Dropping a Dime: Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing

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Abstract

How important are ethnic considerations in shaping an individual’s willingness to inform — to “drop a dime” — on insurgents in wartime? To date, our theories assume individual calculations are driven by security concerns, not identity issues. We argue instead that coethnic bias, the tendency to favor cooperation with a coethnic, shapes individual decisions about informing and beliefs about the subsequent consequences. We use a survey experiment to measure how individuals respond to calls to participate in the Guardians of Peace program, a widespread campaign by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan designed to encourage informing on insurgents. Administered in late 2011 to 2,700 respondents across 100 villages, we manipulate the ethnic identity of the program’s endorser across Tajik, Pashtun, and ISAF spokesmen. Using multilevel modeling, we find that the presence of a persistent coethnic bias that shapes support for the program even in the face of exposure to victimization. We also find that ISAF endorsements reinforce coethnic bias among Tajiks and that beliefs about retaliation are also influenced by coethnic considerations.

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

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What explains the willingness of individuals to inform — to “drop a dime” — on insurgents during a civil war? Are such considerations principally driven by wartime dynamics, or do prior identity allegiances influence an individual’s strategic choice? To date, our prevailing theories of civil war violence cast civilians as master tacticians who instrumentally maneuver between combatants in a bid to maximize their safety and welfare. Prior allegiances, by contrast, are often treated as fluid constructs that are quickly reforged in the crucible of warfare once they become dangerous liabilities. Practitioners, too, have embraced this view. It is now commonplace, for example, to describe (counter)insurgency as an exercise in competitive service provision to win the hearts and minds of a calculating, and fickle, civilian population that sells its allegiance to the highest bidder (U.S. Army 2007; Trinquier 2006; Mao 1961).

In this paper, we adopt a different approach. While considerations of safety and private gain cannot be dismissed, we argue for an expanded understanding of individual decision-making that acknowledges the role of coethnic bias — the systematic tendency to prefer cooperation with coethnics over non-coethnics — in shaping attitudes toward informing.

We test this proposition using a survey experiment that examines the Guardians of Peace (GP) program launched in Afghanistan in 2010 by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and various Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including the Afghan National Police (ANP). The GP program, still in operation today, was designed to encourage civilians to provide tips to ISAF and ANSF soldiers via telephone hot lines and “walk-up” visits to local bases and outposts. Taking our cue from the program’s heavy publicity (e.g., television and radio spots, roadside billboards, and even children’s comic books distributed by patrolling soldiers), we randomly assigned the ethnicity of the spokesmen endorsing the campaign. This manipulation allows us to estimate the endorsement effects associated with coethnic, non-coethnic, and third party actors, in order to test whether support for the GP program is affected by identity considerations.

We use a multi-level modeling approach to analyze our survey experiment, incorporating
both individual and village level characteristics. We find that coethnic bias explains substantial variation in an individual’s willingness to consider informing. Tajik and Pashtun respondents clearly prefer to collaborate with coethnics than across ethnic lines, for example, and appear to be discouraged by norms of reciprocity from considering informing on coethnics. Moreover, the effects of victimization on coethnic bias depend on the perpetrator’s ethnic identity. Exposure to victimization by fellow coethnics typically has a negative effect on coethnic bias. In contrast, harm by a non-coethnic, somewhat counterintuitively, appears to have little or no effect on coethnic bias since individuals were already predisposed against interethnic cooperation. Moreover, beliefs about the likelihood of suffering retaliation at Taliban hands for providing tips are also shaped by the joint identities of the would-be informant and the Program’s endorser. We find only weak or mixed evidence in support of other leading theories that privilege military dynamics such as the distribution of relative control or violence at the local level.

Though only one program in a complex war, the GP initiative offers a window into the dynamics of wartime informing that are central to the theory and practice of counterinsurgency and yet difficult to grapple with methodologically. Rather than prime a hypothetical situation, we exploit a widespread and highly publicized program to test how coethnicity casts its shadow over wartime decisions, a context we might consider a critical test for ideational variables. We believe that the implications of our analysis travel beyond Afghanistan and the relatively narrow scope of civil war violence. In seeking to explain the link between ethnicity and attitudes, we shed light on broader debates about the relationships between ethnic diversity, the (under)provision of collective goods, and downstream consequences for state-building and military interventions (Alesina, Baqir and Easterly 1999; Alesina and LaFerrara 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Downes and Monten 2012/13).
1 The Argument

Our argument unfolds in two stages. First, we argue that civilians, oft-regarded as purveyors of information for counterinsurgents, are guided by durable coethnic biases that influence their choice of wartime strategies. Second, we contend that these coethnic biases interact with the effects of civilian victimization to shape an individual’s likelihood of informing. The argument is rooted in individual psychology, stressing cognitive biases rather than more macro-level variables such as the distribution of combatant control or efforts at service provision.

1.1 Counterinsurgency and Wartime Informing

Existing theories of civil war violence have largely converged on a standard, if narrow, conception of civilians as rational actors that maximize their security above all other considerations. Civilians are, in some sense, “rational peasants,” (Popkin 1979) driven by the necessarily short-term expedient of survival amidst combatants who find themselves warring through, as well as over, the civilian population. Strong ethnic or ideological attachments are viewed as dangerous prewar legacies that are quickly abandoned by civilians seeking to minimize their exposure to harm while maximizing the benefits on offer from the warring parties. Given this viewpoint, our theories have largely concentrated on identifying the battlefield factors that drive civilian behavior. These include the relative balance of control exercised by combatants (Leites and Wolf 1970; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007), competitive service provision (Akerlof and Yellen 1994; Crost and Johnston 2010; Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011), and relative levels of civilian victimization (Stoll 1993; Kocher, Pepinsky and Kalyvas 2011; Condra and Shapiro 2012: 183–84).\(^1\)

Practitioners hold a similar understanding of civilians, viewing counterinsurgency as an effort to drain insurgent support and sway fence-sitters through the appropriate mixture of service provision, governance, and judicious violence. The new U.S. Army Field Manual makes

\(^1\)For a more nuanced appraisal of the roles of civilians, see Arjona (2010); Mampilly (2011).
this logic explicit: “People pursue essential needs [above all, physical security] until they are met, at any cost and from any source. People support the source that meets their needs. If it is an insurgent source, then the population is likely to support the insurgency. If the Host National government provides reliable essential services, the population is more likely to support it” (U.S. Army 2007, 98; see also Trinquier 2006).

What makes counterinsurgency so challenging is the “identification problem” of distinguishing insurgents from the local population. More generally, one must overcome the informational advantages which insurgents possess by dint of their ability to move and live among the population (Kalyvas 2006). Cultivating informants who can privately supply information about insurgent identities and activities therefore becomes crucial for mitigating, if not solving, this identification problem.

Informing provides key military advantages, including the prevention of insurgent ambushes while facilitating both the direct targeting of insurgent leaders and their possible defection. Public knowledge that the counterinsurgent has penetrated the village may undermine the willingness of individuals to collaborate with insurgents for fear of discovery, further complicating insurgent recruitment and operations. In turn, the rise of informants can force insurgents to devote a greater share of their resources into hardening their organization against defection and information leaks, introducing new inefficiencies that may cripple their military effectiveness. It is little wonder, then, that counterinsurgents typically build large and intrusive intelligence-gathering operations as part of their counterinsurgency operations (Galula 2006, 84-87-88; Leites and Wolf 1970, 136-37; Thompson 1966, 84.; Kalyvas 2006, 105-07; Douglass 2012).

