Making Voters Count: Experimental Evidence of Fraud Reduction in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan

Part of IERES’ Behind the Headlines Series

with

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Elections are important because they offer the promise of empowering voters to hold leaders accountable. The sad reality, however, is that voters in less-than-democratic states often are marginalized because of widespread election fraud. Field experiments in three different countries are here used to show that high-quality civil society observers can reduce fraud on election day. But all regimes are not equally sensitive to such interventions. Dr. Sjoberg uses new fraud forensics techniques to examine observer effects. He argues that a reduction in detectable fraud forces authorities to engage with the electorate more directly, instead of focusing their efforts on bureaucratically manipulating the outcome. When faced with monitoring, autocrats replace election fraud with other forms of manipulation, including vote-buying and intimidation. This in itself constitutes a perverse form of empowerment of the individual voter, perverse since the process continues to be both un-free and unfair.

Fredrik M. Sjoberg is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University. He specializes in electoral politics in authoritarian states. In 2011 he published a book titled Competitive Elections in Authoritarian States focusing on Central Eurasia. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Central Asia and has also worked as a statistician and an election observer for the OSCE. In 2008-09 Dr. Sjoberg was a Fulbright Fellow at The Davis Center, Harvard University.

Tuesday, September 18, 2012
4:00 – 5:00 pm
Voesar Conference Room
1957 E Street NW, Suite 412
Please RSVP at http://tinyurl.com/SjobergGWU

This event is on the record