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ELECTION FAIRNESS AND GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

International development agencies invest heavily in institution building in fragile states, including expensive interventions to support democratic elections. Yet little evidence exists on whether elections enhance the domestic legitimacy of governments. Using the random assignment of an innovative election fraud-reducing intervention in Afghanistan, we find that decreasing electoral misconduct improves multiple survey measures of attitudes toward government, including: (1) whether Afghanistan is a democracy; (2) whether the police should resolve disputes; (3) whether members of parliament provide services; and (4) willingness to report insurgent behavior to security forces.

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Introduction

Can fair elections enhance the legitimacy of governments in fragile states? International development agencies invest heavily in building democratic institutions in states engaged in or emerging from conflict, often supporting expensive and even dangerous electoral processes (Bjornlund 2004). In part, such efforts rest on the assumption that democratic elections enhance the domestic legitimacy of governments by increasing citizens' willingness to be governed. This willingness may derive from an individual's perception of procedural legitimacy, where people consider a government more legitimate when it follows procedures that the population considers fair (Levi, Sacks and Tyler 2009; Tyler 1990, 2006; Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, and Sherman 1997; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tyler and Huo 2002), and/or outcome legitimacy, where people view a government as more legitimate if it competently produces public goods (Bernstein and Lü 2003; Fjeldstad and Semboja 2000; Guyer 1992; O'Brien 2002; Levi 2006). Greater legitimacy, in turn, makes governing easier and carries with it the increased likelihood of a stable polity, holding important implications for domestic and global security.

In this paper we explore the role of election fairness in building government legitimacy by combining data from a randomized controlled trial designed to improve electoral quality in Afghanistan's 2010 *Wolesi Jirga* elections with data from a post-election survey of citizens affected by the

intervention. We find that respondents in areas that held fairer elections due to our treatment were more likely to consider their government legitimate as measured by proxies of perceived procedural fairness and performance, including (1) whether Afghanistan is a democracy; (2) whether the police should resolve disputes (3) whether members of parliament provide services; and (4) the willingness to report insurgent behavior to security forces. Moreover, these effects are strongest within the subsample of respondents who were not aware of the fairness-enhancing treatment, leading us to conclude that legitimacy was increased by perceptions of electoral fairness and efficacy. The fairness intervention seems to affect attitudes by decreasing visible signs of electoral fraud at respondents' local polling stations.

We believe that these findings linking electoral fairness to perceptions of government legitimacy are particularly compelling given the setting: an election in a country fraught with vote-rigging with what is by all accounts one of the most corrupt and dysfunctional governments in the world. Our study also challenges the view that Afghan politics is solely predetermined by pre-existing allegiances along ethnic, class, religious, or ideological lines. These results indicate that democratic reforms could have real political effects, even in a country with such strong extant loyalties.

Theoretical approaches

A central problem of political inquiry for millennia has involved the legitimacy of the state (Alagappa 1995; Beetham 1991). The causes and consequences of legitimate government are central issues of political economy and were a focus of enlightenment era political philosophy, which was concerned with nascent democracies.[1] In this paper, we seek to build on more recent efforts to examine the empirical aspects of political legitimacy; specifically, we focus on its relationship to democratic elections.

Definitions of legitimacy vary. For our purposes we adopt a minimalist stance, considering legitimacy to be an attribute of political authority that captures residents' acceptance that state institutions have "the right to issue certain commands, and that they, in turn, have an obligation or duty to comply" (Lake, 2010). This definition, which appears in the context of the state-building literature, is especially appropriate for Afghanistan, where state institutions are weak, and multiple actors compete for political authority (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2013). When this acceptance translates into actual compliance with an authority's rules, it constitutes "behavioral" legitimacy (Hurd 1999; Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Tyler 2006). Compliance reduces governance

[1] The second Treatise of Government by John Locke provides a classical example of enlightenment era inquiry into the causes of legitimate government.

costs on the part of state authority, since no government can enforce all of its laws with direct observation and punishment.

Individuals grant legitimacy by evaluating prior behavior of political authorities (or proto-authorities if a formal polity has not yet been constituted) and then decide whether or not to accept their rule. Scholars discuss several factors influencing that evaluation, but most are related to an authority's procedural and distributive actions. Authorities can enhance their legitimacy when individuals perceive them to have made and followed rules impartially (Grimes 2006; Prud'homme 1992; Rothstein 2009; Rothstein and Teorell 2008; Taliercio 2004), or can lose legitimacy when citizens judge authorities to have violated procedural fairness, as in cases of corruption (Rothstein 2009, Seligson 2002). Authorities can maintain legitimacy even when individuals perceive an outcome to be unfair, as long as they consider the procedure generating it to be fair. Tyler (2006), for example, finds a strong empirical relationship between individuals' evaluations of procedural justice and legitimacy in both public and private sector settings.

Individuals may also confer more or less legitimacy on an authority based on their assessment of competence, often measured by outcomes such as public service delivery and overall economic and political performance (Cook, Hardin, and Levi 2005; Gilley 2009; Levi 1988, 1997; Levi, Sacks and Tyler 2009; Rothstein 2005; Sarsfield and Echegaray 2006; van De Walle and Scott 2009). To build outcome legitimacy, foreign governments, policymakers, and international

organizations concerned with state-building in post conflict areas have demonstrated a strong interest in helping nascent governments establish the competent delivery of basic services to their citizens (Bately and McLoughlin 2010; Beath et al. 2013; Carment et al. 2010; Paris and Sisk 2009; Cole and Hsu 2009). If an authority cannot provide goods and services, individuals may turn to other groups that can, including insurgents, international military forces (especially to provide security), and/or non-governmental organizations (Berman 2009; Brinkerhoff et al. 2009; OECD 2010; Vaux and Visman 2005).

