

# Institutional Corruption and Election Fraud :

Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan

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# Outline

- Introduction and argument
- Political background of Afghanistan
- Field Experiment Design
- Data and Results
- Conclusion
- Comment

# Introduction

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- Election manipulation of young democracy
- How to measure it?

# Introduction

- Election manipulation of young democracy

**Aggregation fraud:**

**before**



# Introduction

- Election manipulation of young democracy

Aggregation fraud:

before



after



- Before the election



نام مرکز رای دهنی: \_\_\_\_\_  
 تاریخ: \_\_\_\_\_  
 کد مرکز رای دهنی: \_\_\_\_\_

بده حضور محترم آقای / خانم  
 میں یولیت نظارت 472 مرکز رای بر حسب توافق نامہ کمیسیون جیتقل انتخابات دفتر اورکا  
 دہی را بر عہدہ دارد.  
 مہی ائید و برای اور (ORCA) دفتربہ مربوطیک تن از نظارت کننڈہ گان رس میدارنڈہ مکتوب  
 معلومک تا بتواند مرکز رای دہی تسلیم نمودن این تا این مکتوب را وظیفہ سپردہ شدہ است  
 . این مرکز دفتہ مرکزی شریک بس از دجج آوری نمودہ و بہا مرکز رای دہی این و دقیق را از پوشق  
 این ولایت تمام براکز رای دہی میان بہ صورت تصدقی از گو بہ شہول چندین براکز دہی رای دہی  
 انتخاب شدہ است.  
 فردا صبح . نظر ما یک انتخابات آزاد و مشروع در افغانستان کسک خوامیم کرد تقویتدبرایما  
 . تصیب میگردند ایچ نمایم مرکز رای دہی این کہ در را نتایج کنان دیدان لست لہ تا تصاویر از دجج  
 گذارتہ مربوط بہ نظریں انتخاباتی داخلی و خارجی این نتایج در سایت انترنتی تصاویر  
 از این نتایج ، موسسات خارجی و مطبوعات داخلی و خارجی خواد شد تا تمام مردم افغانستان  
 نتایج را بہ نتایج کہ از طرف این تصاویر حاصلہ از نظرحیت مناسفادہ کننڈہ . و همچنان ما  
 انتخابات در کابل نشر میشود بقایمہ خوامیم کرد . جیتقل کمیسیون  
 در ہایین امیدہی تائید اینکہ این مکتوب بدسترس شما قرار گرفتہ و شما انرا مطلع نمودہ  
 جضا نمایید . لطف نمودہ ا  
 از مکاری شما قبل از نظر سپاس .

باجترام  
 حاجی عبدالنبی بارکزی  
 معاون دفتر اورکا  
 نام محترم مرکز رای دهنی: \_\_\_\_\_  
 یامضایم و

- A letter would be sent to some of the polling station

➔ treatment group

# Letter treatment

- Right after the election



- Take photos in every polling station
- Only some of them were warned with the letter

A document titled "نتیجہ برآمدہ نشان تطبیق" (Election Results Form) in Urdu. The document contains several sections with text and tables. The top section has fields for "نام و پتہ" (Name and Address), "تعلقہ" (District), and "پتہ" (Post). Below this is a table with columns for "ردیف نمبر" (Serial Number), "نام" (Name), "پتہ" (Address), and "نشان" (Signature). The table contains several rows of data, some with handwritten entries. The document is printed on a light-colored paper with a grid pattern.

FIGURE 2. ELECTION RETURNS FORM FOR THE SAME



# Arguments

The effect of letter treatment:

- Does the announcement reduce election fraud?
- How do the connected candidates perform under the monitoring effect?



- Votes aggregation differences were found in **78%** of the polling stations

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- Connected candidates were in charge of **3.5** fraudulent votes in each substation



# Political Background

# Post-Invasion Democracy in Afghanistan

- 2001: the 911 Day
- 2004: Hamid Karzai was elected as the President of Afghanistan
- 2009: Karzai won his second presidency.
- 2010: lower house of parliament election



# Electoral Institutions SNTV

- Single-nontransferable vote(SNTV)
- each voter casts one vote for one candidate in a multi-candidate race for multiple offices.  
Who gets the most votes wins.

