Do Fair Elections Enhance Government Legitimacy? Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan

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Abstract: International development agencies invest heavily in institution building in fragile states, including expensive interventions supporting democratic elections. Yet little evidence exists on whether democratic elections enhance the domestic legitimacy of governments, in the sense that they increase the consent of residents to be governed. Using the random assignment of a fraud-reducing intervention we find that decreasing visible electoral misconduct improves four survey measures of consent and of attitudes toward government: (i) disputes should be brought to the Afghan National Police; (ii) improvised explosive devices (IEDs) should be reported; (iii) Afghanistan is a democracy; and (iv) parliamentarians can improve service provision. These results are consistent with theories of legitimate government based on conditional consent, such as reciprocity and signaling. Also consistent with conditional consent theories is the additional finding that effects on (i) and (iii) disappear if respondents are aware that the fairness-enhancing intervention was external.

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1. Introduction

"His regime has been built on fear and repression and if you take that away he has no legitimacy. If the people start to lose their fear he is finished. But they are not there yet."

Amin Gemayyel, former Lebanese president, on Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, Oct 14 2011.[1]

Can fair elections enhance the legitimacy of fragile governments? International development agencies invest heavily in building democratic institutions in fragile states, including expensive—sometimes dangerous—interventions supporting the fairness of elections. Those interventions rest on an assertion that democratic elections enhance the domestic legitimacy of governments, in the sense that they increase the consent of residents to be governed. The international community has a strong interest in the domestic stability of those governments, which motivates these interventions, yet we currently know of no careful test of the assertion that election monitoring or other fairness-enhancing measures actually increase legitimacy.

The question of how elections affect legitimacy is informed by a literature on the sources of legitimacy, which dates back to the very origins of political analysis. Modern theories of legitimacy in democracies generally invoke the idea of conditional consent, which can be based either on reciprocity, or on government signaling. More recently, policymakers tend to believe that elections enhance legitimacy, though a countercurrent in the literature argues that elections can be held too soon.

We present experimental evidence demonstrating that fraud reduction in the Afghan elections of September 2009 causally improved government legitimacy. Our measures of legitimacy are several proxies for consent to be governed and perceptions of government, as reported in surveys: whether police should resolve disputes, willingness to report an improvised explosive device (IED) to security forces, whether their member of parliament provides services, whether Afghanistan is a Democracy. This evidence that election fairness matters is particularly compelling given the setting: an election fraught with vote-rigging in what is by all accounts one of the most corrupt and dysfunctional governments in the world.

These results build on the findings of an innovative experiment conducted by two of the authors (Callen and Long 2012) in which polling stations were randomly assigned to receive notice that their provisional vote tallies would be photographed immediately after the election. The effect of that intervention was to increase the integrity, or fairness, of local voting procedures, in the sense that it reduced votes recorded for the candidate most likely to be buying votes by about twenty five percentage points. Remarkably, we

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[1] Martin Chulov, The Guardian. "Syria is heading for full-blown civil war, top UN official warns." The full quote begins: The former Lebanese president Amin Gemayyel said Assad had little option but to continue with the lethal crackdown if he intends to try to cling to power. "Such a regime needs a minimum of brutal repression. Without it he won't be able to lead the country," he said.

Downloaded 10/14/2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/14/syria-protesters-defections-security-forces .

find that when the experimental sample was surveyed three months after election day, the treatment group showed higher levels of legitimacy (on those four measures). Moreover, these effects are strongest (generally statistically significant at either p=.1 or p=.05) among the subsample who were not aware of the treatment, leading us to conclude that legitimacy was enhanced by the increased perception of election fairness.

These results are consistent with theories of legitimacy in which consent to be governed is conditional on the behavior of government or on the quality of institutions (Beetham 1991, Levy 1998). Reciprocity theory states that residents will provide consent if government provides some minimal set of services. Alternatively, signaling theories assert that the government earns consent by signaling its honesty, competence, intention to provide for the welfare of citizens, or the procedural fairness of its institutions. For example, in the Gemayyel quote above, legitimacy would be the result of a reputation for competent suppression through intimidation. Yet legitimacy might hopefully be generated by signaling other aspects of government or institutional quality.

A further implication of conditional consent theories is that a temporary improvement due to some external intervention should not trigger consent, as the government took no action which deserves reciprocal consent, nor does it signal anything about the nature of government (i.e., its competence, honesty, or concern for residents). Thus a testable implication of this class of theories is that respondents aware of the external and temporary nature of the fairness-enhancing intervention should not experience a change in attitudes or consent. That implication is not refuted for any of the four outcome measures and supported for two: reported willingness to bring disputes to police for resolution, and perception that Afghanistan is a democracy.

Our results are inconsistent with theories of loyalty, in which consent is entirely provided unconditionally, so that elections would be superfluous. They refute a strong theory of effective ties, in which all consent is provided due to pre-existing loyalties along ethnic, class or other lines. Likewise, they refute a strong theory of ideological or religious affiliation, in which all consent is due to those predispositions to loyalty.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the next section we survey the literature and describe the environment and institutional setting in Afghanistan of 2010; we then describe our data and methods, report on results, and conclude.

