

“GRASSROOTS DIPLOMACY BETWEEN LESOTHO AND SOUTH AFRICA : THE DISTRICT LIAISON COMMITTEES.”

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ABSTRACT

Cross-border conflicts on the African continent have increased tremendously in the post-colonial years. The widespread border conflicts on the African continent have been attributed to the arbitrariness with which Africa's national boundaries were drawn during the colonial period. The colonial boundaries have left the doors open for perpetual conflicts among African states.

This thesis proposes to investigate the prospects of grassroots diplomacy as an option of dealing with border conflicts with specific reference to the case of Lesotho/South Africa border relations. This is done by critically evaluating the role the District Liaison Committees (DLCs) have played in border relations between Lesotho and South Africa. The Lesotho and South African governments have institutionalised the resolution of border conflicts at grassroots level through the establishment of the DLCs. The DLCs consists of representatives of border communities in Lesotho and South Africa.

The paper introduces a not so familiar concept of involving people at grassroots levels in the conducting of diplomacy between the two neighbouring countries. The central issue implicit in this paper is that grassroots diplomacy is succeeding in the case of Lesotho and South Africa. The DLCs have managed to reduce tension between the two countries along the borders which had existed over a long period of time, thereby, relieving the central governments of some of their duties. The thesis contents that high level conventional diplomacy is not always the answer to cross-border conflicts. The example of Lesotho and South Africa could be followed by other African countries in similar situations.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Diplomacy

The term 'diplomacy' has been used to denote several different things. According to Nicolson (1939:13) some people use it as a synonym for foreign policy. It may also be used to imply negotiations. Sometimes people use it to denote the processes and machinery by which such negotiation is carried out. Some people use it to imply a branch of the foreign service. Another interpretation of the term refers to skill in the conduct of international negotiation. Nicolson sees diplomacy as an essential element in any reasonable relation between man and man and between nation and nation. He argues that the function of diplomacy is to manage relations between independent states by processes of negotiation.

According to Berridge (1995:1), "diplomacy is the conduct of international relations by negotiation rather than by force, propaganda or recourse to law, and by other peaceful means (such as gathering information or engendering goodwill) which are either directly or indirectly designed to promote negotiation." It is an activity which is regulated by custom and by law. It is flexible. Although it has been a professionalised activity, non-professionals have come to play an important part in it.

The importance of diplomacy was realised by states a long time ago. It is not a new concept at all. Even states which are not on friendly terms have recognised that they have a mutual interest in communicating with each other, verbally and nonverbally. Diplomacy is not simply about negotiation. It also involves "... gathering information, clarifying intentions and, among other things, looking after citizens in distress in foreign countries (Berridge,1994:10).

Different ways in which diplomacy can be promoted between states have been identified by some scholars. States with diplomatic relations may have resident embassies in each other's countries or they could have non-resident embassies in a third country. In cases where states do not have diplomatic relations as a result of either non-recognition or formal breach of

relations, there may be other methods of conducting diplomacy. They could, for instance, conduct their business through an intermediary, the disguised embassies, which include interest sections, consulates, diplomatic fronts and trade missions. The working funeral is also one of the platforms for conducting of diplomacy (Berridge,1994).

Berridge (1995:177) contends that the institutionalisation of diplomacy occurred because of the enduring significance of the balance of power in the European states-system. This balance of power instigated and required the reflex of international negotiation. However, he warns us that “it is easy to lose sight of the essential character of diplomacy because of the multiplication of channels through which the activity is now conducted and even greater multiplication in the kinds of people, including political leaders, which it now involves” (Berridge, 1995 : 177).

1.2 Grassroots Diplomacy

The warning of Berridge is of particular relevance to this study because it deals with a different kind of diplomacy with which many scholars may not be familiar with, or have not yet explored. This is what the ex-South African High Commissioner in Lesotho, Mr Visser, once referred to as “grassroots diplomacy” (Coetzee,1994).

Thus by grassroots diplomacy, I am particularly referring to the method of resolving of conflicts which characterises border relations between Lesotho and South Africa. These border conflicts have been part and parcel of Lesotho/South African relations for as long these two countries existed. The resolution of these conflicts has now been institutionalised through the establishment of the District Liaison Committees (DLCs), which have been established jointly by the Lesotho and South African governments to enable the communities living along the borders to deal with border difficulties. In this way, people at grassroots level are actually given a chance to determine their own needs and solve their own problems in dealing with their counterparts across the border.

The DLCs encourage cooperation between the communities living along the border. They are forums where the communities (especially the farming communities) on both sides of the border exchange

ideas, give each other technical advice about farming matters and work side by side to deal with cross-border stock theft, which is a major problem for these communities. They also encourage other activities to improve relations between their communities, such as interschool visits. These committees then make recommendations to both the Lesotho and South African governments on how they can be assisted.

1.3 The Subject

This study is an attempt to look at grassroots diplomacy and assess how effective it has been in mediating relations between Lesotho and South Africa. In the light of Berridge's (1995) warning that it is easy to lose sight of the essential character of diplomacy due to the multiplication of channels through which the activity is now conducted, this study is an attempt to deal with one aspect of diplomacy which scholars have not yet explored satisfactorily. In the existing literature, Ambassador Visser has been the only one who has mentioned this missing aspect of diplomacy between these two countries, namely, grassroots diplomacy. He has described relations between Lesotho and South Africa as "grassroots diplomacy at its best". By this he meant that there is a state on state communication at the highest level but also person-to-person communication at the lowest level (Coetzee, 1994:18).

This study proposes to take the subject of grassroots diplomacy between Lesotho and South Africa a step further by exploring the aspect of person-to-person communication at the lowest level. This will be done by assessing the role of the DLCs, which are instruments of grassroots diplomacy, in border relations between Lesotho and South Africa.

There are ten DLCs all together, but for the purpose of this research, two will be used as case studies. These are the Maseru/Ladybrand DLC and the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC. The two case studies are an attempt to compare the performance of the two DLCs in different areas. The Maseru/Ladybrand DLC consists of urban communities which have a different way of looking at things from the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC. The problem of stock-theft is not as major as it is in the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area, so they can afford to have a broader agenda. The Maseru/Ladybrand

DLC falls within the Lesotho/Free State border areas. It has also been operating for a longer period of time than the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC.

The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area on the other hand is the most troubled area as far as stock-theft is concerned. A large number of people have been killed during stock raids. Stock-theft in this area is a highly organised criminal activity with the use of deadly weapons such as the AK 47 (Cronje, 1998). Therefore, overcoming this problem and normalising relations are the number one priorities on their agenda. The high crime rate and conspiracy in this area are hindering the progress of the DLC. This DLC is the newest of all the DLCs, since it was only established after the 1994 South African election. It falls within the Lesotho/Transkei border area.

1.4 Method

This research relies mainly on the secondary sources. Government reports from the Foreign Ministry in Lesotho and the South African High Commission in Maseru will be extensively used. Additional materials consist of journals, information from the Internet and newspaper articles. Open interviews were also carried out with some of the key people in the DLCs.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. Chapter Two looks at some of the conventional diplomatic methods used to deal with border disputes on the African continent. A few examples of such conflicts on the African continent are examined. The Chapter sets out to do three things. Firstly, it establishes that border conflict is not unique to Lesotho and South Africa. Secondly, it attempts to show that ways of solving border disputes have not always worked. Finally, the chapter argues the case for grassroots diplomacy as an alternative to orthodox diplomacy.

The third chapter gives a brief historical background to Lesotho/South African border relations. It briefly discusses how the present Lesotho borders came into being. It is an attempt to show how the changing borders contributed toward the present character of border relations between the two

countries. It attempts to show how the historical emergence of the present Lesotho borders left the door open for perpetual border conflict between Lesotho and South Africa.

Chapter Four provides policy frameworks for the resolution of conflicts between the two countries during different periods. Four periods are identified. The first period from 1966 to 1970, when the government of Lesotho pursued a policy of dialogue with South Africa. The second period from 1972 to 1980, it is argued, was characterised by confrontation and conflict. The third period, from 1980 to 1985 was characterised by the introduction of the Inter-governmental Liaison committee. Finally, the fifth period from 1985 to date is characterised by the establishment of the DLCs as instruments of grassroots diplomacy.

Chapter Five is an analysis of the performance of the DLCs. Our two case studies, namely, the Maseru/Ladybrand and the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLCs will be analysed. The chapter will also assess how the changes in post-apartheid South Africa are likely to change the relations between Lesotho and South Africa, at grassroots levels.

The concluding chapter constitutes a summary of all the chapters. It draws a conclusion about the mediating role of the DLCs in relations between Lesotho and South Africa. It also looks at how the DLCs can be strengthened.

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CHAPTER 2

2. BORDER CONFLICTS IN AFRICA AND HOW THEY ARE DEALT WITH

2.1 Introduction

Border conflicts are not unique to Lesotho and South Africa. Many countries have been involved in border conflicts with their neighbours at one stage or another. The most common cause of border conflict is the issue of boundaries. Boundaries which are not clearly defined have resulted in confrontations between countries all over the world. For example, boundaries are the main cause of the Indian/Pakistani conflict which has been going on for decades. At the end of the day, the cause of conflict boils down to who controls what part of the territory. Besides wars, border conflicts have manifested themselves in many different ways, including cattle rustling and poaching. The nationals of one country cross into a neighbouring country to try and steal livestock and carry out some illegal poaching activities, because they claim that they have a right to that part of the territory and that it is historically theirs.

This chapter looks at some of the conventional diplomatic methods which are employed to deal with border conflicts on the African continent. Three examples of border conflicts between neighbouring countries in Africa are examined. The aim of this chapter is to show that top-bottom conventional diplomacy does not always work. It argues the case for grassroots diplomacy as an alternative to orthodox diplomacy.

2.2 Colonialism and its Impact on Border Relations in Africa

The most common cause of border conflicts in Africa is the colonial boundaries. It is therefore, important to show how colonialism impacted on border relations on the continent. When Africa was partitioned into colonial territories, the Africans were not consulted by the colonisers. The political map of Africa was shaped to suit the interests of the colonising powers. The colonising powers did not consider the importance of the cultural homogeneity of ethnic groups in those territories. As a result, colonial boundaries often divided closely related peoples. For example, the Maasai were divided between Kenya and Tanzania. The Venda were divided between South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The Kongo-speaking peoples were dispersed over three states of Congo, Zaire and Angola and these territories belonged to three different colonial powers (Fowler, 1995:10; Randrianja, 1996:24).

The dispersing of groups over a number of different states has affected relations between those states in the post-colonial period. Strained relations have continued to characterise interactions among those states because of competing claims to territories and people. Examples of such cases include South Africa and Botswana over the control of the Tswana; Ghana and Togo over the control of the Ewe; Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia over the Somali; Senegal and Gambia over the Wolof. Falola (1996:10) argues that as long as different countries pursue policies that disregard the fact that these groups were previously members of the same 'nations', frontier tensions will continue.

At the same time, colonial boundaries have brought together different ethnic groups with very few common interests. As a result, the governments which succeeded the colonialists were/are faced with the difficult task of managing these groups within common boundaries. For example, in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Namibia, rebel groups are defying the central authorities or seeking a degree of autonomy for the areas they control (Drame, 1996: 201-202). Colonial boundaries in the case of Rwanda have brought together two groups which do not get along very well. The coming together of these two hostile groups have resulted in the worst case of genocide where the Tutsis were nearly wiped out by the Hutus.

2.3 Africans' Reaction to Colonial Borders

The arbitrariness with which Africa's national boundaries were drawn during the colonial period called for some serious discussions in the 1950s. Some African leaders expressed concern that decolonization of other territories could lead to the "compartmentalization of the continent into as many as fifty sovereign nations, more than twice as many as in Latin America" (Mukisa, 1997: 7). Indeed, in 1996, there were 53 states on the continent.

Even though some African leaders recognised the disruptive potential of the colonial boundaries, they were maintained because they feared the chaos that widespread boundary changes might cause. They

were also aware that dramatic changes in the inherited state system could be particularly disastrous to those who succeeded the colonialists (Herbst, 1992:105).

President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who was one of the first African leaders to recognise the disruptive potential of the colonial boundaries, championed a movement towards African unity. He and his colleagues organised a number of Pan-African conferences which led to the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 (Mukisa, 1997: 7). The subject of colonial boundaries came up frequently during these Pan-African conferences and the OAU summit meetings. The greatest fear of the founding fathers was that since most African frontiers divided ethnic groups, “to concede to the demands of one dissatisfied group would open a Pandora’s box of similar demands elsewhere” (Mayall, 1991:25). As a result, at the 1963 meeting of the OAU, which was held in Addis Ababa, the main concern of the African leaders was to protect the boundaries they had inherited from their colonial masters.

When dealing with border and territorial conflicts among African states, three principles were recognised by the OAU in order to regulate inter-African affairs. The first one was the inviolability of the inherited colonially-imposed borders. The second one was non-interference in the internal affairs of the member states. Lastly, the settlement of such disputes was to be carried out by means of mediation, conciliation and arbitration (Sesay, 1982:186).

The OAU Charter urges members to settle their disputes peacefully through mediation, conciliation and arbitration. The rationale behind this charter provision was that “given the newness of independence and the arbitrary nature of most African borders and boundaries, order and peace could not be maintained on the continent if African states resorted to force in their relations with each other” (Sesay, 1982:170).

The Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration which was set up by the OAU in 1963 was not very successful in settling territorial conflicts among African states. It remained unutilised for twelve years after its establishment. This was because it lacked the power to institute mandatory

sanctions. Indeed there are a number of cases which demonstrate that the OAU failed in its mediating role. Shortly after its formation, the OAU was confronted with a series of boundary and territorial disputes. These included quarrels between Ghana and Upper Volta, Somalia and Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia and Algeria and Morocco. They all took place between 1963 and 1964. The OAU was not utilised in all these cases. This shows that the member states were not motivated to take their disputes to the commission for arbitration or mediation.

Two conventional diplomatic methods of dealing with border conflicts on the African continent have been identified and they are the OAU's Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration, and presidential mediation. In fact, most countries opted for presidential mediation rather than make use of this OAU commission. In most cases, the OAU's role has been reduced to merely rubber stamping the agreements reached through the personal initiatives of the African leaders (Sesay, 1982:187-188).

In the case of presidential mediation, African leaders offer their diplomatic services to their friends in times of trouble. They act as mediators to bring warring parties to the negotiations table. These mediators are willing to devote a lot of time, and sometimes even resources to bring conflicts either to a peaceful conclusion or to a dormant stage until a formula is found for a lasting solution. For example, the late William Tolbert of Liberia successfully reconciled Guinea-Ivory Coast and Guinea-Senegal in 1975. Tubman, also of Liberia, undertook a number of diplomatic moves aimed at settling the Nigeria-Biafra war in the late 1960s (Sesay, 1982: 189).

The top-bottom conventional diplomatic methods have not always been successful in solving border conflicts. The OAU has failed because African states have no faith in it. It is more of a talk shop than anything else. It lacks the power to institute mandatory sanctions. It is interested in protecting the colonial boundaries which are the very source of border conflicts. Presidential mediation in most cases have only succeeded in bringing short term solutions to the problems. The shortcomings of these conventional diplomatic methods will be further discussed in the specific case studies below.

