DEMOCRATISATION AND VIOLENCE

HOW DO THE AFRICAN BISHOPS SEE THEIR ROLE IN THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE IN AFRICA?[*]

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The Synod of the African bishops was held in April and May 1994 in Rome. It was the first time that all bishops conferences of Africa met to reflect together on the evangelisation of Africa. In total 166 African bishops were present. Remarkably, in their oral contributions to the Synod many - 79 - explicitly paid attention to the role of the church in the area of peace and justice, one of the components of the work of evangelisation. One of the first African bishops to speak was Archbishop Francis from Monrovia, Liberia. He said the following:

"Peace-making and the ministry of reconciliation should be exercised not only to resolve wars or conflicts, but more so to prevent them. In a few instances, Church leaders have tried to do this especially in the recent years of democratisation process. Sometimes the Church is involved at the level of the bishops, at other times grassroots Catholics are the key leaders. As a consequence they have suffered harassment, repression and even assassination. The few examples of prophetic witness in this regard should not blind us from fully recognising the sin of omission amidst the prolonged situation of institutionalised oppression of the African people."[1]

Archbishop Francis continued with a plea to make peace and justice work central to the evangelisation in Africa. This was the main theme of the Synod. He criticised the working document that lay at the basis of the Synod, because it described peace and justice as being "linked" or joined to evangelisation.[2] He remarked that something which is linked also can be de-linked. That must not happen. In his opinion, working for peace and justice must form the backbone of evangelisation in Africa.

The elements I want to discuss are all present in Archbishop Francis' contribution: the democratisation in Africa, the violence and oppression which is linked to this, and the way in which the church - both the hierarchy and the faithful - handle or ought to handle this. I will start with the relationship between democratisation and violence as it is presented by peace research. Then I will examine how democratisation and violence are linked in Afric a and what role religion plays in this, using the contributions of African bishops at the African Synod.[3]

Democratisation and violence

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Democracies don't fight each other, that is apparent from peace research. That law applies for stable democracies. However, before a state becomes a stable democracy it goes through the transition from an autocracy - a dictatorship or one-party-system - to a democratic order. In peace research literature such a transition is called democratisation. Between 1811 and 1980 there have been 78 such transitions. After ten years war developed in 26% of the cases. Those are the findings of Mansfield and Snyder, who researched the relationship between democratisation and war.[4] Democratisation processes appear to be dangerous and result in war because more parties are permitted and because public leaders are forced to be accountable to the public. The political - and often also the military - elite must give up power in such situations. They don't easily accept this.[5] This research shows that if the democracy fails by forbidding or seriously limiting party formation, or if the democratically chosen leaders back out of their obligation of accountability to the public, war often results.

Based on their research Mansfield and Snyder give four causes why democratisation processes so often lead to the violence of war.

1. Opening of the political spectrum admits new interests and groups and these are often difficult to reconcile with existing interests.

2. Elites who lose power, look for possibilities to secure their interests. In the short term old elites often keep a considerable power base. This is certainly the case with military elites.

3. Through democratisation the threatened elites are able to dispose of the democracy's resources to mobilise the people. By controlling information, by stirring up nationalism and by creating an external enemy the majority is manipulated by war propaganda. While the majority are not usually waiting for war, the powerful ingredients of propaganda often prove effective in preparing them for war.

4. The central authority weakens and the threatened authority tries to survive by weakening it further with the help of sub-elites, such as the army.

The general conclusion is that the possibility of democratisation ending in war is strongly dependent on the reaction of the elites, especially that of the old elite. This gives credit, according Mansfield and Snyder, to giving the old elite a "golden handshake" and forcefully promoting freedom of the press in order to prevent war when democratisation happens. Their advice is to prevent the development of a monopoly control over information to the masses, and to ensure an open market for exchange of ideas and information. They also point out the great importance of the international environment in creating favourable conditions for the consolidation of democratisation. I would also add the importance of the behaviour of the new elite. If democracy is used to restrict minorities' rights or to side-track parties who were defeated in the elections, serious tensions can result.