2. Literature

Textbook welfare economics makes two critical assumptions about governments: first, government behaves as a social welfare maximizer; second, individuals consent to be governed, cede to government a monopoly on coercion, (e.g., offering no violent resistance to tax collection, the selective distribution of subsidies, enforcement of property rights, or of law and order). Together, one might think of these pair of assumptions as a social contract in equilibrium. Yet political economy often discusses self-interested governments, which sometimes disenfranchise individuals and often ignore their welfare. How do those non social-welfare maximizing governments retain the authority to use coercion, when disgruntled individuals can easily band together to resist tax collection, capture subsidies, and steal property? In

political science the term for voluntary acquiescence to coercion by government is "legitimacy." (The term is a little confusing, as it suggests voluntary acquiescence as part of a social contract, or perhaps out of recognition of divine right, whereas legitimacy in this usage could also be obtained through sheer intimidation.) Our interest here is in how legitimacy is obtained in practice, by the types of governments we find not in textbooks but in conflict zones, such as Afghanistan.

Exploring the legitimacy of authority has been at the center of political inquiry for two millennia (Alagappa 1995, Beetham 1991). From Plato to Machiavelli, Locke, and Rawls and the present, scholars have examined the importance, causes, and consequences of legitimate government. In this paper, we seek to build on more recent efforts to examine the empirical aspects of political legitimacy. More specifically, we focus on the effects of elections on legitimacy.

While individual definitions vary, we consider legitimacy as an attribute of a political authority the captures residents' voluntary consent to be governed. Such consent allows the authority in turn to govern, since no government can enforce all of its laws with direct observation and punishment. This willingness to obey authorities translates into actual compliance with an authority's rules. Thus, "value-based" legitimacy produces "behavioral" legitimacy (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009, Kelman & Hamilton 1989; Hurd 1999, Tyler 2006.).

But how is consent—and thus compliance—generated? Generally, studies argue that individuals evaluate prior behavior by political authorities (or proto-authorities if the polity has not yet actually been constituted) and then make a decision about whether to convey to them some level of legitimacy. Scholars discuss several sources for these assessments, but most can be categorized as related to an authority's perceived procedural or distributive actions. The legitimacy of authorities is enhanced when if individuals perceive them to have impartially made and followed the rules (Grimes 2006, Rothstein 2009, Rothstein & Teorell 2008, Prud'homme 1992, Taliercio 2004). By contrast, evidence exists that when citizens judge authorities as to have violated procedural fairness—such as in cases of corruption—then they are considered less legitimate (Rothstein 2009, Seligson 2002). This can be true even if the people believe outcomes generated by procedural fairness are simultaneously considered unfair. Tyler (2006) finds a strong relationship between individuals' evaluations of procedural justice and legitimacy in both public and private sector settings.

Individuals may also confer more or less legitimacy on an authority based on their assessment of the person(s) or institution's competence, often measured as outcomes with respect to public services and overall economic and political performance (Van De Walle and Scott 2009, Gilley 2009, Levi, Sacks and Tyler 2009, Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005, Levi, 1988, 1997; Rothstein 2005, Sarsfield & Echegaray, 2006). Because of this, external governments, policymakers, international organizations, and scholars concerned with state-building in post conflict areas are strongly interested in helping nascent governments establish the competent and delivery of basic services to their citizens (Paris and Sisk 2009; USIP and PKSOI 2009; Carment et al. 2010, Bately and Mcloughlin 2010). If an authority cannot provide such services, individuals may turn to other groups that can, whether rebel groups, international military forces (especially to provide security) or non-governmental organizations (Vaux and Visman 2005, OECD 2010, Brinkerhoff et al. 2009). These can be thought of as signaling theories. When individuals observe the competent delivery of public services, they are thought to believe the producer of those goods as legitimate (Levi 2005, Baird 2010). This is especially important in the context of weak and fragile states,

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since legitimacy is thought to make people more willing to defer to laws and legal authorities, such as the police and the courts (Tyler, 1990, Levi & Sacks, 2007).

Most policymakers and scholars consider the selection of leaders through fair elections as a key part of establishing a legitimate state (Goodwin-Gill 2006; Rothstein 2009). The arguments for holding elections in post conflict areas include to establish post-conflict stability, power sharing, democracy and accountable government, and allowing for the flow of international aid more quickly (Ottoway 2003, Paris 2004, Brancati and Snyder 2011, Diamond 2006, Lindberg 2003). This approach is can be thought of as either signaling or reciprocity, since citizens who perceive an election as well run may then believe a government is more legitimate since it appears to be following fair procedures. Running a fair election can also be considered the effective provision of a public service. Governments that can competently administer such an effort may also gain legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens.

Recent literature also raises the possibility that elections can be held too early. Some evidence suggests that elections do not reduce the risk of post settlement war (Brancati and Snyder 2011, Collier, Hoeffler, Soderbom 2008). Using cross national data of post-civil-war elections that occurred between 1945 and 2008, Brancati and Snyder (2011), argue that *only under certain conditions*, such as decisive victories, demobilization, peacekeeping, power sharing, and strong political, administrative and judicial institutions can elections strengthen peace. Scholars also argue that holding elections too early can worsen the conflict, by allowing the post-election government to be dominated by former combatants who have not been demobilized, providing incentives for office seekers to make extreme rather than prodemocracy appeals. That could lead to either unrepresentative government or the complete breakdown of peace as losers reject the election's results and the return to conflict (de Zeeuw 2008; Mansfield and Snyder 2007; Paris 2004). It may be difficult or impossible to know the generally correct "timing" of holding elections (Berman 2007, Carothers 2007).

Taken together theories of reciprocity and signaling have three testable implications:

H1: Enhancing the fairness of elections should improve attitudes about government.

H2: Enhancing the fairness of elections should increase the willingness of residents to turn to government authorities for services, such as law and order.

H3: Both H1 and H2 should be overturned if residents are aware that the fairness-enhancing intervention was external and transitory.

We test those hypotheses in Section 5 below.

