

**Democratic Peace:
In the Spectrum of Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa**

by

Cage Banseka

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DEMOCRATIC PEACE

**- IN THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICTS IN SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA -**

CAGE BANSEKA

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To all victims of conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The much awaited for and talked about year 2000 is already here with us. The 21st century has therefore dawned with all serenity, leaving behind it a century whose beginning many would scorn and whose end many would salute.

The last decades of the 20th century represented monumental moments in the history of the human race and of the entire planet on which we dwell. The last decade in particular epitomises changes of a colossal scale. The policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, have not only led to the collapse of the Soviet Union but equally brought about the end of the Cold war, a change that has affected both politics and the world economy to a noticeable degree. The East/West divide has effectively ended. The reunification of East and West Germany is portentous of this change. Outside Europe, we have also experienced fundamental changes on the global scene. In the Middle East, major breakthroughs and peaceful processes have begun, and are moving on, albeit with a snail-like pace, while the nauseating apartheid system in South Africa also came to an end, with the first free elections in 1994.

Many optimists believe that the world is a much freer place today and a UNDP report in 1994 makes confirmatory allusions to this point. The possibility of a nuclear war has become more remote and the much cherished democratisation process has made much pace. It is now believed that half of the world's 180 nations have adopted democratic principles and are ruled by elected and accepted governments. Close to 30 nations are currently expected to join the trend by way of civic participation and the rise of political parties.¹

However, painting such a glamorous picture of the world and leaving it at that might be doing injustice to oneself, to the intelligentsia and another humanity that still lives in persistent anguish and suffering on a monstrous scale. This sad episode is brought about by mostly man-made disasters and wars of all sorts. The end of the cold war has failed to deliver the much expected peace, but on the contrary, ethnic conflicts that have long been suppressed by it are now erupting, and with increasing ferocity. Weapon production and arms trade carries on unabated. New markets for

them flourish in the Middle East, Africa and South America. The traders in this market seem to be giving no thought to the consequences of their action and there is no indication that this will end in the near future. This has precipitated conflicts and engineered massacres in great proportions, especially in the so-called developing countries.

Furthermore, the economic and social rifts between the underdeveloped and developed countries are widening at the speed of thunder. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which is our major concern in this dissertation and which is equally code-named a third world, is undoubtedly the weeping boy of the globalising forces. While acknowledging the dangers involved in generalising about this Sub-continent, it will be worthwhile pointing out a few indicators of the plight under which she is languishing.

-SSA is the least developed region of the world, and in World Bank terms, comprises a set of predominantly “low-income countries”

-SSA is the least industrialised region in the world, with the greater proportion of the population actively engaged in agriculture or subsistence farming.

-Its economic growth is among the lowest in the world and has the smallest share of world trade, a limited range of export (mostly primary products and a very limited range of manufactured goods) and a great debt burden.

-SSA equally has the lowest life expectancy rate and the highest rate of malnutrition and infant mortality.

-SSA presently has the greatest number of conflicts and historically the highest number of military regimes.²

This rather gloomy diagnosis offers a dispiriting outlook of the sub-continent, which unfortunately does not end there. In the western mind, SSA is also the least democratised region of the world. As a result the sub-continent harbours authoritarian and repressive military regimes, with awe-inspiring records of despotism, endemic corruption, bad governance, appalling human rights record and a suppressed civil society. There is lack of accountability, transparency and competence. Nepotism and tribalism are rather the norm and not the exception. This bad politics, in combination with several other factors, have not only contributed to the wars that continually plague the continent, but equally made politics anathema to many people. This has

¹UNDP Report, 1992.

²World Bank Report, 1994.

equally led to the personalised nature of rule and a lack of mandated leadership or government by the people and for the people.

However, it is again worth noting that it is not only the lack of good governance that has offered SSA the ugly face that it now seems to have. The very people who today call this sub-continent a third world or underdeveloped have greatly contributed to making it as such. Beginning with the despicable slave trade, SSA as well as other parts of the continent, saw its most able and economically productive men taken out and brought to lands where they toiled and laboured to enrich their masters and put them in that comfortable position from which they now view the world. No sooner had this practice been outlawed than another sort of organised subjugation in the name of colonialism had been put in place. Described by many as a grandiose act of banditry, the entire African continent again saw their raw materials and sources of labour leave and destined for the coloniser's land. Back there, the colonial master consolidated markets for himself. Consider one of the coloniser's slogans "I go to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity. Do carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you." David Livingston, British missionary and explorer in 1857.³ Many of them also claimed that they were on an evangelising mission.

