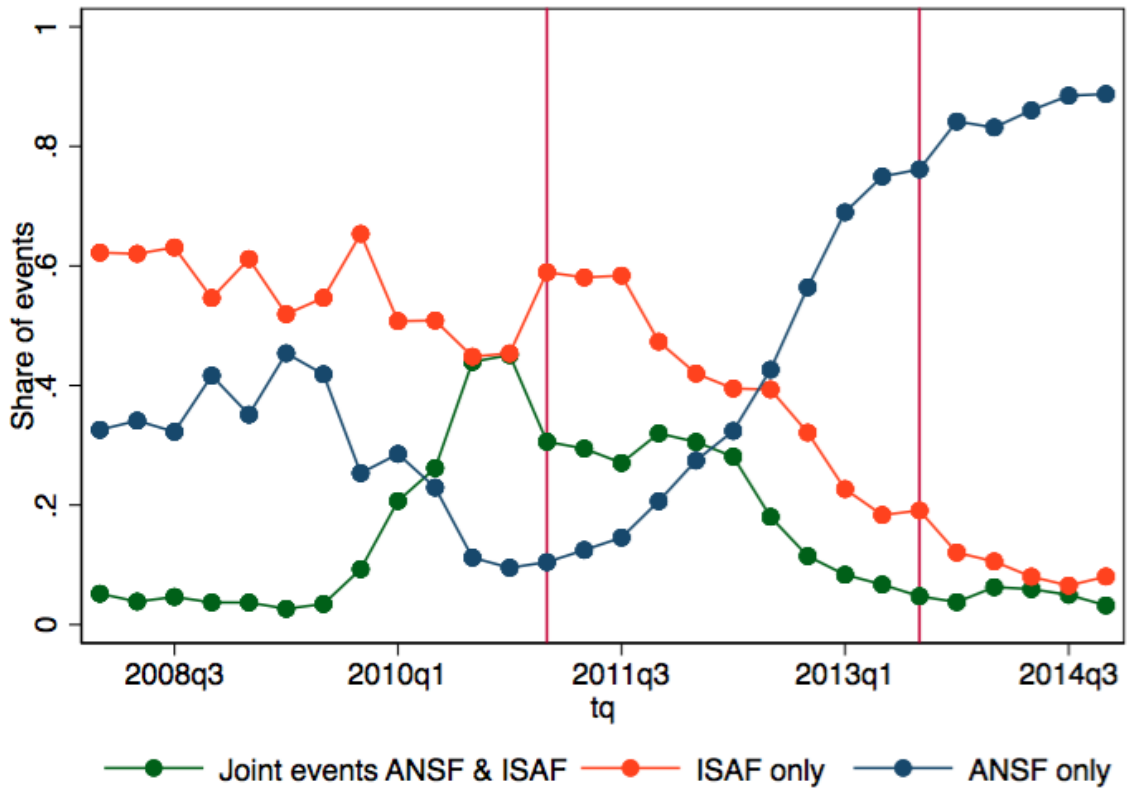
In practice... ultimate decision taken by President Karzai

- The timing of the tranches was constrained by the 2014 deadline

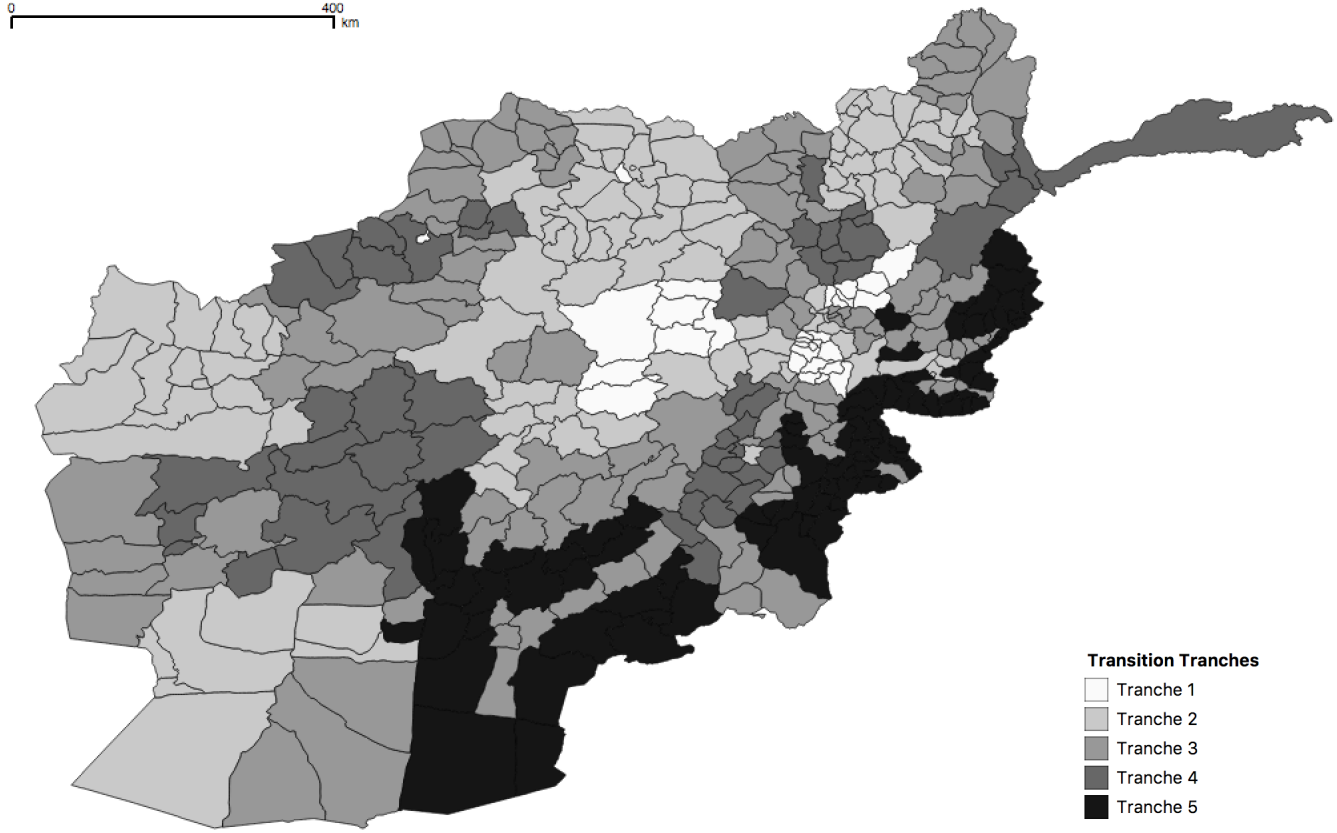
  "Ultimately, the transfer decision lies with President Hamid Karzai and his principal advisor for transition, Ashraf Ghani. Complex political considerations, including ethnic balancing, at times influence the transfer decisions, despite ISAF's advice." (Brookings Institute)