Policymakers and scholars consider the selection of leaders through fair elections to be a key part of establishing a legitimate state (Brancati and Snyder 2011; Diamond 2006; Goodwin-Gill 2006; Lindberg 2003; Ottoway 2003; Paris 2004; Rothstein 2009). Proponents of early elections argue that establishing elected authorities allows for a more peaceful way for parties to compete for office, thus increasing the possibility that a country will consolidate as a democracy (Diamond 2006). Even if poorly run or beset with violence, elections may allow leaders and voters to begin the practice of democratic choice and ultimately lead to better future elections (Berman 2007; Carothers 2007; Lindberg 2003). The promise of elections may also induce the international community to commit peacekeeping forces and development assistance necessary to help legitimize a fragile post conflict government (Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Fortna 2008a; Lyons 2002).

Despite the important role that elections may serve in establishing legitimacy, the evidence is mixed. Recent research identifies many problems associated with holding elections in post-conflict environments. Brancati and Snyder (2009) find that calling for an election too soon is associated with an increased likelihood of renewed fighting. A quick election may increase the probability that one side or the other will ignore a loss at the ballot box and return to war, or may result in an elected government which pursues policies that impede further reform and instead rekindle conflict (Brancati and Snyder 2011; de Zeeuw 2008; Mansfield and Snyder 2007; Paris 2004). Further, early elections are often fraudulent for a number of reasons, including the interests of those staging the elections, a lack of trustworthy electoral institutions, and the disorganization of the opposition (Bjornlund 2004; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2011). Elections in societies divided along racial, ethnic, or other social lines are also more likely to produce immoderate campaigns, violence, and breakdown (Snyder 2000; Horowitz 1985; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). Indeed, Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom (2008) find no evidence that elections in post conflict environments reduce the risk of further war, and instead should be "promoted as intrinsically desirable rather than as mechanisms for increasing the durability of the post-conflict peace" (471).

We seek to contribute to prior studies by exploring whether the fairness of elections enhances legitimacy of government in a conflict setting. To construct testable hypotheses, we revisit for a moment the sources of legitimacy. Holding

elections in post conflict settings can enhance legitimacy through both procedural and outcome pathways. Elections allow individuals to choose their leaders through a procedure that hews to clear and impartial rules. A well-organized and implemented election – which is inherently public – might also signal that the government is more likely to capably produce public services. Both of these arguments also imply that voters would not confer more legitimacy on their government if they believed that a non-governmental actor, such as foreign election monitors or foreign donors, contributed to fair and competent administration of the election, since external interventions are less likely to be sustained in the future. Moreover, they might also turn to government less for services should they perceive that it was a non-governmental actor that facilitated fair and competently administered elections, since that would provide a weaker signal that government services are likely to be administered impartially and competently.

Following those who argue that governments gain legitimacy by following fair procedures and by producing valued public services competently, we construct four hypotheses:

H_1: *Enhancing the fairness of elections should increase the likelihood that individuals perceive procedures related to government authority to be legitimate.*

H_2: *Enhancing the fairness of elections should increase the likelihood that individuals turn to government authorities for the provision of services, such as law and order.*

H_3: *Perceptions of procedural legitimacy should not improve if respondents are aware that a fairness-enhancing intervention was carried out by non-governmental actors.*

H_4: *The willingness of residents to turn to government authorities for services should not increase if respondents are aware that a fairness-enhancing intervention was carried out by non-governmental actors.*

Background to Afghanistan's 2010 *Wolesi Jirga* election

Promoting elections has been a core component of the United States' policy in Afghanistan. After the US invasion and the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Coalition forces immediately began developing democratic institutions, hoping to promote stability by establishing a functioning central government that had been undermined by two previous decades of internecine conflict, civil war, and Taliban rule. Soon after the invasion, Coalition forces empanelled a *Loya Jirga* to create a new constitution. In 2005, Afghans voted in the first elections for the

lower house of parliament (*Wolesi Jirga*). In 2009, Hamid Karzai won re-election as president amid claims of rampant election fraud (Callen and Weidmann, 2013). General Stanley McChrystal, in an official communication to President Obama requesting troops to support a "surge," expressed his belief that the failure of the 2009 elections created a "crisis of confidence" in the government, which would ultimately undermine the war effort without more troops (McChrystal, 2009).

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

Afghanistan's 34 provinces serve as multi-member districts that elect members of the *Wolesi Jirga*. Each province is a single electoral district. The number of seats allocated to a province is proportional to its estimated population. Candidates run "at large" within the province, without respect to any smaller constituency boundaries. Voters cast a Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) for

individual candidates, nearly all of whom run as independents.[2] Winning candidates are those who receive the most votes relative to each province's seat share. For example, Kabul province elects the most members to Parliament (33) and Panjsher province the fewest (2). The candidates who rank one through 33 in Kabul and one through two in Panjsher win seats to the *Wolesi Jirga*.

SNTV rules create strong incentives for fraud. SNTV with large district magnitudes and a lack of political parties creates a wide dispersion of votes across candidates. The vote margins separating the lowest winning candidate from the highest losing candidate are thus often small. This creates a high expected return for even small manipulation for many candidates. (In contrast, electoral systems with dominant parties guarantee victory with large vote margins, and so non-viable candidates are less likely to rig results.) These strong incentives to manipulate voting were compounded by a weak election commission, which had failed to prevent widespread fraud during the 2009 presidential election. We (Callen and Long, 2013) document clear evidence of election fraud in the experimental sample studied in this paper during the 2010 parliamentary contest.

