COALITION POLITICS IN LESOTHO

A Multi-disciplinary
Study of Coalitions and
their Implications for
Governance

Editors

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABC	All Basotho Convention
ACP	Alliance of Congress Parties
AD	Alliance of Democrats
AG	Attorney General
AJA	Administration of the Judiciary Act
AMHC	All Mauritian Hindu Congress
ANC	African National Congress
BAC	Basutoland African Congress
BAP	Basotho Action Party
BBDP	Basotho Batho Democratic Party
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BDNP	Basotho Democratic National Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
CAM	The Comité d'Action Musulman
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CID	Criminal Investigation Division
CMW	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
CORD	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DC	Democratic Congress
DCEO	Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences
DPL	Democratic Party of Lesotho
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECF	Extended Credit Facility

ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
EMB	Election Management Body
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FORD	Forum for Restoration of Democracy
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRC	Human Rights Committee/Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Interim Political Authority
JIMC	Monitoring and Implementation Committee
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KSC	Kenya Social Congress
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
LCS	Lesotho Correctional Services
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
LHWC	Lesotho Highlands Water Commission
LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army
LMPS	Lesotho Mouted Police Service
LP	Labour Party
LPC	Lesotho People's Congress
LPF	Lesotho Para-Military Force
LWP	Lesotho Workers Party
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account

MEC	Movement for Economic Change
MFP	Marematlou Freedom Party
MMM	Mouvement Militant Mauricien
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
MPs	Members of Parliament
MSM	Mkenya Solidarity Movement
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NASA	National Super Alliance
NDPC	National Dialogue Planning Committee
NEC	National Executive Committee
NIP	National Independence Party
NLF	National Leaders' Forum
NRA	National Reforms Authority
NSS	National Security Services
NUL	National University of Lesotho
NYS	National Youth Service
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFD	Popular Front for Democracy
PM	Prime Minister
PMSD	Parti Mauricien Socialiste Democrate
PMU	Police Mobile Unit
PNU	Party of National Unity
PR	Proportional Representation
PSIC	Public Sector Investment Committee
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
RCL	Reformed Congress of Lesotho
RLDF	Royal Lesotho Defence Force

SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SGR	Standard Gauge Railway
SMM	Single Member Majoritarian
SMMEs	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises
SMP	Single Member Plurality
SOMILES	SADC Observer Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho
SOU	Special Operations Unit
TNA	The National Alliance
TRC	Transformation Resource Centre
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Forum Party
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
URP	United Republican Party
WDM	Wiper Democratic Movement

THE IMPLICATIONS OF PARTY CONFLICTS FOR COALITION GOVERNMENTS 10

Sofonea Shale

1 Introduction

The inevitability of conflict in human relations cannot be overemphasised. It is how conflict is handled that defines its implications for collaboration. This chapter looks at the implications of party conflicts for four coalition governments in Lesotho: 2012-2015; 2015-2017; 2017-2020 and 2020. The chapter examines the conflicts that the coalescing parties experienced in these different coalitions, how they were handled and their impact on governance. The chapter differentiates between different ways of dealing with conflicts and chooses conflict management for a conceptual framework. It conceptualises conflict handling and applies it to coalition, examines styles the parties employed to deal with conflict, and analyses the impact on the stability of the government.

The methodology for this chapter has been predominantly a desktop review. This has been complemented by interviews with a wide range of people: the political leadership, civil society, analysts, and youth as key informants.

The chapter argues that while conflict management featured prominently in the coalition agreements, it was not applied in times of conflict. This allowed conflict escalation which prevented coalition governments from operating and led to them finally collapsing. The chapter shows how failure to manage conflict led to the demise of each coalition government.

The chapter draws from that experience, interviews, and the citizens' voices on reforms to propose how best political parties can deal with conflicts to enhance the stability of coalition governments in Lesotho. It proposes that conflict handling and internal party democracy should form an integral part of the negotiation of coalition agreements. It starts off with conceptualisation and contextualisation. It characterises coalitions since 2012 to 2020, analyses the impact of conflict and its management on them, examines the prospects for effective conflict handling and concludes that Lesotho has the opportunity to correct the shortcomings identified.

2 Conceptual and contextual departure points

Conflict is perceived and defined differently by many writers. For example, Persuad and Turner (2013:28) define it as:

[A] disagreement between two or more parties in which one or all perceive(s) a denial of a right or resources or the absence of the capacity to obtain justice which leads to anger, hurt, hate and possibly verbal and violent reactions resulting in damage to person(s) emotionally, physically and or on the property.

This presents a typical situation for Lesotho wherein the BNP and the BCP set Basotho apart and turned them into enemies in the post-independence period. Thus, the Lesotho political experience has characteristically been injustice, discontent, and violence along political party lines. In another instance, Madalina (2016:1) defines conflict as: "some form of friction, disagreement, or discord arising between individuals or within a group when the beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group". This reflects the experience in Lesotho, where coalescing parties are of different origins and could not deal with conflicts encountered.

However, conflict can be positive depending on how it is handled. Conflict is inevitable and desirable (Murerwa & Guantai, 2014:1). Whether it becomes constructive or destructive is a choice. How is conflict handled? Conflict management is applied where the intention is not to end but deal with the conflict to prevent escalation and avert violence. Conflict resolution is applied where parties seek to end the conflict, while transformation is applied where conflict is resolved and new forms of relationships are built through structures. Thakore (2013:7) defines conflict management as a means to solve and avert collapse but preserve unity. This is necessary to sustain coalition governments. Conflict management uses party differences effectively and harnesses them to enhance stability and collaboration desperately needed in the coalition governments. Conflict management implies the integration of all factors which can contribute to averting the negativity of the conflict (Turlkalj, et al., 2015:510).

