

Creating a South African Sub-Regional Conflict Transformation Model

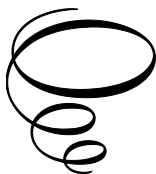
Creating a South African Sub-Regional Conflict Transformation Model:

Conflict Recurrence in Lesotho

By

Noluthando Phungula

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-6363-4

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6363-6

This book is dedicated to my children Melissa Dlamini,
Samuel Radebe, Nkosenhle Radebe, and Ziphezinhle Radebe.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my Lord and King, the Lord Jesus Christ honour and glory be to you for sustaining me during the writing of this book. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the following people for their assistance, encouragement and contributions: First, my PhD supervisor Prof. Khondlo Mtshali, who's always believed in me, Ngiyabonga kakhulu okweze kimi ukwenze nakwabanye. My mentor, Prof Siphamandla Zondi for your assistance, mentorship, and unending support, I am grateful Nondaba.

My parents, Mr and Mrs Phungula thank you for always believing in me and supporting me in all my endeavours. My brother Mpumelelo Phungula the one person who kept on encouraging me, khula Mdlovu. My Aunt Nomusa Nyandeni and Uncle Mmeli Ngwane ngiyabonga maNgubonde you were a pillar of strength, thank you.

My husband, Martin Radebe for pushing me to always aim higher, thank you. My children, Mellissa, Samuel, Nkosenhle, and Ziphezinhle whom I at times had to neglect to focus on this book. I hope one day you understand this was all for you. To my Antie Sandra, thank you for your unwavering support. My colleagues Dr Zanele Zuma and Dr Hlengiwe Phetha, thank you for your encouragement and helping me to push forth in this journey. To my Pastors, Apostle S.C Maduna and Pastor M. Mkhonza thank you for your prayers and spiritual covering, I will be forever grateful. My gratitude to my study participants whose willing contributions made this study possible.

This book is based on research supported by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NIHSS.

PREFACE

Conflict recurrence in the sub-region and Lesotho has come to be a recent litmus test for the SADC's conflict transformation capacity. To date, responses to conflicts in the SADC region have been dominated by traditional, militaristic, and state-centric approaches such as peacekeeping and mediation. The sub-regional body has paid very little attention to developing peace-building capacities and even less attention to conflict transformation as a tool of peace-building.

Regardless of the interventions by the SADC, the Mountain Kingdom still finds itself entangled in cycles of deep-rooted protracted social conflicts. Thus, there seems to be no successful conflict transformation model that the sub-region has adopted as far as coming up with a sustainable long-term peaceful solution to the recurring conflict in Lesotho. As a result, the book seeks to assess the SADC's capacity to transform the context, structure, content, issues, actors, and rules of conflicts in the Mountain Kingdom to attain sustainable peace. The book seeks to do this to detect cracks, challenges, and areas that may well necessitate enhancement.

In its unique way, the book contributes to further academic debate and scholarly research on conflict transformation in the SADC sub-region. It will serve as a guide on how conflict recurrences can best be tackled in the sub-region and it seeks to improve the process of transformation of conflict and peace-building in the Kingdom in the Sky and the sub-region at large.

The book is timely as it is edited at a period when the Mountain Kingdom has recently faced further interstate conflict leading to early elections in efforts to end the violence. It is hoped that the book will be able to shed light on the road ahead for the SADC and its role in transforming conflict into positive peace and peace-building. The book is also relevant as it will contribute to discussions on the necessity of a conflict transformation model as a key tool in efforts to transform the spate of recurring intrastate conflict in Lesotho.

Additionally, the book study seeks to provide new insights on how conflict recurrences can best be tackled in the sub-region and augment the existing body of knowledge relating to the actual rolling out of conflict

transformation. Thus, this book will also enhance the literature and discourse on sub-regional organisations and their path towards Conflict Transformation on the continent.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABC	All Basotho Congress
ACCORD	African Centre For Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AD	Alliance of Democrats
AfDB	African Development Bank
APLA	Azanian Peoples' Liberation Army
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
BAC	Basutoland African Congress
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
CCL	Christian Council of Lesotho
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
CMR	Civil-military relations
CNGO	Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
COM	Council of Ministers
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CT	Conflict Transformation
DC	Democratic Congress
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FLS	Frontline States
FPTP	First Past The Post
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GNU	Government of National Unity
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPA	Interim Political Authority
ISDSC	Inter-State Defence and Security Committee
JOMIC	Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army

