

Alireza Mohammadi Sepahvand

Email: amohamma@ed.ac.uk

Website: AlirezaSepahvand.com

Room: 4.5, 31 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9NA, United Kingdom

Affiliation: School of Economics, University of Edinburgh

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics	Feb 2021 – Apr 2025
Monash Business School, Monash University, Australia	
Visiting Ph.D. Student in Economics	2024
Faculty of Economics, University of Cambridge, UK	
M.Sc. in Economics	2016 – 2019
Graduate School of Economics, Sharif University of Technology	
B.Sc. in Mathematics	2011 – 2015
Department of Mathematics, Sharif University of Technology	

ACADEMIC ROLE

- **Postdoctoral Researcher in Economics**, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom Apr 2025 – Present

RESEARCH AREAS

- Political Economy, Public Economics, Network Economics

WORKING PAPERS

- **Plundering Coalitions**
with Weijia Li. (Submitted to Journal of Political Economy) [Job Market Paper]
Abstract: We develop a model to study coalitions that extract the resources of outsiders. The players in our model are endowed with a power and resources. The ruling coalition plunders outsiders, distributes the plundered resources among its members, and guarantees that insiders' resources remain safe. Under natural conditions, we predict that a unique ruling coalition exists using both axiomatic and non-cooperative approaches. We further study the resilience of the ruling coalition to shocks affecting powers and resources of both insiders and outsiders, as well as the intensity of plundering. We show that a coalition with a classic hierarchical structure of army and bureaucracy, where powers and resources are equal within each class but strictly higher in the higher class, exhibits a (weakly) higher resilience to external shocks affecting the outsider's power and resources. The exception is when the plundering intensity is "relatively weak," where the internal distribution of power and resources does not impact the external resilience. Our final results derive insights into how the intensity of plundering impacts the internal and external resilience of the ruling coalition in various political environments.
- **Uniform and Participation-expanding Reforms in Decentralized Redistribution: Who Gains and Who Loses?**
(draft available)
Abstract: Across many settings, from social transfers to education and health services, reforms that aim to make access uniformly easier for everyone often exacerbate inequality. When access to the redistributive surplus is determined through competition, such reforms increase players' efficiency in the contest but also raise the endogenous efficiency threshold for participation. I formalize this threshold-shifting mechanism in a model of decentralized redistribution, where heterogeneous efficiencies determine both who competes and how the redistributive surplus is allocated. The model delivers two main results. First, a uniform efficiency gain—i.e., equal reductions in access costs—does not expand participation. Instead, it amplifies inequality among participants by reinforcing the relative efficiency of those who were already highly efficient prior to the reform. Yet, such a reform also reduces contest-induced welfare loss, thereby giving rise to an equity–efficiency trade-off for policymakers. Second, a participation-expanding reform that brings excluded players into the contest can reduce both inequality and welfare loss, particularly when: (i) the new entrants are sufficiently efficient relative to the average participant; and (ii) the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) of endogenous contest strengths—measuring the extent to which players' efficiencies exceed the participation threshold—is sufficiently high before the reform; for example, when a few strong participants dominate the competition for redistributive surplus.

- **A Centered Index of Spatial Concentration: Expected Influence Approach and Application to Population and Capital Cities**

with Filipe R. Campante and Quoc-Anh Do. (Revision requested at Theoretical Economics)

Abstract: We construct a general axiomatic approach to measuring spatial concentration around a capital or reference point. Building on expected utility theory, we propose a basic axiom of independence (subgroup consistency) and show that it implies an expected-influence representation of the concentration order. Two further axioms—monotonicity and rank invariance—characterize a unique class of “Centered Indices of Spatial Concentration” (CISC) in which influence declines isoelastically with distance from the center. We apply the index to measure population concentration around capital cities, demonstrate its advantages over standard measures such as capital primacy or the location Gini, and explore its correlations with governance and spatial patterns of development.