3. Background

In this section, we outline the history and characteristics of Afghan electoral institutions necessary to understand our experimental intervention. After the US invasion and fall of the Taliban in 2001, Coalition forces immediately began developing democratic institutions, hoping to promote stability by establishing a functioning centralized government. Afghanistan needed such stability desperately, after two decades of internecine conflict, civil war, and Talban rule. Soon after the invasion, Coalition forces empanelled a Constitutional Loya Jirga. In 2005, Afghans voted in the first elections for the lower house of parliament

(Wolesi Jirga). In 2009, a year prior to the election we focus on, President Hamid Karzai won re-election amid claims of rampant election fraud after his main competitor, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, declined to participate in a recount (Callen and Weidmann, Forthcoming). This election served as a clear turning point in the US occupation of Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal, in an official communication to President Obama requesting troops to support a "surge," expressed his belief that the failure of the 2009 elections created a "crisis of confidence" in the government, which would ultimately undermine the war effort without more troops (McChrystal, 2009).

We study the effects of a fraud-reducing intervention during the 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections, which occurred amid a growing insurgency and a US commitment to begin withdrawing troops in July 2011. The international community viewed these elections as a critical benchmark in the consolidation of democratic institutions given doubts about the Karzai government's ability to excercise control in much of the country. Despite a direct threat of violence, roughly 5 million voters (about 37 percent of registered voters) cast ballots in the 2010 Wolesi Jirga elections.

Electoral Institutions

Afghanistan's 34 provinces serve as multi-member districts that elect members to the Wolesi Jirga. Each province is a single electoral district and the number of seats is proportional to its estimated population. Candidates run ``at large'' within the province without respect to any smaller constituency boundaries. Voters cast a Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) for individual candidates, nearly all of whom run as independents.[2] The rules declare winning candidates as those who receive the most votes relative to each province's seat share. For example, Kabul province elects the most members to Parliament (33) and Panjsher province the fewest (2). The candidates who rank 1 to 33 in Kabul and 1 to 2 in Panjsher win seats to the Wolesi Jirga.

Evidence of Fraud in Afghan Elections

Afghanistan's electoral institutions are highly dysfunctional. Callen and Long (2012), document clear evidence of election fraud in the experimental sample studied in this paper.[3] The 2009 presidential elections also suffered rampant fraud. The IEC initially gave Karzai 53 percent of the vote, above the 50 percent threshold necessary to avoid a run-off. However, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) reduced that margin to 47 percent after investigating numerous allegations of electoral corruption and malfeasance. Evidence from a random sample of physically inspected ballots provide evidence of manipulation, mostly in favor of Karzai (Callen and Weidmann, Forthcoming).

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[2] SNTV systems provide voters with one ballot that they cast for one candidate or party when multiple candidates run for multiple seats. If a voter's ballot goes towards a losing candidate, the vote is not re-apportioned.

[3] These rules create strong incentives for fraud in at least three ways. First, SNTV with large district magnitudes and a lack of political parties creates a wide dispersion of votes across candidates. The vote margins separating the lowest winning candidate from the highest losing candidate are often small. This creates a high expected return for even small manipulation for many candidates. In contrast, electoral systems with dominant parties guarantee victory with large vote margins, and so non-viable candidates are less likely to rig. Second, because each constituency contains multiple parliamentary seats, it is possible for an official to rig the election on behalf of multiple officials simultaneously. Third, because candidates compete for votes province-wide, they can attempt substitution of legitimate and fake ballots elsewhere. The problems are compounded by a weak election commission.

Photo Quick Count

Photo quick count documents fraud by keeping independent photographic records of election returns forms and separating them from the electoral chain of custody, providing a means of detecting manipulation during the aggregation process. This design builds on Parallel Vote Tabulations (PVTs), which have been in use since the 1980s. Two important technological developments allow us to build on the PVT concept. First, it is now common for Election Commissions to release disaggregated results and to post them on the internet. Second, the cheap availability of digital photography allows rapid and perfectly accurate recording of returns forms.

Photo quick count aims to reduce fraud by increasing the probability that it is detected. By randomly announcing the intervention to some Polling Center Managers (PCMs) and not others, we create experimental variation in the awareness of potentially corrupt agents that they are being monitored.

How do citizens know that fraud was reduced?

Callen and Long (2012) document that the announcement of photo quick count reduced votes for predictably corrupt candidates by 25 percent and the damaging or removal of provisional vote tallies by 60 percent. This represents an unusually large treatment effect and suggests other types of highly visible electoral malfeasance (deviations from the counting protocol, early closings of polling centers, etc.) may similarly have been reduced. They focus on the damaging and removal of vote tallies three reasons. First, PCMs are charged with ensuring the provisional vote tallies are clearly displayed. Failure to do so is a direct failure of an important protocol designed to ensure transparency in local vote counts. Second, if the PCM fails to post the provision tally, it is highly visible to local citizens. Third, because it represents one of several duties assigned to the PCM, failure in this duty is likely correlated with other failures which facilitate manipulation at the polling center.

4. Data and Design

4.1 Measuring Legitimacy

To test the effect of Photo Quick Count on legitimacy, we must measure the concept using empirical data. We think of consent to be governed as falling into two categories, attitudes toward government, and willingness to turn to government for services. Therefore, we operationalize measures of legitimacy by using responses to the following survey questions:

> *Who is mainly responsible for delivering services in your neighborhood (RANDOMIZE ORDERING): the central government, your Member of Parliament, religious or ethnic leaders, the provincial government, or the community development council?*

MP Provides Services is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "Member of parliament" to this question.

> *In your opinion, is Afghanistan a democracy or not a democracy?*

Afghanistan is a Democracy is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "Is a democracy" to this question.

