Building Confidence in Elections:

The Case of Electoral Monitors in Kosova[*]

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Abstract

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Democracy promotion has been at the forefront of Western foreign policies since the end of the Cold War, but its effectiveness in practice is debatable. In this paper, I investigate the effectiveness of one important form of democracy promotion, electoral monitoring. Instead of focusing on the effect of monitors on politicians and their behavior in terms of committing electoral fraud as others have done, I analyze in this paper the effect of electoral monitors on citizens and their political behavior in turn through a field experiment in Kosova. The experiment shows that when the conditions are ripe, citizens are likely to believe that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic, but even under favorable circumstances, this does not make a significant difference to how democratic people think elections are overall, nor does it make them more likely to vote.

Democracy promotion has been at the forefront of Western foreign policies since the end of the Cold War. Yet, the persistence of uncompetitive and overtly fraudulent elections, as well as the frequent refusal of electoral losers to cede power to electoral winners, has raised doubts as to the effectiveness of democracy promotion in practice. Evaluating the effectiveness of these practices has proven challenging since identifying, let alone measuring, all aspects of democracy, especially those that are unobservable, like electoral fraud, is difficult at best.[1] Changes in levels of democracy is not the only metric, however, by which to judge the effectiveness of these practices since the latter can also affect citizens' perceptions of democracy. While these perceptions can have major consequences for countries, they are not necessarily in line with the level of democracy in countries, or with standard democracy measures, since citizens have unique perspectives on the practice of democracy in their own countries.

As a first step in understanding these perceptions, I examine in this study the perceived effectiveness of international democracy promotion through the specific case of electoral monitors. Electoral monitors are a common form of democracy promotion with a majority of elections in transitional democracies involving electoral monitors today.[2] They are supposed to promote democracy by deterring electoral wrongdoings from occurring and helping to rectify those that do occur after the fact (Hyde 2007; McFaul 2007; Kelley 2010; Ichino and Schündeln 2012; Donno 2007). In this study, however, I do not focus on the effect of electoral monitors on the behavior of politicians and their propensity to commit electoral fraud, but rather on the effect of electoral monitors on citizens' perceptions of democracy and their political behavior in turn.

In general, I argue, citizens are likely to believe that monitors help make elections more demo-

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[1] *Evaluating Democracy Promotion Programs: A Report to Congress from the National Endowment for Democracy*, The National Endowment for Democracy, March 2006.

[2] Hyde (2009) finds that each year between 2000 and 2007 international electoral monitors observed about 60%-80% of all national elections (excluding long-term consolidated democracies and states with populations less than 250,000). Similarly, Kelley (2008) finds that the 18 international monitors she analyzed observed about 45%-65% of all national elections between 2000 and 2004 (in countries with *Polity II* scores less than or equal to 7).

1

cratic. However, the extent to which they do depends on certain characteristics of the monitors, including their mandate and competence, and certain characteristics of the environment in which they operate. These include the cooperativeness of the government and the responsiveness of the domestic and international communities to reports of fraud. Citizens reach conclusions about these issues in unique ways that are sometimes at odds with the ability of monitors to deter fraud. Whether or not citizens think that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic can have broad implications for how citizens engage in politics, including whether or not they turn out to vote in elections.

In order to understand the effect of electoral monitors on perceptions of democracy, I conducted a randomized field experiment around the 2009/10 municipal elections in Kosova.[3] In the experiment, I varied the amount of information citizens had about the mandate of the monitors and tested whether or not informed citizens were more likely to see monitors as helping make the elections more democratic than uniformed citizens and whether they were more likely to vote as a result. In brief, the results show that people do believe that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic the more information that they have about their work, but even in Kosova where the conditions were favorable, it does not make a difference to how democratic people think elections are overall, nor does it affect their likelihood of voting.

Electoral Monitors: What We Already Know

Since the end of the Cold War, electoral monitors have become commonplace in countries transitioning to democracy, leading some scholars to claim that an international norm exists mandating electoral monitors in these countries (Kelley 2008; Hyde 2011). With threats to democracy arising not only from electoral fraud but also from unequal access to the political system, electoral monitors have assumed more expansive responsibilities over time. Previously these responsibilities were more

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[3]I use the Albanian spelling of the country's name, ending in an "a" rather than an "o".

limited to election day observation. Today, however, they include all aspects of the democratic process, such as authenticating voter registration lists, checking that electoral procedures are followed, reporting on media bias, and verifying the final vote tally. Most research on electoral monitors, though, has focused on only one aspect of the role that monitors play in promoting democracy that of reducing electoral fraud.

The effect of electoral monitors in reducing fraud is widely debated. A number of scholars argue that electoral monitors discourage politicians from cheating during elections, and help to rectify cases of fraud after the fact, by drawing international and domestic attention to the electoral infractions they observe (Pastor 1998; Hyde 2007; McFaul 2007; Donno 2007; Kelley 2010; Hyde 2011). The expectation is that once international and domestic communities are made aware of these infractions, they will pressure politicians to reform. This pressure is supposed to compel politicians to change their behavior by imposing real, material consequences on countries for cheating. At the international level, these consequences can involve the loss of financial assistance and membership in international organizations. At the domestic level, they can include coups, protests and other forms of political agitation.

Other scholars argue that electoral monitors do not deter fraud, but displace it at best (Ichino and Schündeln 2012). These scholars contend that electoral monitors do not deter fraud because they can only observe elections in countries in which they are invited, making them unlikely to observe elections in countries where electoral abuses are most likely to occur. Moreover, within countries, monitors can only observe those aspects of the electoral process that governments allow them to examine. Therefore, politicians and their supporters can to continue to cheat in the presence of monitors by shifting their activities to areas outside the monitors' purview. In general, the quantitative literature on this topic has focused on determining whether or not monitors reduce fraud more broadly rather than the conditions under which they are effective.

Understanding the broader effect of electoral monitors on the behavior of politicians and the

production of electoral fraud is important, but challenging, since it is difficult to measure the incidence of fraud in countries. Scholars have used various proxies to measure fraud, including complaints of fraud (Lehoucq and Molina Jiménez 2002; Ziblatt 2009), electoral turnover (Hyde 2007; Kelley 2010) as well as anomalies in turnout figures (Chaves and Robinson 2009) and final vote tallies (Beber and Scacco N.d.). Complaints of fraud may be politicized, however, with parties falsely accusing each other of cheating in order to discredit their opponents. Turnover, meanwhile, is only a sign of a lack of government fraud while anomalies in turnout figures and final vote tallies only capture fraud that occurs at the voting stage of the electoral process.