The situation in Africa according to the African bishops
Africa makes a good subject for research into the relation between democratisation and violence. Between 1989 and the beginning of the Synod in 1994, 23 of the 54 states made the transition from a one-party-state to a multi-party-democracy. In 1994 seven countries were at war.[6] These changes would not have escaped the attention of the bishops. So my first aim is to find out if and how they are to be found in the contributions of the African bishops to the Synod in Rome. Was attention paid to democratisation and violence, how did they describe these two processes and what relation did they see between the two? If the bishops paid attention to it, they will have done this because, just like archbishop Francis, they saw a link between the political reality in Africa and the church's evangelisation work there. By analysing the bishop's contributions, one can probably get a better understanding of the contribution which the church could make concerning the stabilisation of democracy and the avoidance or reduction of violence. When studying the relationship between religion and violence through the eyes of the African bishops, I will not only examine what they have said about that relationship, but will also look at the religious composition of their societies and its influence on the manner in which they described conflicts, violence and democratisation processes in their countries and on the role which they assigned to the church. The materials for my research are taken from the press summaries of the African bishops' oral contributions to the Synod in 1994.[7]

In order to track down the picture the bishops have, I will first of all investigate in which political contexts they spoke out about peace and justice. Then I will analyse the contributions of the bishops who spoke out, on how they described the situation and which themes they brought up. These themes will be sorted according to the following questions:

- Which diagnosis do they give?
- Which prognosis or solution do they see?
- Which action/strategy do they propose for the church?

It will be clear that the bishops did not make their contributions with this scheme in mind. Often certain aspects do not, or rarely, come into the discussion. By combining contributions from bishops from comparable political, religious and regional contexts, one can nevertheless get a good impression of the pictures which bishops from comparable surroundings have. Comparing these images can also show how their differences are connected with the differences of contexts in which they work.[8]

Which bishops spoke out?
Half the bishops explicitly spoke out about peace and justice. Whether or not bishops spoke out was clearly connected to the political context in which they worked.

- If their own country was *at war*, nearly every bishop (92%) spoke out. There was war in 5 of the countries represented at the Synod. 13 bishops from these countries participated in the Synod.[9]
- More than half (53%) of the 73 bishops who came from countries which had made a *transition* from a one-party system *to a multi-party system* between 1989 to 1994, touched upon the theme. Democratisation appeared in 20 of the countries from which bishops were present.[10]
- When *democratisation had begun* - but the outcome was unclear, or the democratisation was limited - one third (33%) paid attention to peace and justice. This concerned 12 of the countries represented at the Synod by 45 bishops.[11]
- From countries where in 1989 as in 1993 there was a *one party system* - four of the five countries were at the Synod[12] - one out of three bishops touched upon the theme. There were 15 bishops there from these countries.
- In six countries there was a *multi-party system* in 1989 as well as in 1994.[13] From these countries there were 18 bishops of whom 6 (=33%) spoke about peace and justice.

There is a clear connection between the political context and speaking about peace and justice. Bishops who work in war situations seem to feel themselves forced to speak out about the violence in their countries. If bishops work in countries where the transition to democracy has been made, they can talk freely and more than half the bishops talk about subjects concerning peace and justice. If they work in countries with a one party system and in countries with an uncertain political future or limited democratisation then they are clearly more careful with open pronouncements in this area: one out of three speaks out.

When bishops from countries with a stable multi party democracy rarely speak out, this could point to the view that it is not necessary in such a situation for the church to involve itself with political and social problems. The danger of religious tensions could also have made bishops from countries with stable multi-party democracies more cautious. Of the six bishops from Egypt and Tunisia only one Egyptian bishop spoke about peace and justice. He signalled that dialogue with moderate Muslims is possible, but almost impossible with extremists. The Tunisian bishop didn't speak about peace and justice but explicitly asked that missionaries should pay attention to and have some knowledge of the specific religious beliefs of the people with whom they work. His experience was that without this knowledge, they could easily cause damage.

The bishops' image of Africa
What image do the bishops who spoke about peace and justice have? Which problems did they signal and what in their eyes were the causes? Which solutions did they see and how should the church contribute? To answer these questions a content analysis of all contributions was done.[14] In doing this I first

researched which problems, causes, solutions and strategies for action named by the bishops before making a preliminary model. This resulted in a large number of keywords. These were then brought together in a more limited number of categories according to their comparability. On this basis the correlation between the problems signalled by the bishops, the causes they named, the solution they saw and the tasks which, according to them, the church should pay attention was researched.