1.2 Coethnic Bias

Considerable heterogeneity certainly lurks behind the motives for informing. Revenge, personal gain, coercion, or more simply, a desire for temporary respite from random violence (Lyall 2009) are all plausible reasons to engage in the risky business of providing intelligence
to one side in an armed conflict about its enemy. Yet, we believe that the prevailing view of civilian wartime decision-making as atomistic and expediency-driven is incomplete. For many conflicts, ethnic identity plays a major role in shaping the willingness of individuals to consider sharing sensitive information (Lyall, 2010; Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2012).

In particular, individuals may use coethnic status to determine their selection of strategies (here, whether to collaborate with a combatant). Moreover, they may be likely predisposed to favor cooperation with coethnics rather than non-coethnics, a systematic tendency we refer to as “coethnic bias.” We argue that shared identities are underpinned by a norm of reciprocity that establishes a set of common expectations about how coethnics behave toward one another (on coethnics norms of reciprocity, see Horowitz 1985, Fearon and Laitin 1996, Habyarimana et al. 2009, 11-12). In this view, coethnics are expected to cooperate with one another and, importantly, fear sanction if they fail to do so.

This logic can be extended to behavior toward the out-group where, absent shared ethnic ties that facilitate trust and punishment, individuals are less likely to cooperate with non-coethnics. Indeed, extensive laboratory (Tajfel et al., 1971; Sambanis, Schulhofer-Wohl and Shayo, 2012) and field experiments (Habyarimana et al., 2009) have shown that difficulty in establishing interethnic trust contributes to the under-provision of collective goods in ethically heterogeneous settings. The fear of retaliation for non-cooperation with non-coethnics is also lessened by beliefs that the in-group will extend its protection to fellow coethnics while out-group members are less likely to have the necessary information to identify and punish non-coethnics.

As a result, an individual’s likelihood of passing information to authorities hinges on the

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2Following Chandra and Wilkinson (2008, 517), ethnicity is defined as an identity category in which descent-based attributes are necessary for membership. This focus on coethnic bias is not meant to imply that civilians are irrational. A focus on coethnicity is in fact compatible with rationalist understandings of individual behavior. Instead, we disagree with the relative weighting of inputs that are factored into an individual’s wartime decision-making. We maintain that the lion’s share of explanatory leverage is provided by identity considerations, not “objective” factors such as the distribution of violence or combatant control.

3Similarly, cross-national work has regularly found that ethnic diversity is associated with lower levels of collective goods provision (Alesina, Baqir and Easterly 1999; Alesina and LaFerrara 2005).
joint properties of identities involved in the exchange. We expect that coethnic dyads will observe much higher levels of information transfer than non-coethnic ones. Put differently, information flows easily within ethnic groups but meets resistance as it moves across ethnic boundaries. In the current context, programs that seek to elicit tips from local populations will receive one type of reaction if endorsed by coethnics and another, more negative, reception if endorsed by a non-coethnic. We are especially likely to observe a greater willingness to inform with a coethnic dyad where information pertains to a non-coethnic insurgent. Similarly, we are likely to observe a marked unwillingness to consider informing ("snitching") with a non-coethnic pairing and information about a coethnic insurgent.

1.3 Ethnicity and Violence

Theorizing about the interaction between violence and coethnic bias is necessarily a more complicated enterprise. We must consider not only the joint nature of informer-combatant identities but also at a minimum the distinction between individuals who have and have not experienced victimization by these combatants. Nor are the effects of violence necessarily uniform. We might imagine, for example, that victimized individuals are more likely to express willingness to provide information. Several studies at the individual (Blattman 2009; Bellows and Miguel 2009; Voors et al. 2012), community (Gilligan, Pasquale and Samii 2011), and cross-national level (Bateson 2012) have all found evidence that past victimization is associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in prosocial behavior (e.g., voting).

On the other hand, existing research has also found that prior exposure to violence can increase inter-ethnic discrimination: exposure to rocket fire has hardened Israeli attitudes toward Palestinians (Canetti-Nisim et al. 2009), for example, while diminishing the likelihood that in-group members punish one another in behavioral experiments (Zeitzoff Forthcoming). More generally, prior research indicates the existence of a negative relationship between violence and subsequent reciprocity toward out-group members and greater sensitivity to defections from the norm of expected reciprocity (Jakupcak et al. 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator</th>
<th>Hypothesized Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coethnic</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Coethnic</td>
<td>Little effect†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Party</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Harm</td>
<td>Baseline coethnic bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Hypothesized Effects of Violence on the Magnitude of Coethnic Bias, by Perpetrator. Last row is baseline coethnic bias among non-victimized individuals as hypothesized in Section 1.2. The symbol † denotes expectation of “little effect” due to ceiling effects if conflict has been on-going; expectation is a positive effect in early stages of conflict, diminishing until ceiling is reached.

We advance a series of theoretical propositions, summarized in Table 1, about how personal exposure to combatant violence affects coethnic bias. We begin with the case of an individual harmed by a coethnic. Our expectation is that exposure to intragroup violence is associated with a decrease in the magnitude of coethnic bias, though it will not change the direction of coethnic bias. Indeed, while our view of coethnic bias is underpinned by the threat of intragroup sanction, the actual experience of victimization is likely to generate anger at the perpetuator that weakens intragroup solidarity. This negative effect is especially probable if the sanction was viewed as indiscriminate or perpetrated by members of the security forces, where the expectation of protection, not abuse, is the norm. Yet intragroup victimization is unlikely to trump preexisting coethnic biases entirely. As a consequence, victimized individuals are unlikely to transfer support across ethnic lines given the absence of norms of inter-ethnic reciprocity and the requisite trust that would mitigate concerns about retaliation.

Next, consider the situation of an individual victimized by a non-coethnic. We propose that victimization has little effect on coethnic bias in this instance. Consistent with constructivist insights that identities “harden” during wartime, we expect that exposure to violence by a non-coethnic is likely to encounter a ceiling effect beyond which biases cannot be increased. Thus, while violence may have a positive effect during the war’s early stages, we expect that violence has little or no effect on coethnic bias during the remainder of a war’s duration.

We also consider the effects of violence by an external third party on coethnic bias. Though

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4Exposure to intragroup violence may also create ethnic entrepreneurs who crossed ethnic lines to cooperate.
not relevant for all civil wars, many such conflicts are marked by either external intervention or a third party in the form of a distant central government. Our expectation here is that exposure to third party will increase the magnitude of coethnic bias. The logic here is similar to that of interactions with non-coethnics: absent norms of reciprocity, coethnics are likely to prefer cooperation with themselves rather than an outsider, particularly one that they may have infrequent contact with. This positive effect on coethnic bias should be apparent regardless of whether the comparison group is a non-coethnic group or the third party itself. Since the role of the third party can be considered a special case outside the typical non-coethnic dyad, we explore these issues more fully in Section 4.3.

1.4 Empirical Predictions

The above discussion suggests several falsifiable expectations about the nature and magnitude of coethnic bias, which are summarized here.

**P.1 (Coethnic Bias):** Individuals are more likely to support a program endorsed by coethnics than by non-coethnics.

**P.2 (Harm by Coethnic):** Exposure to victimization by a coethnic is associated with a decrease in coethnic bias relative to a non-victimized individual.

**P.3 (Harm by Non-Coethnic):** Exposure to violence by a non-coethnic is associated with a positive effect on coethnic bias relative to a non-victimized individual during initial phases of a conflict and a diminishing one over time as “ceiling” is reached for severity of bias.

**P.4 (Harm by Third Party):** Exposure to violence by a third party is associated with an increase in coethnic bias relative to a non-victimized individual.