In your opinion, how important is it for you to share information about insurgents to the Afghan Security Forces (for example, pending IED attacks or the location of weapons caches): is it very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

Important to Report IED to ANSF is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" to this question.

*If you had a dispute with a neighbor, who would you trust to settle it (**randomize ordering**): head of family, police, courts, religious leaders, shura, elders, ISAF, or other?*

Police Should Resolve Disputes is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "police" to this question.

4.2 Data and Experiment

Sample and field Conditions

During the period of our study, Afghanistan was an active warzone. For the safety of field staff, we selected polling centers that met three criteria: (i) achieving the highest security rating given by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Police (ANP); (ii) being located in a provincial center, which are much safer than rural areas; and (iii) being scheduled to operate on election day by the IEC. Figure 1 maps our experimental sample.

Election Day Intervention

On election day (September 18, 2010), we randomly announced the use of photo quick count by delivering letters to 238 of the 471 polling centers in our experimental sample. We trained Afghan researchers to deliver letters to Polling Center Managers (PCMs) between 10AM and 4PM, during polling. Researchers visited all 471 polling centers the following day in order to take a picture of the election returns form. Of the 471 polling centers, six did not open on election day. We drop these from our analysis.

Letter delivery constitutes the experimental treatment. The letter announced to PCMs that researchers would photograph election returns forms the following day (September 19) and that photo quick count captures discrepancies between returns forms photographed at the polling center and results certified by the IEC. If we had not notified PCMs of monitoring on election day, they would have been unaware of our treatment because no election staff should be present at the polling station on the day after the election. Figure 2 provides a copy of the letter (we provide the Dari translation in Figure 3). We asked PCMs to acknowledge receipt by signing the letter. PCMs at seventeen polling centers (seven percent of centers receiving letters) refused to sign. We designate a polling center as treated if the PCM received a letter (Letter Delivered = 1). Our results remain robust to redefining treatment as both receiving and signing a letter.

Data

We fielded a baseline survey of households living in the immediate vicinity of 450 of the 471 polling centers in our experimental sample a month before the election (August 2010).[4] The survey contained 2,904 respondents.To attempt to obtain a representative sample of respondents living near polling centers, enumerators employed a random walk pattern starting at the polling center, with random selection of every fourth house or structure. Respondents within households are randomly selected using Kish grid. The survey had 50 percent male and female respondents each and enumerators conducted it in either Dari or Pashto.

We obtain a primary measure of returns form manipulation by sending field staff to investigate whether election materials were stolen or damaged the day following the election (September 19). Field staff visited all 465 polling centers in our sample, which also operated on election day to take pictures of returns form and to investigate whether any of the materials had been stolen or damaged during the night of September 18.[5] We trained our staff to investigate by only interviewing local community members and not to engage IEC staff so as to not create an additional treatment effect. While this would not affect the internal validity of our estimates of program effect, our aim was to minimize the additional monitoring effect for the entire sample.

From these investigations we find 44 reports of candidate agents stealing the returns form along with the ballot boxes and other election materials, 18 reports of candidate agents merely tearing down the returns form, 15 reports of citizens stealing returns forms, 17 reports of citizens tearing down returns forms, and 28 reports of security officials stealing materials or denying our interviews access to photograph them. We focus on reports of theft by candidate agents, who are candidate representatives legally permitted to observe polling and typically present at most polling centers in their candidate's constituency. Altogether, we received reports of candidate agents stealing or damaging materials at 62 (13.33 percent) of the 465 operating polling centers. We therefore define our measure *Form Removed* as an indicator equal to 1 if materials were reported stolen or damaged by a candidate agent at a given polling center.

There are several reasons to think that stealing or damaging tallies reflects an intention to manipulate the aggregation process. In many of the ECC complaints, there was speculation that the purpose of stealing the materials was to take them to a separate location, alter them, and then reinsert them into the aggregation process. Alternatively, candidates might seek to destroy all evidence of the polling center count, and then manufacture an entirely new returns form at the Provincial Aggregation Center. While we lack data to know specifically how this happens, we view a reduction in this measure as evidence that candidates withdrew from this margin. Either approach is also likely to involve the PEO.

The final data set used in this paper is an endline survey fielded in December 2010, roughly three months after the election and only shortly after the final results were confirmed by the Independent Election Commission (IEC). As in the baseline, the primary sampling unit for our survey was the polling centers operating on election day. These polling centers were generally neighborhood landmarks such as mosques, schools or markets. Survey enumerators were told to begin at the polling center and survey

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[4] The 21 polling centers in the experimental sample not surveyed at baseline are in Kabul. We subsequently added these using additional funding made available after the baseline.
[5] While there are 471 polling centers in our data, six did not operate on election day.

either 6 or 8 subjects. Enumerators adhered to the right hand rule random selection method and respondents within houses were selected according to a Kish grid. In keeping with Afghan custom, men and women were interviewed by field staff of their own gender.

Table 1 reports summary statistics for all variables from the endline survey used in this paper. The data depict a country with very low levels of popular support for the government. Only 19.3 percent of respondents believe that the Member of Parliament is responsible for providing services and only 17.6 percent prefer the police as their primary means of dispute adjudication. We also find a high incidence of electoral malpractice. 14.3 percent of our respondents live in a polling center catchment were our staff recorded a report of candidate agents removing tallies. A similar picture emerges from the baseline interviews, collected in August 2010, which we discuss below when reviewing balance in our experiment.

4.3 Estimation Strategy

Because assignment to treatment is random, the equation:

$$Legitimacy_{ic} = \gamma_1 + \gamma_2 LetterDelivered_c + \gamma_3' \check{X}_{ic} + \varepsilon_{ic}$$

should provide consistent estimates of the effect of announcing monitoring on legitimacy.

