

# **The Mitigation of Electoral Violence and Peacebuilding in Africa: The Diplomatic Strategies of Traditional Authorities and Shared Norms**

## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to examine how in practice traditional authorities enforce the norms of peace and tolerance as a means of mitigating electoral violence and ensuring the resolution of post-electoral conflict. The extant literature on democratization focuses more on the role of formal institutions such as the electoral commission and judiciary in the resolution of electoral conflicts in Africa. As a result, the strategic role of traditional authorities in the mitigation of violence and the resolution of electoral disputes as a substitute (or complement) to formal electoral institutions when they become ineffective in critical situations has been understudied in the literature. This study explores the mediation role of traditional authorities and shared cultural norms as expressed as myths, proverbs and symbols in accounting for the variations in the nuances of post-electoral violence. It demonstrates this type of mediation as a conflict transformation tool by employing the Ghanaian 1992 and Kenyan 2007 disputed presidential elections to test these assumptions. In sum, it draws some important lessons for policymakers and democracy promoters in their efforts to build sustainable democratic institutions and political cultures in Africa.