

# The DRC and Lesotho Crises: Some Lessons for the SADC

Denis Kadima\*

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*Military intervention by external forces in both the DRC and Lesotho has aroused curiosity among the region's political observers regarding the preparedness and capability of regional states to evolve constructive conflict resolution mechanisms. This article compares the DRC and Lesotho and notes that although the roots and nature of the conflict in both countries are different, external military intervention formed part of its resolution. The paper concludes that there is need to promote and strengthen internal mechanisms of conflict management.*

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## Introduction

There has been a lot of debate about the intervention of Southern African Development Community (SADC) troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in Lesotho. The confusion over these interventions results mainly from the lack of a clear definition of the role of the post-apartheid SADC and lack of clarity over the conditions and mechanisms of military intervention by SADC troops in situations of crisis. As a result, much of the discussion of these crises has been devoted to assessing the legality of the intervention of South Africa and Botswana in Lesotho, on the one hand, and that of Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia in the Congo, on the other hand. Critics have also tried to identify the respective interests of these external actors in order to grasp their motivations for intervening in the embattled countries.

This paper attempts to look at these violent conflicts from the perspective of the internal actors, both armed and unarmed, given that lasting stability in these countries depends essentially on the commitment of these internal actors to end or to continue the hostilities.

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\* Denis Kadima is a Researcher at the Electoral Institute of South Africa, Johannesburg, RSA.

### **The DRC Crisis**

The advent of Laurent Kabila and his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) on 17 May 1997 opened an era of hope for the country and the region as a whole. However, contradictions within the AFDL and ill-managed conflicts between Kabila and his former Rwandan and Ugandan allies, led, on 2 August 1998, to the eruption of new hostilities in the Congo. Led by ethnic Tutsi elements in alliance with former dignitaries of the Mobutu regime, and fully supported by the armies of Rwanda and Uganda, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) has vowed to oust President Kabila by violent means. It has been alleged that the Tutsi-dominated Burundian army has also joined the rebel coalition.

The Congolese president is being supported militarily by three SADC countries, namely Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. These countries were joined later by Chad, a non-SADC member. There are unconfirmed reports that Kabila is also enjoying the support of the Sudanese army. In addition, the Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC) of President Kabila are being assisted by the so-called "independent allies". These are made up of foreign and domestic unlawful armed groups having their own long-term military and political objectives. The most important among these unofficial armed groups are the Hutu-dominated former Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) and the Interahamwe, the Hutu militia alleged to have organised and executed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The domestic "independent ally" supporting Kabila is the Mai Mai, a militia composed of elements from Eastern Congo's indigenous tribes whose *raison d'être* is to resist what they call the Tutsi expansionist agenda.

In brief, there are about 20 distinct armed groups, both lawful and unlawful, operating in the DRC.

Efforts currently undertaken by the United-Nations (UN) and the Organisation African Unity (OAU) mainly through President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, which focus on convincing the armed factions to agree to a cease-fire prior to negotiations, have failed to bring about a political settlement. After six months of war, peace negotiators have not succeeded in bringing the warring factions to the negotiating table. This should stimulate peacemakers to further reflect on the causes and real motivations

of the protagonists in order to grasp the dynamics of the conflict. Only then would they be able to contribute meaningfully to the establishment of a lasting solution.

### **AFDL and RCD's doubtful commitment to democratic transformation**

A few actions by both the Kabila administration and the RCD rebels have prompted serious scepticism about their respective commitment to future political pluralism. The Congolese government is responsible for the systematic exclusion of the political opposition, creating the grounds for armed insurrection. Many decisions of the AFDL have exposed its exclusionist tendencies. These include the suspension of the constitution and the existing institutions on coming to power; the ban on political activities, except for the ruling party, the AFDL; and the establishment of military courts competent to sentence any person involved in political activities other than those organised by the AFDL.