The colonial master exploited and reaped the continent, destroyed long standing traditions, arbitrarily defined boundaries and in so doing implanted much of the dissent that is the subject of conflict today in SSA. The colonial master taught Africans to believe that European ways and systems were ideal and worthy of emulation; that their god was the true one, and that they possess knowledge that brought everything under their control. In fact they wanted to civilise Africa, to make them live in houses and not on trees, to make them drive cars and not the traditional means of transport, and to make them use industrially produced medication and not depend on herbal treatment. On the surface, this looks like benevolence, but deeply, it has made the African to long for things and values that his/her immediate and natural environment does not seem to provide. The search for those things and the frustration of not finding them easily has not only tortured and exasperated people psychologically, it has also led to open warfare and conflict among communities, tribes and nations, which otherwise would have been more peaceful.

³Smith, Dan: *The State of War and Peace*, ATLAS, New Edition, Penguin Group, London, 1997, p. 52.

Having achieved their goals, the colonial masters left as suddenly as they came, leaving behind them poverty and ill-defined boundaries, fragile economies, political unrest, mixed feelings and no peace. Consequently most of the SSA countries have suffered more than three decades of war, repression, uprisings and massacre since independence. This is indeed an unhappy irony for the colonial masters who had supposedly come to Africa on a civilising and evangelising mission.

This is however, no subscription to the oversimplified notion that the problems facing SSA today are all from without. The suggestion here is only that external forces have set the ground for much of her economic stagnation and conflicts, and made her to try to cope with global trends dictated by those with the might and favourable conditions for such a pursuance. Again, it may be unfair to suggest that colonialism was all negative. In fact many structures and ideas present in SSA today, owe their existence to colonial times.

Furthermore, linguistic, regional and ethnic divides, coupled with greatly stratified social entities that greatly characterise SSA's geo-political setting have made it difficult at times for harmony and peaceful co-existence to prevail. The search for fertile land and good sources of drinking water has also made many to be permanently at daggers-drawn with each other. As earlier mentioned, bad governance, ethnic politics and rent-seeking have hampered economic and social development in many of SSA's nations, rendering populations not only breadless and hopeless, but equally violent. Many who eventually have nothing to lose, take on arms as a means of achieving ends or drawing attention to their plight. This has in many countries inevitably led to civil wars and wars across state boundaries.

Contemporary political actors seem to be infatuated with the idea predicted by Immanuel Kant, two centuries ago, that democratic countries virtually do not go to war with each other, and since the early 1980s, this apparent pattern has been regarded as one of the most important empirical features of international relations.⁴ This is a view with which this dissertation strongly sympathises because of its verifiability and workability in the European or Western context to which Kant is probably alluding. The West has experienced the bloodiest wars that history has in record and they were essentially engineered by Nazism and Fascism, which were by no standard democratic. Since the disappearance of these regimes from Europe's political arena

⁴Michael E. Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones, Steven E. Miller (eds.): *Debating the Democratic Peace*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. ix.

and the adoption of democracy as the ideal form of rule, Europe has experienced relative tranquillity. The claim that democracies do not fight against each other in fact evokes our sympathy, and it would have been the wish of all friends of peace to see such a noble idea become the norm on our entire planet.

This notwithstanding, we are left with the nagging question of what form of democracy Kant is referring to here; and most important of all, if this concept could become applicable in the SSA context. If democracy were to be consolidated in SSA, would its norms and values achieve the objective of containing conflicts and effecting lasting change in the area of peace and development?

