

WAR AND REGIME IN AFRICA
A southern pattern?

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Nearly 100 years ago the good men and women of the town of Murraysburg met, early in the morning, to discuss the previous day's events: a Free State commando had raided them again. Murraysburg should have been out of harm's way – in today's terms; the town lies over 200km south of the Orange River. But to the Boers Murraysburg was an irresistible target and as a result, life for the people of Murraysburg had often and in a flash, become "nasty, brutish and short".

What to do? What to do? The Boers were not deterred by the town-guard. The British Army was not going to ride to their rescue; the Army had their own problems with the Boers. Murraysburg had to face its problem alone. And then a bold idea swam into view: Why not invite the Boers to visit Murraysburg and convince them that the townfolk were nice people, too nice to be attacked. There would be games. A swim in the afternoon. A ball would be held in the evening, with fine dining, inoffensive music, dancing, and some comely young ladies in attendance. The British authorities were not going to be told of any of this, lest they swoop on the festivities and arrest everybody. The Boers, particularly if they knew of this deception, would trust Murraysburgers all the more and direct their attentions elsewhere.

To the town's delight, the Boers accept the invitation. Everything goes as planned. By all accounts, a good time is had by all. In the days after the famous Ball for the Boers, the townfolk are well pleased: they had found a way to end the war for Murraysburg.

Not quite: the next week the very same Boers raided the town again. And again. They would eventually do so 19 times.

I was first told of the Ball for the Boers when I worked in the area during South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 ¹ and it amused me to think that the events of 1900 and 1994 were comparable. Soon I had convinced myself that not only were 1900 and 1994 comparable but that these South African events were also comparable to what had recently happened in Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe and what was not developing in Angola. Now I am convinced the comparison can be extended across the oceans, to Latin American countries such as Guatemala. This is a mouthful. But for tonight only a few African countries are on the menu.

These few African countries are not flawless democracies but they are more democratic, much more democratic, than they were before. Most of these much more democratic countries are found south of the equator. ² My purpose tonight is to argue, by means of

¹ I would like to thank Taffy Shearing for her account of Murraysburg during the Second Anglo-Boer War.

² See Michael Bratton, "Second Elections in Africa" in Larry Diamond and Marc F Plattner (eds.), *Democratization in Africa* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), pp. 18-33 and Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.97-127.

comparison, that this democratisation is closely related to the experience of war. The primary cases are Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In these countries (a) the emergence of democracy is in large part attributable to a desire to end war; and (b) features of the resulting democratisation, for example, its constitutionalism, are in large part attributable to the peculiar features of the war in each country.

Because only four cases are compared tonight, my comparison would be classified as a Most Similar Systems Design and such a method of comparison cannot, by its very nature, produce a theory.³ I am going to refer to other southern African countries – Angola, Botswana, Zambia, and so on – but the number of primary cases means, strictly speaking, I can at best suggest a theory or produce tentative generalisations. Thus the latter part of my title: A Southern Pattern Questionmark.

What do I mean by the term war? Whenever I am asked this question, I reply with the accepted definition of 1,000 casualties per year but I know this is not really what people want to hear. They want me to follow either The Fat Boy or Clausewitz. The Fat Boy's is the nickname of Sam Weller and he is a character in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. He is the one who goes about telling horrid stories to little old ladies because, he says: "I wants to make your flesh creep".⁴ We demand that war be talked about in the same revolting way because we think it must be meaningless slaughter. I don't want to follow suit. War involves human cost, very high human cost – random carnage, even – and yet – and yet – it is possible to find meaning in sacrifice. At times humans can prove themselves only through sacrifice. That is the human condition. The political theorist Hegel said of it: we human beings are unusual creatures in that we give life for something higher than life. But we also take life for something higher than life.⁵

Clausewitz defined war as the "continuation of policy by others means". This means war is a political instrument. Why? Clausewitz thought war contained a "remarkable trinity"; i.e. "the people", "the commander and his army", and the "government" with government declaring war, the commander and his army conducting operations, and the people supporting the war effort. But, when you used the instrument, what was it? The nature of war came to Clausewitz through personal experience in the Napoleonic Wars and especially Napoleon's crushing defeat of Prussia in 1806. After the Jena-Auerstadt battle Clausewitz found it impossible to think of war as containing any limits: it was in the nature of war to escalate.⁶ It is in the nature of war, in other words, for things to go from bad to worse.⁷

³ Small-N studies' nature and limitations are discussed in, for example, David Collier, "The Comparative Method" in Ada Finifter (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington DC: The American Political Science Association, 1993), pp. 105-119 and Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method" *American Political Science Review* 6 (1971): 682-691.