2.4 The Case Studies

This section deals with specific cases of cross-border conflict and the approaches which have been used to handle them. The aim of these case studies is to show the weaknesses of some of these diplomatic approaches which are adopted when dealing with conflicts between neighbouring countries. There are many such cases on the African continent, but for the purpose of this paper, only three will be critically analysed. These are the Eritrean/Ethiopian conflict, the Eritrean/Sudanese conflict, and the Botswana/Namibian conflict.

i) The Eritrean/Ethiopian Conflict

Eritrea and Ethiopia are situated in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia has never been colonised. Eritrea like most of today's African states, was a creation of colonial history. It was colonised by the Italians in the 1890s. The boundary between the two countries had been agreed upon between the Italians and Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia by means of a treaty in 1889 (Selassie, 1989: 106). This boundary has been verified in several international agreements in the post-1896 period, including the 1902 treaty. The British took over the control of Eritrea in 1941 after the defeat of the Italians by the allied forces in the Second World War. In 1952, the two countries of Eritrea and Ethiopia were joined together under a federation arrangement. Eritrea got its independence from Ethiopia in 1993, after a long process of struggle for secession. Since its independence, the definition of its international borders have been of utmost importance to the Eritrean government. Hence, the Eritrean government have been involved in border conflicts with a number of its neighbours.

Eritrea and Ethiopia experienced armed conflict in May-June 1998. The quarrel was about the exact location of the 1000km common border (Esterhuysen, 1998: 90). The border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia had been brewing for a long time. In 1902 when the boundary was verified, the Badme area was not occupied. During the last few decades, the region has become increasingly populated by peasants from the Eritrean and Tigrayan high plateaux and Kunana villages. After the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1952, the Lord of Tigray, Ras Mengesha, developed agricultural estates along the frontier. These agricultural estates were administered by the Tigray district of Shire. The area has been subjected to periodic disputes since that time. For example, in 1976 and 1981 the

guerillas of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and those of the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) clashed with each other in the area. The clashes never became serious because they were allies against a common enemy, which was the then Ethiopian regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. The Mengistu regime had complicated the matter further when it changed the administrative borders in 1987. When the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) took over control of the Eritrean resistance movement, this dispute was shelved provisionally (P`eninou, 1998: 507).

When Eritrea got its independence in 1993, a bilateral commission was set up to define the border between the two countries. The commission hardly got beyond listing the points of dispute, before the border war broke out between the two countries. The principal disputed areas along the Eritrean-Ethiopian border seem to be on the Ethiopian side and are claimed by the Eritreans. These areas are the Yirga Triangle which includes the villages of Badime and Shiraro, along with several areas to the east of the border post. There is also Zalambessa on the main road between the capitals of the two countries and an area in the far south, opposite the port of Assab. On the 12th of May 1998, Eritrean soldiers occupied the Yirga Triangle and several people were killed in the cross-fire which resulted from that occupation (Esterhuysen, 1998: 90).

The dispute has been the subject of intense debate. Ragnhild Ek (1998: 509) suggested a border dispute and speculations about economic agendas and different internal problems as the reasons behind the conflict. Lionel Cliff (1998: 516-517) argues that the conflict was not about the real international border between the two. Rather, it was about the problem of two definitions. The first one is an international colonial definition while the other is of various administrative arrangements that have changed over various periods.

Since the declaration of war, quite a number of countries have offered the services of their offices to mediate in this conflict. The United States with the support of Rwanda, Djibouti and Lybia acted as mediators. The compromise which they proposed suggested that 'Eritrea should retreat from its position on the 6th May while further discussions on the borders based on the colonial demarcation took place' (P`eninou, 1998: 506). Their mediation did not help because Ethiopia on the one hand

demanded the unconditional withdrawal of Eritrean troops from its territory. Eritrea on the other hand denied that its forces had occupied territory which did not belong to it (Esterhysen, 1998: 90-91). Both the Eritrean President and the Ethiopian Prime Minister were not prepared to lose face before the United States. Once the war was declared, they were not ready to lose face before their respective public. Many other countries also offered their diplomatic services in order to bring peace to the region. These included countries like Italy, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Netherlands and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Peninou, 1998: 506).

On the 15th June 1998, Italian diplomacy managed to secure a cease-fire in aerial attacks, but the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was tempted to reconquer Assab and the Eritrean Dankalia in order to gain the support of the opposition after the humiliating military defeats. The position of the Ethiopian Prime Minister was very fragile. He had lost the support of many people. His position required the mediators to press for a solution which would not lead to the downfall of his regime in Addis Ababa (Peninou, 1998: 506).

On the 26th June 1998, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to call on the two governments to immediately cease hostilities. Both sides welcomed the Security Council resolution, but still they continued to build up military forces on the front line. The world was surprised by the lack of will on the part of both governments to find a negotiated solutions (Esterhuysen, 1998: 91). This is a clear example of a failure of conventional diplomacy, where both parties opted for war to solve their problems without exhausting all the diplomatic means available.

The OAU established a mediation committee in June 1998, in an attempt to end the dispute. In July 1998, an OAU delegation visited the two countries. The committee presented its report to the Ethiopian and Eritrean Ministers of Foreign Affairs at a meeting held in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, in August 1998. In November 1998, the OAU presented peace proposals which endorsed the US-Rwandan peace plan to both countries. This goes to prove the point raised above that the OAU's role has been reduced to role of rubber-stamping the decisions reached within Presidential mediation. Ethiopia agreed to the framework almost immediately. Eritrea rejected a clause demanding a

unilateral withdrawal of its troops from the contested area to allow Ethiopia to return to the region it controlled before May 1998.

Other international mediation attempts continued in the late 1998. These included that of Anthony Lake, a former US national security adviser. They all failed to resolve the dispute. Eritrea requested an urgent Security Council meeting to “condemn Ethiopia’s territorial ambitions and aggression against Eritrea”(President Isaias Afewerki’s words when requesting an urgent Security Council meeting). The meeting was held on Saturday the 27th February 1999. At this meeting, Eritrea finally agreed to accept an international proposal for peace with Ethiopia. The Security Council demanded an immediate halt to all hostilities, welcomed Eritrea’s decision and supported the peace efforts by the OAU. The Security Council resolutions demanded an immediate cease-fire and a halt to arms sales to both countries (<http://cnn.com/world/africa/a902/27/ethiopia.eritrea.01/>: 27th February).

All the diplomatic approaches to handling conflict which have been mentioned in the first part of the chapter have been tried in this case. They have not yet come up with a permanent solution to the conflict. When one examines all the factors surrounding this conflict, it need not have led to war because there does not seem to be a real conflict with regard to where the real boundary, as drawn up by the Italians and the Ethiopian Empire, is. The misunderstandings could have been easily dealt with through negotiations. The biggest problem is that it seems as though neither of the leaders of these two countries are willing to back down. This conflict is threatening the stability of the whole of the Horn of Africa.

A lesson one can learn from this case study is that politicians are not always the best people to handle conflict because sometimes they can use the situation to pursue their own selfish political interests without considering the consequences the conflict might have for everybody else. In all the approaches which have been used in this case, there is none where the people in the affected area have been asked what they think is best for them as the most affected by the conflict. It is therefore necessary to involve the grassroots when making decisions which will affect them.

ii) Eritrean-Sudanese Conflict

The Republic of Sudan lies in the north-eastern Africa. It is bordered by Egypt to the north, by the Red Sea, Eritrea and Ethiopia to the east, by the Central African Republic, Chad and Libya to the west, and by Kenya, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the South (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol.II: 3300). The Sudanese government has been a cause for great concern to all its neighbours because of its support of Islamic fundamentalism. It has clashed with all of them at one stage or another.

Before 1989 Eritrea and Sudan enjoyed good relations. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) enjoyed Sudanese hospitality during their struggle for independence from Ethiopia. Trouble between the two countries started in 1989 when the National Islamic Front (NIF) in Sudan reportedly sponsored the creation of the Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM). In 1992, the provisional government of Eritrea complained that its forces had fought against the Jihad infiltrators from Sudan. Following that incident, the Eritrean government took the first step towards peaceful settlement of the problem. They sent several delegations to Khartoum and managed to convince the Sudanese government to stop the activities of the EIJM. This eased the tension between these two countries for some time (Tekle, 1996: 505). However, the negotiations between the two governments only brought about a short term solution.

In August 1994, Eritrea and Sudan signed an agreement concerning borders, security and repatriation of refugees. In November, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) initiated a repatriation programme for the Eritreans who were currently in Sudan. Some 500,000 Eritreans had taken refuge in Sudan in the early 1990s during the struggle for independence. Only a small portion of them returned after independence (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 1308).

Relations between the two deteriorated in November 1994, when the Eritrean authorities accused Sudan of training 400 terrorists since August 1994. Sudan accused Eritrea of training some 3000

Sudanese rebels in camps within Eritrea. In December 1994, Eritrea severed diplomatic relations with Sudan and threatened all-out war (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol. 1: 1308).

The early 1995 attacks and infiltrations by commandos of the military wing of EIJM in Barka Province provoked further destabilisation. The Eritrean authorities subsequently claimed to have identified six training camps on the Sudanese side of the border. They also claimed that large numbers of Eritrean refugees in Sudan had been arrested by Sudanese security forces (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol 1: 1308).

Eritrea hosted a meeting of Sudanese opposition groups in Asmara in January 1995. At this meeting they sought to forge cooperation in their efforts to overthrow the regime in Khartoum, and form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Eritrean President, Isaias Afewerki publicly promised to supply the NDA with arms. According to Tekle (1996:505-506), this was a declaration by the Eritrean government that toppling of the Sudanese government was a matter of extreme national interest. In turn, the Sudanese government accused Eritrea of violating the OAU Charter by interfering in the internal affairs of a member state. The Sudanese government also complained that the Eritrean President's statement was tantamount to an act of war and Eritrea should be held responsible for it.

The OAU offered to act as mediators, but Eritrea rejected the offer. In his response to the offer, the Eritrean Foreign Minister actually declared that the Eritrean government did not believe in the effectiveness of the OAU's mechanism for conflict prevention and management. Instead, Eritrea opted for the Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) (Tekle, 1996: 506). This shows how much faith Eritrea had lost in the OAU's ability to settle conflicts amongst member states. Eritrea was arrogant and dismissive in the way it responded to the OAU's offer to mediate in this conflict. The arrogance of the Eritrean politicians made it impossible for the OAU to contribute towards solving of the problem.

Between 1996 and 1998, there have been several cases of attacks against each other which have been reported. In April 1996, the EIJM claimed responsibility for several attacks on Eritrean government vehicles. In January 1997, Sudan accused Eritrean troops of launching an attack on Sudanese forces in the frontier region. In this attack, there had been numerous casualties. In May, Sudan closed its border temporarily because of the fear that Eritrea was going to attack. At the same time, the Eritrean security forces announced that they had discovered a plot to assassinate the Eritrean President by the Sudanese government. Eritrea also complained about repeated violations of its airspace by Sudanese aircraft. In February 1998 Sudan once again closed the border with Eritrea in an attempt to prevent incursions into Sudan. During 1998, further attacks on Sudanese forces by the Eritrean troops were reported. In October 1998, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries attended a mediation meeting in Qatar. At the end of the meeting, they signed a memorandum of understanding to normalise relations (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol. 1: 1308).

The failure of the involved parties to reach a peaceful settlement to the problem has opened the doors for future conflict, especially because diplomatic relations between the two have been severed. Despite the memorandum of understanding signed by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries, there is still a lot of tension at the border. One lesson which can be learned from this case is that the personalities of the politicians involved in the diplomacy processes can stand in the way of peace. The arrogance of politicians can actually bring their countries down. Conventional diplomacy does not seem to be succeeding in the case of these two countries. The two countries need to approach their problems in a different way. Perhaps new players in the negotiation process have to be engaged.

iii) Botswana-Namibia Conflict

Botswana is located in the heart of Southern Africa. It is a large land locked country bordered on the south by the Republic of South Africa, on the west and northwest by Namibia, on the north by Zambia, and on the northeast by Zimbabwe. It was declared a British protectorate in 1885 and it got its independence in 1966 (Vengroff,1977:13).

In July 1992, a border dispute developed between Botswana and Namibia regarding their rival territorial claims over Sedudu/Kasikili Island in the Chobe river. The dispute assumed the form of poaching in the island. The people who were involved in the poaching activities were from the Caprivi in Namibia and other countries such as Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe. By the mid-1980s, the anti-poaching patrols which were organised by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks in Botswana were increasingly placed at risk because the poachers had resorted to the use of sophisticated weapons. The Botswana government responded by deploying Botswana Defence Force (BDF) personnel on the island in 1987, as they had the capacity to match the weapons and tactics of the poachers (BOPA,1999: I).

Sedudu Island formed an important part of the Chobe Game Reserve which was established in 1960 and later, of the Chobe National Park which was created in 1967. The wild species are endangered by the activities of the poachers. Their survival depends on the anti-poaching patrols of the Botswana authorities. Between 1990 to the beginning of 1999, a total of 75 poaching incidents had been recorded by BDF, in which species such as elephant, rhino, leopard, buffalo and zebra were killed. The South African army also played a big role in destroying wildlife in Caprivi by systematic slaughter while they occupied Namibia before it got its independence (BOPA,1999: 1).

The Namibians want control of the island. The Botswana authorities are afraid that if Namibia is given control of the island, the poachers will destroy wildlife on the Botswana side as well. The Botswana government want both countries to continue to have access to the island.

In early 1995, the two states agreed to present the issue of the demarcation of their joint border for arbitration at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In February 1996 the two countries signed an agreement committing themselves in advance, to the court's eventual judgement. Meanwhile, Namibia appealed to Botswana to remove its troops and national flag from the island. In the following month, the two countries agreed on the joint measures aimed at deterring smuggling and illegal border crossings (The Europa World Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 697).

None the less, Botswana's completion of a new air base in 1995 and the efforts to procure military tanks threatened Namibia and it has remained a source of conflict between the two. Namibia perceived it as attempts by Botswana to extend the role and capacities of its armed forces in the area. Botswana emphasized that the principal aim of such expansion was purely to enable its military to fulfil a wider regional and international peace-keeping role (The Europa Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 697).

In 1996-97, the Namibian government decided to construct a pipeline to take water from Okavango River. This construction was a source of great concern in Botswana itself. The Okavango River feeds the Okavango delta which is an important habitat for Botswana's varied wildlife (The Europa Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 697).

In early 1997, it was reported that Namibia had been angered by Botswana's erection of a fence along the Caprivi Strip. This fence separates the two countries to the north. Botswana insisted that the fence was a measure to control the spread of livestock diseases (The Europa Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 697).

In January 1998, an emergency meeting of Botswana-Namibia Joint Commission on Defence and Security was held to discuss ownership of another island in the Chobe river called Situngu. This meeting followed allegations by Namibia that the BDF had occupied the island and was stealing crops planted by the Namibian farmers resident there. Representatives from both countries recommended that a joint technical commission be set up to demarcate the joint border. The discussions regarding its establishment took place in mid-May, 1998 (The Europa Year Book 1999, Vol.1: 697-698).

On the 9th April 1998, President Mogae of Botswana complained that Namibian troops had illegally entered Botswana twice in two weeks. He said Namibian troops had patrolled twenty yards along the disease control fence inside Botswana and the Botswana government was treating the incident seriously. Botswana and Namibia have held talks over long-running local border disputes between the two (http://www.japan.cnn.com/WORLD/africa/9804/09/rb001201_reut.html. 9 April, 1999).