The different approaches to conflict, namely, force, rule, and interests-based applied in Lesotho, expose parties' behaviour in conflict. According to Ury, et al. (1988) the distinction among conflict approaches is glaring where power-based refers to one where the powerful determines the settlement; the rights-based is rule oriented while interest-based reconciles the needs of parties with their concerns and aspirations. These approaches are reflected in the different styles, five of which are generally acknowledged: adaptation, avoidance, collaboration, fight, and compromise (Madalina, 2016:810). Parties resort to one or a mixture consciously or unconsciously, but none is wrong or right; it is a matter of the appropriate style to adopt towards one or another for the conflict in question.

Conflict in Lesotho's politics is historical. The fiercely contested 1965 National Assembly elections between the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) and the Basutoland National Party (BNP) under First-Past-the-Post electoral model, won by the latter, marked the beginning of a violent political confrontation. Though BCP won 1970 polls, the Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan, refused to relinquish power, suspended the Constitution, and declared a state of emergency (Sixishe, 1982:67; Lenka, 1997:1). The people's reaction was suppressed through state violence. The leaders' decision later to annul the outcome of such elections (Jonathan, Mokhehle, Mohaleroe & Mofeli, 1970) without any consultation whatsoever exposed their unfettered power. Followed to the logical conclusion, force-based and rights-based approaches were used to deal with the conflict.

The advent of coalition governments in Lesotho did not occur on a clean slate but rather on the foundation of political conflict, which was not properly handled. The cancellation of the 1970 polls was followed by protracted instability characterised by two-decade civilian authoritarian regime and military dictatorship. Since leaders have moved from one party to another, this history has shaped the present situation. The return to constitutional order, after 1993, can be categorised into three periods: fierce interparty confrontation and weak state (1993-2001), a decade of stability and progress (2002-2012), and the coalition dilemmas (2012-2021).

The introduction of Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system brought relative stability to Lesotho politics (Matlosa, 2008), but coalition governments are a new normal with unique challenges. Makoa argues that MMP has not cured but opened a new side of political conflict (Mahlamenyane, 2018:28). Therefore, coalition governments in Lesotho are a product of unresolved conflicts and a manifestation of the effects of such.

The 2012 coalition, which lasted until 2015, followed a bitter fight within the then ruling LCD, the climax of which was split and formation of the DC shortly before the election. The removal of Prime Minister Mosisili from office intensified the rift between DC and LCD and created suspicion regarding how the ABC perceivably, victimised by Mosisili, would deal with him in opposition. Although the intra-party conflicts were observable in

the coalescing parties, the fallout between the Prime Minister and his Deputy collapsed the coalition government. The DC-led coalition made up of LCD and other five parties (2015-2017) faced inter-party conflict but collapsed due to conflict within the DC. The ABC-led a coalition of AD, BNP and RCL (2017-2020) but discontent within ABC followed and it collapsed coalition government.

First, political parties form coalitions, not by choice but due to inadequate electoral support to form a government alone or secondly due to the special dispensation to address deep political and ethical differences. The reasons necessitating coalitions are essential in seeking to understand why and how they fail. Three schools of thought: game theory, election systems theory and conflict transformation theory, used to analyse coalitions, have been generally applied to the Lesotho context (Deleglise, 2018:17).

In Lesotho, the coalitions are a result of inadequate electoral support for a single-party government. The coalitions are the temporary, decision-oriented, joint use of resources by two or more social units (Kang & Tripp, 2018:4), but the resultant conflict has been a challenge to handle in Lesotho. The two delicately distinct yet inseparable aspects of coalitions are *formation* and *enforcement* (Ray & Vohra, 2013:1). The conceptual and application weakness of agreements on conflict affects sustenance of coalitions. The exhaustion of the common agenda of the coalition parties, external shocks, and party change destroy an initially existing equilibrium (Muller & Miller, 2005:5). However, effective conflict handling can ameliorate these challenges and sustain coalitions.

The coalition agreements in Lesotho have acknowledged the inevitability of conflict and provided for how they would be handled. However, practically, they became destructive, not constructive, due to the manner in which they are handled. Deutsch (1994:14) differentiates three types of conflict which determine whether the conflict becomes constructive or destructive as follows:

Cooperative – the party has a positive interest in the welfare of the other as well as its own; the *individualistic* – the party has an interest in doing as well as it can for itself and is unconcerned about the welfare of the other, and the *competitive* – the party has an interest in doing better than the other.

Clearly, parties need choice and commitment to the approach to have a constructive outcome. Avoided conflicts tend to escalate (Fisher, 2000:1), resulting in fear and defensiveness reflecting individualistic and competitive attitudes. Therefore, conflict handling is not just an expression but a conceptual and practical guide.

The success of dealing with conflict, regardless of the style applied, lies in the soundness of both theory and practice. First, the conflict has to be understood. This entails conflict definition and analysis, which give attention to the history, context, parties involved and the nature of their role in the conflict, issues of contention, power dynamics, the stage of

the conflict or level of escalation (Moore,1996). It is generally believed that conflict, well understood, is almost effectively handled. Once clearly understood, parties can determine whether the conflict can be best managed, resolved or transformed. Besides, understanding conflict is a prelude to the generation of options for a possible solution. Secondly, the generation of options for constructive outcome largely depends on the competitive-cooperative attitude of parties to the conflict and its end:

Collaborating mode is best when parties wish to cooperate to achieve a win-win outcome and ensure each party is content. It seeks to obtain a lasting solution taking into account the interest of both parties involved in the conflict like the integrative and problem-solving modes ... Competing mode has been associated with a win-lose outcome and the need to defend your position (Murerwa & Guantai, 2019:753).

