Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan[*]

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Abstract

How are civilians' attitudes toward combatants affected by exposure to violence during wartime? Does civilian victimization affect these attitudes differently depending on the perpetrator's identity? We investigate the determinants of wartime civilian attitudes towards combatants using a survey experiment across 204 villages in five Pashtun-dominated provinces of Afghanistan — the very heart of the Taliban insurgency. We use endorsement experiments to indirectly elicit truthful answers to sensitive questions about attitudes toward combatants. Our findings demonstrate that civilian attitudes toward the combatants are asymmetric. Harm inflicted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is met with reduced ISAF support and increased Taliban support, but Taliban-inflicted harm does not translate into greater ISAF support. We combine a multistage sampling design with multilevel statistical modeling to estimate support levels for ISAF and the Taliban at the individual, village, and district levels, permitting a more fine-grained analysis of wartime attitudes than previously possible.

Key Words: public opinion; intergroup conflict; civilian casualties; multilevel modeling; sensitive questions

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How does the victimization of civilians affect their support for combatants during wartime? Are the effects of violence on attitudes uniform across warring parties, or are they conditional on *who* inflicted the harm? Despite a widespread belief that modern counterinsurgency hinges on "winning hearts and minds," scholars have yet to address the theoretical and methodological challenges associated with studying civilian attitudes in wartime settings. Existing theories of civil war violence almost entirely sidestep the question of civilian attitudes. Instead, these theories either assume that attitudes are merely endogenous to battlefield dynamics — and thus not of central theoretical concern — or that civilians treat perpetrators of violence in an undifferentiated fashion. Civilians, it is tacitly assumed, are simply guided by a logic of survival that does not permit the luxury of clinging to prior ethnic or ideological attachments, thus essentially eliminating the need to study wartime attitudes.

We challenge this view by arguing that the effects of violence on civilian attitudes are conditional on combatant identity (Lyall, 2010). We contend that intergroup bias — the systematic tendency to interpret the actions of one's own in-group in a more favorable light than those of the out-group — should produce robust and observable asymmetries in how combatant actions affect civilian attitudes. Simply put, it is likely that harm by one's own group carries a different set of implications and effects than victimization by members of an out-group in wartime. We anticipate, for example, that in-group harm is viewed as situational in nature and thus does not lead to either increased support for the out-group or to significant loss of support for in-group combatants. Harm by the out-group, however, is likely to be viewed as dispositional in nature, thus increasing out-group antipathy while heightening support for in-group combatants.

To test this argument, we conducted a survey experiment that draws on multiple endorsement experiments to measure civilian attitudes toward the Taliban and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. We combine a multistage sampling design with multilevel statistical modeling (Bullock, Imai and Shapiro, 2011) to examine attitudes among 2,754 male respondents in 204 villages within 21 districts of five Pashtun-dominated provinces, the very heart of the current Taliban insurgency (Barfield, 2010; Jones, 2009; Crews and Tarzi, 2008; Giustozzi, 2008).

Three main findings emerge. First, there is clear evidence that the effects of victimization by ISAF and the Taliban has asymmetrical effects on individual attitudes. Harm inflicted by ISAF is met with reduced support

for ISAF and increased support for the Taliban, while Taliban-inflicted harm does not translate into greater support for ISAF and has only a marginally negative effect on Taliban support. Second, subsequent efforts by each combatant to mitigate the effects of their violence among aggrieved individuals actually appear to be successful, though in ISAF's case this finding rests on a small subset of selected individuals given ISAF's haphazard approach to responding to civilian casualties. Third, we find only modest support for alternative explanations that privilege the role of economic assistance, the current distribution of territorial control by ISAF and the Taliban, or prior patterns of violence in determining civilian attitudes.

The paper proceeds in eight sections. The first section briefly describes existing work on civilian wartime attitudes and then details our intergroup bias argument and associated hypotheses. The second section is devoted to issues of survey design, including the description of our endorsement experiments, the multistage sampling design, and the measurements of exposure to violence and subsequent post-harm mitigation efforts by each combatant. The third section provides initial descriptive analyses of survey responses and validate them against "ground truth" in our sampled districts and provinces. Section four introduces our multilevel statistical model that incorporates data at the individual, village, district, and provincial levels to generate estimates of support for each combatant at each level. The fifth section describes our core findings, including the asymmetry in effects between Taliban and ISAF violence, the role of post-harm assistance, and how tribal identity conditions the strength of intergroup bias. The sixth section considers alternative explanations drawn from leading theories of civil war violence. The seventh section addresses the questions of the generalizability of these findings within and beyond Afghanistan, and the final section concludes.

1 Theory and Hypotheses

1.1 Motivation: Rational Peasants and Wartime Attitudes

A near consensus among practitioners and scholars exists that the outcome of counterinsurgency wars is dictated by the relative success of each side in winning popular support (Trinquier, 2006; Thompson, 1966; U.S. Army, 2007; Kalyvas, 2006, pp. 91–104). Surprisingly, however, there are few rigorous studies of civilian attitudes toward combatants during wartime (see Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2011, for a recent exception). Despite renewed attention to the task of winning "hearts and minds" in Iraq and Afghanistan, civilian

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attitudes have largely been dropped from our theories of violence during counterinsurgency wars. This apparent omission can be traced to at least three factors. First, safety concerns and logistical difficulties conspire to frustrate survey-based research in conflict settings. Second, even if surveys can be implemented, the validity of resulting measurements may be in doubt, because there exist clear incentives for civilians to engage in preference falsification or to be swayed by social desirability concerns given the inherent dangers of answering these sensitive questions. Finally, civilian attitudes may in fact be endogenous to wartime dynamics, especially rebel and state strategies, which would complicate efforts to identify causal relationships.

Given these difficulties, scholars have instead chosen to ground their theories of civil war violence in the premise that civilians are rational, utility-maximizing actors ("rational peasants") who jettison prior ideological or ethnic attachments as hindrances that impair their ability to ensure survival in wartime (see e.g., Leites and Wolf, 1970; Popkin, 1979; Lichbach, 1998; Kalyvas, 2006). From this perspective, civilian behavior, not attitudes, becomes central. More specifically, the willingness of civilians to share information with the combatants via denunciation becomes the key theoretical and empirical puzzle. Denunciation is seen as a function of the current level of relative control exercised by the combatants (Leites and Wolf, 1970; Kalyvas, 2006) or, related, to the relative level of indiscriminate violence (Kocher, Pepinsky and Kalyvas, 2011; Condra and Shapiro, 2010; Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007) or service provision (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2011; Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2011; Crost and Johnston, 2010). Civilian casualties, for example, may *push* individuals to punish guilty combatants by withholding information or providing tips to the other combatant. Competitive service provision works in the opposite manner, by *pulling* individuals toward the more beneficent combatant and away from its less forthcoming counterpart.

Crucially, attitudes do not mediate civilian responses to combatant actions in these theories. Prior attitudes are, instead, either dictated by the logic of military control or are irrelevant, since civilians are thought to respond symmetrically to abuse by punishing each side equally. Kalyvas (2006), for example, contends that military resources and geography create control, which in turn outweigh prewar allegiance or ethnic identities in the formation of attitudes (pp. 132–135). Political allegiances are thus fluid, not sticky, as seen in this example: "People have no choices; they are in a dilemma," said Abdul Rahman, a tribal elder in Kandahar. "In places where the Taliban are active, the people are compelled to support them, they are afraid of the

Taliban. And, in those places where government has a presence, the people are supporting the government," he said (*New York Times*, 20 January 2010). Similarly, Condra and Shapiro (2010) theorize that civilians respond symmetrically to victimization in Iraq, punishing and rewarding combatants uniformly for inflicting or avoiding civilian fatalities (pp. 31–32).

Despite these insights, however, there are at least three reasons to incorporate civilian attitudes into our models of civil war violence. First, and most obviously, the combatants themselves believe that obtaining popular support is an important goal in its own right. Practitioners ranging from Mao (1961) to the U.S. Army in its new counterinsurgency field manual (2007) emphasize that progress, and ultimately victory, is measured and achieved by winning over the population.[1] Counterinsurgents in contexts as diverse as Malaya, Algeria, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have relied on comprehensive population surveys to measure popular support. Underlying these efforts is a belief that attitudes are a shorthand for expected behavior. As a result, both rebels and counterinsurgents condition their choice of tactics and strategies on the anticipated popular reception. Civilian attitudes may therefore act as a mediating variable that helps explain both strategic selection of targets and the broader patterns of violence that result from these choices.

Second, existing theories of civilian behavior implicitly rest on attitudinal mechanisms that are difficult to differentiate using observational data. There are six different mechanisms that underpin how military control generates civilian collaboration in Kalyvas (2006)'s framework, for example (pp. 124–132). Three of these mechanisms — socialization, beliefs about the credibility of threats, and self-reinforcing reputation effects — are attitudinal in nature, and yet simply measuring levels of violence or collaboration cannot tell us *which* of these mechanisms is at work. Similarly, scholars routinely invoke mechanisms that suggest that victimized civilians act on feelings of revenge and anger by joining insurgent forces or providing tips. Yet typically no data are provided to confirm these attitudes, and, instead, revealed behavior is offered as evidence of motive.[2] Directly measuring civilian attitudes thus contributes to the construction and empirical testing of theories by allowing better identification of *why* certain patterns of civilian behavior are observed during wartime.

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[1]This agreement on the importance of winning "hearts and minds" does not extend to accepted criteria for measuring such efforts, however. Practitioners are also similarly divided over whether the end goal of these campaigns is passive acquiescence, active support, or the actual internalizing of pro-counterinsurgent beliefs by the populace.

[2]In the case of information provision arguments, there may actually be no measure of "tips," either, as such data are often classified or only partially available to researchers. Instead, scholars are forced to assume that information transfer has taken place given observed changes in individual (or more often) combatant behavior.

Third, these theories generate notable empirical puzzles that are difficult to reconcile with the claim that civilians interpret combatant actions uniformly. The effects of aid programs on violence reduction in Afghanistan, for example, appear to depend on the ethnic composition of a district, not the level of control or prior violence (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2011). Similarly, small-scale aid programs in Iraq have heterogeneous effects across Sunni and non-Sunni dominated districts (Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2011). In addition, despite claims that individuals treat combatants uniformly, Condra and Shapiro (2010) find that Sunni districts exhibit markedly different pre- and post-civilian casualty patterns of violence than Shia or mixed districts. In each case, it appears that civilians are responding *asymmetrically*, rather than uniformly, to combatant actions.

1.2 Why Identity Matters: Intergroup Bias and Support for Combatants

Drawing on these theoretical gaps and empirical puzzles, we offer an alternative theory of wartime attitudes. At its root, our argument is that wartime attitudes are shaped by intergroup biases that create durable expectations about the responsibility and blame for combatant actions toward the civilian population. These biases lead civilians to condition their interpretation of events on the perpetrator's identity (Lyall, 2010). As a result, we expect that support for combatants will be conditional on the combatant's identity, as will the effects of positive actions (i.e. aid programs) and negative actions (i.e. civilian victimization) taken by the combatants.

We define intergroup bias as the systematic tendency by individuals to evaluate one's own membership group (the "in-group") or its members more favorably than a non-membership group (the "out-group") or its members (Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Hewstone, Rubin and Willis, 2002, p. 576).[3] Positive actions by one's own in-group are therefore viewed as arising from the innate disposition of in-group members while similar actions by the out-group are interpreted as situational in nature: the out-group was compelled by the situation to undertake a positive act, whereas the in-group did so because of its inherent nature. Negative actions by an in-group, by contrast, are understood as situational in nature ("forced to be bad"), while negative actions by the out-group confirm prior biases that the out-group and its members are inherently "bad" actors.

Laboratory experiments have shown that intergroup bias is especially prevalent in situations where the

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[3]The literature on social categorization theory, and related fields such as prejudice and discrimination, is enormous. For overviews, see Tajfel (2010), Hewstone, Rubin and Willis (2002) and Paluck and Green (2009).

out-group possesses a significant power advantage and members of the in-group feel threatened, or have actually been threatened, by the out-group or its members (Brewer, 1999; Esses et al., 2001; Hewstone, Rubin and Willis, 2002, 585-86). Such conditions characterize counterinsurgency wars, in which members of a group are challenging a much stronger out-group (either a national government or external occupier) in a bid for independence, autonomy, or state capture.[4] The potentially high degree of risk assumed by individuals for (non-)participation in an insurgency means that intergroup biases might prove important as a means of reducing uncertainty in confusing wartime conditions.

One potential basis for in-group identification is ethnicity.[5] Ethnicity can perform two functions under wartime conditions. First, it acts as a shorthand or "social radar" (Hale, 2008, p. 34) that allows forward-looking individuals to anticipate the nature of in- and out-group actions based on prior interactions or information about ethnic types. In particular, ethnicity can convey information about often unobservable characteristics about other relevant actors—especially soldiers and rebels—such as the credibility of their threats and assurances for (non)compliance. Biases about (non-)coethnics can thus be drawn on to facilitate risk management by allowing individuals to mitigate wartime uncertainty by quickly attaching probabilities, if only crudely, to the expected consequences of different actions (Lyall, 2010, p. 15).

Second, and central for our argument, group membership also moderates beliefs about responsibility (and hence blame) for *past* actions toward the individual and her group. Viewed from the lens of intergroup bias, individuals are more likely to punish out-groups for transgressions, which simply confirm prior biases about the out-group's disposition. Harm inflicted by the in-group, however, carries a different meaning: victimized individuals, and the community at large, may be more forgiving, since such acts are justified by appeal to extenuating circumstances that forced the in-group's hand. This bias helps explain why external occupiers are often blamed by victimized individuals for harm that was actually inflicted by the rebels themselves.[6]

Suppose that combatants from an in-group and an out-group are competing for popular support among a civilian population. Combatants may utilize two types of actions: *negative* ones, such as the use of violence

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[4]This discussion presumes a binary in/out-group setup but this could be relaxed to allow for multiple out-groups as well as in-group fissures (on this point, see below).

[5]*Ethnicity* is defined as an identity category in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership (Chandra and Wilkinson, 2008, p. 517).

[6]This raises a key methodological problem for observational studies that rely on violent event data if the (objective) assignment of blame and the (perceived) blame by the victimized individuals are not highly correlated.

| | | Expected Effect on Support for | |
Actor	Action	Out-Group	In-Group
Out-Group	Negative	−	+
In-Group	Negative	=	−
Out-Group	Positive	=	=
In-Group	Positive	−	+

Table 1: Hypotheses Derived from Our Identity Theory of Wartime Attitudes. "+", "−", and "=" signify positive, negative, and neutral relationships, respectively.

against civilians; and *positive* ones such as the provision of aid and services. If intergroup biases are present, we should expect the effects of these actions on popular support to be asymmetrical even after controlling for socioeconomic traits and war dynamics such as relative levels of control or prior violence.

Table 1 summarizes a series of testable hypotheses for each type of action by combatants. Beginning with negative actions, we anticipate that harm inflicted by the out-group will be associated with a sharply negative effect on civilian attitudes toward the out-group and a correspondingly large rally effect for rebels drawn from the in-group. Harm by the in-group rebels toward the civilian population will not result in a transfer of support to the out-group – one of several asymmetries we anticipate – but instead will result in a neutral effect on out-group support and a comparatively modest negative effect on in-group support. Here we observe the basic mechanics of the "home team discount" that insurgents are thought to possess: they may be less constrained in their abuse of their fellow in-group members since such actions do not lead to a corresponding positive effect on support for the out-group while the reverse is true for out-group actions.

We should observe a similar set of asymmetrical effects on civilian attitudes when we examine positive actions by combatants. Out-group positive actions are likely to have little or no effect on civilian attitudes toward either the out-group or in-group since such actions will be heavily discounted as driven by expediency, not conviction. Similar programs or actions by members of the in-group will produce different effects on civilian attitudes, however. Positive actions should have a negative effect on out-group support but a positive effect on attitudes toward the in-group since the granting of aid or provision of services reinforce existing biases about the motives of the respective combatants.