The case of Botswana and Namibia is still under review by the ICJ. The two countries are asking the ICJ to “determine on the basis of the Anglo-German Treaty of 1 July 1890 and the principles of international law, the boundary between Namibia and Botswana around Kasikili/Sedudu Island and the legal status of the island”. (BOPA, 1999 : 5).

The border was fixed by the Anglo-German Treaty of July1, 1890. Article III(2) of the Treaty is relevant to the Sedudu case. The article places the boundary between Botswana and Namibia in the Chobe River in the “... centre of the main channel of the river to its junction with the Zambezi, where it terminates”. (Anglo-German Treaty as quoted in *Botswana Daily News*, 16 February,1999.No 31).

When presenting their case to the ICJ, the Namibians accused the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) of murder, violence and harassment of the people of the Caprivi region. Namibia claimed that Botswana’s occupation of that island was illegal. According to the argument put before the ICJ by Dr Kawana of Namibia, Botswana’s territorial ambitions in the area date back to 1963 when a member of the Bechuanaland Legislative Council moved a motion asking the Council to take complete control of the Caprivi Strip. Although the motion was defeated, this ambition was repeated in 1965 by the then Deputy Prime Minister Ketumile Masire. Dr Kawana argued that the BDF occupied Sedudu Island in 1991, when Masire was President of Botswana (BOPA, 1999: 5).

The Namibian argument is that Kasikili Island has always been part of Namibia and will remain part of Namibia. It was occupied by the Masubia people for over one hundred years. They also argued that the “Anglo-German Treaty of 1890, properly interpreted, attributes the island to Namibia because the main channel of the Chobe River in the vicinity of the island is the southern channel and the treaty established the boundary as the centre of the main channel” (BOPA, 1999: 5).

When the turn of Botswana came to put forward their arguments to the ICJ, they argued that “the boundary between Botswana and Namibia was established on the basis of Article II of the Anglo-American (sic) Agreement of 1890. The Agreement states where the river bifurcates, the boundary

follows the main channel” (Mphusu, 1999: 1). According to them, the northern channel is the main channel.

Contrary to Namibia’s allegation of BDF harassment and the killing of Namibians on the eastern Caprivi, Botswana claimed that they have recently received close to 2000 Namibians from that region fleeing from harassment by security forces and political differences. They claim that the BDF were deployed on Sedudu Island in 1987 as an anti-poaching measure and not in 1991 as alleged by Namibia. The continued presence of the BDF was jointly approved by the presidents of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe at the Kasane Summit on the 24 May, 1992. The BDF is just assisting the Department of Wildlife and National Parks in anti-poaching activities, because poachers have resorted to sophisticated weapons (Mphusu, 1999: 1).

In this case, the two countries have not exhausted all the available diplomatic means to deal with the border conflict. From the onset, they decided to take the case to the ICJ. It looks like the two countries do not have faith in their own local resources to deal with the conflict effectively. What is obvious in this case is the differences between the two government in their approach to nature preservation. The Botswana government is keen to preserve wild life, while the Namibian government does not give wildlife preservation first priority. The fact that the Namibian government had not taken powerful measures to bring an end to the poaching activities, as the Botswana government did, to the extend that the Namibian side of the border has been cleared of all wildlife by the poachers shows that the former does not give wild life preservation a first priority. If the two governments could harmonise their policies on wildlife preservation, I do not think there would even be a need to argue about the exact location of the boundary. Both countries could use the island for their wildlife.

2.5 Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that border conflicts are indeed not unique to Lesotho and South Africa. In fact, border conflicts in Africa are endemic. The bulk of the blame has to be put on colonialism. The selfish way in which the colonialist drew the boundaries throughout the continent without considering the interests of the African people has created many problems for the continent as a whole. Many border conflicts have broken out in the post-colonial period.

Two conventional methods of handling cross border conflict have been picked out and these are the OAU's committee of Mediation and Conciliation and the presidential mediation. The OAU provided a forum where members could take their cases for arbitration and mediation. This has not been utilised because it lacked the power to enforce mandatory sanctions. The African countries are reluctant to take their cases to the OAU for arbitration. The case studies have confirmed that African countries do not have faith in the OAU as a mediator in their conflicts with their neighbours.

Another diplomatic forum which most countries opted for to settle their border disputes was presidential mediation. This form of mediation has been more successful than the former. It has overshadowed the former in the sense that the former slowly became the rubber stamp of the decisions taken by the latter form of mediation. This latter form of diplomacy has not been successful in all cases. In most cases, it has only brought about short term solutions. Over the years, the African continent has been plunged into a series of wars caused by border conflicts, despite the mediation efforts by leaders of different states.

It has become clear that the top-bottom diplomatic approach to border conflicts has failed to bring permanent solutions in most cases. This top-bottom approach to border conflicts is failing because of various reasons. The above examples of conflicts have identified some of the weaknesses of top-bottom diplomacy which make it unsuccessful. One of the reasons is that politicians can stand in the way of peace. They sometimes use a problem to pursue their own selfish political interests.

The states involved in conflicts have failed to make use of all the available local resources in their attempts to resolve their conflicts with their neighbours. For example, not all the parties affected by the conflict are involved in the negotiation process. People at grassroots levels have not been involved in most of these cases. The decisions reached through these other means of diplomacy are detached from the situations on the ground. These states have not incorporated the input of the grassroots in the peace process. Therefore, the failure of the top-bottom approach calls for consideration of an alternative diplomatic means of dealing with cross-border conflict.

Hence, this study proposes to investigate the prospects of grassroots diplomacy as an alternative to top-bottom conventional diplomacy. Lesotho and South Africa have institutionalised the resolution of border conflicts at grassroots levels through the establishment of the DLCs. This was done in an attempt to improve border relations between the two countries. This study of grassroots diplomacy between Lesotho and South Africa is therefore, an attempt to see how the involvement of people at grassroots level has affected border relations between the two countries. Before going into grassroots diplomacy, this paper will give a historical background to the practice of grassroots diplomacy and this will be done in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LESOTHO/SOUTH AFRICA BORDER RELATIONS

3.1 Introduction

The last chapter dealt with border conflicts in the African continent. Some of the conventional diplomatic methods which are used to solve the border conflicts have been assessed. The chapter has shown that there is general failure of top-bottom diplomacy in dealing with border conflicts. This chapter gives a historical background to Lesotho/South Africa border relations. It is an attempt to show how the historical emergence of the present Lesotho borders left the doors open for perpetual border conflict between Lesotho and South Africa.

3.2 The Changing Borders and Cross-Border Stock Theft

Modern Lesotho like the rest of the African countries is a product of colonialism. Lesotho is a small country with an area of 11,716 square miles. It is situated in Southern Africa and it is completely surrounded by South Africa. It is one of the only two countries (which include San Marino) in the world which are completely enveloped by another country. It is bounded by the Drakensberg mountains on the south and north-east, the flat plains of the Orange Free State on the west and Eastern Cape to the south and south-west (Spence, 1968: 5). Lesotho has a population of about two million people. There are more Basotho in South Africa than in Lesotho itself and this, like in most African countries, was a result of the colonial boundaries which cut across the Basotho nation.

Lesotho's boundaries were shaped to suit the interests of the Afrikaner and the British. The Basotho lost a large portion of their arable land to the Afrikaner farmers. They were left with a territory, two thirds of which consisted of mountains. Only thirteen percent of the land is arable. The loss of territory went hand in hand with the loss of a certain portion of Basotho population. The loss of this land is very much resented by the Basotho. Over the years, this resentment has been expressed in the form of stock theft and this practise has continued till to date. The police research conducted during 1998 has confirmed that there is a general feeling among the Basotho living along the border that 'taking' stock from the South African side which used to be part of Lesotho was not stealing but simply taking what was rightfully theirs (Jonker and Monane, 1998).

The migration of the Afrikaner farmers into the Orange Free State marked the beginning of border conflicts between Lesotho and South Africa. They crossed the Orange River from 1833 onwards. They had reached the land of Basotho by 1843. When the Afrikaners interacted with the Basotho, conflict was inevitable because the two groups did not have the same understanding of the nature of land ownership. Moshoeshoe, the King of the Basotho, only gave permission to the Afrikaner farmers to graze their cattle on the land traditionally used by Basotho on a temporary basis. It is argued that when Moshoeshoe gave the white farmers access to land, he had in mind the spirit in which he had received similar requests from African families after Lifaqane wars. They were supposed to be under his sovereign. In Basotho culture, land was owned by the whole community and distributed by the chief among his people for their use. It is 'inalienable and pasturage communal' (Kimble,1978: 92). So, as far as the Basotho were concerned, the land which was occupied by the Afrikaners was still the community property of the Basotho.

On the other hand, for the Afrikaners, "individual title to land was a clear and unambiguous concept which could be formalised in the boundary lines" (Spence, 1968: 10). They insisted on exclusive occupation of any land they settled on. They, also, demanded delimitation of grazing boundaries and the recognition of the rights of private property of land (Kimble,1978: 92).

Due to this different understanding of land ownership, the two communities were bound to have clashes over land. Clashes took the form of cattle theft. The Afrikaners were coming up with new concepts the Basotho had never heard of before. The Basotho did not recognise private land ownership and they constantly violated what the Afrikaners regarded as 'private property'. In the opinion of the Afrikaners, there was a need for boundaries to be drawn to divide the two groups so that each group could exercise the land ownership according to their own understanding of it. As far as Basotho were concerned, there was no need for boundary lines to be drawn because they had no doubt in their minds that the land was theirs. As a result, Basotho were constantly "violating" private property and the Afrikaners regarded this as an act of violence.

The Afrikaners and Basotho could not see eye to eye on the issue of land. As the number of the Afrikaners increased, they became more aggressive and openly challenged the authorities of the African leaders in the area. They began competing with the African leaders over land claims. This competition was expressed in the form of cattle raiding. The situation in the area was deteriorating very fast. Therefore, external intervention was sought.

Moshoeshoe was advised by the missionaries to seek British assistance in 1842. The British recognised all Moshoeshoe's claims to the land "extending from the confluence of the Caledon and Orange Rivers and following a line 25 to 30 miles west of the Caledon all the way to the north where it met the territory of the Tlokoa" (see Figure 1) (Gill, 1993: 89). This was formalised by the Napier treaty which was signed in 1843. The Napier Treaty was the first in a series of agreements concluded between the British Government and the Basotho. Its aim was to establish a tenable and final boundary for Moshoeshoe's territory.

The Napier settlement did not bring lasting peace to the border disputes between the Basotho and the Afrikaner farmers because of complaints raised by other groups in the area. These groups claimed to be independent from Moshoeshoe and demanded to be treated as such. As a result, there was nothing much the British could do and the Afrikaner farmers, therefore, continued to creep into the land of Basotho.

The Basotho resented the invasion of their land by the Afrikaners. There was constant violation of the Napier line by the Basotho. Those living along the borders organised themselves into raiding parties. They raided the white farms as a way of showing their resentment of the encroachment upon their land by the Afrikaner farmers. For example, Moshoeshoe's brother, Posholi occupied the mountain of Vechtkop for the sole purpose of raiding white farmers who persisted in occupying land east of the line between the Kraai River and Commissie Drift (Thompson, 1975: 139). They stole cattle and horses from the Afrikaner farms.

In 1849, the British drew a new boundary line. As indicated in Figure 1, the new boundary took away much of Moshoeshoe's land in the west and south (Sanders, 1975: 94). The districts which were declared Basotho territory by this boundary were Zastron, Wepener, Ladybrand, Ficksburg and Foriesburg (Eloff, 1979:9). The boundary was called the Warden line. The Basotho were not happy with the Warden line, but Moshoeshoe accepted it to avoid alienating the British. Moshoeshoe resorted to diplomacy to resolve border conflicts. Most of the Basotho were getting tired of Moshoeshoe's diplomatic ways. There was constant violation of the boundary line by Basotho who felt cheated by the British and the Afrikaners. They did not feel obliged to observe this boundary line. They felt that those who had stolen their land had to pay the price.

Large numbers of Basotho crossed the Warden line, occupied farms and stole cattle from the Afrikaner farmers. Posholi's land had been cut from Lesotho by the Warden line. He, therefore, acted independently to make life difficult for the Afrikaner farmers. He raided the farms for cattle' (Thompson, 1975: 152). For Posholi and other chiefs living along the borders, there was a connection between cattle raiding and the territorial dispute. For example, Posholi used to say: "They have taken away my country and those who have done it must feed me" (Sanders, 1975: 204). He and other chiefs including Jan Letele, a chief of the Mokoteli tribe, were hoping that by harassing the farmers along the borders they would persuade them to leave. In the opinion of the Afrikaners, these activities were purely stock theft which was committed in time of peace and had nothing to do with territorial disputes (Sanders, 1975: 204).

The situation along the borders was getting out of control, particularly in the vicinity of Vechtkop and Koesburg. Cross-border stock theft, disorder, violence and border infringements became the order of the day. Major Warden was constantly challenging Moshoeshoe's authority and his hostility towards Moshoeshoe's people was not constructive under the prevailing situation. According to Machobane (1990: 30), Warden went all out to try and subject Moshoeshoe to British authority on the pretext that Basotho had raided cattle belonging to the Afrikaner settlers.

The British were finding it difficult to control either the Afrikaners or the Basotho. They declared war on the Basotho, but suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of the Basotho in the battles of Viervoet and Berea which were fought between 1851 and 1852 (Eloff, 1979: 9). The price of controlling the situation in the area was too high. Therefore, the British decided to withdraw south of the Orange River in 1854 (Gill, 1993: 97).

When the British left, they had not settled the border dispute between the Basotho and the Afrikaners. As a result, conflict was inevitable. The situation along the borders continued to deteriorate. The Basotho living along the borders regarded the Afrikaner farmers as intruders and they made life difficult for them. The Afrikaner farmers on the other hand were prepared to do anything to protect their property. For the Afrikaners, it was becoming obvious that order and peace could only be achieved if their government was prepared to 'guard the border with force and punish transgressors in order to deter prospective cattle thieves' (Eloff, 1979: 11).

3.3 From the First Basotho-Boer War to the annexation of Lesotho by the British

On the 6th October 1855, Sir George Grey, the British Governor, convened a meeting of representatives from Lesotho and the Free State. The meeting was held in Smithfield where Basotho and Afrikaner claims overlapped. This meeting was also aimed at addressing the issue of stock-theft. He insisted that Moshoeshe and his leading chiefs should come to an understanding with Boshof, the President of the Orange Free State. Boshof had prepared a document which described among other things, procedures for recovering stolen stock and a prohibition of trespassing by Basotho on the White farms. The boundary issue was not addressed at all. Moshoeshe and his men were forced to sign this document which was called the Smithfield Agreement (Thompson, 1975: 230-231).

After this meeting, Moshoeshe tried his level best to keep the peace, but he made it clear to Boshof that he was not prepared to give up his land and he dismissed the Warden line as unfair and invalid (ibid: 231). For a few weeks after the Smithfield Agreement was signed by Moshoeshe and the Afrikaners in the presence of Grey, the number of thefts along the border greatly diminished. But

within a short time, cattle theft was resumed on an extensive scale as before. The district between the line running from Commissie Drift on the southern side of the Koesberg to the Orange River, and the line drawn by Warden had become the scene of unchecked lawlessness. The Basotho under Letele, Lebenya, and Posholi were occupying farms and damaging homesteads and orchards (Theal, 1886: xxvi-xxvii; Thompson, 1975: 237).