Typically, parties enmeshed in conflict find it difficult to work it out themselves. This brings to fore the significance of the third party. The third party can take different approaches, and this continuum elaborates this point. The *dictatorship* is where the third party determines what the solution shall be and enforces compliance. The *litigation* where a judge listens to the representatives of parties, applies the law, and imposes binding decisions. The *arbitration* is similar to litigation, except that the parties agree on who the third party should be. The other is *negotiation*. Pruitt (1981: xi-xii) defines negotiation as a form of decision making where parties find a solution to their conflict. Similar to negotiation in determining the third party is mediation. According to the United Nations (2012:4), mediation is a process where the third party helps parties in conflict to prevent, manage or resolve conflict. It is not all third-party interventions that bring constructive outcomes. Nathan provides a well-received 'six strategic principles' third-party schema:

mediators should not be partisan; the parties must consent to mediation and the choice of the mediator; conflict cannot be resolved quickly and easily; the parties must own the settlement; mediators should not apply punitive measures; and mediation is a specialised activity (Nathan,1999:2).

This mediation catalogue provides evidence that dealing with conflict should not be taken for granted. It is a specialised function that needs expertise, skill, and some authoritative stature of those who may be third parties. Since the stability of coalition governments in Lesotho is at the core of SADC-led reforms, this topic is significant. Unfortunately, the involvement of SADC in Lesotho has been for long with little if any progress. Therefore, examining conflict and its impact on coalition governments may benefit this process.

3 Characterising conflict in the coalition governments in Lesotho: 2012-2020

The four coalition governments share a similar background. They were all formed immediately after a certain conflict. The circumstances under which they were negotiated were also similar. The parties signed agreements detailing how they would work within

a short time of 14 days. There are similarities and differences in the nature of conflicts the coalitions faced, and how they dealt with them was an admixture of experience. This experience shows that the section turns to discerning the conflict dynamics of each and synthesising the experiences to characterise them.

3.1 Political foes entering into friendly agreements in pursuit of office

The political parties that formed coalition governments were once foes before signing agreements. The obligation that parliament shall meet within 14 days of elections Constitution (sec 82(1) (b)) makes coalition negotiation a haste encounter. Prasad (2014) correctly observes the short time for parties to form a government after elections as a cause for concern.

The hasty negotiations process pressurises parties to sign agreements prematurely. For example, “the ABC which has replaced BNP as the LCD’s bitter and formidable foe” (Makoa, 2008:51) swiftly got to power with LCD. Shortly before the split of LCD and the formation of DC, which was less than three months before elections, LCD and ABC were rivals, and the question could be whether they had time to transition from being foes to being friends. Mothibe (2016:71) defines the ABC-LCD coalition simply as a marriage of convenience against Mosisili. It will be shown that this was not the only one that was driven more by avoiding certain political actors than common policy considerations.

The agreements were reached in haste without critical and deep reflection of parties entering into coalitions. Kapa and Shale (2014:106) agree with Prasad (2014:3) on his criticism of the 2012 coalition for overly concentrating on management and governance of the coalition neglecting policy. Contestations over power and its application are sharper than policy differences. Tolo (2021) argues that parties in Lesotho coalesce not because they agree on a programme to achieve but self-interest, which they clash upon. This is echoed by Matsietsa (2021), arguing that coalition is a fairly new concept to the parties used to single-party government and it is not supported by law. But Shale (2021) argues that the ideological differences, anger and self-interests combined knocked the ABC-led coalition while the DC-led was purely based on succession.

The 2012 ABC-led a coalition of LCD and BNP defying the old congress-national divide pattern (Kapa & Shale, 2014:101). However, this coalition was not arrived at considering the pre-existing differences and similarities between and among political parties. Similar scepticism was cast on the DC-LCD courtship. “In the twist of ironies, the LCD and the DC, which were sworn enemies following the DC’s usurpation of power from the LCD in an ugly split in 2012, joined forces and engineered the fall of the ABC-led coalition government” (Shale, 2016:38).

In 2015, when DC and LCD, together with the other five parties, coalesced, theirs was a consummation of the idea, which started earlier when LCD decided to break ranks with the ABC and BNP in the previous coalition. The other five parties that joined the DC-LCD coalition have been a bloc aligned to the ABC-led coalition. At the formation of DC and immediately before the 2012 elections, the DC-MFP leaders blew fists at the meeting organised by the Christian Council of Lesotho (Tlali, 2012). The latter has been an outspoken critic of Mosisili's administration at LCD, and has made several attempts to moot a motion of no-confidence against him and lately criticised Mosisili's increased security.

The ABC and BNP had no history of confrontation. In fact, there is a strong belief that BNP, not LCD, lost many members to ABC at its formation. However, whilst Tom Thabane was still with LCD, he and the party were branded thieves, surrogates, and traitors by the BNP for rigging 1998 elections and conspiring with South Africa to attack Lesotho under Operation BOLEAS in 1998. Before coalescing with Tom Thabane (ABC), Monyane Moleleki (AD), the DC deputy leader as he then was, had been a prime suspect hunted for diamond related offences and corruption during the Thabane regime.

