POWER-SHARING IN RESOLVING AFRICA’S ELECTORAL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

Power sharing has become a critical component of resolving Africa’s electoral conflicts. The Kenya’s mediation process in 2008 is case in point. This thesis analyzes power-sharing in ending Africa’s electoral conflicts. It focuses on the issues and forces underlying the conception, interpretation, procedures and practices of power-sharing. In order to establish this role the study sought to examine the anatomy of electoral violence that engulfed Kenya before, during and after the highly disputed 2007 elections. Further, the study sought to link electoral violence and ethnic violence by examining the factors that led to the rise of ethnic-nationalism that affected Kenya before, during and after the general multiparty elections of 1992 and 1997. The study found out that there is a relationship between ethnic and electoral violence. In framing the theoretical background of this study, the research presented an understanding of power-sharing that draws from the three models of power-sharing – the consociational, incentivist, and tri-polar models. The study found out that ethnicity influences peoples political affiliations and voting behaviour. The study presents explanations for the adoption, implementation of power-sharing in ending electoral conflicts in Africa. The research undertaken was based on process tracing method, involving a re-description of history based on review of published and unpublished literature, government documents, and media reports as well as interpretation of other available data. The findings also reveal that power-sharing without any legal framework is incongruent with electoral violence and that a power-sharing arrangement does not necessarily end electoral violence. An important contribution to addressing the ethnic problem which is always manifested in electoral contestations is to put in place a legal mechanism to contain power-sharing. It is therefore important for conflict analysts and mediators who chose to resort to power sharing as a means of resolving electoral conflicts, to critically arrive at a mechanism, which are congruous. The study concluded that a consociation strategy for power-sharing is a tool in ending violent electoral conflicts in a multi-ethnic society like Kenya. The explanations for the power-sharing are guided by two analytical premises. The first premise underlines the relationship between the structure of electoral violence and ethnic violence. These structures are a convergence of interests of the dominant elite groups. The elite support for power-sharing is based on widely shared perception of the arrangement as the framework through which the various elite groups could realize their interests within non-violent distributive politics. The second explanation for the power-sharing is based on the premise that the consociation model of power-sharing employed to deal with ethnic conflicts can also be used to address electoral violence. Power-sharing in itself provides the context for the appeasement of the marginal groups in the course of elite struggles for power. This presents power-sharing as a tolerable modality of mediating elite competition, since it reflects the interests of both the dominant and marginal elite groups.