

Political Economy

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Dec 13. 4:00-5:30pm

Title: Ongoing conflict and Ukrainian refugees' resilience to return

Abstract:

Russian full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022 has resulted in the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, with more than 8 million Ukrainians fleeing or being forcibly displaced outside Ukraine. Using new panel data on Ukrainian refugees in Europe, we investigate Ukrainian refugees' return intentions and labor market integration in their host countries. We find that a vast majority of Ukrainian refugees plans to return to Ukraine when safe. The share planning to permanently settle abroad does not depend on time spent abroad. Higher conflict intensity in the home region deters returning soon. Using Gallup World Polls data suggests that Ukrainians' resilience can be explained by their increased confidence in the government and military, and boosted optimism. Additional survey data suggests that also stronger national identity plays an important part. Ukrainian refugees' strong return intentions contrast with previous refugee waves, like Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis, among whom a clear majority does not want to return to their country of origin. We suggest that this difference reflects the type of conflict: Ukraine is a democracy under external attack, while refugees from previous conflicts fled mostly civil war or repression by their own government,