LHWP	Lesotho Highlands water project
LMPS	Lesotho Mounted Police Service
LWP	Lesotho Workers Party
MCO	Ministerial Committee of the Organ
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDP	Mutual Defense Pact
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
MTP	Maremma Tlou Freedom Party
MRG	Mediation Reference Group
MSU	Mediation Support Unit
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEWC	National Early Warning Centre
NIP	National Independent Party
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPDSC	Organ on Politics Defence and Security Co-operation
PAC	Pan African Congress
PMU	Police Mobile Unit
POE	Panel of Elders
PR	Proportional Representation
PSC	Peace and Security Council
NP	National Party
REC	Regional Economic Community
REWC	Regional Early Warning Centre
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RPTC	Regional Peace Training Centre
SA	South Africa
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SADCSF	SADC Standby Force
SAPMIL	SADC Preventive Mission in Lesotho
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SARPPCO	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organisation
SCU	Sector Coordinating Unit
SCT	Systemic conflict transformation
SEAC	SADC Electoral Advisory Council

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SEOM	SADC Electoral Observer Mission
SNC	SADC National Committee
SOMILES	SADC Observer Mission in Lesotho
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SIPO	Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ
UKZN	University of KwaZulu- Natal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZAPU- PF	Zimbabwe African People's Union- Patriotic Front

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING SADC'S ROLE IN THE LESOTHO CONFLICT

The United Nations (UN) is mandated with the daunting task of upholding international peace and security. Originally named the League of Nations, guided by its first document, the Covenant of the League of Nations, the UN was initially eager to play its part in peacekeeping operations in Africa. It would appear that although the international body was equipped to deal with interstate conflict, it was not equipped to handle intrastate disputes (Nadege, 2019). The UN's experience with interventions in Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique and Angola has culminated in a reluctance on the part of the organisation to tackle intrastate conflicts on the continent (Enuka and Nwagbo, 2016). The failure of the UN to resolve conflicts in Africa necessitated regional and sub-regional organisations, such as the African Union (AU), the SADC, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to respond and help resolve conflicts in their respective regions and sub-regions (Enuka and Nwagbo, 2016; Nadege, 2019).

Hence in 1992, the UN delegated the role of peacekeeping to regional economic organisations (Brookings, 2015). As such, regional organisations were tasked to partner with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Arusha Declaration in 1979 by the then Frontline States, which established the SADCC, which was later named SADC. The SADC was initially formed in 1980 with a directive to minimise economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa (SA) but is now tasked to also ensure the upkeep of peace and security in Southern Africa (Mabaleng, 2012).

SADC is a secondary body of the AU, which obtains its directive from Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Chapter VI and Chapter VII suggest that regional organisations must take on various programmes such as preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction in their respective sub-regions. These activities include the right to utilise force, but this must be mandated by the UNSC (Cawthra, 2010). The SADC has continued to be challenged by political, socio-

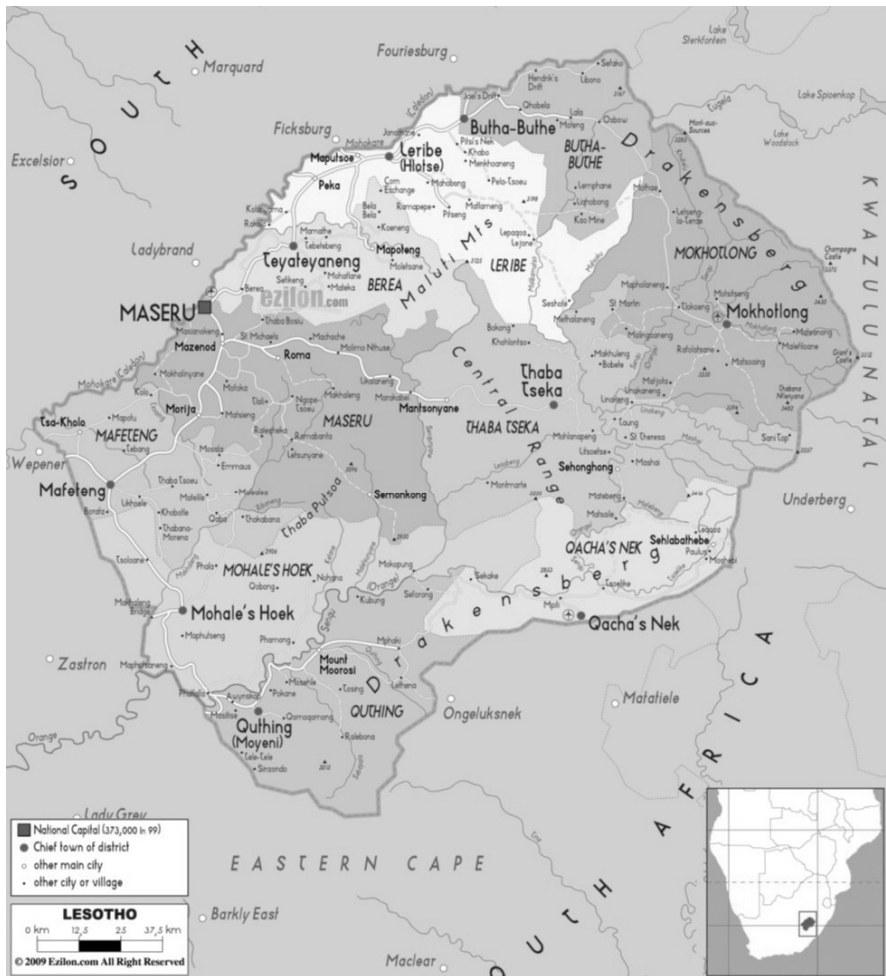
economic and military conflicts that have persisted in affecting the sub-regions peace and security. Apart from the continuing conflict against armed groups in eastern DRC, the sub-region has also witnessed minor armed conflicts flaring up in Mozambique and Angola (). The SADC has consequently faced unique challenges on transforming and finding durable resolutions to such conflicts. Notably, in instances where mediation efforts have been put in place, often these conflicts have recurred.