⁴ Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1999).

⁵ This interpretation derives from the famous Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel. See *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* arranged by Raymond Queneau, edited by Allan Bloom, and translated by James Nichols (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, translated and edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), chapters 5, 7 and 8 of Book VII.

⁷ Azar Gat describes the tendency as "the imperative of destruction". Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 200.

Clausewitz's definition of war forms an almost perfect contradiction. War as a political instrument implies that war can be controlled, limited, managed. But if the nature of war is to escalate, then any attempt to control – manage – it is doomed. ⁸ John Keegan notes even more basic failings of the Clausewitz definition: it is “incomplete, parochial and ultimately misleading”. ⁹ Keegan thought war could be an instrument of culture because, in war, culture influences the “choice of military means...(indeed is) often more likely to prevail than political or military logic”. ¹⁰ Clausewitz himself was increasingly aware that he had mistakenly taken the Napoleonic Wars as a model of all wars but he died before he could correct himself. It has been left to other scholars, usually historians, to show war does not inevitably escalate and that war, besides being a political instrument, is also an instrument of economics, culture, and religion. ¹¹

The current use of war as an economic instrument and an instrument of religion has inspired a good many scholars to connect it with failed states, collapsed states, religious extremism and all sorts of mischief in non-western countries. We should not be fooled, certainly not in believing this happens only among us and that it is a failing. I do not want to dwell on this except to note that a sliver of historical knowledge will give great relief.

When war was a religious instrument among the most Christian princes of Europe, for example, they talked like bloodthirsty zealots about the justness of their cause. But the princes were not so keen to seek battle. The reason was that they believed their god literally determined the course of human events through, among others, military affairs. Since war was seen as a test and victory in battle a sign of divine favour and justice, the princes understandably became fearful about taking the momentous step into battle. ¹² The use of war by religions does not necessarily imply a multiplying number of vicious wars; on the contrary, religion often regulates and limits war.

And lest we believe war as an economic instrument is a non-western mischief, remember the English privateers in the days of the Spanish Main and the gold-laden galleons. If a man had political influence or had distinguished himself, he could receive a licence to operate as a pirate and do things that the Royal Navy ruled out as long as it involved shipping not under the English flag.

War simply has a chameleon-like capacity to reflect context; this is what Thomas Hobbes meant when he stated:

“War consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time wherein the will to battle is sufficiently known.” Four lines later he repeats that the “nature of war, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto.” ¹³

⁸ *Ibid.*, and Jan Willem Honig, “Strategy in a Post-Clausewitzian Setting” in G C de Nooy (ed.), *The Clausewitzian Dictum and the Future of Western Military Strategy* (The Netherlands: Kluwer International, 1997), pp. 112-113.

⁹ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), p.24.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.39.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 3-60.

¹² Jan Willem Honig, “War, Peace and World Orders: Warfare in the Middle Ages”, unpublished paper, 2000, p. 13.

¹³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Collier Books, 1962) , p. 100.

Thucydides had noted the same things in Pericles's Funeral Oration during the war between Athens and Sparta. Pericles explains his thinking as follows:

"I shall say nothing about the warlike deed by which we acquired our power or the battles in which we or our fathers gallantly resisted our enemies, Greek or foreign. What I want to do is...to discuss the spirit in which we faced our trials and also our constitution and the way of life which has made us great." ¹⁴

What about the first part of the title, which refers to Regime Change? I chose Regime Change because it is a fairly neutral term meaning a change in the nature of governance. Regime change should not be confused with a transfer of power from one party to another while the nature of governance stays the same. Regime change should also not be confused with democratisation because it could entail military rule, for example, being replaced by civilian dictatorship. Regime change is just a change in the nature of governance. It is a primarily political term but as any regime change-specialist will tell you, when the nature of governance changes in one country, that country's economic and social life will change, too.