The conferring of nearly absolute power upon President Kabila who, as a result, is vested with all executive, legislative, military and financial powers leaves considerable room for the abuse of power by the incumbent regime. This concentration of powers has allowed the AFDL administration arbitrarily to exclude political opponents from the political arena. Thus, in March 1998 the unilaterally created constitutional commission established and inserted in the appendix of the draft constitution a list of political rivals who would not be allowed to run for office. They are suspected of having participated in political crimes and economic mismanagement while the previous regimes held power.

Furthermore, the head of state has passed a law regulating the highly sensitive issue of nationality. The major stakeholders, and particularly the eastern Congo communities who are the victims of the ethnic confrontations resulting from the inconsistencies of the nationality law, have not been consulted. This confirms once more that unscrupulous politicians have been aggravating ethnic cleavages to advance their own political agendas.

The unilateralist tendency of the Kabila regime further manifested itself when the state president passed the law on political parties and platforms and the 28 February 1999 decree setting the basic rules for the national

constitutional debate. This law contains unnecessary restrictive conditions on the creation and functioning of parties and political platforms. The 1999 decree limits the participants in the national constitutional debate to the government, the judiciary, civil society groups, and the Diaspora and ignores the internal political opposition as well as the rebel forces that control nearly half of the national territory. The Kinshasa government has also been criticised for the frequent arrest of political opponents and journalists, as well as the use of degrading corporal punishments against "undisciplined" civilians, particularly during the early stage of the AFDL take-over.

The most blatant violation of human rights occurred during the first weeks of the rebellion. Indeed the Kinshasa government then orchestrated an extensive national campaign of hatred against the ethnic Tutsis. It has been alleged that the army was responsible for the killing of Tutsi civilians throughout the country and the expropriation of their properties.

As for the RCD rebels, most of them were in the AFDL government until the eruption of hostilities in August 1998. They were supporters, if not initiators, of the new administration's move towards personal rule. Some defended publicly many of the above decisions by the AFDL government, claiming that they were needed to restore discipline, law and order in the country after 32 years of Mobutism. It must be recalled that shortly after the AFDL's take-over, Bizima Kahara, then Minister of Foreign Affairs and today the real leader of the RCD rebellion, declared that democratisation was not on the agenda for the Congo. It was only when a number of AFDL leaders, including Kahara himself, lost their influence over President Kabila and felt threatened by him that they suddenly became vocal for his removal from office by violent means, accusing him of not being prepared to introduce democracy and the rule of law.

While aspiring to play a leading role in the Congo, the Tutsis who constitute the most powerful politico-military component in the RCD rebellion, appear unable to accommodate a broader constituency beyond their narrow tribal group. They have so far failed to reach out to credible, independent-minded and representative Congolese leaders from groups other than their own. As a result, most Congolese tend to consider that the ethnic Tutsis are fighting their own war aimed both at obtaining the recognition of their Congolese nationality and at enjoying the lion's share

of power and other advantages associated with it. Furthermore, their association with the former barons of the Mobutu regime, who are sadly renowned for their mismanagement and kleptomaniac tendencies, is perceived as an additional proof that Tutsi leaders are only interested in acquiring power at all costs, regardless of their partners' unethical and selfish interests.

Mobutuist forces, another major component of the RCD rebellion, have the hard task of demonstrating that they support democracy. For most critics, they have joined the war in order to re-conquer the power they lost two years ago. Reports on corruption in the rebel movement abound. In January 1999, dissatisfied members of the RCD alleged that certain Mobutuist elements are involved in the fraudulent granting of permits for the exploitation and trading of diamonds and gold in the rebel held region.

The argument that the rebellion does not seek democracy was echoed in late January 1999 by the former Vice-President of the rebellion movement himself, Arthur Z'Ahidi Ngoma, who resigned, accusing the movement of not being representative of the Congolese. He also blamed his former colleagues in the RCD for not being interested in the establishment of a genuine democracy in Congo.