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Votes</b>	
A	819	There are 3 seats to be filled and 5 Candidates : A, B, C, D and E.
B	1,804	
C	1,996	C, D and E are the winning candidates.
D	1,999	
E	2,718	

# Electoral Institutions

- SNTV makes incentive to fraud
  - thin victory margins make fraudulent votes highly valuable
  - More candidates means more potential manipulation
- Weak electoral institution
- The state does not have complete control territory
  - Most candidates are warlords
  - Informal social network

# Vote Aggregation Procedure

## Polling Center

- Result forms is recorded in each substation
- Result forms are posted for public viewing

## PAC

- Copies of the result forms are sealed and sent to Provincial aggregation center

## NAC

- All result forms are sent to national aggregation center in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan



# Measuring Fraud

Photo Shot Outside Polling Center

Photo shot on NAC website

د تانگو خپلواک کمیسیون/ کمیسیون مستقل انتخابات  
د ولسي جرگې ټکنس/ انتخابات ولسي جرگه  
د تطبیق او نتایجو فورمه/ فورمه تطبیق و نتایج

د تطبیق برخه/ بخش تطبیق

د نتایجو برخه/ بخش نتایج

PC01  
د تانگو خپلواک کمیسیون/ کمیسیون مستقل انتخابات  
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د تطبیق برخه/ بخش تطبیق

د نتایجو برخه/ بخش نتایج

FIGURE 2. ELECTION RETURNS FORM FOR THE SAME POLLING CENTER BEFORE AND AFTER AGGREGATION

# Pattern of Fraud

TABLE 1—AGGREGATION DISCREPANCY PATTERNS

Pattern	Number of polling substations (1)	Share of sample (2)	Mean vote difference (3)
No fraud	74	21.4 percent	0.00
Adding votes only	70	20.2 percent	47.34
Subtracting votes only	15	4.3 percent	-245.07
Adding and subtracting equally	15	4.3 percent	0.00
Adding more than subtracting	127	36.7 percent	83.45
Subtracting more than adding	45	13.01 percent	-54.13

# Political Connections and Aggregation Fraud

- $Y_{ijs} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Investigated}_i + \beta_2 \text{Connection}_i + \gamma_j + \varepsilon_{is}$
- $Y_{ijs}$  : votes number difference between prior and post aggregation
- $\text{Investigated}_i$  is dummy variable =1 if candidate have political history data which is investigated by local consulting firm (n=57)
- $\text{Connection}_i$  : is dummy variable=1 if candidate have connection to President Karzai or to district and provincial aggregators
- $\gamma_j$  : constituency j
- $\varepsilon_{is}$  : candidate i and polling substation s



# Political Connections and Aggregation Fraud

- Omitted variable problem
- Only data on connections for the most powerful candidates (n=57)
- Omitted outlier

# Experiment

# Experiment design

- A baseline survey for the treatment and control group
- Race, plans to turnout during election, believe vote is secret... etc are all not significant, so we could consider two groups basically are homogeneous

# Experimental Intervention

- 471 polling center (7.8 % of polling center) for safety concern
- 238 treat group and 233 control group
- Treatment effect: if the Polling center manager received a letter





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 تاریخ: \_\_\_\_\_  
 مرکز رای دهی: \_\_\_\_\_  
 کد: \_\_\_\_\_

به حضور محترم آقای / خانم

مسئولیت نظارت 472 مراکز رای سر حسب متوفیق نامه کمیسیون مسئولین انتخابات نغشور اورکا  
 دهی را سر عده دارد.

میباشد و برای او (ORCA) نغشور به متوسطیک تن از نظارت کننده گان رسمی از زده مکتوب  
 معلوم است تا بتواند مرکز رای دهی مسئولیم نبودن این تا این مکتوب را وظیفه میبوده شده است  
 این مرکز نغشور مرکزی شریک بس از جمع آوری نموده و با مرکز رای دهی این و دقیق را از موشق  
 این ولایت تمام مراکز رای دهی میماند به صورت تصانیفی از گره به شمول چندین مراکز دیرای دهی  
 انتخابات شده است.

فردا صبح. ناظر ما یک انتخابات آزاد و مشروع در افغانستان کجک خواهیم کرد تقویتند اینها  
 نصیب میگردند این نامه مرکز رای دهی این که در را نتایج گاندیدان است. امید تا تصویب از دخواه

گذشته به متوسط به نظریین انتخاباتی داخلی و خارجی این نتایج در ساریت این نتایج تصویب  
 از این نتایج، موسسات خارجی، و مطبوعات داخلی و خارجی خواهد شد تا تمام مردم افغانستان  
 نتایج را با نتایج که از طرف این تصویب حاصل از نظرحیت مناسبت داده کنند. و همچنین ما  
 انتخابات در کابل نشر میشود مقایسه خواهد کرد. مسئول کمیسیون

در باین ایند برای نتایج این که این مکتوب بصورت شما قرار گرفت و شما انرا مطلع نموده  
 چنانچه ایستد. لطف نموده ا

از میگری شما قبل از نظر سپاس.