Why did I not say Democratisation in Africa: A Southern Pattern? I could have said just that but then more vultures would have gathered. They would have said: Why bother? The democratisation is bound to be superficial because the preconditions of democracy are absent. What we have is merely the appearance of democracy. Wait until two transfers of power have occurred through free and fair elections, and then we will talk business. These arguments are not frivolous. But for the 75-m people who live in my four cases political life has very quickly improved beyond the wildest expectation. Surely the political progress for 75-m people is worth talking about.

In the remainder of my discussion, there are three sections:

The first section contains a very brief theoretical background. Most theories about the relationship between war and regime change did not, until recently, apply to the African continent. The so-called contract theories developed in the 16th and 17th centuries are relevant, as are some of the historical studies of Africans' experience of war.

The second section explains that war and democratic regime change is a familiar phenomenon but was, until its experience in Southern Africa, not found in Africa. In the South, democracy became the only way to end war that had become a "hurting stalemate". Democratisation following a war, however, contains the possibility that the armed forces, fattened by the recent unpleasantness, may not support democratic governance. The experience of the South, however, has yet to show this tendency. In fact, the opposite seems to be true.

In the third section, I use path analysis to explain the choice of the type of democracy, which is constitutional democracy. In Southern Africa, the type of democracy is shaped by the sequence, specifically the sequence of actions by which the war is brought to a close. This sequence stimulates constitutionalism, multi-partyism, inclusive political practices, and political participation. Unusually high levels of voter turnout reflect a strong commitment to democracy.

¹⁴ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), p. 145.

1. WAR AND REGIME CHANGE: THEORICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between war and regime change is well known. We are well aware of the reason: regimes are often weakened by war.¹⁵ And we are well aware of the famous cases:

The French Revolution followed the wars for the control of North America; the First World War and the Russian Revolution of 1917 are directly related; and the Chinese Revolution was preceded by the Second World War. More recently, in the Gulf War, President Saddam Hussein ordered his precious Republican Guard to return to Baghdad on the eve of what he said was going to be the mother of all battles. If the Guard were to be defeated, he knew his regime could very well be next.

If an undemocratic regime surrenders to a democratic country, as Germany and Japan did after the Second World War, democratisation can be a compulsory exercise. In Japan the Americans simply announced thou shalt be a democracy and thou shalt be a constitutional democracy. The Emperor was allowed to stay – on condition he stop acting like a god.

In cases where a democracy already exists, the pace of democratisation often is accelerated by war. In France, for example, the use of conscription during the Napoleonic Wars obliges post-war regimes to extend the franchise to veterans. After all, the reasoning went, if a man had been prepared to die for his country, he should be permitted to vote for it. The type of democracy may also be affected by the war. After the American Civil War, to cite another example, disabled veterans, widows and orphans receive benefits from the federal government and, in this policy, scholars – I am referring to another masterpiece from Theda Skocpol – detect the birth of social democracy in the United States.¹⁶

Solid correlation and famous cases should not, however, lead us into temptation. The cases in my comparison are all intrastate wars – wars among people of the same country – and theories about interstate wars (wars between or among countries) do not apply. Our cases are also African countries, and many theories are thus irrelevant. In my view, two sets of theorising are relevant: the more empirically inclined studies of African experiences of war and contract theory.

Empirical studies of Africans' experience of war show that, although African countries were affected by wars, wars did not accelerate democratisation. The many black Africans who served, as volunteers in the world wars were not rewarded in the way the French rewarded their conscripts. For the moment, recall the American socialite, Gertrude Whitney, who set off to run a hospital in the First World War. Mrs Whitney loftily declaring that the hospital would be neutral, meaning Germans would receive the same attention as French or English wounded, but soon realised that France's cannon fodder, for much of the war, consisted of dark-skinned Africans. She, by the way, served alongside a doctor who predicted that the speed of modern bullets would serve to cauterise wounds and thus prevent infection.¹⁷

¹⁵ Jack E Goldstone, "Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation" *World Politics* 22 (April 1980): 425-453.

¹⁶ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Barbara Goldsmith, *Little Gloria...Happy At Last* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1980), pp. 188-189.