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

Research design and data

The results in this paper use data from a randomized evaluation of an original anti-fraud monitoring package that we conducted during Afghanistan's 2010 *Wolesi Jirga* election (Callen and Long, 2013), and which we recount here. In this section we revisit that anti-fraud monitoring experiment as a prelude to our investigation of the effect of that fraud reduction on measures of legitimacy.

On election day and the day after, a team of Afghan researchers traveled to an experimental sample of 471 polling centers.[3] Because Afghanistan was an active war zone during this period, we selected polling centers that met three criteria to ensure the safety of our staff: (i) achieving the highest security rating given by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Police (ANP); (ii) being located in provincial centers, which are much safer than rural areas[4]; and (iii) being scheduled to operate on election day by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). Figure 1 maps our experimental sample.

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[3] We stratified treatment on province and, in the 450 polling centers for which we had baseline data (we added an additional 21 to the experimental sample after baseline on obtaining additional funding), we also stratified treatment on the share of respondents from the baseline survey reporting at least occasional access to electricity and on respondents reporting that the district governor carries the most responsibility for keeping elections fair.

[4] Given budget and security issues, we could only deploy researchers in 19 of 34 provincial centers. Thus the sample is not nationally representative but biased towards safer areas. Our sample does however cover each of Afghanistan's regions, including those with a heavy Taliban presence. See Figure 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

In a randomly chosen 238 of those polling centers, researchers delivered a letter to Polling Center Managers (PCMs) between 10AM and 4PM, during voting. Researchers then visited all 471 polling centers the following day to photograph the publicly posted election returns forms.[5] The letter delivery constituted the experimental treatment. The letter announced to PCMs that researchers would photograph election returns forms the following day (September 19) and that these photographs would be compared to results certified by the IEC. Neither treatment nor control sites would be affected by measurement the day after the election, as polling staff were absent. Figure 2 provides a copy of the letter in English (an original in Dari is attached as Figure 3). PCMs were asked to acknowledge receipt by signing the letter. PCMs at seventeen polling centers (seven percent of centers receiving letters) refused to sign. A polling center was designated as treated if the PCM received a letter (*Letter Delivered = 1*).[6]

To measure the fairness of the election, researchers also investigated whether election materials were stolen or damaged the day after the election. Our staff were careful to investigate irregularities by interviewing local community

[5] Of 471 polling centers, six did not open on election day. We drop these from our analysis.

[6] Results below are robust to redefining treatment as both receiving and signing a letter.

members while not engaging IEC staff, so as not to create an additional treatment. We received reports of candidate agents stealing or damaging materials at 62 (13 percent) of the 465 operating polling centers, a clear violation of the law. We define *Election Returns Form Removed* as an indicator equal to one if materials were reported stolen or damaged by a candidate agent at a given polling center.

We have several reasons to think that stealing or damaging tallies reflects an intention to manipulate the ballot aggregation process. Many of the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) complaints reported in Callen and Long (2013) speculated that the purpose of stealing materials was to take them to a separate location, alter them, and then reinsert them into the counting process. Alternatively, candidates might seek to destroy all evidence of the polling center count, and then manufacture an entirely new returns form at the Provincial Aggregation Center.

The treatment (i.e., delivery of a notification letter) induced dramatic reductions in three separate measures of fraud: the removal or defacement of a required provisional vote tally return form (*Election Returns Form Removed*); votes for candidates likely to be engaged in fraud based on their political

connections[7] (see Callen and Long, 2013) (*Votes*); and that same candidate gaining enough votes to rank among the winning candidates in that polling station (*Enough Votes to Win Station*). Table 1 reports estimates of the effect of treatment on these three measures, reproducing results first reported in Callen and Long, 2013. Treatment reduced the damaging and theft of forms by about 11 percentage points (columns 1 - 3), votes for candidates likely to be engaged in fraud (*Provincial Aggregator Connection* = 1) by about 20 (columns 4 – 6) and the likelihood that those candidates would rank among winning candidates by about 10 percentage points (columns 7 – 9). These results represent unusually large treatment effects of the intervention on measures of fraud. They suggest that other types of highly visible electoral malfeasance (deviations from the counting protocol, early closings of polling centers, etc.) may similarly have been reduced.

[Table 1 about here]

The Post-Election Survey

To measure the effect of election fairness on legitimacy, the focus of this paper, we combine the results of the letter intervention with data from a post-election survey which we conducted in December 2010, roughly three months after the election and only shortly after the Independent Election Commission certified

[7] The political connections of candidates were carefully coded in advance. We surmised that a connection to a provincial polling aggregator was a predictor of engagement in fraud. See Callen and Long (2103) for details.

final results. Respondents came from households living in the immediate vicinity of 450 of the 471 polling centers in our experimental sample, for a total of 2,904 respondents. To obtain a representative sample of respondents living near polling centers - generally neighborhood landmarks such as mosques, schools or markets - enumerators employed a random walk pattern starting at the polling center, with random selection of every fourth house or structure until either six or eight subjects had been surveyed. In keeping with Afghan custom, men and women were interviewed by field staff of their own gender. Respondents within households were randomly selected using Kish grid. The survey had 50 percent female respondents. Enumerators conducted the survey in either Dari or Pashto.

We measure perceptions of government using individuals' responses to four questions. The first two questions (1 and 2 below) probe attitudes that might contribute to procedural legitimacy; the second two questions (3 and 4 below) measure attitudes related to outcome legitimacy, i.e. competence in service provision. We use all four questions since any single question is unlikely to capture fully a citizen's conception of legitimacy. While we sought to distinguish between legitimacy related to procedure and competence, our specific questions may straddle the concepts. The survey asks other questions about attitudes to

government as well, which we discuss below. We focus first on these four, as they have a stronger a-priori tie to concepts of legitimacy.[8]

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

Afghanistan is a Democracy is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "is a democracy" to this question. While citizens' beliefs about regime type do not directly measure legitimacy, perceptions of a democratic government should cause citizens to believe that they have a say in the procedures leading to the election of leaders. For these reasons we believe that perceptions of Afghanistan's status as a democracy should indicate beliefs about a government's procedural legitimacy.