This study, thus, asks the question of whether electoral monitors work from a different perspective. Rather than focusing on the effect of monitors on politicians and their behavior in terms of committing electoral fraud, I analyze in this paper the effect of electoral monitors on citizens and their political behavior in turn. I focus specifically on whether or not people think that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic and, if they do, whether or not these perceptions affect their behavior in terms of turnout at the polls. I do not try to make a universal statement in this study about the likelihood of citizens thinking that electoral monitors reduce malfeasance since this will depend on the monitors and context in which they are deployed. Instead, I try to theorize about those factors people are most likely to consider in evaluating the effectiveness of electoral monitors, and to test whether or not citizens believe that monitors are effective under the best of circumstances.

Whether or not citizens think that electoral monitors are effective in reducing electoral malfeasance is an open question. Fraud often occurs in the presence of electoral monitors. Yet, it is not clear to citizens what this says about electoral monitors because citizens cannot know how much fraud the monitors did not catch, or how much fraud would have occurred if the monitors were not been present in the first place. It is also not clear to citizens what a lack of reported fraud says about electoral monitors. If monitors do not detect any fraud in a election, it might mean that the

4

monitors did not do a good job detecting it or that the monitors effectively deterred the fraud, or it might mean that there was no fraud for the monitors to deter in the first place.

Whether or not citizens believe that electoral monitors are effective in this regard has broad implications for politics. Opposition candidates are thought to boycott corrupt elections more often when elections are observed by monitors because candidates believe that monitors legitimize elections and make people think elections are more democratic than they are in reality (Beaulieu and Hyde 2008). Citizens, meanwhile, that believe that elections are honest are more likely to trust governments, see them as legitimate, and be willing to participate in politics, whether they are or not. In this paper, I explore the effect of monitors on one of these outcomes, voter turnout, which has been strongly linked in the academic literature to electoral fraud (Domínguez and McCann 1998; Fairbanks 2004; Birch 2010; Kerevel 2009; Klesner and Lawson 2001; Lott Jr. 2006).

According to rational choice-based models of voting, electoral fraud dampens turnout because people are reluctant to vote if their vote is not going to affect the outcome of the election (Domínguez and McCann 1998; Fairbanks 2004; Birch 2010; Kerevel 2009; Klesner and Lawson 2001; Lott Jr. 2006). Voting technologies and other methods of detecting fraud, like electoral monitors, are thought to raise voter turnout by reducing fraud (Cox and Kousser 1981; Schaffer 2002). Electoral monitors should be even more likely to increase turnout than other mechanisms aimed at reducing fraud, like photo identification requirements, because they do not impose additional requirements on voters to participate in elections that might otherwise depress turnout. These findings may also offer important insight, therefore, on the potential impact of these technologies on voters' behaviors and perceptions as well.

In order to test the effect of electoral monitors on citizens' perceptions on democracy and their turnout at the polls, I conducted a field experiment around the 2009/10 municipal elections in Kosova. A field experiment allows me to determine the causal effect of electoral monitors on citizens, which is difficult to establish in observational studies because the type of elections that

monitors observe may be systematically different from those that monitors do not.[4] However, the results of field experiments are not as easily generalizable as those of observational studies because field experiments typically include fewer cases. For this reason, I devote significant attention in this study to the context in which the experiment takes place in order to understand why electoral monitors had the effect that they did in Kosova, and how this effect might be different in other countries.

The Impact of Electoral Monitors on Citizens

In general, I argue, that citizens are likely to believe that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic because the tasks that monitors perform to reduce fraud are basic, straightforward, and intelligible means of catching malfeasance. However, citizens are not likely to think that all monitors reduce fraud equally. The extent to which they are depends on certain characteristics of the monitors and the environment in which they are deployed. The way in which citizens reach conclusions about these characteristics is unique given the distinct vantage point that citizens have on the electoral process in their own countries.

The two characteristics of electoral monitors that are most important in this regard are the mandates of the electoral monitors and the competence of the monitors to carry these mandates out. Citizens are more likely to see monitors that have a wide range of responsibilities as helping to make elections more democratic than those that do not. Fraud can affect many different aspects of the electoral process and certain types of fraud are more likely to occur in certain contexts than in others. The more aspects of the electoral process that monitors observe, therefore, the more opportunities monitors have to catch would-be-cheaters. When monitors have a broad range of responsibilities, citizens are also less likely to be concerned that monitors are focusing their attention on one aspect of the electoral process when it is more likely to occur in another. They

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[4]See Hyde (2011) and Ichino and Schündeln (2012) for other examples of field experiments on electoral monitors.

6

are also less likely to worry that monitors are displacing fraud from one arena to another rather than expunging it outright, because the fewer places there are for fraud to be displaced to in an election the more aspects of the electoral process that monitors observe. Most of the tasks that monitors perform, though, are not visible to citizens. Polling station observation is the most visible task that electoral monitors perform and the one with which most people are likely to be familiar.

For citizens to think the electoral monitors help make elections more democratic, they must also believe that monitors as competent to fulfill their mandate. Many factors are important for understanding how competent electoral monitors are to observe elections, including their funding, training, skills, experience, and neutrality of the monitors. The latter is important because only neutral monitors will report fraud perpetrated by all sides to an election. Citizens generally lack specific or detailed information, though, about these issues and are likely, therefore, to judge the competence of the monitors based on informational shortcuts, like the size or geographical origins of the organizations.

Citizens are likely to think in this regard that large and well-known agencies, like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the Carter Center, are better prepared – that is, to have the money, experience, training and skills – to carry out their responsibilities than small and less known agencies. This is not always the case, however. The UN, even before it stopped monitoring elections completely, had only a small monitoring function. Typically, more than one agency will monitor an election. In which case, the larger and more well known the entire monitoring mission, the more likely people are to believe that monitors help make elections more democratic. Some scholars suggest that very large monitoring missions can have the opposite effect, though, because coordination problems among monitors can make it difficult to detect fraud (Kelley 2009; Bjornlund 2004, 155).