In South Africa's wars, too, service does not bring political reward. In the Second Anglo-Boer War, for example, the thousands who supported the British suffer a disappointing fate. The British had entered the war with promises about racial fairness; this, it later turned out, did not include the franchise.¹⁸

Wars of course did affect African countries. Economic growth in, for example, South Africa and Zimbabwe after 1939 and well into the 1950s had much to do with the Allies' wartime demand for goods and services and the mechanics of the Marshall Plan in post-war Europe.¹⁹ In one publication, I have made a case for connecting war with South African political development in the 20th century.²⁰ Now, however, a case for a close or direct link between war and democratisation in Africa can be made with the help of contract theory.

Contract theory was born in the 16th and 17th centuries in the writing of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704). Contract theory is very much alive today but I prefer to focus on Hobbes, however, because he first lit on the idea of a contract as a means to end a war.

Hobbes lived in a time when English society was literally collapsing around his ears. In the *Leviathan* (1651) he describes it as follows:

"No arts...no letters, no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."²¹

Hobbes is not imagining things. Against the backdrop of Elizabeth the First's war with Mary, Queen of Scots, comes the rebellion of the Earl of Essex (1601); the Irish Revolts; the Gunpowder Plot (1605); Charles the First's war with the Scots; the First and Second Bishops' Wars; the massacre of Protestants in Ireland (1641); the First Civil War (in 1642); the surrender of Charles the First in 1646 (the same Charles whom Hobbes had backed and nearly lost his life in the process), the Second Civil War (1648); Cromwell's rule; the plots against Charles the Second; Monmouth's Rebellion; and the fights with James the Second (1688). I have mentioned merely the domestic affairs – and not the wars with France, the Dutch and Spain. And then there is also the Great Plague of London (1665) and the Great Fire (1666).

2. WAR AND DEMOCRATIC REGIME CHANGE: AFRICA'S SOUTH

For a start, some dates and detail:

War in Mozambique began in 1964 and, with brief interruptions, ended in 1994. The negotiations ending the war began in 1988, accelerating between 1990 and 1992. The results are a General Peace Agreement, which has the force of a constitution, and multi-party elections.

¹⁸ A striking account of this betrayal can be found in Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979).

¹⁹ Annette Seegers, *Revolution in Africa: The Case of Zimbabwe (1965-1980)*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1984), pp. 69-164.

²⁰ Annette Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa* (London: I B Tauris, 1996).

²¹ Thomas Hobbes, *op cit.*, p. 100.

In Namibia war began in the early 1960s. In the 1980s negotiations among various parties resulted in agreements about South Africa's withdrawal as well as Namibia's future regime. By 1 September 1988 the last South African troops left Angolan soil. Withdrawal from Namibia was to end in November 1989, coinciding with an election to determine Namibia's Constituent Assembly. SWAPO launched an attack to spoil the agreements but they were defeated.

South Africa's armed struggle began in 1961 and ended in 1994. Negotiations to end the war began in December 1985 and were at first conducted in secret. The mostly public phase of negotiations started on 2 February 1990 and led to an Interim Constitution, formulated in 1993 but only in effect the following April.

The war in Zimbabwe started after UDI on 11 November 1963 and led to a constitutional agreement, commonly known as the Lancaster House Agreement, in 1979. Independence and the first democratic election followed in 1980.

A comparison of the above cases shows the following:

First, the major participants and their supporters come to realise that they cannot prevail over their competitors. Losses and setbacks can no longer be seen as just temporary occurrences.

Second, opponents have not been conquered or weakened to the point where they no longer are dangerous. They may be small but they will live to fight another day; and

Third, the major participants and their supporters come to realise they are suffering at least as much as they are gaining through the continued use of violence.

We can describe the situation prior to the start of negotiations not only as a stalemate but a "hurting stalemate". Bill Zartman, who first coined the phrase, says it is a perception that things "can't go on like this".²² Life is nasty, brutish and short and no side has any hope of winning. Conflict of course does not end. But the war does.

2.1 SOUTH AFRICA

Consider the South African case of a "hurting stalemate" and let's, for the moment, focus on the government side of things. Negotiations started in late 1985 when the then Minister of Prisons, H J (Kobie) Coetsee met Nelson Mandela in the Volkshospitaal in Cape Town on December 23rd, 1985. In March 1986 a three-man delegation met the ANC in Paris. What had happened before December 1985 to concentrate the mind of government?