In this regard, conflict recurrence is not a new phenomenon in most member states of the SADC region. These cyclical conflicts have generally ranged from political instability to armed conflicts. In the DRC, the conflict has continued to persist from 1998 to 2017 (Maeresera and Zengeni, 2017). The same has been the case with the 2013-2016 resurgence of conflict in Mozambique; the country is still in an unstable political and security situation. Madagascar has also experienced intermittent conflict. Lesotho, a small, impoverished and dependent enclave state, like many African states, has also throughout its post-independence period been challenged by episodes that have threatened the country's political stability and security (Makoa, 2004). The 'Mountain Kingdom' or the 'Kingdom of the Sky' as it is commonly referred to has hence not been exempted from the scourge of cyclical conflict and the country has continuously faced internal security problems that have followed her since her independence from colonial powers. Notable occurrences which threaten internal peace and security, often endangering the established authority of the state, have been rife in the country.

Overview of Lesotho's geopolitical history

Lesotho is a small landlocked country within Southern Africa. It is known as *Muso oa Lesotho* in the Sesotho language, meaning the state of Lesotho. As its name implies, it is the land of the Basotho, and unlike most African nations, it has no internal ethnic or linguistic divisions (Khaketla, 1970:8). The country remains one of the few surviving monarchies in Africa and is home to a population of about 2.2 million with a geographic size of 30 355km² (World population data sheet, 2018). Approximately 13% of the Kingdom's soil is arable and mainly located on the western strip. The tremendously slanted distribution of arable land provides an explanation of the excessive population concentration in certain parts of the country, mainly, the western arable areas (Monyane, 2009).

Figure 1: Map of Lesotho



Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search> (accessed: 10 October 2018).

The Mountain Kingdom is one of the smallest nation-states in the world and is completely encircled by its more prominent neighbour, South Africa (Monyane, 2009). It connects with KwaZulu-Natal towards the East, the Eastern Cape to the South, and the Free State to the North and West. Nevertheless, despite its triviality in size; vulnerable geography, economic and political status in the region, the Kingdom is famous for being one of

the most politically unstable states in the SADC sub-region (Williams, 2019).

The state is classified under Low Human Development countries with high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, particularly among the youth. The unemployment rate in Lesotho is estimated at 23.6 per cent with about 57.1 per cent of the populace surviving on less than US \$ 1.90 per day which is the stipulated international poverty datum line (World Data Atlas, 2019). According to the AfDB, OECD and UNDP report, about 75.7 per cent of the jobless reside in traditional homesteads (AfDB, OECD and UNDP, 2017:2). According to the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report (2019), Lesotho falls in the category of countries with the lowest of the Human Development Indices. The state has an underdeveloped and weak economy, with small resource endowments including diamonds, minerals, and water. Water, the country's primary natural resource remains critical to the Kingdom's economy as it provides water to various sections of SA, consequently creating revenue for Lesotho (Monyane, 2009). The state further receives tariffs from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). The country has a small private sector that contributes a meagre 14 per cent to the GDP (National Vision Document, 2018).