Citizens are likely to think that international monitors are neutral in respect to the outcome of the election if they hail from regions of the world or from particular countries that have generally

positive relations with their country. Monitors that hail from unfriendly states may actually be neutral in respect to the outcome of the election, especially if they are not associated with the government, but are less likely to be perceived by citizens as such. Western monitors are viewed skeptically in the Arab world for this reason. At the domestic level, citizens are likely to see non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that do not endorse particular candidates or parties, as well as those that do not have expressed ideological leanings, as neutral in respect to the outcome of the election.

Likewise, the two characteristics of the environment in which monitors operate that are most important to how citizens perceive the effectiveness of monitors are the willingness of governments to cooperate with monitors and the responsiveness of communities, both domestic and international, to reports of fraud by the monitors. Governments can obstruct the work of monitors in may ways, including making it difficult for them register to observe elections and by passing restrictive laws that prevent monitors from raising funds to support their work. Many of these actions occur outside the public eye. However, citizens can surmise the willingness of governments to cooperate with monitors from their public attitudes or statements regarding them. Governments that are not willing to cooperate with monitors and are inclined to cheat are likely to denigrate the skills of the monitors in order to undermine their reports.

Domestic communities, meanwhile, are likely to pressure corrupt governments when civil societies are strong and can organize opposition to the government. This type of civil society is most likely to exist in democracies and transitional states where governments are also the most vulnerable to this pressure. Foreign countries that want to promote democracy in other countries are only likely to pressure governments to hold clean elections when these governments are not key allies of theirs, because doing so could jeopardize their relations with these allies. States that desire to participate in the international community through international organizations or foreign economic exchanges are more vulnerable to this pressure than rogue states that do not.

In the field experiment to follow, I vary the information that people have about the wide range of responsibilities that electoral monitors had in the elections. The competence of the monitors and the environment in which the monitors operated are given unalterable features of the context in which the experiment took place. They are constant, though, across both the treatment and control conditions in the experiment, and, therefore, cannot affect the difference between the two. However, since they speak to the generalizability of the findings, I describe how these factors played out in Kosova in the next section.

An Eye Towards Kosova

The conditions surrounding the 2009/10 municipal elections around which the field experiment was conducted were highly favorable towards electoral monitors, and their being seen as helpful in making elections more democratic. The elections were convened to elect 36 mayors and municipal assemblies in the country.[5] Elections were held in the country's ethnic Serb municipalities. However, the Serbs were not expected to participate in these elections because they did not recognize Kosova's independence and had established parallel institutions in the country. For this reason, they are not included in the discussion or the analysis to follow. The term Kosovars thus refers in this paper to the non-Serb population in the country, which makes up about 95 percent of the population.[6]

The electoral monitors had a broad mandate in these elections as well as the competence to carry this mandate out. Prior to the elections, the monitors were responsible for verifying the accuracy of the registration lists, checking that parties adhered to the country's electoral rules, and analyzing the media for biases in its coverage of candidates. During the elections, monitors were responsible for observing the polling stations to determine if the elections was administered

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[5] The newly created municipalities of Parteš and Severna Mitrovica did not hold elections at this time because their administrative structures and budgets were not yet complete.

[6] Kosovar Albanians constitutes about 92% of Kosova's population while Kosovar Serbs makes up about 5% of the population. The remaining 3% is comprised of small largely dispersed minority groups including the Roma, Turkish, Bosnian, Croatian, Ashkali, Egyptian and Goranis people. (See: Statistical Office of Kosovo. 2008. *Demographic Changes of the Kosovo Population 1948-2006*. Prishtinë, Statistical Office of Kosovo, p. 7.)

properly or if there was outright fraud in them. After the elections, the monitors were responsible for verifying the vote count by sampling the ballots and comparing them to the country's official election results in order to identify any significant discrepancies between the two.

While most Kosovars were likely to know that electoral monitors were going to observe the polls on election day, they were unlikely to know much about their work other than this fact.[7] In the lead up to the elections, the government had informed the public that monitors would observe the elections through its civic education materials, but it did not provide information in these materials about the monitors' names, credentials, or responsibilities. Prior to the elections, the local newspapers were peppered with stories about the accreditation of new monitors, but these stories only indicated who the monitors were, not what their responsibilities were in the elections. The night before the elections, Democracy in Action (DiA), the largest domestic monitoring group in the country, held a nationally televised press conference announcing that total number of monitors that would observe the elections, but did not reveal anything about their work beyond this fact.[8]

In total, the government accredited 22,098 international and domestic monitors to observe the elections. The monitors were present at every polling station in the country on election day with an average of 10 observers per polling station or about 1 observer per 31 voters. None of the monitoring agencies were very large or well-known.[9] However, the international monitors hailed primarily from Europe, a region that Kosovars, viewed positively, and which did not outwardly support any particular candidate or party in the elections.[10] Europe supported the United States

[7]Personal Interview, Valmir Ismaili, Democracy in Action (DiA), June 21, 2010. Personal interview, Krenar Gashi, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), June 23, 2010.

[8]According to the domestic electoral monitors, citizens do not generally know what the monitors do other than observe the vote at the polling stations. Personal interview, Krenar Gashi, Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), June 23, 2010. KIPRED monitored the media for the 2009/2010 elections. Personal Interview, Valmir Ismaili, Democracy in Action (DiA), June 21, 2010.

[9]The largest international monitoring organization was the European Network of Election Monitoring Organization (ENEMO), which sent 140 monitors to observe in the elections. The largest domestic agency was DiA, which sent 2,393 monitors. Post-elections surveys taken in these elections, and the one previous to it, also indicate that only a tiny fraction of the people recognize DiA's name and surveyed correctly identified them as electoral monitors.

[10]Steve Crabtree, "UN, EU Viewed Far More Positively by Kosovar Albanians Than Serbs," *Gallup News Services*,

in the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia and in Kosova's 2010 bid for independence, albeit not at first and not without some reluctance. Kosova also aspired, and still does, to join the European Union (EU), although Kosovars have complained about particular EU agencies that have helped run the country since the war.

The domestic monitors included non-party and party monitors. The former were non-partisan NGOs that did not make statements outwardly favoring any political party or candidate in the election. Public opinion surveys prior to the elections showed that the majority of Kosovars surveyed thought that the NGOs in Kosova were independent of the government and served an important counterweight to it.[11] The party monitors, which were chosen by the individual parties, were obviously not neutral in respect to the outcome of the elections, but were only expected to serve as checks against fraud committed by their opponents.