Four stories
War was the problem most often mentioned. Four of the ten bishops who spoke about peace and justice named this as a problem. This was followed by tensions between and within the religions and by underdevelopment (three out of ten). Religious tensions nearly always concerned problems with or within Islam. Crisis in society was put forward as a problem by a quarter of the bishops. One out of five signalled the problem of humanitarian distress - such as refugees or hunger. One sixth saw the rapid political changes in their own society as a problem and one out of ten, violations of human rights. The correlation between the problems is limited, because most bishops named only.one problem. If they signalled more, war and humanitarian emergency were often named together, so were underdevelopment and crisis. There is a negative connection between religious tensions and underdevelopment: if several problems were signalled these problems seldom occurred together.

Thus according to the bishops there were four important problems in Africa in 1994:
- war and coupled to this humanitarian distress
- religious tensions
- underdevelopment and coupled to this, symptoms of crisis, and
- problems associated with rapid political changes
A small number of bishops indicated human rights as a problem, often within specific contexts such as war.

If one takes all contributions together, the bishops appear to point out a specific cause or combination of causes for each problem. This is also true for the named solutions and the church action that was proposed. From this research of all contributions four different stories or analyses surface:
1. War, coupled to humanitarian distress, often due to misuse of power by elites, to tribal tensions, aggravated by weapon deliveries from the West. Bishops who signalled this problem didn't see many solutions. The most frequently named action strategy for the church was public condemnation and the defence of victims.
2. According to the bishops, religious tensions - in nearly all cases - with and within Islam were caused by fundamentalist tendencies and groups in the societies. Bishops, who named this as a problem, thought that these tensions could be reduced by inter-religious and social dialogue.
3. Underdevelopment and crises caused by mismanagement and neo-colonialism. The solution is better development. In the eyes of the bishops that was primarily the task of the economic, social and political elites.
4. Rapid political change or transitions which have different causes. Here the solution is the promotion of democracy. The church could contribute by paying more attention to social teaching and to the education and training of the leaders in church and society.

In other words, the African bishops told different stories and it is very likely that these differences are linked to the context in which the bishops work. In this article, I am most interested in the correlation with the political context. That is why I will first put the stories into the different political contexts and afterwards I will take a closer look at the religious and regional differences.

The political context and the stories

Countries at war: the war story and religious tensions

In countries where an armed conflict had started or was ongoing, war of course was the most named problem: eight of the twelve bishops of such countries named it. Bishops from countries where the war started in or before 1989 - Angola and Liberia - linked this problem to crisis. Bishops from Sudan, Somalia and Sierra Leone, where a war erupted after 1989, signalled inter-religious tensions and humanitarian distress as important problems as well. Misuse of power was seen as a cause by all five bishops from these countries, gross violations of human rights which incite revenge by three of the five bishops. Two of them saw fundamentalism as a cause. The seven bishops from Angola and Liberia agreed much less upon the causes. Nearly every bishop raised different causes. Misuse of power, tribalism and creation of wrong images in the media were named in each case by two bishops.

The bishops from countries at war didn't see many solutions. Bishops from Angola and Liberia most frequently named respect for human rights; their colleagues from the countries where war broke out more recently, called for the promotion of reconciliation and negotiation. However the bishops from all countries at war agreed that the church's most important task is to give a voice to the victims and to protest against misuse of power and gross violations of human rights. Here the story is one of war, in the more recent conflicts it is mixed with the story of religious tensions.

One party states: underdevelopment, religious tensions and war
In 1989 as well as in 1994 a one party system existed in four of the countries represented at the Synod: Algeria, Nigeria, Libya and Equatorial Guinea. The two bishops from Equatorial Guinea did not speak about peace and justice. However, three of the twelve bishops from Nigeria, both bishops from Algeria and the apostolic vicar from Libya did. Two problems were most frequently named: war (Algeria and Nigeria) and underdevelopment (Nigeria). The most frequently named causes were misuse of power and neo-colonialism (Nigeria) and fundamentalism (Algeria). The solution that was most frequently cited was respect for human rights and the promotion of the rule of law. However these bishops did not see many solutions. Although they were almost unanimously of the opinion that the task of the church had to be a prophetic one: giving a voice to the victims. In these countries the bishops thus told two stories: the development story and the story of religious tensions, and in both stories there were elements of the war story.