On the western frontier, the most recent major operation had been Askari. What had happened during Askari that was so important? It had claimed the highest number of any SADF-casualties of any operation. Opposition on the ground was now bad enough but, because of the arms embargo's impact on the Air Force, the SADF was also in the process of losing control of the skies. In fact, on 1 January 1984 the South Africans in fact announced that they were going to leave southern Angola. Why? In my view, Askari exposed the military vulnerability of minority rule, which was that government could not accept a high number of white deaths in war. A few casualties, yes, but not more than that.

²² I William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 268.

In South Africa, the government was bothered by the violence but less about the numbers and more about the nature of the violence.

- (i) First, in the violence the state something worse than ANC-attacks, worse even than ANC-attacks on soft targets: the burning and killing of people in often-spontaneous fashion. To this the state had no answer, particularly since they knew that the victims often were selected because of suspected links with the government.
- (ii) Second, protests involved masses of people but not one organisation. The UDF, for example, consisted of hundreds of smaller community-based organisations loosely affiliated with a small national office. This was very inconvenient for a police force that liked to infiltrate elitist political parties full of revolutionaries.
- (iii) Third, much of the violence directed at the state involved property. Buildings, vehicles, any asset went up in smoke. Rebuilt offices would be destroyed, if possible to their foundations, as soon as they were finished.

About these conditions in South Africa's cities and on the frontier, the National Intelligence Service, State President's Office and the Broederbond reasoned, drew one conclusion: the longer this situation prevailed, the worse the position would be for the state. One had to talk to the ANC; in the light of events in the townships and in Kwazulu-Natal; in fact, the ANC was starting to look like a not very strong bunch of moderates.²³

2.2 MOZAMBIQUE

In Mozambique in 1988, the war, drought, a cyclone and floods had already caused the death of at least of 1-m people and displaced 1.3-m. This with a population of not quite 13-m. The problem in Mozambique was not the devastation; it was that RENAMO was a military creature. Since their political capacities were often described, even by their admirers, as microscopic in size, the question was whether they would ever develop any worthwhile insight or play a useful role before but, more important, after negotiations had begun.

Today RENAMO is a major political party in Mozambique and the story of how they got there is a good lesson in political insight and where you find it. The Mozambican negotiations required a United Nations presence but the UN, being a bit of a bureaucratic cesspool, had no budget to finance such operations. Fortunately, the Italian Government was determined to see a negotiated end to the war and pledged to finance the whole affair. The Italians' role is another story. A grateful UN thought it appropriate that the UN Peacekeeping operation in Mozambique should be headed by an Italian – but could find no Italian in or near their peacekeeping offices. Greatly animated they then literally went down the UN-phonebook and put their finger on the first Italian they found, one Mr Aiello. Mr Aiello had never even heard of something called peacekeeping but money was money and he set off for Maputo. There he turned out to have exquisite political skills. He immediately recognised the problem with RENAMO, for example, and knew what to do about it, which was to create a Trust Fund. This Fund paid RENAMO \$300,000 per month to become a political party, to find instruction about democracy, and to generally learn how to behave.

²³ Annette Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, pp. 245-290.

2.3 ANGOLA

Consider, for its difference, the Angolan situation.

At first the similarities with the conflict in Mozambique were striking: For one, both were officially and on communist terms, one-party states, and such regimes cannot have an Opposition. The problems posed by RENAMO and UNITA thus could not be addressed in political terms. They had to be criminally motivated bandits profiting by South African patronage. The FRELIMO and MPLA both pushed for military resolutions of their wars. Subsequently they parted ways and for economic reasons.

In Mozambique the war affected production in the central provinces, the economic heartland. Already by 1980, President Machel estimated the cumulative cost of the war at US\$ 600m. In Angola, economic damage did not mediate the military definition of the war. Using the towns of Calai (Rundu in South Africa) as a dividing line, the war has taken place primarily in the east and southeast, economically a largely marginal area to Angola's GDP. Agriculturally the most fertile eastern land is the Mavinga valley in Cuando Cubango Province where extensive landmining soon damaged production. But the Soviet Union and their allies helped and there was oil in the Cabinda province. Cabinda – an enclave in the north – generated the revenue to pay for Cuban soldiers and by the way, \$15,000 per year for each soldier. Also by the way, most of the oil companies are American-owned.