Additionally, assuming that Photo Quick Count only effects perceptions of legitimacy through its effect on DR Form Manipulation, we can obtain Instrumental Variables estimates of the effect of election fraud on legitimacy using the following system of equations:

First Stage: $TallyManipulation_c = \phi_0 + \phi_1 LetterDelivered + \phi_2' \check{X}_c + \xi_c$

Second Stage: $Legitimacy_{ic} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Tally\hat{Man}ipulation_c + \beta_2' \check{X}_c + \eta_{ic}$

Our purpose in estimating Instrumental Variables in this case departs somewhat from the conventional use in the economics of program evaluation. We think of it as a test for channels linking Photo Quick Count to legitimacy. For this reason, the estimand of interest is exactly the Local Average Treatment Effect. Instrumental Variables, in this case, allows us to exploit experimental assignment to obtain consistent estimates of the effect of changes in they type of election fraud narrowly targeted by our intervention on perceptions of legitimacy.

The principal threat to our Instrumental Variables estimation is that individuals might have their perceptions of the government influenced directly through knowledge of visits by our field staff, violating the exclusion restriction. To deal with this concern, at endline we asked:

> *On election day we sent interviewers with a letter to the polling center to announce that we would be taking pictures of the tally sheets the following day. Prior to this interview, have you heard any information of this activity happening on election day?*

5. Results

Before turning to tests of the theory, we should take a moment to discuss the randomization. We stratified experimental treatment on province and in the 450 PCs for which we had baseline data, we also stratified on the share of respondents from the baseline survey reporting at least occasional access to electricity and on respondents reporting that the district governor carries the most responsibility for keeping elections fair. All core specifications reflect our assignment strategy, by including stratum dummies as suggested by Bruhn and McKenzie (2009).

Table 2 reports summary statistics and verifies balance using our baseline survey. We are balanced across baseline measures of all four key outcomes used in the study. We do not find any evidence of imbalance on other measures. We note that, as in Table 1, only about one-fifth of respondents prefer to use the Afghan National Police to resolve disputes and only about fifteen percent believe that their Member of Parliament is responsible for delivering services.

5.1 Reduced Form Results

Table 3 reports our main results, testing hypotheses H1 and H2, the causal effect of election fairness on attitudes and on consent to be governed, respectively. Beginning with H1, random assignment of a fraud-reducing treatment allows us to perform a simple test of whether fraud reduction increases popular support for the government. In Panel A we report the effect of fraud reduction on citizens' general beliefs about the Afghan government. Turning to H2, panel B reports effects on measures which reflect the concept of contingent consent—those which require the respondents to express a willingness to cooperate with the government. In column 1 panel A, we find that 21.5 percent of citizens in treatment catchments believe that the MP is the primary service provider, compared to 17.7 percent in controls. This results is robust to the addition of a broad set controls consistent with random assignment to treatment. In columns 5 – 8 we observe a similar increase in respondents beliefs that Afghanistan is a democracy, though it is only marginally significant. This may in part be because the question does not discern whether Afghanistan is nominally a democracy or functions as an effective democracy.

We separately report specification including a control for whether the respondent is aware that external actors visited the polling center. This provides an opportunity to test an additional implication of contingent consent theories, as laid out in H3. Citizens who are unaware of external involvement may attribute the fraud reduction to high quality government management, whereas those that are aware that the intervention was external, and most likely transitory, should not. Consistent with this, we find that the effect of announcing monitoring is much smaller (and possibly negative) among respondents aware of monitoring than among those who were not aware. This term should be treated as an interaction term in a fully saturated model, as an external visit is necessary to be aware that our team visited the polling center. Consistent with this, we have no false positive responses. Specifically, we test whether the coefficient on *Delivered Letter* is the same as the coefficent on *Aware of Delivery*. We reject equality in column 6 (p-value = 0.042) and nearly reject in column 8 (p-value = 0.1061).

In Panel B we use measures of citizens expressed willingness to cooperate with the government as outcomes. Reporting an IED entails some risk in practice. Similarly, using the police to solve disputes indicates a preference for using formal rather than informal institutions, which are abundantly available in Afghanistan, for dispute resolution. We consistently find a strong and significant positive effect of photo quick count on these two measures. Again, we test whether effects are muted for respondents aware of

outside intervention. We strongly reject equality of effects on the aware and unaware subsamples in column 6 (p-value = 0.013) and in column 8 (p-value = 0.002), consistent with the contingent consent concept of legitimacy above.

5.2 Instrumental Variables Results

We now test whether our announcement of monitoring improved perceptions specifically by reducing fraud. Specifically, we isolate exogenous variation in fraud created by our experimental treatment. As discussed, we focus on the damaging and removal of provisional vote tallies by candidate agents, as this is a highly visible type of election fraud. Callen and Long (2012) document a large decrease in this measure due to the announcement of monitoring.

By instrumenting for this measure of fraud, we can recover the differences in perceptions that are local to polling centers where fraud was reduced by the treatment, but would not have been otherwise. That is, we recover the Local Average Treatment Effect on respondent attitudes, which is precisely the estimand of interest.

A concern with this approach is that our treatment might also influence perceptions directly if respondents, aware of the involvement of an external actor, update their beliefs about the government. To address this, we directly control for whether respondents were aware of our visits. As we mentioned, in the previous subsection, this can be interpreted as adding an interaction term to a fully saturated model, so the reported coefficients will reflect the effect for respondents unaware of monitoring. We include this term to allay some concerns about the validity of our exclusion restriction.