We emphasize that these hypotheses are falsifiable in several ways. Attitudes may actually track closely with relative levels of control exercised by the combatants, for example, or by the type and level of violence they inflict on the civilian population. Alternatively, attitudes may not be systematically correlated with *any*

wartime dynamic but are instead idiosyncratic, suggesting that intergroup bias is not at work. Finally, civilians could punish their own in-group and its members *more* severely in terms of negative effects on support than the out-group since they may expect better treatment at the hands of their own in-group members.

Two additional points also bear emphasizing. First, given the complex nature of wartime environments, it is likely that at least some subset of the civilian population will be subjected to positive and negative actions by both combatants. While the effect of these cross-cutting pressures hinges on the specific nature of the combined interactions, we argue that the asymmetric nature of effects on civilian attitudes will remain. Generally speaking, in cases where an individual was the recipient of positive actions from both in-group and out-group combatants, we would expect that the magnitude of the observed asymmetry increases since these individuals are positioned to compare aid or service programs directly. Victimization by both types of combatants, by contrast, may lead to an attenuation of the asymmetry in effects on civilian attitudes since the out-group's actions are being partially offset by the in-group's own violence.

Second, intergroup bias does not implicitly rest on presumed coethnic affinity (Horowitz, 1985) or shared policy preferences among coethnics (Habyarimana et al., 2009, 7-9). For example, the coethnic affinity thesis founders in the context of war on the twin empirical realities of violence targeted against coethnics and defection across ethnic lines that often define counterinsurgency wars (Kalyvas, 2008). Nor do we assume that intergroup bias stems from shared policy preferences, given the wide variation in the historical experiences, tribal affiliation, and economic circumstances among Pashtuns across Afghanistan. Instead, we emphasize the uncertainty-reducing function of intergroup bias in a conflict setting. Intergroup bias provides a shorthand that enables individuals to make rapid assessments about the meaning of particular events, the likelihood and anticipated nature of combatant responses, and the management of risk given an uncertain and often fluid environment.

1.3 From Private Attitudes to Private Actions

Our theory of intergroup bias and combatant support is also underpinned by a particular model of the linkage between *private* attitudes and subsequent behavior. Following the literature in social psychology, we draw on the distinction between *public* and *private* attitudes since different "levels" of attitudes are thought to predict different types of behavior (Dovidio et al., 1997, pp. 519–20). Individuals may express socially desirable

attitudes publicly, for example, as a means of avoiding sanction by other community members. These public attitudes are shaped by an individual's surroundings and are typically expressed out of a desire to conform even though individuals are aware that they privately hold alternative views. In a wartime context, public attitudes are likely predictors of events such as participation in public demonstrations, openly siding with an occupying force (i.e. in a militia), or service provision on behalf of a combatant. These events share a public aspect that enables external observers to police the boundary between expressed attitudes and revealed behavior, administering sanctions if attitudes and behavior are not congruent.

Private attitudes, by contrast, are personal, conscious views shaped primarily by one's own moral standards and ideals instead of as a means to avoid social sanction. These attitudes reside in the gap between the individual and the (incomplete) ability of the in-group to generate sufficient monitoring capabilities to enforce total attitudinal conformity. Elicited a wartime setting, private attitudes would be predictive of participation in more clandestine activities, including providing information to combatants through anonymous "tips" and secret collaboration (i.e. as a translator for occupying forces). Perhaps most importantly, private attitudes are likely driving decisions about whether to engage in violence, especially against the counterinsurgent. Such efforts are secretive by nature, regardless of their target: insurgents take special precautions to conceal their identities while also seeking to avoid information leaks or defection that could destroy the group itself.

This emphasis on private attitudes suggests that violence affects support for combatants through personal victimization rather than indirect knowledge gleaned from other sources. While combatant propaganda and social networks ("grapevines") are important sources of information during civil war, we argue that private attitudes ultimately mediate the effects of violence on support for the warring parties. Thus, we hypothesize that as we move from an individual's direct experience with the combatants to indirect experiences shared by other in-group members the effects of victimization on combatant support should attenuate. Put differently, the magnitude of the effect of a positive or negative action, but not its direction, should diminish as we move from direct experiences to indirect ones provided by secondhand accounts, combatant propaganda, or rumors.

2 The Survey Experiment

In many settings, including Afghanistan, scholars and other actors rely on direct questions to elicit truthful answers on sensitive issues. Yet this practice is problematic. Social desirability bias, which arises when individuals feel compelled to conform to societal norms or the interviewer's perceived views, can result in preference falsification (e.g., DeMaio, 1984; Berinsky, 2004). High refusal rates are also likely with direct questions when the respondent believes that any response may violate norms, creating potential selection bias if non-responses are correlated with the attitudes towards the sensitive issue. Perhaps most importantly, direct questioning can endanger enumerators and respondents alike in conflict settings. Insecurity not only compounds concerns about social desirability bias and non-responses, but it also creates incentives for enumerators to manufacture answers entirely (known as "curb-squatting" in Afghanistan).

Avoiding direct questions on sensitive topics is particularly critical in Afghanistan. ISAF and other organizations have spent billions of dollars seeking to change "hearts and minds" throughout Afghanistan. If recipients believe that the continuation of aid is conditional on the answers they supply, then incentives to shade, if not falsify, these answers exist. In addition, for cultural reasons respondents are typically surveyed in public settings, raising additional concerns about social desirability bias and security threats. We recorded an average of three individuals present at each survey session (standard deviation: 0.9), excluding the enumerator. Finally, our survey firm negotiated access to selected villages with local elders, *arbaki* (militia) commanders, and Taliban leaders. In such situations, indirect questions are preferable because they yield a higher rate of acceptance among these gatekeepers, thus avoiding bias in the choice of interview locations.

We therefore adopt a survey experiment methodology that draws on indirect endorsement questions to measure attitudes. This technique has recently been applied to various issues in diverse contexts, including the measurement of support for militant groups (see e.g., Blair et al., 2011; Bullock, Imai and Shapiro, 2011). We detail our survey experiment below, beginning with the four endorsement questions that are combined to measure attitudes toward ISAF and the Taliban. We then describe our multistage sampling design and survey response rates before turning to our measures of respondents' exposure to direct and indirect harm by each combatant. We conclude with a discussion of other theoretically-relevant explanatory variables.

2.1 Measuring Wartime Attitudes Indirectly

The mechanics of a survey experiment are straightforward. Randomly selected respondents (the "treatment" group) are asked to express their opinion toward a policy endorsed by a specific actor whose support level we wish to measure (here, ISAF and the Taliban). These responses are then contrasted with a "control" group that answered an identical question, minus the endorsement. Higher levels of enthusiasm for a policy with an endorsement relative to those without are taken as evidence indicating support for the endorsing actor. Since each respondent is assigned only one condition for any endorsement experiment, it is impossible for enumerators or others to compare support levels across different conditions for any individual respondent.

Successful endorsement experiments share four properties (Bullock, Imai and Shapiro, 2011). First, selected initiatives should be in the same policy space so that they can be combined for statistical analysis. Second, these initiatives should be well known by individuals to minimize "don't know" responses and to differentiate support for an endorser from learning about a policy from the endorsement itself. Third, these initiatives should actually be endorsed by the particular actors in question so that the questions are realistic and respondents take them seriously (see Barabas and Jerit, 2010). Finally, there should be a relatively wide range of views for these initiatives such that support and opposition for endorsers can be detected without suffering from ceiling and floor effects.

Drawing on electronic and print media, as well as focus groups and two pretest surveys conducted in Afghanistan, we identified four policies that occupied the same policy space, had high public recognition but divided support, and that had been publicly endorsed by both the Taliban and ISAF—no mean feat considering that they are at war.

Our first policy focused on calls for reform of the notoriously corrupt and inefficient Afghan prison system. Plagued by allegations of widespread overcrowding and systematic torture, among other human rights abuses (Human Rights First, 2011), the Afghan prison system has been publicly criticized by ISAF, the Taliban, and outside observers alike. When polled, only 48% of Afghans claim to place any faith in the Afghan prison system (The Asia Foundation, 2010). As a consequence, both ISAF and the Taliban have at various occasions offered remarkably similar reform programs (Nixon, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2008). These commonalities become the basis for an endorsement experiment, reproduced below.

All endorsement experiments briefly explain the central issues at stake to reduce "Don't Know" answers, to ward against floor and ceiling effects, and to prevent learning about the initiative from the endorsement itself.

- CONTROL CONDITION: A recent proposal calls for the sweeping reform of the Afghan prison system, including the construction of new prisons in every district to help alleviate overcrowding in existing facilities. Though expensive, new programs for inmates would also be offered, and new judges and prosecutors would be trained. How do you feel about this proposal?

- TALIBAN TREATMENT CONDITION: A recent proposal by the Taliban calls for the sweeping reform of the Afghan prison system, including the construction of new prisons in every district to help alleviate overcrowding in existing facilities. Though expensive, new programs for inmates would also be offered, and new judges and prosecutors would be trained. How do you feel about this proposal?

- ISAF TREATMENT CONDITION: A recent proposal by foreign forces calls for the sweeping reform of the Afghan prison system, including the construction of new prisons in every district to help alleviate overcrowding in existing facilities. Though expensive, new programs for inmates would also be offered, and new judges and prosecutors would be trained. How do you feel about this proposal?

Respondents were asked to assess their level of support for this proposal on a five-point scale: I strongly agree with this proposal; I somewhat agree with this proposal; I am indifferent to this proposal; I disagree with this proposal; and I strongly disagree with this proposal. Respondents also had the options of "Don't Know" and "Refuse to Answer."

The other three policies tackled related reform proposals.[7] First, we asked whether individuals would support a proposal to allow Afghans to vote in direct elections when selecting leaders for district councils. While technically permitted under Afghanistan's 2004 Electoral Law, these elections have not been held to date. In early 2010, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) — a government agency led by a presidential appointee that works with ISAF to coordinate subnational governance policies — publicly floated the idea of direct elections, to be held in March 2011 (they were not). Surprisingly, the Taliban seized upon this idea in their own propaganda, suggesting that Karzai's claims of being democratically elected were hollow since the Electoral Law was not being followed (Nixon, 2011). Given the issue's long-standing nature, individuals were familiar with it and the various proposals for (finally) allowing elected district councils.

Second, we gauged support for reform of Afghanistan's Independent Election Committee (IEC), a much-maligned institution that failed to prevent widespread fraud in the 2009 Presidential and 2010 Parliamentary

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[7]These questions are detailed in Appendix A.1

elections. The Afghan public has also soured on the IEC; only 54% approved of its performance in 2010 (The Asia Foundation, 2010). ISAF and various international organizations spent much of the post-September 2010 election period publicly discussing various reform proposals. Even the Taliban, which had sought to derail these elections through violence, raised the IEC as additional evidence of the Karzai administration's democracy deficit (Nixon, 2011). Given that the IEC subsequently voided over 20% of the ballots cast (about 1.3 million), respondents were well aware of the IEC and its flaws when prompted for their opinion.

The final question asked whether individuals would support strengthening the new Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption. Alongside security concerns, there is perhaps no more salient issue in the minds of Afghans today than corruption; a full 76% rated it a "major problem" in 2010, ranking it among the top two domestic concerns of individuals (The Asia Foundation, 2010). Both ISAF and the Taliban are aware of the issue's salience; each has issued repeated public statements concerning corruption in general and the need to strengthen existing institutions, including the Office of Oversight, in particular (Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2009; Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Royal United Services Institute and Transparency International UK, 2011).

2.2 Sample Population

Our survey experiment was conducted between 18 January and 3 February 2011 in five provinces of Afghanistan. The survey was implemented by the Opinion Research Center of Afghanistan (ORCA), an Afghan-owned firm that recruits all of its enumerators locally. Two pretests were also run, from 25 September to 5 October and 22 November to 5 December 2010, to pilot different endorsement policies, to assess sensitivity to question order (none was found), and to obtain feedback from enumerators about respondent reactions and security issues. Taken together, the pretests had 600 respondents in 40 villages from 10 districts within our sampling frame. These villages were later removed from our sampling frame to avoid contaminating results.

We devised a multistage sampling design to generate estimates of support for combatants at the individual, village, district, and provincial levels. First, five provinces — Helmand, Khost, Kunar, Logar, and Uruzgan — were randomly selected from the 13 Pashtun-majority provinces.[8] Next, we randomly selected districts until at least one-third of each province's districts were included; in total, 21 districts were selected. Third,

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[8]The remaining eight non-sampled provinces are Ghazni, Kandahar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktia, Paktika, Wardak, and Zabul.

villages were randomly sampled from these districts so that at least 10% of each district's total villages were selected, yielding 204 villages. Households were then chosen within these villages using the "random walk" method. Finally, male respondents aged 16 years and older were randomly selected from these households using a Kish grid. We surveyed nine respondents from villages with populations below the mean of sampled villages (about 680 individuals) and 18 in villages with above-mean populations.

We obtained an 89% participation rate (2,754 respondents from 3,097 attempts). Nearly 70% of respondents agreed to participate upon initial contact. Of the 343 refusals, 138 were due to non-contact with an adult male, while the remaining 205 resulted from various reasons (including 62 individuals who were "too busy"). One-quarter of all surveys was back-checked either via direct supervisor observation or targeted call-back. Of the original 204 villages, only four proved inaccessible due to a combination of Taliban hostility, the presence of criminal elements and, in two cases, the inability of the enumerator to locate the village itself.[9] In all cases, village elders — who may have been Taliban — were first approached by ORCA district supervisors with the relevant connections to describe the survey and to receive assurances of enumerator safety.

Despite the extraordinary level of access we obtained to Taliban-controlled areas — a testament to ORCA's connections as well as its decision to hire locals as enumerators — we nonetheless experienced myriad delays and logistical challenges. These included movement restrictions due to open war-fighting (especially in Helmand); Taliban and militia roadblocks (normally appearing after 2pm in most of our districts); and attempted highway robbery. In one case, a clean-shaven enumerator was pulled from his car in Kunar where, along with other motorists, his face was blackened with motor oil by local Taliban to signify his "sinfulness."[10] Our most serious incident involved a district manager in Uruzgan, who was wounded by a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) the day after placing the last bundle of completed surveys on a fruit truck to Kabul (our preferred method of returning surveys to ORCA).

Table 2 summarizes our five-stage design and resulting sample. Since the vast majority of Afghans live in small rural settlements, we avoided sampling from large urban centers, e.g., district centers. Our villages thus range from 20 to 2509 inhabitants (mean: 680 individuals). We also made the difficult decision to include only male respondents given the cultural and logistical challenges of interviewing women in these violent

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[9]Each village was matched with a similar replacement that the enumerators could select if conditions warranted.

[10]In a sign of how routine this practice has become, roadside shopkeepers had set up a thriving business charging these unlucky individuals a 100 Afghanis "per face" charge for soap and water.

| | Districts | | Villages | | Individuals | | Violent events initiated by | | Civilian casualties caused by | | |
Provinces	total	sample	total	sample	total	sample	Taliban	ISAF	Taliban	ISAF	unknown
Helmand	13	5	568	61	1,411,506	855	4,444	179	330	202	234
Khost	13	5	405	45	754,262	630	406	3	142	24	22
Kunar	15	5	262	30	548,199	396	733	12	107	37	30
Logar	7	3	365	40	384,417	486	132	0	36	24	11
Uruzgan	6	3	262	28	324,100	387	314	3	80	14	35
Total	54	21	1,862	204	3,422,484	2,754	6,029	197	695	301	332
8 non-sampled Pashutun provinces	112	0	10,383	0	6,156,571	0	2,353	64	809	181	234
Other 21 provinces	232	0	20,804	0	14,903,729	0	1,220	32	416	115	165

Table 2: Multistage Sampling Design Used for the Afghanistan Survey Experiment. First, five provinces shown in this table were randomly sampled from a total of 13 provinces with a Pashtun majority. Second, districts were randomly chosen within these districts. Third, villages were then randomly sampled from within selected districts. Fourth, households were randomly selected within each of the selected villages. Finally, one male respondent 16 years or older was randomly sampled within each of the selected households. The table also displays the number of Taliban- and ISAF-initiated violent events (from January to May 2010) and civilian casualties (from January to December 2010) inflicted at the provincial level.

and deeply conservative areas. Our protocol included a special consent form for individuals aged 16 – 18 years. We elected to include these individuals since Afghanistan's median age is only 18, a fact typically overlooked by existing surveys of Afghan public opinion.