In addition, the report of 18 September 1998 by the Congolese non-governmental organisation Groupe Justice et Libération, blamed both RCD rebels and Congolese governmental troops for massive human rights abuses and the illegal expropriations of property in Kisangani and the surrounding areas (Groupe Justice et liberation, 1998). A report by the Catholic Church has revealed massive massacres of civilians, women and children by the ethnic Tutsi rebels in the South Kivu province. These two reports were corroborated by the findings of Roberton Garreton, the United Nations' rapporteur on human rights in the Congo, after visiting the eastern Congo during the second half of February 1999. Garreton expressed concern about the situation in eastern Congo, where political parties are not allowed and the press is not free. In a more recent communication with the media, Garreton accused RCD rebel forces and their Rwandan and Ugandan allies of cruelly massacring civilians and enforcing a reign of terror that is far worse than the abuses committed by the Government of the DRC. Describing the rebel prisons, he said "some are genuine torture centers and many are extermination centers. The persons held in the centers are

regularly tortured and the women are sexually abused". (Internet, March 30, 1999).

There is little doubt that both the AFDL government and the RCD rebels have still to prove that they are really committed to democratic transformation. The fact that both movements' appellations contain the word "democracy" or the adjective "democratic" is not sufficient. This seems to be a mere window dressing.

Little is known about the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC), the second rebel movement, so far confined to the Equateur and Oriental provinces. The leader of the MLC, Jean-Pierre Bemba, has admitted that his movement was supported by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.

The other internal actors in the DRC are the non-violent opposition and civil society. Both structures have been excluded from all the talks. These groups consider the current war as an internal power struggle opposing current and former elements of the AFDL and their respective allies, and that the governments of Rwanda and Uganda have exploited this conflict to advance their hegemonic agendas. For these non-violent organisations, the military victory of one side is undesirable as the winning factions would exclude the losers and all the other groups just as happened after the AFDL defeated Mobutu's poorly paid soldiers. And this will create the grounds for emergence of another rebellion.

The attitude of the international community and SADC leaders is worrying. They should be aware of the long-term danger of listening exclusively to the armed groups and ignoring the voices of credible and representative leaders of the non-violent political opposition and civil society. By doing so, are they not setting a precedent by legitimising armed insurrection at the expense of peaceful opposition, as the most effective means for whoever wants to be listened to? Would this not encourage the emergence of more armed oppositions in the region?

The argument for the inclusion of the leaders of the non-violent internal opposition and civil society, I should not suggest that all of them are credible. Only those who are sufficiently representative of their respective constituencies and have demonstrated credibility, honesty and a strong commitment to democracy, peace and development should be considered

as valuable partners in future peace talks.

### **The Congolese Political Elite and its Fear of Elections**

This paper argues that efforts must be pursued to convince the fighting parties to meet at the negotiating table, to which significant non-violent internal forces should also be invited as equal peace partners. At the same time, it draws the attention of the negotiators to the fact that they must avoid the mistakes of the past when such meetings were used by unscrupulous politicians as springboards to acquire or maintain power. It is worth recalling that since the early nineties all means, including unethical ones, were used to acquire entry to the sphere of power. Those who had failed to be appointed ministers would eventually “fabricate” fresh political crises, hoping to be luckier in the subsequent cabinet reshuffle aimed at ending the “crisis”. The late president Mobutu himself was a champion of “fabricated” crises, created to get rid of opponents or to appoint courtesans. As a result of both real and unreal crises, democratic transformation has become an unreachable dream for the Congolese. The prolonged political impasse has thus profited to this non-elected political elite. As a result, nine years after the beginning of the democratic transition the DRC is ruled by its umpteenth “transitional government”.

This elitist thinking has been reinforced by the opportunities created by the AFDL war. Congolese adventurers from the European, American and African Diaspora, most of whom having little qualifications and professional experience, joined the 1996-1997 rebellion in Goma in eastern Congo during the early hours of the insurrection. Many have managed to be appointed cabinet members and to other powerful positions thanks to their “courage” rather than their expertise. Following the same elitist logic, after having lost power to the benefit of Kabila’s AFDL, Mobutu’s former courtesans are financing a fresh war in the Congo with their ill-gotten money in order to re-enter the corridors of power. This is done in partnership with the same Rwandan and Ugandan troops who pushed them out of power two years ago.