The political landscape in Kosova was also conducive to the work of electoral monitors. Prior to the elections, the government had indicated that it was willing to work with the monitors by not establishing unreasonable accreditation requirements or blocking the registration of the monitors in others ways. Kosovar politicians also spoke positively of the monitors, including Prime Minister Thaçi and President Fatmir Sejdiu.[12] International figures, including the US Ambassador to Kosova Christopher Dell and the EU's International Civilian Office (ICO) Representative in Kosova Pieter Feith, spoke highly of the monitors as well and their role in ensuring the transparency of the elections.[13]

Domestic groups, including the media, were also ready and able to pressure the government

May 24, 2007.

[11]United Nations Development Programme, "Civil Society and Development," *Human Development Report 2008*, Prishtinë: UNDP.

[12]"Kosovo PM Re-emphasizes Commitment for Free, Fair, Democratic elections." *The New Kosova Report.* November 12, 2009.

[13]"EUSR Pieter Feith Welcomes the ENEMO Elections Observation Mission for Kosovo Local Elections." European Union Special Representative in Kosovo. Ref 012/09. April 11, 2009.

to produce clean elections. The country's civil society was strong at the time.[14] The media was independent of the government and while many newspapers had an ideological or partisan bias to them, the papers were likely to report fraud committed against the side that they supported. Surveys taken prior to the elections indicated that a majority of Kosovars were also willing to protest for political reasons.[15] As a transitioning democracy, Kosova was vulnerable to pressure from domestic groups. Kosova was also vulnerable to international pressure from the United States and Europe to hold clean elections. Kosova did not want the international community to see these elections, the first post-independence elections in Kosova, as undemocratic because Kosova wanted the international community to recognize its independence and aspired to join the European Union.

In the end, the municipal elections were generally free and fair although they were not without their problems. Both the media and the monitors identified many incidences of electoral malfeasance, inaccuracies in the voter registration lists, biases in the media, violations in the country's electoral rules and procedures, as well as numerous cases of fraud at the polling stations. In response to reports from both the electoral monitors and the media, the government overturned the results of several polling stations.

In sum, the conditions were optimal in Kosova for electoral monitors to be seen as helping to make the elections more democratic. The monitors were numerous and neutral in respect to the outcome of the elections and operated in a environment favorable to their work. Most Kosovars did not know the breadth of the monitors work in these elections. However, this is something I capitalize on in the experiment.

Field Experiment

In order to test whether citizens believe that electoral monitors help make elections more demo-

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[14]United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Civil Society and Development," *Human Development Report 2008*, Prishtinë: UNDP.

[15]U.S. Agency for International Development, "Early Warning Report", January-June 2008.

cratic and whether they vote more often as a result, I conducted a field experiment in Kosova around the first round of the 2009/10 municipal elections held on November 15th 2009. In the experiment, I varied the amount of information people had about the monitors' responsibilities in these elections by randomly distributing flyers to citizens in comparable voting centers.[16] Following the elections, I surveyed participants in the experiment about their views of the monitors and their decision to vote. I also analyzed the effect of the electoral monitors, if any, on objective turnout using election returns.

Treatment and Control Conditions

The experiment included three different experimental conditions – a treatment condition (information [I]) and two control conditions (reminder [R] and no contact [NC]). Those in the treatment condition received a flyer informing people about the work of the monitors, while those in the reminder condition received a flyer announcing the elections. Those in the no contact condition received no flyer at all. The purpose of the reminder condition was to ensure that any difference between the treatment and the two control conditions was attributable to the monitors, and not to being contacted about the election. To draw this conclusion, the results of the information condition would have to be significantly different than both the reminder and no contact conditions.

The monitoring flyer informed people that both international and domestic monitors would monitor the elections and specified the various responsibilities that the monitors would undertake in these elections. (See Figure 1.) The responsibilities included: verifying the voter registration lists, visiting the polling stations on election day, checking that ballots were secret and secure, verifying the vote count after the elections, and reporting on the overall fairness and openness of the elections. I expected citizens with more information regarding these key issues to believe that

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[16]Leafletting is appropriate for this study because the flyers were supposed to provide information about monitors, not to generate enthusiasm for the monitors or to convince people that monitors were effective in reducing fraud, which personal contact through a door-to-door, get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaign would be more effective in conveying. Leafletting should also be more effective in Kosova than in the United States because leaflets are much less common and more likely to stand out given the country's level of economic development and poor postal system.

elections would be more democratic because there were concerns about fraud leading up to the elections in each of these areas.

I intentionally did not provide too much detailed information about the work of the monitors in these flyers in order not to deter people from reading them.[17] I used a neutral tone and staid language to convey this information because I sought to inform citizens about the work of the monitors, not to endorse the monitors or persuade people to value them in any way, something more spirited language might evoke. I printed the flyers in bright colors (blue and orange) with a simple eye-catching design to draw people's attention to the flyers. This combination of colors, while not very attractive, is attention-getting and not partisan or offensive to any ethnic group.[18]

[Figure 1 About Here]

The reminder flyer informed citizens of the date of the elections and the names of the municipalities holding elections. The reminder flyer was identical to the monitoring flyer with one exception. Instead of information about the monitors, the reminder flyer included a map of Kosova and a list of all 36 municipalities holding elections in the country. I dedicated an equal amount of attention to this information as I did to that of the monitors and carefully chose the language in the flyers to simply remind citizens about the elections, not to rally them to vote in any way.

Paid volunteers hand-delivered the flyers in Albanian to individual homes approximately two weeks prior to the elections, leaving the flyers at people's doorsteps without conversing with the residents.[19] I did not mail the flyers to people's homes due to the country's poor postal system

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[17]I did not include their names for several reasons: (1) all of the monitors had not agreed to monitor the elections before the flyers had to be printed, (2) citizens would not be familiar with the names of most of the international and domestic monitors, (3) excluding this information is more realistic since people are generally not likely to have specific information about the electoral monitors, and (4) listing all the names would have created an imbalance on the flyers between the amount of attention devoted to the international and domestic electoral monitors with international monitors receiving more attention than the domestic ones.