We chose to concentrate on Pashtun-majority areas rather than a nationwide sample for three reasons. First, estimation at the village and district level requires a sufficient number of individual respondents and selected villages, respectively, making a nationwide sample prohibitively expensive if we scaled up with the same level of coverage. Second, these areas are not only substantively important — they encompass the Taliban "heartland," and are considered the battleground provinces — but also represent areas where intergroup bias between Pashtuns and ISAF should be present. Third, these areas have had (variable) experience with ISAF and Taliban-initiated violence. Indeed, they represent the higher end of the distribution of violence.

Table 2 outlines just how violent these provinces have been using two different datasets. The number of attacks initiated by the Taliban and ISAF during January-May 2010 stems from ISAF's Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) which records the date, location, and type of event according to specific categories.[11] Civilian casualty data stem from three sources: a cleaned version of ISAF's own

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[11]The specific event categories: ISAF (Cache Found, Direct Fire, Escalation of Force, and Search and Attack) and Taliban (Assassination, Attack, Direct Fire, IED Explosion, IED False, IED Founded/Cleared, IED Hoax, Indirect Fire, Mine Found, Mine Strike, SAFIRE, Security Breach, and Unexploded Ordinance). These data run from 1 January to 15 May; we will close this gap once ISAF releases its data.
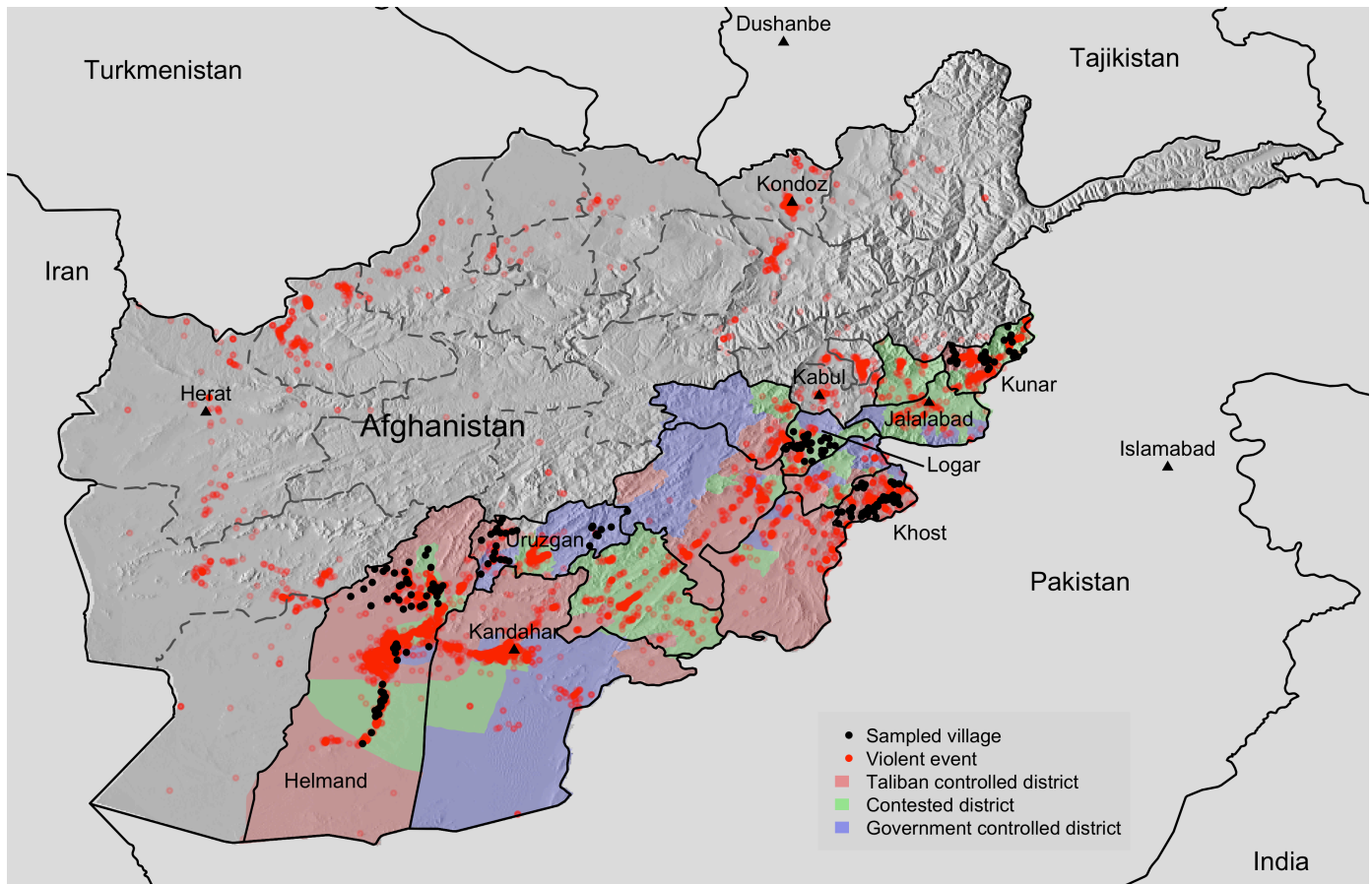
Figure 1: Sample Population. Black dots represent randomly sampled villages within five Pashtun-dominated provinces. Red dots represent Taliban- or ISAF-initiated violence between January and May 2010, the most recent dates we have data for. Three colors are used to distinguish Taliban-controlled (red), Government-controlled (blue), or contested (green) districts.

Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell (CCTC); several human rights organizations, including UNAMA; and media reports from Afghan and Western electronic media. All incidents record the date, perpetrator and victim identities, event location, and the manner in which individuals were killed or wounded (i.e., by airstrike). These data demonstrate that the sampled provinces have experienced variable levels of violence but, on average, are considerably more violent than other, non-Pashtun, provinces.

Figure 1 illustrates this pattern by overlaying the location of sampled villages (as black dots) on the distribution of Taliban and ISAF violence (as red dots) during 2010. Two spatial patterns emerge immediately. First, while some of our surveyed villages are within extremely violent areas, other sites experienced relatively few attacks nearby, giving rise to considerable heterogeneity in the level and type of harm experienced by respondents. Second, we overlay the spatial distribution of relative control by combatants, as measured by ISAF at the district level. Nine of the 21 districts are defined as under Taliban control (red areas), while

another nine were coded as "contested" (green areas). Only three districts in our sample are thus considered under central government or pro-ISAF local control (blue areas). These data underscore both the difficulties of research in these areas as well as the fact that, for nearly all respondents, experience with harm at the hands of ISAF or the Taliban (or both) is not an abstract notion but a realistic possibility—and, for many, a reality.

2.3   Measuring Exposure to Violence

We measure our central explanatory variable, exposure to harm caused by ISAF or the Taliban, with multiple questions. We distinguish between "direct exposure" to harm that affected an individual or his family and "indirect exposure" in which the individual "heard about" harm by inflicted by combatants in the surrounding area. These self-reports were elicited prior to the endorsement experiments; the initial questions are reproduced below.

- Over the past year, have you or anyone in your family suffered harm due to the actions of foreign forces?
- Over the past year, have you heard of anyone in your *manteqa* suffering harm due to the actions of foreign forces?

The same questions were asked about the Taliban to establish the comparison between the effects of ISAF and Taliban-inflicted harm on attitudes. *Manteqa* literally translates as "area" and typically refers to a geographic space larger than the village but much smaller than a district. To avoid ambiguity and differing interpretations, the questions were preceded by a script that defined "harm" as both physical injury and property damage.

One might wonder whether enquiries about victimization are too sensitive for direct questioning. This was an initial concern that was ruled out during the pretests when we discovered that individuals, far from being reticent about sharing their experiences, were only too eager to provide details.[12] In fact, the combined rate of "Don't Know" and "Refuse to Answer" for the full survey was only 2% and 1% for Taliban and ISAF-inflicted harm questions, respectively.

After each question about direct and indirect exposure to harm, we asked whether the individual had personally experienced or heard about efforts by the responsible combatant to mitigate the harm inflicted. These questions permit sub-setting of individual experiences by exposure to harm (yes/no), by combatant,

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[12]The IRB protocols ruled out collecting data on the specific nature of harm inflicted since these details could, in theory, be used to identify individuals in a given village if these data leaked.

and whether those harmed were subsequently approached by the responsible party in an effort to mitigate the negative effects of their actions. This latter comparison is especially important since it allows us to examine whether attitudes are irretrievably hardened by violence or whether they can be shaped, if only partially, by combatants after the fact. Our post-harm mitigation question is reproduced below.

- (If yes to the above question) Have you (or your family) been approached by foreign forces after they caused harm?
- (If yes to the above question) Have you heard whether foreign forces approached those who suffered harm?

As before, these questions were repeated to capture whether the Taliban had approached victimized individuals (direct exposure) and if the respondent knew of similar efforts in his *manteqa* (indirect exposure).

In this context, "approached" is a euphemism devised in conjunction with ORCA to ask tacitly whether individuals received (or were perceived to have received) compensation for damages inflicted. Our focus groups and enumerator debriefs after both pretests concluded that asking direct questions about the type or level of remuneration was too sensitive in this setting and, in a sense, unnecessary, since the meaning of being "approached" was widely understood by respondents without further explanation.

To be approached by ISAF signifies that an individual or family has received a one-time *solatia* payment, typically on the order of $2,500, that absolves ISAF of criminal liability for civilian casualties or property damage.[13] By contrast, to be "approached" by the Taliban suggests that the aggrieved party has received a funeral oration by the Taliban extolling the virtues of the fallen individual(s) as well as modest monthly payments or basic staples such as kerosene or foodstuffs. Posed in this manner, these questions resulted in a combined "Don't Know" and "Refused to Answer" rate of less than one percent for both combatants.

Respondents were also asked "how often do you encounter foreign forces in the area where you live?" This question, which was not asked about the Taliban for security reasons, aimed to control for prior level of interaction with ISAF forces. Possible answers ranged from "daily" and "several times a week" to "several times a month" and "never."

Finally, to complement respondent self-reports, we calculated the number of attacks initiated by the Taliban and ISAF occurring in or near each village. As detailed earlier (Section 2.2), these declassified data

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[13]In 2010, the US spent $4.44 million on 1114 condolence and battle damage payments. For our sample, Helmand had the greatest share of payments (N=518, $2.8 million), followed by Kunar (N=48, $129,000), Khost (N=40, $66,197), Urozgan (N=15, $76,000), and Logar (N=12, $44,000). The mean disbursement was $3,982, though payment per individual was far lower.

record the location and perpetrator of 17 categories of violent events. To be consistent with our survey questions, we count only the attacks that occurred within a five kilometer radius of each village in January-May 2010 (i.e. one year prior to the survey). Despite the current data gap for the June-December 2010 period, this event data offers an extraordinarily fine-grained measure of violence that can act as an important, if limited, alternative measure to our self-reported measures of exposure to harm.

2.4 Other Explanatory Variables

We also account for variables emphasized by leading alternative explanations. First, we record each village's elevation to account for the difficulty of state control (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Second, we measure the relative level of control exercised by ISAF and the Taliban over a given district. We draw on ISAF's own four-fold index, which grades ISAF's level of control from "government control or dominant influence" to "local control or dominant influence" to "contested" to "Taliban control or dominant influence." These ratings were assigned in September 2010, roughly four months before our full survey was implemented.[14]

Third, existing theories contend that an individual's attitude towards the combatants may be swayed by the provision of services or basic goods. We therefore record the number of Community Development Councils (CDC) implemented by July 2010 at the district level by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) under the auspices of its National Solidarity Program (NSP). At nearly $1 billion, the NSP is the largest aid program in Afghanistan and consists of cash transfers to villages that decide on spending priorities via local council meetings. The MRRD uses a seven-fold index to record the range of completed projects (from 0 to 262) in a given district. We also record the amount of district-level expenditures devoted under ISAF's Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) during 2010. Unlike the NSP, these projects are designed to be inexpensive and fast-acting and typically center around back-to-work initiatives, agricultural initiatives, or short-term grants for business development.[15]

Fourth, we account for Taliban efforts to provide services. While the Taliban clearly does not have the resources to run an NSP-style program, it is deeply enmeshed in district-level opium cultivation, protecting opium farmers from state interference in exchange for a share of opium-derived revenues. We therefore

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[14]ISAF "Insurgent Focus" Briefing Slide, dated September 2010.
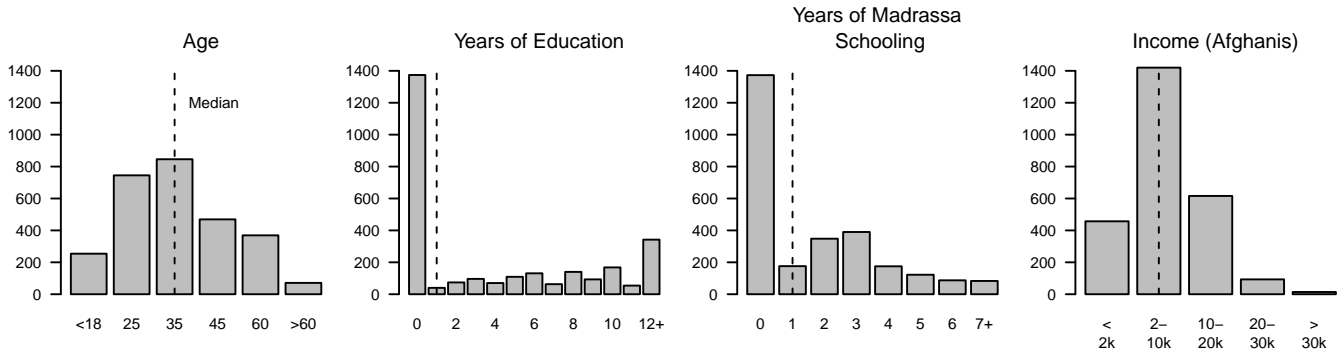
[15]ISAF CERP Data, 2005-10.

Figure 2: Distribution of Demographic Characteristics. Bar plots indicate the number of respondents in each category for demographic variables. Dashed lines represent median values.

measured the estimated level of hectares under opium cultivation at the district level during 2010 (United Nations Office of Drug Control, 2010, p. 112). We also record whether one or more Taliban "flying courts" were present in the district by mid-2010. These courts are designed to compete with often-corrupt official judicial institutions by providing swift "justice" for capital crimes. They often consist of little more than several Taliban officials making the rounds between villages on motorcycles, dispensing their particular brand of justice, but are welcomed by locals since they have a reputation for incorruptibility, if not leniency.

3 Survey Responses

In this section, we conduct a descriptive analysis of survey responses to examine respondents' demographic characteristics, their reported exposure to violence, and the spatial distribution of their answers to the endorsement experiments. We also "ground truth" these responses by comparing them to qualitative knowledge about sampled districts and provinces.

3.1 Demographic Characteristics

Figure 2 presents the distributions of basic demographic variables for our sample of 2,754 respondents. Our average respondent was a 32 year old Pashtun male who was likely married (77% answered yes), possibly employed (only 58% reported holding a job, with the most frequent occupation being "farmer"), and earning between $1.40 and $6.97 US a day. Respondents typically had little or no government-provided schooling, and on average had only six months of madrassa schooling. In keeping with the high poverty rates of the sample area, respondents on average had less than 90 minutes of electricity a day. Less than half (48%) possessed cellphones, while nearly all (90%) owned a radio, the principal means of obtaining information.