Unclear or limited democratisation
The next group of bishops come from countries where something has changed but where the outcome was still unclear or where the democratisation was limited. That there is unclear or limited democratisation is evidenced by the fact that the change-story scarcely appears in the fifteen contributions from these countries. Only in two of these contributions were the rapid political changes perceived as a problem. This story was heard far more often in contributions from bishops in transition countries where the democratisation was not limited or unclear. Nine of the forty bishops from such transition countries named the rapid political changes in their country as a problem.

Unclear political future: religious tensions
In nine countries it is unclear where the change is leading, from eight of these countries there was a total of 27 bishops present in the Synod.[15] They were cautious about making explicit pronouncements: two out of three (70%) didn't speak about justice and peace. A sign of their caution is that only one bishop of the eight who spoke explicitly about the subject thought that it was the task of the church to give a voice to the victims. In the other contexts bishops named this task far more often. The most named problem was religious tension, the most named cause, fundamentalism and the solutions were almost completely absent in these contributions. These bishops thought that the church should pay more attention to social teaching and formation of leaders. Their story is the story of religious tensions.

Limited democratisation: religious tensions, underdevelopment, war
In Uganda, Tanzania, Djibouti and Gambia one could talk of a limited democratisation because the formation of parties had been restrained. From these countries eighteen bishops were present, seven of them (39%) spoke about peace and justice. The bishop of Gambia didn't. Just like their colleagues from

countries with an unclear political future, these bishops most often named religious tensions as a problem. Besides this, war and underdevelopment were named a few times. The most frequently named causes were fundamentalism and misuse of power. Nearly every bishop named a different solution. Only respect for human rights and the promotion of rule of law on the one hand and development on the other hand were supported by several bishops. In spite of their lack of unanimity on solutions they did at least see them. This is in contrast with the bishops from countries with an unclear political future. The fact that these bishops saw more of a perspective than their colleagues from countries with an unclear political future also appeared in the multitude of tasks they named for the church. Giving voice to the victims, formation of executives, social dialogue and solidarity were the tasks most frequently named.

In these countries the story of religious tensions is the dominant story, but the war story and the development story also soccur. The stories overlap each other.

Transition to democracy: change, underdevelopment and war
From twenty countries, in which the transition to a multi-party system had been made, a total of 73 bishops were present at the Synod. Forty bishops from seventeen of these countries spoke explicitly about justice and peace.[16] Their stories overlap even more strongly than those of the bishops from countries with limited democratisation. It is striking, however, that religious tensions were hardly mentioned in their contributions. The other three stories all occurred there. The problem of war was named most, followed by underdevelopment and rapid political change. With the problems they named, the causes they gave matched, in so far as they named causes. But often they did not name the causes. Compared to the bishops from the previous contexts, they did however see more solutions. The solutions most often named concerned: strengthening of the democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, and development. The church should promote these solutions by giving voice to people without rights, by social teaching and promoting the formation of executives in church and society, and by displaying and organising solidarity. Even though the stories overlap, the danger of war, as is evident from the contributions, has not disappeared from sight. Bishops from these countries were more often aware of the danger of war than their colleagues from countries with an unclear future or limited democratisation and also more often than the bishops from more stable democracies.

Democratic countries: war, underdevelopment, religious tensions
The image of bishops from countries that were democratic in 1989 as well as in 1993, resembles that of their colleagues from transition countries, except for the fact that rapid political change is not named by any of them. This points out that the democracy in these countries is more stabilised than in the recently democratised countries. Just like the bishops from transition countries, they signalled war and underdevelopment as problems, but contrary to their colleagues from those countries they also saw religious tensions as a problem. They were even more reserved in the naming of causes than their colleagues from transition countries: the one named most was misuse of power. The most important solution mentioned was searching for compromises and reconciliation, followed by strengthening democracy. Development was not raised as a solution by any of these bishops. In their eyes the church should stand up for the those without rights and should promote social dialogue.

