The Triumph of Liberal Securitocracies:

Africa's Great Lakes New Dispensation?

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Abstract

This paper tackles the new dominant governance paradigm focusing on Africa's Great Lakes: liberal securitocracy. These are different from traditional military dictatorship in that they have adapted a liberal veneer both politically (holding regular elections, for instance) and economically with some even joining the OMC or ranking high on the World Bank's annual Going Business report. Despite the appropriation of the global liberal order with varying degrees of sophistication, the new Securocrats remain rooted in their ability, readiness and willingness to resort to violence. This governance system has become pervasive in many fragile situations where related concepts (e.g., right wing Leninism, military aristocracy, situation thermidorienne) to describe this new type of regime appear in Putin's Russia, South East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

This paper tackles the new dominant governance paradigm focusing on Africa's Great Lakes: liberal securitocracy. Liberal securitocracies combines a golden triangle of electoral democracy, state capitalism and militocracy. They constitute an adaptation of Cold War tropical communism to the global liberal ideology of our time. Such systems moved on from traditional military dictatorship applying a liberal veneer both in the political (holding regular elections, resorting to the constitutional court to settle disputes, etc) and economical (some joining the WTO, ranking well on the World Bank's annual Doing Business report or Transparency International) realm. Despite the appropriation of the global liberal order with varying degrees of sophistication in the region, the regime remains rooted in its ability, readiness and willingness to resort to violence. It is a securitocracy in terms of its agenda and policies (driven by the need to defend itself against external and internal 'security' threats) as well as the military background of its key decision-makers.[1]

Similar governance systems have emerged and been studied in a range of fragile regions in Russia under President Putin, in South East Asia, and after the Arab Spring's counter-revolution also the Middle East and North Africa. Scholars studying these regions developed various concepts to capture this new phenomenon: "right wing Leninism or militarism" in central and the Horn of Africa by Gérard Prunier, "military aristocracy" in South Sudan by Clémence Pinaud, "situation thermidorienne" in Cambodia and Iran by Jean-François Bayart, and "Militocracy" by Olga Kryhtanovskaya in Putin's Russia. This paper will study liberal securitocracies bedrock arguing that they constitute an adaptation of former socialists and communists in search of sustainability for a model they saw collapse at the end of the Cold War.[2]

As the Cold War came to an end, the literature identified an emerging trend of stalled democratic transitions: the so-called anocracies or semi-democracies.[3] Transitology identifies these hybrid regimes negatively by what they fail to achieve (e.g., democracy) and the threat they represent to world peace. South Sudan was a case in point: the 2011 referendum with a 99.8% plebiscite in favor of independence was heralded as a democratic success, only to collapse into a crippling civil war two years later in 2013. Transitology fails to inform us on what these regimes are, their defining characteristics. Whilst transitology identified these regimes as steering away from dictatorship without fully embracing democracy,

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[2] Jean-Francois BAYART, "Le Concept de Situation Thermidorienne: Regimes Neo-Revolutionnaires et Liberation Economique", Research in Question, n°24, March 2008, Centre D'études et de recherches internationales, Science Po.Olga KRYSHTANOVSKAYA and Stephen WHITE, "Putin's Militocracy", Post Soviet Affairs, 2003, 19, 4, pp.289-306; Clemence PINAUD," South Sudan: Civil War, Predation and the Making of a Military Aristocracy", African Affairs (2014) 113/451, pp. 192-211; Gérard PRUNIER applied this model originally to Mobutu's MPR party in "Africa's First World War: Congo, the Rwanda Genocide and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe" (Oxford University Press America, 2008), before expanding it to the African Renaissance leaders in "African Conflicts in the Early 21st Century", Strategic Insights, October 2011, vol. 10, special issue, pp.99-104 and "From Fatigues to Three-Piece Suits: East African Guerillas in Power" (South African Institute of International Affairs, June 2009, Occasional Paper n°37).
[3] James Raymond VREELAND, « The Effect of Political Regime on Civil War. Unpacking Anocracy", The Journal of Conflict Resolution, June 2008, vol. 52 no. 3 401-425.