Ethnic minorities, mostly Tajiks, made up about 7% of the respondents and had comparatively higher rates of education and employment.

3.2 Exposure to Violence

Respondents reported a high degree of prior exposure to ISAF and Taliban violence. Figure 3 presents mosaic plots summarizing four key questions (two for each combatant) about exposure to violence: whether the respondent had experienced harm from Taliban and ISAF-initiated violence and whether the responsible combatant subsequently approached harmed individuals (see Section 2.3). Plots were created for direct exposure to violence (Figure 3(a)) and indirect exposure in the *manteqa* (Figure 3(b)) for the sample average and for each province. In each mosaic plot, the rectangle's area is proportional to the number of respondents who answered a specific combination of these four questions. For example, the plot in the upper left corner illustrates the overall distribution for direct exposure to violence; the largest rectangle depicts those that did not experience harm by either the Taliban or ISAF and who were, as a consequence, not approached.

Overall, 37% respondents indicated that they or their families had personally experienced harm at ISAF's hands over the past year. A comparable share (33%) reported that they had been victimized by the Taliban (left corner plot in Figure 3(a)). Roughly 70% of respondents had heard of ISAF inflicting harm on civilians in their *manteqa* in the past year, whereas a little less than 40% reported that they had similarly heard of Taliban violence toward civilians in their *manteqa* (left corner plot in Figure 3(b)).

Province-level variation is broadly consistent with the pattern of violence outlined in Section 2.2. Helmand is associated with the highest recorded levels of violence from individual and *manteqa* level self-reports (right corner plots of each subfigure) and from the CIDNE data, for example. Logar, by contrast, is associated with the lowest levels of self-reported victimization (left bottom corner plot of Figure 3(a)) and CIDNE data.

It is important to note, however, that there is low statistical correlation between self-reports of combatant harm and ISAF's own civilian casualty data. ISAF's data suggest that the Taliban are responsible for inflicting 89% of incidents involving the death or wounding of civilians in 2010 (or, by UNAMA's estimate, 83% of civilian deaths). By contrast, our self-report data reveal a much more even distribution of harm inflicted, with a slightly larger proportion of respondents reporting victimization at ISAF's hands than the Taliban. This pattern holds at the *manteqa* level; the number of respondents who had heard about someone being
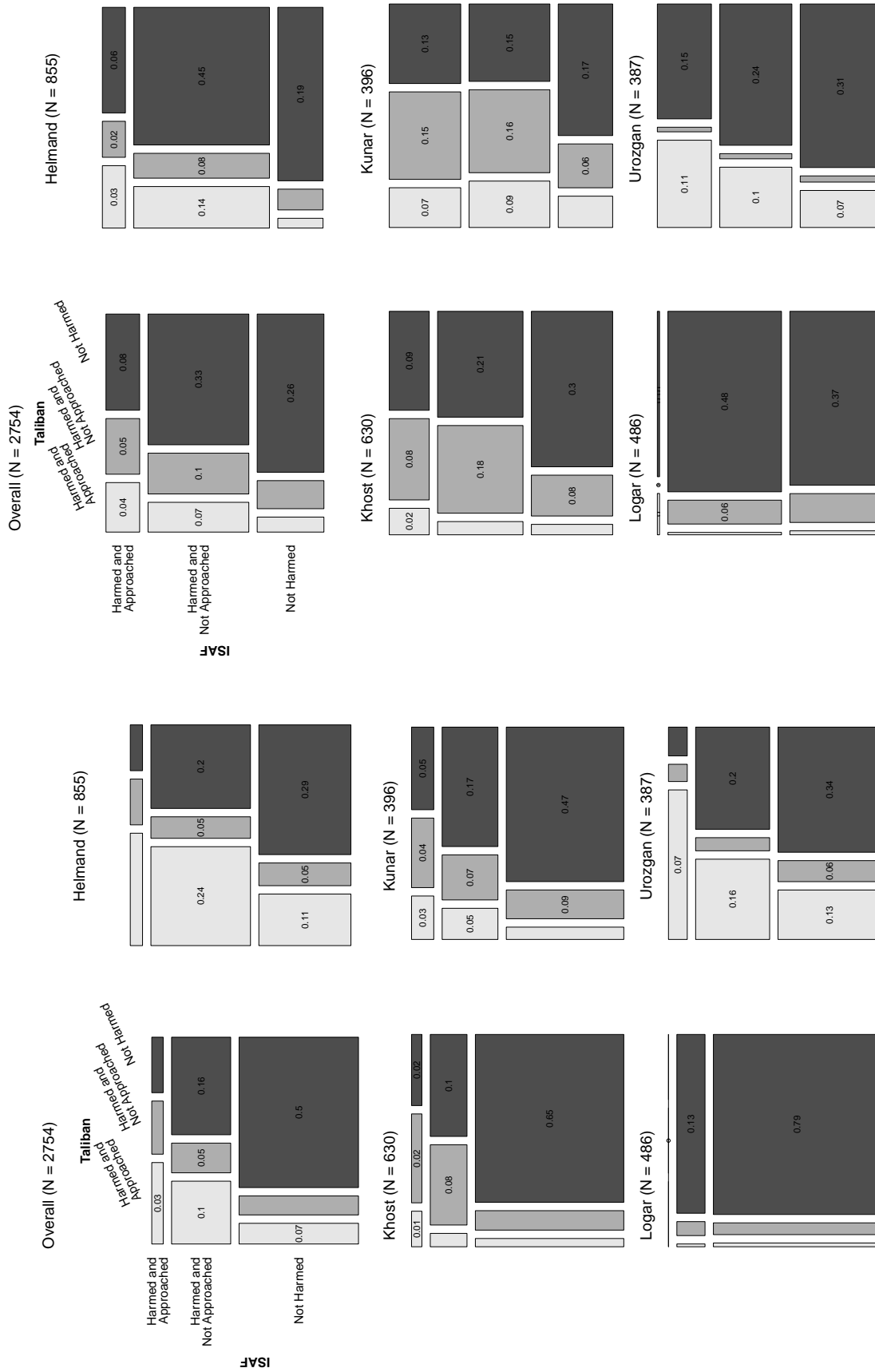
(a) Direct Experience with Violence

(b) Heard About Violence in the *manteqa* (area)

Figure 3: Responses to the Questions about Harm from Taliban- and ISAF-Inflicted Violence and Whether Victims were Subsequently "Approached" by Combatants. Mosaic plots depict the overall and inter-province distributions of responses at the self/family (left two columns) and *manteqa* (right two columns) levels. In each plot, the area of a rectangle is proportional to the number of respondents who answered those four questions in a specific way. The number in each rectangle represents the proportion of the same of the corresponding subgroup. "Don't Know" and "Refuse to Answer" were dropped as they accounted for at most 2% of the sample.

victimized by ISAF in the past year was nearly twice as high compared with Taliban-inflicted harm.

The discrepancy between ISAF event data and self-reports is due to several factors. First, the two measures operationalize harm differently, with ISAF's data focused solely on deaths and wounded while our self-report measure captured both physical harm and property damage. The latter category, which ISAF does not collect systematically, is especially important since it represents a far more frequent occurrence than the rare mass-casualty events that command media attention. Second, ISAF's coding rules for assigning responsibility for a particular event rely on objective indicators (e.g. if a Taliban-emplaced IED kills civilians, then the Taliban is assigned responsibility for the event) while the population may not be making the same calculation (e.g. ISAF is blamed for IED-conflicted casualties since ISAF's presence made the IED likely). Third, ISAF's Civilian Casualty Tracking Cell (CCTC) still relies on non-standardized (self-)reporting by soldiers in the field who often struggle to complete follow-up investigation in certain regions, especially in Regional Command-East and -Southwest (Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 2011, pp. 10–11). Four of our five provinces — all but Uruzgan — fall within these two regional commands. Finally, these self-reports measure individual-level exposure, while ISAF's event data in present form can only be pegged (at best) to the more aggregate village level. For these reasons, we believe that our self-reports represent a more comprehensive measure of harm inflicted by each combatant than ISAF's own data.

3.3 "Ground-Truthing" Our Initial Findings

Next, Figure 4 displays the provincial distribution of responses to our four endorsement questions. Three trends are worth noting. First, there is substantial heterogeneity of inter-province support for these policies, even independent of particular endorsements. This is encouraging since it suggests that the questions, taken separately or together, possess remarkable discriminatory power. Compare higher support for prison reform in Logar, for example, with Khost, or anti-corruption efforts in Logar with Helmand. Second, there are substantial support differences across Taliban and ISAF endorsements. In some provinces including the Taliban stronghold of Helmand or the warlord-controlled Uruzgan, support for Taliban endorsed policies is far higher than ISAF endorsed policies. In fewer cases, notably in the key battleground province of Kunar, ISAF endorsement does translate into higher support for at least two proposals.

Finally, the low non-response rate signifies the high level of public awareness of these policies, which is
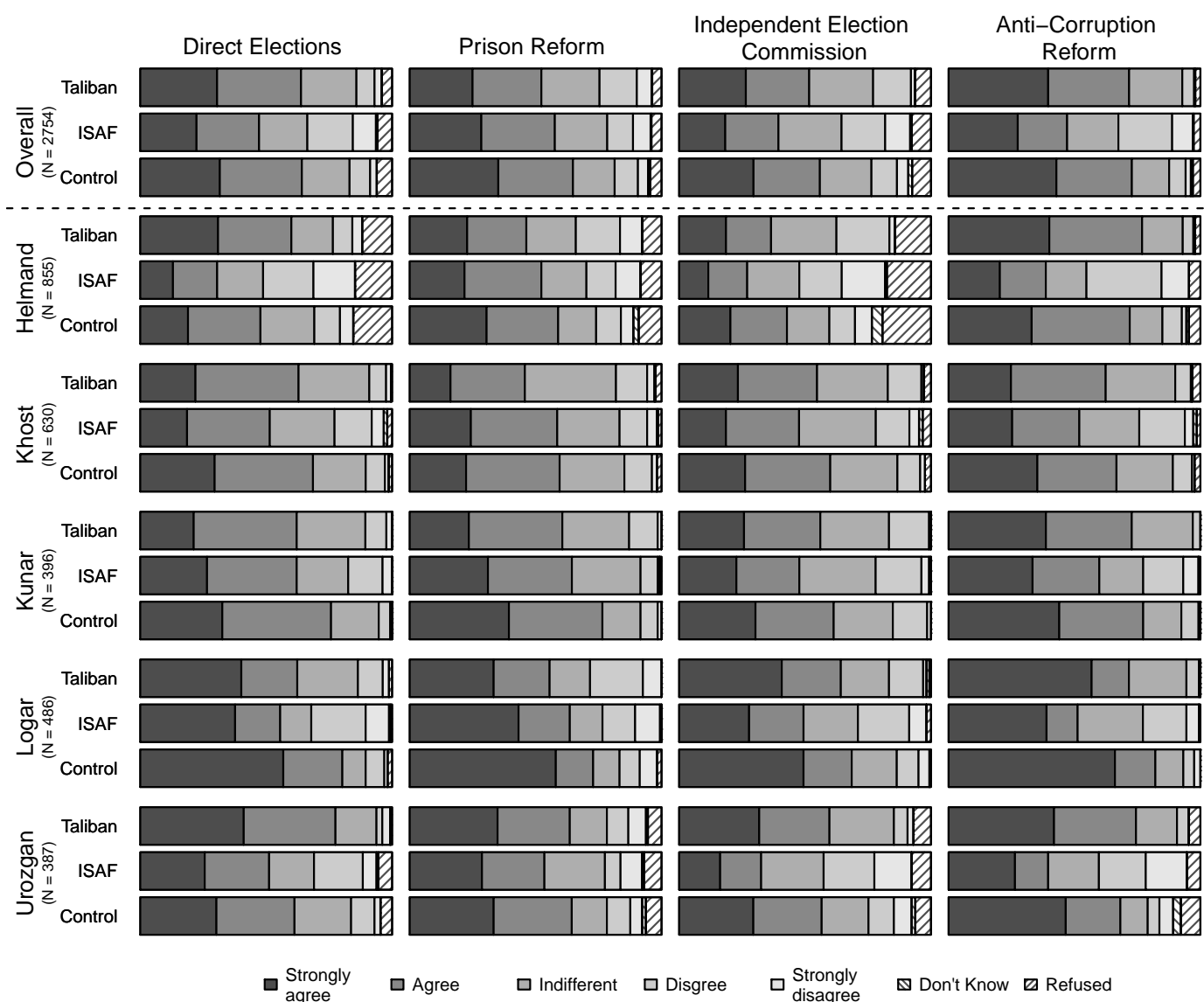
Figure 4: Overall and Within-Province Distribution of Responses from the Endorsement Experiment. Plots depict the distribution of responses to four policy questions (columns) across three groups (Taliban/ISAF endorsement groups and control group) for the overall sample (top row) and each province (bottom five rows). Sample sizes are also shown.

an important requirement for the successful implementation of endorsement experiments. On average, only 4.5% of respondents replied "Don't Know," with a range of 2% (on the Anti-Corruption Initiative) and 7% (on IEC reform). In addition, we recorded low refusal rates in all provinces, with the partial exception of a single district in Helmand (discussed below), indicating that the endorsement experiments were successful in avoiding high non-response rates even when asking sensitive questions in a setting with ongoing hostilities.

Since endorsement experiments only provide indirect measures of support, it is important to compare these responses with existing knowledge of these areas. We contend that, while these distributions are broadly consistent with the qualitative knowledge about these five provinces, our survey experiment also identifies

novel patterns at provincial and district levels.

As Figure 4 demonstrates, Helmand reveals a strong pro-Taliban emphasis in its collective response to the endorsement questions at the provincial level. This finding is perhaps unsurprising, for Helmand has been a Taliban bastion since the resurgence of the Taliban movement in 2006. Afghanistan's largest province, a key South-North supply line, and the center of its booming opium trade, Helmand has also consistently topped ISAF charts for insurgent-initiated attacks against ISAF forces. In 2010 — that is, before and during our survey — ISAF and Afghan National Army (ANA) forces had launched a series of operations designed to evict the Taliban forcibly from several districts, including Garmser, Nawa, Nad Ali, Now Zad, and the capital, Lashkar Gah. These efforts have yielded a modest reduction of anti-ISAF violence, but these gains remain fragile and their ultimate effects unknown.

Khost is a relatively small and mountainous province that, owing to its strategic location bordering Pakistan, has emerged as an important transit route for both Taliban fighters and those of the Haqqani network. Closely aligned with the Taliban, the Haqqani network is led by Mawlawi Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sirajuddin Haqqani, and has gained a reputation as one of the most lethal and violent insurgent organizations in Afghanistan. At the time of our survey, Khost was largely stable, but had recorded a notable uptick in attacks in 2010 when compared with the preceding year. The presence of both a sizable ISAF contingent and these armed groups lends Khost the air of a classic "battleground" province. As a consequence, attitudes toward the combatants appear nearly evenly divided, with ISAF or Taliban leanings apparently dictated by the content of the particular issue rather than prior allegiance.

Much like Khost, Kunar is a relatively small, mountainous province that borders Pakistan. Two insurgent groups, the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), are present, though the Taliban are by far the largest and most important organization. Unlike Khost, however, Kunar has long been viewed by ISAF as a linchpin in its eastern strategy. As such, at least $70 million in aid has been poured into the province, while the United States maintains a large, if still insufficient, military presence in the province. Here, too, public attitudes toward the combatants appears divided, with the weight of a particular endorsement conditional on the question posed. This is perhaps to be expected given the sizable presence of both combatants in the province, not to mention ever-increasing levels of violence between them. Kunar will only gain in importance

in the coming months as ISAF shifts its counterinsurgency strategy away from Helmand and Kandahar and toward Afghanistan's eastern border provinces.