[18]They also happen to be New York City's official colors (Go NYC!).

[19]US-based GOTV studies suggest that contacting voters approximately 2 weeks prior to an election maximizes the effect on turnout (Green and Gerber 2008).

14

and the complexity of its street names.[20]

Site Selection

The field experiment took place in 15 voting centers located in 8 municipalities across all 5 regions of Kosova. Administratively, voting centers are one level above the polling station and one level below the municipality. I used the voting center as the unit of analysis rather than a lower level of aggregation (i.e., individual, household or polling station) or a higher one (i.e., municipality) for several reasons.[21] Voting records of individuals are not public in Kosova, making it impossible to track turnout based on election returns at a lower level of aggregation.[22] I did not use a higher level of aggregation, like municipalities, as the unit of analysis either because municipalities are very large and heterogenous, and using them, would have reduced the number of sites that I could have included in the study and their comparability as well.

Having the voting centers be as similar to each other as possible is important because it minimizes the chances of differences among the voting centers confounding the results. It also reduces the number of experimental sites needed in the study. To ensure that the voting centers matched well, I used high-dimensional blocking to select the voting centers included in the experiment (Moore 2009). Using this technique, I identified the voting centers that best matched each other along the dimensions most likely to affect citizens' perceptions of electoral monitors and their propensity to vote.[23] I then randomly assigned voting centers into treatment (information) and control condi-

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[20]Streets often have three names in Kosova arising from the communist period, the Serbian occupation, and the post-1999 period. None of which are used consistently throughout the country.

[21]Individuals had to vote in the voting center in which they were registered.

[22]Individual voting records are needed to track turnout not only at the individual or household level, but also at the polling station level because polling stations often cover the same neighborhoods within municipalities with people sorted into different polling stations based on their last names. Even for non-overlapping polling stations, distributing the flyers accurately at the level of the polling station would have been problematic due to the multiple street names and the lack of street signs in the country.

[23]I first matched all the voting centers in Kosova into blocks of three representing each of the three experimental conditions in the study (information, reminder and no contact). Prior to matching, I excluded voting centers for which past turnout data was not available or an unreliable predictor of future turnout, voting centers in which

tions (reminder and no contact) within these matched blocks. I included in the study the 5 blocks of voting centers with the best matches.[24]

I matched the voting centers based on the following characteristics: past turnout, past competitiveness, and size.[25] Past turnout speaks to the underlying propensity of an area to vote and is potentially indicative of future turnout. Competitiveness is also related to turnout and is likely to increase turnout by raising the value of every vote in an election (Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968). It is also likely to raise the incidence of electoral fraud for the same reason (Lehoucq and Molina Jiménez 2002). In contrast, turnout should be lower in large voting centers because people living in these voting centers are less likely to cast the deciding vote than people living in small ones. At the same time, fraud may be more common in large voting centers because it may be more difficult to detect.

The degree to which the voting centers in this study are matched along these dimensions is depicted in Table 1. The voting centers are matched very highly along each of these dimensions, as confirmed by their small Mahalanobis distances.[26] The experiment included 29,020 participants

ongoing Get-out-the-Vote (GOTV) campaigns could contaminate the results, and voting centers for which there were no potential matches. Specifically, I excluded voting centers that split after the 2007 elections, new voting centers, new municipalities, and voting centers for which the 2007 turnout data were missing. I dropped the one Turkish majority voting center (Mamuşa) in Kosova and the one Roma majority center (Romsko Naselje) for which there were no potential matches. I also excluded Prishtinë and Gjilan because the organization, Future Voters of Kosovo, conducted a GOTV campaign in these cities around the elections.

[24]The voting centers included in the study are in line with with the average voting center in Kosova for the 2009/10 elections in terms of size, turnout and competitiveness of the municipality in which the experimental voting centers were located. In 2009/10, the size of the average voting center was 2,096 voters. The mean municipal turnout was 40.56% and the mean municipal competitiveness was 23.41%. Meanwhile, in 2009/10 the average size of the experimental voting center was 1,673 voters. The mean municipal turnout of the experimental voting centers was 44.79% while the mean municipal competitiveness was 9.95%.

[25]I measured each of these variables as follows: 1. past turnout = the number of votes cast as a percentage of registered voters in a voting center for the 2007 municipal assembly elections. 2. past competitiveness = the difference in the percentage of votes obtained by the largest and second largest party in the 2007 municipal assembly elections. I matched based on the competitiveness of the voting center, not the municipality, because matching on the latter would have significantly constrained the voting centers to be within the same municipality and have increased the odds of violating SUTVA (stable unit treatment value assumption); 3. size = number of registered votes in the voting center in the 2009/10 elections. All 2009/10 election-related data are based on information from the CEC and all 2007 election-related data are based on DiA's parallel vote count.

[26]Mahalanobis distance calculates the distance between two points by taking into account the covariance between them

(9,938 in the treatment condition, 8,792 in the reminder condition, and 10,290 in the no contact condition) within these voting centers. All individuals within each voting center are in the same experimental condition. The voting centers are located at a significant distance from each other, minimizing the likelihood of individuals in different experimental conditions conversing with each other about the electoral monitors.

[Table 1 About Here]

The post-experiment survey included all the voting centers in the experiment with 200 people sampled from the treatment condition and 200 people sampled from the two control conditions (100 in the reminder condition and 100 in the no contact condition).[27] I based the number of people surveyed in each voting center on the percentage of people in that voting center for a given experimental condition. Novo Selo, for example, constitutes 50% of the people in the experimental treatment (information) condition and, therefore, 50% of the people in the survey treatment (information) condition. Index Kosova administered the survey door-to-door approximately 2 weeks after the elections (November 24th and December 4th) and 1 month after I distributed the flyers. To ensure overlap between the flyer distribution and the administration of the survey, the volunteers drew maps of the streets where they delivered the flyers denoted by their proximity to landmarks, such as churches and schools. The volunteers distributed the flyers to every street in each voting center. Using these maps, the survey interviewers randomly selected households and people within households using the next birthday method.[28]

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and is preferable over Euclidian distance when the data is not spherical and the distance between the two points depends on the direction.