Since independence, the constitutional monarchy had opted for the British system where the Prime Minister functions as head of government while the King is the head of State (Monyane, 2009). The incumbent king is His Majesty King Letsie III while the Prime Minister is Sam Matekane who took over Tom Thabane who was prime minister until May 2020. Moreover, the country utilises a twofold legal system comprising traditional customary law and the common law (Monyane, 2009). The Council of Chiefs regulates succession to the throne of Lesotho. Given its political structure, the country can be categorised into three sections: the highlands, the lowlands and the Maloti Mountain. For administrative purposes, the Kingdom is separated into ten districts: Berea, Butha Buthe, Leribe, Mafeteng, Maseru, Mohale 's Hoek, Mokhotlong, Qacha 's Nek, Quthing, and Thaba Tseka. District administrators supervise the various regions (Lesotho Country Analysis, 2017). Sesotho and English are the official languages in the country, with the latter widely spoken and this can be traced to its colonial history.

While the pre-independence period did not experience any violent episodes, the country still failed to transition to a politically stable post-colonial society (Makoa, 2004). The country is well known for its complicated history of political commotions since its attainment of freedom in October

1966 and has over the years witnessed extreme factionalism, political tension, and violent conflict particularly during and after election times (Vhumbunu, 2015).

Background

The Kingdom in the Sky has never enjoyed political stability since the attainment of political independence in 1965. The Kingdom has been marred by violent uprisings, electoral disputes and inter and intra-political disagreements, often denting the Kingdom's democracy and stifling its governance systems (Williams, 2019:65). The political atmosphere in the Mountain Kingdom has been unpredictable and often faced with a reality of intermittent violent episodes. This instability in Lesotho has resulted in a considerable loss of lives, dislodgment of citizens mainly in South Africa and destruction of infrastructure, further escalating the nation's socio-economic predicament (Haynes, 2001). Thus, the self-rule era in Lesotho has been characterised by various peace-disturbing occurrences.

Lesotho has experienced political instability since its first democratic elections in 1965. As such it can be argued that the Mountain Kingdom has not enjoyed political stability since attaining its independence. The country has been haunted by violent episodes emanating from political power struggles from the advent of political liberation in 1965 to present day. The country has been persistently engulfed by political violence more predominantly, during and after the polls. In the same breath, Monyane (2009) agrees that the Mountain Kingdom's over 50 prime years of independence have not witnessed a stable democracy. Instead, throughout its post-independence period, the country has been haunted by continuous instability and rampant periodic political violence.

This book argues that these conflict situations have often been unsuccessfully managed by the local leadership, and have necessitated the intervention of external institutions such as SADC and neighbouring countries. For Matlosa (2008) and Makoa (2014), political polarisation in the Mountain Kingdom runs deep. It can be noticed in the concentration of authority by small elites in the country's political parties, as a result of intra-party democracy in Lesotho. Matlosa further explains that this polarisation is reinforced by "personality cults - a trend that reduces political institutions to individuals and turns individual politicians into institutions" (2008:21).

After attaining independence, the Mountain Kingdom has carried out numerous elections, the majority of which have witnessed some form of

violence, either before, during or after an election. This was evidenced in the 2007 post-election violence where the governing party unfairly used the electoral model to advance for a parliamentary majority. In response, the opposition parties demanded electoral reforms, even going to the extremes of utilising violence.

The post-independence political history of the Kingdom of Lesotho has been characterised by frequent political instability submerged in several arrangements of conflict, exposed and concealed, violent and non-violent, short-lived and prolonged resulting mainly from disputes often arising around election time, over the electoral system and eventually the electoral results (Matlosa, 2006).

The rationale for the book

Conflict recurrence in the Southern Africa sub-region and Lesotho in particular in recent times has provided a litmus test for the SADC's capacity to manage and transform conflict within the sub-region. To date, responses to conflicts in the SADC have been dominated by traditional, militaristic and state-centric approaches such as peacekeeping and mediation. The sub-regional body has paid very little attention to developing peace-building capacities and even less attention to conflict transformation as a long-term framework for peace-building. Regardless of the various interventions by the SADC, the Mountain Kingdom still finds itself amid deep-rooted protracted social conflicts (Mokoa, 2004). Thus, there seems to be no successful conflict transformation model that the sub-region has adopted towards a long-term peaceful resolution to the recurring conflict in Lesotho. As a result, in this book, I aim to assess the SADC's capacity to transform the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict in the Mountain Kingdom in order for the country to attain sustainable peace. I do this to detect cracks, challenges and areas that may well necessitate enhancement. This is what this book endeavours to achieve from an academic and sub-regional strategic policy stance.