We report both uninstrumented regressions (columns 1, 2, 5, and 6) and IV estimates for all four measures of legitimacy. For all four measures we find that the IV estimates are much larger and considerably more negative than the OLS estimates. This provides direct evidence that the causal effect of manipulating provision tallies is to decrease perceptions of government legitimacy quite substantially. This provides some evidence that the improvement in electoral function due to our treatment is operative in improving citizens perception of the Afghan government.

Overall, the treatment effect of fraud reduction and our Instrumental Variables estimates of the effects of DR Form Manipulation are strikingly similar across all four dependent variables. This increases our confidence that the estimates reflect a real change increase in both *perceptions of government* and in *support for government*.

6. Conclusions

We have reported evidence that the fairness of elections affects attitudes of citizens towards government directly relevant to their consent to be governed, the standard definition of legitimacy. As far as we know, experimental evidence of this nature is new to the literature. Our evidence is particularly compelling given the setting, even in the context of an ongoing insurgency and an infamously ineffective government rife with corruption, we find that enhancing electoral fairness increases measures of state legitimacy.

These findings speak to both policy and to our understanding of legitimacy in nascent democracies. From a policy perspective, they reinforce the notion that domestic legitimacy, and therefore stability, can be enhanced by interventions which increase the fairness of elections. That notion undergirds the emphasis that the international community currently puts on fragile states holding elections, and the considerable investment of resources it makes in the integrity of those elections. Importantly, our results have nothing to say about the effectiveness of election monitoring –the most common intervention-- as an integrity-enhancing technique. Indeed, we find in passing some evidence that the design of election monitoring in Afghanistan was unlikely to enhance the integrity of those elections, as it is external and temporal and thus unlikely to affect attitudes. Nevertheless, our results are supportive of integrity-enhancing interventions as a general policy.

Legitimacy plays a key role in theories of political development, and should play an equally important role in any theory of economic development, since consent to be governed necessarily underlies the use of coercive force by government. The government's option on the use of coercion is a necessary precondition of taxation and of protection of service provision or development programs—including those administered by the nongovernmental organizations and international organizations such as the World Bank. As such, it is critical that we understand how consent is obtained.

Our findings should be interpreted as revealing that at least some consent is plastic: though it may be built on a base of unconditional loyalties (e.g., ideological, religious, or ethnic), consent is somewhat conditional on citizens' perceptions of the integrity of elections. Conditional consent includes various theories of what precisely legitimacy is conditioned on, between which this paper makes no attempt to distinguish. Future experiments which enhance election integrity might attempt to do so.

Along these lines, future research should explore the extent to which interventions that enhance the quality of other aspects of governance confer legitimacy in fragile states; improvements in the integrity not just of elections, but also of policing, health, education and other basic services should enhance legitimacy, according to most theories of conditional compliance. A more practical question would be which types of legitimacy-enhancing interventions are most cost-effective, and how they compare in costs to more heavy handed interventions such as security assistance? Photo Quick-Capture, for instance, is remarkably inexpensive, and has been successfully replicated (in Uganda in 2011)

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Table 1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	# Observations
Demographics:			
Employed (=1)	0.506	0.500	2584
Age (years)	32.636	12.345	2583
Female (=1)	0.483	0.500	2584
Married (=1)	0.697	0.459	2584
Education (years)	6.871	5.438	2583
Beliefs:			
General Happiness (1-10)	4.368	1.714	2584
MP Provides Services (=1)	0.193	0.395	2551
Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)	0.680	0.467	2373
Important to Report IED to ANSF (=1)	0.933	0.250	2523
Police Should Resolve Disputes (=1)	0.176	0.381	2572
Elections and Violence:			
Military Events within 1KM	2.487	7.094	2584
Visited by Int'l Monitor (=1)	0.168	0.374	2584
Aware of Treatment (=1)	0.057	0.231	2584
Form Removed (=1)	0.143	0.350	2584

Notes: Military event data are from ISAF CIDNE and remaining data are from the endline survey fielded in December 2010. The sample is restricted to the 2,584 respondents answering positively or negatively about awareness of external visits to polling centers.

Table 2. Randomization Verification

	No Letter	Letter	Difference	p value
Demographics:				
Employed (=1)	0.557	0.566	0.010	0.575
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.017)	
Age (years)	33.574	33.277	-0.297	0.533
	(0.337)	(0.336)	(0.476)	
Female (=1)	0.500	0.500	0.000	1.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	
Married (=1)	0.710	0.705	-0.005	0.786
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.019)	
Education (years)	6.588	6.476	-0.112	0.674
	(0.182)	(0.193)	(0.265)	
Reg Access to Electricity (=1)	0.717	0.735	0.018	0.539
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.029)	
Beliefs:				
General Happiness (1-10)	4.919	4.946	0.027	0.821
	(0.086)	(0.084)	(0.120)	
Dist Governor Keeps Fair (=1)	0.110	0.111	0.001	0.958
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.016)	
Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)	0.644	0.655	0.012	0.639
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.025)	
MP Provides Services (=1)	0.142	0.163	0.021	0.258
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.019)	
Important to Report IED to ANSF (=1)	0.961	0.956	-0.005	0.591
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.010)	
Police Should Resolve Disp (=1)	0.218	0.202	-0.016	0.459
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.021)	
Elections and Violence:				
Military Events within 1KM	2.701	2.943	0.242	0.769
	(0.427)	(0.707)	(0.826)	
Visited by Int'l Monitor (=1)	0.191	0.151	-0.040	0.270
	(0.027)	(0.024)	(0.036)	