[27] The demographics of the survey population in terms of ethnicity, gender, education, and voting age population are very similar to unofficial estimates of these characteristics in the general population. The survey population, though, lives in rural areas much more often than the actual population of Kosova due to the exclusion of Prishtinë and Gjilan from the study. These differences should not affect the results because they are not systematic across the experimental conditions. (See: Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK). 2009. *Women and Gender in Kosovo.* Prishtinë: Statistical Office of Kosovo.)

[28] Index Kosova used the 'random route' method to select households, interviewing every third house/apartment from a

Results

In brief, the results show that citizens who received the monitoring flyer were significantly more likely to believe that the monitors helped make the elections more democratic than those in the control conditions. However, this did not make a significant difference to how democratic they thought the elections were overall. Nor did it make people more likely to vote as a result.

Prior to the election, 66% in the information condition but only 44% in the two control conditions (R=37%; NC=51%) said that they expected the electoral monitors to be "very helpful" in making the elections free and fair, a 20% difference between the conditions (χ^2, p≤0.01 level). (See Table 2.) The effect of the information condition on the extent to which citizens expected monitors to be helpful in making the elections free and fair remains significant in an ordered logit model controlling for an individual's interest in politics, ethnicity, and the competitiveness of the municipal election (p≤0.01 level). None of the control variables are significant in this analysis.

[Table 2 About Here]

A slight majority of those polled, namely 51%, believed that domestic monitors are "more effective in monitoring elections in Kosova" than international monitors. Only 16% believed that international monitors are more effective and an additional 15% thought domestic and international monitors were equally effective, while 19% did not know. In a follow-up, write-in question asking people to explain their responses, the most common reason people said that the former were more effective than the latter is that domestic monitors were more familiar with local conditions and spoke the local language(s). Only a few people explicitly stated that they did not trust international monitors.

Following the elections, the percentage of people in both the treatment and control conditions who said that the monitors were helpful in making the elections free and fair is lower, though a

given starting point, and selecting the first next house/apartment and every third house/apartment thereafter when a person refused to participate in the survey.

higher percentage of those in the treatment condition still see the monitors as "very helpful" in making the elections free and fair than those in the two control conditions. Specifically, 43% in the information condition and 34% in the two control conditions (R=33%; NC=34%) said that the electoral monitors were "very helpful" in making the elections free and fair after they occurred.[29] The differences between the treatment and two control conditions for this question are not statistically significant according to a χ^2 test. This effect remains insignificant in an ordered logit model controlling for an individual's interest in politics, ethnicity, satisfaction with the outcome of the election, personal observation of polling station irregularities, and competitiveness of the municipal election. Satisfaction with the outcome of the election and personal observation of polling station irregularities significantly reduce the extent to which people see monitors as helpful in making the elections more democratic in this analysis.

Although people in the information condition believe more often than those in the two control conditions that the monitors helped make elections more democratic, they don't actually consider the elections to be more democratic overall. (See Table 3.)[30] Approximately 41% in the information condition and 23% in the two control conditions (R=21%; NC=25%) said that they expected the elections to be free and fair to a "a very large extent" prior to them occurring. However, the differences between the treatment and control conditions for this question are not significant according to a χ^2 test. They remain insignificant in an ordered logit model controlling for interest in politics, ethnicity and satisfaction with the outcome of the election. None of the control variables are significant in this model.

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[29] The results in Table 2 are not due to a difference in sample. Restricting the analysis to only those who answered the pre- and post-election questions, yields the same statistically significantly patterns. The post-election figures in Table 2 are consistent with a nationally representative Gallup Balkan Monitor poll conducted only two days after the election, according to which about two-thirds of Kosovar Albanian surveyed thought that the elections were carried out with 'a lot' or 'some' honesty. (See: "Monitors Happy About the Way Kosovo Elections Conducted," Gallup Balkan Monitor, November 17, 2009.)

[30] For purposes of comparison, the figures presented in Table 3 include only those who responded to the questions about the helpfulness of the electoral monitors.

The percentage of respondents who thought that the elections were free and fair to a "very large extent" after they occurred was only 14% for the information and 13% for the two control conditions (R=18%; NC=9%). The differences between the treatment and controls conditions for this question are also not significant according to a χ^2 test. People were asked to evaluate the overall quality of the elections at the beginning of the survey before they were asked any questions about the monitors so that the latter would not influence the former. The effect of the treatment remains insignificant in an ordered logit model controlling for an individual's interest in politics, ethnicity, satisfaction with the election outcome and personal observation of polling station irregularities. The latter two variables are significant in this model.

People who received the information condition were also not more likely to vote than those in the control conditions. I measure voting behavior in this study both in terms of reported turnout and actual turnout since the latter can be tainted by fraud (Converse 1974; Rusk 68; Cox and Kousser 1981). Estimates of reported turnout also tend to be inflated upwards (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010). That is, people often report voting when they did not due to social norms about voting. However, this should not affect the results of the survey since people in the treatment and control conditions should both overreport turnout.

Overall, 58% of those surveyed said that knowing that electoral observers would monitor the elections "did not affect their decision to vote at all." Only 28% of those surveyed said that it made them "more likely to vote." (See Table 4.) Those in the information condition stated this more often than those in the two control conditions, but this difference is not significant according to a χ^2 test. The effect of the information condition remains insignificant in a statistical analysis controlling for the effect of interest in politics, a person's perceived ability to influence local politics, and the competitiveness of the elections. Interest in local politics significantly increases the likelihood of voting in the elections.

Those who said that the monitors made them more likely to vote did not actually vote more often than those who said that the monitors did not influence their decision to vote, according to their self-reported voting behavior.[31] In explaining why electoral monitors did (or did not) influence their decision to vote, nearly two-thirds of the people surveyed mentioned other issues as their reason for (not) voting, such as civic duty/obligation, free will, and the state of Kosova's political and economic affairs.[32]

[Table 4 About Here]

Consistent with these findings from the post-election survey, I found that information about the monitors did not affect people's actual voting behavior based on the government's official electoral returns. That is, those in the information condition did not vote significantly more often than those in the reminder or no contact conditions.[33] (See Table 5.)

[Table 5 About Here]

Conclusion

When the conditions are ripe, this study suggests that people are likely to believe that electoral monitors help make elections more democratic. Those informed through the field experiment about the work of the monitors were significantly more likely to believe that the monitors helped make the elections more democratic than those who were not informed about the work of the monitors.

