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The Rise of “Peaceocracy” in Africa¹

Gabrielle Lynch

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Summary

The term “peaceocracy” refers to a situation in which an emphasis on peace is used to prioritise stability and order to the detriment of democracy. As such, the term can be used to refer to a short-lived or longer-term strategy whereby an emphasis on peace by an incumbent elite is used to close the political space through the delegitimization and suppression of activity that could arguably foster division or conflict. At the heart of peaceocracy lies an insistence that certain actions – including those that are generally regarded as constituting important political and civil rights, such as the freedom of speech and association, freedom of the press, and freedom to engage in peaceful protest and strike action – can spill over into violence and foster division and must therefore be avoided to guard against disorder. Recent history suggests that incumbents can effectively establish a peaceocracy in contexts where many believe that widespread violence is an ever-present possibility; incumbents have, or are widely believed to have, helped to establish an existing peace; and the level of democracy is already low. In such contexts, a fragile peace helps to justify a prioritization of peace; the idea that incumbents have “brought peace” strengthens their self-portrait as the unrivalled guardians of the same; and semi-authoritarianism provides a context in which incumbents are motivated to use every means available to maintain power and well placed – given, for example, their control over the media and civil society – to manipulate an emphasis on peace to suppress opposition activities.

¹ This article draws from Lynch, Cheeseman and Willis, forthcoming 2019.

Key characteristics of peaceocracy include: an incumbent's effective portrait of an existing peace as fragile and themselves as the unrivalled guardians of order and stability; a normative notion of citizenship that requires "good citizens" to actively protect peace and avoid activities that might foster division and conflict; and the use of these narratives of guardianship and disciplined citizenship to justify a range of repressive laws and actions. Peaceocracy is thus a strategy, rather than a discreet regime type, which incumbents can use in hybrid regimes as part of their "menu of manipulation", and which can be said to be "successful" when counter-narratives are in fact marginalized and the political space is effectively squeezed.

Keywords: Peaceocracy, hybrid regimes, peace, order, stability, African politics

Introduction

The term "peaceocracy" was used by various commentators after Kenya's 2013 election to refer to how the victorious Jubilee Alliance had prioritized peace to the detriment of substantive democracy. The argument was that, in the context of widespread fear that the country might experience similar, or even worse, violence to that witnessed during the country's post-election violence of 2007/8 (when over 1,000 people were killed and almost 700,000 others were displaced), establishment elite emphasized the need to protect a fragile peace as a way to legitimize certain activities, such as the strategic placement of security forces, and to delegitimize others, such as public protest or open debate of potentially divisive topics. To this end, it is clear that the Jubilee Alliance benefited from a pervasive peace campaign in the lead up to the election, which saw a wide range of actors – from politicians to businessmen and religious leaders to popular artists – call upon Kenyans to campaign, vote and accept election results in peace (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2014). However, while some

aspects of this campaign were unique to Kenya and to the country's 2013 election, an emphasis on the need for order and stability in the face of an arguably fragile peace has long been, and is still, used by some establishment elite Africa and beyond to suppress critical voices. In turn, peaceocracy can be defined as 'a situation in which an emphasis on peace is used to prioritise stability and order to the detriment of democracy' (Lynch, Cheeseman & Willis, forthcoming 2019, p. 1). More specifically, the term can be used to refer to a short-lived or longer-term strategy whereby an emphasis on peace, stability and order is used to legitimize a heavy-handed state security response to threats faced (both real and perceived) and to delegitimize activity that is deemed by the regime to foster division or conflict. This strategy in turn deemed to be effective when counter-narratives are in fact marginalized and the political space is substantively closed.