Kabila having set the example, power-thirsty citizens have understood that the easiest way to advance their interests is to ensure they coincide with the strategic and economic interests of some of the Congo’s neighbours. In fact, there is no doubt that Rwanda and Uganda have real and legitimate

security concerns which, to some extent, explain their sending of troops to the Congo. However, it must be recognised that the political and military leadership of these countries is finding this war very profitable. It is not surprising that many do not wish to see the crisis come to an end. Museveni and his family are said to control the diamond centre in Kisangani, while the Ugandan military are reported to be involved in the traffic of the Congo's timber and diamonds. The Ugandan parliament has complained about this predatory behaviour several times. As for the Rwandan politico-military leadership, they are organising daily looting in the eastern Congo, as well as trafficking in gold, diamonds and other natural resources. Some reports indicate that Congolese plants and factories are dismantled and then assembled in Rwanda, rendering the eastern Congo dependent on Rwanda for what it used to produce locally.

Given the above, it would be interesting to answer some questions, such as:

- Is the crisis about democracy, human rights, peace and security, or is it just about who should control the Congo's natural resources?
- How can negotiations serve exclusively the search for democracy, human rights, peace, security and stability without being abused by malicious politicians as a mere tactic for acquiring or maintaining power?

The central argument of this section is that there is undoubtedly a need for talks amongst all the Congolese parties, on the one hand, and between the Congo as a sovereign country and its neighbours, on the other hand. The talks amongst the Congolese should be aimed at finding lasting solutions to this multidimensional crisis, rather than being abused by politicians as a springboard to achieve personal political ambitions. One of the aims of such direct talks would be to get the Congolese government, the rebels and credible and representative leaders of the internal political opposition and civil society, to approve and genuinely support the deployment of impartial and well-trained peacekeeping forces between the belligerents.

It is worth remembering that the hatred between parties and communities in conflict, as well as the alleged massacres of civilians by both sides, will not make the restoration of trust easy. In fact, the victims of human rights violations will not forget their condition just because a peace accord has



been signed by a handful of negotiators in remote air-conditioned offices in Lusaka, Windhoek or Pretoria. The accord should be accompanied by extensive civic education campaigns and reconciliatory programmes at the grassroots levels. And most of this effort will naturally come from local civil society groups and trusted political leaders, as they have a better understanding of the issues and the terrain. Therefore, the resolution of the conflict in the Congo should involve not only the fighting factions but also non-violent political parties and civil society. These internal actors should be involved in the talks from the early stages. Otherwise the SADC leaders would, perhaps unintentionally, be legitimising the use of violence as the preferred means to achieve the recognition of one's cause.

The formation of an inclusive government of national unity should follow such talks. The duration of such a government should be kept deliberately short (i.e. not exceed 6 months). In order to keep its tasks simple and achievable, the mission of the transitional government would be confined to:

- facilitating the organisation of inclusive, transparent, free and fair elections at national, provincial and local levels within a period of time not exceeding its tenure of office;
- designing electoral laws and process as to ensure that the expectations of the majority are acknowledged without ignoring the fears of significant minorities; and
- creating a national republican police and army whose respective tasks will be the restoration of law and order, the protection of the national territory against foreign aggressions and the prevention of rebels groups operating from the Congolese territory to destabilise its neighbours.

While pursuing these objectives, the transitional government will also deal with the traditional tasks of all governments, such as the provision of health, education and justice. However, its highest priorities should be the installation of an elected leadership and the restoration of internal and external security.

There is bound to be controversy over the duration of such a transitional

government and the scope of its mission. Some would argue that it would be better to appoint a government for a longer transitional period (e.g. 2 years) so that it should deal with other important matters, such as the restoration of the infrastructure, which is of primordial importance for better electoral operations.