It is again worth noting at this point that SSA has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the democratisation process in the last decade. Several grassroots organisations have mobilised themselves to promoting liberalisation, to pave the way for political reforms and putting an end to one-party domination. By the early 1990s several SSA nations had undergone this transition (e.g. Benin, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Zambia, to name but these). Popular alliances have equally been successful in ousting totalitarian African regimes in Zambia, Benin, and Sudan, to mention just these few.⁵ The World Bank and other like-minded external donors view the adoption of democratic principles as a prerequisite to the obtention of aid, and a precondition for development. They have therefore continually insisted on the consolidation of democracy as part of their very much cherished Structural Adjustment Program. This seems to suggest that the World Bank and foreign donors are proposing or advocating liberal democracy for SSA as a solution to the conflicts, poverty and underdevelopment presently plaguing the continent. All these have unfortunately not brought about the end to conflicts or even the hope that they will soon end. On the contrary, they have created more problems for the countries of the region that came under this scheme.

This dissertation shall be an examination of the ‘democracy + development = peace’ concept in the Sub-Saharan African context. The dissertation shall be dealt with in four chapters. The first shall explore the many and contested meanings of democracy and the forms that have so far been experimented in SSA, (with the view of examining if the current practices by the sub-continent of this political culture suit the aspirations of the fathers and advocates of democracy). The second part will

⁵ Bratton M. and Van de Walle N. :Democratic Experiments in Africa, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997, p.15

explore the causes of conflicts in SSA and their relationship with democracy or lack thereof. In the third part we will attempt an analysis of the concept with reference to two case studies; Tanzania and Kenya. In so doing, we shall make reference to concrete examples that may help cement the arguments we are seeking to put forth. The final part of the paper will, through inferring from the quoted examples, suggest some ways forward in our understanding or analysis of democracy and conflict as prevailing in SSA.

CHAPTER II

ON DEMOCRACY AND THE FORMS SO FAR EXPERIMENTED UPON IN AFRICA

Democracy is one of those terms about which nearly all great minds of memorable time have talked. From Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and contemporary philosophers, much has been heard about democracy. Today it is hard to say something new about the term and this dissertation does not claim to do so. Our singular attempt here is to explore the different views of democracy vis-à-vis its understanding and applicability in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Is democracy as currently understood, especially by westerners, feasible in SSA?

Coming into English in the 16th century from the French word 'democratie', its origins are Greek. Derived from '*demokratia*', its origins are Greek. Derived from and '*kratos*' (rule), democracy means a form of government in which, contrary to monarchies and aristocracies, the people govern. Democracy entails a state in which some form of political equality prevails among the people and where rule by the people is the norm.⁶ Historically, the idea of democracy has been a subject of complexity and offers plenty of scope for disagreement. It has invariably meant different things to different people in different places.⁷

In order to imprint a more clearer picture of the concept of democracy in our minds; and for the sake of this present dissertation, it might prove worthwhile to examine the conditions that favour the existence of democracy and the result that its application are expected to achieve.

⁶Held, David: *Models of Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 2.

⁷Dahl, Robert A., *On Democracy*, Yale University Press, London, 1998, p. 9.

Table 2.1:

| Conditions | Arguments | Problems |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Economic development | correlation exists between wealth and democracy; increased national wealth makes competition for resources less desperate. | a) correlation is not the same as cause. b) greater wealth may strengthen the resources of authoritarian rulers. c) process and rapidity in economic growth is not specified clearly. |
| 2. Political attitudes and behaviour. | Democracy requires a willingness to accept government by consent as a means of resolving conflicts. | attitudes may be shaped by social and economic circumstances. |
| 3. Inter-elite relations. | Democracy emerges when elites agree to the rules of the political game rather than risk national disintegration. These rules can subsequently be adopted to accommodate non-elites. | a) why is a point reached when national unity is preferred to violent conflict or disintegration? b) How can elite attitudes be ascertained? |
| 4. Political Institutions. | democracy requires the establishment of institutions (especially pressure groups and political parties) which can filter public demands and thus facilitate compromise. | a) danger of historical determinism. b) Role of economic changes, external influences and even society is not clear. |
| 5. Sequences in Development. | Democracy is easier to establish if political competition precedes mass participation, and if major conflicts over the role of the state are resolved one at a time. | a) Danger of historical determinism. b) Problems of recognising and quantifying the variables. |
| 6. External Influences. | Foreign governments, institutions or individuals may supply ideas, offer inducement or apply sanctions. | a) influence can only be indirect; democracy cannot be imposed. |