Against this background, this book endeavours to further the academic debate and scholarly research on conflict transformation in the SADC sub-region. The book is timely as it is written at a period when the Mountain Kingdom has faced further intrastate conflict in the past two decades leading to early elections in efforts to end the violence which have not yielded sustainable positive results. It is hoped that this book will be able to elucidate the road ahead for the SADC and its role in transforming conflict into sustainable positive peace. The relevance of the book lies in its ability

to contribute to discussions on the necessity of a conflict transformation model as a critical tool towards transforming the spate of recurring intrastate conflict in Lesotho. The book envisages contributing to knowledge in the field of conflict transformation and provides findings that could be useful to policymakers, regional economic bodies, scholars, governments, diplomats, and NGOs towards devising mechanisms for conflict transformation in the sub-region. Additionally, the book seeks to provide new insights on how conflict recurrences can best be tackled in the sub-region and augment the existing body of knowledge relating to the actual rolling out of conflict transformation. Thus, this book will also enhance the literature and discourse on sub-regional organisations and their path towards conflict transformation on the continent.

The research questions that the book endeavours to address are the following:

- a) Which dynamics have been at play in the recurrence of conflict in Lesotho?
- b) What strategic political and diplomatic efforts has the SADC implemented in its attempts to resolve the conflict?
- c) What have been the major constraints encountered by the sub-regional body in its attempts to resolve the conflict?
- d) Using the Lesotho conflict as a case study, what scholarly and policy recommendations can be proffered for a sustainable SADC sub-regional conflict transformation model?

A qualitative methodology was utilised in the research for this book. I interviewed politicians from various political parties from Lesotho, students and academics from the NUL and UKZN, leaders of civil society organisations, journalists, military officials and also practitioners in the field. The interviews were conducted in person and guided by semi-structured questions. Policy documents, books, and journal articles were also accessed and reviewed to guide the research plan and in triangulating the research findings. Research respondents were purposively chosen primarily based on their acquaintance with the conflict itself, their understanding of conflict transformation, and the specific role they played in the political space in the country. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to produce a descriptive narrative. The conflict transformation theory was used as an analytical tool which allowed for a clear grasp of the descriptive narrative acknowledged in the data.

This book is made up of six chapters. The first chapter delivers a general introduction the background, the outline of the research problem and a synopsis of the study. Chapter 2 focuses on the different factors understood as contributing to the recurring conflict in Lesotho. Chapter 3 deliberates on the available literature around the SADC, its capacity and its conflict transformation record in Lesotho. Chapter 4 focuses on the conceptual framework and offers a synopsis of the central theoretical approaches used in this book and elaborates on the critical concepts utilised in the book. Chapter 5 forms an important component of the book as it presents, reports and analyses data gathered on the SADC's s conflict transformation capacity and the Lesotho conflict. Chapter 6 offers a summary of the significant assumptions of the research, the study's main is the conclusion as well as the recommendations of the book.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING THE RECURRING CONFLICT IN LESOTHO

Introduction

There have been varying explanations of the recurring political conflicts in Lesotho, and this chapter delves into such arguments as espoused by experts. In this chapter, I map out the underlying causal factors that various scholars have put forth in their analysis of Lesotho's perennial political instability from independence to date. My aim in this section is to demonstrate the conversation on the recurring political problems in Lesotho and to show how my work adds to the work of other scholars. This is done to establish the strengths and weaknesses in their analysis of the recurring conflict riveting the SADC member state. Here, the secondary aim is to explain the key issues in the conflict and to interrogate SADC's capacity to transform the conflict and realise sustainable positive peace in Lesotho.

Many researchers have focused on the country's poor socio-economic conditions marked by underdevelopment, poverty, inequality, unemployment, etc., which turn contestation over state power into fierce warfare among the political elite (Maphosa, 1995; Gebremichael, 2019). Also discussed in the literature is the country's colonial history, a factor which informed Lesotho's adoption of a British-based electoral system. To explore the political problems in Lesotho, it is important to understand how the country transitioned from colonial rule to independence, a matter that I discuss extensively. In the same breath, various other studies have focused on the country's geographical location and South Africa's interests in the conflict (Monyae, 2014; Grimmwood, 2017). Yet, fewer studies have considered the lack of governance structures as a commonly identified source of conflict in the Mountain Kingdom.

Furthermore, the chapter explores a plethora of works (Matlosa and Pule, 2001, 2003; Pherudi, 2018; Letsie, 2018; Gebremichael, 2019; Williams, 2019; Matlosa, 2020) that have reflected the militarisation of politics and politicisation of the military, which has generated political violence

underpinning the pervasive instability of the country. To a lesser extent, fewer studies explore the monarchy as a key contributor to the conflict. The recent mushrooming of coalition governments between different political parties is also a new dynamic in literature (Kapa, 2008; Kapa, 2012; Kapa and Shale, 2012; Ngubane, 2018) which is viewed as an underwriting factor in the intensifying of violent conflict in the country. This is as many of these coalition governments have sooner or later crumbled, proving ineffective and causing instability