2 Context and Empirical Strategy

In this section, we describe our empirical strategy and the context in which our study is conducted. Specifically, we conduct a survey experiment using the Guardians of Peace program to indirectly measure the magnitude of coethnic bias among Pashtun and Tajik respondents.
2.1 The Guardians of Peace Program

The current war in Afghanistan began in October 2001, when American airpower and Special Forces combined to chase the Taliban from power in the immediate aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks. A fitful occupation then began, beset by contradictory nation-building aspirations and resource shortages that allowed the Taliban to regroup and then quietly extend its influence. By 2006, the war had clearly moved to a new, more violent, phase, with insurgent attacks sharply increasing across southern and eastern Afghanistan. The next five years were marked by escalating numbers of ISAF soldiers, heightened violence by the Taliban and other insurgent organizations, and the tit-for-tat evolution of tactics to include increased reliance on airpower and, later, night raids by ISAF and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide terrorism by the Taliban. By 2012, the high-water mark of ISAF troop strength and foreign aid had been reached, as public exhaustion with the war effort made continued outlays of lives and treasure politically unpalatable. A proposed exit date of December 2014 now looms, with Afghanistan’s future very much unclear [Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012, Chandrasekaran 2012, Barfield 2010, Jones 2009, Giustozzi 2008].

We exploit ISAF’s Guardians of Peace (GP) program as an opportunity to explore coethnic bias and its effects on wartime informing. The program, first launched in southern Afghanistan
in early 2010 but quickly scaled up nationally, was designed to elicit anonymous tips from locals about the presence and activities of insurgent forces within their villages. Based on US-style community policing tactics ("See Something, Say Something"), the GP program encouraged villagers to provide information via dedicated hot-lines or visits to neighboring ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) outposts and bases, where it was hoped that these initial walk-up contacts could be cultivated as more regular informants. The GP program was and continues to be actively promoted through various media, including national television (i.e Tolo) and radio commercials, roadside billboards, village shuras (councils), and flyers, business cards, and even children’s comics distributed by patrolling ISAF and ANSF soldiers (see Figure 1). Even Afghan celebrities, including singer Habib Qaderi, have been enlisted to promote it.

We reproduce the text of one national television commercial to provide a sense of these appeals. It should be added that informants also receive financial compensation of their tips if they are deemed useful. Though program details, including payment amounts and number of tips received, remain classified, at least $1 million was disbursed in the first month of the program alone.\(^5\)

\[\text{There are things that should be symbols of a brighter future for our children. There are things that should represent signs of development. And there are things that should create an easier way to get together with our brothers. You have the duty to restore the proper meaning of things in our society. All you have to do is report any suspicious activity. Our security forces are here to take care of the rest. Your actions can lay the foundation for a true Islamic society. Be a Guardian of Peace! Report suspicious activities to your local ANSF.}^6\]

The Guardians program offers a unique window into coethnic bias, for several reasons. First, it encompassed all of our surveyed districts, so we avoid the problems associated with priming hypothetical situations (Barabas and Jerit 2010). Second, since both ANSF and


ISAF endorsers were depicted in media outreach and participated in these patrols, we can exploit this naturally occurring heterogeneity by explicitly (and systematically) randomizing the endorser’s ethnicity without raising concerns about unrealistic endorsers.

2.2 Indirect Measurement through Endorsement Experiments

We rely on an indirect survey measurement methodology — endorsement experiments — to avoid or mitigate many of the problems associated with conducting surveys in conflict settings (Bullock, Imai and Shapiro 2011; Lyall, Blair and Imai 2012; DeMaio 1984). We are especially concerned about social desirability bias. That is, individuals may simply provide the answers which they expect will satisfy the enumerator to avoid sanction or in the hopes of receiving (continued) material assistance. Such issues are especially likely to rise in a counterinsurgency environment, where many seemingly banal issues become highly politicized and where both combatants have been rendering assistance — and threatening or directly harming respondents — in a bid to win “hearts and minds.”

We randomly assign a respondent to one of the three endorsers for the GP program: an ISAF spokesman, to capture the role of the external intervener, a Pashtun Afghan National Police (ANP) official, and a Tajik ANP official. We posed four questions about the program, changing only the identity of the endorser. We selected names in consultation with our field staff that were easily identifiable as Tajik or Pashtun in nature. To ensure that individuals could correctly identify the enduser’s identity (Habyarimana et al. 2009, 48–57), we appended a descriptive phrase (“a Pashtun/Tajik” official) after the endorser’s name. Using this manipulation, we seek to compare the effects of ISAF, Tajik, and Pashtun endorsements on support for the GP program across Tajik and Pashtun respondents.

As an example, we provide one of the endorsement experiments below.

[Foreign forces / Gul Alam Shinwarai, a high-ranking Pashtun official in the Afghan National Police / Haji Asad Anwari, a high-ranking Tajik official in the Afghan National Police] recently announced the creation of the Guardians of Peace program across Afghanistan. This program provides a telephone number that residents can
call anonymously if they see anything that might injure or kill Afghan security forces or innocent Afghan civilians. How likely would you be to call this telephone number to report a suspected anti-government activity?

We used a five-point response scale for this particular question: I am certain to call this telephone number; I am likely to call this telephone number; I might call this number; I am unlikely to call this telephone number; and I will not call this telephone number. “Don’t Know” and “Refuse to Answer” were also possible answers.

Three additional endorsement questions were also posed while the ethnic identity (but not the name) of the endorser remained constant across all four questions. Specifically, we asked whether the respondent believed that phone calls to the hotline would remain anonymous (“Anonymity”); whether respondents would be willing to stop by local ANP stations and outposts to report suspicious activities by armed anti-government organizations “that may result in harm to innocent Afghans” (“Stopping by”) and how likely respondents viewed Taliban retaliation if they participated in the GP program (“Retaliation”). For reasons explored below, our analysis indicated that the response distribution to this last question differs significantly from that to the other questions. Thus, in our final analysis, we examine the initial three questions together. All the survey questions are reproduced in Appendix A.1.

The distribution of responses, including “Don’t Know” and “Refuse to Answer,” is provided in Figure 2 for Tajik and Pashtun respondents by Tajik, Pashtun, and ISAF endorsers. Considerable heterogeneity in responses is immediately apparent both within and across our respondents. This is an ideal situation, enabling us to detect support for endorsers more readily than if attitudes have coalesced around a single position. In addition, the low rate of “Refuse to Answer” and “Don’t Know” is encouraging, particularly since the question subjects are sensitive. Finally, we already observe some initial evidence on the possible existence of coethnic bias: compare, for example, the clear differences between Tajik and Pashtun endorsers among Tajik respondents for questions about the likelihood of calling the dedicated hot line (“Guardians”) and stopping by ANP posts (“Stopping by”).
Figure 2: Distribution of Responses from the Endorsement Experiment by Ethnic Groups and Endorsements. Plots depict the distribution of responses to four survey questions (Guardians, Anonymity, Stopping by, and Retaliation) across three endorsement groups (Tajik/Pashtun/ISAF) among Tajik respondents (left column) and Pashtun respondents (right column), respectively. For the retaliation question, labels for the response categories are reversed so that darker gray indicates higher support for the GP program as in the case of the other questions. Specifically, the darkest gray represents “Retaliation is highly unlikely” while the lightest gray represents “Retaliation is highly likely.” All the survey questions are reproduced in Appendix A.1. Sample sizes are shown in parentheses.