To summarise, one can observe that the bishops' contributions reflected the political context in which they work. It was true that bishops from countries at war told the war story and the bishops from transition countries told the story of rapid political change. One can also deduct from the contributions that situations of unclear or limited democratisation are coupled to religious tensions, a problem that is almost absent in the analysis by bishops from countries with a recent democratisation. This could point to the fact that there exists only a slight possibility that countries with unclear or limited democratisation would decide on a complete democratisation soon. For that matter, religious tensions appear to play a role in all political contexts except for democratisation. That alone makes it desirable to look at the correlation between religious contexts and political change in the next paragraph.

It is striking that bishops from stable democratic countries did name underdevelopment as a problem, but none of them saw development as a solution. They did see strengthening the democracy as a solution. Bishops from countries in transition named both solutions. This shows that they were more aware of the relation between development and stabilisation of democracy than their colleagues from stable democratic countries. That relationship is not: first development, only then democratisation, as was thought for a long time. Recent research shows that a democracy has most chance of stabilising if the development - even if it is only slow - continues.[18] To consolidate democracy, there must be some prospect of a better economic future. Apart from this, one must also note that the bishops from countries in transition, were of the opinion that development is foremost a task for the political, economic and social elite, and not so much of the church. In the eyes of the bishops the church should help with the consolidation of democracy by contributing to the democratic education of civilians and the training of democratically thinking leaders in society and in the church.

The religious factor
It is no coincidence that bishops from countries where the transition to democracy was recently made, rarely present the problem of religious tensions. This is connected to the fact that in most of these countries only 15% of the population is Islamic. Islam was such a minority in thirteen of the seventeen democratised countries, from which bishops spoke about peace and justice. In the four countries in transition where Islam was stronger than 15%, the percentage of bishops who named religious tensions as a problem, was comparable with the average percentage for countries with a similar share of Islam. The absence of religious tensions in the contributions of the bishops seems to be a good indicator for the question if the country was in transition towards democracy.

Religious tensions were named as a problem most often by bishops from countries where Islam amounted to more than 15% of the population and where the Catholic church was represented by less than 15% of the population. This composition of the population is found in twenty African countries. In four of these countries there had been a democratisation. In two of them there was a multi-party democracy in 1989 as well as in 1994. In 21 countries the composition was the opposite: Islam weaker and the Catholic church stronger than 15%. Democratisation had taken place in twelve of these countries and two were stable democracies.

In other words, when the Catholic church has a strong presence and Islam a weak one there seems to be a good context for democratisation. However, closer analysis teaches us that a strong Catholic church - more than 40% Catholic- is not always a good environment for stabilisation of democracy. In thirteen African countries the church is as strong as that and Islam weak (less than 15%). In two of these countries there was a war in 1994: Angola and Rwanda. In three of them the democratisation ended in violence: Burundi, former Zaire and Congo-Brazzaville. In all five cases a beginning democratisation ended in war, in Angola and Rwanda even before it could take off.[19]

Strong Catholic church - weak Islam: war, underdevelopment and change
The differences between the two environments - Islam stronger and Catholic church weaker than 15% on the one hand, and Islam weaker, Catholic church stronger than 15% on the other side - was also illustrated by the themes raised by the bishops in their contributions. When Islam is weak and the Catholic church strong, war was the main problem; it was named by half of the bishops. Problems of underdevelopment and rapid political change were also often named. The most important causes were tribalism and people's personal attitudes; solutions named most were: respect for human rights and rule of law on the one hand and strengthening of democracy on the other hand. It is striking that fundamentalism was never named as a cause, whereas it is the most mentioned cause in countries where Islam is strong and the Catholic church weak. Even more striking, however, is that the bishops of these countries with a strong Catholic Church and a weak Islam hardly see misuse of power as a cause, whilst it was the second most important cause for bishops from countries where the Catholic church is weak and Islam strong. Would misuse of power not occur in countries that are predominantly Catholic? That is very unlikely. It is more likely that the failure to name this cause is a consequence of the church's power in these countries. Because of this

power, the church has become integrated in the existing order. According to a recent study by the English sociologist Haynes, the hierarchy is part of the elite in many of these countries.[20] By raising the issue of misuse of power these bishops would not only incriminate their friends from the elite, but also themselves.