Assignment of districts to transition tranches

- Transition mark a real shift of responsibilities, but did not represent a complete break
- ISAF maintains a supporting and advisory role throughout the process, and throughout the transition the ANSF takes the majority of field operations



Transition tranches



Completion of security transition

- Withdrawal and base handovers: mine online (social) media
  - Throughout ISAF's engagement, up to 140k NATO troops operated out of estimated 825 physical bases in Afghanistan
  - Identify 338 main facilities regularly mentioned in DoD's Periodic Occupational and Environmental Monitoring Summary (POEMS)

    Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), Camps, Combat Outposts (COPs), and bases hosting the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)
  - Unfortunately, POEMS does not provide exact location or date when bases ceased operations
  - Extensive search on social and traditional media for evidence of public handover ceremonies
  - For 170 bases, we were able to identify the district as well as confirm whether they were closed or demolished or handed over to ANSF
  - Aggregate to the district level, and use the last date as the transition indicator

Completion of security transition

HIDE CAPTION – 2 / 6

FORWARD OPERATING BASE AZIZULLAH, Afghanistan -- Troopers with 3rd Squadron, Combined Task Force Dragoon, lower the American flag during a transfer ceremony Nov. 15, 2013, at Forward Operating Base Azizullah, Afghanistan. Troopers recently relinquished authority over the base to the Afghan National Army and Civil Order Police in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. *(Photo Credit: Spc. Joshua Edwards, Combined Task Force Dragoon Public Affairs)*

VIEW ORIGINAL

Data

We rely on two main data sources to measure the impact of the security transition:[1]

1. **SIGACTS**: administrative data on conflict events, 2005-2014

   Approximately 500k georeferenced observations, down to several meters and time-accurate

   Catalog of attacked carried against the int'l forces

   Mandatory reporting to SIGACTS

2. **ANQAR**: citizens perceptions of safety and security, 2008-2016

   ANQAR tracks civilian attitudes toward government forces, anti-government entities, and coalition partners

   Data on $\approx$ 370,000 individual respondents, across dozens of waves from 2008 to 2016

[1] Released by US Central Command and NATO to Wright in 2015 and 2017

Summary Stats

	Mean (1)	s.d. (2)	N (3)
Panel A: District-quarter level, SIGACTS			
All casualties	5.006	15.361	10976
Direct Fire	9.725	42.788	10976
IED Explosion	3.080	10.036	10976
ANSF	0.367	0.482	10976
ISAF base closure	0.221	0.415	10976
Panel B: District-quarter level, ANQAR			
Security improved in village in last 6 months (share)	0.322	0.220	8889
Seen ANA at least monthly in village (share)	0.685	0.324	8661
ANSF brings most security to area (share)	0.507	0.236	8888
Anti-government elements in control (versus govt, share)	0.185	0.226	8889
Return of Taliban would be good (share)	0.204	0.227	7698

Notes: Observations at the district-quarter level in Panel A (2008-2014) and B (2008-2016)

Roadmap

1. Background and data
2. **Results: the onset of the transition**
3. Results: physical withdrawal
4. (Ruling out) mechanisms
5. Conclusion & policy relevance

Difference-in-difference estimation

- Base specification: at the district level

$$y_{i,r,t} = \gamma \times ANSF_{i,t} + \alpha_i + \beta_{r,t} + \eta_i \times t + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

  where i indicates district, r the Regional Command and t is the quarter

- District FE (α_i), nonlinear RC trends ($\beta_{r,t}$) and district-specific linear trends ($\eta_i \times t$)

- $ANSF_{i,t}$ switches on when Afghan forces takes over from ISAF

  (γ is our coefficient of interest)