understanding their nature cannot be done from above through macro-analysis alone; it requires an analysis of local dynamics is essential to define their defining features.[4]

Defining Liberal Securitocracy

This paper argues that in the Great Lakes many of these regimes are liberal securitocracies. Securitocracies like military authoritarian systems are dominated by security forces, which control most powers, enjoy disproportionate benefits, and dominate the political agenda.[5] In securitocracies, security is the key compass driving all politics, and the (often former) armed forces have a considerable economic reach through personal connections.[6] Rulers of such regimes often retain the mental setup of their formative years either as freedom fighters (in Africa) or watching the collapse of the communist ideology (in Russia and China). Their state is a 'besieged fortress' that needs defending against intrusive and greedy external actors working hand in hand or even fuelling genuine internal opposition. This can only be achieved by protecting the political, economic and social domains against a fifth column.

In many securitocracies, the intelligence services in particular, have come to dominate the state apparatus for they often attracted the brightest elements of minority or dominated groups due to the prospect of rapid social mobility. Sport and youth organizations also become militarized. As opposed to the police, the army and the intelligence services were often perceived as less politicized and as therefore more legitimate. Virtually all the armed forces in the Great Lakes have a checkered track record marred by high levels of abuse towards the civilian population. Ugandan armed forces, for instance, ostensibly the most efficient and best behaved troops in the region, were condemned in 2005 by the International Court in The Hague for human rights violations and plundering in DRC.[7] In 2010, a UN 'Mapping Report' report into killing in DR Congo between 1993 and 2003 implicating Ugandan (and Rwandese) forces says they may constitute 'crimes of genocide'. The same report also saw Rwanda's troops accused of grave human rights violations in the DRC.[8] When the author went to Northeastern DRC in 2006 trailing the Lord's Resistance Army, Congolese civilians interviewed felt more threatened by their own armed forces, the Forces Armées de la République du Congo (FARDC) than by the rebels. Similar allegations plague the armed

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[4] Jean-Francois BAYART developed that point on the limits of transitology and the need to study international dynamics in "Le Concept de Situation Thermidorienne: Regimes Neo-Revolutionnaires et Liberation Economique", <u>Research in Question</u>, n°24, March 2008, Centre D'études et de recherches internationales, Science Po.

[5] Haydar IBRAHIM ALI developed the notion of securitocracy to great effect in the Sudan in "Securitocracy and the Democratic Transition in the Arab World.", <u>Al- Siyassa Al-DawliyaI</u>. Vol. 184 (April 2011), p.50, Translated from Arabic.

[6] This draws on the research of Luc BATIGNE & Agnes LEVALLOIS quoted in Loic SALMON, « Renseignement : pouvoir et ambiguité des « SR » des pays arabes », Association Nationale des Croix de Guerre et de a Valeur Militaire, Decembre 2015, n°322.

[7] International Court of Justice, "Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo" (Press Release, n°2005/26, 19 Decembre 2005).

[8] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, "Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003", August 2010.

forces of Ethiopia, Chad, and South Sudan.[9]

Liberal securitocracies distinguish themselves from traditional military dictatorships by their readiness to embrace the dominant liberal ideological veneer. Originally, the African Renaissance leaders claim to power was based on the revolutionary credentials against highly corrupt and inefficient regimes: Mengistu's Red Terror in Ethiopia, Uganda's Idi Amin-Milton Obote-Tito Okell, the Hutu Powered genocide in Rwanda. Eventually, they transform into a civilian political party and submit to a multiparty electoral process winning with a reasonable margin (far from late President Mobutu's 90-something % electoral victories); thereby acquiring critical international legitimacy. In the Great Lakes today, many Presidents reach the end of their second mandate, raising the question of a third term. Even when the nomenklatura of such regimes intends to prolong its stay in power, it attempts to maintain the moral high ground by respecting formal liberal institutions. The Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi used a national referendum and the Constitutional Court, respectively. In this sense, they attempt to distinguish themselves from traditional military dictatorships aiming to achieve electoral democracy, where democratic elections occur without the liberties attached to a democratic system.