This article starts by looking at how a prioritization of peace – understood as the absence of widespread direct violence and/or the presence of unity and cohesion – can be used to justify state repression, to delegitimize opposition activities (including those that are widely regarded as important freedoms), and to discipline citizens. It is this capacity for peace to (de)legitimize certain actions and relations that underlies the potential 'violence of peace' (cf. Branch, 2014) and the repressive logic inherent to peaceocracy. The article then discusses some of the historical precursors of peaceocracy before turning to some contemporary African examples, key characteristics, and facilitating factors. This latter section draws upon the examples of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda – three East African countries that have experienced different types and levels of mass violence – from genocide in Rwanda to civil war in Uganda and election-related violence in Uganda – and which are characterized by different types of hybrid regimes – from a highly closed regime in Rwanda to a more competitive but still repressive

regime in Uganda, and to a yet more democratic (but nevertheless still hybrid) regime in Kenya (Cheeseman, Collord and Reyntjens 2018).

By drawing on these examples, peaceocracy is shown to be a potentially effective strategy in countries with a relatively recent history of widespread civil conflict in which incumbent regimes can argue that they have helped to establish or maintain peace and where the quality of democracy is already low. In turn, key characteristics of peaceocracy include: the presentation of an existing peace as under constant threat; a state discourse of incumbents as the unrivalled guardians of order and stability; and a normative notion of citizenship that casts the “good citizen” as someone who actively takes care to uphold and protect a fragile peace and the “bad citizen” as someone who does anything to potentially threaten the same. These foundations ensure that, while peaceocracy refers to a strategy of leadership, rather than to a discreet regime type, it is a strategy that tends to be adopted and to be most effective in post-conflict countries in which it is widely perceived that an existing peace is fragile and which are also characterized by hybrid regimes – i.e. by regimes that are neither fully democratic nor classically authoritarian.

In turn, whilst the three countries discussed are all located in East Africa, it is posited that the findings have broader application. First, there are examples of hybrid regimes outside of the region that have used the idea of a “fragile peace” to legitimize authoritarian tendencies and to delegitimize opposition activities in countries as different as South Africa (Beresford, Berry and Mann, 2018) and Peru (Burt 2007). Second, as a strategy, it is possible that other regimes may learn from their East African peers and adopt similar, or revised, narratives in the future.

Finally, it is worth noting how the analysis adds both to our understanding of the advantages of incumbency (Cheeseman 2015), and to a literature that stresses the potentially

'deleterious impact of internal conflict for the quality of democracy' (Cheeseman, Collord & Reyntjens, 2018, p. 33). It does so by looking – not, as some others have done, at the negative impact of conflict on the 'quality of political institutions, the degree of elite cohesion, and the nature of civil-military relations' (Cheeseman, Collord & Reyntjens, 2018, p. 31) – but at the implications of conflict for discursive politics and understandings of (il)legitimate action (cf. Burt 2007).

The Potential Violence of Peace

No academic has been as influential in the field of peace studies as Johan Galtung who, among other contributions, distinguished between a state of "negative peace", characterized by the absence of direct violence, and "positive peace", which requires dealing with the underlying hostilities, inequalities, and injustices that can promote conflict (Galtung, 1969). According to this understanding, "negative peace" is a realistic goal to achieve – at least in the sense of an absence of widespread direct violence – while "positive peace" is better understood as an ideal state that only more egalitarian and just societies can hope to approach. This distinction is important as it captures a common everyday understanding of peace as both the absence of violence and as a matter of degree. It also draws attention to how a "negative peace" can be threatened by the absence of a more substantive "positive peace", but also how – against a backdrop of widespread direct violence – a "negative peace" can often be regarded as a generally accepted priority.

However, while this idea of peace is predominant in the academic literature, it is clear that everyday understandings of peace often combine (or even replace) peace as the absence of violence – be it direct or structural violence – with the idea of peace as the presence of unity and cohesion. For example, when Zimbabweans were asked what they understood by "peace"

in a 2009 national public opinion survey, 36 percent said the “absence of violence”, but 30 percent said “unity or harmony”. With other responses including “political freedoms” (16 percent) and “stability or tranquility” (9 percent) (Bratton, 2011, p. 365). This emphasis on unity and solidarity is highlighted by other analyses of political thought across the sub-continent (for example see Karlstrom, 1996 on Uganda or Schaffer 1998 on Senegal) and is also evident from the author’s own research in Kenya in the wake of the country’s post-election violence of 2007/8 (Lynch 2018).