The war thus never started to hurt in economic terms; it has consumed (on average) about 20% of the GDP. Angola even posts a positive growth rate for the years after 1974 – extraordinary, given the conditions of war. Partly on account of the growing influence of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, Angolan policy-makers are no longer so socialist in economic policy. But they unite on one item: the military defeat of UNITA. The war does not hurt the MPLA; one may well ask if the MPLA can live without the war? The answer is probably not. Without a war with UNITA, the MPLA could well disintegrate.

As for UNITA, they were alarmed when the South Africans first showed signs of leaving. The Americans were going to pick up the slack but that meant moving UNITA north, to areas adjacent to the DRC (then Zaire), America's ally in Central Africa. This trek was never completed because, on the way, UNITA had to pass by the diamond mines along eastern sections of the Benguela railway line (north of the town of Luau). They have never left.²⁴

I chose to discuss these cases in some detail because it is important to realise that, despite their high human cost, some wars do not become "hurting stalemates".

One also has to be realistic in what happens during the search for the end of the war. This search contains the same measures of cunning, exaggerations, jealousy, miscalculations, pride and vanities that marked the war and a good measure of violence.

Violence is a tool of negotiations. I am not referring to one or another cease-fire violation in the provinces but the deliberate threat of violence and the deliberate use of violence by the major negotiators to strengthen their negotiating position. Of course they will deny it is their doing but we should know better. Therefore, although it is often considered necessary for negotiations to begin with renunciations of violence, this is not particularly realistic. Further, the more genuine the negotiations, the greater the need of the supporters of the old order to

²⁴ Annette Seegers, *The Military in the Making of Modern South Africa*, pp. 203-244.

stop the negotiations; if need be, through violence. In fact and ironically, the more serious the negotiations, the greater the chance of violence during the process of it.

Because they are skilled in force and fraud – the two cardinal military virtues²⁵ – the armed forces are usually suspected of being behind the violence and of opposing the end of the war. This is somewhat unfair. For the most part the armed forces of the South have played a supporting role during the negotiations and subsequently, civil-military relations have been stable. Several reasons account for this stability:

One reason is that many of the armed forces – MK and the military wings of FRELIMO, SWAPO, ZANU (PF) and ZAPU – grew out of local circumstances but they were trained in communist countries, such as China and the former Soviet Union and its allies, and did include instruction in Marxism-Leninism. This political tradition has made an invaluable contribution to democratisation in the South because communist thinking – perhaps even more than democratic thinking – insists on the political subordination of the military. The armed forces must obey the party.²⁶

Another reason is that the very party, to whom loyalty was sworn, is now – in Namibia, South Africa and, until recently, in Zimbabwe – the dominant party. Dominant party-rule is thus not the utter catastrophe it is made out to be²⁷ but more of a mixed blessing, at least when viewed from a civil-military relations perspective.

The militaries of Southern Africa are not apolitical; they have their interests and we should never forget that, without a war, a military man's life is unfulfilled. But to date we have not seen the kind of political obstructionism so common to West African militaries. Ironically, regime change in the South, which came about through wars, produced democratic civil-military relations, while regime change in (for example) West African countries resulted in obstructionist and coup-prone militaries.

Looking to the future civil-military in the South democracies, we should worry not about a military that is disloyal; I worry, rather, about militaries that are too loyal. In Lesotho, for example, the former government stuffed the army with his supporters, who understandably felt isolated and unhappy when their opponents, the Congress Party, won a landslide election. When the Congress Party wanted to reconstitute itself without a general election, the soldiers made themselves part of the subsequent constitutional crisis. Of course this does not justify SADC-intervention; it's just a cautionary tale about militaries too close to those in power.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY, MULTI-PARTYISM, POLITICAL INCLUSIVITY AND PARTICIPATION

Although constitutionalism is part of the democratic tradition it is not, judging by the numbers, most countries' flavour of choice. Most democracies are parliamentary democracies, that is, the legislature is not subject to restrictions outlined in a constitution and protected by the judiciary. Power should be viewed as something you have or you don't have,

²⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *op cit.*, p. 101.

²⁶ For a summary of this type of civil-military relations, see Amos Perlmutter, *The Military in Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 205-228.

