# Discussion of Border Enforcement and Refugees in Europe

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# Intro

Francesco Fasani's and Tommaso Frattini's research question:

**Does EU Border Enforcement deter immigrants from trying enter the EU?**

- timely (also politically speaking) and important research question
- quarterly, route and country specify data (great collection effort)

# Overall comment

This is the first paper that tests whether the EU border enforcement policy works, and it does so using state of the art empirical methods:

- data on all arrivals through different routes
- convincing IV strategy (based on politics and a EU power rotation mechanism)
- a great number of robustness tests

# Major issue that F&T face

- Enforcement investments may respond to the number of attempted crossings (generating a ++ correlation)
- On top of this several actors involved:
  - EU (may try to minimize arrivals and deaths)
  - NGOs (in the Med sea) may try to minimize death rate
  - Smugglers (may try to maximize departures keeping risk below some level)
  - Migrants (cover large distances on foot and are willing to take risks)

**...**

- Francesco and Tommaso focus on two actors:
  - EU (may try to minimize arrivals and deaths)
  - ~~NGOs (in the Med sea) may try to minimize death rate~~
  - ~~Smugglers (may try to maximize departures keeping risk below some level)~~
  - Migrants (cover large distances on foot and are willing to take risks)
- This may require an explanation (more on this on the next slide)

# IV papers thrive or die on the IV validity:
## Rotation mechanism on Frontex board and political pressure

- "Exclusion restriction: holding the EU presidency does not have a direct effect on undocumented immigrants' flows"
  - But the EU presidency may also strike deals with countries on the closest route like Lybia, Tunisia, Turkey, etc. violating the exclusion restriction.
  - Another violation may come from smugglers (more than migrants) predicting that the rotating mechanism may predict anti-migrant measures (i.e. the IV may belong to the main equation)

# More technical comments:
## Comment on Part 2 (deterrence) vs Part 1 (diversion)

- The model in **Part 1** of the paper does not allow for diversion effects, or better, such <span style="color:red">diversion effects are the same towards all routes</span> (due to the Independence from Irrelevant Alternatives assumption) and are thus captured by country-time FEs.
- But in **Part 2** shows that such diversion varies across alternatives, with migrants diverting to <span style="color:red">second best</span> routes.
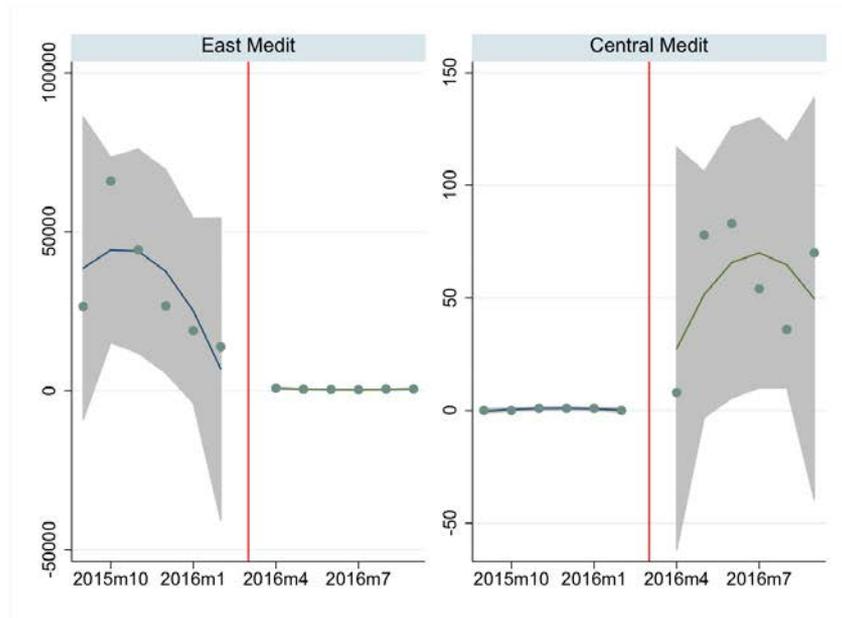- Possible solution: Nested logit where migrants first choose sets of potential routes (see map on next slide)
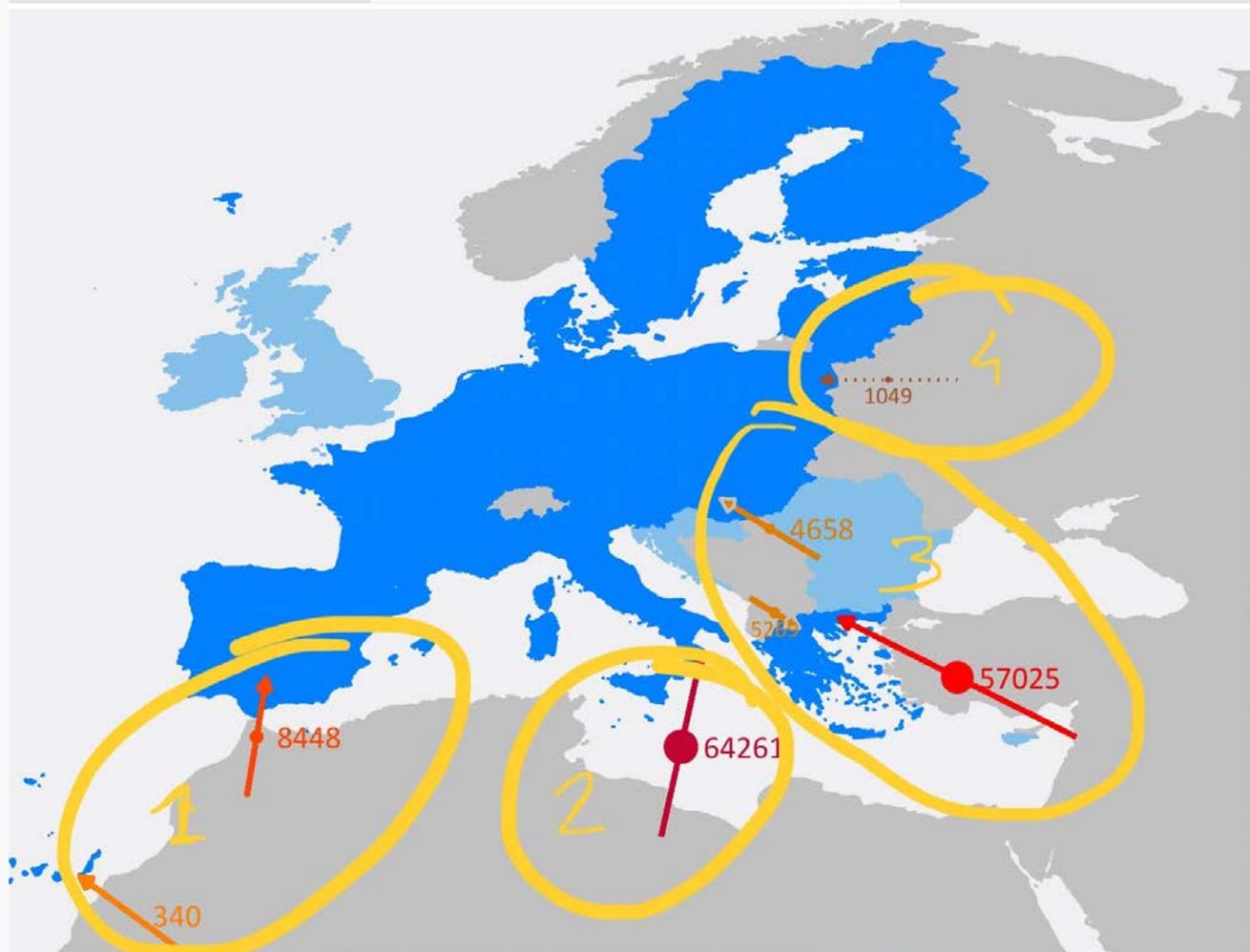
Nested Logit where immigrants first choose a major route

