

Image of Research Paper Assessment Form

Name	Indiv Paper Letter	Indiv Paper (30)
<input type="text"/>	8+	26.10

Best thing about this paper

The paper's strongest sections begin around page 13, with the discussion of South Sudan's role in cooperation.

Content

Research question is clear and focused	Relevancy of project is established	Identification of core political phenomenon	
Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	
Consideration of rival arguments/explanations/hypotheses		Sampling and case selection	
Not Applicable		Very Good	
Data collection and quality	Internal Validity	External Validity	Replicability
Very Good	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Very Good

Overall Content
Very Good

Comments on Content

The paper makes a number of strong arguments about policies that South Sudan can employ in its engagement with its neighbors. Focusing more on this, on how South Sudan's interests are to be determined, and on the ability of South Sudan to achieve its aims with regards to the Nile would have made this a stronger paper. As it is, there is way too much background. The first 13 pages could have been condensed into 3 pages and not impacted the actual original contributions the author has tried to make.

I did not rate hypothesis testing and internal validity here because the paper felt more descriptive than analytical. One way to improve the paper would have been to provide more of an analytical framework for how countries determine their water needs and act to obtain them. What will motivate South Sudan most? The needs of developing industry? Agriculture? New urban population needs? Hydropower? And how can South Sudan work to achieve those aims? Will it rely on the support of neighboring countries with similar political aims vis-a-vis the use of the Nile? Will it use the moral power that comes from winning a long-deserved secession and status as a newly independent power? Will it rely on international law and its rights? Will it rely on its own ability to threaten the use of force? Economic power? Thinking along these lines, especially for the purposes of a government class, might have made this a stronger paper.

Does the author adequately define the key outcome (dependent variable) of interest?
a. If applicable, does the author have a reasonable plan for measurement of that dependent variable?

Does the author adequately identify and explain rival hypotheses/arguments/explanations?
a. If applicable, is there a reasonable plan for assessing the relative merit/validity of the rival explanations?
b. If applicable, is there a reasonable plan for measuring and collecting evidence for the core concepts embedded in the rival hypotheses/arguments/explanations?

Does the author clearly explain their sampling/case selection methodology?
a. How many cases?
b. Criteria for selection?
c. Correlation with either the dependent variable (outcome) or independent variables (explanatory factors) of interest?

Does the author explain their method for data gathering/collection?

Overall Content

- Do claims made in this paper have sufficient evidence and support?
- Is all of the content provided relevant to the study? If some of the information is not relevant, can it be cut?
- Is the paper interesting? What are the most interesting points? Can the writer expand on those to improve the paper?
- How creative and original are the ideas here?
- Do any of the ideas seem vague? What can the writer explain more thoroughly that would help the reader? Is the purpose of the essay clear?

Internal Validity: Ability to establish causal inferences
External Validity: Generalizability

Overall Structure

Very Good

Overall Structure

- Is the structure apparent and easy to follow?
- Is there a logic to the structure?
- Adequate introduction?
- Are there adequate transitions to help connect ideas?
- Adequate summary of findings and reasonable conclusion?

Structure Notes

The paper's organization was clear and easy to follow.

Too much of the discussion was focused on background information and the background information was not always sufficiently tied to the research question. For instance, how does the hydrology information help us know how Sudan can use the Nile and the politics of that situation. I can see this type of information being useful but the connections need to be made explicit.

Style, Spelling and Grammar

Very Good

Style, Grammar & Spelling

- Is the style appropriate (formal and academic in this case)?
- Is the reader too tentative about their thoughts? Does s/he rely too heavily on phrases like "I think" or "It seems..." or "approximately"
- Does the paper engage the reader?
- Are some sections better written than others?
- Are sentences well formed? Appropriately varied in length and style? Used for different effects?
- Do the paragraphs hold together?
- Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors?

Style, Spelling & Grammar Notes

There were quite a few scattered errors with grammar (comma placement, for instance) and spelling (e.g., succeed v. secede).

Technical: Following instructions, etc.

Very Good

Citations

Very Good

Technical Notes

Citations are generally fine, but page numbers should be included more often.