In liberal securitocracies, the economy sector too is liberalized: despite the communist background of many of the leaders, there are no nationalized state-owned companies and multi-year plans. Instead, liberal securitocracies have shifted from hybrid neo-patrimonialism structures to economies appearing to abide by free market rules with various degree of sophistication. Some are even amongst the strongest performers in the world (i.e., Rwanda today and Uganda in the nineties). However, beneath the liberal surface, a discreet web of personal connections dating back to the revolutionary struggle on the board or control institutions of these private companies. Given the personal and informal nature of these relations, only detailed historical knowledge can grasp the strength and extend of these political-economy networks; much remains to be done.

Occasional studies give a rare glimpse of this attempt at sovereign globalization : welcoming foreign investments while defending the economy's sovereignty of the 'besieged fortress' for security purposes. A string of UN panels and expert groups have studies these discreet connections into considerable detail during the regional war in the region.[10] In DRC, the 2005 Lutundula Parliamentary Commission also identified substantial shortcomings with the contracts signed with international companies; many were discreetly renegotiated. If Uganda has long been heralded as one of structural adjustment successes, the large army's procurement system has remained off boundaries to independent scrutiny.[11] In 2011, the Uganda military justified a spending spree (a 300% increase) by the need to fight various rebellions. In Burundi, the senior leadership of the OLCUME (Observatoire de la lutte contre

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[9] See where the two countries rank in the successive Human Rights Watch World Reports or the US State Departement annual reports.

[10] See for instance, "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of DR Congo" (New York, UN Security Council, 12 April 2001).

[11] Andrew MWENDA, "Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict: The Political Uses of the LRA Rebellion", in Tim ALLEN and Koen VLASSENROOT, The Lord's Resistance Army. Myth and Reality (London, Zed Books, 2010), pp. 45-58.

la corruption et les malversations économiques), an independent national anti-corruption organization, has had to suffer severe physical threat and death. Alex De Waal explains how far away the SPLA/M had strayed from the New Sudan democratic vision: "*by the time of independence, the South Sudanese 'militarized political marketplace' was so expensive that the country's comparatively copious revenue was consumed by the military-political patronage system, with almost nothing left for public services, development or institutions*".[12]

Specifically, this paper will examine the features of the new regimes that established themselves in the Great Lakes taking into account both the global environment in which they established themselves as well as the national patterns that lead to their endurance. The focus on the Great Lakes is spurred by the current instability in the region currently as most Presidents reach the end of their second and final democratic mandate between 2015 and 2017.[13] In most cases, the temptation to modify the constitution has been strong to prolong one's stay in power.

Liberal Securitocracies Navigate the Global System

At the global level, the victorious liberal model at the end of the Cold War has changed the global culture with all leaders adopting at least a hybrid system including international democratic veneer, such as regular elections, constitutional courts. If the political systems changed, the operating principles remain unchanged according to Gérard Prunier . "*Right-wing Leninists*", he argues, "*have borrowed with great profit all the organizational characteristics of the Marxist-Leninist parties,… including fake trade unions, bogus professional organizations, a controlled press and state-sponsored 'free citizens' organizations*". [14]

As the dominant liberal ideology has been appropriated by those new securitocracies, the United Nations have become the unwitting accomplice and, according to Jean-Francois Bayart, the prime legitimizing instrument notably by means of electoral supervision.[15] As a result, "*the conflicts of these new democracies with their internal opposition of their neighbors, are usually looked upon with benevolence by Western opinion. Rwanda under President Paul Kagame became a prime example of this aspect of the new dispensation*".[16] The scope of the problem, 72% of peacebuilding operations leave into place authoritarian

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[12] Alex D Waal, "When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent: Brute Causes of Civil War in South Sudan", <u>African Affairs</u> (2014), 113/452, pp. 347.

