

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

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

With its powerful insights, not only about the grievous electoral malpractices that negatively impact on Nigeria's democracy but also the historical and current human costs generated by the erratic process, the article is a powerful shot in the right direction. With a lot already commented by other reviewers, suffice here little additions permeated by what I can describe as critique of the critiques previously made. The idea is to attentively highlight and seek to illuminate, by casting further light on, some of the raised and commented points, while as much as possible making suggestions.

Little if at all any doubts persist about the multifaceted nature of electoral ills in Nigeria, but for parsimony sake that befits the study in question the emphasis here is on declared critical underliners.

## Resource Curse

About resource curse attributes or approach, attention is required for noting that instead of curse, naturally endowed resources for socioeconomic development are optimally a blessing. Hence, the issue turns simply to the productive and efficient conversion of accruing funds by the political elite, interactively working with the people through democratic governance.

## INEC

Regarding INEC's funding and responsibilities in efficiently applying available funds, the problem in Nigeria, perhaps, elsewhere, relates to the frequent collusion between powerful agents at both public and private spheres, including the presidency and godfather power mongers from the political class, that increasingly seek political and/or economic power through the State. INEC's foundation is enshrined in the federal constitution, rendering it a state rather than government-centered (interest) status or manipulative instrument. As the latter prevails in Nigeria, its 'Independence' status is being defiled by the whims and caprices of these agents. So, in terms of underlying state-society and elite-mass interactivities, state capture and social exclusion play out to undermine the role and responsibilities of INEC in upholding and advancing democracy through undiluted and effective electoral conducts. Institutionally, INEC's underperformance can be said to derive from the incomplete and weak democratization processes that lamentably in Nigeria give wings to the operatives of illiberal democracy. This takes the comments and suggestions to the the next item.

## Theory and Methodology

The theoretical perspective adopted by the authors, and agreeing with earlier reviewers, can be considered as adequate. However, the framework calls for reinforcement and updating of concepts, postulates, and outreach, in terms of its critically descriptive and explanatory potentials or instructions about the relationship between facts. I suggest the authors expand and enrich their (limited) literature sources and resources, they hinged mainly on Zakaria's (1997) rise of illiberal democracy. They could consider and draw from the following for situating and clarifying better the Nigerian case:

- Davenport, C. (2000). Understanding illiberal democracies, liberal autocracies and everything in between: a cross national examination from 1972-1996. Houston: University of Houston

The 'everything in between' can be explored further through:

- Zinecker, H. (2009) Regime hybridity in developing countries: achievements and limitations of new research on transitions. *International Studies Review*, 11: 302-31.

- Diamond, L. (2002). Elections without democracy: thinking about hybrid regimes. *Journal of Democracy*, 15: 20-31.

- Levitsky, S & Way, L. (2006). Competitive authoritarianism: origins and evolution of hybrid regimes in Post Cold War Era. Check <http://www.columbia.edu/~mv2191/levitsky.pdf> for possible access online

Levisky, S and another co-author, Ziblatt, D. (2018), published, that is, recently, a book about 'how democracies die'. It could be useful for updating.

Moreover, the methodology problem can be addressed by stating initially the recourse to an eclectic (descriptive and explanatory) procedure, naturally informed by the illiberal democracy perspective. Worthy of note is that illiberal democracy is assumed as a divergent, critical, and contradictory outlook from a (true) liberally founded democracy.

Ultimately, the eclectic nature of the methodology can be consistently augmented by a succinct historical and comparative analysis with data showing the regularity of violent electoral processes or outcomes since Nigeria's political independence. The idea can be to put side by side and show more clearly that before and after the 1999 democratic transition, that is, since the 1960's electoral experiences through the transition, no significant changes have been occurring towards clean, non-violent, non-deadly and effective elections. A cue or clue with specific data (rounded figures) about death from pre-1999 elections (since the 1964/65 process) can be taken and sourced from an online posting by Kunle Adebajo on 27 June 2022 at: <https://humanglemedia.com/nigerias-deadly-history-of-electoral-violence-in-five-charts/>, entitled 'Nigeria's Deadly History Of Electoral Violence In Five Charts'.