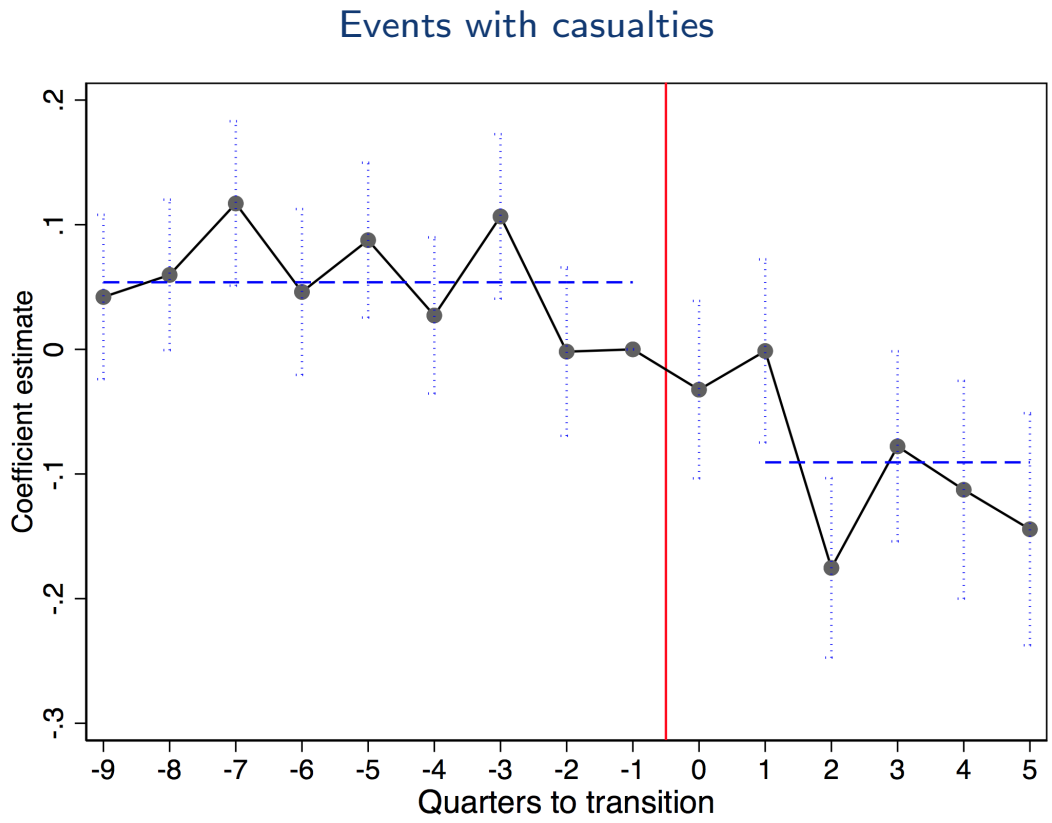
Results

Results: transition onset, SIGACTS data

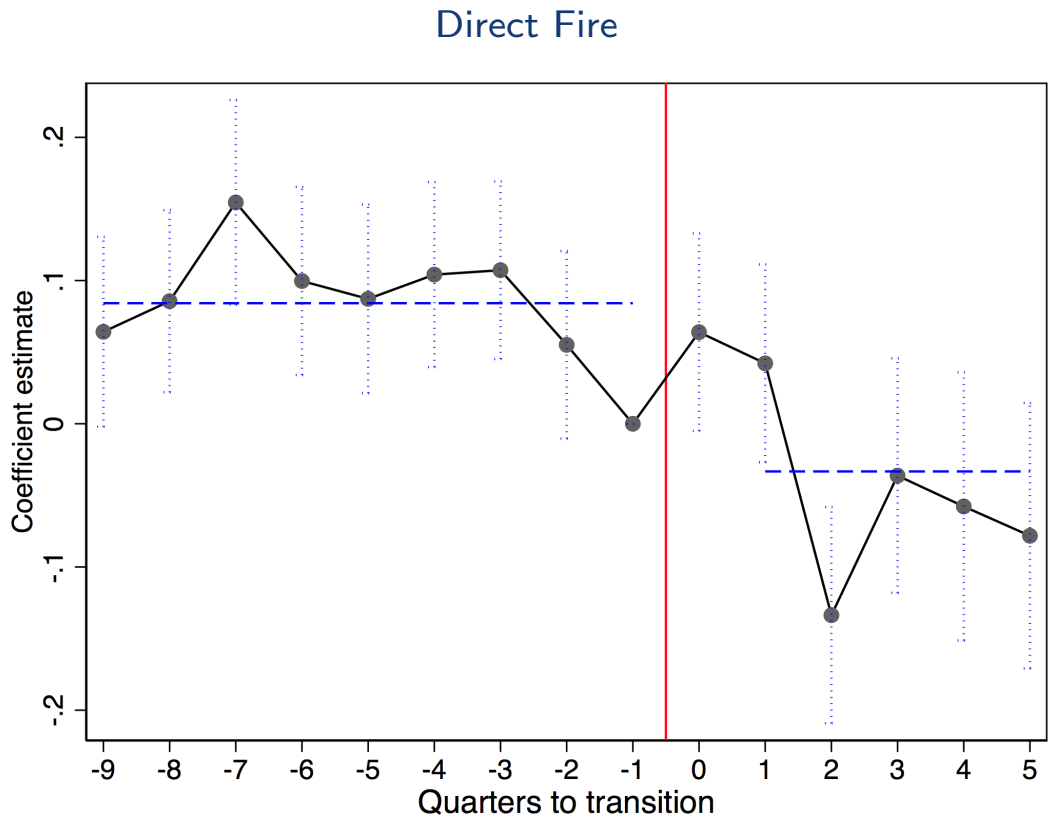
	All fatal Events		Direct Fire Attacks		IED Explosions	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANSF	-.134***	-.096***	-.131***	-.064*	-.070**	-.076*
	(.032)	(.031)	(.036)	(.035)	(.029)	(.029)
Number of Districts	392	392	392	392	392	392
District time trend	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Table reports results from a panel OLS regressions. The dependent variable throughout is in logs plus 1 per capita. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

