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Security Transitions



Lecture by

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ABSTRACT | *How do foreign powers disengage from a conflict? We study the recent largescale security transition from international troops to local forces in the context of the ongoing civil conflict in Afghanistan. We construct a new dataset that combines information on this transition process with declassified conflict outcomes and previously unreleased quarterly survey data. Our empirical design leverages the staggered roll-out of the transition onset, together with a novel instrumental variables approach to estimate the impact of the two-phase security transition. We find that the initial security transfer to Afghan forces is marked by a significant, sharp and timely decline in insurgent violence. This effect reverses with the actual physical withdrawal of foreign troops. We argue that this pattern is consistent with a signaling model, in which the insurgents reduce violence strategically to facilitate the foreign military withdrawal. Our findings clarify the destabilizing consequences of withdrawal in one of the costliest conflicts in modern history and yield potentially actionable insights for designing future security transitions.*

BIO | *Oliver Vanden Eynde is an associate professor at the Paris School of Economics and research fellow at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). He obtained his PhD at the London School of Economics in 2012, and joined the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University as a visiting research scholar in 2013-2014. He has worked on the human capital effects of military recruitment in colonial India, the economic drivers of India's Maoist conflict, and influence of ethnic politics on the performance of Kenyan policemen. Current research projects explore the role of security forces the military and police in the development process, the public finance of law and order, and the political economy of infrastructure provision.*

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