²⁷ See Charles Simkins and Hermann Giliomee (eds.), *The Awkward Embrace: One-Party Dominance and Democracy* (London: Gordon and Breach, 1999).

the parliamentary democrats suggest, and, when you have it, lawyers and of paper should not bother you. Constitutional democrats, however, think that having power makes people naughty and, the more power they get, the naughtier they become. As Kenneth Tynan – the creator of *Oh Calcutta* (the old-timers might remember this cultural milestone) – liked to confess about his urges: “all power is delightful and absolute power is absolutely delightful.”²⁸

Until the last decade, violent regime change rarely resulted in constitutional democracies but was thought to be especially improbable in southern Africa. Colonial and minority rule was legal but there is no rule of law in the sense that those who make the law should also live under it. A sure sign of this was the timidity of judiciaries in challenging legislation. When law is turned into a weapon, people learn not to trust it. And, besides, war produces nationalism, solidarity and a keen anticipation of enjoying power. Why struggle to get power when it is going to arrive with a plague of lawyers telling you what is and is not permissible? How come then that the South’s almost holy war for majority rule also becomes a search for limits to majority rule? Not impossible but improbable and, Kenneth Tynan would have said, unnatural.

The political theorist John Rawls once developed the notion of a “veil of ignorance”, which consists of making decisions when you cannot know whether, in the future, you will occupy the least or the most advantaged position. Equanimity, fairness, and even justice mark decisions made in such conditions. Rawls and his followers have had great difficulty in finding cases to illustrate their notion but I think the sequence of actions of the South’s democratisation contain a veil of ignorance: because the new regime’s political rules, including those governing elections, are negotiated before the first election, the negotiations turn into constitution-making with all the fairness that is implied in the term.²⁹ The critical factor thus is the path or sequence of events, which requires path analysis.

Path analysis is used when political scientists suspect that the sequence of events is important in determining outcome. Two potential cases of democratisation may have identical political components. In Case 1 these components unfold in a sequence A then B then C and the outcome is democratic regime change. In Case 2, the very same components unfold as B then A then C and the outcome is a military regime.³⁰

The path of the democratisation is crucial in at least two senses:

First, negotiators’ plans and proposals are tempered by one obvious fact: if the losers of the negotiations are crushed and marginalised by the arrangements, they may well decide to take up arms again or, as the phrase goes, “return to the bush”. Hence the preference for political rules that guarantee a place to minorities, not racial minorities, as some would have expected, but outvoted minorities.

²⁸ Kathleen Tynan, *The Life of Kenneth Tynan* (London: Morrow, William and Company, 1987).

²⁹ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). I am not the first person to notice Rawls’s relevance to South Africa. See Steven Friedman, *Too Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing: South Africa’s Bargained Transition, Democratic Prospects* and John Rawls’s ‘Veil of Ignorance’, *Politikon* 25, 1 (June 1998): 57-80.

³⁰ See Earl Babbie and Johann Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 469-471.

Second, political parties may seem to be confident but none is ever entirely sure that they will, in a post-war political system, constitute the majority. Of course they do their utmost to ensure that they will be. In Zimbabwe in 1979 and 80, for example, only a fraction of the guerrillas enter the assembly points. Where are the others? They are in the countryside, working as “election agents” or political mobilisers.³¹ In their political imaginations, the parties can envision losing the first election or the second or the third, and can see themselves outvoted and marginalised. Better, therefore, to create rules that are fair.

Third, in the Southern African countries, African cultural traditions may well support, even inspire, the view that the weak and the vulnerable are not supposed to be crushed or hurled into the darkness. In *The Long Walk to Freedom*, for example, former President Mandela [this after an encounter with an unruly donkey] notes:

“Like the people of the East, Africans have a highly developed sense of dignity, or what the Chinese call 'face'. I had lost face among my friends. Even though it was a donkey that unseated me, I learned that to humiliate another person is to make him suffer an unnecessarily cruel fate...(One defeats) opponents without dishonouring them.”³²

This brings me to electoral behaviour: how have the voters responded to the regimes negotiated in this manner? Like other political scientists, electoral behaviour drives me toward the comparative technique known as Most Dissimilar Systems Design (MDSD). MDSD uses statistical techniques to compare the maximum possible number of cases.³³ In my exercise there are 172 countries compared in relation to parliamentary (i.e. national) elections in the 1990s. In the South’s democracies, there have been at least 10 such elections.³⁴

Interpretation follows rational choice-theory, which studies voters' choices from a cost-benefit perspective. Voter turnout is positively correlated with a series of factors, chiefly education, gender, income, expected election results, and conditions on the day(s) of voting. The lower the levels of education and income, the lower the voter turnout. The higher the number of women in the voting population, the lower the turnout. When the election outcome is not in doubt, voters stay away, as they also do in rainy weather.