Every country must learn from its experience and those of others. No government in today's DRC has the resources and ability to build or restore the Congo's degraded infrastructures within a short-term period. International lenders and aid agencies are reluctant to make medium and long-term deals with transitional governments. Moreover, deprivation in today's Congo would not allow the government to raise sufficient funds domestically. In addition, as the country's recent political history shows, in the new DRC like in the former Zaire, an entire year has never passed without a major sociopolitical or military conflict. If the negotiating parties opt for a longer transitional period, there would probably be another major crisis in the country before the completion of such a period. Political troublemakers would have sufficient time to engineer a "crisis" that would ensure their own political survival by prolonging the transition. It is particularly those politicians who are conscious that they have no future in the context of electoral democracy, given their lack of broader support among the electorate, who are likely to be guilty of such conduct.

In addition, the DRC can learn from the example of Angola. After several decades of devastating war, which has left this neighbouring country with destroyed roads and railways, an obsolete telephone network, and millions of life-threatening landmines, Angola managed to hold elections in September 1992, relying mainly on air transport provided by the UN. The subsequent electoral dispute was not a result of the poor state of the country's infrastructure but rather the controversy surrounding the election outcome. In order to efficiently organise general elections, the DRC transitional government could also secure logistical, material and financial support from the UN and other donors, and thus, surmount the obstacle posed by its destroyed infrastructure.

To conclude with the Congolese case, it must be pointed out that at the moment, the fighting factions, with their supporters, are claiming to have the best interests of the Congolese people at heart. The only way for them to demonstrate their respect for the Congolese population and their

commitment to democratic values, is by providing the people of the Congo with the opportunity to choose by themselves their representatives without further delay. The proposed approach would help entrench the culture of acceding to power through the ballot and not the bullet.

### **The Lesotho Crisis**

I was one of the international observers of the Lesotho May 1998 parliamentary election where I visited 19 polling stations on the election day. It must be mentioned that the electoral operation, from the opening of the polling stations to the announcement of the results, was peaceful, transparent, free and fair, at least in the voting stations that were visited. Thus, the Lesotho post-electoral crisis came as a big surprise to many foreign observers, given their limited understanding of Lesotho's history and the nature and extent of the successive political crises.

### **Brief Overview of Lesotho's Post-Independence Political History**

The post-independence political history of the Kingdom of Lesotho has been characterised by frequent political instability resulting from disputes over electoral results. Thus, when, in 1965, the progressive Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) surprisingly lost the first parliamentary general elections by a small margin to the conservative Basutoland National Party (BNP), it was alleged that the elections had been rigged. The losing party did not accept the election outcome.

Afterwards, the BCP started to prepare itself systematically for the January 1970 general elections, which it won eventually, though the official results were withheld by the government. Indeed, Leabua Jonathan's ruling BNP refused to acknowledge its defeat, cancelled the electoral results and established a single-party system that lasted until 1986, when the military organised a coup d'état against the government and installed a military dictatorship until 1993. The period between 1970 and 1993 was, then, a serious setback to the entrenchment of a democratic culture in the Kingdom.

However, the gradual transformation of most Southern African regimes and South Africa's apartheid system from the late 1980's, as well as internal and external pressures upon the Lesotho military leadership, compelled the

military to relinquish power to the civilians through the holding of election. In 1993 Lesotho held its first multiparty election in 23 years. The BCP won all the 65 seats, becoming a de facto single-party. According to Southall "... the voters imposed a heavy punishment upon the BNP for having subjected them to its dictatorship" (1999:21).

Once more, the electoral results were disputed. The BNP challenged the outcome of the election through the court but its allegations of electoral fraud could not be substantiated. It therefore lost the case.