Strong Islam - weak Catholic church: religious tensions and war
Half of the bishops of countries where Islam is stronger and the Catholic church weaker than 15% also said that war was a problem. Religious tensions were found to be even more of a problem (60%). Rapid political change or underdevelopment were scarcely mentioned. Here, fundamentalism was the most commonly mentioned cause, followed immediately by misuse of power. The bishops from these countries seldom offered solutions. Strengthening democracy was never suggested and respect for human rights and rule of law were proposed by only a few bishops. This pattern shows that the bishops from these countries were pessimistic about the future of their country. Religious tensions which get out of hand are coupled with violence, or threaten to end in violence, elite groups overindulge in misuse of power and fundamentalism is everywhere. Democracy can flourish only with difficulty and the development of a well functioning rule of law is a difficult task in such a context.

Both weak: the best prognosis for a stable democracy
If we review the influence of the religious context, then it appears that the possibility of democratisation in countries where Islam has the upper hand, is small - but not non-existent; whilst there is a strong possibility that democratisation will end in violence in countries where the Catholic church is in a strong position. Could it be the case that the chance for consolidation of democracy is greatest in countries where both are weak? This seems to be the case. In six countries the two religions both amounted to 15% or less of the population; in four of them the transition to democracy had been made and had so far been consolidated, in the other two there was a stable democracy.[21] Four out of ten bishops from these countries named underdevelopment and crisis as their country's problems; war was seen as a problem by only two of the ten. Misuse of power was the most frequently mentioned cause, strengthening democracy and promoting development were the favoured solutions. The bishops from these countries hoped that they could consolidate democracy and expected that violence would be avoided. The direction they pointed to in order to consolidate democracy was to strengthen it and to promote development.

Regional spreading and strategies for -further- democratisation
The further one moves to the South of Africa, the more countries one encounters which have made the transition to a multi-party democracy. However, war is present in all regions. Everywhere the virus of violence is close at hand.
In the *North* the situation for further democratisation is gloomy and the possibility of war cannot be barred.[22] The most important question here is how the debate - and in a few cases the struggle - within Islamic society about the relationship between Islam and democracy will develop.[23] It would be useful if the church, in her attempts to promote the social dialogue, would also make a contribution to this debate out of her own tradition. This does assume however that one should do more research about the valuing of democracy by the Catholic tradition.
In the *West*, *Middle* and *East* of Africa democratisation occurs more often - in nearly half the countries. At the same time however, experience frequently shows that democratisation ends in violence, is prevented with violence (Nigeria), is degenerated (Kenya) or limited (Uganda and Tanzania). An important challenge here is how one can combine tribal and regional differences with the construction of a stable democracy. Democratisation - in the form of a stable multi-party system - in this region should be coupled to far reaching decentralisation. Participation at the local level should become meaningful and should be promoted. These are the conclusions from analyses by experts on Africa.[24] Participation at the local level also means that one is looking to connect up with traditional structures in Africa. This is something the church is already doing - successfully according to the contributions of the bishops - in the dialogue with the traditional religions. That is why the church has excellent opportunities to promote participation in the decision making at the local level and so to stimulate decentralisation and democratisation. According to the

research of Russett, such participation reduces the chance of violence between groups, and can help the stabilise democracies.[25] The promotion of good development in this region is a task which can also help avoid democratisation ending in violence.

The best prospects for the consolidation of democratisation are in the *South,* but the tasks which one is confronted with are gigantic. One just has to think about South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia. Besides strengthening democracy and rule of law, development is also an important condition for the consolidation of democracy. Help from the churches in this consolidation is very much welcomed, as is shown by the example of South Africa.

How can the African churche s help to promote democracy and avoid violence?
Democratisation and violence are linked together in various ways. In the first place there are violent attempts to halt democratisation; secondly there are attempts to botch democratisation or to pervert it, also using violence; and finally it appears difficult to build up democratic structures out of a violent situation. At the beginning I pointed out that research has shown the great importance of the behaviour of the elite vis-à-vis whether or not democratisation will end in violence.

The analysis of the bishop's contributions confirms this; they often point to misuse of power. Also, a number of bishops point out the importance of a good international environment; but it is striking that they hardly speak about the importance of the development of an independent media. The strengthening of independent media by the church would provide more opportunities to the many bishops who want to enhance their role as advocates of victims.