Although parties have had such a conflictual history, they suddenly entered into agreements without dealing with the entrenched differences. This is not different from the ABC-DC rivalry, which paved the way for the sudden grand coalition. According to Delglis (2018:30), parties were concerned with power-sharing, not history, workable and irreconcilable issues at the formulation of agreements.

The coalition agreements have been signed by parties that have neither healed nor moved on from the conflicts, leading to their separation. LCD, itself an offshoot of the BCP, had given birth to LPC, ABC, and DC due to failure to deal with intra-party conflict. The BNP had given birth to NIP, NPP and the BDNP. However, these parties did not recognise that their already challenged conflict-management arrangements might even be more exposed once they had closer friends and foes to work with. The DC, which inherited its constitution from its parent party, had the same limitation as parties that it coalesced with, which were either the result of unresolved conflicts or had experienced the same internally.

The conflicts that led to the demise of these agreements are primarily internal, but the conflicts from the external causes had a role in the instability of governance.

3.2 Recognition of conflict handling mechanisms in the coalition agreements

The 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2020 coalition agreements detailed how power would be shared and collaborative governance handled. All these agreements provided for conflict handling arrangements in them. The insertion of conflict handling mechanisms in the agreements is examined with a view to understanding their applicability, effectiveness, and efficacy.

The ABC, LCD and BNP coalition recognised the potential for conflict and provided in the agreement for conflicts among partners to be referred to the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (ABC, LCD and BNP Coalition Agreement, 2012:9). The primary function of the committee was to ensure implementation and facilitate dialogue and trust-building among the coalition partners. It included, over and above dealing with conflict, facilitation of dialogue, trust-building, and the implementation of the agreement. In this provision, the committee mandate was too broad and exceeded conflict handling. The implementation task was problematic, more so when the mechanism lacking institutional-legal arrangements does not have clear lines of liaison with the party and government structures like national executive committees and the cabinet responsible for implementing the agreement.

The DC led a coalition of seven parties (DC, LCD, BCP, LPC, MFP, NIP, PFD) which, in the same fashion, established a Monitoring Group to handle conflicts (DC, et al., 2015:11). In anticipation of conflict, the ABC-led 2017 coalition partners also agreed to establish an Independent Mediation Mechanism made up of people who were capable of independent thinking, wise, and had the expertise (ABC, et al., 2017:8). The sections in this agreement, dedicated to the settlement of disputes, only provide that it shall be referred to the Joint Monitoring Committee or mediation if not resolved whenever there is a conflict. However, the composition, functioning and approach of such a committee were not defined.

In anticipation of conflict, the grand coalition of 2020 contemplated an Oversight Committee to conciliate any dispute with support of an Independent Mediation Mechanism (ABC & DC, 2020:9). The provision was silent on how the structure would be composed, how it would function and what conflict-handling approach it would follow.

Although these coalitions acknowledged the inevitability of conflict in the partnership, which was commendable, the provisions did not provide adequate clarity on how the conflict would be addressed. The conflict-handling mechanisms were not instructive in terms of what approach they should pursue – power-based, rights-based or interest-based. This conflict-handling orientation is critical because it shows the attitude of parties to the conflict. The silence of agreements on this aspect made the proposed mechanisms vulnerable to manipulation by parties during the conflict.

Traditionally, political parties in Lesotho do not handle conflicts directly and effectively. Rather, they fall either by choice or default for avoidance and/or fight conflict styles, resulting in destructive outcomes. This is explained by Kapa (2013:63) in his argument that parties in Lesotho have developed what may be described as a “culture of splitting”. The net effect of parties choosing to avoid conflicts or fights instead of handling them effectively is collapse or separation. The proliferation of political parties in Lesotho emanating from

splits is common (Matlosa, 2003:27). The conflict mechanism in the coalition agreement does not seem to be adequate for the intra- and inter-party conflict emanating from elite political rivalry that has shaped political discourse in Lesotho (APRM, 2010:55).

The provisions for conflict handling in all the agreements have given nothing more than an expression of intent to note conflict as one of the areas to agree upon. The provisions have not defined the orientation from which the parties would deal with the conflict – management, resolution or transformation. They were not clear on the of conflict handling mechanisms; they did not consider any principles highlighted by Nathan (1999:2).

The structural limitations of the conflict mechanisms explain why parties appeared aloof to conflict handling despite the provisions in the agreements. Although parties declared that they would deal with coalition conflicts in the coalition agreements, such declaration was not adequate.

The conflict resolution mechanisms contemplated the agreements and were never established except for one in the first coalition. In the 2012 coalition, Samonyane Ntsekele, the Prime Minister's Political Adviser-ABC, Mpho Malie-LCD and Mr Chaka Ntsane-BNP constituted the JMIC. However, this team, made up of members of capable and respected calibre, could not help saving the "Letsema coalition" from collapse, not because of incompetence but rather the problematic level of insertion in the party and subsequently coalition apparatus. The trio was very much conversant with issues during the turbulent 2014-2015 period. It predicted that the coalition would not survive the conflict at hand, but its hands were tied by the undefined position and modalities of intervention (Ntsekele, 2021).