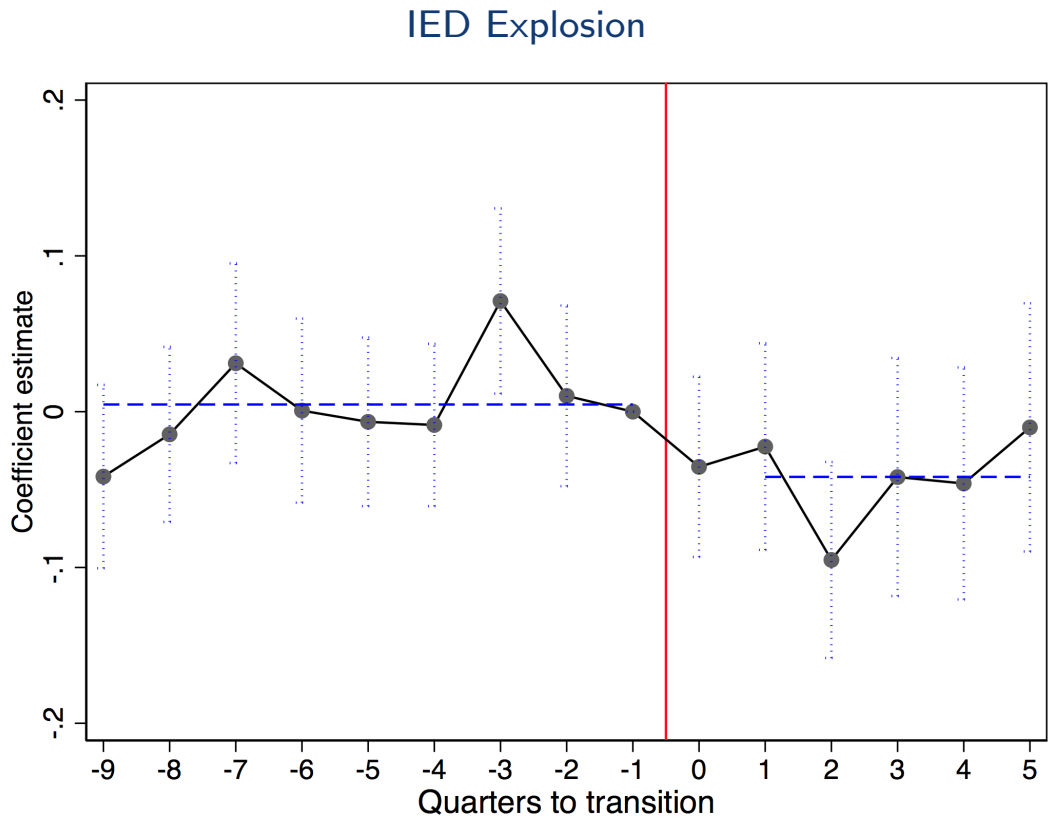
Event studies



Event studies



Event studies



Results

Results: transition onset, ANQAR data

	Security improved (1)	Taliban weaker (2)	See ANSF monthly (3)	Govt doing well (4)
ANSF	.032**	.030*	.052***	.022*
	(.015)	(.018)	(.019)	(.012)
Number of Districts	390	390	390	390
District time trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Regressions at the district-quarter level, covering the period 2008-2016. All regressions include district fixed effects, regional command by time fixed effects, and district-specific trends. The dependent variables measure shares of respondents at the district level. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Displacement

- Insurgents' strategic behaviour in time as well as **in space**: when and where to attack
  - Not clear how insurgency displaces in space when districts are transitioned
  - Especially as obfuscation might be of strategic interest
- To shed light on this issue, we apply the paper of de Paula, Rasul and Souza (2020)
  - Allows to recover the network dependencies using observable panel data
  - We assess: *(i)* the extent to which spillovers confound the identification of the diff-in-diff results; *(ii)* explain the presence, magnitude and mechanisms behind displacement

Displacement

- Diff-in-Diff

$$y_{i,r,t} = \gamma\, ANSF_{i,t} + [\text{ FEs }] + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

where i is district, r is regional command and t is a quarter.

[FEs] = district, district linear trends, and regional command by time

- Diff-in-Diff with spillovers

$$y_{i,r,t} = \underbrace{\rho \sum_{j=1}^{N} w_{i,j} y_{j,r,t}}_{\text{endogenous effects}} + \gamma\, ANSF_{i,t} + \underbrace{\delta \sum_{j=1}^{N} w_{i,j} ANSF_{j,t}}_{\text{exogenous effects}} + [\text{ FEs }] + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

where $w_{i,j}$ represents the extent to which district j affects i

Displacement

- Diff-in-Diff with spillovers

$$y_{i,r,t} = \underbrace{\rho \sum_{j=1}^{N} w_{i,j} y_{j,r,t}}_{\text{endogenous effects}} + \gamma\, ANSF_{i,t} + \underbrace{\delta \sum_{j=1}^{N} w_{i,j} ANSF_{j,t}}_{\text{exogenous effects}} + [\text{ FEs }] + \epsilon_{i,t}$$

- Also a spatial econometric model, but with **unknown** $w_{i,j}$
- Two perspectives:
  - (i) Evaluate γ, the main treatment effects, controlling for spillovers
  - (ii) Shed light on the mechanisms behind the displacement in $w_{i,j}$

Two slides on de Paula, Rasul and Souza (2019)

- Shows the identification of (ρ, γ, δ) and W under the following conditions
  1. no self-loops, $w_{i,i} = 0$
  2. stationarity, $\sum_{i=1}^{j} |w_{i,i}| \leqslant 1$, and $|\rho| < 1$
  3. spatial effects do not cancel out, $\gamma\rho + \delta \neq 0$
  4. one row is normalized (wlog), there is an i such that $\sum_{j=1}^{N} w_{i,j} = 1$
  5. network asymmetries, diagonal of W^2 is not constant

     $\Rightarrow$ implies peers-of-peers identification condition

     Peers-of-peers identification condition: the only constants c_1, c_2 and c_3 that solve

     $$c_1 I + c_2 W + c_3 W^2 \quad = \quad 0$$

     is $c_1 = c_2 = c_3 = 0$.

Two slides on de Paula, Rasul and Souza (2019)

- Estimation: Adaptive Elastic Net GMM of Caner and Zhang (2014)
  - Penalize in the structural form and estimate in the reduced-form

- First stage

$$\tilde{\theta} = \left(1 + \frac{p_2}{T}\right) \cdot \arg\min_{\theta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \left\{ g(\theta)' M_T g(\theta) + p_1 \sum_{i,j=1}^{n} |W_{i,j}| + p_2 \sum_{i,j=1}^{n} |W_{i,j}|^2 \right\}$$

- Second (adaptive) stage

$$\hat{\theta} = \left(1 + \frac{p_2}{T}\right) \cdot \arg\min_{\theta \in \mathbb{R}^p} \left\{ g(\theta)' M_T g(\theta) + p_1^* \sum_{\tilde{W}_{i,j} \neq 0} \frac{|W_{i,j}|}{|\tilde{W}_{i,j}|^\gamma} + p_2 \sum_{i,j=1}^{n} |W_{i,j}|^2 \right\}$$

  where $\theta = (\rho, \gamma, \delta, W_{1,2}, \ldots, W_{N,N-1})$ and p_1^*, p_1 and p_2 chosen by BIC

- Outcomes: estimates of ρ,γ, δ **and the network** W, fully free of additional assumptions