2.3 Sample and Survey Diagnostics

Our survey experiment was conducted between 21 November and 11 December 2011 in 100 rural villages located in 10 districts of five provinces in Afghanistan (see black dots in Figure 3). The survey was implemented by the Opinion Research Center of Afghanistan (ORCA), an Afghan-owned firm that recruits its enumerators from local populations. A 270-responder
Figure 3: Sampled Villages. Black dots represent randomly sampled 100 villages. Red dots represent ISAF- and insurgent-initiated violent attacks one year prior to our survey launch (November 2011). The left panel depicts violence using ISAF’s own CIDNE database; the right panel draws on iMMAP, which collates event data from NGOs in Afghanistan.

pilot was conducted in 10 randomly sampled villages in these same districts (4–10 September 2011) to pretest our questions (including alternative list and endorsement experiments), to gauge question-order sensitivity, and to obtain current information about the security environment. These villages were subsequently removed from the sampling frame.

A multistage sampling design was employed to identify our sample of Pashtun and Tajik respondents, the two largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Using population estimates from the Central Statistical Office, ORCA, and our purpose-built Afghanistan Population Index (API) database, we first identified 100 districts (out of 400 total) that were considered ethnically mixed. All of these districts had exposure to the GP program. We included two districts in Helmand (Lashkar Gah and Nad Ali) within these totals. Though almost exclusively Pashtun, these two districts had witnessed the introduction of Tajik Afghan National Army and Police forces into key towns as during a major Taliban-clearing operation in February 2010 (Operation Moshtarak). These districts were testbeds for the GP program concept — as part of a larger “government in a box” initiative designed to bring governance and services to newly-cleared areas — and so provide an opportunity to explore the dynamics of coethnic bias in key strategic areas.

We then randomly sampled 10 districts from these 100 districts (two per province). Next,
we stratified villages according to their ethnic composition using bins of “Pashtun only,” “Tajik only” and “Mixed.” We sought a breakdown of 50 percent mixed villages, 25 percent Tajik-only, and 25 percent Pashtun-only. Figure 9 in Appendix A.2 graphically depicts our distribution. We obtained 10 percent or better coverage of villages in each district except for Nad Ali (8 percent). The average population size of our selected villages is 2,050 individuals, larger than the average of 683 in the remaining 35,543 villages in Afghanistan. This number is inflated, however, by the inclusion of two large urban centers, Lashkar Gah and Marja, in our sample. Once removed, our average size falls to 1,038 individuals. As expected, there are no statistically significant differences in population size in our sampled villages and non-sampled in either the same district or the rest of Afghanistan.

Finally, we utilized a random walk procedure to identify households and then identified respondents among adult males (18 years or older) using a Kish grid. Each village had 27 respondents (nine responses for each of the three versions). Our refusal rate was less than 15 percent (2700 respondents/3160 approached). The majority of interviews were completed on the first (62%) or second (23.7%) attempt. Of the 460 failed contacts, 202 were due to non-response (no adult male was available after three visits) and 258 refused to participate; the most common reason was “in a hurry” (N = 70).

Of course, field research in conflict settings poses a special set of challenges. We encountered Taliban and arbaki (militia) checkpoints in many of our districts, particularly in Kunduz and Kunar, that restricted movement (though not access). Helmand continued to be extremely violent throughout the duration of our fieldwork, and Ghazni and Kunar both recorded daily (or nearly so) violence in surveyed districts (see Table 2). One district in particular, Wati Pur in Kunar Province, proved especially difficult. Long considered a Taliban

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7 We also collected data on ethnic composition by asking respondents about their perceptions of the village’s ethnic breakdown and by having enumerators, who were all locals, classify the village’s composition in a post-survey module.

8 Given our survey locations, we were unable to interview female respondents.

9 As part of our quality control, district supervisors directly monitored 10 percent of the interviews, back-checked another 15 percent, and ORCA’s Kabul-based staff randomly audited a further 5 percent via call-backs.
Table 2: Overview of the Multistage Sampling Design. Violent events by district by data source (CIDNE and iMMAP) in the year prior to the survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>CIDNE: Violent events initiated by</th>
<th>iMMAP: Violent events initiated by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>ISAF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deh Yak</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>72,680</td>
<td>162</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghazni Center</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>146,403</td>
<td>216</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lashkar Gah</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>126,926</td>
<td>216</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nad Ali</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>290,866</td>
<td>324</td>
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<td>Khas Kunar</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45,166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wati Pur</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>148</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>143,243</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosfandi</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>59,570</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangcharak</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>83,412</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,009</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,139,337</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,700</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92 non-sampled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixed districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

redoubt, two enumerators were detained by the Taliban as “foreign spies” prior to conducting their surveys. Village elders interceded on behalf on the enumerators (who were locals), and the Taliban soon released them, albeit with minor injuries. In total, we replaced only four villages of the original 100 selected, a testament to the skill and courage of our survey teams.

## 3 Statistical Modeling

To analyze our survey, we employ the statistical methodology proposed by Bullock, [Bullock, Imai and Shapiro (2011)](footnote) where the endorsement effects are modeled within the framework of item response theory (IRT). The IRT framework enables the extraction of systematic patterns common across multiple questions. Our multi-stage sampling design naturally leads to the use of a hierarchical model where the village specific effects are modeled with village level covariates. This model also accounts for within-village clustering that may be present.

We fit this model with a series of individual- and village-level covariates that are emphasized by existing theories as important for explaining willingness to inform. At the individual level, we include measures for standard socioeconomic traits such as age, ethnicity, and income. In addition, we account for the individual’s frequency of contact with combatants...
(ISAF and ANP) as well as coethnics and non-coethnics \cite{Allport1954, Cook1971}. Our models also include self-reports of harm (both personal and property) that the individual or his family has experienced in the past year at the hands of the Taliban, ISAF, and ANP.

We also incorporate five village-level covariates. These include village elevation (in logged meters) as a proxy for difficulty of state control \cite{Fearon2003}; the village’s logged population size and ethnic composition (as percentage of Pashtun inhabitants); the relative control exercised by combatants over the village \cite{Kalyvas2006}; see Section 4.4; and the number of insurgent and ISAF-initiated attacks within a 2km$^2$ radius of the village in the year prior to the survey (November 2010 to December 2011). These data stem from two sources: ISAF’s own Combined Information Data Exchange (CIDNE) and iMMAP, a web-based database that multiple Western and Afghan NGOs use to record and share incident data (see Section 4.4). The full list of individual and village level variables in our model appears in Appendix A.4.

Formally, let $Y_{ij}$ denote the observed ordered response variable, which takes one of the following values, \{$1, 2, \ldots, L$\}. We use $T_i$ to indicate the randomized “treatment” variable, which represents the endorser assigned to respondent $i$. Then, the individual level model is given by the following ordered probit IRT model,

$$\Pr(Y_{ij} \leq l \mid T_i = k) = \Phi(\alpha_{jl} - \beta_j(x_i + s_{ijk}))$$

(1)

where $\alpha_{j1} = 0$, $\alpha_{jL} = \infty$, and $\alpha_{jl} < \alpha_{jl+1}$ for any $j$ and $l$. In this model, $x_i$ represents the level of respondent $i$’s willingness to support the GP program and $s_{ijk}$ denotes the effect of endorsement by group $k$ on question $j$ for respondent $i$. As in the standard IRT model, $\alpha_{jl}$’s are the item difficulty parameters and $\beta_j$ is the item discrimination parameter. In the current context, $\alpha_{jl}$’s reflect the degree to which a certain aspect of the program is supported whereas

\footnote{The years of education variable is highly collinear with other covariates and hence is excluded from the model.}
\( \beta_j \) represents the amount of information each question reveals about respondents’ willingness to support the program.