Source: Pinkney, 1993, pp.22-23.⁸

Furthermore, for democracy to prevail, there has to be an effective participation of the citizens in the political life of a country; there has to be equality in voting, the people should have an enlightened understanding of what their action leads to or not, control should be exercised over the agenda and all adults should be included in the democratic processes.⁹

If the above conditions, conducive to democracy prevail within a state, the following will be the desirable consequences:

1. Tyranny will be avoided,

⁸Pinkney, Robert: *Democracy in the Third World*, Open university Press, Philadelphia, 1993, pp.22-23.

2. Essential Rights will be guaranteed,
3. General freedom will prevail,
4. There will be self-determination,
5. There will be moral autonomy,
6. Human development will be precipitated,
7. Essential personal interests will be protected,
8. There will be political equality,
9. There will be prosperity,
10. Peace will reign.¹⁰

These will be the conditions and consequences of an ideal democracy. We note here, albeit with regret, that most of these conditions and consequences, as idealistically formulated, are in living contradiction to most of what is practised in SSA, but still in the name of democracy. This does not only concretise the complexity of defining democracy but also urges us to ask if the African claim to democracy is genuine. (The last two points in particular will form the foundation on which our subsequent arguments will be based. Is democracy is precondition for development, poverty alleviation, and does it ultimately lead to peace as the last point here suggests?)

The answer to the above question is surprisingly in the affirmative. The Africans have a genuine claim to democracy and it is needless to say that it is their understanding of what democracy is that makes the above points look contradictory to most of their practice. Their concept of democracy is neither the Western-liberal nor the democracy formulated by Marx and Lenin. It appears to be new, but in fact predates Marx and the notion of the liberal state. It is the notion of democracy as rule by and for the oppressed people.¹¹ Given that the so-called underdeveloped countries had on the whole a simpler culture than the one of those who had dominated them; it does not surprise anyone that they resorted to a concept of democracy that has its roots in the pre-industrial society. Their rejection of most of the characteristics of liberal democracy and their concept of democracy as not liberal-individualist is representative of their nature. It would have been surprising if they had adopted a

⁹Dahl, Robert, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁰Dahl, Robert A., op. cit., p. 45.

¹¹Macpherson, C. B., *The Real World of Democracy*, Anansi Press Limited, 1992, p.

contrary notion. The competitive market society which forms the backbone of liberal democracy was unnatural to the people of SSA. The market society is something that has been imposed on them from outside. The African traditional culture was generally not attuned to competition. They generally did not value wealth-gaining and gave no respect to individual aggrandisement. Community life and equality within that community was, and is still in some traditional societies today, an intrinsic and respected value.¹²

Like the competitive market economy, the notion of political competition was unnatural to Africans. Up to present times some communities are ruled by kings or leaders for whom leadership is a mere destiny. They are neither elected nor is their ascension to power a subject for debate. No parties compete for the position and this fully explains why the notion of competing political parties was until recently foreign to most of the region. The notion that a system of such competing national parties is the most sensible and most beneficial way of choosing and authorising governments is equally something quite foreign to the African mind. SSA communities are pre-political and pre-national and it will still require time and strain to bring them to a real political and national consciousness. Their criterion of democracy is the achievement of ends which the community shares and which are put above separate individual ends.¹³

Rousseau is the classic formulator of this doctrine and is often quoted in the theoretical statements made by SSA leaders after the colonial period. In keeping with Rousseau's thoughts, they see the embodiment of social ills, of moral depravity, of dehumanisation and loss of human freedom in the institution that promotes inequality, namely liberal democracy. According to them, dignity, freedom and full humanity can only be achieved through the re-establishment of the equality that the colonisers had deprived them of. This was not to be achieved through the creation of a class society and a system of exploitative capitalism that leads to conflicts among these classes. Democracy should bring about freedom from starvation, ignorance and early deaths. The former are the inevitable characteristics of a society with capitalist thinking and where each person is akin to amassing as much individual wealth as

24.