By 1858, “the irreconcilable points of view, together with the continued border violations by Basotho and the failure of the policy of negotiation made war inevitable”(Eloff, 1979: 11). In March 1858, war between the Basotho and the Boers finally broke out. The main cause of the war was the situation which prevailed in the area where the Basotho and the Boer claims overlapped. The Basotho won the war in the battle field. In this war, the Basotho managed to destroy 124 farm houses, stole 2619 head of cattle and 4 739 sheep in the districts of Winburg, Bloemfontein and Caledon River (Eloff, 1979: 12). Moshoeshoe wrote several letters to Grey after the war requesting the British to “restore the country unto its legitimate owners since tracts of Basotho land had been granted to the whites at the British request” (Thompson, 1975: 246). He said the British should have done this when they withdrew their protection in the Orange River Valley. Subsequently, the British government rescued the Orange Free State from major destruction in the hands of Basotho.

The peace treaty which was signed after this war was the Treaty of Aliwal North, which drew new boundaries for Lesotho. The treaty stated that the northern boundary for Lesotho was the one established by Warden in 1849. The western boundary between the Caledon and the Orange Rivers ran about midway between the Maitland and Warden lines. Moshoeshoe was disillusioned by this settlement. He felt that once again he had been let down by a British official whom he trusted to make a fair settlement of his disputes with his white neighbours (Thompson, 1975: 251).

The British, also, contributed towards the outcome of the balance of power between the blacks and the whites in the region. The Afrikaners were given preferential access to guns by the British government. The second clause of Article 2 of the Bloemfontein Convention of 1854 on the question of guns stated that “the British-controlled sources of guns and munition of war were preferentially

closed to those ‘natives of the surrounding states’, in favour of the *Boers* (Afrikaner) from the Orange Free State” (Machobane, 1990: 34) (my italics). Moshoeshe could see that, given a few years of building their military might, the Afrikaner Republic would become formidable. He commented that this clause was making it difficult for the Africans to protect themselves. Hence, Moshoeshe was anxious to make peace with the Free State.

On the 30th March 1860, a meeting was arranged between the two heads of States, namely, Moshoeshe and Marthinus Pretorius to discuss the peace prospects in the area. Pretorius wanted Moshoeshe to review a portion of the Basotho army numbering about six thousand cavalry. Moshoeshe could not agree to this and thus the conference broke up (Machobane, 1990: 31-33).

Frontier incidents and stock thefts did not stop after the war and the meeting between the two heads of governments. They continued and led to the Second Basotho-*Boer* (Afrikaner) War of 1865. The Afrikaners were far better equipped than they were in the 1858 war. The Basotho were defeated by the Afrikaners in this war. They were pinned to Thaba Bosiu which was the capital and mountain fortress of Moshoeshe. The President of the Free State demanded the following from Moshoeshe: 40 000 cattle, 5 000 horses, 60 000 sheep, evacuation of Thaba Bosiu, handing over of guns and the kingdom’s sovereignty, all within four days. Moshoeshe was, also, to hand over two of his sons as hostages until all demands had been met. Moshoeshe refused to give in to the Afrikaners’ demands. He instead, opted to become a British subject and put forth his request to the British High Commissioner, Philip Wodehouse (Machobane, 1990: 37).

Molapo, a son of Moshoeshe decided to conclude a separate peace with the Free State government in March 1866. This became known as the Imperani Convention. In this convention he surrendered an area on both sides of the Caledon River in the vicinity of Ficksburg, Ladybrand and Leribe to the Free State. He also agreed that he and his people should become subjects of the Free State. Moshoeshe soon realised that unless he concluded peace treaty with the Free State, his kingdom could be completely destroyed. In April 1866, the Thaba Bosiu Convention was concluded. In this

convention, Moshoeshoe accepted most of the provisions of the Imperani Convention (Van Wyk, 1967: 3).

In order to prevent the total defeat of his people, Moshoeshoe called upon the British government to annex his territory. As the immediate cause of the 1865 war was the unauthorised raid of the Afrikaners by Lesaoana, Wodehouse had been reluctant to take Lesotho under the wing of the British government before Moshoeshoe punished Lesaoana. But as the war dragged on, the British government realised that besides Moshoeshoe's request for protection, there was need for formal control of Basotho. They dreaded the prospect of the defeat of the Afrikaners by the Basotho (Machobane, 1990: 37).

At the same time, Wodehouse feared that if the Afrikaners could be allowed to conquer Lesotho, it could result in important changes in the political position of several powers in South Africa and this could not be allowed. These changes would include the Orange Free State gaining control of the Indian Ocean port of St John's. The British feared that the unending border conflicts between the Basotho and the Afrikaners would affect immigration from Europe and the Overberg trade (Machobane, 1990: 37).

Britain declared Lesotho a British Protectorate in 1868 (Van Wyk, 1967: 3). The present boundaries between Lesotho and South Africa were finally decided in the Aliwal North Convention, which was signed in 1869 by the two countries. The convention required the Free State to give up the territory which lay east of the Caledon River and which had been acquired under the 1866 Convention (Van Wyk, 1967:3). All the Basotho who were living west of this boundary had to return to the Lesotho side while the whites who were living on the Lesotho side were forced to evacuate the area.

The Basotho were embittered by the loss of a big portion of their fertile land. They felt that Moshoeshoe had been forced to sign the convention because of circumstances beyond his control. As a result, the Basotho have always regarded the areas which were surrendered to the Free State as rightfully theirs and this perception still exists to date. Due to the loss of their land, a certain

pattern of behaviour has developed along the borders. There is constant violation of the boundary line by Basotho. As the population grew, the desire to recover their lost territory increased. Only the presence of the British authority in Lesotho prevented further outbreaks of major border trouble.

The conflicts between the border communities of the two countries continued during the British rule in Lesotho which lasted for almost a century (1868-1966). The British authorities did not address this issue of the border conflicts properly. They annexed Lesotho to protect the British commercial interests, the balance of power in South Africa and to a lesser extent, for the security of Lesotho. At a later stage, it was assumed that in due course, Lesotho will become part of South Africa. So, when the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, the British expected Lesotho to join the Union. But Lesotho never joined the Union because of the historical animosities between the Basotho and the Afrikaners. The tragedies of the border wars were still too fresh in the minds of many Basotho leaders to wish to join the former enemy. Another reason was that the Basotho were still very angry towards the Afrikaner for the territory which had been taken away from them.

One way in which the British tried to prevent the outbreak of a major border conflict between the Basotho and the Afrikaners was by passing an Act called the Peace Preservation Act in 1878. The aim of the Act was to disarm all the Africans under the Cape Colony. The Act was to apply in areas which were completely under the Cape colonial rule. At the time of its passing, Lesotho was then, not completely under the British rule. Even though Lesotho was a British Protectorate, it retained a high level of autonomy. According to the agreement reached between Moshoeshoe and the British authorities, Lesotho was to be ruled according to Basotho Customary Law. As a result, this Act could not be applied directly to Lesotho. In 1879, an opportunity presented itself to the Cape government to apply the Act in Lesotho when one of the chiefs under King Letsie I (Moshoeshoe's successor), Moorosi of Quthing, got involved in an armed conflict with the British authorities. Moorosi was defeated on 20 November 1879. The British decapitated him and sent his head to King William's Town. After this war, the British announced that the Act would be applied to the whole of Lesotho and that Quthing was to be confiscated. The Basotho protested on the grounds that

according to the Moshoeshoe-Wodehouse agreement, Lesotho was a territory for Basotho only and confiscating Quthing would be against that agreement (Machobane,1990: 52-53).

On the issue of the Peace Preservation Act, the Basotho argued that the Cape government could not disarm them because of the small rebellion of a group under Moorosi. They also said if they were disarmed, they would be reduced to the status of servitude. After receiving an urgent message from Sir Bartle Frere in Cape Town, Letsie ordered his people to disarm with immediate effect. The majority of the population, inspired by Masopha, Letsie's brother, and Lerotholi, Letsie's heir, challenged the order and refused to hand in their guns (Machobane,1990: 53).

The turn of events in Lesotho made the Cape government more determined to disarm the Basotho. When the delegation which had been sent to Cape Town to present the case of Lesotho came back with the report that disarmament was to proceed, the decision was rejected by the elements inspired by Masopha. They said disarmament to them was 'a load too heavy to carry and they would rather fight than lose their manhood' (Machobane,1990: 54).

The war between the Basotho and the colonial officers started in September 1880. Letsie was trying to impress the British officials on the one hand by pretending to disarm his people. But on the other hand, he was secretly supporting the 'rebels' and all the parties involved knew about it. The war became known as the Gun War. It lasted for seven months and the Basotho came out victorious in this war (Machobane,1990: 54-55).

The change in the agricultural production of Lesotho and the role Lesotho came to play as a labour reserve have, in a sense, also contributed to the present border problems between Lesotho and South Africa. Before British colonization, Lesotho used to be a rich and self-sufficient agricultural economy. It was self-reliant in food and well integrated into the cash economy of South Africa. When minerals were discovered in South Africa in the late 1860s, Lesotho became the 'grain basket' of South Africa, in spite of having lost a large lowland area. The Basotho farmers were producing enough grain to feed themselves and the surplus was exported to the mining towns of South Africa.

The Afrikaner farmers in the Free State region were no competition for Basotho farmers. The Basotho did not seem to have a reason to go and work in the mines. They were competing with Australian suppliers for supplying the mining towns of South Africa with wheat (Strom, 1978:32-33).

Agricultural produce of Lesotho only started decreasing in absolute terms in the 1930s. In 1932, the South African Prime Minister, General Herzog wrote to the British Secretary of State, J.H. Thomas, to ask for restrictions on wheat farming in Lesotho. White farmers in South Africa had been complaining about the competition from the Basotho farmers. In 1933, the South African government repeated these complaints and threatened to restrict the recruitment of labour to the British-owned mines and to incorporate the British territories if they do not do something about it (Strom, 1978: 34-35).

The South African government made sure that the scale was tipped in favour of the Afrikaner farmers. They drove Basotho farmers out of business in order to give the Afrikaner farmers a monopoly of the markets despite the fact that the Basotho had already lost a large portion of their arable land to South Africa. The South African government subsidised the Afrikaner farmers thus making their produce cheaper. The British government collaborated with the South African government by ensuring that the mines had a regular supply of labour. They introduced what they called 'hut tax' which meant that every male head of the household had to pay a certain amount of money in a form of tax to the British colonial government. Even Basotho farmers who had been able to pay their tax with the income derived from their agricultural produce could no longer afford to do so because of competition from across the border. They were, therefore, forced to go into the migrant labour system. Lesotho was reduced to the status of labour supplier for South Africa, and with the introduction of the migrant labour system in Lesotho, the agricultural activity was mainly left in the hands of women.

Today, Lesotho cannot provide its population with enough maize which is their staple food. The Lesotho government has to rely mainly on South Africa to feed its population. More than 600 farms in the conquered territory (see Figure 2), with a combined area of about 813 000 hectares are very

good for agriculture. This 'conquered territory' therefore developed into the "granary" of the Free State (Eloff, 1979: 35-36).

With the recent recession in the price of gold in the world market, the migrant labour system which Lesotho has come to depend on, has been adversely affected by these developments. Some gold mines have been closed because of the decline in the price of gold. A large number of Basotho mine workers have been retrenched. The implication of this for Lesotho is that poverty is on the increase. As more and more people are out of work, the chances of cross-border crime will increase. Poverty and desperation drives people to resorting to criminal activities.

Due to all these historical developments, stock-theft has continued to be a central component of the Lesotho/South Africa border relations. Some Basotho justify their stealing on the neighbouring South African farms as a compensation for these injustices. Even today stock theft in the conquered territory constitute a major threat to peace between Lesotho and South Africa. Border problems have come to include other criminal activities such as drug-trafficking, car theft, cutting of the fences along the border and murders.

3.4 Conclusion.

The loss of land by the Basotho to the Afrikaners has led to a certain pattern of behaviour along the borders. There are constant violations of the boundary line by the Basotho which have resulted in the stealing of agricultural produce and stock from the South African side. This has created a lot of tension between Lesotho and South Africa. Basotho living along the borders have attacked white farmers for cattle and vandalised their property. Successive attempts have failed to bring a lasting peace. Not even the wars which were fought brought a permanent solution to the border conflicts between the two countries. The British take over in Lesotho in 1868 did not contribute much towards solving the border problems between the two countries. In fact, what the British did was to ensure the systematic exploitation of Lesotho by South Africa.

It is a fact that the Basotho still feel angry about losing so much of their land to South Africa and this resentment along the border still continues to date. Their anger has been confirmed by the police reports on cross-border stock thefts. In their interviews with the members of the public on the Lesotho side, the Lesotho and the South African Police discovered that there was a general feeling that as far as the Basotho were concerned, they did not regard the taking of stock from the South African side which used to be part of Lesotho as stealing. They are simply taking what is rightfully theirs (Jonker & Monane, 1998). Stock theft across the borders thrives as a vicious circle of revenge and shows no signs of abating. Today, border problems have incorporated other cross-border crimes such as drug-trafficking, car theft, vandalising of government property (cutting border fences) and murders.

Cross-border crimes between Lesotho and South Africa are also aggravated by poverty on the Lesotho side. The decline in agricultural produce since the 1930s has led to increasing poverty in Lesotho. The decline in agricultural produce was initially compensated for by the migrant labour system. However, as a result of recent recession in the prices of gold, Basotho who have been depending on the mines for their living have been adversely affected. A large number of them have already been retrenched. This means a number of families without any source of income has increased. As poverty rises, the temptation to get involved in criminal activities increases. Hence, cross-border crime has increased in recent years.