13 In chronological order : the Burundi, the Republic of Congo (Congo Brazzaville), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) and Rwanda. The two notable exceptions are the CAR which just held its first democratic transition and Uganda where term limits have long been abandonned.

[14] Gérard PRUNIER, "African Conflicts in the Early 21st Century", <u>Strategic Insights</u>, October 2011, vol. 10, special issue, p.101 and "From Fatigues to Three-Piece Suits: East African Guerillas in Power" (South African Institute of International Affairs, June 2009, Occasional Paper n°37), p.12.

[15] Jean-Francois BAYART developed that point on the limits of transitology and the need to study international dynamics in Le Concept de Situation Thermidorienne: Regimes Neo-Revolutionnaires et Liberation Economique, Research in Question, n°24, March 2008, Centre D'études et de recherches internationales, Science Po., p.26

[16] Gerard PRUNIER, "African Conflicts in the Early 21st Century", <u>Strategic Insights</u>, October 2011, vol. 10, special issue, p. 101.

regimes, calls the democratic peace model into question.[17] According to Freedom House's 2016 report, there have been 10th consecutive years of decline in global freedom.[18]

Securitocracies perceive themselves as 'besieged fortresses' that need defending and sovereign politics; the war on terror has often been used to justify a crackdown on civil liberties and political opposition. Guerilla movements have been re-labeled terrorist groups, a catch-all category in which to fit armed movements not clearly understood. Securitocracies lobbied to have their armed opposition placed on Western or international terrorist lists in order to attract additional aid and justify repressive policies. As a result, the armed forces of these countries have time and again proved as dangerous to the civilian population as to their enemies. In 2016, according to the UN Human Rights Office described horrendous human rights violations and deliberate targeting of civilians for killing, rape and pillage, primarily by government forces and affiliated militias.[19]

In the context of the Great Lakes, most heads of states originally accessed power through the barrel of a gun, with the notable exception of the CAR. Many former African Renaissance fought several campaigns during the continental confrontation in the nineties, Africa's First World War in the DRC. Africa's First World War militarily engulfed close to 10 countries either directly or indirectly lends credibility to the 'besieged fortress' facing the (real or perceived) threat of foreign intervention. The current heads of states of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and Congo-Brazza were all directly involved in the Congo War militarily either as a rebel, an armed forces commander and sometimes both.

Liberal Securitocracies in Search of Legitimacy

At a national level, liberal securitocracies present three critical defining features: a 1) political and 2) economic liberal veneer painted on a 3) military or rebel backbone. Usually, the Securocrats originally accessed power through violent military conquest before submitting to an electoral process; as a result the revolutionary legitimacy will be replaced by a representative legitimacy paving the way to international acceptance. Jean-Francois Bayart speaks of "thermidorian situations" as those where multiparty elections and privatisations constitute the two key ingredients of a triple transition of military –often intelligence-revolutionaries towards a civilian democracy and market economy.[20]

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[17] Of the 18 single countries that experienced U.N. peacekeeping missions with a political institution-building component between 1988 and 2002, thirteen (72%) were classified as some form of authoritarian regime as of 2002. In Call, Charles T. and Susan E. Cook, « On Democratization and Peacebuilding », Global Governance, 9, 2, Apr- Jun 2003, pp. 233-246.

[18] FREEDOM HOUSE, Freedom in the World 2016 (Washington DC), p.1

[19] OHCHR, Assessment mission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to improve human rights, accountability, reconciliation and capacity in South Sudan: detailed finding (Geneva, 10 March 2016, A/HRC/31/CRP.6)

[20] Jean-Francois BAYART developed that point on the limits of transitology and the need to study international dynamics in Le Concept de Situation Thermidorienne: Regimes Neo-Revolutionnaires et Liberation Economique, Research in Question, n°24, March 2008, Centre D'études et de recherches internationales, Science Po.

When global neo-liberal discourses on transparent market economy and good governance contrast with the harsh political economy realities of these regimes, illustrating Jean-Francois Bayart's point on the limits of transitology. In South Sudan, for instance, Clemence Pinaud describes the Sudan's People Liberation Movement/Army as a 'military aristocracy' or predation whereby commanders raised their social and economic status.[21] As the revolutionary elite professionalizes, it becomes more adept at accumulating the riches under a cover of liberalism and moderation.