Critically, various studies also reveal how many citizens across sub-Saharan Africa – in the face of ongoing, recent or feared violence and division – not only view peace as desirable, but often prioritize it above other collective goods. Thus, in the Zimbabwean study cited above, respondents were asked to list their first and second priority out of a choice of three options. The responses highlighted a general preference for peace and prosperity over justice, with 44 and 39 percent of respondents listing “a peaceful country without political violence” as their first or second preference, respectively; 42 and 41 percent listing “a prosperous country with improved living standards” as their first and second choice; and 13 and 19 percent selecting “a healed nation in which victims of political violence received justice” (Bratton, 2011, p. 366). Similarly, in a nationally representative survey conducted with Nic Cheeseman and Justin Willis on elections in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda in 2016/7, we found that “a peaceful process” was the most common factor cited in all three counties for an election to be deemed as “free and fair” (see table 1).¹

Table 1: Most important factor for an election to be free and fair, top three responses (%)

	Ghana	Kenya	Uganda
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A peaceful process	20	26	17
Secret ballot	16	20	16
Independent Electoral Commission	15	14	14

However, it is not only local citizens who tend to prioritize peace, but also members of the international community broadly understood – with western donors in particular often criticized for caring more about stability and order than about governance, democracy and justice.

This common tendency to prioritize peace – be it in the context of preferred futures or specific elections – and an understanding of peace as the absence of violence and/or presence of unity is important as it helps us to understand the ways in which peace can be used to legitimize certain actions, which are deemed necessary to protect peace, and to delegitimize others that might threaten the same. Thus, it might be argued (in a way that is persuasive to many) that peace as the absence of direct violence requires action to be taken against those who might pose a threat to stability; while peace as the presence of unity might arguably require action to be taken against those who promote division and disunity. A complex understanding of peace as both the absence of violence and presence of cohesion potentially justifying a more complex mix of actions to promote and guard the same.

The fact that “peace” may help to justify certain pre-emptive or reactive actions ensures that the term is ultimately a ‘fraught concept that often conceals the violence upon which apparent peace depends’ (Smith, 2010, p. 3). With an emphasis on peace and order – and associated narratives regarding the potential source of violence and division – potentially used to legitimize certain actions (including those widely regarded as illegal or immoral, such as repressive media laws and a heavy-handed state security response to protest) and to

delegitimize other actions (including those often regarded as legal or moral, such as the public criticism of incumbents and peaceful protest). With calls for peace potentially constituting a ‘productive *political violence*, [which pushes] towards specific possible futures, while cutting off others’ (Branch, 2014, p. 609; emphasis added).

Critically, debate over what is deemed legitimate as a means to guard and promote peace are intimately intertwined with ideas of authority and force. Or, more specifically, with ideas of who is best placed to understand, respond to, and minimize potential threats, and of what kind of force is deemed necessary to prevent a more disruptive violence. Moreover, while these questions are always a subject of ongoing contestation, it is common for “the state” to be awarded particular privileges as “an actor” or “body”, which – following on from such prominent thinkers as Thomas Hobbes and Max Weber – enjoys a monopoly over the legitimate use of force against an other(s) as long as actions are deemed proportionate and necessary given the threat faced. With questions of what constitutes a significant threat, and of what can be considered as proportionate and necessary force, constituting contested and highly political questions in any polity.