[31] Results based on a logistic regression of the relationship between reported voting and reported influence of monitors on voting in the survey controlling for non-Albanian ethnicity and the competitiveness of the municipality in which the voting center is located.

[32] Figures are based on write-in responses to the aforementioned question on the influence of electoral monitors on their decision to vote using a third expert coder to break the tie between two independent coders, which agreed 70% of the time.

[33] While we cannot rule out the possibility that undetected fraud, such as forged signatures or ballot stuffing, increased voter turnout (Converse 1974; Rusk 68), this is not likely to have systematically affected the different experimental conditions in order to have biased the results.

Believing this did not make a significant difference to people's overall evaluation of the elections, however, nor did it make a difference to their likelihood of turning out at the polls.

In many countries, the conditions are not as favorable as they were in Kosova. In Kosova, the monitors had a wide mandate and many resources. They were neutral in respect to the outcome of the elections and backed by a supportive leadership, a strong civil society, and an engaged international community. In countries where the circumstances are not as favorable, people are less likely to think that monitors help make elections more democratic, let alone a real difference to the quality of the elections overall. The fact that people in Kosova viewed the monitors favorably, but did not think that the monitors made a real difference to how democratic the elections were, suggests that the issue at hand is not with the particular monitors in Kosovo, but with people's perceptions of the value of electoral monitors in general.

An alternative technology of reducing fraud is not likely to have a bigger impact on people's perceptions of how democratic elections are overall, or to their willingness of people to participate in politics as a result. Most other mechanisms to detect fraud, including different voting technologies, are much more limited in scope than electoral monitoring. Generally, these technologies are targeted at detecting anomalies in the counting process and have their own concerns associated with them, like whether or not they reduce the anonymity of voters. Electoral monitors, in contrast, are oriented toward detecting misdoings at all stages of the voting process. Only more fundamental changes that strengthen countries' democratic norms and practices and that reduce the desire to hold corrupt elections in the first place, are likely to make a more significant difference to how democratic people think elections are overall in their countries.

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Figure 1: Monitoring and Reminder Flyers

KOSOVA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
ELECTORAL OBSERVERS

WHO ARE THE OBSERVERS?

- INTERNATIONAL MONITORING AGENCIES BASED IN EUROPE, AND
- A MULTI-ETHNIC, NON-PARTISAN COALITION OF KOSOVAR NGOs

WHAT WILL THE OBSERVERS DO?

- VISIT POLLING STATIONS
- VERIFY VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS
- CHECK BALLOTS ARE SECRET AND SECURE
- VERIFY ACCURACY OF THE VOTE COUNT
- EVALUATE OVERALL FAIRNESS AND OPENNESS OF ELECTIONS

NOVEMBER 15TH 2009

For more information, contact *Democracy in Action*, Rr. Rexhep Mala, Nr.33, Prishtinë, 10000, +381 (0) 38 248 038, http://www.demokracianeveprim.org

KOSOVA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
MAYORS ASSEMBLIES

ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN 36 MUNICIPALITIES

DEÇAN/DEČANI	KAMENICË/KAMENICA	PRISHTINË/PRIŠTINA
DRAGASH/DRAGAŠ	KLINË/KLINA	PRIZREN/PRIZREN
FERIZAJ/UROŠEVAC	KLLOKOT-VËRBOC/KLOKOT-VRBOVAC	RAHOVEC/ORAHOVAC
FUSHË KOSOVË/KOSOVO POLJE	LEPOSAVIĆ/LEPOSAVIQ	RANILLUK/RANILLUG
GJAKOVË/ĐAKOVICA	LIPJAN/LIPLJAN	SHTIME/ŠTIMLJE
GJILAN/GNJILANE	MALISHEVË/MALIŠEVO	SKENDERAJ/SRBICA
GLLOGOVC/GLOGOVAC	MAMUSHE/MAMUSHA	ŠTRPCE/SHTËRPCË
GRACANICA/GRACANICE	MITROVICË/MITROVICA	SUHAREKË/SUVA REKA
HANI I ELEZIT/ELEZ HAN	NOVOBËRDË/NOVO BRDO	VITI/VITINA
ISTOG/ISTOK	OBILIQ/OBILIĆ	VUSHTRRI/VUČITRN
JUNIK/JUNIK	PEJË/PEĆ	ZVEÇAN/ZVEČAN
KAÇANIK/KAČANIK	PODUJEVË/PODUJEVO	ZUBIN POTOK/ZUBIN POTOK

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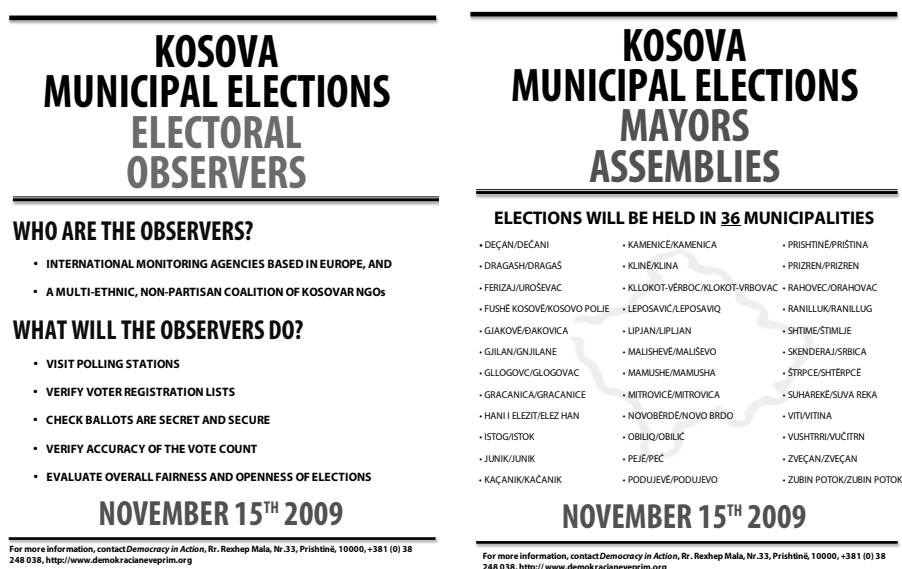
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Table 1: Comparison of Field Experiment Locations

