Foreign Interventions and Community Cohesion in Times of Conflict

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Motivation (1)

Research question

- How do foreign military interventions affect community cohesion and the role of local institutions in times of conflict?

More precisely

- For the case of a long-lasting conflict: Afghanistan
- For one of the largest coalitions in history (NATO, 2015): International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

More broadly

- Implications for the achievement of the intervention's objectives: COIN, stability, reconstruction, nation-building

Motivation (2)

Anecdotal evidence

ISAF "helped to undermine and marginalize the important role played by village elders in Afghan culture." (Cohn 2009)

At the same time

"Local communities such as villages are commonly assumed to be vital partners in counter-insurgency and post-conflict reconstruction." (Weidmann & Zürcher 2013)

"The breakdown of social cohesion at the community level has increased instability, made Afghans feel unsafe, and fueled the insurgency." (Washington Post, September 21, 2009)

Literature

Literature on social cohesion

- Slow process with deep historical roots: e.g., Nunn (2008)
- Conflict: Bellow & Miguel (2009), Gilligan et al. (2014), De Luca & Verpoorten (2015)
- Aid (community program): Fearon, Humphreys & Weinstein (2009)

Literature on effectiveness of security missions

- Security achievements: Dell & Querubin (2018), Hultman et al. (2013)
- Wartime informing: Berman & Matanock (2015), Wright et al. (2017)
- Attitudes: Lyall et al. (2013), Schutte (2017)

Literature on external shocks and conflict

- Military-led aid projects: Sexton (2016), Child (2016), NSP: Beath (2016)
- Winning hearts and minds: Böhnke & Zürcher (2013), Lyall (2017)
- Income shocks: Berman & Couttenier (2015), Gehring, Langlotz & Kienberger (2018)

Contributions

General contributions

1. Evidence on "effects" of foreign military interventions on community cohesion
   - For a large sample and time period (covering 90% of Afghanistan's districts)
   - For various outcomes measures from different data sources
   - Highlight potential channel for peace and nation-building
   - Highlight interplay between foreign interventions & foreign aid

2. Exploit three different estimation techniques
   - Panel with high-dimensional fixed effects
   - Interaction effects of (exogenous) income shocks with ISAF presence
   - Geographic regression discontinuity exploiting ISAF's mandate enlargement

     (see UNSC Resolution 1510, October 13, 2003)

Mechanisms

- Net effect is not clear
- Effect depends on whether ISAF…

a) provides an environment of security

- e.g. less need to rely on community support

b) increases insecurity: attract insurgent violence/strategically deployed to insecure areas

- e.g. if violence is a common threat, households might rely more on community

c) Irrespective of degree of contestation

- e.g. if shura/elders are bypassed

Data (1)

Household-level

- *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment*: 4 waves (2003; 2005, 2007/08; 2011/12)
- *The Survey of the Afghan People (Asia Foundation):* 8 waves (2007-2014)
- Include data on:
  - Shocks: insecurity/violence, opium eradication, climate shocks
  - Coping strategies: including indicators on social cohesion
  - Community behavior: community meetings/councils, trust/confidence
  - General information: income, consumption, assets, aid programs

District-level

- ISAF: mandate enlargement, military bases, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)
- Contestations: different measures on conflict intensity (UCDP GED, SIGACTS)
- Other controls: nightlight, population, aid (AidData)

Data (2)

The standard in measuring social cohesion

- "[T]rust, patterns of community activity, ..." (Fearon et al. 2009)
- "…, sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help." (Chan et al. 2006)

My measures

1. *Community Help:* Received help from others in the community
2. *Community Help+Loans:* Community help + received loans from friends or family
3. *Council Member:* Any hh member is a member in a community council (shura/jirga/CDC)
4. *Trust/Confidence in Council (shura/jirga):* Great deal/fair amount/not very much/ not at all

Identification (1): Geographic RD (GRD)