Logar has until recently enjoyed a reputation for safety, with some of the lowest recorded totals of insurgent violence among Pashtun-majority provinces. While an important transit route to and from Kabul, there is only a minimal Czech-led ISAF force presence in the province. In recent years, however, the Taliban have made inroads into this agricultural province as part of their strategy to encircle Kabul, and violent incidents increased in 2010. Our endorsement experiments reflect this trend: three of four questions suggest a pro-Taliban leaning, despite the fact that Logar's capital, Pul-i-Alam, is only 60 kilometers from Kabul.

Uruzgan is a rugged, sparsely populated and extremely poor (even by Afghanistan's standards) province that has only a small Dutch-led ISAF presence. Local government has essentially been captured by Matiullah Khan, a local warlord who heads a private army that generates millions of dollars by guarding NATO's supply convoys that transit the highway linking Kandahar to Uruzgan's capital, Tirin Kowt.[16] Khan, along with US and Australian Special Forces, has also fought to clear Taliban forces from Uruzgan, though allegations persist that he actually colludes with, rather than combats, Taliban forces to secure additional revenues for "protection." In light of the province's chaotic government, weak ISAF presence, and general lawlessness, the demonstrated support for the Taliban in Figure 4 is perhaps unsurprising despite ISAF's own internal designation of Uruzgan as generally under "government or local control."

Finally, Figure 5 offers Helmand as an example that substantial district-level variation exists in the distribution of responses, even within a province uniformly regarded by ISAF and outside observers as heavily pro-Taliban. Intriguingly, in the case of Lashkar Gah, Helmand's capital district, we even observe high levels of ISAF support. This trend is likely due to a joint ISAF-Afghan National Army (ANA) offensive launched in late-2010 that resulted in the forced dislodging of Taliban fighters from the capital city, if not the surrounding countryside. Unlike other provinces, however, Helmand has a fairly high refusal to answer rate, which is mostly concentrated in Now Zad district. Subsequent interviews with our Helmand survey coordinator and district managers suggests that the survey was conducted during an ongoing ISAF military operation that had bloodied, but not yet eliminated, the Taliban in Now Zad.[17] Historically a Taliban bastion, Now Zad was a

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[16]See "With U.S. Aid, Warlord Builds Afghan Empire," *New York Times*, 5 June 2010.

[17]Interview with project supervisor, Kabul, 4 September 2011; Interview with Helmand project manager, Konduz City, 6 September 2011.
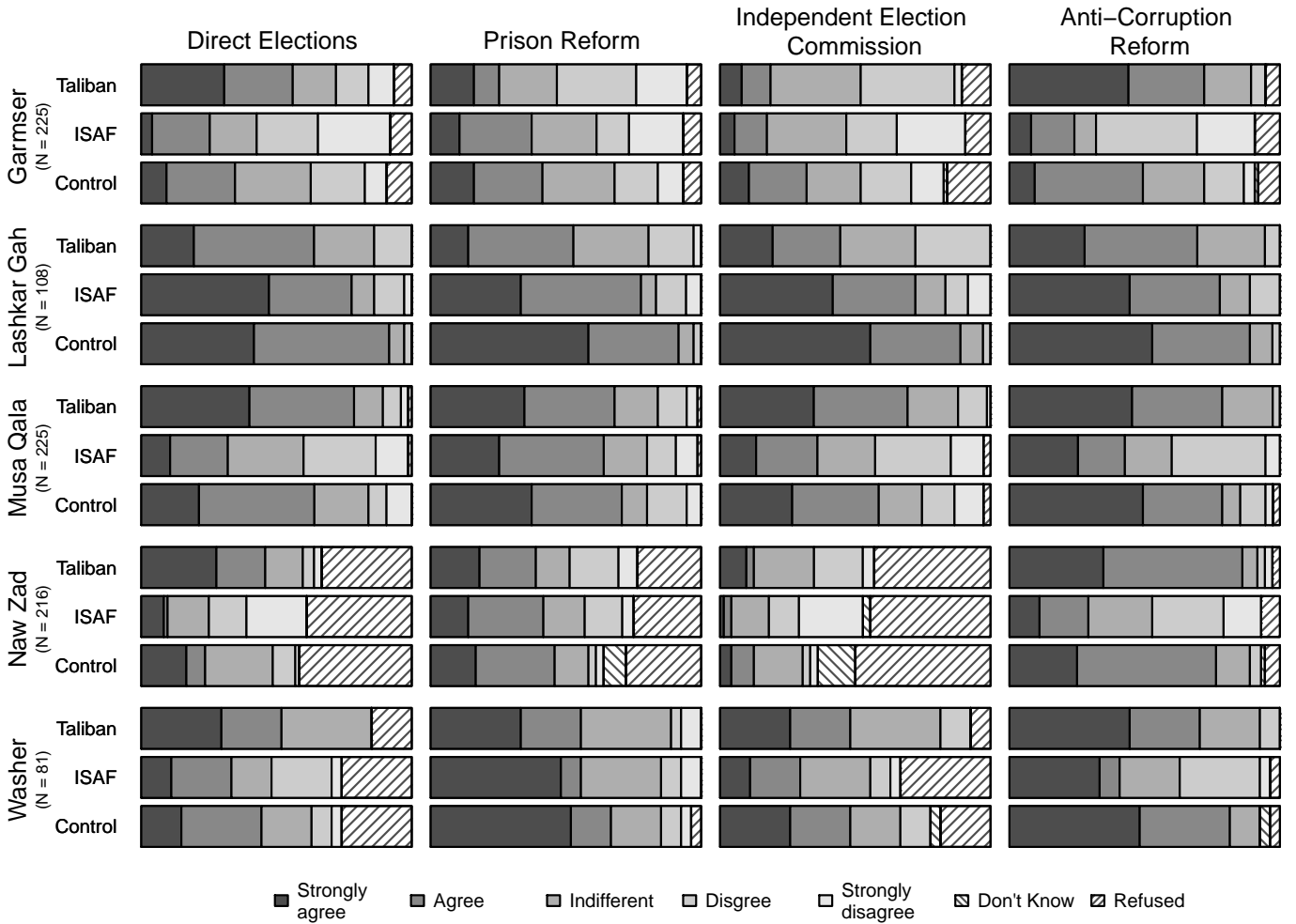
Figure 5: Within-District Distribution of Responses to the Endorsement Experiment for Helmand Province. Plots show the distribution of five point scale responses to four policy questions (columns) across three groups (Taliban/ISAF endorsement groups and control group) for each of the five districts of the Helmand Province in the sample. Sample sizes are also shown.

"no man's land" in January-February 2011 and, as such, many respondents simply refused to answer these questions to avoid incurring Taliban wrath. Given these circumstances, it is nonetheless remarkable that the majority of respondents in Now Zad still answered these questions.

4 Statistical Modeling

While these aggregate descriptive analyses are informative, we move to formal statistical analyses to test our individual-level hypotheses about intergroup bias and alternative explanations. We employ the methodology developed by Bullock, Imai and Shapiro (2011) to combine responses from the four endorsement experiment questions to uncover the underlying latent levels of support for each combatant. Since all four questions occupy the same policy space, it is possible to apply this methodology based on item response theory.

We exploit the multistage sampling design of our survey experiment and construct a multilevel model where each level corresponds to one stage of sampling. Under this model, for example, a village-level parameter is assumed to be randomly drawn from a distribution defined at the level of the district in which the village is situated. This corresponds to the sampling process, in which villages are randomly selected from the population of villages within each of the sampled districts. Our multilevel modeling approach allows us to estimate via partial pooling support levels of the Taliban and ISAF and their difference at all four levels – individuals, villages, districts, and provinces – providing a wealth of information about the spatial distribution of support. Finally, our model also accommodates predictors at each of the four levels, including individual-level survey measures and village-level violence data.

We now formally define our statistical model. Let i index survey respondents in our sample ($N = 2,754$). In the endorsement experiment, each respondent is randomly assigned to one of the three conditions with equal probabilities — Taliban endorsement, ISAF endorsement, and no endorsement (control condition). We use T_i to denote this randomized "treatment" assignment, which takes one of the three values, i.e., $2 =$ Taliban, $1 =$ ISAF, and $0 =$ Control. Now, respondent i's answer to the jth policy question is represented by Y_{ij} for $j = 1, \ldots, 4$ and is recorded as the 5-category ordinal response variable, $5 =$ Strongly agree, $4 =$ Agree, $3 =$ Indifferent, $2 =$ Disagree, and $1 =$ Strongly Disagree.

First, the individual level of our model is given as the ordered probit item response model: $\Pr(Y_{ij} \leq l \mid T_i = k) = \Phi(\alpha_{jl} - \beta_j(x_i + s_{ijk}))$ where $\alpha_{j1} = 0$ and $\alpha_{jl} < \alpha_{j,l+1}$ for any j and l. In this model, the latent variable x_i represents the degree to which respondent i is pro or anti-reform while s_{ijk} measures his support level for group $k = 1, 2$ where $s_{ij0} = 0$ and a greater value of s_{ijk} indicating a higher level of support. In addition, the "item difficulty" parameter α_{jl} controls how likely respondents are to agree or disagree with policy j without endorsement, and the "discrimination" parameter β_j operationalizes the degree to which policy j differentiates between pro-reform and anti-reform respondents. We assume $\beta_j > 0$ for any j because we have written policy questions such that a respondent's agreement would imply he/she is supportive of the reform. Thus, according to our model, the probability of agreeing with a reform proposal is a function of the two factors: how pro-reform a respondent is in general and how supportive he/she is of the assigned group. In addition, the degree to which survey responses are affected by these two factors depends on how popular the

reform proposal is and how the proposal can discriminate between pro-reform and anti-reform respondents.

We model the two key latent parameters, x_i and s_{ijk}, using the multilevel modeling strategy.[18] Specifically, we assume that each respondent is randomly drawn from a population distribution in his own village, each village is randomly drawn from a distribution of its district, and each district is randomly drawn from a distribution of its province. At each level, covariates can be incorporated and the normal distribution is used. We use Markov chain Monte Carlo to obtain random draws from the joint posterior distribution of relevant parameters. For each model fit, which is accomplished via JAGS (Plummer, 2009), we monitor convergence by running three parallel chains with over-dispersed starting values.

Finally, though the number of non-responses is small, the pattern of missingness is not completely random. Thus, we impute these missing values as part of our model by assuming that the data are missing at random conditional on village and other covariates at individual and aggregate levels. This mitigates the bias and inefficiency that typically result from list-wise deletion.

5   Empirical Findings

The results from our multilevel models are presented below. We first concentrate on four individual-level analyses: the role of socioeconomic characteristics such as income and education in shaping support for ISAF and the Taliban; the effects of victimization on combatant support; the effects of being approached after harm by each combatant in a bid to mitigate its effects; and the role played by tribal affiliation among Pashtun respondents in conditioning support. We then scale-up to the village level to provide a more sweeping view of the distribution of support for each combatant.

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[18]Formally, the model is specified as follows,

$$x_i \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\delta_{\text{village}[i]} + Z_i^\top \delta^Z,\ 1)$$

$$s_{ijk} \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\lambda_{k,\text{village}[i]} + Z_i^\top \lambda_k^Z,\ \omega_{k,\text{village}}^2)$$

$$\delta_{\text{village}[i]} \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\delta_{\text{district}[i]} + V_{\text{village}[i]}^\top \delta^V,\ \sigma_{\text{district}}^2)$$

$$\lambda_{k,\text{village}[i]} \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\lambda_{k,\text{district}[i]} + V_{\text{village}[i]}^\top \lambda_k^V,\ \omega_{k,\text{district}}^2)$$

$$\delta_{\text{district}[i]} \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\delta_{\text{province}[i]} + W_{\text{district}[i]}^\top \lambda_k^W,\ \sigma_{\text{province}}^2)$$

$$\lambda_{k,\text{district}[i]} \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\lambda_{k,\text{province}[i]} + W_{\text{district}[i]}^\top \lambda_k^W,\ \omega_{k,\text{province}}^2)$$

where Z, V, and W are optional covariates at the individual, village, and district levels, respectively. The model is completed by assigning non-informative prior distribution on each parameter (Bullock, Imai and Shapiro, 2011).

5.1 Individual-Level Analysis

We fit two models: a "direct exposure" model that incorporates a respondent's (or his family's) direct exposure to harm (see Section 2.3) and our key explanatory variables, and an "indirect exposure" model that draws on the same covariates, but substitutes direct exposure to harm for an individual's awareness of civilians being harmed within his larger *manteqa*. Both models include a common set of theoretically relevant variables, some of which are described in Section 2.4. At the individual level, we include a battery of socioeconomic and demographic covariates that have been cited as important determinants of support for terrorist or insurgent groups. These covariates include the respondent's age, marital status (Berrebi, 2007), income level and years of state and madrassa education (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003; Bueno de Mesquita, 2005; United States Agency for International Development, 2011), ethnicity, and if the respondent is a Pashtun, his tribal affiliation and whether that tribe was deemed already pro-Taliban (Giustozzi, 2008, pp. 52–69).[19]

These models also include key covariates at the village and district levels. Village-level covariates include the settlement's altitude, population size, and the number of ISAF- and Taliban-initiated violent events within five kilometers of the village center during January-May 2010[20] to account for prior exposure to each combatant's negative actions (see also Section 2.2).

District-level covariates include total expenditures on ISAF Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) short-term aid projects in 2010; the number of villages in a given district that had received NSP-run community development projects by the conclusion of 2010; a dummy variable that indicated whether the district was home to a Taliban-run sharia court system; the area in a given district under opium cultivation (in hectares); the length of paved roads, a proxy for general economic development; a dummy variable indicating whether the district neighbored Pakistan, to control for cross-border flows of arms, insurgents, and funds; and ISAF's own measure of the control it exercised over a given district, as measured in September 2010. The inclusion of ISAF- and Taliban-directed aid and service provision variables enables us to account for the "positive" actions of combatants on the battlefield.[21]

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[19]For our purposes, the pro-Taliban tribes are the Noorzai, Zadran, Gheljay, and Durrani.

[20]These results were robust to the substitution of violent events within one or ten kilometer radii, of violent events within five kilometers for a longer period of time from 2006 to 2010, and of civilian casualties for the same January-May 2010 period.