¹²Luckham, Robin, and Gordon White (eds.), *Democratization in the South, The Jagged Wave*, Manchester University Press, 1996, pp. 24-25.

¹³Macpherson, C. B., *op. cit.*, pp. 31-34.

possible.¹⁴

Liberal democracy puts in place a system in which people can buy what they want with their votes. African countries are in no position to exercise such a consumer's sovereignty, because the political goals on offer are too few. On achievement of independence, they are bound to commit themselves to the achievement of economic development as a means of preserving the newly gained national autonomy. They cannot afford to treat their government at this stage as a consumer's good but rather a producer's good and a capital investment.¹⁵ In the next section we shall attempt to explore the ways post-independence SSA countries have sought to realise what in their understanding would be viable paths to achieving their goals.

1. FORMS OF RULE AND THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENTS

A. Presidentialism

Presidentialism is basically a phenomenon that involves the centralisation of state power in the hands of a president or his office. The incumbent president represents the entire people in nearly all matters relating to the state. Most of them derived their authority, not from regular electoral mandate but through sheer incumbency. In some SSA countries this was still considered as democracy although the sole political party to which such a president belongs put forth one candidate for election to the presidency. It is again needless to say that it is pointless to conduct elections if only one candidate is posing for it, but this is a well-known electoral practice that had been very popular in SSA after independence. The unopposed election was a demonstration of the candidate's popularity, and newspapers sang of his heroism and lavished him with praises. In some cases it was considered treason and illegal to oppose a president.¹⁶

The idea of Presidentialism developed in the sub-continent immediately after independence. The leader of the nationalist party declared himself president soon

¹⁴Luckham, Robing, and Gordon White (eds.), op. cit., p. 35-36.

¹⁵Macpherson, C. B., op. cit., pp. 35-36.

¹⁶Anyang' Nyong'o Peter (ed.), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa*, Zed

after the departure of the colonial master. Upon ascension to power such presidents would normally have abolished any distinction there may have been between different institutional sources of power, such as between the Prime Minister and the president. He made himself almighty and his rulings became sacrosanct. It was not clearly defined how long they had to stay in power, but it was not unknown that such presidents intended to rule indefinitely. In some cases, such a president was a military leader who tried to establish a base or political legitimacy for his despotic regime, as was the case of Samuel Doe in Liberia.¹⁷

Presidentialism was the first rocky labyrinth to democracy that the sub-continent had to go through after independence. The reasons for this were many and varied, a full compilation of which unfortunately cannot find space here. In fact such reasons are similar to the ones put forth for the one-party system as a form of democracy, to which we shall be referring later. It does not conform to democracy as we understand it today (even in SSA) and will certainly drive the Athenian fathers of democracy to nausea, but it remains probably the only alternative to post-colonial rule. The Africans did not have alternatives to choose from and no ground had been laid for a proper democracy since colonialism itself was an undemocratic and authoritarian form of rule. The Africans did not choose the colonial masters and their exercise of power was not mandated by anyone, although they remained long and ruled with all imaginable despotism.

B. The One-Party System

The one-party system embodies the type of regime that has so far come closest in some particulars to effecting a modicum of democratic participation in some countries of the sub-continent. It has so far been the organisational expression of the most stable and acceptable types of regime in SSA. Principally, the one-party system provided leaders with a relatively democratic organisation which was used to rouse, exhort and encourage people towards a search for desired ends and also allowed ordinary citizens a limited degree of participation in the public affairs of the state. In so doing the contradictory urges on the one hand of the people for democratic participation and on the other hand, of leaders to exercise tight control were

Books Limited, 1987, p. 31.

