

The Local Arena of Power Sharing in Africa. Between Patterns of Adaptation and Continued Disorder

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In 18 out of 19 peace accords signed in Africa since 1999, some form of power-sharing between incumbent leaders and rebel groups was stipulated to end civil war and restore political order. Often proposed by external mediators, power-sharing has become a blueprint for peacemaking. There is a puzzle, however: peace processes with power-sharing arrangements produce divergent outcomes, both within and across countries. Some result in transitions to peace, but especially at the local level, insecurity and situations of ‘neither war nor peace’ often persist. This puts into question the assumption that the sharing of national power leads to a territorially uniform and locally meaningful peace process. We will investigate the following questions: Under which conditions are national power-sharing arrangements successful at promoting peace and political order? Which variants of power-sharing are adequately adapted to national and local circumstances for order to spread?

Our more specific research questions are:

1. Which modes and variants of the broad power-sharing formula are adequately adapted or being adapted to national and sub-national (local) circumstances for order to spread across the entire national territory of a post-conflict state?
2. How does the local adaptation of the national peace agreement provisions affect local peace?
3. If local peace has taken hold in the wake of power-sharing: what are the main determinants of this successful process? Can we identify patterns of adaptation that explain peaceful outcomes?
4. What are the repercussions of success and failure on the local level for the national level?

Selecting four African countries that have recently seen power-sharing agreements (Burundi, DR Congo, Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia), we will analyse the impact of national power-sharing agreements on the local level; that is, local arenas that were affected by violence during the war and identify variables and factors to explain diverging outcomes. Using the comparative method, we will generate testable hypotheses about the conditions under which such agreements succeed or fail to achieve peace.