

Review of: "Government interference in election administration and lethal electoral irregularities in Africa: Evidence from Nigeria"

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This manuscript, which examines government intervention in Nigeria's elections and the attendant consequences (particularly with regard to violence) is a promising study with the potential to speak to a significant and important topic in Nigerian politics. The puzzle is somewhat buried, but interesting - I interpret it as such: many African nations have established independent electoral commissions, yet only some such commissions have been willing to act in response to clear incidents of electoral fraud and violence. Why? The author further examines how government interference may link closely with violence.

Having now reviewed this manuscript, I offer the following suggestions to the author:

1. The research question should be simplified and clarified. While the study examines many interesting elements of elections and violence, it could be strengthened by clearly landing on a single research question and spending significant effort clarifying the conceptual and theoretical aspects of that question. One question might simply be: why do some commissions act while others do not? Another question might be: how does government interference correspond with electoral violence?
2. The absence of a clearly stated research question generates other challenges. For example, there is little attention paid to establishing hypotheses. This is particularly problematic because the author conducts what seems to be an impressive amount of data collection and statistical analysis - but does so without establishing guidelines (via hypotheses) that help us understand what, if anything, the findings represent.
3. In addition to clarifying the research question, I encourage the author to spend time clarifying the concepts themselves. What, precisely, constitutes government intervention? Is it the fiscal starvation of certain voting mechanisms, as suggested on pages 5 and 6? Or is it discarded ballots, which seems to be implied on page 13? I remain uncertain, and thus it is difficult to actually determine whether the findings speak directly to what the author claims they do.
4. Methodologically, I would encourage the author to focus his or her attention on clearly explaining the logic of each method, as well as better identifying the source and validity of data sources. For example, why were interview respondents randomly selected? I understand the logic of random selection for surveys, but interviews are generally tailored to provide inside information into institutions or processes that are specialized. How are these interviews used to test hypotheses? I don't see that they are directly engaged.

5. Similarly, how do the myriad statistical tables on pages 12 through 14 speak to a clear research question or hypothesis?
6. I was uncertain of the source of data or validity of the data associated with Table 7. The cross tab seems to aim to examine pre- and post- technology intervention data to examine election-related deaths. But there is scant attention provided to explain this table or its meaning.