

Lin Yang

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Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2025 (expected)

M.S. in Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2020

B.A in English (Finance and Economics Track), Central University of Finance and Economics, 2018

Exchange Student, University of California, Berkeley, Summer 2016

Research Fields

Applied Microeconomics, Development Economics, Environmental Economics, Health, Conflict

Working Papers

"Foreign Aid and Conflict: Evidence from Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in Pakistan"

(Job Market Paper)

Abstract: This paper examines the impact of large-scale infrastructure aid on political violence, focusing on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in Pakistan. While the relationship between aid and armed conflict has been widely studied, the effects of Chinese aid to developing countries remain less understood. Using an event study design on district-level violent conflict data in Pakistan from 2010 to 2020, I find that violent incidents decreased in districts along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during the month of construction and shortly after. However, when examining patterns on an annual scale, there is increased volatility of violence in subsequent years, suggesting that the initial reduction in conflict is temporary. I explore the channels through which aid impacts conflict, showing that large-scale, government-supported transportation projects, carried out under military protection, initially reduce conflict but return to previous levels over time. These findings highlight significant short-term effects of infrastructure aid on local political violence but suggest no enduring decrease. This study also provides the first rigorous evidence on the social impacts of BRI projects, a growing but understudied form of foreign aid, specifically addressing impacts on local violence.

"Cell Phone Access and Insurgent Violence: Evidence from a Radio Propagation Model in Afghanistan"

with Ryan Ellis and Robert Gonzalez (submitted to *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*)

Abstract: We provide evidence that mobile phone coverage lowers insurgent violence using two separate empirical designs in Afghanistan. First, we propose a novel regression discontinuity (RD) design for multiple, unknown cutoffs that uses signal strength as the forcing variable. We estimate signal strength for each cell of a 1X1 kilometer grid using a high-resolution radio wave propagation model. Second, we employ a differences-in-differences design leveraging the staggered rollout of cell towers for the largest operator in Afghanistan. We explore insurgent coordination and information sharing as possible mechanisms. We find weak evidence of spatial and temporal changes in the clustering of attacks following the installation of a tower in a district. However, we find evidence of coverage having larger effects near populated areas, primary roads, during morning hours, and a sharp increase in call traffic preceding certain attacks, all suggesting that information sharing is a key mechanism.

"Violent Conflict and Demand for Healthcare in Afghanistan" with Olga Shemyakina

Abstract: This paper examines population demand for healthcare under conflict using the case of Afghanistan. We find that violent conflict is associated with a reduction in healthcare utilization by female patients and parents, primarily mothers, with young children. We combine daily data on the conflict in Afghanistan from ACLED and GTD datasets with data on healthcare use by women and children using visit date and facility location from the 2019-2019 Demographic and Health Survey

(DHS-VII) collected at the facility level from November 2018 to January 2019. This paper contributes to the literature on the impact of shocks on the demand for healthcare, particularly the relationship between conflict exposure and measures of healthcare utilization. We seek to enhance an understanding of healthcare-seeking behavior in Afghanistan from the demand perspective and to provide insights into how individuals, in particular pregnant women and children, access healthcare services in the context of Afghanistan.

Works in Progress

"Relationship Between Transport Infrastructure, Economic Growth and Transport Emissions in Pakistan"

"The Health Costs of Infrastructure Energy Projects in Pakistan"

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record

Principles of Macroeconomics (Undergraduate): Spring 2024

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Principles of Microeconomics (Undergraduate): Summer 2024, Fall 2024

Cost-Benefit Analysis (Graduate): Summer 2022

Principles of Macroeconomics (Undergraduate): Summer 2022, 2023

Industrial Organization (Undergraduate and Graduate): Spring 2022

Economic Forecasting (Undergraduate): Fall 2021

Econometric Analysis (Undergraduate): Fall 2021

Econometrics I (Graduate): Fall 2023

Econometrics I (PhD): Fall 2021, Fall 2023

Data Analytics and Security (Graduate): Spring 2021, Summer 2021

Grader/Reader, UW-Madison, Spring 2020

Research Experience

Graduate Research Assistant for Prof. Olga Shemyakina

"Armed Conflict and Health", Fall 2022-Spring 2023

"Women in Sri-Lanka", Fall 2024-Spring 2025

Professional Activities

Conference & Workshop Presentations (Including Scheduled)

"CSWEP Workshop: Successfully Navigating Your Economics PhD", Nov 2024, Washington DC

9th Annual Conference of Society for Economic Measurement (SEM), August 2024, Atlanta GA

South East Exchange of Development Studies (SEEDS) Conference, April 2024, Atlanta, GA

Development Economics in the South Workshop (DevSouth), April 2024, Knoxville, TN
 Atlanta Workshop on Public Policy and Child Well-Being (PPCW), March 2024, Atlanta, GA
 93rd Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, Nov 2023, New Orleans, LA
 Carolina Region Empirical Economics Day (CREED), Oct 2023, Columbia, SC
 98th Western Economic Association International, July 2023, San Diego, CA
 South East Exchange of Development Studies (SEEDS) Conference, April 2023, Atlanta, GA

Referee Service

China Economic Review

Selected Honors & Awards

2025 Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year, Georgia Institute of Technology, March 2025
 Graduate Student Award (nominated for 93rd SEA Graduate Student Session), Nov 2023
 3rd-Year Paper Award of School of Economics (\$500), Georgia Institute of Technology, 2023
 Tech to Teaching Certificate, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2022
 Excellent Undergraduate in Beijing, Central University of Finance and Economics, 2018
 First Prize Scholarship, Central University of Finance and Economics, 2017, 2018

Additional Information

Skills: STATA (Proficient), Python (Machine Learning), ArcGIS Pro, SQL, **R**, **L^AT_EX**
 Language: English (Fluent), Mandarin (Native)
 Citizenship: China

References

Academic References

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Teaching Reference

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