[21]As a robustness check, we re-ran our models without the village and district-level covariates. The results are substantively similar and therefore we present results from the hierarchical models only.
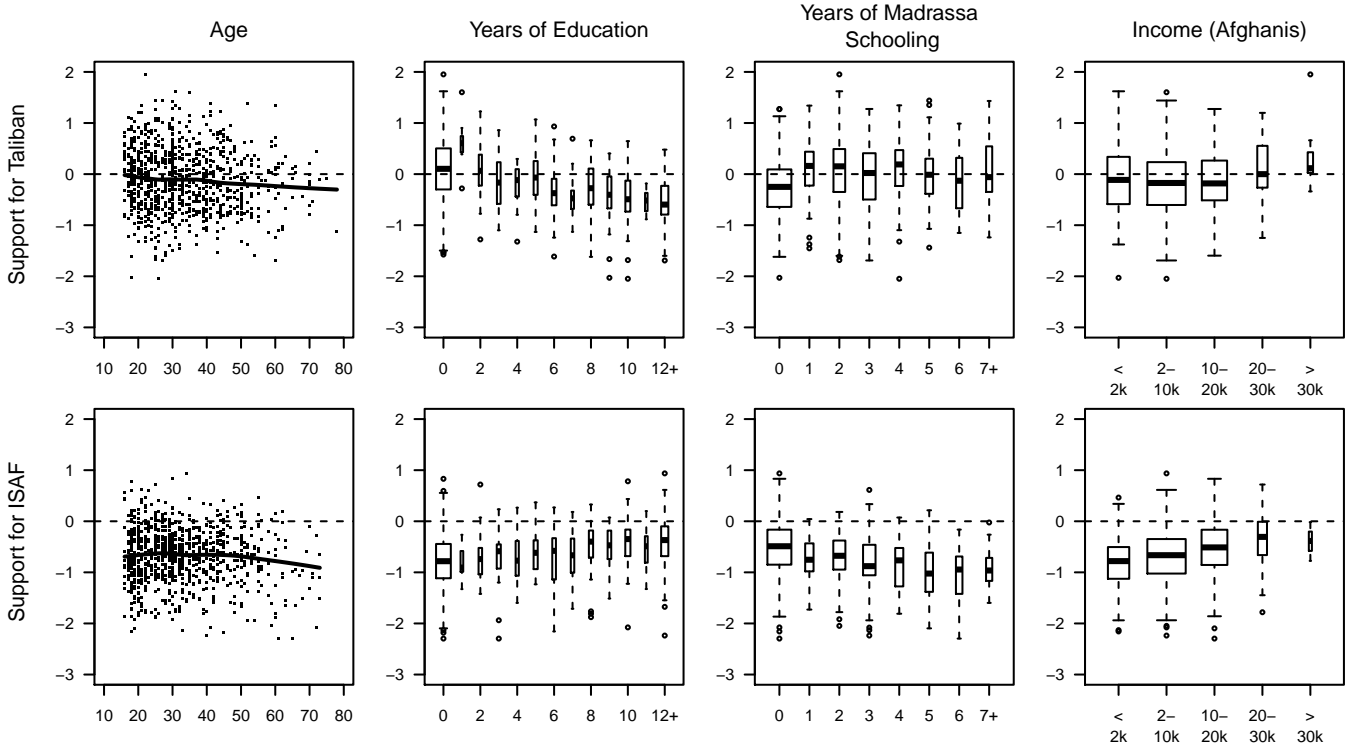
Figure 6: Bivariate Relationships between Demographic Variables and Individual-level Support for the Taliban and ISAF. Support estimates are given in terms of the standard deviation of ideal points. For age (the left column), dots represent respondents and the lowess curve is fitted as a solid line. For remaining plots, box plots are used: the width of each box is proportional to (the square root of) the number of respondents for each value of the demographic variables.

For space reasons, we provide the posterior mean and standard deviation for each coefficient in these models in Appendix A.2. The models also generate estimates of a respondent's level of support for the assigned combatant,[22] where the estimates are measured in terms of the (posterior) standard deviation of respondents' preferences within a single dimensional policy space (i.e., ideal points). Within our context, suppose that a respondent neither supports nor opposes the proposed reform initiatives. If this individual's support level for the Taliban was "1," then it implies that a Taliban endorsement of reform proposals can move this individual's ideal point by one standard deviation in the pro-reform direction.

Characteristics of Taliban and ISAF Supporters. Who is more likely to support the Taliban or ISAF? We plot individual-level support estimates from the "direct exposure" model against key demographic covariates in Figure 6. We note, for example, that estimated support for both combatants decreases with age, though the Taliban (top row) clearly enjoy much more support among the youth than ISAF (bottom row). This may appear somewhat surprising given the Taliban's public image as a conservative gerontocracy, but the war

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[22]If a respondent is assigned to the control group, then no estimate of support is generated.
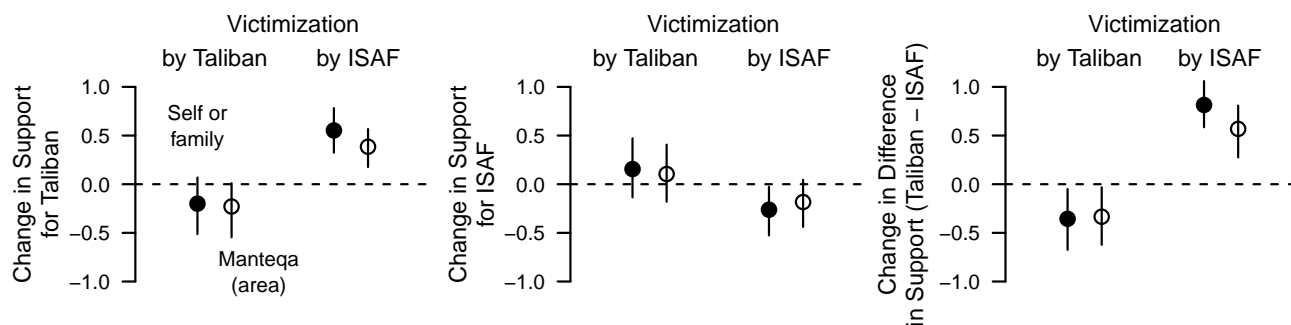
Figure 7: Estimated Effects of Victimization by the Taliban and ISAF on Support Levels. Respondents were asked whether they or their family members were harmed ("self/family") as well as whether they had heard about someone in their "*manteqa* (area)" who had this experience. The responses to these questions were used as measures of exposure to violence and their effects on support levels are estimated. Posterior means of the corresponding coefficients are plotted along with 95% confidence intervals.

has created opportunities for advancement among the youth, and it appears that the Taliban are being given credit for this mobility. Predictably, support for ISAF — or, more bluntly, decreased dislike for ISAF — is associated with increased education and with fewer years spent in madrassa education. The reverse is true for the Taliban: its estimated support levels rise with years of madrassa education and fall with years of government education. Finally, per capita income is positively associated with estimated ISAF support (or, again, less dislike of ISAF) while there appears to be no clear pattern between income and Taliban support.

Effects of Victimization. We provide initial evidence for our claim that the effects of violence on civilian attitudes depend on the combatant's identity. Figure 7 illustrates these estimated effects on levels of support for the Taliban (left panel) and ISAF (middle panel) as well as their difference (right panel) at two levels — the self/family (solid circles) and the *manteqa* (open circles). Within each plot, the estimated average effects of Taliban harm are presented first, followed by ISAF harm.

First, victimization by the Taliban slightly decreases support for the Taliban (left panel), and has no clear effect on support for ISAF (middle panel). Taken together, this evidence suggests that victimization by the Taliban has a moderately negative effect on the difference in support between the Taliban and ISAF. Victimization by ISAF, however, yields a different pattern. Self-reports of harm inflicted by ISAF are associated with a large positive effect on Taliban support (left panel) and a similar negative effect on support for ISAF (middle panel). This basic asymmetry between the effect of ISAF victimization on support for the Taliban and Taliban victimization on support for ISAF is statistically significant and is estimated to be 0.42 standard deviation of the ideal points (with the 95% confidence interval of $[0.03, 0.81]$) at the individual/family level.
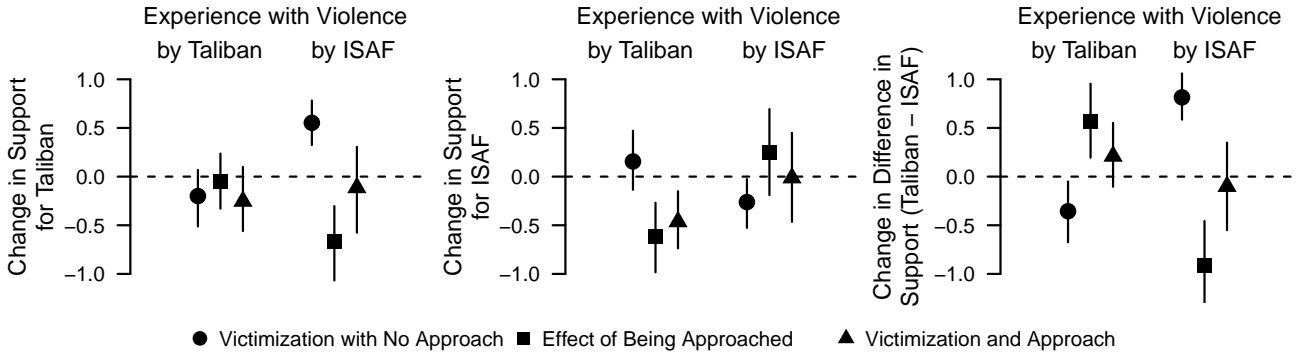
Figure 8: Estimated Effects of Victimization and Subsequent "Approach" by Combatants on Support. Posterior means of the corresponding coefficients are plotted along with 95% confidence intervals.

The asymmetry aligns with our theoretical expectation that responses to violence will be structured by the identities of the combatants, and in particular that violence initiated by the out-group (ISAF) will increase support for the in-group (Taliban). On average, Taliban victimization leads to a smaller net negative effect on support for the Taliban when compared to ISAF victimization, suggesting that in-group members view violence by their own group in very different terms than negative actions by the out-group.

Shifting our focus from the "direct exposure" to the "indirect exposure" model allows us to determine whether our proposed mechanism of personal victimization is at work. As Figure 7 demonstrates, the effects of ISAF victimization are somewhat attenuated when compared self-reports of direct harm: support for the Taliban and ISAF do follow the general patterns indicated at the self/family level, but the magnitude of estimated effects on support levels for each combatant is diminished at the *manteqa* level. More specifically, we find that the net difference in the effect of ISAF violence on ISAF support between individual- and *manteqa*-level is 0.246 (95% confidence interval at $[-0.07, 0.60]$). We do not observe a similar pattern of attenuation for Taliban violence, in part because the individual-level effects are already small. In short, the magnitude of the effects of ISAF's violence on attitudes attenuates as we scale up from direct to indirect exposure to violence.

Effects of Post-Harm Mitigation Efforts. Can combatants offset the negative effects of their violence on civilian attitudes via post-harm mitigation efforts? In each panel of Figure 8, we present the combined estimated effect of being harmed and "approached" (triangles) as well as the estimated effect of being harmed but not approached (circles) and that of being approached alone (squares) by each combatant. Both victimization by the Taliban and its post-harm mitigation efforts have little effect on Taliban support (left panel). Interest-

ingly, although Taliban-inflicted harm does not change support for ISAF, being approached by the Taliban after victimization has a negative effect on support for ISAF (middle panel). The net effect of Taliban victimization and post-harm mitigation efforts (right panel) is thus a *positive* net effect on Taliban support, reversing the negative net effect that is associated with Taliban victimization. More specifically, the net difference, at 0.57 standard deviation (95% confidence interval of $[0.19, 0.95]$) is statistically significant.

The right column of each panel presents the results for ISAF's restitution efforts. As seen before, civilian victimization by ISAF has a large positive effect on Taliban support and a sizable decrease in support for ISAF. However, when we examine the combined effects of being harmed and subsequently approached by ISAF, the net effects on both Taliban and ISAF support become nearly zero. Indeed, the net difference in effect between harmed individuals and those who were harmed and then approached is a highly significant -0.91 standard deviation movement away from a pro-Taliban position (95% confidence interval of $[-1.40, -0.46]$). This suggests that ISAF is capable of nearly offsetting the sharply negative effect of its victimization on civilian attitudes if it subsequently attempts to mitigate the harm inflicted. It therefore appears that both combatants, and not simply the Taliban, are able to mitigate the negative effects of their violence.

ISAF's apparent ability to ameliorate the negative effects of its violence also implies that intergroup bias can be mitigated in wartime. Yet we must be careful not to overstate this finding. Indeed, there is a severe selection problem at work here, for ISAF managed to "approach" only 16% of those who claimed that they had been harmed by ISAF. By contrast, the Taliban "approached" over 60% of those who self-identified as suffering Taliban victimization. ISAF's decision-making on the extension of condolence and battle damage payments is often haphazard, but is at least partly conditioned on anticipated reception in a given village (Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, 2010*b*). The more likely a unit is to receive armed resistance from aggrieved villagers, the less likely ISAF will return to disburse payments. Given closer media scrutiny, mass casualty events are more likely to be followed by post-harm mitigation efforts. Aggrieved individuals in small-claims cases, by contrast, are often forced to go to military bases to receive their funds, discouraging all but the most determined (and risk acceptant) claimants (Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, 2010*a*). As a result, the finding regarding ISAF's ability to use condolence payments to overcome intergroup bias relies on a small subset of individuals who were specifically selected to receive this assistance. Indeed, these
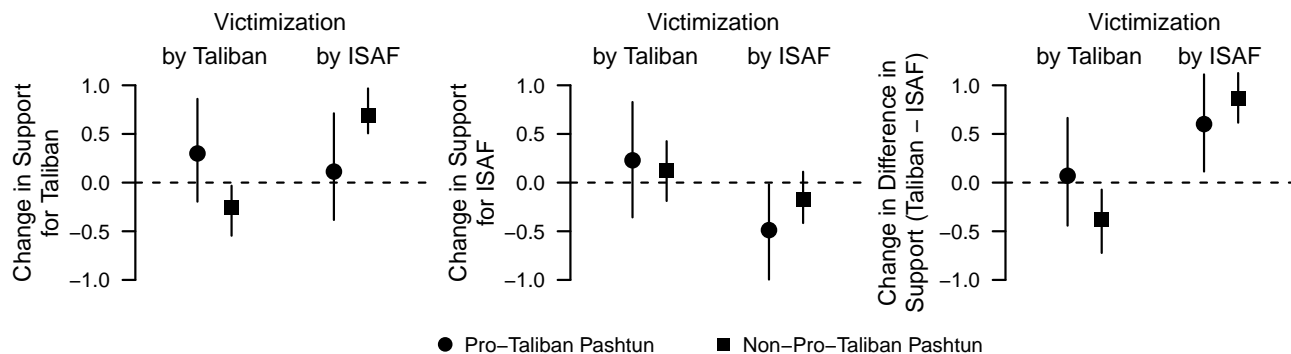
Figure 9: Differences in Estimated Effects of Victimization by the Taliban and ISAF on Their Support Levels by Tribal Affiliation with the Taliban. Posterior means of the corresponding coefficients are plotted along with 95% confidence intervals. The full results of these models appear in Appendix A.2.

individuals may be the ones most likely to be swayed by ISAF's efforts.

Tribal Analysis. We can add nuance to our discussion of intergroup bias and its effects on attitudes if we allow for variation within the "in-group" category. Several Pashtun tribes, for example, have largely (and publicly) declared in favor of the Taliban, while others — often in conflict with pro-Taliban tribes — have remained neutral or, in a few instances, sided against these tribes. While we cannot assume homogeneity of views among all members of a particular tribe, we can explore whether the attitudes of individuals from these pro-Taliban Pashtun tribes diverge from those of their non-Taliban aligned counterparts. In particular, we expect that individuals from pro-Taliban tribes are more likely to be forgiving of Taliban victimization given their prior support and close identification with the Taliban. The negative effects of ISAF victimization are also likely to be greater in magnitude for this subset of individuals, though if ISAF support is already low we may actually observe a ceiling effect given that support for ISAF may not sink any further. In each case, victimization is likely to confirm the intergroup bias that negative in-group actions are situational in nature while those of the out-group and its members are dispositional.

Figure 9 illustrates the conditional effects of tribal affiliation on how ISAF and Taliban victimization is interpreted by our respondents. The effects of Taliban victimization, for example, partly hinge on the individual's tribal identity, with members of pro-Taliban tribes (solid circles) actually recording a *positive* effect on Taliban support after suffering harm. For members of non-pro-Taliban tribes (solid squares), on the other hand, exposure to Taliban violence has a modest *negative* effect on Taliban support. Members of pro-Taliban tribes appear, on average, to not only tolerate, but to embrace harm as an expected aspect of war-fighting against the out-group, a view less strongly held among other Pashtuns. Similarly, ISAF victimization

does not have an effect on (already high) support for the Taliban among pro-Taliban tribes, but has a large positive effect for non-pro-Taliban tribal members. Indeed, the difference between the two groups is 0.61 standard deviation (with a 95% confidence interval of $[1.11, 0.22]$), suggesting that ISAF-inflicted harm has an especially outsized effect on members of non-Taliban-aligned tribes.