Results

Results: transition onset, SIGACTS data

	All fatal Events		Direct Fire Attacks		IED Explosions	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANSF (γ)	-.095***	-.102***	-.066*	-.066**	-.074**	-.088***
	(.031)	(.026)	(.034)	(.024)	(.029)	(.021)
Conflict displacement (ρ)		.039		.004		.002
		(.060)		(.042)		(.083)
Treatment spillover (δ)		.039		.002		.386
		(.554)		(.226)		(.644)
Number of Districts	392	392	392	392	392	392
District time trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

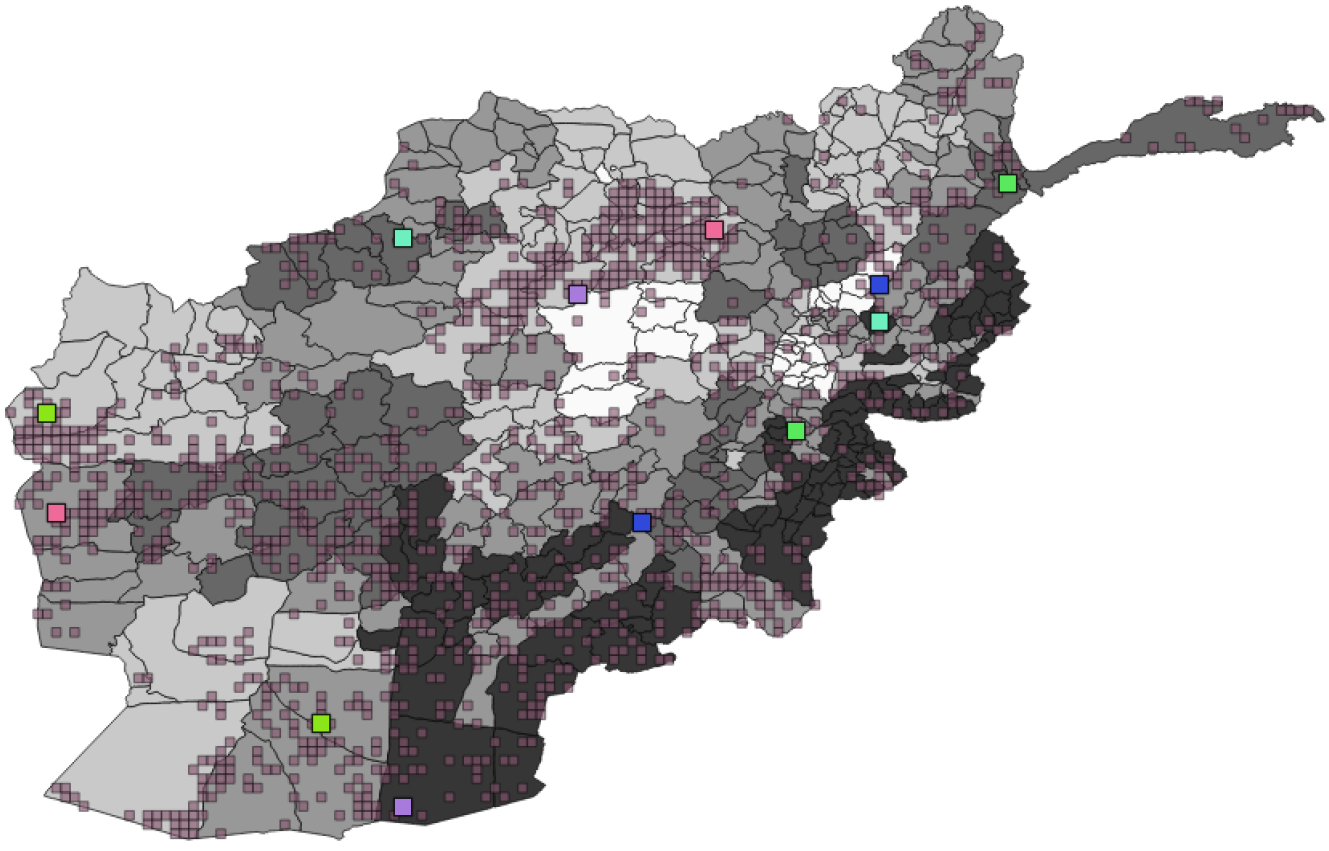
Notes: Table reports results from a panel OLS regressions. The dependent variable throughout is in logs plus 1 per capita. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Difference-in-difference in gridcells

- Alternative approach: matched 10km x 10km grid cells
  - Identify observationally similar but distant counterfactual in different transition tranches
  - Match on key terrain and infrastructure (transport and electrification) characteristics
  - Impose a minimum distance (200km) between matched grid cells to avoid displacement effects within pairs

    (matching process may be informed by the estimated network itself)

Matched grid cell pairs



Difference-in-difference estimation

- Matched DiD at gridcell level (SIGACTS):

$$y_{i,p,d,t} = \alpha_i + \beta_{p,t} + \gamma \times ANSF_{d,t} + \epsilon_{i,d,t}$$

  for gridcell i, part of the matched pair p in district d, and month t

- Controlling flexibly for matched-pair by time FE $\beta_{p,t}$ to account for any non-linear trend specific to the propensity score

- Matching on grid level population (as of 2008), elevation, MODIS landcover (2008), distances to nearest a) asphalt road, b) road and c) any airfield

Results

Results: transition onset, matched grid cells, SIGACTS data

	All fatal Events		Direct Fire Attacks		IED Explosions	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ANSF	-.024***	-.015***	-.026***	-.015**	-.021***	-.019***
	(.007)	(.006)	(.008)	(.007)	(.006)	(.006)
Number of Districts	392	392	392	392	392	392
District time trend	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: Table reports results from a panel OLS regressions. The dependent variable throughout is in logs plus 1 per capita. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Robustness

- Consistent to using a border design at the gridcell level
- Robust to using alternative with more or less saturated fixed effects
- Robust to using working with alternative proxies or PCAs
- No evidence of changing pattern in survey participation
- Heterogenous effects suggests effects driven by earlier tranches (1-3) and by regional command North, South, West (but not East and Capital).