Both Jean-Francois Bayart and Gerard Prunier point to the communist roots of many of these liberal-izing regimes while the latter aptly refers to "right-wing Leninists".[22] Those systems do not stray far from the Chinese market socialism where straddling between institutional, family and business positions is a defining feature of securitocracy. In late 2004, President Salva Kiir, then SPLM/A Commander, voiced his concerns to his Commander-in-Chief, John Garang de Mabior, about the growing securitocracy: "*at the moment some members of the Movement have formed private companies, bought houses and have huge bank accounts in foreign countries, I wonder what kind of system are we going to establish in South Sudan considering ourselves indulged in this respect?*"[23] Yet, all Great Lakes countries but South Sudan are members of the World Trade Organization, which is the economic unwitting legitimizing tool similar to the UN at the political level.

Most of Africa's Renaissance Leaders stem from a common communist background some having educational and/or combat experience together. Some were trained in Mengistu's Ethiopia training centres (e.g., South Sudan's SPLA commanders), others directly in China (e.g., President Kabila from DRC), usually during their rebel days. With their raise to power, they have promoted a trusted network of individuals with relations dating back to that original period: facing war and death together creates strong bonds. It also impacts one's mindset: if the formative years were spent fighting facing the distinct possibility of total annihilation, notion of sovereignty over the 'besieged fortress' and security are prominent policy driver. In Africa's Great Lakes, security threats carries potency because numerous armed groups, whilst no longer a threat to the regime, continue to harass and abuse the population.

These systems are thus based on the shared experience of the revolutionary struggle between the actors of the political, security and economic spheres. Despite the new securitocracy appearing open politically due to its multi-party elections and market economy, in reality common memories are shared only within a small circle that constitute the heart of the regime, the new Securocrats' nomenklatura. This closed group does not need to appear in formal institutional control; in fact, under the new dispensation, the inner circle tends to be

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[21] Clemence PINAUD," South Sudan: Civil War, Predation and the Making of a Military Aristocracy", African Affairs (2014) 113/451, pp. 192-211.

[22] Gérard PRUNIER applied this model originally to Mobutu's MPR party in "Africa's First World War: Congo, the Rwanda Genocide and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe" (Oxford University Press America, 2008), before expanding it to the African Renaissance leaders in "African Conflicts in the Early 21st Century", Strategic Insights, October 2011, vol. 10, special issue, pp.99-104 and "From Fatigues to Three-Piece Suits: East African Guerillas in Power" (South African Institute of International Affairs, June 2009, Occasional Paper n°37).

[23] Minutes of Historical SPLM meeting in Rumbek 2004, Sudan Tribune (12 March 2008), in Alex De Waal, "When Kleptocracy Becomes Insolvent: Brute Causes of Civil War in South Sudan", African Affairs (2014), 113/452, footnote 1, p. 347.

discreet, secretive and therefore hard to detect. In DRC, for instance, one of the most powerful institutions in the country, the Maison Militaire, has hardly no formal existence.

Liberal securitocracies still apply the communist notion of state sovereignty and control but updated their tools with various degrees of sophistication leading to "reforming without changing" with at its core the notions of "sovereign democracy and globalization".[24] Both notions were developed as a mean to incorporate a liberal ideology without jeopardizing control and sovereignty. Politically, the system opposition is incorporated, but opposition that is not 'accepted' is viewed as a suspicious fifth column. Similarly, foreign investments are welcomed, but without the liberal notions of transparency nor a people's right to accountability.[25]