The subsequent coalition did not have the structure set up because nobody talked about or even wanted it. The attitude of political parties towards conflict, blamed on lack of internal democracy and authoritarianism by leadership (Likoti, 2005) and failure to deal with conflict resulting in proliferation and party splits (Kapa, 2013), are reflected in the coalitions. Many writers agree that political parties in Lesotho split because conflicts are not addressed, but dominant actors seek to have their way if the resolution of such conflicts is not successfully avoided (Shale, 2021:35). Put differently, with the elaborate provision, parties could have been better driven to decisively deal with their conflicts, compromise, collaborate and find ways through which their interests could co-exist and coalition governments could be sustained. Muller and Miller (2005:3) observe that: "treating political parties as unitary actors in coalition politics is highly unrealistic and therefore inadequate in many instances". Lesotho's situation confirms the observation. The parties remain largely "ailing" individual organisations rather than part of a collective in the coalition government.

Besides, this inadequate provision of conflict mechanisms did not make conflict handling part of the coalition's life. As parties developed and matured in other aspects of coalition government, conflict handling lagged behind. Hence they could not cope in time of need.

3.3 Conflicts experienced and how they were handled

Given the foregoing discussion, the focus now turns to look at how the conflicts were handled. Further, the concentration will be on how such impacted the stability of the coalition governments.

The conflict that took the 2012-2015 coalition down was a fallout between the Prime Minister and his Deputy that was neither defined nor addressed. The failure of SADC was first in the definition of the conflict. In this way, all the efforts made on the improperly defined conflict could only exacerbate the situation. The coalition partners who have now turned into belligerent parties strived to insulate SADC envoys from civil society because each wanted their narrative to prevail. The parties wanted a win-lose solution in their favour, which Murerwa and Guantai (2019:753) define as collaborating against competing attitudes that result in constructive and destructive outcomes. On the other hand, civil society looked for the progress of the country beyond naïve partisan gains. Given the centrality of SADC as the third party in the conflict between ABC and LCD in the same coalition, the target of each party was to have SADC understand the conflict from their vantage, not reality point.

The foregoing narrative explains how the conflict started and how it escalated until it reached crisis level. Further, it also shows how the external mediator/facilitator did not save the situation, but allowed the problem to lead to the protracted coalition governments' instability.

The ABC-led coalition experienced conflict where LCD leader Mothetjoa Metsing, also the Deputy Prime Minister, complained about consultation in making key decisions by the Prime Minister. He complained about removing Government Secretary Motlatsi Ramafole and other senior officials without non-consultation (Metsing, 2014). This did not seem to be an isolated case, rather a pattern, because shortly thereafter, the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to the Christian Council of Lesotho warning that LCD would leave the coalition government "if nothing is done to change the situation" (Metsing, 2014:3). The ABC also wanted the Deputy Prime Minister to answer corruption charges in court.

At the time, ABC was also experiencing intra-party conflicts, some of which were orchestrated by an informal yet powerful inner circle of the party known as the "Resource Group". It was alleged that it had influenced many key and sometimes unpopular decisions in the name of the party. Allegedly through the same influence, the Prime Minister sacked two Ministers from the cabinet, namely Mophato Monyake, who formed his party, Progressive

Democrats, and Thabiso Litsiba, who defected to the DC. This reduced the ABC majority, which coincided with the ABC-LCD feuds crowned by the LCD-DC alliance, signed for the change of government, which made the situation desperate for the ABC. At the time, there was also a looming motion of no-confidence. The Prime Minister invoked section 83 of the Constitution and prorogued parliament for nine months, thus blocking LCD and DC to pass the motion of no confidence in him and the government.

The civil society organisations raised their voice to SADC Troika Summit sitting in Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. Ahead of the 2014 SADC Summit, President Pohamba, Chair of SADC Troika and President Zuma, who flew into Lesotho, were misled by the parties to understand the conflict as non-consultation between Prime Minister and his Deputy, yet that was only a manifestation. Lesotho needed to be helped to deal with Prime Minister-Deputy fallout and be set on the reforms agenda (LCN, 2014:2). However, SADC did not consider this; rather, it agreed with belligerent parties that elections would be a solution. By this move, SADC missed the point of where the conflict was, and suffocated the local processes. For the belligerent parties, elections would be the way of getting rid of another conflict.

The regional body called for the reopening of parliament, dropping off the DC-LCD agreement, signing of Maseru Facilitation, signing of Maseru Security Accord, and bringing forward elections. The New Zealand reform initiative already afoot was removed from the cards only to be recommended later to be prioritised. The turning point was when on 29 August 2014, the King, in terms of Section 12(1) (a) of the Lesotho Defence Force Act and acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, Thomas Thabane, removed Lieutenant General Tlali Kamoli and appointed Brigadier Maaparankoe Mahao, as he then was, as Commander of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) (Legal Notice No. 64:2014 and Legal Notice No. 41 of 2012). Although the Deputy Prime Minister went on air insisting that Kamoli was still the Commander, Kamoli refused to leave office; instead, according to Mothibe (2017:70), he attempted a coup, a fact Kamoli (2014) blatantly denied.

The ABC-LCD fallout could have been effectively addressed if the conflict mechanism setup had been properly empowered. The fact that the fallout had caused tension even within the conflicting parties also demonstrated that it was a workable conflict. On the basis of collaborating, not competing attitudes, identifying convergences and divergences could have led parties to a win-win situation. Although officially LCD appeared discontent about the ABC leadership, not all members of the LCD agreed with efforts to dissolve the coalition. Some cabinet members from LCD wanted the LCD leader to face court cases and allow the coalition to continue. The formation of RCL led by the former LCD Secretary General, Keketso Rantšo, was a case in point. Rantšo (2021) believed that the coalition agreement was not adequately clear to deal with the conflicts and saw immediate establishment and empowerment of the Monitoring Group as something that could have been helpful.