We are especially interested in \( x_i \) and \( s_{ijk} \) and these parameters are modeled hierarchically as follows using the individual level covariates \( Z_i \) and the village level covariates \( V_{\text{village}[i]} \),

\[
\begin{align*}
  x_i & \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\delta_{\text{village}[i]} + Z_i^\top \delta Z, 1) \quad (2) \\
  s_{ijk} & \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\lambda_{k,\text{village}[i]} + Z_i^\top \lambda Z_k^\top \lambda, \omega_k^2) \quad (3) \\
  \delta_{\text{village}[i]} & \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}(\delta + V_{\text{village}[i]}^\top \delta, \sigma^2) \quad (4) \\
  \lambda_{k,\text{village}[i]} & \overset{\text{indep.}}{\sim} \mathcal{N}((\lambda_k + V_{\text{village}[i]}^\top \lambda V_k), \omega_k^2) \quad (5)
\end{align*}
\]

The model, therefore, allows us to investigate how individual and village level covariates are associated with respondents’ willingness to support the program as well as how these variables determine the size of endorsement effects. Finally, the model is completed with the conjugate prior. The normal and inverse chi-squared prior distributions are placed on the coefficient and variance parameters, respectively. The model is fitted using the R package, endorse [Shiraito and Imai, 2012], and the standard convergence diagnostic based on three independent Markov chains was performed.

4 Empirical Findings

This section first describes our main findings about how coethnic bias influences strategy selection (Hypothesis P.1) before exploring how such biases influence the effects of combatant violence (Hypotheses P.2 and P.3) on the likelihood of informing. All of the results are calculated using the posterior draws of the fitted model described in Section 3. The summary of estimated model parameters appears in Appendix A.4.
Figure 4: Estimated Support for the Guardians of Peace Program. We plot the predicted probability of each response category averaged across three endorsement experiment questions under the ISAF endorser condition for each ethnic group with the 95% confidence intervals. The column labeled by “Certain” represents the averaged predicted probability of the “certain to call this telephone number,” “certain that callers will remain anonymous,” and “certain to stop by a local ANP post” categories, while “Not” represents the predicted probability of the “will not call this telephone number,” “certain that callers will not remain anonymous,” and “will not stop by a local ANP post” categories. The predicted probabilities are calculated separately for each ethnic group based on the observed characteristics of respondents. Tajik respondents systematically support the GOP program more than Pashtun respondents. The differences between ethnic groups are substantively large and statistically significant.

4.1 Coethnic Bias and Support for the GP Program

How important is coethnic bias in explaining support for the GP program? In brief, we find that it is very important. As a first cut, in Figure 4, we plot the predicted probability of each response category averaged across three endorsement questions under the ISAF endorser condition, which will be used as the baseline category for each ethnic group throughout our analysis. The column “Certain” represents the predicted probability across our “certain to call this telephone number,” “certain that callers will remain anonymous,” and “certain to stop by a local ANP post” categories, while the “Not” column represents the opposite end of the five-point scale. We calculate these predicted probabilities averaged across respondents separately for each ethnic group using their observed characteristics.

We find that Tajiks are far more likely to consider supporting the GP program than their
Figure 5: Estimated Endorsement Effects on Respondents’ Support for the Guardians of Peace Program. Endorsement effects in this figure refer to the average probability that Pashtun and Tajik endorsers increase respondents’ support for the program (relative to the ISAF endorser condition). These effects are estimated for each ethnic group separately under the Pashtun and Tajik endorser conditions. The differences between these endorsement effects under these two endorser conditions represent coethnic bias and are given in columns 3 and 6. The vertical lines represent the 95% credibility intervals. The plot indicates that respondents in both ethnic groups support the Program more when endorsed by their own group. Tajik respondents are far less supportive of the Program under the Pashtun endorser condition than Pashtun respondents are under the Tajik endorser condition. Notable, too, is the fact that the ISAF endorsement (the baseline endorser category) is not viewed favorably relative to either Pashtun or Tajik endorsers for either ethnic group.

Pashtun counterparts. In fact, the predicted probability of opposing the program is nearly twice as high among Pashtuns as Tajiks, while Tajiks are at least three times more likely to report that they are “certain” to support the program than Pashtuns. These differences are both substantively large and statistically significant for all five response categories. This analysis provides initial evidence that support may vary systematically across ethnic groups.

Next, we directly test Hypothesis P.1 by examining how the ethnicity of program’s endorser influences respondents’ support for the GP program. Figure 5 plots the estimated endorsement effects, which are represented by the estimated probability that having a Pashtun (Tajik) endorser increases support for the Program among Pashtun and Tajik respondents. The third and sixth columns present our key quantity of interest, i.e., coethnic bias, which is estimated...
as the difference in endorsement effects between Pashtun and Tajik endorsers (with 95 percent confidence intervals as vertical lines). Here, we observe coethnic bias on full display. Pashtun respondents record higher levels of support for the GP program when endorsed by a coethnic, though the difference is fairly modest. Tajik respondents provide a much sharper example of coethnic bias: support for the program moves only slightly (relative to the ISAF endorser condition) when endorsed by Pashtun representative while a Tajik endorsement is associated with a substantial positive increase in estimated support for the program.

Underscoring the importance of coethnic bias is the fact that these models include standard socioeconomic and demographic variables and yet they appear to explain little, if any, variation in support for the GP program. Age, wealth, and degree of interaction with non-coethnics, ISAF, and ANSF all appear to have little association with changes in the probability of support. Moreover, village level covariates, notably elevation, population size, and ethnic composition, also have no consistent relationship with the likelihood of support, and none of these relationships approaches conventional levels of statistical significance. This suggests that our respondents’ choice of strategies hinges on the coethnic status of the proposed interlocutor, particularly among Tajiks, who report little willingness to consider a proposal endorsed by a Pashtun.

We are also in a position to explore how victimization affects support for the GP program. How is “harm” measured? We asked whether an individual or members of his family had been physically injured (or killed) or experienced property damage within the past year. These self-reports, elicited prior to the endorsement experiments, were preceded by a script that defined “harm” as first physical injury and then property damage. We also asked the respondents to identify which combatants — ISAF, Afghan National Police, or the Taliban — were responsible for the incident and whether that combatant had subsequently “approached” the individual to offer restitution.11

Are victimized individuals more likely to support the program, as suggested by recent literature? In a word, no. We find little evidence that exposure to violence — whether perpetrated by ISAF, the Taliban, or the ANP — is positively associated with an increase in the likelihood of supporting the GP program. In fact, for several combinations, notably ISAF victimization of both Pashtuns and Tajiks under the ISAF endorsement, we find evidence that victimized individuals are less likely to support this program when compared with non-victimized individuals. We graphically represent all possible combinations of respondent ethnicity and perpetrator’s identity under the ISAF endorsement condition in Figure 10 of Appendix A.3. While our notion of “prosocial” differs from those employed in existing research, these findings nonetheless suggest that individuals who have been harmed are unlikely to play the often-heroic role assigned to civilians in our theories, that is, seeking to punish victimizers by providing information to the other side in a civil war.

4.2 Coethnic Bias and Violence

We next examine how exposure to harm by different combatants affects the magnitude of coethnic bias (Hypotheses P.2 and P.3). For our purposes, we treat the ANP as “in-groups” for our respondents. This is not a perfect measure, however. In general, ANP forces are recruited locally and either reflect the composition of the village itself or neighboring areas with similar demographics. We do not possess precise data on the ethnic balance of local ANP forces; nor, from press reports, does ISAF itself [Giustozzi and Isaqzadeh 2011]. Thus, while nearly half our sampled villages are either exclusively Pashtun or Tajik, we must be careful when drawing conclusions about mixed villages, where ANP forces may be comprised of both ethnic groups. Despite these difficulties, we choose to retain our analysis of the ANP given its substantive importance to both state-building efforts and to ISAF’s own exit strategy of replacing ISAF forces with local ones.