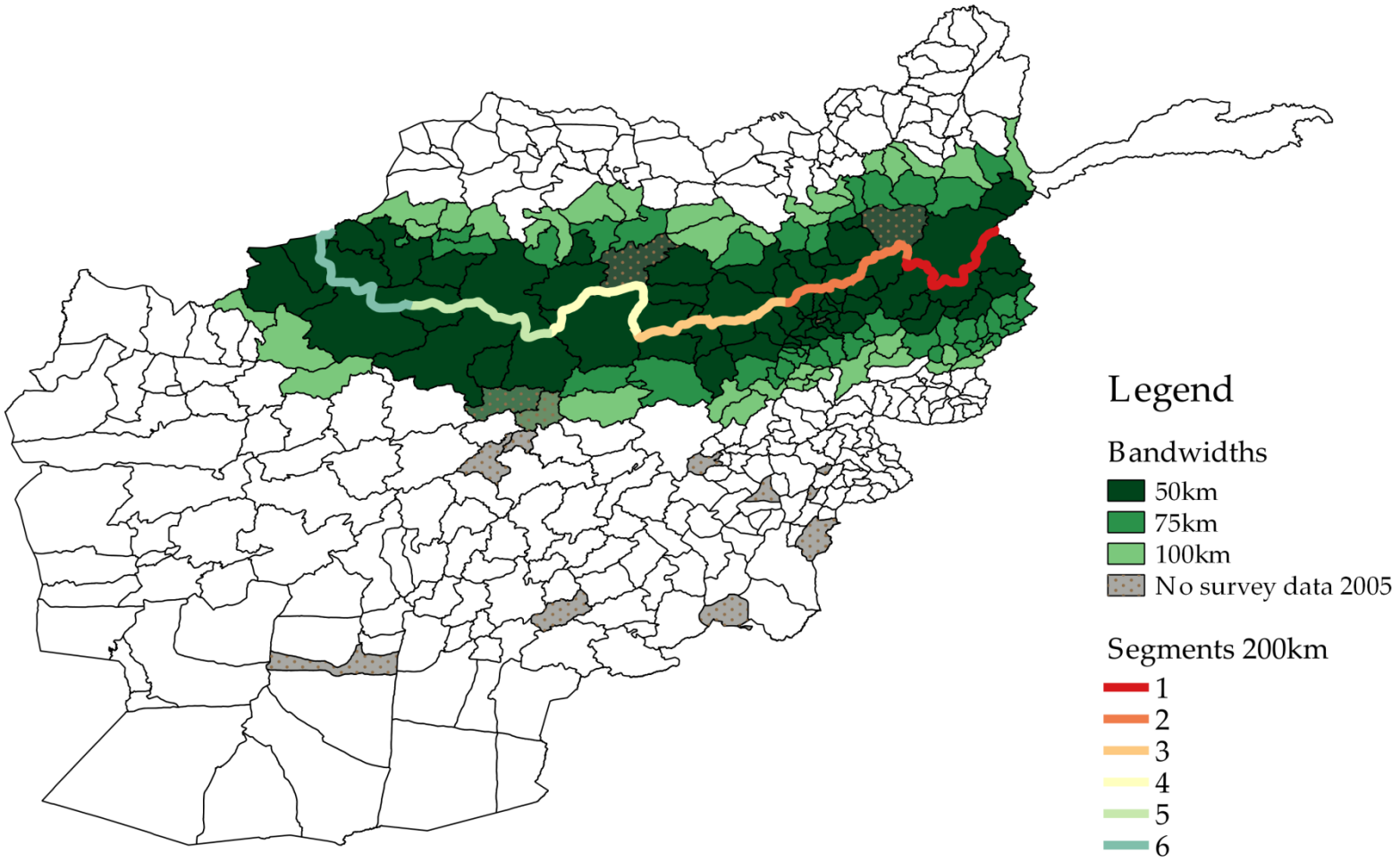
Exploit ISAF mandate expansion (see UNSC resolutions)

→ Exploit boundary between North & rest of country

→ Use HH survey data from 2005

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-work-in-afghanistan/the-uks-work-in-afghanistan

Identification (2): GRD



Identification (3): GRD

Baseline model

$$CC_{i,v,d} = \alpha + \beta\, Treat_d + f\left(geo\ location_{i,v,d}\right) + \boldsymbol{X'}_d\gamma + \boldsymbol{H'}_i\mu + \sum_{s=1}^{n} seg_v{}^s + \varepsilon_{i,v,d}$$

$CC_{i,v,d}$	measure of community cohesion of hh i in village v *in* district d
$Treat_d$	ISAF presence
$f\left(geo\ location_{i,v,d}\right)$	one-dimensional: (linear) polynomial in distance
	two-dimensional: (linear) polynomial in longitude & latiutude
$\boldsymbol{X'}_d, \boldsymbol{H'}_i$	pre-determinded vector of district- and hh-level covariates
$seg_v{}^s$	boundary segment fixed effects (see Dell 2010, Dell et al. 2017)