The Joint Monitoring Group tried to deal with the conflict, but the pressure was too much for the informal structure against the national executive committees, cabinet, and later SADC which all had vested interest in how the outcome favoured them and not so much how the conflict would be managed, resolved, or even transformed. Ntsekele (2021) argues that it is not like the group was not aware of the conflict and its potential. He contends that the advice was given but not considered. Since the conflict was not addressed, it kept on escalating to crisis level.

The SADC is somewhat responsible for the demise of the first coalition. This started with the conflict's inaccurate diagnosis, which led to a series of other decisions and activities escalating the conflict. The regional body took Lesotho to the brought-forward elections on the assumption the Kingdom needed that as belligerent parties claimed. Here, each party wanted elections, hoping that was the legitimate way of divorcing the other. However, the chosen route had the effects from the simple collapse of the ABC-led coalition to the complex challenges that still keep SADC in Lesotho even today.

The problem of external intervention cannot be overemphasised. As Botcharova notes: "[t]he international community often sees people in the regions of conflict as passive recipients, rather than active resources in peacebuilding..." (Botcharova, 2001:272). The argument that official state-based diplomatic efforts have proven to be limited to tackle internal conflicts, and they are circumscribed by political interests and other problems caused by internal conflicts (Rupesinghe, 1997:187) is relevant to Lesotho. For an external intervention to be effective, it should strive not to exclude but harness the capabilities of civil society and other groupings working in peace and community mobilisation.

Lesotho civil society has shown potential in dealing with complex conflict situations. Following the unceremonious departure of the SADC Eminent Person, Sir Ketumile Masire in 2009, Lesotho's civil society picked up the process. CSOs rescued the SADC process from collapse and invited the church to lead while playing a technical role. The local mediation accommodated SADC back to give political clout to the process but demanded that the regional body play a quiet and non-assertive facilitators' role (Odendaal, 2013:7). This empowering arrangement allowed SADC to facilitate dialogue through locals while it remained a guarantor of the process. According to Nathan:

The complexity of intra-state conflict and peace-making poses two main challenges to the international mediators. First, they should acquire a thorough understanding of local history, politics, cultures, and personalities before assuming a substantive role. Second, they should refrain from rushing the process and making precipitate interventions. However critical the situation and however obvious the basis of a settlement might appear, they should not attempt to thrust solutions on the parties or pressurise them into signing an accord prematurely (Nathan, 2000:9).

Coming back to Lesotho in 2014, SADC forgot the local capacity demonstrated in the post-Masire dialogue. As the state-led entity, SADC was sold on the idea of side-lining civil society; hence, it fell into the external intervention trap. It could have easily been avoided by relying on institutional memory. Although several agreements were signed under SADC during that period, the conflict was not resolved. The impact of the SADC blunder in the definition of the problem manifested in the subsequent coalitions. In the subsequent conflicts, 2015-2017; 2017-2020 and 2020 to date, the parties have not attempted adaptation, collaboration or even compromise styles to deal with the conflict.

The DC-led coalition faced inter-party conflict but what brought it to its knees was the intra-party conflict within DC itself and the failure as argued later. The second party in the coalition, the LCD, was not spared from the internal feuds. The tension between the leader and the Secretary General saw a split of LCD and the formation of MEC. Generally, the 2015-2017 coalition occurred within a very volatile situation. As Mothibe notes: "The second Coalition government of 2015-2017 was equally unstable" (Mothibe, 2016:70). The DC Leader and Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili seemed to have been leading the coalition of seven relatively well until the unattended conflict within the DC manifested and escalated to crisis level. Moleleki, The DC Deputy Leader, had not been happy with the fact that Mosisili led the government after the 2015 elections. He thought and expected that Mosisili would step down after elections to allow Moleleki to reign.

The allegedly corrupt awarding of government fleet management to the Bidvest car hire services divided the DC leadership into two factions. However, this divide understandably went along with the already existing discontent about benefits accruing from coalition power-sharing. Those who felt that the Bidvest issue was used to peddle corruption were generally those who believed that DC deserved better than what it was getting from the coalition. The reality was that Moleleki was not the Prime Minister, not even the Deputy in the DC-led government. At the same time, Metsing, way junior by credentials and numbers, a defector who earlier revolted against Mosisili, was second in command. This was seen as an insult to the disciples of Moleleki. They were to benefit from his inauguration. For this faction, within the DC, the stay of Mosisili in power was seen as a creed and a simple plan to bar Moleleki from ascending to the premiership. This conflict has gone unattended for too long in DC, just like many party conflicts. It spilled into the LCD, and it finally affected the coalition. The faction revolted against Mosisili and mooted a move to remove him from the party leadership. This attracted sympathy for Mosisili from other coalition members, with the LCD leader being at the forefront.

The leader of LCD led the DC and the coalition partners' march of confidence on Mosisili, an act that isolated Moleleki. Ironically, the majority of the national executive committee of DC did not attend the event. The Moleleki faction sat in the national executive committee

meeting, suspended Mosisili and claimed to have withdrawn the DC from the coalition it was leading to form a new one with the ABC. The contest over DC leadership ended in the courts of law, which endorsed Mosisili as the leader. Mosisili suspended Moleleki and other committee members, and the special conference confirmed their six-year suspension. The election of Mathibeli Mokhothu as an interim Deputy Leader marked the end of the road for the long-lasting political friends in Mosisili and Moleleki.