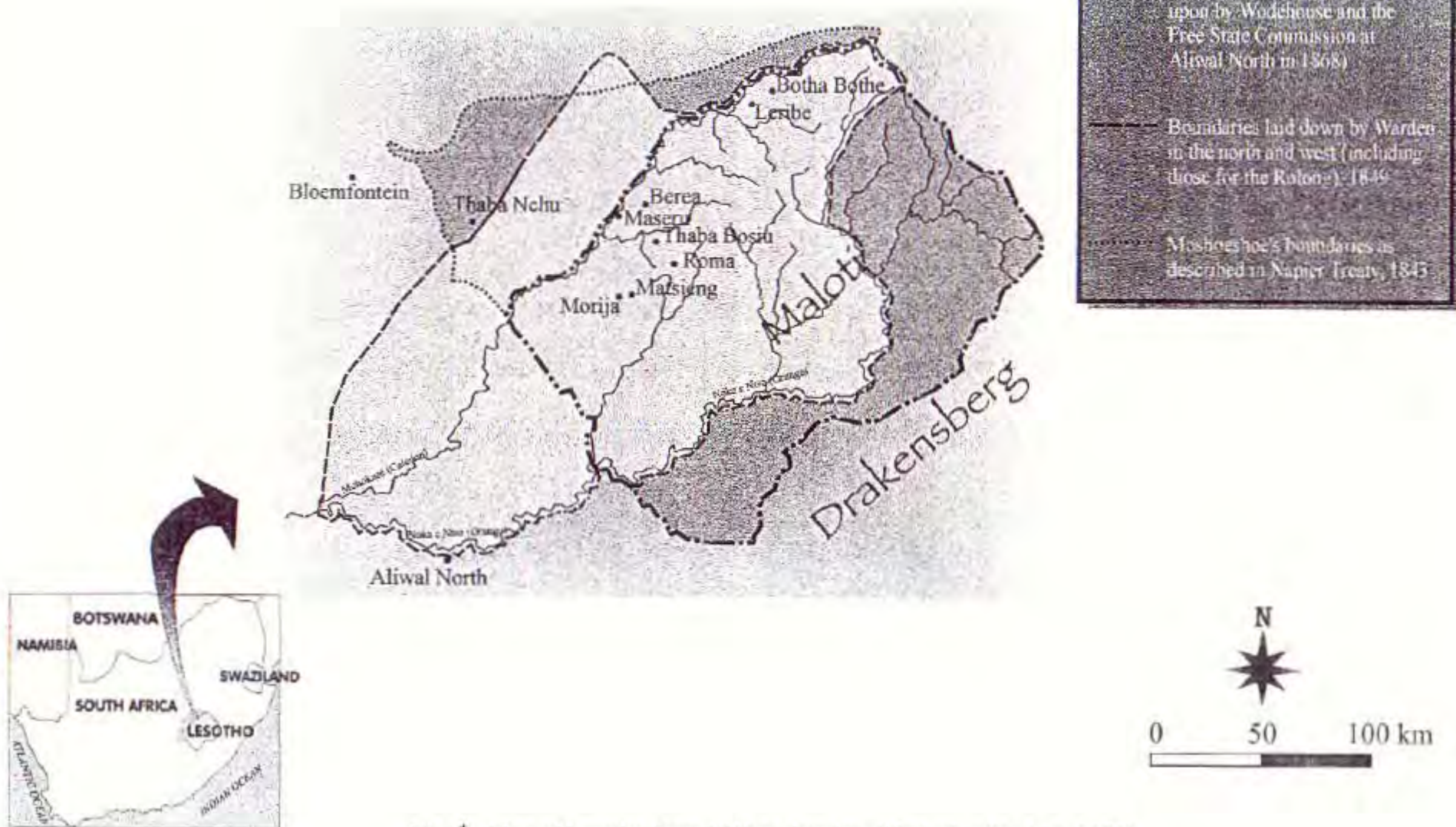


Fig. 1. Map of Lesotho from 1843 to date (modified after Sanders, 1975)

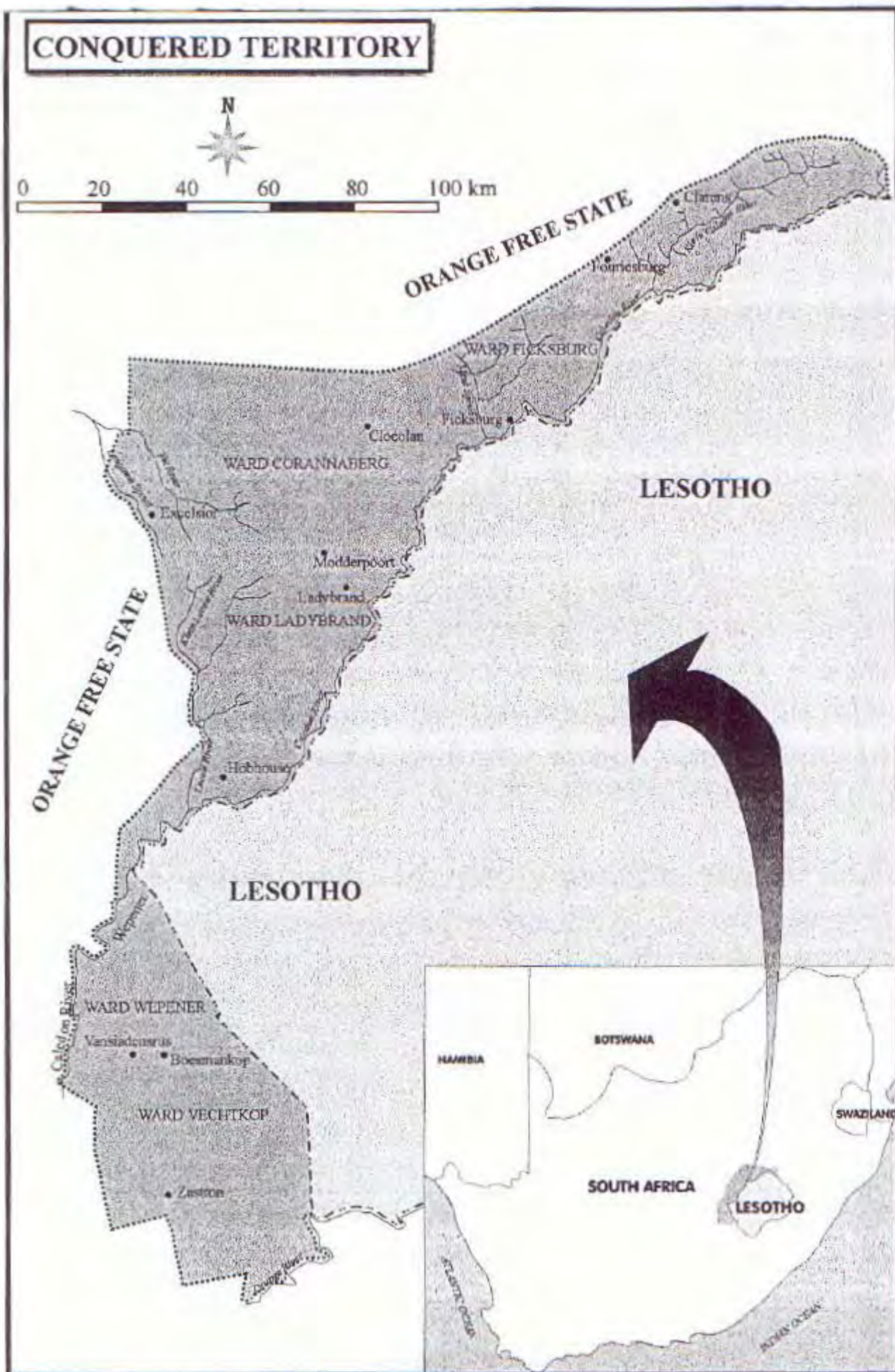


Fig. 2. Map of the conquered territory (modified after Eloff, 1979)

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CHAPTER 4

4. THE INTRODUCTION OF GRASSROOTS DIPLOMACY BETWEEN LESOTHO AND SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

The last chapter looked at the historical background to Lesotho/South Africa border relations, thus, providing a background to the discussion of grassroots diplomacy. It showed how the historical emergence of modern Lesotho left some perpetual border conflicts which have remained the central characteristic of relations between the two countries. These conflicts have manifested themselves in the form of cattle rustling and stealing of other agricultural produce across the borders. Today, these problems now include other criminal activities such as drug- trafficking, car theft, cutting of the fences along the border and murder. We have seen how the situation prevailing in the conquered territories led to three wars within a short period of less than ten years. We have also seen how successive settlements failed to bring permanent peace between the border communities of the two countries. The historical dispossession of the Basotho has contributed to the hostile relations which existed between the two governments, especially in the post-1970 period.

This chapter is an attempt to assess different policy frameworks which were adopted by the two governments during different periods. It identifies four different periods in the post-1966 years in the relations between Lesotho and South Africa. The first period from 1966 to 1970, when Lesotho government pursued a policy of dialogue and co-existence. The second period from 1972 to 1980, characterised by confrontation and hostility. The third period, from 1980 to 1985, was characterised by the introduction of the Inter-Governmental Liaison Committee (IGLC). Finally, the fourth period from 1985 to date is characterised by the establishment of the District Liaison Committees as instruments of grassroots diplomacy.

But before discussing the above-mentioned periods, I wish to highlight a few pointers about the British attitude towards border problems and the issue of the conquered territory which played an important role in shaping border relations between Lesotho and South Africa. During British rule in Lesotho, the British authorities did not follow a particular policy dealing with border problems

between Lesotho and South Africa. The reason for this was that it was assumed that, in time, Lesotho together with Botswana and Swaziland would join the Union of South Africa. As early as 1913, the South African government had asked Britain to incorporate the above-mentioned countries into the Union (Eloff, 1979: 37). It was therefore assumed that as soon as Lesotho became part of the Union of South Africa, the border conflicts would no longer be an issue. Lesotho never joined the Union and later, the British government decided to give independence to all its Protectorates.

Even though the British avoided addressing the issue of the conquered territory, it kept on coming up from time to time. As the population grew, the desire to recover this conquered territory increased. Prior to Lesotho's independence, the political parties used the land issue to gain national support and international sympathy. By 1962, the leaders of the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) had written letters to the United Nations, requesting it to intervene on behalf of the Basotho on the question of the territory conquered by South Africa. "Britain and South Africa were accused of robbing the Basotho of living space and of the ability to maintain themselves by depriving them of the most productive ground to the west of the Caledon River" (Eloff, 1979: 38). It became obvious that somehow, this issue of conquered territory was going to feature a lot in the post independence relations between Lesotho and South Africa.

4.2 Dialogue and Coexistence with South Africa -1966-70

When the Basotho obtained their independence from the British in 1966, they inherited the colonial state machinery as it was. The colonial state was pro-South Africa. The BNP government which took over from the British did not want to upset the order of things with their neighbour. They were aware of the economic interdependence which existed between Lesotho and South Africa. They were a product of capitalist system of the colonial power. They, therefore, pursued a policy of dialogue and coexistence with South Africa. This pro-South African policy was very unpopular amongst the majority of the Basotho who hated the Afrikaners because of the history of these two groups. The memory of how they had lost their land was still fresh in the minds of the Basotho.

In November 1968, the South African government declared that it was ready to appoint a combined border commission in co-operation with Lesotho. South Africa pointed out that this proposed commission would concentrate on the Lesotho-Cape and Lesotho-Natal borders, because there was an uncertainty in these areas as to the exact location of the border. The Free State was not to be included because the Caledon River constituted most of the border (Eloff, 1979: 39). In other words, the South African government was not prepared to talk about the Free State which was the very area which the Basotho regarded as rightfully theirs. The Lesotho government was unable to pursue this boundary issue until in the post-1970 period. It was too busy with the preparations for the second elections which were held in 1970.

4.3 Confrontation with South Africa: The Politicisation of the Border Issue -1972 to 1980

i) The Politicisation of the Border Issue

In the post-1970 period, relations between Lesotho and South Africa took a new direction, characterised by hostility and confrontation. The change in relations between Lesotho and South Africa was brought about by the change in Lesotho's policy towards South Africa after the 1970 election. The new policy of the Lesotho government towards the South African government was characterised by the challenging of the apartheid system and politicisation the border issue.

From 1972 onwards, the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Leabua Jonathan, began to challenge the apartheid regime openly. He undertook to do whatever he could to alleviate the sufferings of black people in South Africa. The shift in policy towards South Africa was necessary to divert the eyes of the international community from Lesotho's internal political problems. Jonathan's party had hijacked the government when it became obvious that the BCP was winning the 1970 election and it was being criticised by the international community. For the Lesotho government to gain the support of the international community once again, it had to do something which would receive international support. Hence, the decision to challenge the apartheid system. South African government was not impressed by the new attitude of Jonathan. Therefore, there was a break-down in relations between these two countries.

In the circumstances of the rising hostility between the two governments, the border question became politicised by the government of Lesotho. The break-down of relations was not just at state-to-state level. It also affected the grassroots. The hostile relations between the two governments fuelled the border problems. Stock theft along the borders had not disappeared during British rule but it deteriorated in these hostile environment. For example, when Jonathan addressed the *pitsos* (public gatherings), he used to talk about the territory which have been conquered by the *Boers* (Afrikaners) and his determination to make sure that the conquered territory was returned to its rightful owners. This talk rekindled the anger the Basotho felt over the loss of their land. Some cattle rustlers became even more determined to steal stock across the border as a way of redressing the wrongs of the past.

The South African government accused the Lesotho government of becoming communist. This was used as an excuse by the South African officials to harass Lesotho citizens travelling in and out of South Africa at the borders. There were reported incidents of violence and the killing of Basotho by the South African Police along the borders. Complaints by the Lesotho government were ignored by the South African government.

The question of the Conquered territory between Lesotho and South Africa came up again in May 1973. The Prime Minister of Lesotho, Leabua Jonathan, demanded that the South African government return the conquered territory to its rightful owners namely the Basotho. The Lesotho government had already approached the United Nations for legal advice and to ensure an impartial decision on the question of the conquered territory. The Lesotho government raised this issue again in 1974. The South African president accused Jonathan of causing strained relations between Lesotho and South Africa (Eloff, 1979: 40).

In 1976 the Foreign Minister of Lesotho, visited Europe. The issue of the conquered territory once again came up during his European tour. While in Bonn, the Foreign Minister spoke of “Lesotho’s battle against racism and colonialism and attempts by the Pretoria regime to incorporate Lesotho into the Republic of South Africa” (Eloff, 1979: 41). In May 1976, the South African Foreign Minister visited Lesotho. The border issue was top of the agenda. The meeting took place behind closed

doors and the outcome was not made available to the public. The border issue was not just politicised to win local sympathy, but also to gain international support.

In 1976, South Africa announced the so called “independence” of Transkei. Transkei offered Lesotho an alternative route to the sea if Lesotho could give her recognition, but the Lesotho government made it clear that they would not recognise Transkei or any other Bantustan. On the 26th October 1976, the very day on which the Transkei obtained its “independence”, its Premier, Kaizer Matanzima, announced the closure of the entire South Eastern border between Transkei and Lesotho. The border posts which were affected by this closure were Qacha’s Nek, Ramatsiliso’s gate and Tele border posts. About 238,114 Basotho were affected by this closure (Sixishe, 1984: 94). The Lesotho government complained to the South African government whose reply was that they had no control over the closed border posts since Transkei was now “independent”.

The attempt by the Lesotho government to solve the problem bilaterally with South Africa did not succeed and thus, they were left with no other choice but to complain to the UN General Assembly. The international community condemned the actions of South Africa because Transkei was not recognised as an independent country and it was obvious that South Africa was using Transkei as a pawn of its destabilisation policy towards Lesotho. The international community rallied behind Lesotho with aid to lessen the economic effects of the border closure on the Basotho.

Like the South African authorities, the Transkei authorities started harassing Lesotho citizens. This was interpreted by the Lesotho government as an attempt to force a confrontation between the two countries. The citizens of Transkei crossed the border illegally and impounded the livestock of the Basotho. When the Basotho attempted to cross the border and recover their stolen stock, they were given heavy fines by the Transkei authorities. These incidents were reported to the South African government which never bothered to respond. Instead, the Matanzima regime made threats against the Lesotho government. For example, Matanzima’s ‘Foreign Minister’, Digby Koyana, wrote to Lesotho’s Foreign Minister, Charles Dube Molapo, on the 15th April 1977 saying: “The government of Transkei would not like to find itself in a position where it is compelled to adopt retaliatory

measures against your government and/or people” (Cit in Sixishe, 1984: 98). The behaviour of the Transkei citizens clearly shows how the people at grassroots reacted to hostility at state-to-state level. The Transkei citizens translated the hostility of their government towards the Lesotho government into their day-to-day interactions with the Lesotho citizens.

After the border closure by Transkei, Lesotho’s Foreign Minister called upon the South African government to appoint a border commission with immediate effect to solve the question of the disputed territory which had been a thorny issue in relations between these two countries, once and for all. He further pointed out that ‘the legality and morality of the second Treaty of Aliwal North (1869) could be challenged on the grounds that it was signed between the Afrikaners and the British and the Basotho were not part of the negotiation process’ (Eloff, 1979: 41).