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

Police Should Resolve Disputes is an indicator equal to 1 for individuals responding "police" to this question. This question reflects basic trustworthiness in the procedures of government responsible for the maintenance of law and

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[8] We did not specify these four outcomes in a pre-analysis plan. To demonstrate that our results do not reflect a selective reporting of results, we report below estimated treatment effects using all survey outcomes that might measure legitimacy. The timing of the survey (immediately after election outcomes were certified) and its' content (principally questions on attitudes toward government) should also provide an indication that our intent was to measure legitimacy.

order, a core component of legitimacy found in the literature (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009). Courts are in principle another relevant institution, but less so in Afghanistan, where they are absent in much of the country. We report below additional results using an indicator for the answer "courts" and other alternative outcome measures.

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

The variable *MP Provides Services* is equal to one if individuals responding "Member of Parliament" to this question. This question is intended to capture whether or not an individual links service provision to an elected government official, since that provision is important to establishing legitimacy related to competence. This question allows us to measure the concept against the specific institution, the parliament, voted on in this particular election. The alternative answer "central government" is more tangentially related to the election, since parts of it are not elected. We report results below using that measure as well.

4. *In your opinion, how important is it for you to share information about insurgents to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) (for example, pending*

IED attacks or the location of weapons caches): is it very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

Important to Report IED to ANSF is an indicator equal to one for individuals responding "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" to this question. The question is intended to measure whether or not citizens view the ANSF as a competent provider of security, an important service to a highly vulnerable and war-torn population.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 reports summary statistics for these variables from the post-election survey. The data depict a country with uneven support for government. About 68 percent of respondents view Afghanistan as a democracy, while only 18 percent prefer the police as their primary means of dispute adjudication. 20 percent of respondents believe that the Member of Parliament is responsible for providing services, while 94 percent respond that reporting an impending attack to the ANSF is important.

In Table 2 we also find a high incidence of electoral malpractice at the polling stations linked to survey respondents. At 13.4 percent of polling stations our staff recorded a report of candidate agents removing tallies (*Form Removed*). A similar picture emerges from the baseline interviews, collected in August 2010,

which we return to below.[9] Our data also include two important descriptors of the environment that the elections were held in: the number of local military events tracked as by International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (from their Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) database), with a mean of 2.6; and whether or not the polling station was visited by an international monitor on election day, which occurred in 16.5 percent of the sample (from Democracy International).

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 reports summary statistics and verifies balanced randomization of our anti-fraud intervention between treatment and control polling stations, using our baseline survey of August 2010. Treatment status is balanced across baseline measures for all four key outcomes used in the study, which we expect given randomization.[10] We find no evidence of imbalance on other measures that might

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[9] Similar to the endline survey, we sampled respondents for the baseline, enumerators were told to begin at the polling center and survey either 6 or 8 subjects. Surveys were conducted in individuals' homes. Enumerators adhered to the right hand rule random selection method and respondents within houses were selected according to a Kish grid (Kish, 1949).

[10] For reasons of safety, we did not collect identifying information from our subjects and so the respondents in our post-election (December 2010) survey are likely to not be the same respondents as in our pre-election (August 2010) survey. The same sampling protocol was maintained across both waves. We therefore view baseline balance on our key outcome measures as an additional indication that the measured treatment effect is not due to pre-existing differences between the treatment and control samples.

be relevant to attitudes, including military events in the vicinity and visits by international monitors.

Estimation Strategy and Results

Assignment to treatment is random. So the following equation consistently estimates the effect of delivering the letter (which alerts the polling station manager of monitoring) on our measures of legitimacy:

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

All specifications reflect our assignment strategy, by including stratum dummies as suggested by Bruhn and McKenzie (2009).

[Table 4 about here]

Table 4 reports our main results, testing hypotheses H_1 and H_2, which imply that the notification letter should improve attitudes that enhance procedural and outcome legitimacy. Since assignment of the fraud-reducing treatment is randomized, we need not be concerned with selection bias or other omitted variable biases. In Panel A, we report the effect of fraud reduction on citizens' beliefs about procedural legitimacy. Columns 1 – 3 suggest that treatment causes an increase in respondents' beliefs that Afghanistan is a democracy, though the results are not statistically significant. (This may in part be because the question is

vague, -- it could be asking whether Afghanistan is nominally a democracy or whether it functions as an effective democracy.)[11]

Turning to columns (4) – (6), using the police to solve disputes indicates a preference for using formal procedures rather than informal institutions -- abundantly available in Afghanistan-- for dispute resolution. Treatment causally increases reported willingness to use police by 2.3 percentage points in the uncontrolled specification and by 3.6 percentage points with a full set of controls (column 6).[12] The latter result is statistically significant at the five percent level and provides supportive evidence for Hypothesis 1.

In Panel B, columns (1)-(3), we find that the fraud reduction intervention causally increased beliefs that members of parliament are responsible for providing services by 4.1 percentage points, compared to a base of 17.8 percent in the control group, supporting Hypothesis 2. This result is statistically significant and robust to the addition of a broad set of controls, as reported in columns (2)

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[11] For ease of exposition, we restrict our sample to respondents who provide some response to the four questions corresponding to our main outcome and to our question regarding whether they were aware that the monitoring exercise was conducted by outsiders. All specification in Tables 4 and 5 therefore have either 2313 (specifications including polling centers without pre-election survey data) or 2200 (specifications including only polling centers with pre-election data) observations. Results (unreported) are nearly identical removing this restriction, though sample sizes vary between specifications according to the number of respondents providing some response to the question used as the dependent variable.