We treat the Taliban as the “out-group” for Tajiks by virtue of the Taliban’s overwhelmingly Pashtun composition. By contrast, we consider the Taliban the “in-group” for our Pash-
Figure 6 plots the estimated effects of victimization by the ANP and Taliban on coethnic bias among Pashtun (left panel) and Tajik respondents. These estimates of victimization effects correspond to the estimated change in the probability that a Pashtun (Tajik) endorsement increases respondent’s support for the GP program.

Take, for example, the response of Pashtuns to victimization. Consistent with Hypothesis P.2, we find that exposure to ANP victimization has a negative effect on coethnic bias relative to those individuals not victimized by the ANP. The effect is substantively small in its

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12 On intra-Pashtun divisions, see Lyall, Blair and Imai (2012).
size, however, and not statistically significant. Interestingly, exposure to harm by the Taliban appears to have a small positive effect on coethnic bias among Pashtuns. Again, however, these differences are modest, and we cannot rule out the possibility that these small effects are simply noise. Victimization of Pashtuns by the ANP and Taliban may actually have little systematic effect on coethnic bias.

The effects of violence on coethnic bias are much more stark when we examine Tajik respondents. Victimization by ANP forces is associated with a steep decrease in estimated coethnic bias compared with non-victimized Tajiks (Hypothesis P.2). This suggests that ANP violence is undoing the positive effects of a Tajik endorsement among Tajiks, making the GP program less attractive to would-be informants. The effects of Taliban violence on coethnic bias are similarly interesting: Taliban harm does not appear to change the propensity of individuals to exhibit coethnic bias. This may suggest that Tajiks, while profoundly (negatively) influenced by exposure to in-group violence, are equally likely to consider providing information about Taliban insurgents regardless of whether they have been victimized by the Taliban or not. Consistent with our expectation of a ceiling effect (Hypothesis P.3), it is apparent that coethnic bias is so persistent among Tajiks that no Pashtun endorsement is likely to be viewed positively, regardless of actual exposure to Taliban violence.

An important subset of our respondents are Pashtuns who reside in Nad Ali and Lashkar Gah, two districts in Helmand that first experienced the GP program as part of the large-scale Operation Moshtarak. Though substantial efforts were made to engage the Pashtun populace, appeals to support the GP program appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Conducting the same analysis as in Figure 6 using only the respondents from these two districts reveals an unchanged picture. Exposure to ANP violence is associated with a modest negative change in coethnic bias while Taliban violence has no net effect on coethnic bias. Despite tens of millions of dollars in development assistance and sustained operations designed to drive off the Taliban, even exposure to Taliban violence is not decisive enough to diminish coethnic bias.
among Pashtun respondents. Efforts to encourage providing information about the Taliban are therefore unlikely to gain traction if endorsed by either Tajik or ISAF spokesmen.

In short, two points bear emphasis. First, the effects of violence on the magnitude of coethnic bias are dependent on the perpetrator’s identity. Violence, in other words, does not have uniform effects on coethnic bias, challenging prevailing conceptions of decision-making where individuals automatically provide information to the side that was not responsible for inflicting harm. Second, despite the variable effects of violence, it is important to acknowledge that coethnic bias remained positive across many of Pashtun and Tajik respondents. The effects of violence may change the magnitude of coethnic bias, but it remains persistent, and in no case was victimization sufficient to turn individuals away from their own group in favor of non-coethnics.

4.3 Coethnic Bias and Third Parties

About 40 percent of insurgencies fought since 1800 have witnessed external intervention by a third party (Lyall and Wilson 2009). In many of these conflicts, the external intervener has assumed responsibility for bolstering the state’s flagging capacities for war-fighting, service provision, and intelligence collection. As a result, the third party becomes saddled with the highly public and intrusive task of obtaining information from ordinary citizens. What effect would a third-party endorsement have on individual attitudes toward informing when compared with local endorsers?

Existing research suggests that external interveners can, in some situations, interpose themselves between warring parties as an “honest broker” that transcends coethnic biases. This position is often cited in studies of United Nations interventions and peacekeeping operations that are designed to prevent the recurrence of civil war (Fortna 2008). Similarly, it may be possible for the intervening state to use its superior military power to carve out a role as balancer between two warring (ethnic) groups. Biddle (2005/06) argues, for example, that the United States was able to balance rival Shia and Sunni insurgents in Iraq by threatening
Figure 7: Estimated Effects of Victimization by ISAF on the Magnitude of Coethnic Bias. Coethnic bias refers to the difference in the probability that Pashtun (Tajik) endorsers increase respondents’ support for the program among Pashtun (Tajik) respondents, relative to the Tajik (Pashtun) endorser condition. The panels represent the estimated coethnic bias for respondents who suffered both harm and property damage and those who did not experience the victimization of either kind. The vertical lines are the 95% credibility intervals. The left panel plots the estimated victimization effects for Pashtun respondents while the right panel plots the same quantities for Tajik respondents. Victimization by ISAF appears to increase coethnic bias among Tajik Respondents.

to punish one side’s continued intransigence with backing the opposing side. These examples suggest that interveners may be able to rise above the fray of ethnic violence to become respected (or feared) mediators.

Of course, it is also plausible that the intervener will be viewed in an even worse light than non-coethnics. Indeed, it is commonplace to cite the role of nationalism in mobilizing opposition to an external occupier across ethnic lines (Mack 1975). Coethnic biases may therefore be transcended at the intervener’s expense. In this view, a third party endorsement should generally be associated with negative support for a Guardians-style program, while inflicting harm should be met with a sharply negative effect on the odds of considering informing.

We explore these issues in Figure 7 which plots the estimated differences coethnic bias across Pashtun and Tajik respondents who have (not) experienced ISAF victimization. Victimized Pashtuns reported a slightly positive coethnic bias (that is, an increase in the en-
endorsement effect of a Pashtun relative to a Tajik endorsement). This represents a decrease in coethnic bias relative to non-victimized Pashtuns, though as before these differences are small and not statistically significant (Column 3). As above, those findings suggest that there is no clear effect of ISAF victimization on coethnic bias. Within the Tajik sample, however, ISAF victimization is associated with a sharp increase in estimated coethnic bias. The magnitude of the effect is large; victimization by ISAF is clearly reinforcing pro-Tajik sentiment. A small but still substantively large coethnic bias is observed among Tajiks who did not report ISAF victimization.

In short, ISAF victimization is associated with an increase in coethnic bias among Tajik, but not Pashtun, respondents. From ISAF’s viewpoint, this is a particularly worrisome finding since it implies that Tajiks, who are most likely to support the GP program, are rendered less likely to trust non-coethnics (including ISAF) when considering informing about Taliban activities. ISAF could, in other words, find itself on the wrong side of both ethnic groups when seeking to obtain information from the civilian populace.

4.4 Alternative Explanations

In this section, we consider the possibility that our findings about willingness to consider informing are driven not by coethnic bias but instead by the relative level of control exercised by combatants over these respondents [Kalyvas 2006, Kalyvas and Kocher 2007]. This claim offers a two-fold challenge. First, it suggests that social desirability bias will be variable across our villages but will be especially concentrated in areas controlled wholly or partially by the Taliban, against whom the GP program is directed. Conversely, support for the program may be inflated in areas controlled by the government or ISAF as respondents “overfulfill the plan” and wax enthusiastic publicly about a program that they have no intention of supporting privately. Second, and related, attitudes toward prosocial behavior may simply be endogenous to the level of control exercised by these combatants. Thus, the distribution of control, not ethnic identity, should explain the direction and magnitude of support.
Figure 8: Estimated Support for the Guardians of Peace Program by Level of Taliban Control of Village. The average predicted probability of each response category for respondents within Taliban controlled villages is presented with the 95% credibility intervals. The estimated average predicted probabilities (filled triangles) are calculated using the estimated parameters and the empirical distribution of the other covariates in Taliban controlled villages. Response categories are the same as Figure 4. There is no difference in support for the Program between levels of Taliban control.