The border problems in the Transkei/Lesotho area escalated during this time of hostility between the two governments. It is most unfortunate that even to date, these border problems between Lesotho and Transkei still continues and has rendered that area the most troubled border area between the two countries. The situation in that area is so bad that there is a fear among the community leaders and the police that “a full-scale war” could break out on this border if both governments do not step up security measures in the area. In the year 1998 alone, it is claimed that more than 70 South African and Basotho nationals have died (Motale, 1998: 3).

ii) The African National Congress Presence in Lesotho and the South African Policy of Destabilisation Towards Lesotho

The South African government, also, used the presence of ANC refugees in Lesotho as another excuse to harass the Basotho. They felt threatened by the good relationship which existed between the ANC and the Lesotho government. They raised this issue at every meeting they had with Lesotho government officials. They accused the Lesotho government of allowing the ANC to use Lesotho as “a springboard to launch attacks on South Africa” (Sejanamane, 1988: 15).

The South African government retaliated by establishing the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA), which was the armed wing of the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) and allowed it to launch attacks on Lesotho from the South African soil (Sixishe, 1984: 105). They used the LLA to destabilise Lesotho. The people who were seriously affected by these attacks were mostly the ones living along the borders. They were more likely to become victims in the cross-fire between the Lesotho Security Forces and the LLA guerilla fighters. Indeed, quite a number of shepherds from these border villages were mistaken for LLA fighters and were killed by the Lesotho Security Forces. Some of the families living along the borders were accused of harbouring LLA fighters. Many innocent people became victims.

During this time of hostility and confrontation between the two countries, border relations deteriorated. The border problems which had always been there were exacerbated by the hostility. The element of courtesy and diplomacy was no longer visible in the way the two governments were conducting their affairs. Unfortunately the people who suffered the most were the border communities. They lived in fear of becoming victims of the cross-fire between the two countries. The whole situation was getting out of hand. The Lesotho government used LLA activities and the fact that they were supported by the South African government to embarrass the later internationally. The Lesotho government made it a point that they raised this issue at every General Assembly. This finally led to a movement towards grassroots diplomacy. Negotiations between the two governments were called for to try and come up with solutions to these problems.

4.4 The Peka Bridge Meeting: The Beginning of Grassroots Diplomacy

When P.W Botha took over from B.J. Vorster as the President of South Africa, the relations between the two countries were at their lowest ebb and the leaders of both countries were called upon to meet and try to defuse the situation. The activities of LLA along the borders had rendered the area very unsafe. The farmers and the businessmen in the border towns of South Africa put pressure on their government to do something about the situation along the borders because it had a negative impact on their businesses. They therefore called upon their President to meet with the Prime Minister of Lesotho to resolve these problems.

Neither of the two leaders, namely Jonathan and Botha, was prepared to cross the border into each other's country. It was finally agreed that the meeting be held in a caravan at Peka Bridge on the Lesotho/South African border, which was an acceptable compromise for both parties. The meeting took place on the 20th August 1980. It was attended only by Jonathan and Botha with their Foreign Ministers. A very important decision was reached at this meeting. This was the decision to set up a Lesotho/South Africa Liaison Committee which was to look at ways to defuse tension between the two countries and recommend areas of co-operation on matters that were of grave concern to Lesotho (Sixishe, 1984: 111-112). The Lesotho/South Africa Liaison Committee became known as the Inter-Governmental Liaison Committee (IGLC) and it was instrumental in the establishment of the DLCs. The Peka Bridge meeting, therefore, marks an important point in relations between the two countries namely, the move towards grassroots diplomacy.

After the Peka Bridge meeting, there was a notable decline in the activities of the LLA, but they resumed shortly after that, which could only mean that something did not go well for the South African government. This shows the extent of the failure of high level diplomacy in solving the problem between these two countries.

4.5 The Inter-Governmental Liaison Committee (IGLC): 1980 to date

The IGLC was established in 1980. The heads of government of both countries, Botha and Jonathan felt then that regular consultations at senior official level could go a long way towards promoting healthy neighbourly relations. The IGLC was established as a forum for these consultations. Both countries had much to gain from negotiating on a wide variety of issues which complicated their relationship and threatened to sow the seeds of disagreement and instability (Weisfelder, 1997: 32).

Operating under the general committee of the IGLC were various sub-committees. These sub-committees included the Agricultural Sub-committee, the Consular/Migration Sub-committee, the Drakensberg/Maluti Conservation Programme Sub-committee, the Educational Sub-committee, the Health Sub-committee, the Sub-committee for Justice, the Labour Sub-committee, the Transport Sub-committee, the Tourism Sub-committee, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, and the Sub-

committee on Security Matters (RLMP/SAP). All these sub-committees had a mandate to promote closer cooperation between the two countries in their different fields (Lesotho government: 5th November, 1992).

In all the IGLC meetings, the Lesotho Delegation was led by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The South African Delegation was led by the Director-General of Foreign Affairs. The meetings of the IGLC were held annually towards the end of the year. The purpose of these meetings was to review the progress reports of these various sub-committees. These sub-committees were therefore expected to meet at least twice before the big meeting of the IGLC and this was supposed to happen on an annual basis.

The establishment of the IGLC offered the two countries a platform for the discussion of many issues and problems arising from the day-to-day interactions of the Basotho and the South Africans. It also enhanced the possibilities for mutual beneficial cooperation between the two countries as neighbours. The agendas of the meetings of the IGLC reflected the many concerns of the two countries. In the case of Lesotho during the apartheid era, the promotion of the notion that the two governments should reciprocally accord dignified treatment to each other's citizens was of paramount importance. The Lesotho government felt strongly that dignified treatment of each other's citizens was of paramount importance and was the very basis for neighbourly relations (Lesotho Government: 13th August, 1993).

The senior government officials of both countries, through their efforts in the IGLC, have done their level best to keep the relations between the two countries afloat. Through the different sub-committees, the IGLC has ensured that there was cooperation between the two countries in different fields. Each committee was expected to give a progress report in the IGLC meeting at the end of every year and this kept the committee members on their toes. The importance of the role played by the IGLC in ensuring the maintenance of good relations between Lesotho and South Africa was eloquently stated by one leader of the South African delegation, Geldenhuys, in his opening remarks to the Eleventh meeting of the IGLC, when he said:

“Politics, the very essence of relations are the most unstable ingredient of cooperation. Politicians can come and go ...but officials have a tendency to stay and are usually responsible for the permanence that keeps the relations afloat when the going gets tough. Above all, the official is the practical creature who, in spite of the ups and downs of politics, can be relied on to continue with the essential business of daily bilateral activities which cannot only be implemented when relations take a temporary depth (sic). That is why I can say that we have set an example with our Inter-Governmental Liaison Committee, an example that can rightly be noticed and followed by many in the international community, but especially by countries in Africa who need each other in practice but lack the practical realism to use their officials to break the bonds of suspicion and sow the seeds of trust that can grow into fields of cooperation and goodwill”. (Lesotho Government: 20th September, 1990).

4.6 The District Liaison Committees (DLCs)

I wish to emphasize the important point that from the onset, the DLCs were never dragged into party politics. They have remained independent from the influence of politicians in both countries. This point was confirmed by various members of the DLCs I interviewed. The fact that they continued operating even when the relations were at their lowest ebb shows that politician had no influence over them. The idea of establishing the DLCs was born in the IGLC meetings. The members of the IGLC, who are mainly senior government officials from the two countries, felt that the IGLC was doing a good job, but still it was not enough to harmonise relations between the two countries. They felt that there was a need for their efforts within the IGLC to be complemented by direct grassroots contact and cooperation at the level of respective communities across the border. This led to the birth of the DLCs which were established in 1985 by the IGLC (Lesotho Government: 20th September, 1990). So, these DLCs were the latest addition to the sub-committees under the IGLC.

The DLCs were established in all the border districts of Lesotho, except Qacha's Nek. The problem was that Qacha's Nek shared a border with Transkei and the Lesotho government did not recognise the Bantustans as independent states. Therefore, they could not have any bilateral relations with any one of them. The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC was only established in the post-apartheid era when the Bantustans became re-incorporated into South Africa.

4.7 Functions of the District Liaison Committees

The main function of the DLCs is to promote the interests of the communities residing on either side of the border and to foster a spirit of good neighbourliness with regard to government policies. It is therefore the duty of the DLCs to try and overcome the problems which threaten peace between these border communities. The main problems which are faced by the border communities are cross-border crimes. These include among other things, illegal crossings of the border. Sometimes this illegal act is committed in order to carry out innocent business such as shopping or going to the doctors on the other side of the border. In some instances, illegal crossings of the border have resulted in the theft of livestock and agricultural products, illegal trade and smuggling of goods, trafficking in drugs, firearms and stolen vehicles, cutting of border fences, illegal grazing of animal, and sometimes unfortunate deaths along the border lines (Khomongoe,1999). These problems are common to all the border regions namely, Lesotho/Free State, Lesotho/Transkei and Lesotho/KwaZulu-Natal. The only difference is the varying degree of the problem. For example, the Lesotho/Transkei area has the most serious problem of violent stock theft of all the areas and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

The DLCs have identified poverty as one of the causes of cross-border crime. In order to get to the bottom of the problem, the DLC members therefore feel that it is necessary to fight the root of the problem which is poverty. Initiation of development projects is therefore an attempt on the part of the DLCs to help the border communities help themselves and reduce the temptation to become involved in criminal activities. The DLCs also facilitate cross-border farmer relationships under the Agricultural sub-committee. According to the rules of procedure for the DLCs, as drafted by the two governments, the DLCs have to work towards the promotion of the following:

- They have to give assistance with the supply of agricultural production inputs and equipment on an agreed basis in agreement with government recommendations and regulations.
- They should provide guidance, advice and possible assistance with regard to agricultural practices such as the use of farm equipment.
- They should monitor the movement and health of livestock.
- They should foster informal agricultural training and extension.

- They should discuss agricultural problems with a view to formulating mutually acceptable solutions.
- They also discuss any other matter which may be raised such as commerce, transport, labour, marketing, processing, etc.
- They also work towards the advancement of bilateral nature conservation issues and related matters.
- They are to encourage cross-border development projects.
- DLC members have a mandate to discuss any matter of a bilateral nature between Lesotho and South Africa.

4.8 Membership of the District Liaison Committees

The DLCs consist mainly of the farming communities from both sides of the borders. They also consist of local tribal authorities, namely chiefs and herdsmen along the borders. The armed forces are also represented in these committees. Since the DLCs are supposed to facilitate cross-border farmers' relationships, each delegation has a government farming specialist who advises the local farmers and keep them up-to-date with the latest farming technologies. The observers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and South African High Commission act as liaison officers between the committees and the central governments, because the latter have to be informed about the activities of the former so that they can intervene where their assistance is required (Mjikeliso, 1999).

Despite the fact that some members of the DLCs are government officials, the DLCs have been given a high level of autonomy to deal with matters affecting the border communities without the interference of the central government. The DLCs may invite specialists to attend meetings as and when required. The portfolios of each delegation from both countries are as follows:

Lesotho Delegation

District Agricultural Officer

District Co-operative Officer

District Secretary

Farmer Representative (Crop/ livestock)
District Veterinarian, as and when necessary
Deputy District Officer
Observer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Principal Chief of the area
Local Chief along the border
Lesotho Defence Force (LDF)
Royal Lesotho Mounted Police
National Secret Service

RSA Delegation

Town Clerk
District Agricultural Unions
Agricultural co-operatives
Nature Conservation (Conservator)
Town Council
Regional Director of Veterinary services, as and when necessary
Local Tribal Authority (Chiefs along the border).
Agricultural Officer
South African Police Service (SAPS)
South African National Defence Force (SANDF)
South African High Commission (SAHC).

4.9 Funding of the District Liaison Committees

According to the rules of procedure for the DLCs, each delegation is supposed to bear its own expenses. This means that each government is supposed to sponsor its own delegation, but if special needs arise, they may be referred to the South African High Commission in Maseru. The South African DLC delegations are funded by a special fund which falls under the Department of Foreign Affairs Development Fund. This fund enables the South African members to organise meetings and

run the activities of the DLCs efficiently since most of them are not civil servants but individuals who are doing the work voluntarily. The Lesotho DLC delegations are funded by the Ministry of Agriculture. Most of the development projects initiated by the DLCs have been funded by the South African High Commission.

4.10 How the District Liaison Committees work

In order to achieve their objectives, the DLCs work through meetings. In these meetings, members identify problems which are creating tensions between the border communities and come up with suggestions for a plan of action to be followed. They meet as and when necessary, but the minimum number of times the DLCs should sit is twice a year. The venues for the meeting alternate between the two countries.

Whenever necessary, the DLC members hold *pitsos* (public gatherings) among the border communities on the Lesotho side to obtain their views on certain issues and educate them about certain things. The farmers living along the borders on both sides are the eyes and ears of the committees. They report any illegal activities to the committees who in turn request the assistance of the armed forces. The fact that the armed forces are represented on these committees makes things a lot easier. The Maseru/Ladybrand DLC has even requested walkie talkies for their committee members living along the border to make communication easier in their fight against crime and their request has been granted. When members of the DLCs are unable to solve a problem at grassroots level, they refer it to a specialised committee of the IGLC. For example, if a matter needs legal attention, they will refer it the Sub-committee of Justice.

Once the DLCs have identified problems and made decisions on their plan of action, it is very important that the minutes of the meetings be sent to the South African High Commission in Maseru and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lesotho. The observers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the South African High Commission are not able to attend each and every meeting. The decisions made at the DLC forums are crucial to the politicians. The Foreign Ministry and the High Commission have a duty to follow up on issues which need to be addressed at higher levels. An

example of such an issue was a decision reached by the Mafeteng/Wepener DLC that there was an urgent need to open a border post between Hob house and Ha-Rantsie (Khomongoe,1999). Time was of the essence because the offices concerned in both countries had to be informed in good time so that they could take the matter up in the IGLC. After deliberating on the issue, the IGLC has to take it up with the parliaments in both countries for final endorsement (Mjikeliso,1999). The DLCs have a duty to ensure that the voices of people living along the border are heard by the central governments in these matters which affect them directly. So, through the DLCs, the decisions which are made by both governments at the highest level are actually reached at the grassroots level. This is clearly a good example of “grassroots diplomacy at its best” (Coetzee, 1994: 18).

4.11 Conventional Diplomacy Versus Grassroots Diplomacy: Deteriorating Relations Between Lesotho and South Africa.

After the formation of the IGLC and the DLCs, conflict between the two governments continued. The lack of initial success was largely due to prevailing political hostilities. The two governments disagreed on the issue of South African refugees based in Lesotho. The South African government wanted the Lesotho government to dispose of all the ANC refugees in Lesotho and the Lesotho government was not prepared to do that. Therefore, the South African government continued using LLA to destabilise Lesotho. But when the Lesotho government was not intimidated, the South African government was forced to act on its own to pursue its policy of destabilisation (Ajulu, 1995: 13). For example, on the 9th December, 1982, the South African Defence Force violated the international borders, raided Maseru and killed 42 people, 30 of whom were ANC members and 12 others being local Basotho. The international communities continued to rally behind the Lesotho government and condemned in the strongest terms, the attack by the South African government.

Meanwhile, South Africa which at the time was faced with intensifying internal resistance and a lot of pressure from the international community continued with its destabilisation strategy against Lesotho. On the 20th December 1985, another attack similar to the December 1982 attack was launched by the South African Defence Force in which nine people were killed. Six of them were South African refugees, while three of them were Lesotho citizens. A complaint was filed by the

Lesotho government with the UN Security Council. The Security Council condemned the killings of the nine people and the violation of Lesotho's territorial integrity (Sejanamane, 1988: 16).