Finally, the desirability of peace is often intimately associated with the ideas of what it is to be a “good” or “bad” citizen as leaders try to ‘discipline and shape unruly subjects into “good citizens” in order to consolidate their rule and ensure the reproduction of hegemonic projects’ (Dorman, forthcoming 2019). This is critical as it means that the potential “violence of peace” can be felt, not only through outright repression – such as a heavy-handed security response to protests, arrests and detentions, and repressive legislation that seeks to control the media, civil society and other critical voices – but also through more subtle disciplinary techniques that seek to determine what is good and acceptable behavior, which should be encouraged and rewarded, and what is bad or unacceptable behavior, which should be

avoided and punished. Such disciplinary projects are useful to justify actions vis-à-vis citizens, but also to 'sway the international community' for whom the ideas of peace, unity, reconciliation, good governance and the like hold a strong appeal (cf. Desrosiers and Susan Thomson 2011, p. 446)

It is this combination of factors – namely, of peace as the absence of violence and/or presence of unity; of peace as a generally desired state at both the domestic and international level; of peace as an idea that can help to (de)legitimize certain actions; of the state as enjoying a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence; and of associated debates about how citizens should behave to help promote peace – that lies at the root of peacocracy. As, when adopted as a strategy, incumbents take advantage of their position to cast themselves as the guardians of peace and security, to discipline citizens and to justify repressive laws and actions that ultimately help to close the political space and undermine various democratic freedoms. This strategy of using peace as a discursive tool is evident in a number of contemporary hybrid regimes, but the underlying logic has a longer history to which this article now briefly turns.

Post-Colonial Politics and the “Ideology of Order”

The potentially repressive implications of the post-colonial state's role in ensuring peace, order and stability came to the fore almost immediately after independence. As governments maintained much of the security apparatus of their predecessors, and as new one-party and military regimes soon cast multi-party politics as divisive and dangerous and justified the centralization of power as a means to guard against division, chaos and disorder. This approach is well captured by Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi who, in justifying the need for people to unite behind his ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) in the mid-1980s, noted how:

I cannot stress enough the need for every Kenyan and every African to be constantly and dutifully mindful of our respective responsibilities for the cultivation, management and support of the people's will – the elective leadership. There is no sane alternative, the alternative is ghastly. It is gangsterism, coups, starvation and death. It means stagnation of development projects, the suffering of millions and the degeneration of human dignity, life and worth ... It has been the de facto and (latterly) the de jure one-party system which has largely saved Kenya from negative inter-tribal rivalries, factionalism and chaos. Indeed, many people do not realise how much of the post-independence progress in Kenya ... has been due to the one-party system. (Moi, 1986, p. 77 & 177)

Such rhetoric, and an associated reality of increasingly authoritarian politics across much of the sub-continent during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, led to a proliferation of terms – from the ideas of personal rule and the predatory state to neo-patrimonialism and kleptocracy. Within these debates, the ideas of unity, stability and order loomed large with more specific terms also coined. In this vein, E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo (1987) used the term “ideology of order” to refer to how colonial and post-colonial regimes in Kenya had sought to justify the deployment of state power as an instrument of control in the name of unity, stability and development. Similarly, Richard Sklar coined the term “guided democracy” to refer to a particular sub-set of one-party state developmental dictatorships, which prioritized socio-economic development over democracy. For Sklar, “guided democracies”, such as Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya and Julius Nyerere's Tanzania, accepted the need for a certain level of accountability and thus held regular elections, but dispensed ‘with the political method of multiparty electoral competition’ and were characterized by a ‘type of government by guardians of the public weal who insist upon political uniformity’ (Sklar, 1983, p. 14).

This justification of state force and an insistence on a disciplined citizenry in the name of order and unity is clearly reminiscent of what – in the multi-party era – this article calls “peaceocracy”. The difference is that, today, most countries feel the need to hold regular multi-party elections to help legitimize themselves to domestic and international audiences. This reality has encouraged increased competition and new modes of international oversight (such as electoral support programmes and election observation missions), but – as is now widely recognized – it has not necessarily dampened the desire of establishment elites to remain in power. It is in such a reality of subsequent hybridity – i.e. in regimes that are neither fully democratic nor classically authoritarian – that certain regimes have further fine-tuned their discursive use of “peace” to (de)legitimize certain actions in ways that are difficult for local citizens and the international community to object to. To put it another way, a discursive use of “peace” – or what here is called peaceocracy – has become part of a range of strategies, or part of a “menu of manipulation” (cf. Schedler, 2002), that incumbent candidates or establishment elite can use in order to maintain their position.