Shortly after acceding to power, the BCP found itself embroiled in an internal power struggle which weakened the party affecting adversely its ability to deliver on its electoral promises. In addition, the BCP government found itself in conflict with the monarchy and the army. This eventually led to its month-long dismissal by the King in August 1994. The ruling party recovered its prerogatives only after intensive mediation by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Subsequently, the conflict within the BCP grew and led to the party splitting into two fiercely opposed factions. The then Prime Minister, the late Ntsu Mokhehle and his splinter group, called the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), counted the majority of seats in parliament, reducing the elected BCP to a mere official opposition. The BCP protested to no avail, calling upon the King to dissolve the LCD-dominated parliament and appoint a government of national unity prior to the holding of fresh elections. This tense atmosphere prevailed until the eve of the May 1998 election.

The political context just before the 1998 elections, as described by Matlosa, explains the crisis that occurred a few days after the announcement of the election outcome.

"As the [May 1998] election date drew closer, the political bitterness among the contestants became more and more pronounced. The animosity and the rivalry were real as the opposition parties aimed to either dislodge or destabilise the LCD government through both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means. Extra parliamentary pressure was relaxed as the election approached with the assumption that the newly formed LCD would be defeated (my emphasis)" (1999a:16).

Thus, when international election observers arrived in Lesotho, most failed to notice the tensions given that opposition parties had suspended extra-

parliamentary demonstrations, as explained above. As a result, the havoc that followed the announcement of the 1998 election outcome came as a shock.

### **The Exclusionist Character of the Current Lesotho Electoral System**

The Lesotho 1998 election was won by the ruling party by an overwhelming majority. Indeed, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) won 79 out of 80 constituencies. However, when one looks at these results in terms of the percentage of votes received by the contesting parties and candidates, one discovers that the winning party received just over 60 per cent of votes cast, while the losing parties received the remaining 40 per cent. In other words, for having received 60 per cent of the votes cast, the LCD was entitled to nearly 98 per cent of the parliamentary seats while the opposition and independent candidates, in spite of their 40 per cent of the votes, were entitled to only 2 per cent of the seats in parliament.

In addition, although the LCD received the majority of votes in all but one constituency, namely Bobatsi, the percentage of votes cast in its favour ranged from 81 per cent in Thaba-Phechela to only 29 per cent in Mokhotlong, where it beat all three of the main opposition parties by narrow margins.

The First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system denied the losing parties fair representation in Parliament. This clearly illustrates the weakness of a constituency-based electoral system that allows a disproportional representation of parties.

Sekatle disagrees with the argument that the current Lesotho electoral system favours the exclusion of significant minorities from participating in the country's political life:

I do not agree that the electoral system deliberately excludes certain sections of the population. It did not do so in 1965 and 1970. In 1965 opposition parties were well represented in Parliament. The 1970 elections would have also given a fair representation to opposition parties. The anomaly of a one party parliament that resulted from the 1993 and 1998 elections is a legacy of the long history of BNP dictatorship. A political party is judged at the polls by its performance. The verdict passed by the electorate on the BNP in 1993 and 1998 testifies to this. You cannot rule against people's will for more than two decades and

expect to be forgiven inside two years. (1999:7)

While agreeing with Sekatle that BNP's confiscation of power in 1970 played against it in 1993, I nonetheless believe that an electoral system that ignores the choice of almost 40 per cent of the electorate is not inclusive enough, and needs to be reformed to accommodate significant losing parties. Even in the 1965 election, the exclusionist patterns were present in the electoral system. The BNP won only 42 per cent of the total valid votes and was entitled to over 50 per cent of the seats while the BCP, the Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) and other parties and independent candidates who had secured together a total of 58 per cent of votes were granted only 48 per cent of the seats (Matlosa, 1999b: 11).

