Cassy L. Dorff
Department of Political Science
MSC 05-3070
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001
cdorff@unm.edu

Journal of Politics via Online Submission:

Dear Colleagues,

This letter accompanies our submission of the manuscript "Predicting Violence: Network Dynamics in Nigeria" for your consideration. In submitting this paper, we feel as though it would be helpful to first provide some background information.

Among political scientists using statistical models to analyze network data there has emerged a dispute between the advocates of the Exponential Random Graph (ERGM) model and those building on the "latent space" approach pioneered by Hoff, Raftery, and Handcock. It is worth noting that this fight is not mirrored in the statistical or broader networks literature, as in those communities people recognize these models as having distinct goals.

In political science, however, the dispute has become quite prevalent. Although we clearly work in the latent space world, this paper is not about engaging or extending the ERGM-latent space discussion. Rather our paper is focused on better understanding the complexity of interactions and actor-level dynamics that comprise many recent intrastate conflicts. Trying to do justice to the larger dispute (which, quite frankly, we find unproductive) would make the paper much longer and more complicated while only serving to mask our central contribution. In addition, ERGM approaches are not appropriate for networks whose actor composition changes over time, rendering this debate even less relevant to our work.

We are therefore asking you to avoid using the following people as external reviewers: Bruce Desmarais (Penn State), Skyler Cranmer (Ohio State), William Winecoff (Indiana), and Philip Leifeld (Glasgow). We understand that there is small number of qualified reviewers, particularly since all three of us have co-authored with Mike Ward and/or Peter Hoff. Social science scholars who are familiar with network modeling tools and/or these approaches in conflict studies and who do not have co-authoring or other entanglements with any of us include Patrick Brandt (UT-Dallas), Jennifer Victor (George Washington), David Siegel (Duke University), Charles Butcher (Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Jan Pierskalla (Ohio State), David Cunningham (University of Maryland), Olga Chyzh (Iowa State University) and Katherine Stovel (University of Washington).

We look forward to your evaluation of this paper.

Respectfully submitted,

Cassy Dorff
cc: Max Gallop
cc: Shahryar Minhas