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What is fake observation?

Fake observation is politically biased international election observation. It is a form of political activity performed by international actors and aimed at advancing the interests of politicians and political forces by imitating credible election monitoring during electoral processes. Politically biased election observation ignores common standards and good practice of international election observation as defined in relevant basic documents.

Why do politicians engage with fake observers?

Evidence collected by the European Platform for Democratic Elections throughout the years demonstrates that invitations to participate in politically biased international election observation missions are used by authoritarian regimes or illiberal actors as an entry door to recruit allies in key institutions. In turn, politicians may engage in fake observation for the following reasons:

- to whitewash electoral fraud for domestic and international audiences;
- to legitimize electoral processes considered illegitimate by the international community;
- to delegitimize and weaken the institution of free and fair elections;
- to subvert and/or relativize findings of credible election observation;
- to weaken political rivals;
- to build networks of influence.

How do we identify particular individuals as fake observers?

- they lack credible and transparent methodologies for observing election processes;
- their activities are limited to short-term or stand-alone observation without clearly and publicly admitting that their activities and/or conclusions are limited in scope;
- they make personal comments, especially on the election day, about their observation or conclusions to the news media;
- the missions to which they belong do not publish preliminary or final reports informing about methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the observation;
- they are unwilling, or refuse, to report publicly preliminary and/or final conclusions on their electoral observation mission;
- they have political, economic or other conflicts of interest that would interfere with conducting observations accurately and impartially;



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- their travel and/or accommodation costs are paid for by politicians or other political actors in the country holding elections, or by individuals or organizations related to those politicians or political actors;
- they receive remuneration or expensive gifts from politicians or other political actors in the country holding elections, or by individuals or organizations related to those politicians or political actors; and/or are unwilling, or refuse, to disclose the sources of their funding upon appropriate and reasonable requests;
- they are willing to take part in observation of the electoral processes considered illegitimate or illegal by the international community;
- they have experience of taking part in earlier identified fake observation missions.

See our database of politically biased election observers at www.fakeobservers.org.

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