Results (1): GRD - Balancing tests

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Conflict (2002)						
	Insecurity		log	Fire		IED
	HH	District	BRD	Direct	Indirect	Attack
ISAF treat	-0.038	-0.081	0.243	-0.011	0.259	0.170
	(0.027)	(0.129)	(0.365)	(0.013)	(0.252)	(0.154)
Observations	1540	1630	1630	1630	1630	1630
Adj. R-squared	0.007	0.284	0.278	0.094	0.110	0.127
Panel B: Government/Western forces/NGOs (2002/03)						
	Military	Employed by		Development Aid		
	Bases	Military	State/NGO	WB	AFG	WB
ISAF treat	0.773	0.010	-0.005	0.222	-0.131	-0.002
	(0.702)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(1.249)	(0.125)	(0.002)
Observations	1630	1630	1630	1630	1630	536
Adj. R-squared	0.127	0.010	0.015	0.339	0.072	0.567
Panel C: Geography and territory						
	Rugged-ness	Wheat Suit.	Opium Revenue	Travel Time	Share Rural	Territory Control
ISAF treat	-118.580	0.130	1019.175	123.975	-0.003	-0.597
	(125.470)	(0.130)	(631.327)	(188.044)	(0.020)	(0.386)
Observations	1630	1630	1630	1630	1630	1630
Adj. R-squared	0.500	0.275	0.376	0.314	0.090	0.763

Results (1): GRD - Balancing tests

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel D: Ethnicity and household size (2003)						
	Pashtuns	No. Ethnic Groups	Native Langugage			HH Members
			Dari	Pashto	Uzbeki	
ISAF treat	0.343	0.528	-0.030	-0.200	0.202	0.074
	(0.262)	(0.518)	(0.145)	(0.221)	(0.497)	(0.562)
Observations	1630	1630	1355	781	492	1630
Adj. R-squared	0.332	0.347	0.612	0.818	0.598	0.035
Panel E: Further variables (2002/03)						
	VHI	Shock		Popu-	Nighlight	Wheat
		Climate	Any	lation		Cons.
ISAF treat	4.412	0.034	0.049	14.995	0.048	3.265
	(6.161)	(0.139)	(0.108)	(64.016)	(0.040)	(2.599)
Observations	1630	1630	1630	1630	1630	1570
Adj. R-squared	0.302	0.036	0.027	0.333	0.177	0.040
200km segments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control variables	No	No	No	No	No	No
Restricted sample	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: The dependent variable is indicated in the column heading. 200km segment-fixed effects are included. All regressions are on the restricted sample. Standard errors are in parentheses (clustered at the district-level). Significance levels: * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01

Results (2): GRD - Main outcome

Treatment effects: Community Help (2005)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Bandwidth 50		Bandwidth 75		Bandwidth 100	
	Panel A: Linear polynomial in distance to boundary					
ISAF treat	-0.093**	-0.121**	-0.082*	-0.095**	-0.064*	-0.082**
	(0.045)	(0.052)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.035)	(0.037)
Adj. R-squared	0.079	0.095	0.064	0.065	0.058	0.057
	Panel B: Linear polynomial in longitude and latitude					
ISAF treat	-0.059**	-0.080***	-0.052*	-0.060**	-0.047*	-0.058**
	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.029)
Adj. R-squared	0.078	0.093	0.065	0.064	0.059	0.056
Observations	3554	3148	7495	5882	11810	8426
Number of clusters	74	64	120	103	166	144
200km segments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restricted sample	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: The dependent variable is Community Help. The set of control variables includes aid(t-1), VHI(t-1), (log) nightlight(t-1), hh shock, loan. Standard errors are in parentheses (clustered at the district-level). Significance levels: * 0.10 ** 0.05 *** 0.01

Results (3): Geographic RDD

Concern: Selective sorting

- Taliban could move across border, i.e. insurgency „reallocates“
- Replace outcome with measures of violence

  → no evidence for reallocation

Potential channels

- If ISAF replaces old with new/more efficient institutions
- Replace outcome with measures on government employment/support, living standards, provision of aid/infrastructure, aid effectiveness

  → no evidence for any positive effect

  → aid effectiveness is even reduced in districts where ISAF is present

Robustness

- **Results are robust across all estimation strategies**

GRD

- Different bandwidths, RD polynomials, interaction with treatment, direct neighbors
- Drop potential outliers, segment at a time, regional command (east/west)
- Different ways of clustering standard errors (spatial, bootstrap)
- Placebo test
- Different sets of covariates

Panel results/Interaction

- Using survey of the Afghan people (trust, confidence in shura)
- Different outcomes and conflict measures (UCDP/GED, SIGACTS)
- Different sets of covariates, time coverage

Conclusion

Method: Exploit 3 different estimation techniques including a GRD

Results: Robust negative link of ISAF presence with community cohesion

- Households in the treated area:
  - are 6-12% less likely to receive help from community
  - participate up to 12-18% less often in community councils
  - have less confidence and trust in community councils
- Channels: No evidence for an increased provision of formal (better) institutions that crowd-out informal institutions

Policy implication: Effectiveness of COIN and reconstruction (see also aid projects) could be undermined by negative effects on community cohesion

Thank you for your attention

and your feedback!

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