- **Leave or Reclaim? The Impact of Demonstrations on Migration Intentions in Iran**

(Preliminary draft available)

Abstract: I study the causal impact of demonstrations in Iran on short-term migration intentions from September 16 to December 15, 2022. Using a combination of text-data analysis, web scraping, and two comprehensive protest datasets, I document 397 demonstrations across all 31 provincial capitals to estimate their influence on migration intentions, measured through a migration-related Google search index. To address endogeneity concerns, I employ an adverse weather index as an instrumental variable, demonstrating its significant negative impact on daily protest occurrences. The findings indicate that protests lead to a significant reduction in migration search intensity for up to 19 days at the 5 percent significance level, with decreases ranging from 27% (3-day average) to 8% (19-day average). This effect is more pronounced when protests are nonviolent, involve women and students, and occur on a larger scale. While political instability is commonly viewed as a push factor for migration, two key explanations help contextualize the observed reduction in migration intentions. First, nonviolent, widespread protests featuring prominent participation by women and students may signal potential for reform and civic resistance, altering public perceptions about the country’s future and fostering a sense of agency. Second, the focus on dress codes and mandatory hijab regulations may resonate strongly with women, diminishing their migration inclination. Supporting these interpretations, I find no evidence that government responses, such as internet blackouts or repression, or changes in public focus and media coverage mediate the observed changes in short-term migration preferences. Instead, media coverage slightly increases migration intentions (by approximately 0.5%), potentially driven by state media’s portrayal of protest violence aimed at discrediting dissent.

- **Finding the Key Player with Simultaneous Social Planner Intervention**

with Arthur Campbell and Yves Zenou. (Preliminary draft available)

Abstract: This paper studies the simultaneous intervention of a social planner in a criminal network. The social planner implements a targeting policy, and criminals decide upon their level of effort simultaneously based on their beliefs about their neighbors before the realization of the network. We provide conditions that guarantee the existence and uniqueness of the Bayesian Nash equilibrium of the game. The equilibrium is fully characterized by a degree threshold; that is, only criminals with a degree above this threshold are targeted with positive probabilities. Furthermore, criminals with the same degrees adopt identical criminal efforts proportional to their degree in equilibrium. We further conduct comparative statics with respect to the network’s characteristics and the social planner’s budget. Our final analysis compares the aggregate crime reduction from the simultaneous intervention to that of the sequential intervention.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **Empowered Resistance: How Women-Led Protests Reshape Migration Across Borders?**, *with Ehsan Habibpour Moghaddam*
- **The Dynamics of Repression and Protests in Iran**, *with Filipe R. Campante and Quoc-Anh Do*

HONORS AND AWARDS

- **Bronze Medal**, 21st National Scientific Olympiad in Economics, Iran, 2016
- **Student Excellence Award** for Academic Performance, Monash University, 2021
- **Monash Department Funded Graduate Research Scholarship (Fees and Stipends)**, 2021–2024
- **Enhanced International Research Experience Grant Scheme**, Monash Business School, 2024

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- **Lecturer:** Principles of Economics; Game Theory.
- **Teaching Assistant:**
 - * **Graduate Courses:** Microeconomics I, Financial Econometrics, Advanced Mathematical Economics.
 - * **Undergraduate Courses:** Microeconomics I, Intermediate Microeconomics, International Economics, Game Theory, Principles of Economics, Statistics, Linear Algebra, Discrete Mathematics, Topology, and Calculus II.

SKILLS AND ACTIVITIES

- **Programming:** Proficient in R; familiar with Python
- **Software & Tools:** Proficient in Stata and L^AT_EX
- **Languages:** Persian (Native); English (Proficient); Arabic (Basic); Romanian (Basic)
- Co-organiser of the **Applied Young Economist Webinar**, supported by the Monash–Warwick Alliance (2022–2024)

REFERENCES

- **Professor Kaveh Majlesi**
Professor of Economics, Monash University
Email: Kaveh.majlesi@monash.edu
- **Professor Arthur Campbell**
Professor of Economics, Monash University
Email: Arthur.campbell@monash.edu
- **Professor Yves Zenou**
Professor of Economics, Monash University
Email: Yves.zenou@monash.edu
- **Dr. Weijia Li**
Lecturer in Economics, Monash University
Email: Weijia.li@monash.edu