Roadmap

1. Background and data
2. Results: announcement
3. **Results: physical withdrawal**
4. (Ruling out) mechanisms
5. Conclusion & policy relevance

Completion of security transition

- Unlike the transfer process, which was constrained by five tranches, the decision to close individual bases was highly discretionary
- Timing of the completion of the transition is potentially endogenous to the (perceived) success of the handover to ANSF
- We leverage on logistic constraints to construct an instrument for the base closures
- Scale of the withdrawal logistics is enormous by any standard

  Estimated 70,000 vehicles and 120,000 containers (Loven, 2013)
- To make matters worse, Afghanistan is a land-locked country with poor physical infrastructure

Constrained logistical routes

Logistical challenge to fly out most equipment

$\Rightarrow$ in total, 70,000 coalition military vehicles need to be moved.

Logistical challenge to fly out most equipment

$\Rightarrow$ significant use of fixed and rotary wing capacity to consolidate material around main exit points near main military air hubs.

Logistical challenge to fly out most equipment

Base closures

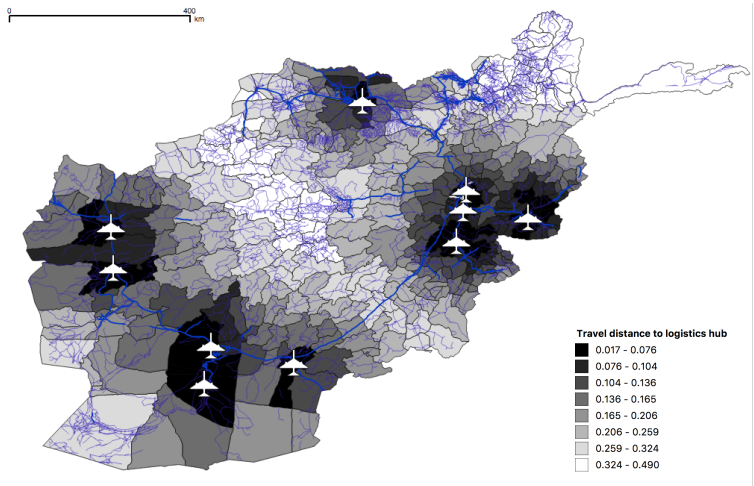
- Constrained logistical routes:
  - Through Karachi in Pakistan: unreliable and difficult access
  - Through North: 3,900m Salang Pass, vulnerable to avalanches and landslides, and restricted to no-weapons use
  - Within Afghanistan: very limited paved road network
  - Heavy-duty Boeing C-17 Globemasters provided up to 7 trips a day between Afghanistan and Kuwait

- Led to consolidation around the air-ready bases which served as transport hubs

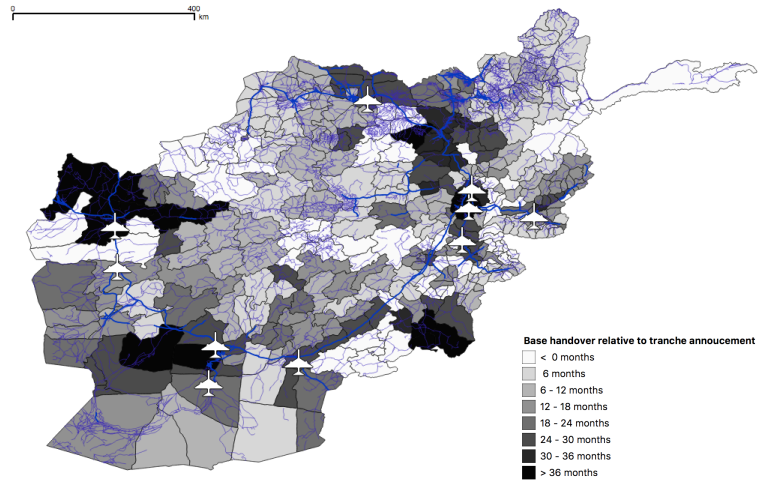
$\Rightarrow$ build a variable capturing travel distances on the least cost path which serves as an instrument

Base closures

Distance to nearest logistic hub



Last base closure, relative to tranche date



$\Rightarrow$ nearest airport serves as exit point is strong correlate of timing of base/ district handover competition.

Withdrawal

- Main specification:

$$y_{d,t} = \kappa \times \text{ISAF base closure}_{d,t} + \gamma \times ANSF_{d,t} + \beta_t \times X_d + \eta_d \times t + \epsilon_{d,t}$$

where

$\text{ISAF base closure}_{d,t}$ is an indicator if ISAF base was closed in a district-time (instrumented by the travel distance to military airport $\times$ post-2011)

$\text{ANSF}_{d,t}$ is the indicator for the transition to ANSF

District-time linear effects, and X_d are controls such as distance to the border (more demanding specification has tranche-specific fixed effects)

Distance to military airport - First stage

	Date of last base closure in district		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Travel distance to military airport × Post 2011	1.857***	2.014***	1.995***
	(.233)	(.230)	(.219)
ANSF	.202***	.196***	
	(.027)	(.027)	
Number of Grid Cells	392	392	392
IV control set × time FE	No	Yes	Yes
Tranche × time FE	No	No	Yes

Notes: Regressions at the district-quarter level, covering the period 2008-2016. All regressions include district fixed effects, regional command × time fixed effects, and district-specific trends. The additional IV control set includes distance to any airport, and distance to province borders. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for the last (observed) ISAF base closure at the district level. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Effect of withdrawal on conflict outcomes (SIGACTS)

	All Casualty Events		Direct Fire Attacks		IED Explosions	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: District level – OLS						
ISAF base closure	-.003	.001	-.018	-.004	-.017	-.010
	(.034)	(.035)	(.039)	(.041)	(.029)	(.031)
ANSF	-.102***		-.054		-.094***	
	(.030)		(.034)		(.028)	
Panel B: District level – IV						
ISAF base closure	.750**	.765**	.734**	.787**	1.001***	1.109***
	(.304)	(.336)	(.363)	(.397)	(.329)	(.364)
ANSF	-.221***		-.172**		-.255***	
	(.059)		(.068)		(.066)	
Weak IV statistic	56.5	51.6	56.5	51.6	56.5	51.6
Number of Districts	392	392	392	392	392	392
Tranche × time FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