In my contribution I have sig nalled many different ways in which democracy can be consolidated. I will not repeat them, but signal only their existence. That has also been established by bishops from countries in the process of democratisation. The situation is more difficult in countries where democratisation is prevented and in countries where democratisation has been overthrown violently. In the first case the strengthening and supporting of the church's advocacy role is important The same is true for the second case, but here the church seems to be part of the problem. Support for critical groups of Christians who strive for democracy and human rights is important here. They can play a role in moving the church from inside towards a position of critical distance.

Religion appears to play a complicated role in Africa in the relation between democratisation and violence. In countries where Islam has the upper hand there is discussion and struggle within Islam about the relation between democracy and Islam. In only a few of these countries did democratisation happen. In the Islamic countries the church could accentuate the relationship between religion and democracy more in the inter-religious dialogue This of course presupposes that she has something to say about it. The African Synod has made a good start, by naming democracy as a preferential option.[26] This is thanks to the contributions of many African bishops because in the working document it had not been mentioned. Calling democracy a preferential option, however, is not yet a profound contribution to the debate on the relationship between religion and democracy. More reflection on this issue should follow and can help the African bishops in their wish to consolidate democratisation.

In countries where Catholics are in the majority, democracy is more easily botched, and the church has not done much, or has not been able to do much, about this. This is partly because that same church, in the past, was part of the existing order. In such cases support for critical church groups is important.

I was able to establish that the prospects for consolidation of democracy and avoidance of violence are best in countries where the Catholic church as well as Islam are weak. However, it is also evident that the road to consolidation in these countries is still long and that the contribution of the church is needed.

And finally: war and violence are not new in Africa. In the Cold War years violence seemed to be endless.[27] This has changed and Africans now, much more than ever, have an opportunity to form their own future. This has led to an extensive wave of democratisation and it is primarily up to them to consolidate it. It is gratifying that the church in Africa is aware of this enormous task. Support from outside can help them share the burden of it.

Notes

1. Synodus Episcoporum, *Bulletin* 11-04-1994, 6, Holy See Press Office, English edition, p. 6.

2. "Socio-economic and political concerns have vital links with evangelisation" in: *The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission towards the Year 2000; Instrumentum Laboris*. Vatican City, 1993, p. 88.

3. I owe many thanks to Monique Selten. She did the preparatory work for the research regarding the political changes in Africa, made an inventory of all contributions to the Synod which referred to justice and peace and made them available for further analysis on the computer.

4. E.D. Mansfield and J. Snyder, Democratization and War, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74, 1995, pp. 79-97; and E.D. Mansfield and J. Snyder, Democratization and the Danger of War, *International Security*, vol. 20, 1995, pp. 5-38.

5. Autocratisation - the transition from democracy to dictatorship - appears to have an somewhat larger chance (32%) on war. This chance can be derived from the figures given by Mansfield and Snyder in table 1 of their contribution in *International Security*.

6. A wave of democratisation and political change has been going on in Africa since 1989. When the bishops gathered in Rome in 1994, only eleven countries had the same political system compared to 1989: five one-party states and six multi-party democracies. Three countries were at war both in 1989 and in 1994: Angola, Liberia and Western Sahara. Since 1989 three more wars were added: Sierra Leone, Sudan and Somalia. During the Synod the war in Rwanda was added to this list. The remaining 36 countries changed their system: in 23 countries from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy, in 13 countries the result of the change was unclear or a limited democratisation took place.
   To determine the change in political context we described the political situation in 1989 and at the end of 1993. Resources used were: *Third World Guide 1993/94*, Montevideo, 1992; the Dutch newspapers *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad* from 1989 to 1994, and the *CIA World Fact Book*, as published on internet.

7. The analysis is based on the summaries of the contributions of the bishops, as they were made in their own language by the bishops themselves. These summaries, made for the press, are translated by the press office of the Vatican into several languages. The translations are not authorised. Holy See Press Office, Synod of Bishops for Africa 1994, *Communication*, no. 2, 30-03-1994. For the analysis the English translation is used.