[12] The difference in point estimates is partly due to the difference in samples. Moving from column (4) to column (5), the sample is reduced by 18 polling centers and 113 respondents. These 18 polling centers are part of the sample of 21 polling centers in Kabul that we added to the experiment after the completion of the baseline survey.

and (3) (as expected with random assignment to treatment). Still in Panel B, columns (4)-(6) report effects on citizens' attitude that it is important to cooperate with security forces by reporting IEDs. Treatment increases reported willingness to report by 2.5 percentage points (column (4)) in the specification without controls, and by 3 percentage points in the specification with a full set of controls. Both results are statistically significant, and again support Hypothesis 2, that electoral fairness enhances outcome legitimacy.

In summary, the electoral fraud reduction treatment increased perceptions of legitimacy of the Afghan government for four measures of procedural and outcome legitimacy. Those effects were statistically significant for three of the four measures. Figure 4 summarizes those results graphically, reporting treatment effects and 95% confidence intervals for the four measures.

[Figure 4 about here]

Turning to other measures of legitimacy collected in our survey, we find additional evidence that electoral fraud reduction improved perceptions of legitimacy. Our survey includes seven additional measures related to attitudes toward government and willingness to be governed. For instance, we also included a question about another important concept found in discussions of government legitimacy regarding taxation. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of paying taxes as "not at all important," somewhat important," or

"very important."[13] [14] Table 5 reports the results of estimating treatment effects for these measures. Five of the seven additional measures yield estimated treatment effects in the direction predicted by theories of procedural fairness and public service provision. Of these, two are statistically significant at the 99 percent level, both of which are related to taxes.[15]

Table 5 also reports treatment effects aggregated across outcome measures. Following Kling, Liebman, and Katz (2007) and Casey, Glennerster, and Miguel (2013), we estimate standardized treatment effects, standardizing outcomes by subtracting their mean and dividing by their standard deviation so that all outcomes are measured in standard deviation units. We then create an index which is simply the arithmetic average of these standardized outcomes. We calculate separate indexes for: (i) the four dependent variables used in our main analysis; (ii) the seven additional outcomes reflecting alternative measures of legitimacy related to either conditional consent or service provision; and (iii) all

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[13] For the full text for these questions and a description of how they are coded to create outcome measures see the Appendix.

[14] We also estimated treatment effects on dummy variables set equal to one when respondents indicate supporting the Central Government, Provincial Government, or local Community Development Council as the unit that should provide services. Consistent with our main results, we find a significant and negative treatment effect for the provincial government, which is appointed rather than elected. However, this may be due just to a simple adding up constraint – since the choices are exclusive-- so we do not report it.

[15] We report estimates using as dependent variables dummy variables equal to one for respondents indicating that (i) paying taxes is very important,; (ii) paying taxes is somewhat important; and (iii) paying taxes is somewhat or very important. The third is the sum of the first two. We report estimates for all three in order to indicate the insignificant but negative estimate corresponding to (i). If we remove (iii) from the additional variable index and all variable index the estimates are nearly identical and remain statistically significant at the 99 percent level.

11 variables. Estimated treatment effects on these indices are all statistically significant at the 95 percent level, even after adjusting p-values to reflect multiple hypothesis testing using the method of Young and Westfall (1993).[16]

[Table 5 about here]

The estimated treatment effect of 0.10 standard deviations for the four primary outcome variables is comparable in size to the estimated effect using the index calculated using the remaining seven measures as an outcome (0.06 standard deviations). In summary, estimated treatment effects using the additional seven measures and indices based on all measures yield results that strongly reinforce the conclusion of Table 4: treatment improved attitudes toward government and increased willingness to be governed.

Does Enhanced Fairness Increase Legitimacy if Perceived as External?

Hypotheses 3 and 4 state that an individual will not credit government with improved legitimacy (procedural or outcome based) if they observe that enhancements in election fairness were caused by a non-governmental (i.e., external) intervention. Our survey asked respondents if they had knowledge of the

[16] This method yields Family-Wise Error Rate (FWER) p-values, as described in detail in Anderson (2008).

researcher team or their actions in providing the letter treatment. About 11 percent responded that they were aware. Table 6 repeats the analysis of Table 4, estimating the same equation with an added indicator variable *Aware of Delivery*, which takes the value one if the respondent is in the treated sample and responded that they had knowledge about the treatment. These estimates are *not* experimental, since awareness was not randomly assigned within the treatment group; nor is there any means to identify the comparison group in the control sample who would have been aware of treatment had they been treated.

[Table 6 about here]

The estimated coefficient of *Aware of Delivery* represents the contrast between the predicted value of the outcome variable for the unaware treated and that of the aware treated. That estimate is subject to possible selection bias, since those aware of treatment might have *a priori* different outcomes. That would be true, for instance, if the aware were keen observers of local politics and were therefore more cynical about Afghan democracy.

Being aware of letter delivery undermines the treatment effect for two of the four outcome measures. Specifically, for the outcomes *Afghanistan is a Democracy* and *Police Should Resolve Disputes*, including the awareness indicator increases the size of the positive estimated treatment effect, which is now estimated solely using the (distorted) aware sample, while generating an

estimated negative effect for the aware sample of at least the same size (columns 1 and 4). While these estimates are not experimental, they do retain their size when stratum fixed effects and additional covariates are added (columns 3 and 6). For the other two variables awareness predicts a statistical zero, so that the treatment effect is statistically the same for both aware and unaware samples. In sum, treatment has no effect on outcomes for two of our four variables for respondents aware that an external actor was responsible for delivering the notification letter. We interpret this as mixed but weakly supportive evidence for Hypotheses 3 and 4.