The Security Council's position annoyed the South African government which decided to impose a total blockade on Lesotho. This was the most devastating strategy used by South Africa, considering the geographical position of Lesotho. This and other factors set the stage for the military coup of January 20th, 1986.

However, the IGLC and the DLCs continued operating despite the fact that relations between the BNP government and the apartheid government were at breaking point. They remained the only positive aspect in the relations between the two countries at that time. The implication of this is that even though state-to-state diplomatic relations between Lesotho and South Africa were failing, the practice of grassroots diplomacy continued between the two countries. The example of Lesotho and South Africa indicate the importance of drawing a boundary between the problems of politicians at the top and what is good for the people at grassroots levels.

4.12 The District Liaison Committees During the Military Regime

The military regime had a completely different relationship with apartheid South Africa from the one the BNP regime had. They were more submissive to the demands of the South African government. The issue of the conquered territory was never mentioned by the military government, not even once. They were willing to compromise quite a lot in the name of so-called 'good neighbourliness'. In his speech on the 24th January, 1986, a few days after the coup, Major-General Lekhanya stated that:

“It is our commitment to normalise relations with South Africa and we shall do all that is humanly possible to achieve this objective. We espouse the noble principles of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness and we are prepared to demonstrate our sincerity whenever called upon to do so” (Cit in Sejanamane, 1988: 21).

One of the first signs that the military government was willing to appease the South African government at all costs was that shortly after their take-over, most of the ANC refugees were transferred to Zambia, which was something the South African government had wanted for years, namely, elimination of the of ANC presence in Lesotho. It did not take long for the military

government to sign the agreement on the Highlands Water Project with South Africa. For the first time in the history of the two countries, they exchanged Trade Missions, which were later upgraded to the level of Embassies.

The DLCs as has been indicated, were established in 1985, a few months before the military coup. When the military took over, the DLCs were still at the stage of implementation, but taking into consideration the kind of relations the BNP regime and the military regimes had with the South African government, one would assume that the DLCs were more likely to benefit from the cosy relationship between the military regime and the South African government financially, than they would have during the BNP regime. Since the military government showed its commitment to peaceful coexistence with South Africa, the South African government was more willing to open its purse. There is the possibility that the DLCs got more funding for their development projects than they would have during the Jonathan regime.

The period of the military rule was actually the very critical stage of the DLCs because it was the stage of implementation. This was the stage which determined whether the DLCs would work as instruments of grassroots diplomacy or not. The DLCs were faced with all kinds of problems which will be further discussed in the case study of the Maseru/Ladybrand DLC in the next chapter. It had not yet been determined who would be responsible for the financial needs of the DLCs on the Lesotho side. The members of the DLCs were faced with the difficult task of convincing the border communities in both countries of the importance of solving their problems through these forums. This was like a trial stage for the DLCs. During this period of military rule, the DLCs members managed to get their act together and the wheels for the practice of grassroots diplomacy were set in motion. By the end of the military rule in 1993, it had become clear that the DLCs were going to succeed. All the parties involved showed some commitment to ensuring the success of the DLCs.

The Ministry of Agriculture of Lesotho have now been given the financial responsibility of the DLCs.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that relations between Lesotho and South Africa have gone through different phases in different periods. Different policy frameworks were followed by these governments in their relations with each other. They ranged from dialogue and co-existence to hostility and confrontation. The issue of conquered territory played a significant role in the deterioration of relations between these two countries. The politicians in Lesotho politicised it to gain national and international support. The two governments tried high level diplomacy to solve their problems but it never brought long-term solutions. The hostilities between the two governments only fuelled the border problems which existed between the two countries. The border communities became victims of the hostile exchanges between the two governments.

Relations between the two countries were on the brink of breaking before the leaders of both countries resorted to grassroots diplomacy. The pressure applied by the farmers and the businessmen in the border towns of South Africa convinced the South African President to meet with the Prime Minister of Lesotho to deal with border problems which were of particular concern to them, and moved towards grassroots diplomacy. It was only after resorting to grassroots diplomacy that things really began to change for these two countries. For the first time in the history of relations between the two countries, grassroots diplomacy empowered border communities with regard to matters affecting them directly. The governments of Lesotho and South Africa have come to appreciate the importance of involving grassroots people in the issues which affect them. What one can appreciate in the above discussions is the point that grassroots diplomacy continued even when conventional diplomacy was failing. Indeed, the practice of grassroots diplomacy have stood the test of time.

Grassroots diplomacy was introduced at two stages. The first stage was the introduction of the IGLC which consisted of government officials, while the second stage was the introduction of the DLCs which consisted of member of the border communities. The DLCs are meant to compliment the efforts of the IGLC. In the history of the two countries, their working relationship has never been better than since the introduction of grassroots diplomacy. Even when the relationship between the

politicians at the top were not good, the IGLC and the DLCs provided the tools which ensure the continuation of cooperation between the two countries.

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CHAPTER 5

5. THE DISTRICT LIAISON COMMITTEES IN THE POST-APARTHEID YEARS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter was an attempt to assess different policy frameworks which were pursued by the governments of Lesotho and South Africa during different periods. Four different periods in the post-1966 period in which different policies were pursued, were identified. Grassroots diplomacy, once it had been established, had survived under the most difficult circumstances in the relations between the two governments.

This chapter is an attempt to evaluate the performance of the the DLCs. The Maseru/ Ladybrand and Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLCs are used as case studies to illustrate the successes and challenges facing the DLCs. Before looking at the performance of the DLCs, this chapter will first assess how the changes in post-apartheid South Africa are likely to affect its relations with Lesotho, especially the grassroots diplomacy between the two countries.

5.2 South Africa in the Post-Apartheid Era

By the end of the 1980s, the whole of the Southern African region was experiencing dramatic changes in its international environment. These changes have been attributed to the end of the Cold War (Venter, 1997: 73). The changes brought about by the end of the Cold War presented new opportunities to the people of the region and democratisation was one of them. Lesotho and South Africa were swept by these winds of change. It became apparent to the non-democratic governments of both countries that they could no longer hold on to power.

On the 2nd February 1990, President de Klerk announced that he was unbanning the African National Congress (ANC) and other political organisations as a first major step towards the dismantling of apartheid. A few weeks later, Lekhanya started the democratisation process in Lesotho. According to Southall (1995: 27), this was viewed in Lesotho as evidence that the military could no longer hold on to power. Three years later in 1993, for the first time in 27 years, Lesotho held democratic

elections which were won by the Basotho Congress Party (BCP). The following year, in 1994, South Africa also held its first multi-party democratic election. The end of apartheid and the democratisation of South Africa brought hope to the whole Southern African region. Unlike the previous apartheid government, the democratic government of South Africa was expected to work with the other countries of the region and not destabilise them.

The demise of apartheid in the South African election of 1994 brought some great expectations by the other Southern African countries and the world at large, from South Africa as a regional power. South Africa's relations with the rest of the region in the post-apartheid era have constituted the major foci of recent academic concerns.

South Africa was aware of the fact that her chances of survival in the post-apartheid period depended on her co-operation with her neighbours and the rest of the continent. Unlike the old apartheid regime which had destabilised the region, the new regime understood the interdependence that existed between it and the neighbouring countries. It realised that its growth and development were linked with that of the region (Hull, 1996: 33). South Africa could not be allowed to be an island of development in an ocean of poverty and underdevelopment. This would create a lot of problems including those of illegal immigrants, who are driven out of their own countries by poverty and unemployment.

The Southern African region had certain expectations from the new government of South Africa. The new South African government was expected to play a big role in the affairs of the region. It was also expected to be more friendly than the apartheid government. The ANC-led government was expected to return favours granted to the ANC during the struggle, by these countries which assisted them in times of need (Maasdorp, 1994: 5; Ajulu, 1995: 52).

Notwithstanding these expectations on the South African government, some scholars realised that there were bound to be internal conflicts which might make it difficult for the South African government to participate in the affairs of the region as much as it would like to have done. The new

government was faced with too many problems which were caused by the imbalances of the previous government. These problems created a major challenge to the new government. Therefore, the new government was more likely to put the country and the people first (Maasdorp, 1995: 5). What that meant for Lesotho was that South Africa was more likely to neglect her than aid her. However, because of the geographical position of the two countries, if Lesotho was allowed to deteriorate economically, socially and politically, it would present substantial risks to South Africa. Anything negative happening in Lesotho was likely to spill over into South Africa and vice versa.

The first test which proved that South Africa could not allow Lesotho to deteriorate came in August 1994, shortly after the Government of National Unity came into power. King Letsie III of Lesotho dissolved the democratically elected BCP government. President Mandela of South Africa, together with his colleagues in Botswana and Zimbabwe, President Masire and President Mugabe mediated in this conflict and ensured that the democratically elected government was restored. They declared that coups could no longer be tolerated in the Southern African region. Another test came after the 1998 election of Lesotho when the opposition parties refused to accept the election result and claimed that they were rigged. The opposition parties were making the country ungovernable, and the situation was deteriorating very fast daily. Responding to the Prime Minister of Lesotho's request, the South African and Botswana government send troops to Lesotho under the umbrella of SADC, to intervene in Lesotho. Some of the Peace Keeping forces are still stationed in Lesotho until the next election which is to held in 2000.

5.3 South Africa and Lesotho in the Post-Apartheid Period

Immediately after the 1993 election in Lesotho, the South African government assured the BCP government of Lesotho of its good neighbourliness. In his interview with Coetzee, Ambassador Visser described relations between Lesotho and South Africa as "grassroots diplomacy at its best" (Coetzee, 1994: 18). By this he meant that it is state- to-state communication at the highest level, but also person-to-person communication at the lowest level. After the 1994 election, the new government of National Unity continued this policy of good neighbourliness towards Lesotho.

Like the rest of the world, the border communities in Lesotho had their own expectations from the democratic South African government. They expected that there would be more cooperation between the governments of Lesotho and South Africa, especially because they represented the new age of democracy for the two countries. They both represented the interests of the majority of the people. They expected this cooperation to be particularly visible at the borders (Tlebere, 1999).

Because of the contributions of Basotho towards the struggle of the ANC, the government of National Unity which was led by the ANC was expected to have a soft sport towards Basotho. In this circumstances, the border communities assumed that relations along the borders would go from strength to strength. They still felt that South Africa owed them compensation for their conquered territory. With the coming to power of the government of National Unity in 1994, they thought that the possibility of compensation was more likely to be considered by the new government than by the previous apartheid government.

5.4 The District Liaison Committees in the Post-Apartheid Era

The DLCs continued with their work in the post-apartheid period. The new regimes in both countries appreciated the importance of the work these forums were doing, namely, the promotion of grassroots diplomacy between the two countries, and therefore, they embraced this concept of the DLCs. Their functions did not change. They continued to harmonise the relations between the border communities. Even the 1998 SADC (Southern African Development Community) intervention in Lesotho did not have any impact upon the functioning of DLCs. The functioning of the DLCs was not affected by the spirit of resentment against South Africans which prevailed amongst the Basotho after what they saw as an 'act of aggression' by the South African government. This resentment was evidenced by the looting and burning down of the businesses owned by South African companies in Maseru and in other major towns of Lesotho. Shops such as Sales House, Scotts, Pep, and Smart Center to name but a few, became targets during the touching and looting in these towns. Cars with South African registration numbers were being attacked by the rioters immediately after the intervention. The activities of the DLCs are very much appreciated by the border communities, especially the farming community. They were, therefore, not prepared to do anything to jeopardise

the benefits they were getting from the DLCs. The only set-back caused by this intervention was that farmers in Lesotho did not receive assistance with their harvesting from the South African Farmers' Union in time because of the instability in the country.

5.5 The Performance of the District Liaison Committees

According to the report of a Foreign Affairs observer (Lesotho Government, 1993), the DLCs have generally performed well, except for the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC which is still struggling to establish itself. The members have undertaken many varied and positive steps to promote better understanding and co-operation between their respective communities. In many instances common problems have been resolved at grassroots level and insights have been gained into the concerns and problems which are being experienced by their neighbours. The DLCs have taken care of most of the Consular problems without them being brought to the Foreign Ministries of both countries. Such consular problems include a national of one country dying in another and locating the relatives of the deceased in the other country. They also include incidents such as the false arrest of the citizens of one country in another country. Such cases which do not require complicated procedures have been discussed and resolved at the level of the DLCs. One of the most positive aspects is that the committees have expanded their activities and now operate on the basis of mutual trust and friendship.

One area where the DLCs have been successful is in encouraging co-operation between the police forces on both sides of the border. Through the efforts of the DLCs, the South African Police and the Lesotho Police have established cross-border liaison Security Force committees which work hand-in-hand with the DLCs as indicated by appendix 5.1. The members of these cross-border liaison committees for the security forces are also members of the DLCs. Therefore, security matters which are raised in the DLCs are followed up in these Police/Security Forces forums. These cross-border liaison committees of the Police force work together across the border to combat cross-border crime such as drug-trafficking and car theft. They have carried out studies about cross-border crime in their specific areas and have written joint reports.

Case Studies

The DLCs in general are doing well. They have gone a long way to improve hostile relations which existed at the border in the past. In order to evaluate the performance of the DLCs, two case studies with different backgrounds and experiences will be assessed. These are the Maseru/Ladybrand and the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLCs. The Maseru/Ladybrand DLC consist of semi-urban population and it is based in the low lands. It is now doing very well. On the other hand, the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC consist of rural population and is based in the highlands. It is faced with different problems which include high crime rate and conspiracy. The terrain of this area is also a problem. It is mountainous and, thus, make the movements of the security forces in their fight against crime very difficult. The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC is therefore, faced with the most difficult job of normalising the relations between communities which seem to be deteriorating very fast due to stock theft.

i) The Maseru/Ladybrand DLC

The Maseru/Ladybrand DLC consist of the semi-urban population and was established in 1985. At the time of its establishment, the main problem was the illegal crossing of the border which resulted in the stealing of stock and other agricultural produce, car theft and trafficking in illicit goods. The porousness of the border was making it easy for the cross-border criminal activities to take place. There was a lot of tension and mistrust between the border communities.

Besides the traditional hostility and resentment against South Africa, criminal activities across the border have also been attributed to poverty and unemployment in Lesotho. The closing down of some of the mines in South Africa has aggravated the problem of poverty, leaving many Basotho families without a source of income. Some South African farmers have been blamed for contributing to cross-border stock theft by employing illegal immigrants from Lesotho. When stock theft occur under these circumstances, it becomes basically impossible to apprehend the suspects. Some of the farmers allowed Lesotho citizens to illegally graze their stock on their farms. When the farmers stopped this practice, they became victims of stock theft (Jonker et al, 1998: 2-3).

For the first few years after its establishment, the Maseru/Ladybrand DLC was not doing very well. There was negative attitude and lack of trust between these two communities. As a result, these communities did not have faith in the DLCs, especially the white South African farmers. The white farmers had reached a point where they wanted to take the law into their own hands when dealing with stock thieves. It took a lot of hard work by the DLC members to convince these communities that they could work out their problems within the DLC forum, and to promote better understanding and co-operation between them. Members held discussions about problems they were faced with in carrying out their job. The communities were then made aware of the importance of the DLC. Slowly but surely, the community members began to appreciate the role the DLC could play in helping them solve their day-to-day problems with their neighbours. In the post-1990 period, this DLC has been moving in a positive direction. The members were beginning to have faith in it. The community members on both sides had gained an insight into each other's problems and concerns. The mutual trust and friendship which was established enabled the committee to expand their activities.