Originally, Securocrats benefits from input legitimacy based on the original revolutionary struggle, but as this eventually wanes over time, it will be necessary to develop an alternative source of legitimacy. As the system consolidates, the revolutionary ethos will be replaced by an output legitimacy based on its security and particularly socio-economic performance. This constitutes an important distinction from traditional patrimonial entities where little to no attempt at producing inputs prevails. Focusing mainly on outputs becomes a source of fragility when outputs cease to increase. This explains the current political consequences of an economic downturn in China or falling oil prices in Russia. In the Great Lakes, output legitimacy is critically linked to poverty reduction in a region where over 60 to 80% of the population lives below poverty (depending on the type of poverty rate selected). In late 2015, for instance, Rwanda allegedly manipulated its poverty data by changing the way in which it is measured to show a 6% decrease rather than increase in poverty.[26] The shift in the nature of legitimacy from input to output corresponds to a shift in leadership style from Max Weber's legal-rational legitimacy to charismatic.

Liberal securitocracy further attempt maximizing their input legitimacy by coopting and sometimes reinventing religion, traditions and ancient kingdoms. The growing importance of religion and ancient culture is part to the political legitimization process of the former revolutionary fighter into mainstream liberals. In Uganda, President Museveni restored the Tooro, Bunyoro and Busago kingdoms to bolster the institutionalization of his regime. Resort to religion has received considerable media attention when it relates to Islam as in Eritrea, but less so when Protestant fundamentalists and Pentecostal churches have also begun to challenge older established forms Christianity.[27] Religious violence is growing apace. President Nkurunziza of Burundi is particularly found of religious references and metaphors, which have become a standing feature of his discourses. President Museveni of Uganda, once a champion at combatting aids, has become reluctant to stop evangelical churches from sponsoring anti-contraception and anti-gay bills. In Rwanda, traditions have been reinvented by adapting the Gachacha to handle the judicial backlog generated by the genocide. In

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[24] Mohamed TOZY, <u>Monarchie et Islam Politique au Maroc</u> (Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1999).

[25] Masha LIPMAN, "Putin's Sovereign Democracy", <u>Washington Post</u>, July 15, 2006

[26] Filip Reyntjens, "Lies, damned lies and statistics: Poverty reduction Rwandan-style and how the aid community loves it", <u>African Arguments</u>, 3 November 2015.

[27] Gerard PRUNIER, « African Conflicts in the Early 21st Century", <u>Strategic Insights</u>, October 2011, vol. 10, special issue, p. 102.

Burundi, a traditional local justice mechanism, that of the wize Bashingantahe, have also been coopted and institutionalized with uncertain degrees of success to address the gap in input legitimacy.

The Sustainability of Liberal Securitocracies

As securitocracies in the Great Lakes reach a critical time: gains in military security threats (from regional as well as internal actors) and (timid) economic recovery has been challenged. The economic marasmus at the end of the two year terms raises the issue of the sustainability of those regimes. When output legitimacy comes under duress, input legitimacy may help navigate the storm. However, when input legitimacy is weak the outcome is uncertain: Burundi's descend into violence after the President's bid for a third term starkly illustrates the challenge. In Rwanda, an extension of terms was managed via a referendum and a constitutional change. The President of Uganda, a strategic Western ally in the containment of Sudan and the War on Terror, had already discarded presidential term limits a decade earlier. The stakes of controlling the state are high due to the implicit economic influence at stake and thus output legitimacy.

What will the liberal securitocracies next steps be to ensure their sustainability? Liberal securitocracies, often led by former communists establishments, already bandwagon with the global liberal creed to ensure their survival after the Cold War. Whether the political and economic liberalization process of these securitocracies was ideologically genuine or opportunistic remains unclear. Will they be able to reinvent themselves sufficiently to survive while maintaining their liberal varnish and develop into the Koreas and Singapores of tomorrow? Or will they instead retract to an ever shrinking support base and engulf into violence? Will they reinvent tradition and like the Asian miracles, will they develop an establishment dominated by one party (Japan) and/or one family (Singapore)? Many already suspect President Museveni of Uganda to groom his son to succeed him, which has lead to vivid opposition from the army. Many Western countries also went through period of one party domination before 'alternance' became mainstream. The question remains as to liberal securitocracies' ability to navigate past their weak input legitimacy to ensure long term sustainability.