All told, we find strong experimental evidence that the fraud-reduction intervention improves perceptions of procedural and outcome legitimacy. We also find weakly supportive evidence for the implied hypothesis that citizens must perceive a relatively clean election to be the consequence of the actions of a domestic government, as opposed to the result of an outside intervention, for legitimacy to be enhanced. Taken together, these results indicate that even in a nascent democracy with weak institutions such as Afghanistan, improving procedural and outcome legitimacy has consequential effects on attitudes towards government.

Conclusions

We have reported experimental evidence showing that the fairness of elections affects attitudes of citizens towards their government directly relevant to their willingness to be governed, a contributor to legitimacy. Experimental evidence of this nature is new to the literature and is particularly compelling given the setting: even in the context of an ongoing insurgency and with an infamously ineffective government rife with corruption, we find that enhancing electoral fairness seems to contribute to state legitimacy in Afghanistan.

These findings speak both to policy and to the study of legitimacy in nascent democracies. From a policy perspective, our results reinforce the notion that domestic legitimacy, and therefore stability, can be enhanced by interventions that improve the fairness of elections, an assumption that undergirds the current emphasis the international community places on holding elections in fragile states and the considerable investments it makes to ensure electoral integrity. Importantly, our results are mute on the effectiveness of election monitoring–the most common intervention—as an integrity-enhancing technique. Indeed, we find in passing some evidence suggesting that the design of election monitoring in that Afghan election was unlikely to enhance perceptions of legitimacy, since interventions viewed as external did not affect attitudes. Nevertheless, our results are supportive of integrity-enhancing interventions as a general policy.

While we agree that elections form the core institutional component of a legitimate state, our results cannot provide guidance on how fair elections must be in order to legitimize a government, when compared to the counterfactual of no elections (Hoglund et al. 2009). Electoral processes in these contexts frequently suffer fraud (Bjornlund 2004; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2011), can incite violence (Horowitz 1985; Hyde and Marinov 2010; Snyder 2000; Wilkinson 2004), and may institutionalize former combatants into uncompromising political parties. In such circumstances, staging unfair elections in an attempt to increase state legitimacy may instead undermine it. That remains an important question for future research.

Legitimacy plays a key role in theories of political development, and should also play a role in the theory of economic development, since recognition of government's authority to impose rules is a necessary precondition for taxation, service provision, protection of human rights, enforcement of property rights, and implementation of development programs—including those administered by nongovernmental organizations and international organizations such as the World Bank.

These findings show that at least some attitudes toward government are plastic: though it may be built on a base of unconditional loyalties (e.g., ideological, religious, or ethnic), legitimacy is affected by citizens' perceptions of

the integrity of elections. The theory of legitimacy as conditional recognition of authority embraces various theories of what precisely recognition is conditioned on, between which our evidence cannot adjudicate. Future experiments which enhance election integrity might attempt to do so.

Along these lines, future research might explore the extent to which interventions that improve other aspects of governance confer legitimacy in fragile states; improvements in the integrity not just of elections, but also of policing, justice, health, education and other basic services should enhance legitimacy, according to theories of outcome legitimacy. Such studies might also consider which types of legitimacy-enhancing interventions are most cost-effective, and how they compare to expensive interventions such as security assistance.[17]

[17] On this note, our fraud-reduction intervention is remarkably inexpensive, and has been successfully replicated in two subsequent elections. Callen, Gibson, Jung, and Long (2013) report results from the first replication in Uganda.

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Table 2: Summary Statistics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observations
Demographics:			
Employed (=1)	0.524	0.500	2313
Age (years)	32.571	12.286	2313
Female (=1)	0.460	0.499	2313
Married (=1)	0.692	0.462	2313
Education (years)	7.179	5.387	2313
Beliefs:			
General Happiness (1-10)	4.402	1.707	2313
MP Provides Services (=1)	0.199	0.399	2313
Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)	0.678	0.467	2313
Important to Report IED to ANSF (=1)	0.935	0.247	2313
Police Should Resolve Disputes (=1)	0.183	0.387	2313
Elections and Violence:			
Military Events within 1KM	2.567	7.456	455
Visited by Int'l Monitor (=1)	0.165	0.371	455
Aware of Treatment (=1)	0.051	0.219	455
Election Returns Form Removed (=1)	0.134	0.341	455
Votes	1.386	8.313	375148
Votes for Candidate Connected to the Provincial Aggregator	23.646	47.49	1795
Enough Votes to Win Station	0.0867	0.281	375148
Enough Votes to Win Station (Connected to the Aggregator)	0.447	0.497	1795