با احترام

حاجی عبدالنبی بارگزی

معاون نغشور اورکا

امیر محترم مرکز رای دهی: \_\_\_\_\_  
 مامض الموم و

- Delivery: 10 AM - 4 PM in 238 group
- Managers are asked to sign; 17 refuse to sign
- Take a picture of the Election Return Form in 471 polling center

# Experimental Intervention

- The key of experimental protocol
  - Notify manager on election day to ensure they are aware of treatment
  - Only research team know the experiment sample, no election officials had means to determine which sites to be control

# Data and Results

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# A. Aggregation Fraud

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  - ➔ 5.484 for the treatment group

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- Absolute value of  
votes differences (fraudulent votes)
  - ➔ 17.170 for the control samples
  - ➔ 5.484 for the treatment group
- Treatment < Control
  - ➔ letter warning works

# A. Aggregation Fraud

- Absolute value of  
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  - ➔ 20.1% decrease for connected candidates
  - ➔ 30.0% decrease for highly connected candidates

# A. Aggregation Fraud

- Absolute value of  
votes differences (fraudulent votes)
    - 20.1% decrease for connected candidates
    - 30.0% decrease for highly connected candidates
- Elite candidates: **votes reduced by 25%**



## B. Theft and Damaging of forms

- Missing voting sheets
- Candidate agents stole or damage materials at 13.16% (62 out of 471 stations)



# B. Theft and Damaging of forms

TABLE 8—IMPACTS ON FORM THEFT

	Election returns form damaged (=				
	OLS (1)	OLS (2)	OLS (3)	Logit (4)	$\partial y/\partial$ (4A)
Letter treatment (= 1)	-0.108*** (0.032)	-0.111*** (0.031)	-0.110*** (0.032)	-0.975*** (0.302)	-0.10 (0.03)
Constant	0.189*** (0.026)	0.191*** (0.025)	0.211*** (0.078)	-1.013*** (0.317)	
Stratum FEs	No	Yes	Yes	No	
Full covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	
$R^2$ [log-likelihood]	0.025	0.218	0.228	[-165.651]	

- control: 18.9%

➔ letter treatment: 8.1% (10.8% lower)

# C. Tests for Spatial Externalities

- Chilling effect?

$$Y_{ics} = \varphi_1 + \varphi_2 \text{Letter Treatment}_c + \varphi_3 \text{Treated}_c^{1km} + \varphi_4 \text{Total}_c^{1km} \\ + \varphi_5 \text{Treated}_c^{1-2km} + \varphi_6 \text{Total}_c^{1-2km} + \varphi_7' \mathbf{X}_c + \eta_{ics}.$$

- Having a treated neighbor in 2 km?
  - ➔ NO : 42.8 (votes)
  - ➔ YES : 17.8 (votes)
- high elasticity of fraud

TABLE 9—SPATIAL TREATMENT EXTERNALITIES

	Votes for the most connected candidate			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Letter treatment (= 1)	-4.080** (2.009)	-4.183** (1.982)	-4.290** (1.956)	-4.159** (1.980)
Any PCs treated within 1 km (= 1)		-6.877* (3.512)	-6.742* (3.486)	
Total PCs within 1 km		-0.597 (0.566)	-0.499 (0.564)	-1.256 (0.806)
Any PCs treated within 1-2 km (= 1)			-4.738 (4.244)	-4.681 (4.240)
Total PCs within 1-2 km			0.103 (0.378)	0.223 (0.392)
1 treated PC within 1 km (= 1)				-6.457* (3.613)
2 treated PCs within 1 km (= 1)				-5.831 (3.882)
3 treated PCs within 1 km (= 1)				-3.007 (1.858)

votes difference

< 1km : - 6.742

1~2km: - 4.738

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votes difference

< 1km : - 6.742

1~2km: - 4.738

**The closer to treatment, the lower number of votes**

# Conclusion

Negative effects on politics:

- Entry barriers for unconnected candidates
- Incentive to cultivate connections
- Could not show the real preference of voters

- → letter treatment had negative effect on
  - number of votes of connected candidates
  - election fraud
  - theft of election forms

# Comment

- Is the letter threatening?
  - ➔ If so, why kept on manipulating the election?
  - ➔ The Boy Who Cried Wolf?
- Wouldn't it be selection biased to collect data from relatively peaceful areas?