Turning to the effects of violence on ISAF support, we find that Taliban victimization has broadly similar effects for both pro-Taliban tribal members and other Pashtuns. This result is consistent with our claim that intergroup bias prevents a "transfer" of support from the in-group to the out-group. We also find that ISAF victimization has a larger negative effect on members of pro-Taliban tribes than non-Taliban-aligned tribes — as we would expect from an intergroup bias perspective — though the difference is fairly modest at -0.26 standard deviation (95% confidence interval at $[0.73, -0.28]$) and statistically insignificant.

5.2 Village-Level Analysis

Our multilevel model also generates village-level estimates of combatant support. Scaling up facilitates the investigation of the spatial distribution of support across our 204 villages while also permitting engagement with theories that privilege variables at higher levels of aggregation than the individual. We therefore reestimate our models without any individual-level covariates to avoid drawing on the same information twice.

Figure 10 maps estimates of support for the Taliban, ISAF and the net difference between the two combatants for each village. The map illustrates the overwhelming dominance of pro-Taliban sentiment throughout surveyed locations. Some 162 villages are modestly pro-Taliban, with 97 villages recording net support levels above 0.5 standard deviation; 55 villages have a 1.0 or higher standard deviation; and 18 actually recorded greater than 1.5 standard deviation from the average ideal point estimate. By contrast, only 42 villages reveal a pro-ISAF leaning; only 5 villages are above -0.5 standard deviations and no village record higher than -0.85 standard deviation from the ideal point. There are surprisingly few "fence-sitting" villages that occupy the contested middle ground between the two combatants: only 17 villages have net differences of around zero (between -0.05 and 0.05, specifically), with the highest concentration in Kunar (6 villages) and Khost (5). There are only two fence-sitting villages in our Helmand sample and none in Uruzgan. A less restrictive definition of fence-sitting ($\pm$ 0.25 standard deviation from the ideal point estimate) finds 70 villages occupying this middle ground, with the bulk in Khost (26), Kunar (22), and Logar (19). Even with this less
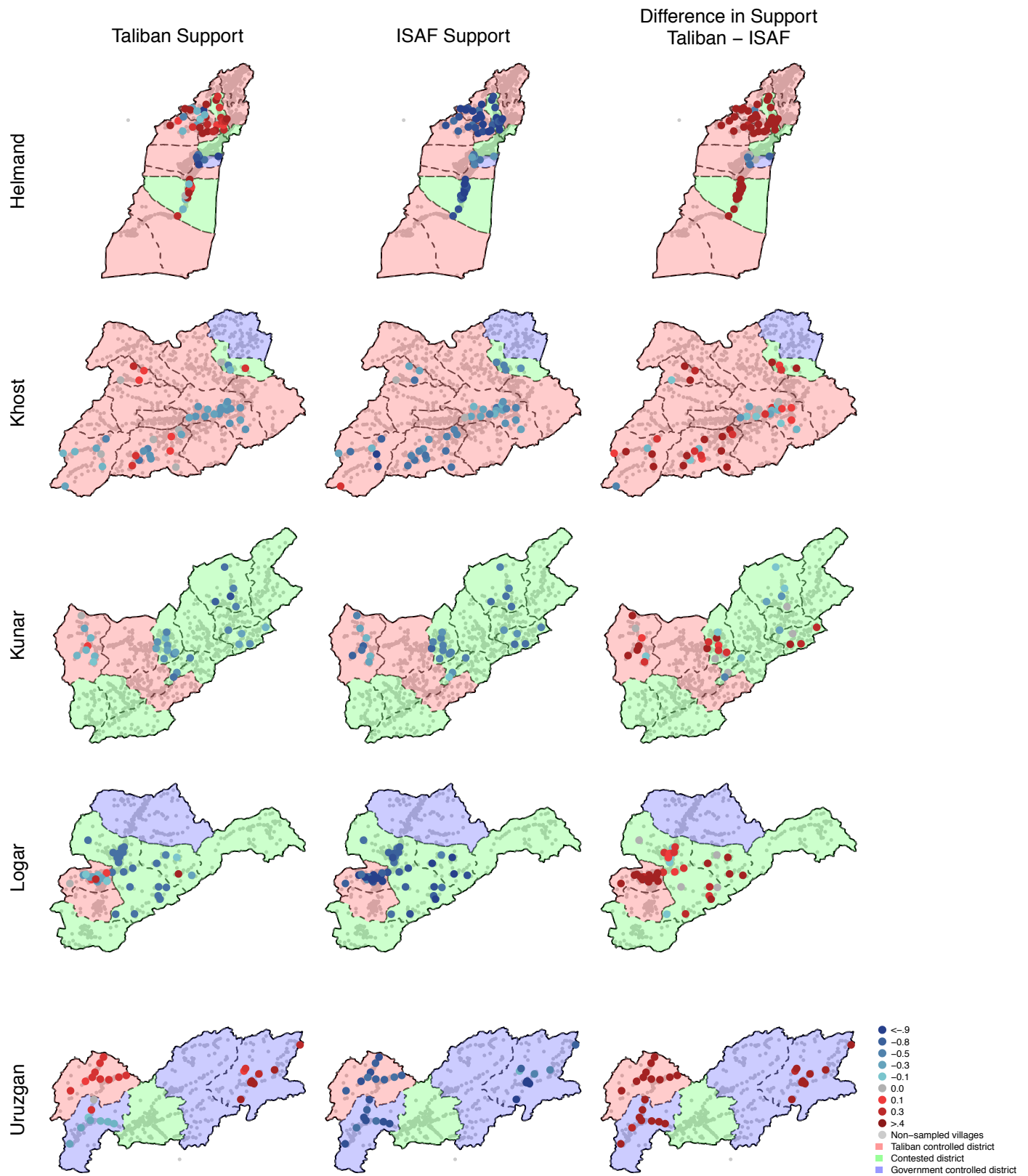
Figure 10: Estimated Levels of Support for the Taliban, ISAF, and their Difference for Sampled Villages. Red dots represent villages with positive support while blue dots are those with negative support. Estimates are presented in terms of standard deviation of ideal points. Dashed lines represent district boundaries and small light grey circles are non-sampled villages.

restrictive measure, Helmand only records 3 villages while Uruzgan (still) has none.

Perhaps most counterintuitively, there appears to be no consistent effect of prior violence near a respondent's village on civilian attitudes. As noted above, we separated violent incidents by their initiator and then created count variables for events within 1km^2, 5km^2, and 10km^2 radii for each village for various timeframes (January 2006-May 2010, January-May 2010 only). No model returned a statistically significant association between combatant violence and effects on attitudes. We are currently limited by the terms of ISAF's release — our data only run until May 2010 — a potential problem if violence's effects are conditional on their immediacy. We therefore substituted these event data for ISAF civilian casualty data that encompass all of 2010. Once again, we find no consistent relationship between "objective" civilian casualty data and respondent's attitudes. While we cannot rule out the possibility that these events do shape private attitudes, they appear to be less salient than individual self-reports of harm.

6 Alternative Explanations

Substantial evidence exists to support the claim that intergroup biases are responsible for the observed asymmetries of effects of combatant actions on civilian attitudes. Yet concern may remain that other theoretical accounts might also account for these results. We therefore devote this section to considering four alternative identity-based theories as well as three additional explanations that emphasize battlefield factors such as the distribution of aid, relative control by the combatants, and Taliban service provision.

Other Identity-Based Accounts. We might imagine, for example, that the observed asymmetry of effects on attitudes is due to a sense of betrayal among Afghan civilians. Perhaps these individuals believe that ISAF, but not the insurgents, will protect them, a belief that leads them to punish ISAF for violating its perceived commitment to safeguard the population. While intuitive, it is clear from our data that few believes that ISAF will protect them from harm; in fact, the opposite is true. We posed the question "In your view, how often do foreign forces (or the Taliban) take precautions to avoid killing or injuring innocent civilians during their operations?" Possible answers were: always (3), sometimes (2), rarely (1), and never (0). The mean response for ISAF was 0.56; for the Taliban, a 1.92, a substantial difference.[23] These findings are stunning when we

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[23]This difference is significant at $p = .000$, $t_{5506} = 56.55$.

consider that the Taliban killed an estimated 2,080 Afghan civilians in 2010 alone while ISAF was deemed responsible for 440. Yet the perception remains that ISAF, rather than the Taliban, is wielding violence indiscriminately, suggesting that individuals in our sample area do not believe that ISAF is protecting them.[24]

These findings are also consistent with arguments that the post-2001 status reversal experienced by Pashtuns in Afghanistan's ethnic hierarchy has created high levels of support for the Taliban and against the occupying army (for status reversal arguments, see especially Petersen 2002, 40-61). Yet while it is true that foreign-imposed regime changes do "scramble" existing institutions (Downes, 2011), this is less the case in Afghanistan than elsewhere. Indeed, the Karzai-led government created by the Bonn Agreement (December 2001) actually represented a return to prior patterns of ethnic hierarchy and rule, not a decisive break. The current Pashtun-dominated executive has echoes in earlier Durrani Pashtun regimes, including the rule of the "Iron Amir" (1880-1901), under Mohammed Nadir Shah (1930-79), and the Taliban itself. Despite (modest) local score-settling, Pashtuns were not punished for their earlier support of the Taliban, and the new Afghan constitution itself was ratified unanimously (Barfield, 2010, 272-93). Given the nature of the Bonn Agreement, coupled with dissatisfaction with the Karzai government that transcends ethnic lines, it is difficult to argue that current Pashtun support for the Taliban — itself variable, not constant, in our data — is due to a status reversal in the ethnic hierarchy.

A third alternative explanation privileges revenge motives that stem from the Pashtun-specific code of ethics known as *Pashtunwali*. Consisting of nine principles, Pashtunwali norms call for aggrieved individuals to take revenge (*badal*) upon a wrongdoer while acting bravely (*tureh*) to defend their property, family (especially women), and honor (Johnson and Mason, 2008; Tomsen, 2011, 47-54). This argument about culture dictating attitudes stumbles, however, over two issues. First, it is not clear why attitudes would be asymmetrical among harmed individuals without invoking a prior claim about intergroup bias. In principle, the dictate to seek revenge should lead to symmetrical effects of violence on civilian attitudes since the obligation to seek redress is not directed solely against non-Pashtuns. Second, there is considerable intra-Pashtun tribal differences in how their attitudes are influenced by combatant violence and post-violence restitution efforts. It is *neither* the case that Pashtun attitudes are monolithic toward the combatants, nor are these attitudes

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[24]According to UNAMA's figures, the Taliban has been responsible for the bulk of civilian deaths since at least 2008. In 2008, ISAF was responsible for 828 deaths to 1,160 by the Taliban; in 2009, ISAF inflicted 596 deaths, compared with 1,631 by the Taliban. See (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 2011).

uniformly affected by combatant actions.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that these asymmetrical effects remain regardless of an individual's level of prior exposure to ISAF. Contact theory (Allport, 1954; Cook, 1971) suggests that, under certain conditions, intergroup bias — and, specifically, the lessening of out-group derogation — can be reduced via frequent (positive) interaction with members of the out-group. Current ISAF counterinsurgency doctrine also stresses the importance of face-to-face interaction with local populations to build trust and shape attitudes. There is little actual evidence to support this claim in our context, however. To begin with, the conditions cited as necessary for contact theory to be operative are not present. These include equal status between the interacting parties, shared goals, sustained intimate contact, and the absence of competition (Paluck and Green, 2009, 346), a set of ideal conditions not likely to be found in Afghanistan. We also directly tested this claim with a survey question that measured the respondent's frequency of prior interaction with ISAF forces (*Frequency*). The *Frequency* measure was statistically significantly and negatively associated with ISAF support, exactly the opposite of the predictions of contact theory.

Battlefield Dynamics: Aid, Control, and Taliban Service Provision. How do other theoretical explanations fare in explaining civilian attitudes? Surprisingly, we find little evidence that district-level variables hold substantial weight in explaining attitudes toward either combatant. To be sure, caution is warranted when interpreting these results, for we only possess 21 districts in our sample and therefore draw on bivariate correlations between district-level covariates and support in the analyses detailed in Figure 11.

For example, economic assistance, whether in the form of quick, 30-day Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP) initiatives or more deliberate National Solidarity Program (NSP) community grants, appears to hold little sway over attitudes. This holds true if we replace our preferred CERP measure — dollars spent per district in 2010 — with the number of CERP initiates undertaken per district in 2010. Similarly, our measure of NSP progress, namely the number of villages in a given that received NSP grants up until December 2010, is not associated with any effect on civilian attitudes. While data limitations, especially given poor CERP data management practices, are undoubtedly present, a district-level analysis may nonetheless be justified given the possibility of spillover between villages in a given area for certain types of aid.

The apparent ineffectiveness of the US $1 billion National Solidarity Program deserves a closer look, not
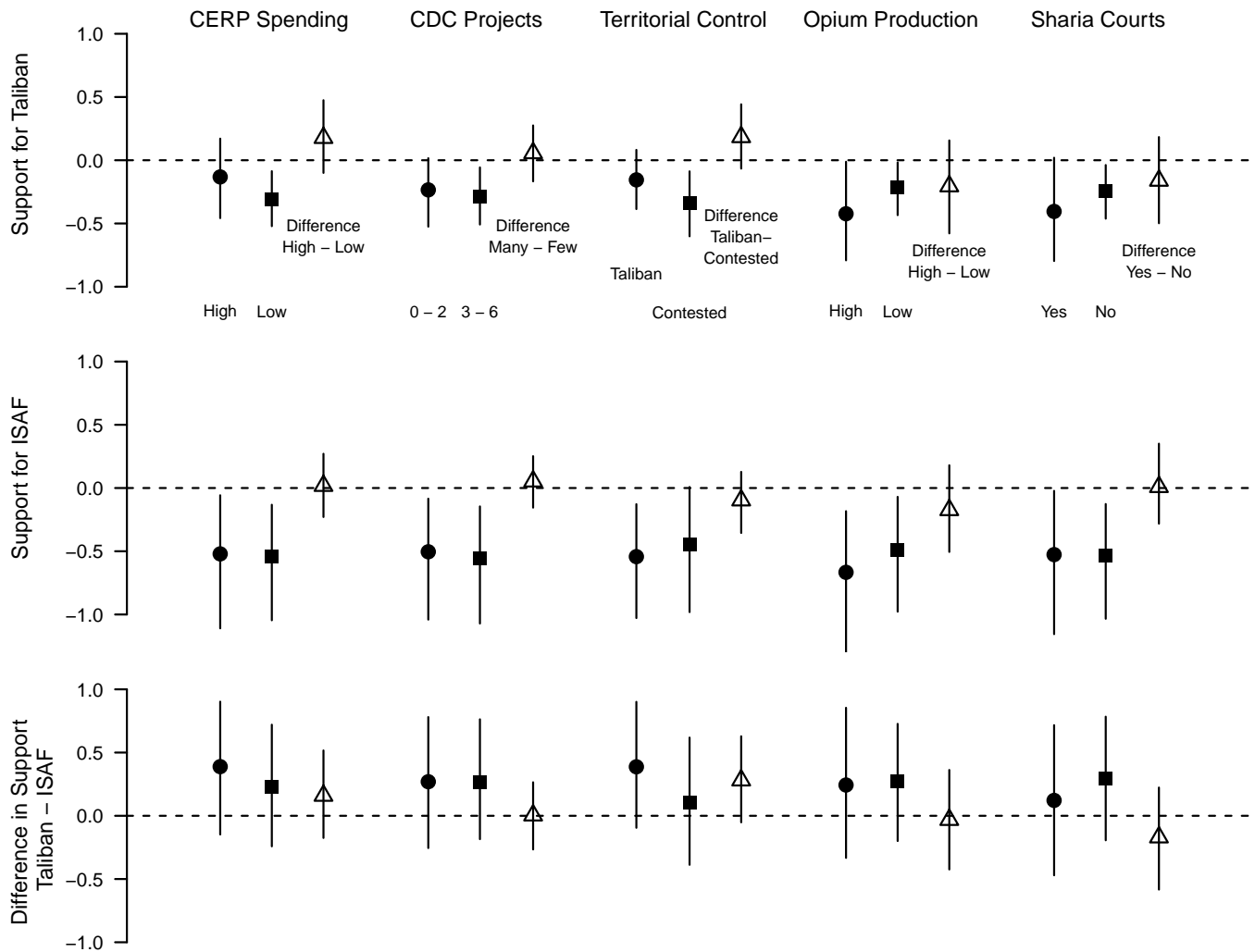
Figure 11: Relationship between District-Level Covariates and Estimated District-Level Support for the Taliban and ISAF. The estimated mean support levels and 95% confidence intervals for each combatant (solid circles and squares) are presented along with net differences (open triangles).

least because it partly conflicts with Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2011)'s careful NSP evaluation. These authors conclude that NSP receipt is associated with a modest improvement in respondents' attitudes toward both local and central governments in eight of their 10 targeted districts. This positive effect disappears, however, in the two most violent, and Pashtun-dominated, districts in their sample, a finding that jibes with our own findings (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2011, 4). Broadly speaking, the different conclusions about NSP effectiveness stem from sampling decisions: our 21 districts are all majority Pashtun and much more violent than average (Tajik majority) districts, while Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov restrict their sample to mostly Tajik or Hazara dominated areas (six of 10) where only 3% of respondents indicate that their village had experienced an attack in the past year (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2011, 16).[25] Moreover,

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[25]Note, too, that Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov included female respondents in 406 of their 500 villages, something that was

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these differences may also arise from different methodological choices: we chose to rely on endorsement experiments to minimize social desirability bias, while the NSP survey evaluation relied on direct questions.