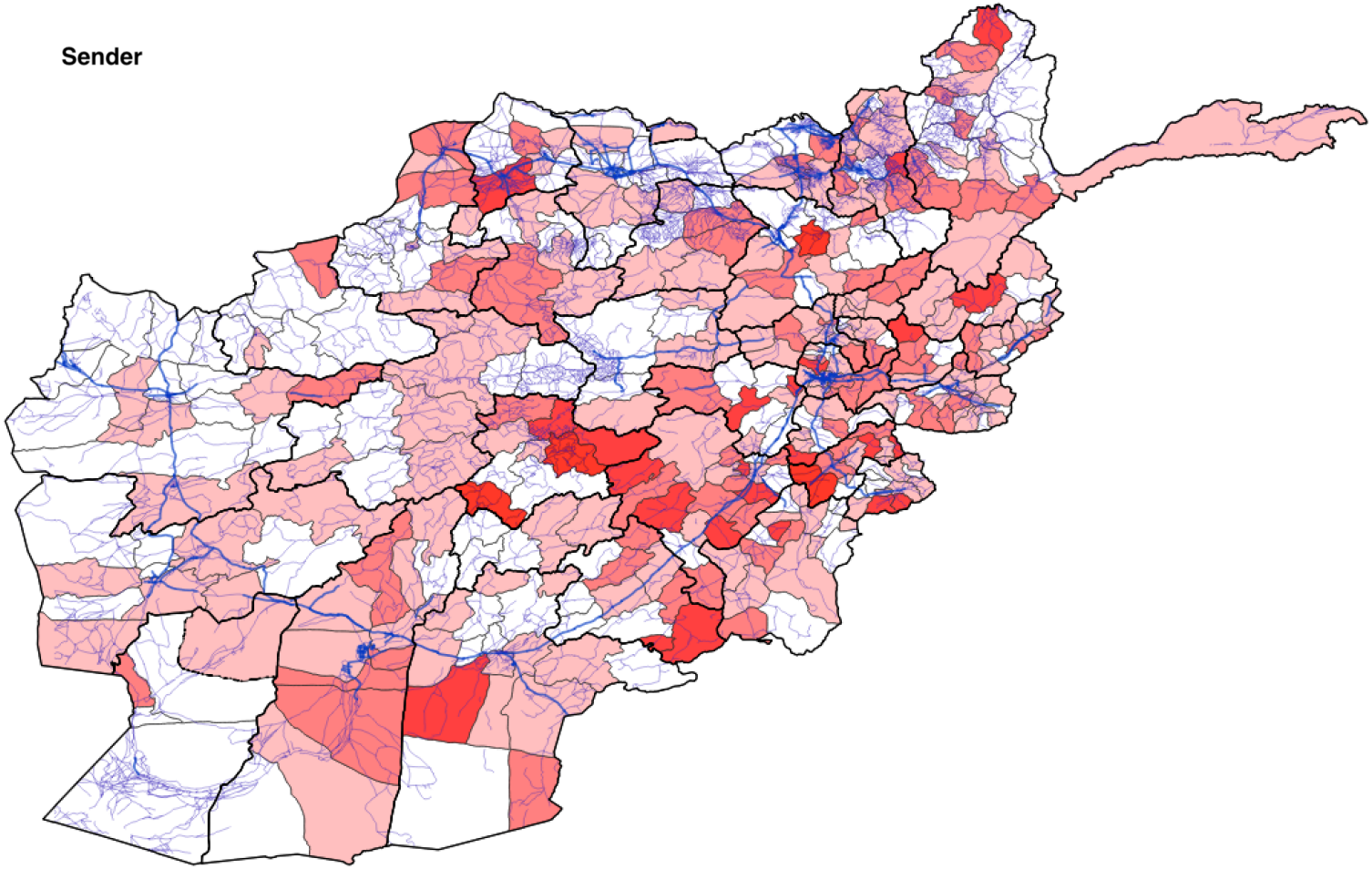
Notes: Regressions at the district-quarter level, covering the period 2008-2014. All regressions include district fixed effects, regional command × time fixed effects, and district-specific trends. The instrument used for ISAF base closure is the interaction of the travel distance to the nearest military airport and an indicator for the post-2011 period. The IV control set includes distance to any airport × time fixed effects, and distance to province borders × time fixed effects. Outcomes are measured as log plus 1.

Results

Results: completion, SIGACTS data

	All fatal Events		Direct Fire Attacks		IED Explosions	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
ISAF base closure (γ)	.765**	.533***	.787**	.628***	1.109***	.377**
	(.336)	(.179)	(.397)	(.191)	(.364)	(.166)
Conflict displacement (ρ)		.587***		.697***		.692***
		(.071)		(.063)		(.070)
Treatment spillover (δ)		2.713***		2.900***		1.474***
		(.281)		(.306)		(.292a)
Number of Districts	392	392	392	392	392	392
District time trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Table reports results from a panel OLS regressions. The dependent variable throughout is in logs plus 1 per capita. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.