Instead of challenging the glaring irregularities of the special conference, the Moleleki faction formed the Alliance of Democrats, crossed the floor in parliament and successfully moved the motion of no-confidence in Mosisili. As a result, Mosisili could not just hand over power to Moleleki, whom the motion proposed as an alternative Prime Minister on a platter. Instead, he advised the dissolution of parliament and elections.

The DC-led coalition collapsed due to the passage of a motion of no-confidence in parliament orchestrated by DC members who jumped ship and formed AD. Right from the initial stage, no attempt has been made to define the conflict, understand, and generate options. Instead, factional battles when one strived to defeat the other ensued. The conflict mechanism provision in the agreement did not work because not even the contemplated structure was formed (Rakuoane, 2021). In this way, the traditional conflict-handling styles leading to party splits and proliferation were implored, this time leading to the demise of the coalition.

In 2017-2020, Thabane abused his position of power. The Lesotho government was crippled by “bedroom politics”. The wife of the Prime Minister interfered with governance matters and meddled with party affairs. This created a conflict that the party was not only unable to solve but which removed Thabane from the office and destroyed ABC as an organisation.

The ABC, AD, BNP and RCL coalition enjoyed international approval and had a moral high ground when it entered governance. However, this was not so much for what it deserved but mainly due to the errors of the previous regime. This coalition came determined to correct almost all the wrongs that the previous regime committed. As a result, Thabane got the opportunity to demonstrate how much better he was compared to Mosisili. The relatively negative performance of Mosisili, mainly his mishandling of the unruliness of the military, placed Thabane well to prove himself better. Besides, this new coalition seemed to have given Moleleki comfort, seeing Mosisili and Metsing out of government. It was somehow a confirmation that he had won the battle in which both were ganging up against him. However, the coalition failed to utilise this relatively conducive environment due to its proneness and vulnerability to conflict.

The coalition seemed to be pulling well together on the government front until the national executive committee elections contest in the ABC became heated. The contest for the

vacant Deputy Leader position was seen as a determinant for the future leadership of the ABC. The leader and his faction did all they could to block Nqosa Mahao from contesting, but the court approved his participation only hours ahead of the conference. It has to be noted that this was not the conflict itself but manifestation while it had already taken shape, developed, and progressed. The candidate unwanted by the leader, Mahao, won the highly contested position (LCN, 2019:6). In this contest Mahao beat Moeketsi Majoro, now the Prime Minister, Motlohi Maliehe and Prince Maliehe.

The ABC lost the opportunity to reconcile when the losing faction refused to hand over power. The election outcome was challenged, but the courts endorsed the elections facilitated independently by the Lesotho Council of NGOs. The contestations within the party characterised by the court petitions, party infighting and violence within the party structures, spilt over into the government. The undue interference of the Prime Minister's wife in both party and governance affairs complicated the situation.

The faction of the leader did not only lose the battle, but the coalition collapsed, the leader himself was removed from the premiership, and the party entered into a new coalition led by a non-executive committee member.

In the ABC Deputy Leader-led faction's orchestrated move, which was also labelled graceful stepping down of the Prime Minister, the ABC, BNP and RCL in parliament pulled out and withdrew their support to the coalition. This was in lieu of a motion of no-confidence. The next move was for the ABC, BNP and RCL together with DC and their allies to support the new ABC-DC coalition. Effectively this was negotiated by one of the factions of the ABC though all ABC members voted. This paved the way for the formation of a grand coalition between ABC and the DC featuring allies of both to the exclusion of AD and the LCD. Thabane, as the ABC leader and the Prime Minister, had failed to control the situation, which escalated to the level where his wife commanded one of the factions of the party, paralysing the government and holding the party to ransom. The ill-health of the Prime Minister made him vulnerable to manipulation by the wife and the cohorts. As a result, many bad decisions were either made in his name or he was pushed into making them. One of those was for the ABC Leader to refuse to accept the executive committee elected by the conference. It was this displaced and abused political power that ABC could not resolve that hampered governance and the party at the same time. Had Thabane sat down with ABC leadership and sought ways of averting the wife's undue influence, a different destiny could have been reached.

Although the ABC may wish to be a unified body, it is not. The intra-party conflict that led to the demise of the ABC, AD, BNP and RCL coalition paving the way for the ABC-DC grand coalition still exists though changing in form and shape.

The ABC had a dysfunctional leadership. The leader did not attend executive committee meetings, and when he did, he was whispered to and written notes by one faction to pronounce which decisions should be made. The ABC did not command respect in all its MPs, and the government leader became a non-executive committee member. The situation was deliberately left so for internal party-political expediency. The choice of the cabinet members was contested bitterly within the party. As the Prime Minister, Dr Moeketsi Majoro was expected to handle the intra-party conflict and ensure that all performed well in their positions, yet he could not call the shots. He fired the RCL leader and replaced her with the ABC member who defeated the RCL leader in the constituency. Further, he replaced one former First Lady, Prince Maliehe as the Minister of Defence, with yet another loyalist Lekhetho Mosito. This has been received with a fierce contest by members who did not support him for the position of a leader. Indeed, he succumbed to the pressure and removed the new minister in two weeks.

Both Mosisili and Thabane lost power, not because the conflicts were insurmountable but because of the inadequate mechanisms in the coalition agreements. These ineffective mechanisms left parties with no alternative but to relapse to the traditional ways of dealing with conflicts. Motsamai (2021) contends that the Thabane-Metsing conflict and the Mosisili-Moleleki internal conflict, and the discontent over succession were not addressed. Unfortunately, the current grand coalition is not immune from similar challenges.