The intention of this chapter is to move away from the exclusive emphasis on each individual factor that impinges on the Lesotho conflict. The chapter instead engages in a holistic, in-depth and multi-faceted conflict analysis which considers the possible role of locals in the effort to realise the transformation of the recurring conflict in Lesotho. The chapter notes that each extant study often concentrates on one or two factors with a mere mention of other factors but without delving into how each element forms a part of a much more profoundly rooted problem. In this regard, it is essential to note the interrelatedness of the various conflict contributors, particularly in the ongoing efforts to transform the conflict into positive, sustainable peace. Moreover, as time has lapsed, various new influencing factors have further complicated the nature of the conflict in the Kingdom of the Sky. As such, it becomes increasingly important that such new factors are considered in the analysis and conflict transformation plans for the Kingdom. Hence, the book advocates for a broad many-fold analysis of the conflict from its inception to date.

Factors influencing conflict in Africa

Africa has continued to experience violent conflicts which have gradually deepened in complexity. Achankeng (2017) puts forth the argument that the imperial factor is a fundamental primary cause of conflict in Africa and goes even further to suggest that their repetitive nature may be attributed to their colonial past. Similarly, Okoyo (1977) maintains that the political instability facing various African countries today is primarily rooted in the very structure of society, mainly informed by their colonial history. A similar view is shared by Duala (1984), who argues that the majority of the issues faced by African countries can be traced to their colonial history. Cohen (1995:11) also concurs that the majority of the sources and consequences of internal conflicts faced by post-colonial African states today have their roots in colonialism, decolonisation and the subsequent predicament of state-building (Achankeng, 2013). Cohen (1995) notes for instance the contradictions

that have formed the foundations for the modern African state without consideration of ethnic and regional diversities, which today have led to inequality and skewed wealth distribution in respective countries, often recreating cycles of violent conflict.

The transition from colonial rule to independence in Africa is also cited for the dampening of conflicts while they remain primarily unresolved or untransformed and thus their recurrence. Zartman (2000:3) seems to support Achankeng (2017) who maintains the view that the efforts utilised by Regional Economic Communities have not been successful in disabling the tragedies that have brought them to the continent. Achankeng's (2017) standpoint reiterates the crucial need of attending to the sources of conflict if actual transformation is to be achieved.

Maphosa (1995) emphasises skewed allotment and access to natural resources, where the impoverished often feel excluded from access to resources as a critical root cause behind African conflicts. In countries with weaker economies, resources are usually controlled by a few, and this has sparked violent conflict in various countries. In Lesotho, the colonial legacy has remained a critical factor that has formed the current system of governance. For Monyane (2009), the existing governance systems can be linked to the scant competition for scarce resources, the power scuffles by the elect, maladministration, socio-economic variables such as scarcity, feeble civil society, insignificant middle class, and socioeconomic disparities.

In Africa, political, economic, and social issues have proven to be interdependent and deeply intertwined. As such, the continent has witnessed various forms of tension and violent conflicts. These conflicts have included authoritarianism, post-election violence, armed conflicts, ethnic and religious rivalries, terrorism, insurgencies, and Muslim-extremist movements, among others (Ngoma, 2005). The root causes of some of these acts of violence also appear to intensify the already dreadful situation. Over 700 million people in the third world continue to be confronted by abject poverty, and others remain targets of various types of violence, and these constitute conflict-provoking realities in many African states (Lifewater, 2020). The various regional organisations within the continent have sought to institute multiple mechanisms to deal with potentially dire situations of violent conflicts.

An overview of Lesotho's historical realities

A critical assessment of the recurring conflict in the Kingdom of the Sky shows that the nation-state's current state is historically rooted in its institutional crisis and constitutional ailment, which can be traced to the period before political liberation (Weisfelder, 1967; Makoa, 1994; Matlosa, 1997; Matlosa, 1999).

The Kingdom of Lesotho is based on the pre-colonial state known as Basotho land, which was established by King Moshoeshoe in 1822 (Sanders, 1979; Thompson, 1979). The modern nation of Lesotho also emerged through alliances with clans and chiefdoms of southern Sotho people under the leadership of Moshoeshoe during the Mfecane wars in the early 19th century (Monyane, 2009). Moshoeshoe and his close relatives who followed him established homesteads in the Lesotho mountains. Moreover, it is also said that the founding father of the Basotho nation successfully built a united homogeneous federation by welcoming and accepting various peoples from various groups (South African History Online, 2019). Some of the groups were the Basia, the Bamonaheng, the Baphaleng, the Bapedi, the Batlokwa, the Bakubung, the Bamokotele, the Bakgatla, the Baphuting and even the infamous Nguni migrants who were escaping from the great Zulu King Shaka Zulu (Thompson, 1975; Knight, 1994; Mofuoa, 2015). For Maundeni (2010) and Mofuoa (2015), Moshoeshoe's rise to domination is not necessarily attributed to his conquering of other groups but rather to his occupation of a strategic mountain that allowed for greater protection against enemies and adorned with arable land and abundant water resources.