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the polling center are reported in parentheses. Military event data are from ISAF

Panel A – Perceptions of Government

Dependent Variable:	MP Provides Services (=1)				Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Delivered Letter (=1)	0.038**	0.038**	0.038**	0.038**	0.031	0.038*	0.032	0.037*
	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Aware of Delivery (=1)		0.006		-0.004		-0.064		-0.046
		(0.035)		(0.036)		(0.039)		(0.040)
Constant	0.177***	0.177***	0.158***	0.157***	0.665***	0.665***	0.580***	0.577***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Additional Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.068	0.068	0.076	0.076	0.112	0.113	0.125	0.126
# Observations	2,435	2,435	2,435	2,435	2,259	2,259	2,259	2,259
# Clusters	442	442	442	442	439	439	439	439

Panel B - Support for Government

Dependent Variable:	Important to Report IED to ANSF (=1)				Police Should Resolve Disputes (=1)			
Delivered Letter (=1)	0.026**	0.025**	0.024**	0.026**	0.036**	0.044**	0.036**	0.046***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Aware of Delivery (=1)		0.006		-0.017		-0.065*		-0.091**
		(0.020)		(0.020)		(0.034)		(0.035)
Constant	0.918***	0.918***	0.947***	0.946***	0.153***	0.153***	0.109***	0.104***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Additional Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.112	0.112	0.123	0.123	0.072	0.073	0.081	0.084
# Observations	2,408	2,408	2,408	2,408	2,456	2,456	2,456	2,456
# Clusters	441	441	441	441	442	442	442	442

Robust standard errors clustered at the polling center level in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.-5, * p<0.1. All regressions include stratum fixed effects. The additional covariates are the number of military events within 1KM of the polling center, whether the polling center was visited by international monitors, whether the respondent is employed, their years of education, their general happiness (1-10), gender, marital status, and age.

Table 4: Visible Fraud Casually Reduces Government Support

Panel A - Perceptions of Government

Dependent Variable:	MP Provides Services (=1)				Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Form Removed (=1)	-0.042	-0.042	-0.300*	-0.300*	-0.081**	-0.081**	-0.277*	-0.277*
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.164)	(0.164)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.166)	(0.166)
Aware of Visit (=1)	0.022	0.022	-0.001	-0.001	-0.051	-0.051	-0.068*	-0.068*
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.039)
Constant	0.201***	0.201***	0.135***	0.135***	0.696***	0.696***	0.760***	0.760***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Additional Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Specification	OLS	OLS	2SLS	2SLS	OLS	OLS	2SLS	2SLS
R-squared	0.067	0.067	0.026	0.026	0.114	0.114	0.096	0.096
# Observations	2,435	2,435	2,435	2,435	2,259	2,259	2,259	2,259
# Clusters	442	442	442	442	439	439	439	439
First-Stage F-Statistic			15.840	15.840			18.190	18.190

Panel B - Support for Government

Dependent Variable:	Important to Report IED to ANSF (=1)				Police Should Resolve Disputes (=1)			
Form Removed (=1)	-0.010	-0.010	-0.195*	-0.203**	-0.002	-0.004	-0.346**	-0.373**
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.159)	(0.166)
Aware of Visit (=1)	0.018	-0.004	0.001	-0.023	-0.043	-0.066**	-0.074**	-0.103***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.038)
Constant	0.931***	0.961***	0.973***	1.000***	0.175***	0.129***	0.166***	0.111
	(0.006)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.009)	(0.036)	(0.059)	(0.072)
Additional Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Specification	OLS	OLS	2SLS	2SLS	OLS	OLS	2SLS	2SLS
R-squared	0.11	0.121	0.058	0.065	0.07	0.08	-0.009	-0.011
# Observations	2,408	2,408	2,408	2,408	2,456	2,456	2,456	2,456
# Clusters	441	441	441	441	442	442	442	442
First-Stage F-Statistic			16.320	15.820			16.300	15.750