# Diversion effects

- Starts with a graphical analysis

└─ **Deterrence and Diversion: a Natural Experiment**

# Afghanistan

# Diversion effects

- Starts with a graphical analysis
  - Most figures reveal a change in slope without sudden jumps, as it takes time for migrants to move to alternative routes
- This is why adding linear time trends can make a great difference in the regression that the authors run:
  - $y_{ct} = \alpha + \beta POST_t + \gamma dist + \delta dist^2 + ct$
- I would try to run a regression in first differences to try to measure changes in the trend

# Smaller comments

- Bad notation for FE in main regression equation
  - $\ln(\text{att}_{rct}) = \alpha + \beta \text{enf}_{rt} + (\gamma_r \times \phi_c) + (\phi_c \times \tau_t) + \gamma_r + \varepsilon_{rct}$
- I would stick to the same range for the EU-Turkey figures on diversion, and I would standardize the arrivals in the first year to 100. This would allow to look at more than one route (not just Central Med) in the right panel and ease the measurement of diversion.

- This is an important paper that improves our understanding of what is going on along our borders.
- Interesting to notice that the IV rests on conflicting interests across EU countries, while it is evident that because of diversion we need a unified approach.
- More work is needed to understand the role of smugglers and NGOs…

# Smugglers respond to wave conditions



Figure 5: Crossings and Wave Conditions
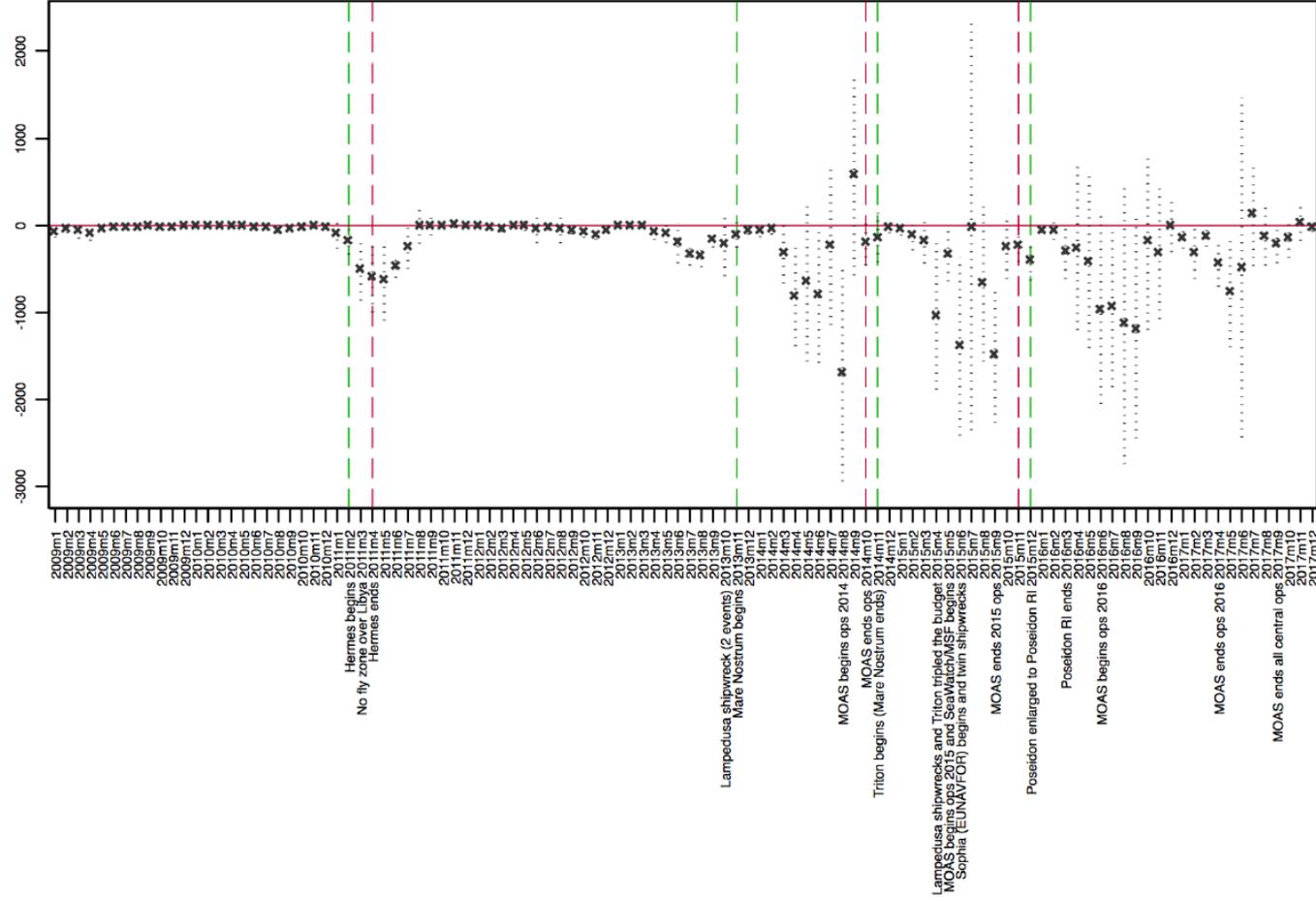
# Smugglers are smart, forward-looking

Table 2: Crossings, Waves and Forecasts

| | (1) Crossings | (2) Crossings | (3) Crossings | (4) Hyp. Crossings | (5) Hyp. Crossings | (6) Hyp. Crossings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I($Wave_t < Forecast_{t+1}$) | 104.6280*** | 19.1100 | 41.3155*** | 0.7074*** | 0.2920** | 0.4013*** |
| | (16.1994) | (11.4976) | (12.5437) | (0.1090) | (0.1394) | (0.1273) |
| Post Mare Nostrum | | -322.9825*** | | | -2.4454*** | |
| | | (43.0239) | | | (0.2282) | |
| Post Mare Nostrum * I($Wave_t < Forecast_{t+1}$) | | 201.3625*** | | | 0.9810*** | |
| | | (44.9010) | | | (0.2552) | |
| Post Triton | | | -390.9983*** | | | -1.4287*** |
| | | | (46.9013) | | | (0.2699) |
| Post Triton * I($Wave_t < Forecast_{t+1}$) | | | 193.1650*** | | | 0.9338*** |
| | | | (46.9013) | | | (0.2699) |
| Constant | 145.4064*** | 287.4129*** | 278.2429*** | 2.4356*** | 3.5339*** | 2.9154*** |
| | (13.1635) | (9.8409) | (11.4694) | (0.0886) | (0.1055) | (0.1132) |
| | | | | | | |
| Observations | 3,287 | 3,287 | 3,287 | 3,287 | 3,287 | 3,287 |
| R-squared | 0.4039 | 0.4081 | 0.4074 | 0.4547 | 0.4579 | 0.4572 |
| Mean Y | 230.4265 | 230.4265 | 230.4265 | 3.0104 | 3.0104 | 3.0104 |
| Week-Year FE | X | X | X | X | X | X |

# Thank you!

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