While the French had initially introduced Christianity, the religion also became deeply entrenched, as protection came hand in hand with the holistic British system, including religion. Eldredge (1993:94-95) also refers to the growing influence of the church in the Mountain Kingdom as she points to the rapid growth of French missionaries from 393 in 1843 to 13 733 by 1894. In 1904, the church membership had grown to 13,733, accounting for 5.5% of the total population (Eldredge, 1993). The increasing power of the Roman Catholic Church on the royal family is still very much a reality in contemporary Lesotho.

In October of 1966, the Kingdom of Lesotho became an independent parliamentary democracy led by King Moshoeshoe II and Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan of the Basotho National Party (BNP) winner of the first post-independence elections. On attaining independence, Lesotho

naturally adopted administrative features similar to those found in Great Britain (Matlosa, 1993). Firstly, Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with the King as the head of state, and the Prime Minister as the head of government (Letsie, 2009). Secondly, as in Britain, Lesotho has a bicameral parliamentary system which is made up of the National Assembly and the Senate. Regardless of the adoption of the democratic system, the Kingdom has not enjoyed a flourishing democracy but instead has for more than three decades after that been hindered by intermittent election-related violent conflicts (UNDP, 2012).

For Helen (2014:23), the political unpredictability in the country can be credited to Britain's failure to prepare the country for independence and self-rule. Instead, the former colonial master had focused on exploiting the country's natural resources. As a result, upon the attainment of independence, the state found itself under the reign of incompetent leaders who were unable to manage the Kingdom's affairs, let alone an economic base (Helen, 2014:23).

Moreover, the Basotho had been forced out of their arable land to live in mountainous areas with very little crop production due to harsh weather conditions (Benyera, 2017:57). The Basotho had the majority of their good land taken by South African Afrikaaner farmers in what today is known as the Free State Province.

Before this time, the monarchy had remained functional and in power from 1822 but lost executive power at independence (Monyane, 2009). In Pherudi's view, the period marked the end of colonialism but also marked the beginning of new political complications for the Mountain Kingdom (2000:10). As already established, the track to multi-party democracy in the Kingdom has been characterised by tension and volatility since independence. Henceforth, political instability in Lesotho can be said to have begun when the state attained independence from Britain (Makoa, 2004; Vhumbunu, 2015).

Before independence, various political parties in Lesotho had been campaigning for the elections but later began to withdraw their campaigns after learning of the highly probable chances of the Basotho National Party (BNP) winning the polls. As such, the King and opposition parties were working on convincing Britain not to give Lesotho its independence in an effort to stop the BNP from attaining power (Aerni-Flessner, 2014). This then attests to the beginning of scuffles and tensions between the monarchy and government in Lesotho. The King argued, "people could not be given

independence while there were political problems in the country” (Mmutle, 2007:13). Similarly, opposition parties within the country shared similar opinions on their unwillingness to be governed by a minority government.

The Geographic location of Lesotho and South Africa’s interests

Geographically, the Mountain Kingdom is located within South Africa. This reality denies Lesotho the option of non-involvement and non-interference by South Africa in its internal affairs. In their study, Mahlakang and Solomon (2013:36) argue that the Mountain Kingdom and its more prominent neighbour, South Africa have come a long way in the past 61 years of the Kingdom’s liberation. For Selinyane (1998), this was evident in their good relations in the 1960s towards the early 1970s; to strained relations through the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. The two countries then saw improved relations in the late 1980s to the early 1990s; and up to today’s good relations (Selinyane, 1998:59). Since 1994, the Mountain Kingdom and South Africa have enjoyed cordial bilateral relations (Government ZA, 2010).

Hadebe (2011:37) in his study points out the realities of a country-within-another-country, arguing that the geographic position of the country has and will continue to pose challenges. In fact, it can be argued that the Mountain Kingdom’s location deems it susceptible to political and economic impact from South Africa (Mahlakang and Solomon, 2013). In the same breath, several writers have argued that the country’s dependence on its more prominent neighbour necessitates peaceful coexistence with South Africa (Matlosa, 1999; Selinyane, 1998; Matlosa, 1999). Pefole, in his study, demonstrates that South Africa has had strong economic and political influence over the Kingdom of the Sky, further arguing that in some instances, there has been direct interference (2004:50).