We also find only modest evidence for the presumed relationship between the distribution of combatant control and civilian attitudes. While being located in a government-controlled district is predictably associated with a negative effect on Taliban support, the relationship does not reach conventional levels of significance. In fact, no level of combatant control is associated with any statistically significant effect on support for either combatant. ISAF support is lowest, and Taliban support highest, in districts that are deemed "Taliban controlled" by ISAF relative to "contested" districts. This is consistent with the theoretical predictions of Kalyvas (2006), though the level of support for the Taliban is surprisingly low and, indeed, does not reach positive values for most of the districts in the analysis (Row 1). And as Figure 1 reveals, we also observe considerable within-district heterogeneity in attitudes, especially those toward the Taliban, despite the level of control being held constant. In an ideal environment, control data would exist at the village level, as gathered by Kalyvas for the Greek Argolid (1943-44), to permit a more direct test of this competing theory. Indeed, our analysis reveals that ISAF's district-level conception of control may be too crude to capture the substantial village-level variation that exists in Afghanistan.

Taliban support is consistently *lower* in districts marked by high opium cultivation. While the Taliban do provide farmers with security in exchange for a share of revenue from opium sales, it is possible that the more draconian of Taliban measures — cultivation quotas enforced through violence, increasing levels of taxation, and rising farmer indebtedness — may account for these lower levels of Taliban support. Unexpectedly, the districts that were earliest to witness mobile Taliban courts established have lower net support for the Taliban, though this difference is not statistically significant. This difference is perhaps due to the fact that the Taliban chose these locations to win over local populations, not to reward areas where support was already assured.

7   Generalizability

While threats to internal validity are mitigated through randomization, the question of the survey's external validity still remains. To be sure, there are limits to any one study. Yet the combination of the survey experiment's multistage sampling and empirical context increase the odds that these findings will apply in other

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not feasible in our sampling environment.

settings. For example, given our randomization from provincial to individual levels, there are no substantive differences between our villages and those not sampled; between our districts and those not sampled; or between the selected five provinces and the remaining eight Pashtun-dominated ones. Scale-up to the remaining Pashtun areas is also facilitated by several design aspects — including the use of actual policy proposals for endorsements experiments, the population's continued exposure to violence from both combatants, and the use of multiple measures of support — that strengthen our inferences about these non-sampled provinces.

There are two important caveats, however. First, these findings do not necessarily extend to the non-Pashtun provinces in Afghanistan. These areas are typically, though not always, less violent than Pashtun provinces, and the intergroup dynamic between non-Pashtuns and ISAF is likely not as pervasive as the Pashtun-ISAF relationship examined here given the Taliban's overwhelmingly Pashtun membership. Second, as noted above, our sample only includes male respondents. While this may be the relevant sample given our interest in studying individuals who may be (or may become) insurgents, the results may not apply to females. More specifically, laboratory experiments have largely concluded that men are more prone to intergroup bias than women (Sidanius et al., 2000; Hewstone, Rubin and Willis, 2002, 583). Our male-only respondent pool may therefore explain the magnitude of the intergroup bias effect we identify.

Ranging beyond Afghanistan, we expect similar intergroup bias dynamics to be present in an important subset of insurgencies. Indeed, Afghanistan shares a number of key characteristics with other conflicts, including: (1) an interethnic dimension, which has been the hallmark of more than two-thirds of the 127 civil wars fought since 1945 (Fearon and Laitin 2003; (2) military intervention by an outside party, a feature of about 40% of 286 insurgencies since 1800 (Lyall and Wilson 2009); and a predominantly rural setting. Given these factors, we would expect intergroup dynamics to play an important role in conditioning private attitudes toward combatants in a large number of historical and contemporary civil wars.

8   Conclusion

Drawing on a survey experiment in 204 villages of five Pashtun-dominated provinces in Afghanistan, we demonstrate that civilians' wartime private attitudes toward combatants are guided by intergroup biases that render the effects of violence conditional on combatant identity. These effects are asymmetrical: ISAF-

initiated violence generates a positive effect on Taliban support and a large negative one for ISAF, while Taliban-inflicted harm has only a modest negative effect on Taliban support and no effect on ISAF support. This asymmetry is especially apparent among members of pro-Taliban tribes: they are prone to overlooking, even embracing, Taliban harm, while non-Taliban-aligned tribal members do record a negative effect on support after experiencing harm at the Taliban's hands. Harm by ISAF, on the other hand, has an especially outsized effect within non-pro-Taliban tribal members, suggesting that there are gradations in the strength of intergroup bias among Pashtuns. Both combatants do appear capable of offsetting to a substantial degree these negative effects through the subsequent provision of assistance, though in ISAF's case this finding rests on a small, skewed, sample. Finally, our evidence supports the claim that these effects work through personal, direct experience with violence rather than indirect exposure. The magnitude of the observed asymmetry in conditional effects, for example, clearly attenuates as we shift from the individual to the *manteqa*.

These findings suggest several policy-relevant implications for our understanding of the Afghan war and, more narrowly, ISAF's counterinsurgency strategy. Perhaps most obviously, it is clear that efforts to win "hearts and minds" in these areas have generally failed. Moreover, it is apparent that, given the sensitive nature of measuring support for combatants, ISAF needs to amend not only its strategy, but also its measurement of political support. To date, ISAF has relied heavily on the Afghan National Quarterly Assessment Report, a survey that consists of nearly 350 direct questions on nearly every sensitive topic imaginable, including corruption, support for combatants, and perceived legitimacy of Karzai's government. Such methods are unlikely to elicit truthful answers on these important topics. Second, ISAF's district-level measurement of control is too aggregate given the considerable heterogeneity in attitudes within and across villages that our survey instrument uncovered. And, in terms of specific policy recommendations, it is apparent that aid programs like the NSP or CERP are having little effect on attitudes. While additional study is clearly required, it appears that small-scale post-harm mitigation programs such as *solatia* payments may be the most effective at influencing attitudes. Efforts to systematize the distribution of this aid—and to evaluate the program thoroughly—may yield the highest payoff in terms of positive effects on attitudes.

The notion that intergroup bias may condition attitudes toward combatants and their actions also highlights the need to foreground identity in studies of civil war violence. Statistical models that rely on counts of

violent acts but do not distinguish among perpetrator and victim identities are likely to be misspecified. The same is true of the effects of aid programs, which may hinge on *who* delivers it, not the type or amount of aid itself, a key issue given the U.S. Congress' mandate to brand all foreign aid. Additional research is also needed on how in- and out-groups form and evolve in conflict settings. Of particular concern is the dynamics of how blame is assigned for particular events; this process is poorly understood at present yet is pivotal for understanding how intergroup bias generates conditional effects. Finally, future studies should strive to close the loop between private attitudes and private behavior. To take one example, estimates of support could become the basis for predicting the location of future violence or the degree of collaboration with the local population, two issues of obvious theoretical and practical significance in the study of civil war violence.

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A Appendix

A.1 Survey Questions of the Endorsement Experiment

In addition to the prison reform question given in Section 2.1, we used the following three questions in order to estimate support levels for the Taliban and ISAF.

Direct Elections

- CONTROL CONDITION: It has recently been proposed to allow Afghans to vote in direct elections when selecting leaders for district councils. Provided for under Electoral Law, these direct elections would increase the transparency of local government as well as its responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the Afghan people. It would also permit local people to actively participate in local administration through voting and by advancing their own candidacy for office in these district councils. How do you feel about this proposal?

- TALIBAN TREATMENT CONDITION: It has recently been proposed by the Taliban to allow Afghans to vote in direct elections when selecting leaders for district councils. Provided for under Electoral Law, these direct elections would increase the transparency of local government as well as its responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the Afghan people. It would also permit local people to actively participate in local administration through voting and by advancing their own candidacy for office in these district councils. How do you feel about this proposal?

- ISAF TREATMENT CONDITION: It has recently been proposed by foreign forces to allow Afghans to vote in direct elections when selecting leaders for district councils. Provided for under Electoral Law, these direct elections would increase the transparency of local government as well as its responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the Afghan people. It would also permit local people to actively participate in local administration through voting and by advancing their own candidacy for office in these district councils. How do you feel about this proposal?

Independent Election Commission

- CONTROL CONDITION: A recent proposal calls for the strengthening of the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The Commission has a number of important functions, including monitoring presidential and parliamentary elections for fraud and verifying the identity of candidates for political office. Strengthening the IEC will increase the expense of elections and may delay the announcement of official winners but may also prevent corruption and election day problems. How do you feel about this proposal?

- TALIBAN TREATMENT CONDITION: A recent proposal calls by the Taliban for the strengthening of the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The Commission has a number of important functions, including monitoring presidential and parliamentary elections for fraud and verifying the identity of candidates for political office. Strengthening the IEC will increase the expense of elections and may delay the announcement of official winners but may also prevent corruption and election day problems. How do you feel about this proposal?

- ISAF TREATMENT CONDITION: A recent proposal by foreign forces calls for the strengthening of the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The Commission has a number of important functions, including monitoring presidential and parliamentary elections for fraud and verifying the identity of candidates for political office. Strengthening the IEC will increase the expense of elections and may delay the announcement of official winners but may also prevent corruption and election day problems. How do you feel about this proposal?

Anti-Corruption Reform

- CONTROL CONDITION: It has recently been proposed that the new Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption, which leads investigations into corruption among government and military officials, be strengthened. Specifically, the Office's staff should be increased and its ability to investigate suspected corruption at the highest levels, including among senior officials, should be improved by allowing the Office to collect its own information about suspected wrong-doing. How do you feel about this policy?

- TALIBAN TREATMENT CONDITION: It has recently been proposed by the Taliban that the new Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption, which leads investigations into corruption among government and military officials, be strengthened. Specifically, the Office's staff should be increased and its ability to investigate suspected corruption at the highest levels, including among senior officials, should be improved by allowing the Office to collect its own information about suspected wrong-doing. How do you feel about this policy?

- ISAF TREATMENT CONDITION: It has recently been proposed by foreign forces that the new Office of Oversight for Anti-Corruption, which leads investigations into corruption among government and military officials, be strengthened. Specifically, the Office's staff should be increased and its ability to investigate suspected corruption at the highest levels, including among senior officials, should be improved by allowing the Office to collect its own information about suspected wrong-doing. How do you feel about this policy?

A.2 Coefficient Estimates of the Full Models

	Individual harm		*Manteqa* harm	
	est	se	est	se
Support for the Taliban				
Individual-level				
Harm from Taliban violence	-0.194	0.153	-0.252	0.140
Harm from Taliban violence is NA	0.281	0.322	-0.095	0.463
Harm from ISAF violence	0.485	0.098	0.331	0.094
Harm from ISAF violence is NA	0.222	0.514	0.180	0.417
Approach by Taliban after harm	0.020	0.166	0.237	0.174
Approach by Taliban after harm is NA	0.265	0.543	0.199	0.295
Approach by ISAF after harm	-0.664	0.209	-0.483	0.131
Approach by ISAF after harm is NA	0.027	0.830	-0.433	0.288
ISAF encounter frequency	-0.059	0.086	-0.076	0.056
Years of education	-0.034	0.014	-0.034	0.010
Age (tens)	-0.040	0.042	-0.008	0.038
Income (Afghanis)	0.141	0.052	0.144	0.051
Income is NA	0.361	0.231	0.491	0.219
Schooled in madrassa	0.095	0.113	0.132	0.117
Pro-Taliban tribe	0.202	0.134	0.311	0.153
Pro-Taliban tribe is NA	-0.322	0.288	-0.396	0.215
Village-level				
Altitude (km)	0.060	0.103	0.065	0.096
Population	-0.031	0.052	-0.012	0.073
ISAF-initiated violent events (within 5km)	0.087	0.070	0.069	0.078
Taliban-initiated violent events (within 5km)	-0.056	0.079	-0.051	0.083
District-level				
Sha'ria courts	0.162	0.541	0.126	0.547
CERP project spending	-0.003	0.247	0.019	0.242
Opium cultivation (ha.)	0.256	0.275	0.276	0.271
CDC project count	-0.052	0.092	-0.057	0.097
Road length (km)	-0.022	0.193	-0.076	0.186
Pakistan border	-0.089	0.352	-0.101	0.384
Government territorial control	-0.196	0.571	-0.180	0.586
Contested territorial control	-0.274	0.297	-0.263	0.261
Support for ISAF				
Individual-level				
Harm from Taliban violence	0.172	0.155	0.101	0.141
Harm from Taliban violence is NA	-0.399	0.366	-0.080	0.440
Harm from ISAF violence	-0.300	0.112	-0.199	0.123
Harm from ISAF violence is NA	0.435	0.532	0.072	0.392
Approach by Taliban after harm	-0.589	0.188	-0.426	0.193
Approach by Taliban after harm is NA	0.156	0.728	0.199	0.332
Approach by ISAF after harm	0.262	0.233	0.049	0.152
Approach by ISAF after harm is NA	0.576	0.782	0.231	0.303
ISAF encounter frequency	0.094	0.065	0.058	0.069
Years of education	0.017	0.014	0.021	0.011
Age (tens)	-0.065	0.037	-0.031	0.041
Income (Afghanis)	0.076	0.070	0.069	0.076
Income is NA	0.055	0.275	0.064	0.278
Schooled in madrassa	-0.339	0.110	-0.279	0.113
Pro-Taliban tribe	-0.095	0.147	0.009	0.161
Pro-Taliban tribe is NA	0.225	0.292	0.132	0.255
Village-level				
Altitude (km)	-0.030	0.128	-0.053	0.093
Population	0.078	0.074	0.070	0.078
ISAF-initiated violent events (within 5km)	0.010	0.074	-0.021	0.070
Taliban-initiated violent events (within 5km)	-0.051	0.093	-0.001	0.091
District-level				
Sha'ria courts	-0.062	0.518	-0.298	0.465
CERP project spending	0.089	0.229	0.083	0.232
Opium cultivation (ha.)	0.117	0.262	0.068	0.240
CDC project count	-0.094	0.092	-0.094	0.100
Road length (km)	0.171	0.166	0.085	0.154
Pakistan border	0.051	0.376	-0.029	0.371
Government territorial control	0.267	0.476	0.117	0.469
Contested territorial control	-0.361	0.244	-0.231	0.242

Table 3: Posterior means and standard deviations for estimated effects of covariates on support for ISAF, the Taliban, and the estimated difference from the full individual-level harm model and the *manteqa* harm mode.