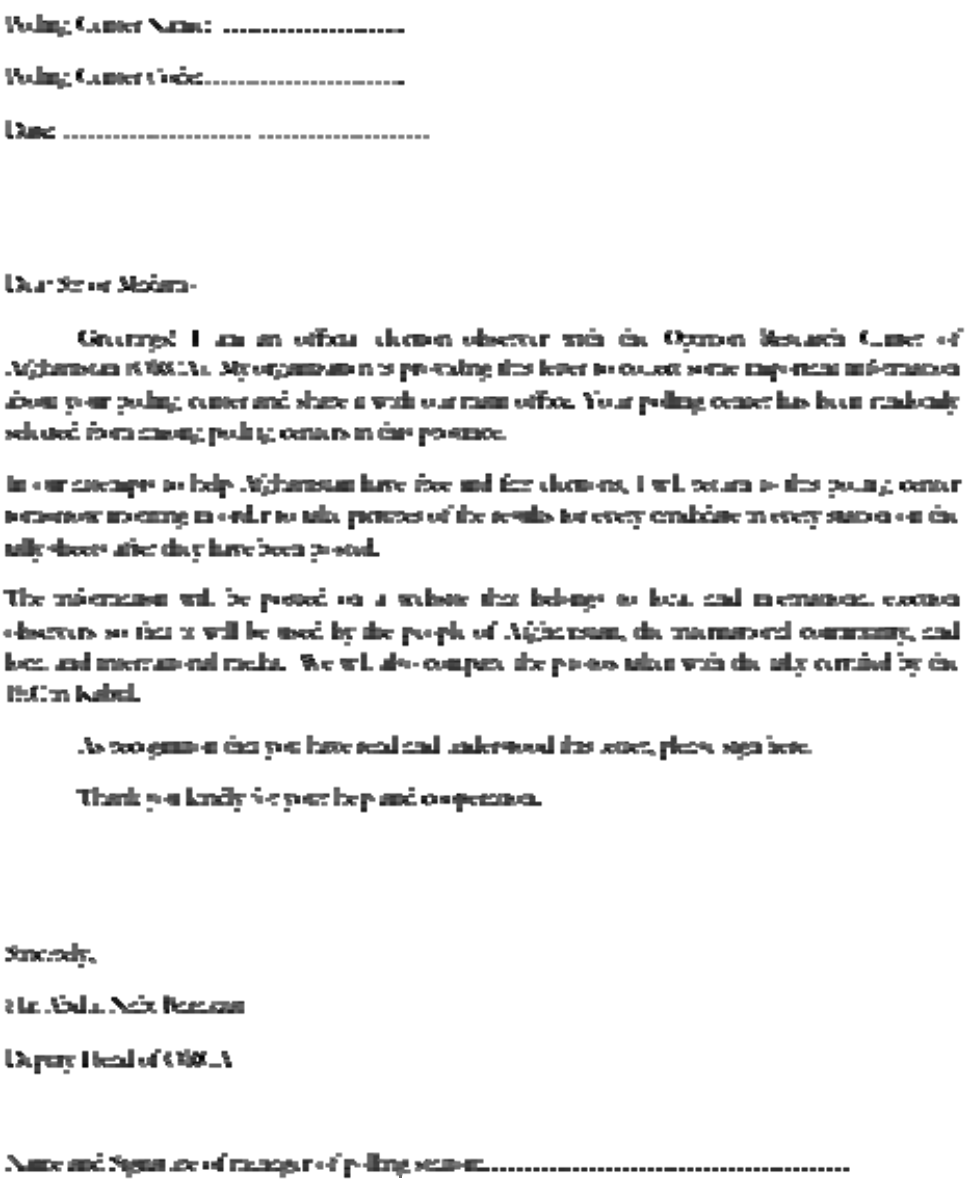
Notes: Military event data are from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) database. Data on international monitor visits are provided by Democracy International. Vote counts are from a web scrape performed on October 24, 2010 of the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan website. Remaining data are from our endline survey fielded in December 2010. MP is a member of the national parliament. An IED is an improvised explosive device, generally a roadside bomb. ANSF are the Afghan National Security Forces, including police and military. The survey sample is restricted to the 2,313 respondents who provide some response to the questions corresponding to the following variables: MP Provides Services, Afghanistan is a Democracy, Important to Report IED to ANSF, and Police Should Resolve Disputes.

Table 3: Randomization Verification

	No Letter	Letter	Difference	p value	# Control	# Treatment
Demographics:						
Employed (=1)	0.556	0.566	0.01	0.575	1410	1456
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.017)			
Age (years)	33.577	33.291	-0.285	0.547	1410	1456
	(0.336)	(0.335)	(0.474)			
Married (=1)	0.71	0.706	-0.004	0.815	1410	1456
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.019)			
Education (years)	6.565	6.462	-0.103	0.699	1410	1456
	(0.182)	(0.193)	(0.266)			
Reg Access to Electricity (=1)	0.718	0.733	0.015	0.607	1410	1456
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.029)			
Beliefs:						
General Happiness (1-10)	4.913	4.949	0.035	0.768	1410	1456
	(0.086)	(0.084)	(0.120)			
Dist Governor Keeps Fair (=1)	0.11	0.111	0.001	0.963	1301	1355
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.016)			
Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)	0.643	0.655	0.011	0.654	1286	1307
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.025)			
MP Provides Services (=1)	0.142	0.163	0.021	0.259	1396	1440
	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.019)			
Important to Rept IED to ANSF (=1)	0.961	0.956	-0.005	0.592	1390	1418
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.010)			
Police Should Resolve Disp (=1)	0.217	0.202	-0.015	0.480	1410	1456
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.021)			
Elections and Violence:						
Military Events within 1KM	2.690	2.551	0.139	0.842	226	236
	(0.583)	(0.398)	(0.700)			
Visited by Int'l Monitor (=1)	0.146	0.177	-0.032	0.353	226	236
	(0.235)	(0.246)	(0.034)			

Notes: Standard errors clustered at the polling center are reported in parentheses.
Survey data are from the baseline survey fielded in August 2010. Military event data are from ISAF CIDNE.

Figure 2: Announcement of Monitoring



Polling Center Name: .....

Polling Center Code.....

Date .....

Dear Sir or Madam-

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

In our campaign to help Afghanistan have free and fair elections, I will return to this polling center tomorrow morning in order to take pictures of the results for every candidate in every election in the ballot sheet after they have been posted.

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

As a guarantee that you have read and understood the letter, please sign here.