The geographic location and abundance of water in Lesotho, given the water crisis in South Africa, make the country’s interests in the Mountain Kingdom inevitable. Various South African governments have acted in ways that have often shown a vested interest in the mountainous kingdom’s water resources (Meissner, 2006; Meissner, 2016; Moyo, 2018). Lesotho’s water supplies various South African cities including Johannesburg, the country’s industrial hub. While South Africa’s interest in the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) has often been cited as the reason behind the country’s involvement, one cannot deny that volatility in Maseru would

have a devastating impact on South Africa (Matlosa, 2006). This is because of the high possibility that the conflict and, consequently, instability could spill over into South Africa. As such, it is in South Africa's best interest for stability and democracy to prevail in Lesotho, not only because of South Africa's water interests but more importantly for stability in the entire sub-region. This reality then suggests that the LHWP while a key feature is not the only aspect of the Lesotho-South African bilateral relationship.

For Mahao (2006), this hegemonic role of South Africa can be understood within the setting of the hierarchical nature of the 'Westphalia State Sovereignty'. Mahao (2006) puts forth the argument that states are ranked in order in the Westphalia system; as such, the higher-ranking states often dominate the lower-ranking states. The method further allows for the stronger states to stipulate the rules for weaker states and in this regard, carry out their hegemonic role. In instances where the more vulnerable states divert from the set rules, they are automatically subjected to chastisement by the regional superpower (Mahlakeng and Solomon, 2013). Similarly, Matlosa (2006) argues that more often than not smaller economies that are reliant on external resource flows often expose and compromise their governance agenda to undue influence from powerful external players.

Socio-economic dynamics in Lesotho

Southern Africa is generally composed of unequal societies, and this reality can often be attributed to colonial systems which enforced racial segregation thus creating social cleavages which today have formed a foundation for many of the violent conflicts in the sub-region (UNECA, 2014; Aeby, 2018; IMF, 2020). These social cleavages have persisted despite the independence of post-colonial states. As such, it is expected that socio-economic dissatisfaction will pose a risk to peace and security in the sub-region.

Moreover, the decline of employment opportunities coupled with economic stagnation has impeded the creation of economic opportunities and investments, further heightening the stakes for fierce political competition (Aeby, 2018). In light of this, one critical explanatory factor for the political volatility in the Kingdom can also be attributed to the weak, dependent economy and the country's socio-economic fabric (Matlosa, 1999; Hassan and Ojo, 2002; Kabemba, 2003; Matlosa, 2006). According to Aluju (1995), in comparison to other post-colonial nations in Africa, Lesotho has remained relatively weak. This can be credited to the fact that its colonialist master, Britain had not established any economic base be it manufacturing,

commercial nor agricultural which the post-colonial state would be able to benefit from. As such, it could be considered a dependent state par excellence. This reliant nature had placed limitations on what the state was equipped to achieve, regardless of the party in power after the attainment of liberation (Kabemba, 2003). Alexander Falconer Giles, Britain's last representative to Lesotho wrote on the eve of the Kingdom's independence:

“Britain’s neglect over the past century has led to Basutoland’s complete dependence on the Republic of South Africa, and that by granting independence with insufficient aid Britain is in fact “selling out” the territory to the Republic ... Impecunious independence will not be independence at all, and for this, Britain must bear the responsibility (Aerni-Flessner, 2014)”.

This persistent state of economic fragility has contributed to the political conflict leading to violence in the nation-state (Matlosa, 1999; Kabemba, 2003). The lack of employment opportunities, with the government being the largest employer in the country with means that the state can provide its inhabitant's very few economic prospects (Kabemba, 2003; Aerni-Flessner, 2014). For example, the formal economy in the Mountain Kingdom employs a mere 50,000 people (Gibbs, 2005; Kabemba, 2003: 16; Monyane, 2009, The World Bank, 2018). As such, one's prospects for employment in the country is enhanced with control of political power or connection to government. In turn, being in power permits the governing party to regulate access to available employment opportunities and public coffers. As a result, available employment opportunities are kept aside for members affiliated with the governing party. This situation produces rivalry among political party members for access to employment opportunities and further increases the probability of political violence (Kabemba, 2003).

Lack of employment opportunities combined with the reality of the government being the largest employer in a country where power within the government improves employment opportunities has contributed to a combative political culture, intensifying the chances of violence whenever power is threatened (Matlosa, 1999; Kabemba, 2003). This is accurately captured by Chris Landsberg who puts it as follows: “One key lesson from the Lesotho case is this: the smaller and poorer a country, irrespective of how homogeneous or heterogeneous a state, the more fierce and competitive are elections and the struggle for power (Landsberg, 2002)”.

As a result, elections in Lesotho have been reduced to a competition for employment opportunities which in turn increases the stakes for political competition. Consequently, the competition within and between political