Block	Voting Center	Treatment	Size	Past Turnout	Past Competitiveness	Mahalanobis Distance
1	Novosellë (1707C)	M	4943	40.75	2.34	0.12
1	Mati Logoreci (2009A)	R	4374	40.15	1.40	0.12
1	24 Maj (2005X)	N	5326	40.08	2.15	0.12
2	Randobravë (2027A)	M	1307	41.58	20.16	0.12
2	Potoqan i Ulrët (1611A)	R	857	41.60	20.38	0.12
2	Gushavce (1114B)	N	1483	40.65	18.56	0.12
3	Savrovë (2404A)	M	1001	39.89	5.33	0.14
3	Mohlan (2411A)	R	1081	40.21	5.57	0.14
3	Sllapuzhan (2423A)	N	914	40.46	7.14	0.14
4	Lapceva (3037A)	M	770	46.55	6.04	0.18
4	Herticë (1828E)	R	538	46.37	5.65	018
4	Petrovë (2048A)	N	732	46.59	6.31	0.18
5	Tuneli i Parë (1116B)	M	1917	33.77	3.53	0.20
5	Nedakofc (2708B)	R	1942	33.87	5.44	0.20
5	Tërnavë (1817E)	N	1835	34.84	7.50	0.20

Note: M=Monitoring; R=Reminder and N=No Contact. The dash represents "not applicable." Mahalanobis distance is measured in terms of standardized units from the mean. The 2007 figures on voter turnout and competitiveness are based on Democracy in Action's parallel vote count and CEC data on the number of registered voters in each voting center.

Table 2: Overall Evaluation of the Helpfulness of Electoral Monitors

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Neither Helpful Nor Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	DK/NK
Pre-Election	66% (44%)	16% (34%)	8% (11%)	0% (3%)	0% (3%)	10% (6%)
Post-Election	43% (34%)	35% (44%)	6% (8%)	2% (2%)	1% (2%)	13% (11%)

Note: Responses for the information condition are outside the parentheses and responses for the two control conditions are inside the parentheses. Responses do not necessarily sum to 100% due to rounding. The responses for the two control conditions are summarized jointly above due to space constraints, but included separately in the statistical tests mentioned in the text. Pre-election Helpfulness Question: *Before the November 15th elections were held, how helpful did you expect electoral observers to be in making these elections 'free and fair'?* N=180. Post-election Helpfulness Question: *Now that the municipal elections are over, how helpful do you think the electoral observers actually were in making these elections 'free and fair'?* N=241. Respondents were asked to evaluate the elections using the following criteria for 'free and fair': 1. All political parties and candidates have an opportunity to participate in the election; 2. All citizens can vote in the election and can vote for whomever they choose; 3. Voting is private and ballots are secret and secure; 4. The electoral process is transparent and free from fraud; 5. Everyone has an opportunity to report problems and irregularities in the elections and their complaints are responded to in a fair and timely manner. The results are substantively and statistically the same if Block 2 is excluded from the analysis due to distribution problems with the flyers in Randobravë.

Table 3: Overall Evaluation of the "Free and Fairness" of Elections

	A Very Large Extent	A Large Extent	Some Extent	A Small Extent	A Very Small Extent	Not At All	DK/NK
Pre-Election	41% (23%)	26% (40%)	29% (33%)	3% (4%)	–% (–%)	1% (–%)	–% (–%)
Post-Election	14% (13%)	31% (26%)	47% (50%)	6% (7%)	1% (2%)	–% (1%)	1% (2%)

Note: Responses for the information condition are outside the parentheses and responses for the two control conditions are inside the parentheses. Responses do not necessarily sum to 100% due to rounding. The responses for the two control conditions are summarized jointly above due to space constraints, but are included separately in the statistical tests mentioned in the text. Pre-election Expectations: *"Using this standard, to what extent did you expect the Nov. 15th elections to be 'free and fair prior to them occurring?"* N=166. Post-election Evaluation: *"Now that the elections are over, to what extent do you feel that the November 15th municipal elections actually were 'free and fair?"* N=213. Respondents were asked to evaluate the elections using the following criteria for 'free and fair': 1. All political parties and candidates have an opportunity to participate in the election; 2. All citizens can vote in the election and can vote for whomever they choose; 3. Voting is private and ballots are secret and secure; 4. The electoral process is transparent and free from fraud; 5. Everyone has an opportunity to report problems and irregularities in the elections and their complaints are responded to in a fair and timely manner. The results are substantively and statistically the same if Block 2 is excluded from the analysis due to distribution problems with the flyers in Randobravë.

Table 4: Reported Influence of Electoral Monitors on Likelihood of Voting

	Overall	Monitoring Condition	Control Conditions
Much More Likely to Vote	19%	26%	14%
Somewhat More Likely to Vote	9%	8%	10%
Did Not Affect My Decision to Vote at All	58%	52%	62%
Somewhat Less Likely to Vote	0%	0%	0%
Much Less Likely to Vote	0%	0%	0%
Don't Know/No Answer	14%	14%	15%
N	180	77	103

Note: Responses do not necessarily sum to 100% due to rounding. The question for which the results are reported above asked *"Did knowing that election observers were going to monitor the November 15th elections affect your decision to vote?"*

Table 5: Voter Turnout (2009)

Block	Voting Center	Turnout (2009)
Monitor		
1	Novosellë	41.17
2	Randobravë	37.41
3	Savrovë	55.74
4	Lapceva	50.78
5	Tuneli i Parë	40.11
Average		*45.04*
Reminder		
1	Mati Logoreci	52.77
2	Potoqan i Ulrët	45.86
3	Mohlan	53.84
4	Herticë	51.49
5	Nedakofc	44.18
Average		*49.63*
No Contact		
1	24 Maj	44.99
2	Gushavce	52.33
3	Sllapuzhan	46.50
4	Petrovë	47.13
5	Tërnavë	42.62
Average		*46.71*

Note: Kosovars in the information condition did vote significantly more often than those in the no contact condition if Block 2 is excluded from the analysis due to distribution problems with the flyers in Randobravë. But, even after excluding this block, people in the information condition did not vote significantly more often than those in the reminder condition. As a result, we cannot conclude that this difference is attributable to the monitors per se, but to the flyers serving as a reminder about the elections. These results are based on a logistic regression analysis of actual voting as the dependent variable and the treatment condition as the independent variable and the competitiveness of the municipality (2009) as a control variable with Block 2 excluded.