To explore these claims, enumerators were asked to assess the level of control by combatant for each of the 100 surveyed villages. A standardized 7-point scale was employed: (1) ISAF or Afghan security forces were permanently based in this village or nearby; no Taliban activity or presence had been reported; (2) ISAF or Afghan security forces were permanently based in this village or nearby; some Taliban activity or presence had been reported, especially at night; (3) ISAF or Afghan security forces were permanently based in this village or nearby but did not move freely at night; village administrators usually do not sleep in their homes, and Taliban activity took place regularly; (4) Taliban forces were permanently based in this village or nearby and operated freely; ISAF or Afghan security forces might visit the village on occasion but did not stay; (5) Taliban forces were permanently based in this village or nearby and operated freely; no ISAF or Afghan security force presence or activity at all; (6) Local *arbaki* (militia) control this village; minimal Taliban, ISAF, or ANSF presence at all; and (7) There were no ISAF, Taliban, ANSF, or *arbaki* controlling this village.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\)We operationalize this as a dummy variable that indicates some degree of Taliban control (1) or not (0).
Yet as Figure demonstrates, there is little difference in the average predicted probabilities attached to each response category of support for the GP program between respondents in Taliban- and non-Taliban-controlled villages. We derive these estimates from the IRT model detailed in Table and use ISAF as our baseline endorser. Quite remarkably, these results suggest that the nature of Taliban control is not associated with the likelihood that individuals will express support for the program, challenging the claim that attitudes are necessarily endogenous to the distribution of wartime control. Indeed, despite possessing village-level data, our statistical models do not uncover any statistically significant relationship between control and support, at least when ISAF is the treatment condition.

We also test a more general claim that attitudes are driven by exposure to violence in one’s immediate area. We draw on two different data sources — ISAF’s Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) and iMMAP’s Security Incidents Tracker — to measure violence within a 2km² radius of the village. CIDNE records the date and spatial location of 17 different types of violent events initiated by either ISAF or insurgent organizations. iMMAP is a reporting system similar to CIDNE but run by international humanitarian/NGO actors in Afghanistan that records security and other incidents in near-real time through crowd sourcing among participating organizations via standardized reporting on a web-based portal. While CIDNE is focused almost exclusively on ISAF-insurgent interactions, iMMAP records nearly 50 types of violence against civilians and Afghan government institutions (including ANSF). There are 42,248 events in CIDNE and 30,640 events in iMMAP for 1 November 2010 to 15 December 2011 (the year prior to our survey’s launch).

Echoing earlier findings by , we find no consistent or statistically significant association between exposure to these violent events and individual attitudes. This finding is perhaps unsurprising, insofar as these event data do not track an individual’s

actual exposure to harm. We might reasonably expect, however, that a backdrop of violence nonetheless has a more generalized effect on individual attitudes; indeed, this is a key, if tacit, assumption of most event data-driven research on civil war dynamics. It appears that event counts of violence, while useful for some research purposes, are poor proxies for capturing how combatant actions affect civilian attitudes.

4.5 The Question of Retaliation

Our respondents’ beliefs about the likelihood of Taliban retaliation for providing tips creates another opportunity to examine coethnic bias. Are these beliefs influenced by coethnic bias, or do they instead reflect more objective calculations of risk, such as the presence of Taliban in a given village? Following the structure of our previous endorsement experiments, we asked “in your view, how high is the risk of Taliban retaliation if someone provided tips to the authorities?” (see Appendix A.1 for full question wording). Respondents could provide one of five responses, ranging from “highly likely” to “highly unlikely.”

Given the importance of ensuring an informant’s anonymity (Leites and Wolf 1970, 141-43), it is unsurprising to discover that most respondents were at least somewhat concerned about retaliation. As Figure 2 demonstrates, Pashtuns are more concerned about Taliban retaliation than Tajiks: the median response for this endorsement was a 5 (“highly likely”) among Pashtuns and a 4 (“somewhat likely”) among Tajiks. 15 Most worrisome, at least from ISAF’s point of view, is that an ISAF endorsement is associated with the highest number of responses that retaliation is highly or somewhat likely among both Tajik and Pashtun respondents. This finding is consistent with the claims above that ISAF has emerged as the actor least likely to have a positive endorsement effect on the likelihood of supporting the GP program.

We offer another test of coethnic bias and beliefs about retaliation in Table 4 of Appendix A.4. We use a multilevel ordered profit model to examine whether the individual and

15 This difference is statistically significant based on Pearson $\chi^2$ test.
village level covariates are associated with beliefs about retaliation. Similar to the IRT model, the random village intercepts are modeled using village level covariates as mean predictors. The ISAF endorsement is the baseline category, so effects on probability of retaliation are interpreted as changes relative to this endorsement. The model confirms that Tajiks are, under the ISAF endorser condition, less concerned about the prospect of retaliation than Pashtuns. At the individual level, the most robust findings center around the interaction terms between respondent and endorser identities. Both interaction terms are positively associated with beliefs that retaliation is likely if information about the Taliban is supplied to the authorities. Among Tajiks, the Pashtun endorsement (relative to the ISAF endorsement) has the largest positive effect, though the substantive difference between endorsements is fairly modest. Intriguingly, wealthier individuals are also more apt to believe that retaliation is more likely, though the substantive effect size is small.

Perhaps most surprisingly, many of the factors typically thought to drive individual perceptions of risk are statistically insignificant. None of our measures of daily contact with ISAF or ANP forces are associated with increased perception of risk of retaliation. Similarly, none of our measures for ISAF or Taliban victimization are statistically significant. We do find, however, that personal harm and property damage when inflicted by the ANP are positively associated with increased perception of retaliation risk at conventional levels of statistical significance.

What about village-level covariates? Unsurprisingly, we find evidence, albeit mixed, of the importance of violence in shaping attitudes toward Taliban retaliation. ISAF- and Taliban-initiated events within 2km are both positively associated with a heightened risk of retaliation using SIGACT and iMMAP data, respectively. Yet ISAF- and Taliban-initiated events are also statistically significant and negatively associated with concern about retaliation using iMMAP and SIGACT data, respectively. While it is possible that these results stem from different coding rules across these datasets (the correlation between events is about .4), the inconsistent
nature of the relationship between neighboring violence and attitudes suggests the presumed
link between the two is not as straightforward as suggested by existing theories. Control
by the Taliban is also positively associated with an increased belief of risk of retaliation,
consistent with the notion that present territorial control is also an important determinant of
risk calculation. Given the non-random nature of these events, however, we must be careful
not to impute causality to any of these relationships.

In short, while there is little doubt that informing is responsive to risk (Kalyvas, 2006, 105),
it is apparent that a large component of risk estimation hinges on the identities involved in a
given interaction. Our respondents exhibit varying beliefs about the likelihood of retaliation
that cluster by coethnicity. Individuals also appear to be using the endorser identities, and
not more “objective” indicators such as contact with (or abuse from) combatants, to gauge
the risk of Taliban retaliation.

5 Conclusion

Drawing on the Guardians of Peace program in Afghanistan, this paper has found substantial
evidence that individual decision-making toward informing about insurgent behavior is shaped
by a persistent coethnic bias. Substantial divergence across ethnic groups exists, for example,
in overall support for the program. Our experimental manipulation of the ethnic identity of
the program’s endorser also revealed that coethnicity shapes individual willingness to consider
supporting the program, with Tajiks especially prone to severe coethnic bias. This bias
appears durable; exposure to victimization by various combatants rarely attenuates it, and in
some cases, can substantially increase the magnitude of coethnic bias.