4 Impact of conflict and its management on coalition governments

The coalition governments in Lesotho have not been able to finish their terms in office not because it is impossible to finish the term for coalition governments. The reason is that parties in the coalition faced conflicts but were not able to handle them effectively. Given Lesotho's conflict-ridden history, parties are used to conflict. What has come out clearly is that the failure to handle conflict and the internal democracy deficit resulting in party splits and proliferation has a similar effect on the stability of coalitions. The conflict has been universal to the coalition parties and consistent over time. Delgisie (2018:40) contends that at one time, all 2012-2015 ABC-led coalition members were struggling with intra-party conflict with dire impact on the functionality of government.

As argued above, conflict is inevitable wherever there is human interaction. The coalition government parties in Lesotho are not exceptional. The peculiarity and similarity of the situation in Lesotho is that conflicts were neither addressed nor attempted. In all the cases analysed here none has been defined and accurately so, analysed, and solution attempted. Matlosa (2008:46) argues that if the conflict is not managed constructively, it develops

into a crisis with a deleterious impact on democracy. This is real for conflicts that Lesotho coalition governments have been faced with. The conflicts escalated to the crisis level until coalition governments collapsed before their time.

The SADC-led reforms process, aimed at helping the country to be able to deal with conflicts better, is itself not an easy yet very necessary route.

While the Lesotho national dialogue process aimed at facilitating the implementation of the multi-stakeholder reforms which includes political parties and different stakeholders was started with the support of SADC in 2018, the continued infighting between the government and opposition parties also threatens the process. The reform process had stalled due to the bickering between the government and opposition over the latter's demands for a Government of National Unity (GNU) and an independent Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Feyissa, 2019:10).

The inter-party conflicts during all coalitions have been characterised by contests aimed at blocking each other. During the 2012-14 coalition, DC, as an opposition, was determined to break it. Critical was drawing the security forces into the inter-party conflict (Matlosa, 2016:143) where Police backed the Prime Minister while his Deputy was supported by the army (Vhumbunu, 2015:6). Later the ABC, BNP and RCL in opposition fiercely challenged the DC-led coalition government. They did all they could to bring it to its knees. The ABC, AD, BNP and RCL coalition was similarly not spared until the grand coalition replaced it.

The impact of intra and inter-party conflict and its management on the stability of the coalition government is glaring in the Lesotho context. The foregoing overview of coalition governments and the synopsis of intra-and inter-party conflict provides a basis for the conclusion that providing for conflict mechanisms in the agreements was not adequate. Sellinyane (2021) believes that coalitions in Lesotho since 2012 were brought to their knees by conflicts that were not resolved. However, what is fundamental for the analysis of the collapse of these coalitions is not the conflict but the cause. He argues that parties fight over the sharing of spoils on the looting of the state. This argument makes a lot of sense and falls within the main argument that no attempt has been made to deal with that which parties differ on.

5 Prospects for effective conflict handling

It is widely believed that the proliferation of political parties in Lesotho has to be dealt with, internal party democracy be strengthened, and conflict-management capacity be built (Matlosa & Shale, 2008:151; Kapa, 2013:73; Deleglise, 2018:45; Kapa & Shale, 2014; Shale, 2008:122-23). This resonates with the concerns raised by Basotho in the consultations for reforms.

In particular, Basotho are concerned about the proliferation of political parties, their number and their size. This is evidenced by the citizens' recommendations that the number of supporters required for registration of a political party be changed from 500 to 5 000 on the one hand and on the other that a law that governs the registration ensures party compliance with set standards and controls unhealthy proliferation yet without curtailing democracy and freedom of association (NDPC, 2019:7-8) be enacted. This proposal presents an excellent opportunity for party regulation and guidance. In effect, this proposal shall relieve an Election Management Body from regulatory functions bestowed on it by the National Assembly Electoral Act (2011), which it does not effectively do anyway (Matlho, Motsamai, Shale, 2018). Another important submission on the reforms is that Lesotho should "create a new chapter on political conflicts that will create a structure on conflict resolution or look into the possibility of reviewing the Council of State" (NDPC, 2019:3). This is in line with the previous recommendations that there be national peace architecture (Vision 2020, 2004; PRS, 2004; APRM, 2010; NSDP, 2012).

These proposals carefully crafted into the law have the potential to improve conflict management in Lesotho. For the contemplated Registrar of Political Parties to be helpful, it has to do both regulatory, backup and support roles on democracy and conflict handling. The proposed coalition regulation laws (NDPC, 2019:3) should incorporate conflict handling and agreement negotiation.

6 Conclusion

The coalition governments in Lesotho inherited the weakness of handling conflicts from the constituting parties. Although all coalitions collapsed before their term because of conflict, none of them was unresolvable or unmanageable; it is just that the parties did not attempt them. This seems to have been made possible by the poor insertion of conflict mechanisms in the agreements. Parties did anticipate in all coalitions that conflict might arise. Still, the mechanisms to deal with it were weak in terms of orientation and arrangements through which they link and relate with existing power structures both in parties and government.

Given this weakness, the agreements' provisions on conflict were hardly applied. In all but one agreement, the conflict structures were not even set up. Effectively, parties found themselves using self-help means exacerbating, not ameliorating the conflict. The SADC intervention was relevant, but its energy was excruciating and protracted instead of ameliorating the conflict in Lesotho.

The reforms that the country is undergoing have the potential to change the situation. However, this is not given. The reforms process has to be carefully managed to deliver the desired changes.

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