¹⁷Ivor W. Jennings, *Democracy in Africa*, Cambridge University Press, 1963, p. 25.

accommodated in the same body. While expressing the contradictory nature of politics, single party regimes established a situation where the leader felt unthreatened and where they could fashion party leadership in their own image. This, without doubt is not a democratic practice; on the contrary, it was designed both in terms of its actual structure and in terms of the philosophy of effecting control and limiting democratic participation. In spite of this, the party sometimes developed to become a body through which daring individuals or groups may acquire some degree of active participation, especially in matters that posed no particular threat to the party leadership and their position in the party or government of the country as a whole. The single political party therefore had the propensity to produce the government's political legitimacy while at the same time effecting tight control over politics and other institutions of the state as found desirable to the leaders.¹⁸

Bratton and Van de Walle call the above system a plebiscitary one-party system. They distinguish it from a competitive one-party system. The latter is a less common variant of the one-party system but as the label suggests, it was somewhat more competitive. Unlike Presidentialism or military oligarchy, it tolerated some limited political competition at the mass as well as elite levels. It allowed for two or more candidates to run for party primaries or parliamentary elections. Voters possessed at least a limited electoral choice among candidates from a single official party with an established policy platform. Although rulers attempted to depoliticise society and manipulated electoral rules, there was a sufficient attraction on the part of the voters to the available choices. This sustained genuine turn out and figures were relatively high (the trend declined with time). This had the dual advantage of bringing about relative stability and revisiting military intervention.

The competitive one-party regime was characteristically headed by a nationalist founding father like Kaunda of Zambia or Houphouët Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire. In some countries the original leader engineered a smooth but undemocratic transition of leadership to hand-picked successors (as to Moi in Kenya, Mwinyi in Tanzania or Biya in Cameroon).¹⁹ As a result of longevity of service, leaders in such regimes accrued much support for themselves and were allegedly in a politically secured position. They tolerated a degree of political pluralism and allowed

¹⁸Anyang' Nyong'o, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

¹⁹Anyang' Nyong'o, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35. Also see Bratton and Van de Walle, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

significant opposition to the government on the fringes of the single party, in the press and civic associations, which were by African standards, very strong.²⁰ Where it was practised, this form of rule is not known to have engendered the sort of political violence and other forms of ethnic rivalries that later forms of governance were to experience.

i. Arguments advanced in favour of a single-party leadership after independence

Some plausible sounding arguments have been advanced by the SSA leaders themselves after independence and by their apostles, as to the quintessentiality of the one-party rule that became the order of the day in SSA upon the departure of the colonisers. These spurious arguments that could equally be described as the destruction of democracy at birth, were presented by nationalist leaders, who instead of using their immense authority to enhance democracy or at least some democratic sentiments (as the rest of the world expected them to do), threw their might and main behind the construction of a number of repressive systems.

The first argument advanced was that, being new states and at the genesis of nation-building, the major pre-occupation at that stage should be striving to preserve the unity achieved during the pre-independence nationalist struggles. They pitched national unity against open politics and saw the proliferation of parties as divisive, conflict prone, and a danger to nation-building.

The second argument advanced was that the institutions and beliefs that are generally accepted as being the backbone of democracy have a colonial outlook or are the ideas of imperial nations and therefore unacceptable to the African. This argument was particularly shallow because it did not take into account the fact that it was not part of the experience of colonial Africa to enjoy the democratic forms and principles of the imperialist countries. These experiences can therefore not be described as colonial or imperialist. Even if the ideas were imperialist, they were a result of protracted struggles in these countries, a situation that shares similarities with SSA's pre-independence struggles. Apart from that, it does not sound reasonable to dismiss a practice as unworthy of emulation simply because it comes from an imperialist state.

Another commonly advanced reason was that to achieve rapid development, it was necessary to have everything under control. This view maintained that much

²⁰Bienen S. Henry, and Van de Walle, "Of Time and Power in Africa", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 83, March 1989, pp. 19-22.

political disputation would have the effect of distracting people from the preponderant concern, namely development. Politicking was considered less pressing and the leaders were seemingly more concerned about sustaining developmental efforts that were being put in place at the time. It is not too difficult to see a measure of truth in this sort of argument. Development was the major problem confronting the SSA countries at the time and it was but logical to face it with attention, despite the claim of some social scientists that all good things go together. Unfortunately, and like in most of the rhetoric of that generation's leaders, the seeming concern for development turned out to be hypocritical and more fanciful than real. The resentment of too much politics bore more in mind the leader's position than sympathy with development efforts.

