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إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

Explaining Post election Violence in Contemporary Africa

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Electoral violence has dominated Africa's transition to democracy in the past two decades or thereabout. This problem, which tends to demonize the "third wave of democratization" in Africa, has been blamed in extant literature on the rules governing elections during the election cycle. But the post election violence associated with the presidential elections in Kenya in December 2007, Zimbabwe in 2008, Cote d'Ivoire in early 2011 and Nigeria in April 2011 suggests that there are some deeper systemic and structural factors deeply embedded within the political economy of each African state that must be carefully interrogated in order to gain better understanding of what is happening. This kind of analysis is important in the contexts of the deaths and human displacements associated with each of these cases of electoral violence. My proposed paper would take a critical look at the contexts and contents of the problem and blame the situation on four related factors: politicians' perception of politics as a zero-sum game, the stanch social cleavages in the society that lend themselves to the exploitation of non-altruistic politicians, the anemic link between citizens and the state, and the fragile institutional framework for democratic transition/consolidation and law enforcement. As an analytical framework, the paper will identify three types of electoral violence: (i) the psychological (ii) structural and (iii) physical. The (physical) post election violence witnessed in the four countries under review would be blamed on the psychological and structural violence experienced by the people before and during the elections. Recommendations would be made on how to surmount this problem in African politics.