Sender

Results

Dyadic regressions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9) LPM	(10) Tobit
Driving distance	-2.378***	-2.429***						-1.980***	-4.035***	-487.3***
	(.193)	(.255)						(.267)	(.455)	(59.52)
Geodesic distance		.0759								
		(.606)								
Neighboring districts		-.000319								
		(.00106)								
Same regional command			.00127***		.00123***			.000577*	.00137**	.0720*
			(.000206)		(.000226)			(.000316)	(.000569)	(.0397)
Regional command, Turkey				.00167**	.00194***			.00129*	.00243*	.192**
				(.000687)	(.000686)			(.000717)	(.00126)	(.0794)
Regional command, United States				.000801***	.000439**			.000291	.000746	.107***
				(.000191)	(.000212)			(.000257)	(.000457)	(.0377)
Potential opium yield						2.59e-05		9.38e-05	.000111	.0126*
						(5.61e-05)		(6.42e-05)	(.000100)	(.00713)
Ethnic similarity							.000235	-.000203	-.000565*	-.0611***
							(.000155)	(.000169)	(.000317)	(.0235)
Pashtun ethnic similarity							-2.90e-05	-3.05e-05	-.000257	-.0340
							(.000201)	(.000206)	(.000365)	(.0301)
Observations	153,272	153,272	153,272	153,272	153,272	150,144	122,150	120,056	120,056	120,056
R-squared	.001	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.001	

Notes: Dyadic regressions with estimated network $[\hat{w}_{ij}]_{i,j=1^N, i\neq j}$ as dependent variable, explained by differences between observable characteristics of the (i, j) pair (driving distance, geodesic distance, neighbouring districts, same regional command, ethnic and Pashtun ethnic similarity) and characteristic of the sender node j (regional command, Turkey and the United States, and potential opium yield.

Results

Results: transition onset, ANQAR data

	Security improved (1)	Taliban weaker (2)	See ANSF monthly (3)	Govt doing well (4)
ISAF base closure	-.143***	-.151***	.161***	-.140**
	(.050)	(.052)	(.068)	(.050)
ANSF	.062***	.058***	.017	.047***
	(.018)	(.020)	(.023)	(.017)
Number of Districts	390	390	390	390
District time trend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Regressions at the district-quarter level, covering the period 2008-2016. All regressions include district fixed effects, regional command by time fixed effects, and district-specific trends. The dependent variables measure shares of respondents at the district level. Standard errors clustered at the district level and are presented in parentheses, stars indicate *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

Roadmap

1. Background and data
2. Results: announcement
3. Results: physical withdrawal
4. **(Ruling out) mechanisms**
5. Conclusion & policy relevance

Mechanisms

- Mechanism 1: transfer of security to the ANSF could reduce violence because the ability of the Taliban to mobilize was weakened by the ISAF withdrawal
  - Inconsistent with rise in violence after the base transitions
- Mechanism 2: complementarities between ANSF and ISAF
  - Troop effort or efficiency rises with the security transfer and falls with base closures
  - Monitoring, technical support, targeted aid allocation to transition districts, ...
  - We do not find evidence of increase in misbehaviour by ANSF, perceptions of complementarity or aid timed with the transition process
  - We also look at tactical support activities which are generally correlated with violent events – again, the response does not change with respect to the transition stage
- Mechanism 3: **lying low as strategic response**

Mechanisms: Lying Low

- This was a distinct possibility at the time:

  If you tell the enemy that you're leaving on a date certain, unequivocally, then that enemy will wait until you leave." – John McCain (2010)

  "They cannot wait us out. They cannot defeat us. And they cannot escape this choice." – Hillary Clinton (2011)

  "If I was an insurgent, I would wait until the Americans left and try my luck with the ANSF" – Capt. Michael Wallace (Washington Post, 2014)

- Facts: surge in violence after 2014 and *return* of US troops in 2017

Mechanisms: Lying Low

- Reductions in violence after the transition suggest *strategic behaviour*, for example in a signaling game:
  - Lying low is costly: signals to the local population, ability to defend
  - If there is some discretion left about the speed of the withdrawal, incentive to make the transition look successful until troops leave
  - Pooling equilibrium when capacity of ANSF versus Taliban is unobservable to ISAF (see model)

Mechanisms: Lying Low

- The signalling strategy appears to have worked:

  "During the reporting period, the ANSF has performed effectively in the field, losing no major bases or district centers to the insurgency and protecting the majority of the Afghan population. Although challenges remain, the ANSF demonstrated an increasing level of effectiveness." – DoD, July 2013

A model of lying low

- Capacity of ANSF versus Taliban is $\theta \in \{0, 1\}$, and cannot be observed by ISAF.
- ISAF allocates capacity $\rho_1 = 1$ but commits to not using against the Taliban in the first period
- Taliban chooses the level of attacks in the first period as $a_1 \in \{0, 1\}$ according to the objective function $a_1 - \theta_1 a_1$
- If game ended in the first period, then $a_1^* = 1$ if $\theta = 0$

A model of lying low

- In the second period, ISAF chooses the capacity level ρ_2 with cost c per unit of ρ_2

  Costs are associated to the physical maintenance as well as the political costs of not adhering to the transition

- Second-period objective function for ISAF is $-a_2 - c\rho_2$
- Second-period objective function for the Taliban is $\omega[a_2 - (\theta + \rho_2)a_2]$ where ω is a discount factor

- Timing: (i) Nature draws $\theta \in \{0, 1\}$ with $E(\theta) = \lambda$; (ii) Taliban chooses a_1 and gets the payoff; (iii) ISAF observes a_1 and chooses ρ_2; (iv) Taliban chooses a_2, and period-2 payoffs materialize

- In this (very simple) game, a pooling equilibrium exists with $a_1 = 0$ and $\rho_2 = 0$ if $1 - \lambda < c\rho_2 < 1$. In period 2, $a_2 = 0$ if Taliban has low capacity relative to ANSF and $a_2 = 1$ otherwise.

  The pooling equilibrium breaks down if ρ is too small, so if ISAF is weak.

  The pooling equilibrium breaks down if λ is too small, i.e. the Taliban is strong.

Roadmap

1. Background and data
2. Results: announcement
3. Results: physical withdrawal
4. (Ruling out) mechanisms
5. **Conclusion & policy relevance**

Conclusion & policy relevance

- Our findings suggest that insurgents acted strategically around the withdrawal
  - Violence decreased after the announcement of the transition, but increased after the physical withdrawal of troops.
- The experience of Afghanistan is not unique:
  - 1989 Soviet transfer of power to Afghan forces
  - The end of US-led operations in Iraq in 2011
  - Also domestic operations in high-crime environment
- Cases reveal similar patterns of insurgent violence declining during the initial phase of the security transition and surging after the final withdrawal of foreign troops.
- Suggest that the patterns of violence reflect a broader dynamic as foreign wars end

Thank you!