This contemporary emphasis on the need for order and stability by incumbents in countries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda has led me to talk in earlier work of the emergence of new “guided democracies”: where regular multi-party elections are characterized by electoral authoritarianism; and an asserted imperative of political uniformity behind elected leaders is justified in the name of peace and stability (Lynch, 2015). Other analysts have discussed similar, albeit different, dynamics through the use of other terms. In this vein, Alex Beresford, Marie Berry and Laura Mann (2018) – in their comparative analysis of contemporary Rwanda and South Africa – talk of “productive liminality”. Their argument is that, in both countries, ruling parties purposefully use the idea of an incomplete liberation to foster the idea of an “extraordinary mandate”, which is now associated with their claimed role

in helping to bring liberation. This is then used to try and legitimize an “authoritarian social contract” whereby promises of peace and development are exchanged for political acquiescence or loyalty. With political opposition in turn delegitimized as not only problematic, but as unpatriotic and dangerous, and thus subject to what the authors call “political abjection” or ‘a sustained political strategy wherein opponents of these parties are not simply marginalized, but discursively ejected from the “acceptable” sphere of politics’ (ibid, p. 1240). Similarly, Jo Marie Burt has discussed how the Fujimori regime in Peru manipulated and exploited fears of violence ‘to justify authoritarian projects’; ‘to keep a weak civil society on the defensive and unable to organize’; and to cast any opposition to the regime ‘as an act of subversion’ (2007, pp. 5 & 16).

The common theme that cuts across these new “guided democracies” and regimes that adopt a “productive liminality” or opt to “instrumentalize fear” is the strategic use of “peace” – as both the absence of violence and presence of cohesion – by incumbent elite to try and mobilize support and suppress opposition activities. They are thus all countries in which, at certain points in time, the ruling party can be said to have used – albeit to a varying extent – a strategy of peaceocracy.

Of Fragility, Extraordinary Leaders and Disciplined Citizens

This section draws upon the recent history of three countries – namely, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda – to highlight some of peaceocracy’s key characteristics. First, however, it is important to stress that, while incumbent regimes in all three countries have emphasized peace as a means to bolster their position, they do not constitute the same regime type. Important differences between them include, but are not limited to: the scale and type of violence experienced in recent years; the level of authoritarianism; the strength and independence of

key institutions; the type of socio-economic policies introduced; and range of strategies that establishment elite have used to try and ensure their continued stay in power (Cheeseman, Collord & Reyntjens, 2018). Yet despite these differences, incumbent elite in all three countries have sought to establish a peaceocracy as one of their political strategies with common characteristics including: an incumbent's portrait of an existing peace as fragile and themselves as the unrivalled guardians of order and stability; a normative notion of citizenship that requires "good citizens" to actively protect peace and avoid activities that might foster division and conflict; and the use of these narratives of guardianship and disciplined citizenship to cast certain actors as "bad citizens" and to justify a range of repressive laws and actions.

As noted, the term peaceocracy entered public debate in Kenya following the country's 2013 election. The election was held in the shadow of the 2007/8 post-election violence and was characterized by a pervasive peace narrative that called upon Kenyans to vote and accept election results in peace. This narrative helped to minimize the likelihood of violence, but also undermined democratic gains. Most importantly for the purposes of this article, the call to actively promote peace and to avoid anything that might potentially foster violence, helped to constrain the scope of legitimate political debate and contestation, which – together with the strategic placement of security personnel in opposition strongholds – ensured that opposition politicians and supporters, as well as civil society and the media, felt constrained in what and how they could protest or report. This emphasis on peace also played to the advantage of incumbent elite who controlled the state security forces – and thus the legitimate use of force in the face of any security threat – and who also used other state powers and resources to curtail debate and action (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2014; Lynch, 2018).