Consistent with prior research (Lyall, Blair and Imai, 2012), violence has conditional effects
depending on the nature of perpetrator-victim identities involved in the interaction. These
results also challenge prevailing notions that victimized individuals are more likely to engage in
prosocial behavior; individuals who experienced victimization were no more, and sometimes
much less likely (in the case of ISAF victimization), to support the Guardians program. Moreover, our findings suggest that third parties such as ISAF can have especially negative consequences for coethnic biases, increasing rather than diminishing the tendency to favor interaction with one's own ethnic group. Finally, beliefs about retaliation are heavily, though not exclusively, shaped by coethnic bias, suggesting a role for identity in strategy selection that has been marginalized by existing theories.

These findings also cast doubt on the utility of the Guardians of Peace program, at least as currently implemented. Selling the program via multiethnic appeals or, worse, using ISAF soldiers and imagery, are at best likely to do little to sway would-be informants. At worst, such efforts are misplaced, serving to intensify coethnic biases, particularly among Tajiks. Moreover, efforts to promote the ANP, a key plank of ISAF’s 2014 exit strategy, may also be having a deleterious effect on information-gathering. Exposure to ANP violence is associated with a negative effect on coethnic bias, and thus undermines even a coethnic endorsement. It also appears that ISAF violence is inadvertently reinforcing coethnic bias among Tajiks. The negative effects of this strategy may be far-reaching, spilling over into other state-building initiatives and possible ethnic violence in the post-2014 era.

The paper also raises several implications for theories of ethnicity in wartime and efforts to measure the concept in difficult settings. First, current theories that cast civilians as driven largely by security concerns and material benefits need to reexamine the role of identity considerations as key inputs for individual decision-making and risk calculations. More explicit inclusion of coethnic bias in our understanding of how civilians choose strategies in wartime makes especially good sense given that some two-thirds of all civil wars fought since 1945 have been at least partially ethnically motivated (Sambanis, 2001).

Second, the paper has endeavored to move away from average effects toward the heterogeneity of effects. This increases the complexity of theorizing but avoids the pitfalls of assuming that violence has uniform effects or that individuals assess risk and make decisions
independent of the identities of their interlocutors. The conditional nature of effects will only become more salient as scholars begin to tackle the question of civilian attitudes and behavior in multi-actor settings. Finally, the apparent irrelevance of our violent events data — despite its rich nature — in explaining support for the Guardians program or the direction and magnitude of coethnic bias underscores the importance of gathering individual-level data on attitudes to test our claims.

There are several natural extensions of this research. First, we might contrast the “top-down” nature of the Guardians program with more “bottom-up” initiatives to determine whether coethnic bias still matters when local communities, rather than outsiders, take the lead in fostering collective action. Second, it is likely that coethnic bias is an important predictor of the future onset and location of interethnic conflict. Blair, Blattman and Hartman (2012, 29) argue, for example, that four of the five most robust survey-based predictors of future local-level violence in Liberia center around ethnic and religious cleavages in surveyed villages. Theorizing and testing directly the linkage between coethnic bias and violence would close the gap between attitudes and behavior that currently exists as a tacit omission in nearly all work on measuring attitudes, including this one. It may also hold the key for not only a deeper understanding of the motives of individuals during wartime but also the locations most likely to witness future bloodshed.
References


A Appendix

A.1 Other Endorsement Experiment Questions

Anonymity:

[Foreign forces / Gul Alam Shinwarai of the Afghan National Police / Haji Asad Anwari of the Afghan National Police] have pledged that all phone calls to this Guardians of Peace telephone line will remain anonymous. Do you believe this?

- I am certain that callers will remain anonymous
- It is likely that callers will remain anonymous
- Callers might remain anonymous
- It is unlikely that callers will remain anonymous
- I am certain that callers will not remain anonymous
- Refused
- Don’t Know

Stop-by:

[Leaders of foreign forces / Ajmal Khan Popoalzai, a high-ranking Pashtun official in the Afghan National Police / Ahmad Sabir Sadat, a high-ranking Tajik official in the Afghan National Police] have also encouraged concerned citizens to stop by local Afghan National Police stations and outposts to report suspicious activities by armed anti-government organizations that may result in harm to innocent Afghans. How likely are you to do this?

- I am certain to stop by a local ANP post
- I am likely to stop by a local ANP post
- I might stop by a local ANP post
- I am unlikely to stop by a local ANP post
- I will not stop by a local ANP post
- Refused
- Don’t Know
Retaliation:

[Leaders of foreign forces recently / Ajmal Khan Popoalzai also / Ahmad Sabir Sadat also] announced that the Guardians of Peace program will also provide cash rewards for useful tips about anti-government activities. While some welcome the addition of these rewards, critics have argued that participation in this program increases the risk of retaliation by Taliban forces. In your view, how high is the risk of Taliban retaliation if someone provided tips to the authorities?

- I consider retaliation highly likely
- I consider retaliation somewhat likely
- I consider retaliation neither likely nor unlikely
- I consider retaliation somewhat unlikely
- I consider retaliation highly unlikely
- Refused
- Don’t Know

A.2 Ethnic Diversity of Sampled Villages

Figure 9: Ethnic Diversity of Sampled Villages. Histogram of the proportion of Pashtun residents among the sum of Pashtun and Tajik residents. Almost the half of the sampled villages are fully Pashtun or Tajik villages.
A.3 Willingness to Inform by Victimization, Endorser Identity, and Respondent Ethnicity

Figure 10: Willingness to Inform by Victimization and Respondent Ethnicity under ISAF endorser condition. The figure depicts the predicted probability of support for the Guardians of Peace program according to different combinations of victimizer (ISAF, ANP, and Taliban) and respondent ethnicity (Pashtun and Tajik) under the ISAF endorsement condition. Victimization by ISAF is associated with the reduction in support for the program among both Pashtun and Tajik respondents. In contrast, victimization by ANP and Taliban appears to have little impact on the support level under the ISAF endorser condition.
## A.4 Coefficient Estimates of the Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual-Level Covariates</th>
<th>Support for Pashtun</th>
<th>Support for Tajik</th>
<th>Ideal Points</th>
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<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Village-Level Covariates</th>
<th>Support for Pashtun</th>
<th>Support for Tajik</th>
<th>Ideal Points</th>
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Table 3: Summary Statistics for Estimated Posterior Distribution of Parameters of the IRT model. Posterior means, 2.5 percentiles, and 97.5 percentiles for estimated effects of covariates on support and ideal points are reported. The first four columns, the middle four columns, and the last four columns correspond to the effects on support for Pashtun, support for Tajik, and ideal points, respectively. The intervals between the 2.5 percentiles and the 97.5 percentiles can be regarded as the 95% confidence intervals.
The intervals between the 2.5 percentiles and the 97.5 percentiles can be regarded as the 95% confidence intervals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual-Level Covariates</th>
<th>Fear of Retaliation</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>2.5%</th>
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<table>
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<th>Village-Level Covariates</th>
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<th>2.5%</th>
<th>97.5%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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| Variance of village random effects | 8.70 | 7.60 | 11.40 |

Table 4: Summary Statistics for Estimated Posterior Distribution of Parameters of the Hierarchical Ordered Probit Model for the Fear of Retaliation. Posterior means, 2.5 percentiles, and 97.5 percentiles for estimated effects of covariates on the fear of retaliation are reported. The intervals between the 2.5 percentiles and the 97.5 percentiles can be regarded as the 95% confidence intervals.