Close to this argument was also the one that democracy and development are in any event contradictory elements. Again if rapid development were to take place, it would be wise to forget the idea of democratic participation because a poor country cannot afford to dissipate its energies in the luxury of allowing all and sundry to put forth opinions regarding national matters. Too many views will have the effect of hampering or even undermining development because it will become too complex to implement them. However, this remains a futile argument till today; because development has not yet been achieved even after so many years of political independence and still less civil participation.²¹

Furthermore, there was an argument (many people are still of this opinion today) that democracy is not a *conditio sine qua non* for development. Intellectuals do not agree as to whether democracy precedes development or if the reverse is true. There is empirical evidence to either side of the argument and the African despots might just have been taking advantage of this.

Everything notwithstanding, these arguments for the advantages of a one-party rule have had contrasting effects in different countries in the sub-continent. For some it was the basis of a systematic journey towards some measure of democracy and to others it undermined the initiative in many respects. These views could be summarised in this quote from Siaka Stevens, the former president of Sierra-Leone, who referred to multipartism as "...a system of...institutionalized tribal and ethnic quinquennial warfare euphemistically known as elections, which contributes an open

²¹Pinkney, Robert, op. cit., pp. 20-21. See also Anyang' Nyong'o, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

invitation to anarchy and disunity.”²²

C. The Multi-Party System

The term multi-party is resonant of both participation and competition for leadership in political settings. Multiparty regimes in SSA, unlike Presidentialism or the plebiscitary one-party system, have displayed relatively high levels of these. In fact forming political parties has become an obsession for many people in the sub-continent. In such regimes voters enjoy guarantees of a universal franchise and the sort of equality before the law that is enforceable. A plurality of political parties contest in relatively open elections. In using many different campaign slogans, politicians and those vying for power can demonstrate a set of wishes that are representative of the people’s opinions. In so doing, they appeal to a cross-section of the population, who normally in SSA, will see the prospect of bringing their plight to light. This has the advantage of mobilising people and making them participate in national issues, thereby fulfilling an essential criterion of democracy.

However, multi-partyism in SSA, attractive though it may seem, suffers serious shortcomings. These include: weak opposition parties, intimidation of opposition leaders and their supporters by incumbent governments (as was recently the case in Zimbabwe), an absence of leadership turnover.²³ There is plenty of misperception, poor calculation, false hopes and unjustified expectations. The opposition parties often lack a strategy and intra-party strife is not uncommon. In many cases supporters and sympathisers of opposition parties have felt a great sense of deception after they voted the party into power and just to see it do the exact opposite of their election promises. If unchecked leaders of so-called democratic parties show marked inclinations to neopatrimonial habits. SSA’s multi-party systems can therefore be thought of as hybrid regimes in which the formal rules of electoral democracy vie with informal ties of the “big whips” to define and shape the actual practice of politics. The multiparty systems of Botswana, Senegal, Zimbabwe and

²²Glickman, Harvey, *Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa*, the African Studies Association Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, p. 20.

²³Bratton and Van de Walle, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

others are imperfectly democratic in these respects.²⁴

D. The Military-Oligarchy (Regime)

The military regime in SSA is an exclusionary form of rule after independence. Elections are few or entirely absent and nearly all decision making is the sole responsibility of a narrow elite behind closed doors. Personal leadership is visible but in some cases power is not all concentrated in the hands of one man; there is somehow collective decision-making by a junta, committee of cabinet that often included civilian advisers and technocrats alongside military officers. There exists a degree of competitive debate within the elite, and objective criteria are at times brought to bear in the assessment of policy options. Actualisation of decisions occurs through a relatively professional civil or military hierarchy, and executive institutions are maintained in at least a token sense of readiness and effectiveness.²⁵

There was a tendency for military regimes to be led by a younger generation of junior military officers who took power in a second, third or later round of coups during the late 1970s and 1980s. Under these regimes there was a severe circumscription of political participation, not only because elections were eliminated at the primary phase of the rule but also because existing political parties and most civic associations were banned. In radical regimes such as in Burkina Faso or Congo, the military dictators put in some so-called people's committees to fill the political space and disseminate their message.²⁶ Although these regimes sometimes espouse a populist ideology, their methods are void of genuine participation at least until such times when the leaders began making good promises of a return to civilian rule. Such regimes are exemplified by the governments of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana (1981-92), Ibrahim Babangida in Nigeria (1985-93), among others.²⁷

It should be noted however that the predominance of the military in the political life of the sub-continent reflects a widespread frustration with civilian and sometimes democratically elected leaders over gross inefficiency, corruption, ruthless

²⁴ibid.