Thank you kindly for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,

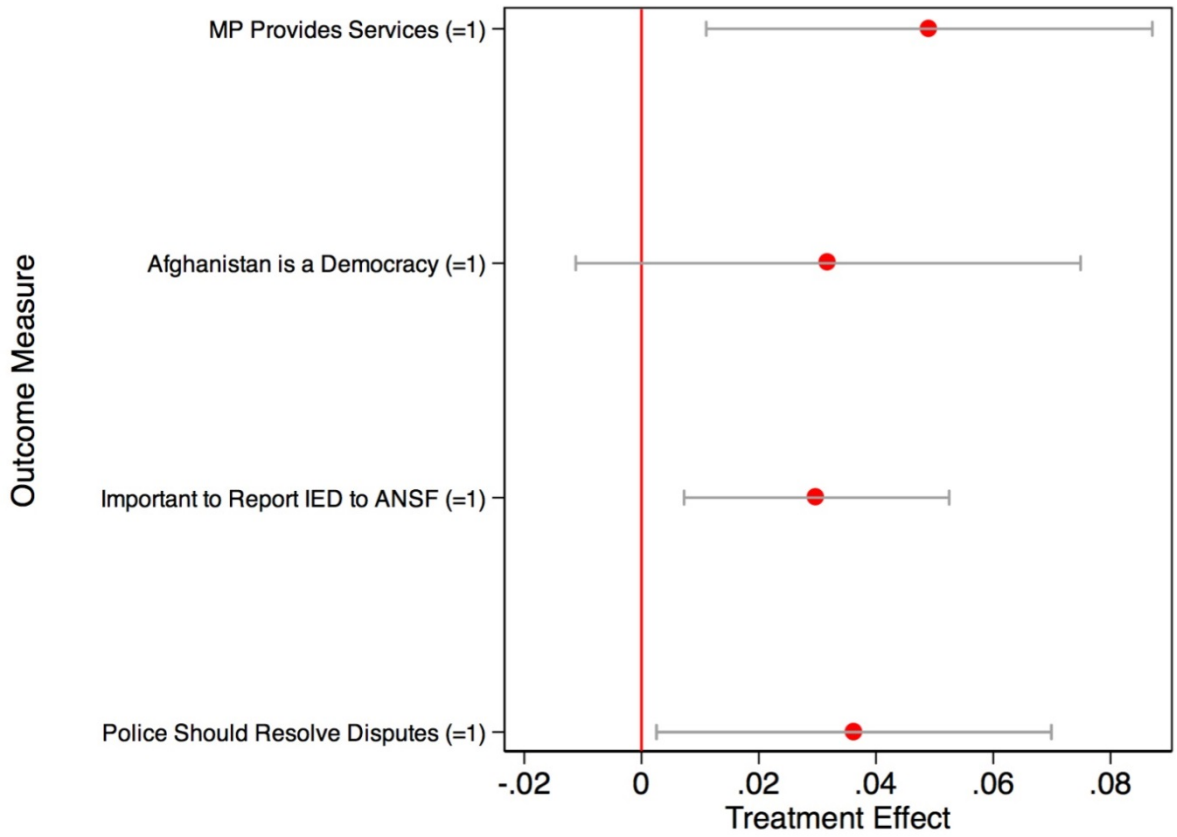
Mr. Abdul Nabi Rezayee

Deputy Head of ORCA

Name and Signature of manager of polling station.....

Figure 3: Announcement of Monitoring (Dari)

Figure 4: Treatment Effects



Note: Brackets reflect 95 percent confidence intervals.

APPENDIX: OUTCOMES QUESTIONS AND VARIABLE CODING

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

1. Central government; 2. Member of parliament; 3. Religious or ethnic leaders; 4. Provincial government; 5. Community development council; 6. Other (record verbatim); 98. Don't know; 99. RTA

The variable *MP Provides Services (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 2. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

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

1. Yes; 2. No; 98. Don't know ; 99. RTA

The variable *Afghanistan is a Democracy (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 1. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

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

1. Very important; 2.Somewhat important; 3. Not at all important; 98.Don't know; fd99.RTA

The variable *Report IED to ANSF (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 1 or 2. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

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

1. Head of family; 2. Police; 3. Courts; 4. Religious leaders; 5. Shura; 6. Elders; 7. ISAF; 8. Other (record verbatim); 98. Don't know; 99.

The variable *Police Should Resolve Disputes (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 3. The variable *Court Should Resolve Disputes* is a dummy equal to one for individuals responding 3. Responses of 98. and 99. are treated as missing.

Do you think that voting leads to improvements in the future or do you believe that no matter how one votes, things never change?

1. Improvements in the future; 2. Things never change; 98. Don't know; 99. RTA

The variable *Voting Improves Future (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 1. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

In your opinion, how important is it for you to pay taxes to the government: is it very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?

1.Very important; 2. Somewhat important; 3. Not at all important; 98.Don't know; 99.RTA

The variable *Paying Taxes is Very Important (=1)* is a dummy variable equal to one for individuals responding 1. The variable *Paying Taxes is Somewhat Important (=1)* is a dummy equal to one for individuals responding 2. The variable *Paying Taxes is Very or Somewhat Important (=1)* is a dummy equal to one for individuals responding 1 or 2. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

Let us suppose that your friend has been accused of a crime. Who do you trust to determine whether your friend is guilty: head of your qawm or the Afghan government?

1. Head of your qawm; 2. Afghan government; 98. Don't know; 99. RTA

The variable *Trust Afghan Government to Determine Guilt (=1)* is a dummy equal to one for respondents answering 2. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.

Does the central government do an excellent, good, just fair or poor job with the money it has to spend on services?

1. Excellent; 2. Good; 3.Just fair; 4. Poor; 98.Don't know; 99.RTA

The variable *Govt. Does an Excellent or a Good Job of Providing Services (=1)* is a dummy equal to one for respondents answering 1 or 2. Responses of 98 and 99 are treated as missing.