Robust standard errors clustered at the polling center level in parentheses. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.-5$, * $p<0.1$. All regressions include stratum fixed effects. The additional covariates are the number of military events within 1KM of the polling center, whether the polling center was visited by international monitors, whether the respondent is employed, their years of education, their general happiness (1-10), gender, marital status, and age.
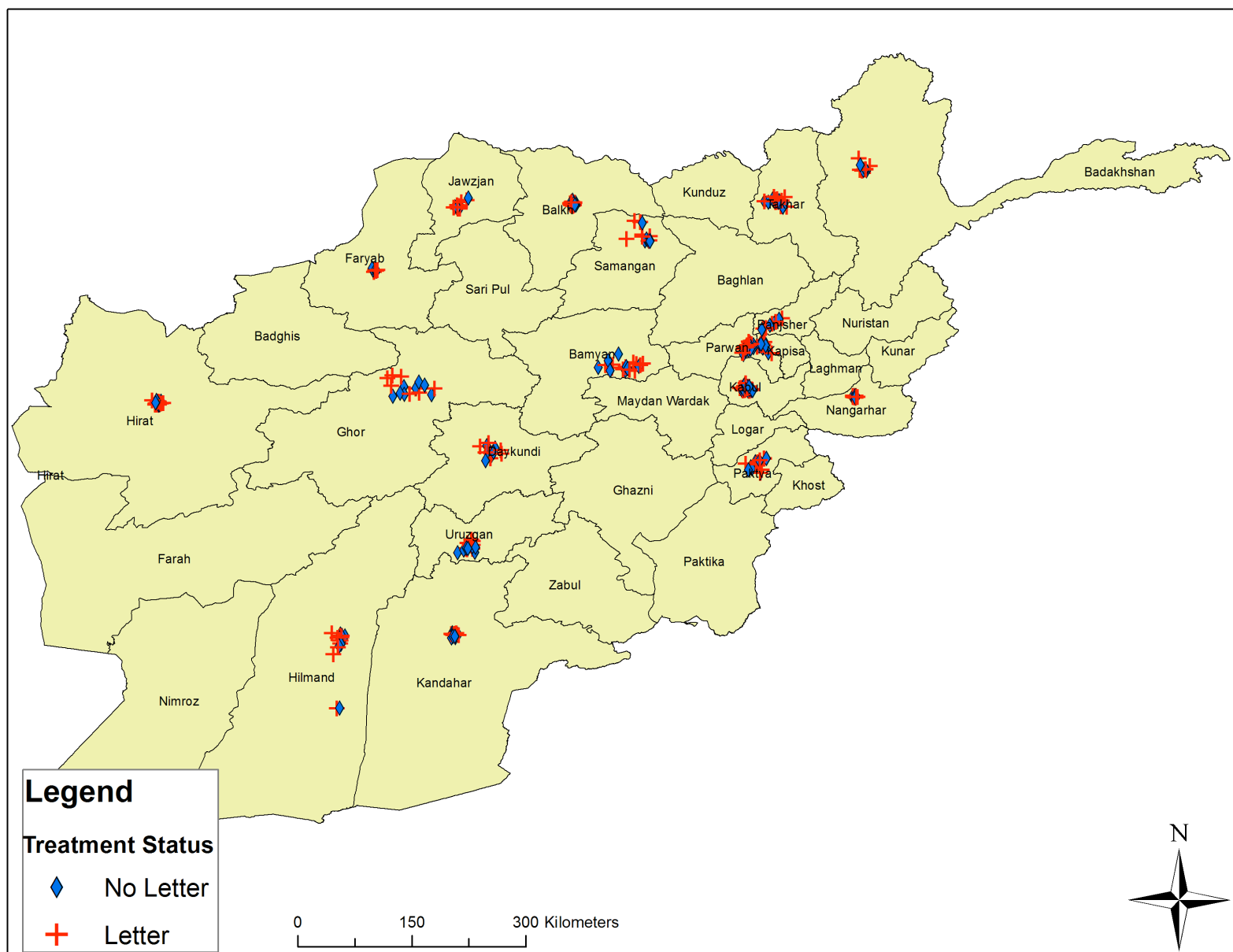
Legend

Treatment Status

◆ No Letter

✚ Letter

0   150   300 Kilometers

N

Figure 2: Announcement of Monitoring

Polling Center Name: …………………..

Polling Center Code:…………………….

Date: ………………………………………

Dear Sir or Madam-

Greetings! I am an official election observer with the Opinion Research Center of Afghanistan (ORCA). My organization is providing this letter to collect some important information about your polling center and share it with our main office. Your polling center has been randomly selected from among polling centers in this province.

In our attempts to help Afghanistan have free and fair elections, I will return to this polling center tomorrow morning in order to take pictures of the results for every candidate in every station on the tally sheets after they have been posted.

The information will be posted on a website that belongs to local and international election observers so that it will be used by the people of Afghanistan, the international community, and local and international media. We will also compare the photos taken with the tally certified by the IEC in Kabul.

As recognition that you have read and understood this letter, please sign here: _____

Thank you kindly for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Haj Abdul Nabi Barakzai

Deputy Head of ORCA

Name and Signature of manager of polling station:………………………………………

Figure 3: Announcement of Monitoring (Dari)

نام مرکز رائ دهی: ــــــــــــــــــــــ   تاریخ: ــــــــــــــــ

ــــــ مرکز رائ دهی: ــــــــــــکود

به حضور محترم آقای / خانم

مسئولیت نظارت 472 مراکز رائ بر حسب توافقنامه کمیسیون مستقل انتخابات دفتر اورکا دهی را بر عهده دارد.

میباشد و برای او (ORCA) دفتربره مربوطیک تن از نظارت کننده گان رسمیدارنده مکتوب معلومات تا بتواند مرکز رای دهی تسلیم نمودهراین تا این مکتوب را وظیفه سپرده شده است . این مرکز دفتر مرکزی شریک بسازدجمع آوری نموده و با مرکز رای دهی این و دقیق را ازموثق این ولایت تمام مراکز رای دهی میانبه صورت تصادفی از گر به شمول چندین مراکز دیرای دهی انتخاب شده است.

فردا صبح . ناظر ما یک انتخابات آزاد و مشروع در افغانستان کمک خواهیم کرد تقویتبرایما . نصب میگردد اخذ نمایدمرکز رای دهیاین که در را نتایج کاندیدان لست آمد تا تصاویر از دخواه

گذشته مربوط به ناظرین انتخاباتی داخلی و خارجی این نتایج در سایت انترنتی تصاویر از این نتایج ، موسسات خارجی، و مطبوعات داخلی و خارجیخواهد شد تا تمام مردم افغانستان نتایج را با نتایج که از طرف ایننتصاویر حاصله از ناظر حیث مناستفاده کنند. و همچنان ما انتخابات در کابل نشر میشود مقایسه خواهیم کرد. مستقلکمیسیون

در پایئین ایدبرای تایئد اینکه این مکتوب بدسترس شما قرار گرفته و شما انرا مطالعه نموده مضا نمائید. لطف نموده ا

از همکاری شما قبلاً اظهار سپاس.

بااحترام

حاجی عبدالنبی بارکزی

معاون دفتر اورکا

آمر محترم مرکزرائ دهی: ــــــــــــــــــ   یامضاااسم و