Rule (1998: 18) undertook a study for the Electoral Institute of South Africa, in which he speculate about the composition of the Lesotho National assembly, had Proportional Representation (PR) or a mixture of PR and FPTP systems been used as an electoral system for the Kingdom. In a situation of pure PR, the LCD would have received 50 seats (or 60.7 per cent of the votes) and the losing parties would have been entitled to 30 seats (or 39.3 per cent of the votes cast). In mixed systems, opposition parties would still have been better represented than in the constituency-based system.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Composition of Lesotho National Assembly using 4 Alternative Electoral Systems based on votes cast in 1998**

Party	Only Constituency seats	Only PR seats	Mixed option A, 40/40 split of constituency and PR seats			Mixed option B: 80 constituency seats and 20 compensatory PR seats		
			Const	PR	Total	Const	Compensatory seats	Total
LCD	79	50	40	25	65	79	0	79
BNP	1	20	0	10	10	1	13	14
BCP	0	9	0	4	4	0	6	6
MFP	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Total	80	80	40	40	80	80	20	100

**Source:** Rule, S: *The Lesotho Election, May 1998*, the Electoral Institute of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1998:18.

The agreement finally reached by the Basotho politicians in the Interim Political authority (IPA), which includes a reform of the electoral law, has to be welcomed. Such a reform should, however, avoid the replacement of the constituency-based system by a purely PR system as the latter electoral system (i.e. PR) contains its own disadvantages, such as the lack of local accountability of members of Parliament. A mixed electoral system combining the advantages of both the FTPT and PR systems would be advisable.

Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to hold the Lesotho electoral system solely responsible for what happened after the announcement of the May 1998 election and the subsequent intervention by the South Africa and Botswana troops. The elitism and greed of the Lesotho political class also contributed significantly.

**The Political Elite and its Lack of a Culture of Tolerance**

The results of each and every general election in Lesotho has been disputed either by the opposition parties or by the ruling party. In fact, in 1965 the BCP lost the election and protested over the results. In 1970 the ruling

BNP cancelled the election which it had lost. After being defeated in the 1993 parliamentary general election following the re-introduction of multiparty politics, the BNP challenged the results in a court of law. Finally, unprecedented levels of violence followed the challenge to the legitimacy of the 1998 general election by the BCP, BNP and MFP.

Why do the losing parties in Lesotho never accept the electoral outcome? Sekatle provides us with an explanation : “The explanation must be sought from politics of the belly. The state in developing countries is the most reliable source of economic power. Those who control the state machinery control the economy. This is why battles for the control of the state are issues of life and death.” (1999:6)

This explanation is echoed by Matlosa (1999a, p15) when he accounts for the roots of the conflict within the BCP and which led to the formation of the LCD. “The two factions engaged in a fierce power struggle which was driven by neither policy nor ideological differences, but rather by leadership squabbles and how best to share the spoils of state power”. (1999a:15)

In summary, the responsibility of the Lesotho political elite in the successive political crises that have occurred in the Kingdom is well documented. Most analysts acknowledge the need for political inclusiveness and participation. However, it must be emphasised that the accession to power should be based on the choice of the electorate and not on the levels of violence used by the losers and their followers to force the door of power. Acceptance of defeat is part of a culture that needs to be built by Basotho politicians to spare their country unnecessary destruction, killing and political instability that could also have negative impact on the other countries of the region.

## **Conclusion**

There are lessons to be drawn by the SADC with regard to the crises and interventions in Lesotho and the Congo. Whereas the Lesotho crisis occurred in the context of a dysfunctional and exclusionist electoral system, the roots of the DRC conflict are to be found in the undemocratic nature of its incumbent regime, as well as the absence of a legitimate and inclusive constitutional framework. Both countries need to establish constitutional and electoral frameworks that ensure the rule of the majority while allowing



significant minorities to participate meaningfully in political life.

Furthermore, the political stability of both countries is being jeopardised by the tendency of their respective political elites to advance their personal, rather than national, interests.

It is therefore crucial for regional leaders to make sure that conflicts are not fabricated by politicians to advance their quest for power, at the expense of human life and common interests. Mechanisms should be found not only to promote the emergence of inclusive democracy, but also to identify and prevent elitist interests from threatening regional peace, security and stability. Thus, legitimate conflicts could be converted into opportunities for the installation of more stable and inclusive systems of representation, which constitute some of the sine qua non requisites for the democratic consolidation and development of the region.

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