³¹ Annette Seegers, *Revolution in Africa: The Case of Zimbabwe (1965-1980)*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1984), pp.332-340.

³² Nelson Mandela, *The Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.10.

³³ See David Collier, *op cit.*, and Arend Lijpart, *op cit.*

³⁴ The data can be found at http://www.idea.int/Voter_turnout/index.html

TABLE A

COUNTRY	AVERAGE VOTER TURNOUT (voter/registered as %)	LITERACY (15 years and above, as %)
Angola	91.3	42
Mozambique	78	39
Namibia	69.4	40
South Africa	87.64	81*
Zimbabwe	40**	84

** Zimbabwean data for two elections N/A

TABLE B: WORLD RANKING OF VOTER TURNOUT (N=172)

- 2 = Angola
- 7 = South Africa
- 32 = Namibia
- 41 = Mozambique
- 117 = Zimbabwe

What do Tables A and B show? Exhausting registration procedures, scorching heat, endless queues, and ballot-papers shortages are enough to make the voters of Western Europe and North America stay away by the million even when the election outcome is furiously contested. They are calculating what benefits voting will bring them against its costs. Not so in Africa's South. Electoral participation is much higher than is usually expected of countries where most people are poor, have modest levels of formal education, and live in the countryside. Voter participation in Angola and South Africa are ranked well above countries with 99% literacy (Austria, Japan, New Zealand, and the UK). Even Mozambique ranks above Japan and the UK. People in Africa's South turn out to vote against all odds: they vote as if their very lives depend on it. And I think they think it does.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

One implication that should not be drawn is that war is a good thing. The South's wars brought untold misery to millions of people. I cannot, for example, explain the extent of our AIDS/HIV crisis without noting its relation to the wars. When I began studying the South's guerrillas in 1975 I was struck by the accounts of the women. They told of how large concentrations of single men, conditions of exile, and miserable socio-economic conditions placed an immense amount of pressure on them. Now we will all pay for this. Of course it is not the whole story but the war is a big part of the birth of the problem.

What are the implications that can be drawn?

First, there are democratic theorists – Huntington, for example – who say one should examine the breakthrough to democracy but also its consolidation. What matters after breakthrough is equally important because many countries slide back into non-democracy if, for example, the democratic regime does not deliver goods and services.³⁵ True. But consolidation cannot be approached as rational choice-theorists do because they do not – indeed, given the nature of their theory, cannot – account for levels of commitment to democracy. And theorists tend to forget that the primary service of a democratic regime is avoiding war.

Finally, the theorists – Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, Ian Shapiro, and so on – who define democracy as, at heart, a regime which successfully regulates conflict, should be about right for us.³⁶ This minimalist definition, however, is hard for us to like. If, in 1974, we had been asked whether regime change – any regime change – would occur in southern Africa, we would have replied “inconceivable”. If we had been asked, in 1980, whether the majority of countries in Southern Africa by the end of the century would have experienced democratic regime change, we would have replied, “absolutely inconceivable”. And if we had been asked on February 1st 1990 whether South Africa by 2000 would have had two free and fair elections based on universal adult franchise, we would have replied: “absolutely, totally, and in all other ways, inconceivable”. When the year 2000 did arrive, so much had been gained so fast that a constantly rising flood of expectation has resulted: the better we do, the better we think we should be doing.

Democracy may and indeed should bring all sorts of things. A democratic temperament does require of citizens to be demanding. But every now and then, democrats must take their priorities off the shelf and take a good look. They will see that the first duty of a democratic regime is to avoid war among its own. I will remind myself of this when I next visit the cemetery in Murraysburg.

³⁵ Samuel P Huntington, *The Third Wave* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

³⁶ Ian Shapiro discusses these definitions in *Democracy's Place* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 79-108.