

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Aid and attitudes in war*Am. Pol. Sci. Rev.* [https://doi.org/10.1017/](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000698)

S0003055419000698

During wars, policy makers often rely on economic aid programs in an attempt to win support from local populations. However, the effectiveness of this approach remains largely unknown.

A new study by Jason Lyall, Yang-Yang Zhou and Kosuke Imai addresses this question using a randomized controlled trial and indirect survey methods for sensitive questions in Kandahar, Afghanistan. In the study, vulnerable youth randomly selected from a waitlist received either a one-time cash transfer, a vocational training program, or both. Eight months after the interventions, cash transfers had little impact on financial circumstances, while vocational training increased the likelihood of recent cash earnings and landownership by about 5%. Cash transfers, particularly when not accompanied by training, did initially increase support for the government. However, eight months later, this support reversed, with support for the Taliban higher among recipients. Vocational training alone did not significantly impact support for the government, but when combined with cash transfers, it reduced willingness to engage in pro-Taliban actions eight months after completion.

The findings suggest that aid affects attitudes by providing information about government resolve and competence rather than by improving economic livelihoods. The study offers insight into a persistent policy question for which strong evidence is difficult to come by.

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Published online: 7 February 2020

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0829-6>