In this context, the establishment candidates – namely, William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta of the new Jubilee Alliance – proved more adept at presenting themselves as the

guardians of peace or, more specifically, as a youthful team, who – by uniting the previously warring Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities – could help to ensure peace. With the main opposition leader, Raila Odinga, in turn cast as old, vengeful, and as a potential threat to peace if – as in 2007 – he rejected the election results (Lynch 2014). This strategy continued ahead of the country's subsequent election in 2017 – with Jubilee linked, for example, to a new social media campaign dubbed "The Real Raila", which used a series of short videos and memes to remind Kenyans of the horrors of the post-election violence of 2007/8, and to blame Odinga for that violence as the candidate who had rejected the 2007 election results.

Critically, this depiction of some individuals and groups as pro-violence and as divisive, and thus as citizens who posed a threat to peace, went hand-in-hand with the idea of a "good citizen". As, in the context of widespread fears of further electoral violence, a range of actors framed the good citizen as someone who 'would inform the authorities of any untoward behaviour, and take time to encourage dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution strategies at the family, neighbourhood and community level'. Moreover, while 'such efforts had a clear impact on reducing the likelihood of violent conflict ... they also helped to curtail the range of activities that were deemed to be politically legitimate' (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2014, p. 11).

This discursive narrative has been important for its disciplinary effects, but also for the range of repressive measures that it has helped to justify (at least in the eyes of some). This includes a heavy-handed security response to limited protests following the Supreme Court's decision to validate the country's 2013 election, as well as the suppression of frank discussion. Ahead of the 2013 election this included pressure on media houses to be overly "conflict sensitive" and to avoid reports that might foster division or conflict, and a depiction of land as

too emotive an issue for politicians to discuss on the campaign trail (Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis, 2014, p. 11).

The outcome – both around the country's 2013 elections and to a lesser extent the 2017 elections – was a situation in which an emphasis on peace served, and was specifically used by, incumbent elite to prioritise stability and order to the detriment of democracy. However, while such a peaceocracy has been the subject of some debate in Kenya, the term can also be applied to other contexts such as contemporary Rwanda and Uganda.

With regards to Rwanda, a number of scholars have outlined how President Kagame and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) have used the memory of the 1994 genocide, understandable fears of further violence, and the asserted role of the RPF in helping to bring the violence to an end, to claim a particular status as protectors of the peace; to legitimize their rule in the eyes of domestic and international audiences; and to suppress – often violently, but also through more subtle means – sites of potential political opposition (Reyntjens 2011). In this vein, Marie-Eve Desrosiers and Susan Thomson depict President Kagame's projection of "benevolent leadership" as 'a tool designed to win over the international community and discipline the Rwandan population ... Reminding Rwandans of hierarchy, authority, and the need for obedience, these projections of leadership aim to limit popular dissent and stimulate support on the part of the population' (2011, p. 430 & 431). As, "[i]n the face of their country's 'saviours' and rebuilders, Rwandans [post-genocide] are expected to fall in line, to accept the new Rwanda, and actively take part in the changes" (Ibid, p. 447). Or as Susanne Buckley-Zistel succinctly surmised: 'the promotion of unity [by the RPF] is used to silence opposition' (Buckley-Zistel, Susanne, 2006, 111)

Similarly, a number of analysts of Ugandan politics have highlighted how President Museveni's has used the ideas of order and stability to mobilise support for himself and the

ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) and against the major opposition parties, and to justify the use of a range of repressive and violent state security tactics that – together with the use of state resources – collectively ensure a blatantly uneven playing field (for example see Tripp 2010). For example, during Uganda’s 2016 elections, there was a strong push by President Museveni and the NRM to assert how they had brought peace to the country; how only the NRM could maintain that peace; how anyone who threatened to cause chaos would be dealt with accordingly; and how, if the government were to lose the election, the country could return to war (Lynch, Cheeseman & Willis forthcoming 2019). Once again therefore an emphasis on peace, and on the president and ruling party’s particular role in helping to bring peace, was used to mobilize support, discipline citizens, and justify more repressive policies, rules and regulations. This included the strategic placement of security forces in opposition strongholds as a means to intimidate residents and guard against potential protest, as well as the organization of politicized community policing efforts, intimidation of journalists and civil society activists, and arrest of opposition politicians (Lynch, Cheeseman & Willis forthcoming 2019). Similarly, following violence in Kampala in September 2009, the Ugandan government violently suppressed demonstrations and shut down various media outlets, but also required all radio stations to stop airing popular *ebimeeza* – a ‘roundtable’ discussion or ‘people’s parliaments’ – as the NRM elite sought to limit citizens ‘to a “suitable” format of oratory, limited to “development” issues, [to be] deployed in state-controlled spheres of deliberation, and limited to local issues’ (Brisset-Foucault, 2013, p. 243). Critically, while such a discursive strategy in contemporary Kenya has relied on the possible return of election-related violence, and in Rwanda on the memory of the horrors of the 1994 genocide, in Uganda this emphasis on peace is linked to the civil war that followed the disputed 1980 election and to an alleged

threat that the country might return to war if Museveni is ever ousted (Lynch, Cheeseman & Willis forthcoming 2019).

Thus, in all three countries an existing peace is cast as fragile on the basis of recent histories of violence – be it election-related violence in Kenya, genocide in Rwanda, or civil war in Uganda. With the incumbent regime in turn claiming an especial status as the party and individuals who both helped to “bring peace” and, just as importantly, as those in an unrivalled position to help guard the same; with opponents simultaneously cast as a threat to order and stability.

In turn, while all of these countries are geographically located in East Africa, the differences between them suggest that incumbents can most effectively establish a peaceocracy in contexts where it is widely believed that an existing peace is fragile or under threat and that a country is in real danger of descending into disorder and chaos; incumbents have, or are widely believed to have, helped to establish an existing peace; and the level of democracy is already low. More specifically, these examples suggest that the idea of a fragile peace can be used to help justify a prioritization of peace; a state security narrative can help incumbents to present themselves as the guardians of peace; and hybridity provides a context in which incumbents are motivated to use every means available to win and well placed to manipulate an emphasis on peace to suppress opposition activities if they so choose.

Conclusions

Over time, governments around the world have emphasized the importance of peace, order and stability; while such collective goods have clearly influenced the development of various laws and regulation of state and non-state institutions. In this way, governments have developed laws and regulations to monitor and curtail activities that might promote violence

or division – from hate speech and incitement through to unregulated protest. In turn, the narrative of coming together as a political community or “nation” and need to forefront loyalty and patriotism to forestall divisionism and chaos, lies at the heart of most nationalist narratives. Indeed, at one point or another, citizens everywhere have been encouraged to reconcile and recognize their shared interests, for example, in unity, stability and development, and to accept the benevolent, historically earned, and/or democratically-acquired leadership of an incumbent regime (Lynch, 2015). However, it is only in some cases that such logics have taken on a more repressive, strategic and purposeful dimension whereby incumbents actively seek to use an emphasis on peace – and associated threat of violence and division (both real and imagined) – to discipline citizens and to suppress opposition activities as a way to try and maintain the status quo to the detriment of democracy. In turn, it is only in such contexts that incumbents can be said to use peaceocracy as a strategy to bolster their position as part of a broader “menu of manipulation”.

Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda provide good examples of this strategy as they highlight how it can be adopted in countries characterized by different histories of violence and levels of authoritarianism. However, comparative literature from countries such as South Africa and Peru suggest that the term has broader application, while the strategy may also be adopted in other contexts – in either a similar or revised form – in the future.

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Notes

¹ This survey – the same in each country – was conducted as part of the authors’ wider project on attitudes towards elections; in each case this was a nationwide face-to-face survey, conducted by a professional polling organization using random sampling techniques. The Ghana and Uganda surveys had national samples of 2,000 respondents; the Kenya survey had a national sample of 1,100.