8. The religious context is analysed by determining for each country how strong the main religions are represented. A fourpoint scale is used: 0-15%, 15-40%, 40-80% and 80-100%. In the survey I restricted the analysis to the share of Islam and the Catholic church in the African countries. The resources used, are: *Vivant Univers. Les Catholiques en Afrique*, no. 408, Novembre-décembre 1993, p. 4 and the figures given by the *CIA World Fact Book*.
   The regional division used in this research is: North (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco); North-west (Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Burkina Faso); North-east (Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia); West-small (Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin); West (Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tomé); Central (Central African Republic, Zaire, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi); East (Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles); South (Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Lesotho, South Africa).

9. These are the following countries: Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan. From Rwanda and Western Sahara no bishops were represented. In the case of Rwanda the bishops were not able to leave the country because the war started just before the beginning of the Synod.

10. The countries are: Benin, Burundi, Cape Verde, Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Zaire, Zambia. The bishops from Malawi, Mali and Namibia did not speak on peace and justice. No bishops represented the three countries which made the transition to democracy at the Synod: Comoros, Sao Tomé and Seychelles.

11. The result of the democratisation was unclear in: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco and Togo. Limited democratisation occurred in: Uganda, Tanzania, Gambia and Djibouti. In these countries there were elections but the number of parties that was allowed to take part was limited. From the bishops of Ethiopia and Gambia no one did speak on peace and justice, from Guinea no bishop was represented.

12. Libya, Nigeria, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea and Eritrea. From this last country no bishop was represented, the bishops from Equatorial Guinea did not speak on peace and justice.

13. Egypt, Tunisia, Botswana, Madagascar, Mauritius and Zimbabwe. The bishops from Mauritius and Tunisia did not speak on peace and justice.

14. The Kwalitan programme is used for content analysis. V. Peters, F. Wester en R. Richardson, *Kwalitatieve analyse in de praktijk en Handleiding bij Kwalitan, Versie 2*, Nijmegen, 1989. The author thanks Vincent Peters for making available the most recent version of the programme.

15. See note 11.

16. See note 10.

17. See note 13.

18. A. Przyworski, a.o., What Makes Democracies Endure?, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, 1996, pp. 39-55.

19. The other countries with a strong Catholic church and a weak Islam are: Equatorial Guinea (one party state), Central African Republic (unclear political future), Uganda (limited democratisation), and Cape Verde, Gabon, Lesotho, Sao Tomé, Seychelles (democratisation).

20. J. Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, Nairobi, etc., 1996. See especially pp. 107-114.

21. This concerns: Benin, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa.

22. See also B. Harff, Minorities, Rebellion, and Repression in North Africa and the Middle East, in: T.R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk, A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, Washington, D.C., 1993, pp. 217-251.

23. See G. Krämer, Islamist Notions of Democracy, in: J. Beinin and J. Stark (eds.), *Political Islam, Essays from Middle East Report*, London/New York, 1997, pp. 71-82.

24. See B. Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden - Africa and the Curse of Nation-State*, Somerset (UK), 1992. G. Hawthorn, Sub-Saharan Africa, in: D. Held (ed.), *Prospects for Democracy, North, South, East, West*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 330-354. J.R. Scarritt, Communal Conflict and Contention for Power in Africa South of the Sahara, in: Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, pp. 252-289.

25. B. Russett, C.R. Ember and M. Ember, The Democratic Peace in Nonindustrial Societies, in: B. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace, Principles for a post-Cold War World*, Princeton, 1993, pp. 99-118.

26. "This Synod encourages all Christians who are so gifted to become engaged in the political field, and we invite all without exception to educate themselves for democracy." (nr. 33)

    "If we desire peace, we should all work for justice, we should foster the rule of law. In many cases, people have turned to the Church that she might accompany them as they set on the journey of the democratic process. Consequently, democracy should become one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people. [...] The lay Christian, engaged in the democratic struggle according to the spirit of the Gospel, is the sign of a Church which participates in the promotion of the rule of law everywhere in Africa." (nr. 34) Synodus Episcoporum, Message of the Synod, *Bulletin*, 06-05-1994, 35, Holy See Press Office, English edition, p. 9.

27. See F. Marte, *Political Cycles in International Relations, The Cold War and Africa 1945-1990*, Amsterdam, 1994.

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