²⁵Decalo, Samuel, *coups and Army Rule in Africa*, Africana Publishing, New York, 1979, pp. 231-240.

²⁶Decalo, Samuel, "The Monopoly of Military Rule in Africa", in *Military Marxist Regimes in Africa*, John Markakis and Michael Waller (eds.), Frank Cass, London, 1986, p. 134.

manipulation of ethnic, tribal or regional differences (like in Kenya or Cameroon). Nonetheless, military leadership is an undesirable system of rule, not only because they are essentially undemocratic but also because they very often promise quick solutions to problems, but ironically tend to compound the very problems they claim to wish to salvage the country from. It equally cannot provide regimes with the necessary political legitimacy for good government and demonstrates a visible inability to stem the tide of corruption, turn the country around or bring about democratic participation.²⁸ They often cannot attract foreign investment and political support from outside.

E. The Settler Oligarchy

As the terminology suggests, this form of rule was not initiated by a purely indigenous people but by a group whose ancestry could be traced elsewhere. This form of rule did not share the core features of the neopatrimonial regimes prevalent in SSA after independence, but instead resembled the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes put in place by Europeans in those parts of the colonial world where the settlers acquired overpowering control of the state.²⁹ Settler oligarchies are synonymous to exclusionary democracy, in which the dominant group used the institution of law to deny political rights to ethnic majorities, usually through a restrictive franchise and emergency regulations that received the backing of a hierarchically organised coercion.

Noteworthy here, is the fact that settlers, however, practised some democracy within their microcosmic enclaves with characteristics like elections, leadership turnover, loyal opposition, independent courts and some press freedom. These were, but all reserved for whites. Therefore, at the same time while permitting quite far-reaching measures of political competition, settler-regimes proscribed access to political participation by all the races and this completely overwhelmed their sense of altruism.

The obvious and classic example of this sort of regime was South Africa. Together with Namibia, she was the only remaining settler oligarchy in the African

²⁷Bratton and Van de Walle, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁸Anyang' Nyong'o, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁹Bratton, Michael, "Patterns of Development and Underdevelopment: Towards a

continent by 1989, though about half a dozen other African countries in the eastern and southern subcontinent shared a settler colonial heritage.³⁰ The early 1990s saw a rather dramatic turnover of rule in South Africa, which has since 1994 been ruled by a democratically elected government.

2. THE PROSPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The question as to whether democracy could be achieved and consolidated in SSA, and whether it could precipitate conflict eradication and poverty reduction, is not only a nagging one but equally one that social scientists have found hard to answer with an empirical yes or no. Attempting to predict the likelihood of such consolidation is indeed “ a journey without maps”. Historical comparisons with the democratisation cases of other parts of the world, for example Latin America or Southern Europe is of little guidance because of the enormous differences existing between the historical experiences and the social and economic structures of those areas in comparison with SSA. Within Africa itself, such comparison of developments in the direction of democratisation will produce as many questions as there are answers.³¹

That the emerging democracies in SSA will remain highly flawed is an article of faith in descriptions of analysts that use terms like “delegative democracies”, “hybrid democracies” and “patrimonial democracies” to describe emergent regimes in the sub-continent.³² Such terms are portentous of the notion that the formal trappings of democracy, such as universal franchise, elections and political parties are superimposed on potentially totalitarian practices and a clientelist political culture.³³ Multiparty elections of unpredictable outcomes may be a regular practice; but at the same time, civil and political rights of citizens are not respected between elections, and considerable proportions of the populace are effectively co-opted and intimidated. Moreover, there is a coexistence between formal democratic politics at the national

Comparison”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 26, 1982, pp. 333-372.

³⁰Bratton M., and Van de Walle, op. cit., p. 81.

³¹Wiseman, A. John (ed.), *Democracy and Political change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 229.

³²Bratton M., and Van de Walle, op. cit., p. 236.

³³Fox, Jonathan, “The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship: Lessons