Through the hard work and dedication of the DLC members, stock theft in the Maseru/Ladybrand area has declined remarkably. Some of the stock owners have been able to recover their stolen stock. The walkie-talkies which were requested by the Maseru/Ladybrand DLC have been of great help to the members of the committee in reducing stock theft. Increased communication made it easier for the Police to apprehend suspects and recover stolen stock. At the recent meeting of the Maseru/Ladybrand DLC, which was held in Maseru on the 8th June 1999, it was reported that there were no recent cases of cross-border stock theft. This has been attributed to the patrol of the Caledon River by the members of the border communities on the side of Lesotho and the farmers on the South African side (Jonker & Monane, 1998). The villagers and the farmers have been assisted by the armed forces of both countries.

On the issue of development projects, quite a number of them have been successful. The development projects are aimed at fighting poverty and creating self-employment among the border communities. The projects have played an important role in the upliftment of these border communities. For

example, in 1996 the South African High Commission donated some sewing machines to a women's self-help project based in Maseru. This project creates self-employment for women. They make school uniforms for different schools in Maseru. The women in Maseru and Ladybrand involved in development projects, through the DLCs, are able to meet from time to time to exchange ideas. Through the work of the DLCs, the farmers living along the borders on Lesotho side, are being assisted with the ploughing of their fields at the beginning of every ploughing season. In another instance, a Mosotho farmer has been assisted to turn a deep donga into a beautiful field planted with all kinds of crops. Through the efforts of the DLC members, large campaigns against rabies have been carried out in the Maseru/Ladybrand area. Most of the animals in this area have received the anti-rabies injection. This has helped prevent the spread of rabies in the area.

ii) The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC

The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC was established in 1994. It was established to monitor and advise the two governments on the situation in the area. The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area is the most troubled border area between Lesotho and South Africa. The problems of this area are complicated by one main factor which is high crime rate. The high crime rate is exacerbated by the geographical factors.

There has always been cattle stealing between the peoples of Lesotho and the Transkei. According to the history of this area, at one stage during the time of Moshoeshoe I, this area had become a centre of lawlessness with cattle-stealing by small bands of Basotho and whites spreading like wild fire. According to a police report (Cronje, 1985: 5) there is a feeling amongst some Basotho that part of the Maluti and Mount Fletcher areas of the Transkei historically belongs to them. So, one of the reasons for the Basotho to steal stock in Transkei is attributed to the loss of this territory. Stolen stock is seen as a form of compensation for the use of the land belonging to their forefathers.

The relationship between Transkei and Lesotho during the BNP regime was not good at all, but it has never been this bad. As already mentioned in the last chapter, when the South African government announced the so-called "independence" of Transkei in 1976, the Transkeian government under

Matanzima offered Lesotho an alternative route to the sea if Lesotho could give her recognition. When the Lesotho government refused to give Transkei recognition, the Transkei authorities closed the entire southern border. It has already been discussed in the last chapter, how the Transkei authorities started harassing Lesotho citizens and how the Transkeians crossed the border illegally and impounded the livestock of the Basotho. At that time, the situation never got to the stage where it is, even though it was bad. It is therefore important to highlight some of the developments which resulted in the deterioration of relations between these communities and some of the conditions which exacerbate the situation.

Since October 1994, stock theft has assumed a dimension that seriously strained relations between the peoples of Lesotho and Transkei. As a starting point, after the first democratic election of South Africa in 1994, the policing structures in the former Transkei collapsed. The Transkei Police disbanded its Stock-theft Units. This left the door open for the more radical anti-stock-theft organisations such as “Khotla la Thaba” with its ‘Committee of 12’ to gain a free hand in the area. The inefficiency of the Transkei Police forced the people to look after their own interests and that included ‘investigating’ their own stock cases.

The cause of poor relations in the Qacha’s Nek/ Matatiele area has been traced to one particular incident which occurred in December 1994. In this particular incident, 2200 stock belonging to the Basotho were found grazing illegally on South African soil and were impounded by the Transkeians at Mount Fletcher. This incident created a lot of tension between the two communities. Relations between them have never been the same since. Transkei farmers in the Mount Fletcher and Maluti districts insisted that before the stock could be released to the owner, they had to pay for them. Many of the Basotho did not have enough money to pay for all their stock and, therefore, they had to leave some of it behind. Stock theft raids from Qacha’s Nek were, therefore, an attempt to recover their stock. The farmers in Transkei argued that the stock now belonged to them. This has led to a circle of cross-border stock theft which thrives on revenge (Cronje, 1998: 6-7).

In 1995, the nature of cross border stock theft began to change. It became more marked by armed and violent raids, abductions, murders and revenge attacks. The size of raiding parties also increased. It is no longer individuals involved in the raids. The forces masterminding stock theft raids lies mostly with the syndicates or “anti stock-theft organizations”, such as “Khotla la Thaba” (Cronje, 1998: 7). The main problem of the “anti stock-theft organizations” is that they have been infiltrated by the stock thieves. These thieves camouflage their involvement with stock theft by posing as members of the “anti-stock theft organization”. Hence, it is a well known fact in this area that some of the people who are claiming to be involved in the fight against stock theft are actually involved in the very crime.

To show the seriousness of stock theft in the area, some of the major events between 1996 and 1998 include the following:

- 1996-01-13: About 40 Basotho armed with R1 rifles attacked a cattle post near New Gate and attempted to steal 800 sheep and 67 cattle. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) intervened and killed three suspects during an exchange of fire.
- 1996-01-23: Basotho men armed with automatic firearms crossed the border and took 560 sheep, 70 cattle and 12 horses in Tabase Administrative area.
- 1996-05-29: About 300 South African men stole 100 cattle, 30 horses, 14 donkeys and a 1000 goats and sheep in Lesotho at the village of Teletsane.
- 1997-09-15/16: South African citizens crossed the border to steal stock in Lesotho. In this incident, one Mosotho was shot and killed by the cattle thieves.
- 1997-12-21: Armed men from Mzongwana in South Africa attacked Ramatsiliso village in Qacha’s Nek, killed one man, set a house on fire and stole 725 stock.
- 1998-01-01: A large number of South African men attacked a village in Lesotho and stole 508 sheep and 83 cattle and transported the stock to South Africa in a truck. On the same day 11 bodies of South African men were found near Ramatsiliso Border Post.
- 1998-01-02: A stock post called Mafikalisiu in Lesotho was attacked and 80 sheep and 4 horses were stolen. Later the South African Police found the body of an unknown man in Matatiele with an AK47 rifle in his hands.

- 1998-01-04: 40 Basotho men attacked Cairntoul, fired shots and stole an unspecified number of stock. When the South Africans crossed the border to recover their stock, they were chased by Basotho. On the same day 6 bodies were recovered in Mzongwana Location in South Africa (Cronje, 1998: 8-11) .

These are just a few examples of the incidents of cross-border stock theft which took place in the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area within the last two years.

Another issue which is creating serious problems in this area is the unresolved border demarcation dispute. The border exists only on maps and it is not fenced. As the population grows on both sides of the border, there is a demand for more land for grazing. This demand for land, aggravated by the unclear border line, creates conflict between the two communities. The authorities in both countries have been reluctant to intervene for too long. Of concern is that the longer it is left unattended, the more conflict it is going to create in the future as evidenced in the stock theft problems cited above.

The destruction of the infrastructure in the area is another problem, especially on the South African side. The roads in the Maluti and Mount Fletcher district are dilapidated and need to be upgraded. Furthermore, the terrain in this area is not user friendly to the law enforcers. It is very mountainous. The stock thieves on the other hand use it to their advantage. It provides very good hide-outs for the thieves to hide their stolen stock and these hideouts are not easily accessible. It therefore becomes very difficult for the police to recover stolen stock and to enforce law properly.

When the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC was established in 1994, it inherited all the problems mentioned above. It is essential for the situation in the area to be handled with the utmost sensitivity. Therefore, the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC has been entrusted with the difficult task of monitoring the situation and advising the governments of both countries accordingly. It is also entrusted with the task of normalising relations between these communities.

At the moment, the performance of the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC is not satisfactory. The stagnation is primarily caused by the high crime rate and conspiracy. Kynoch and Ulicki (1999: 6)

blame the two governments for not doing much to address the issues of cross border crime and conflict jointly in these area. They argue that lack of meaningful cooperation between the two governments to address this crisis has allowed a “culture of nationalist/ethnic intolerance to develop and ensures that violence has continued virtually unchecked” (Kynoch et al., 1999: 6).

The border situation in this area has resulted in high levels of hatred and mistrust which hinders the functioning of the Qacha’s Nek/ Matatiele DLC. If the two governments do not give this matter the serious attention it deserves, it might escalate into a regional disaster. Considering the rate at which people are being killed in the stock raids and the ethnic intolerance which has resulted from this problem, the whole situation might escalating into a full-scale war between the two communities. Therefore, it is essential that the situation in that area be given special treatment by both governments. The job of the DLC in this area is to push harder and make the voice of the people be heard by both governments. They have to make the two governments realise that the people are tired of crime and demand that the governments put up the necessary infrastructure to assist them fight against crime and in their efforts of grassroots diplomacy.

Despite all the problems in the Qacha’s Nek/Matatiele area, some of the members of the Qacha’s Nek/Matatiele area are optimistic about the future of that DLC. For example, Mokoto (1999) argues that the DLC has made it possible for the two communities to have a forum where they could discuss their problems in a meaningful and constructive way. The DLCs encourages South African businessmen to come and advertise the products they sell in Lesotho and vice versa. This practice has familiarised them with each other’s problems. For example, the businessmen on each side are aware of how this instability in the area is affecting each other’s businesses. Businessmen in Matatiele rely on their Basotho customers for their businesses to flourish. There was a time (1994) when a group of hooligans on the South African side made it difficult for Basotho to cross to the Matatiele by harassing them, and this resulted in murders in some instances. The businessmen in Matatiele complained that they were losing a lot of money because of this behaviour. The Basotho businessmen also complained that since it was risky to go to Matatiele, they had buy their stock from far away. Transport was more expensive and thus, pushing the prices up. This in turn was affecting an ordinary

citizen in Qacha's Nek. These problems were brought to the attention of the DLC and each side began to appreciate how this was affecting them.

The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC has also invited 'Skill for Africa' in 1998 to teach the Qacha community some business skills they were interested in. Some people have been taught how to run their own businesses profitably. Some have been taught some farming skills such as starting a poultry farm.

5.6 How the Political Changes in South Africa have Affected the District Liaison Committees

As predicted by Evans (cit in Weisfelder, 1997: 32), the new South African government has indeed adopted an inward looking policy which puts the country and people first. As much as it is interested in the development of the region as a whole, the South African government has been forced to give priority to her internal problems. This means correcting the imbalances of the past whereby the non-whites were marginalised. Therefore, more of the government resources have been put towards the development of the majority of South Africans, unlike the apartheid government which did not have the mandate of majority of the people. The South African government cannot spare much of its resources to assist its neighbours when it has so many internal problems. According to Mjikeliso (1999), the South African government is not allowed to give aid to other governments. It would rather finance community-based projects like the ones initiated by the DLCs . The DLCs continue to obtain some funding for their projects from the South African High Commission, but money is no longer flowing as freely as it used to under the apartheid government. The High Commission has limited resources at its disposal. Besides, in the post-apartheid period, the South African government opened many new embassies all over the world, to break away from the isolation of the apartheid years. And this is where some of the money is being diverted to.

Instead of paying money directly into the development projects, some of it has been re-directed into 'Skills for Africa' (SFA). SFA are sponsors of small self-help projects. It is involved in providing training for the rural communities in different fields. Khalipa (1999) said "SFA deals with the heads, the hearts, then the hand of people for engagement in the business activities." He further contends

that 'SFA helps small entrepreneurs to have a vision for their businesses, have their hearts feel the need of the projects, and then have their hands yielded to performance in the activities'. As SFA approach has proved to be useful amongst the rural communities in South Africa, Khalipa strongly felt that the same approach could help the rural communities in Lesotho to fight poverty and help themselves.

SFA is in line with the African Renaissance. South Africa no longer regards herself as a donor, but she is interested in sharing her skills with the rest of the region. At the present moment, 'Skills for Africa' is being invited to different DLCs to find out what kind of skills the border communities in that area are interested in learning. The DLC members are, therefore, being challenged to reprioritise their needs so that SFA may help bring change to small farmers in Lesotho (Mjikeliso, 1999). SFA has already provided some training to the Qacha's Nek community.

5.7 Challenges facing the District Liaison Committees in the Post-Apartheid Period

Currently, the DLCs are faced with a couple of challenges. Through its Department of Home Affairs, the South Africa government has introduced many changes which are rather disturbing to the DLC members and the Basotho nation in general. These have to do with the study permits and the six month border passes. During the apartheid years, the South African government used to issue study permits free of charge to Basotho. But when the government of National Unity came to power, they introduced exorbitant charges for study permits which increase every year. In 1994 when charges for study permits were introduced, a new study permit cost R265,00. This year (1999), the charge for a new study permit is R1020.00 (figures from the Department of Home Affairs). For Basotho living along the borders, this is of great concern because previously, they were able to take their children to the nearby South African schools which are sometimes closer to them than the local schools. With the new charges for study permits which are increasing every year, most of these people cannot afford to do this anymore. This means that their children have to walk longer distances to the local schools. In some areas like Qacha's Nek where violent stock theft is endemic, it is not safe for children to walk long distances. This issue has been raised by Lesotho government at every level, from the DLC level to Ministerial level, where the two countries discuss their relations with

each other. The Lesotho government has managed to convince the South African government to make the Basotho student stop paying the repatriation money of R500,00, on top of the study permit money. But they have not been able to convince the South African government to exempt the Basotho students from paying a lot of money for study permits.

With regard to the issue of the six month border passes, in the past the South African government made a special arrangement for Basotho who frequently travel to South Africa to obtain these passes which allowed them to go in and out of South Africa without having to endorse their passports, provided they were not staying overnight. These were renewed every six months. This practice of issuing the Basotho with six months border passes continued in the post-apartheid period. Since just before the 1999 elections, the South African authorities have been issuing six months border passes which limit travel to the South African border towns near Lesotho. They allege that the old six months border passes issued before were being misused to reside illegally in South Africa. It seems that since the 1994 election, the Basotho have been bombarded by the Department of Home Affairs with more demands every year. The DLCs are also trying to address the inconvenience caused to an ordinary citizen residing along the border by this new six months border pass.

5.8 Conclusion

The DLCs continue to play a very important part in relations between Lesotho and South Africa. They provide very good forums for the promotion of grassroots diplomacy between these two countries. Changes in regimes have not affected the importance of the work done by the DLCs. The DLCs have adapted to the new environment without much difficulty because the actual nature of relations between the two countries had not have much of an impact on the way the DLCs are run. The performance of the DLCs are quite impressive. The way the Lesotho borders have been created constitute the breeding grounds for conflict with her neighbour. The impact of this has been clashes over limited resources along the borders. The DLCs have done very well with the exception of the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC which is still struggling to normalise the relation between the border communities in the area. The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLCs is the newest player in this game of grassroots diplomacy and it still needs to be given a chance. Besides, the situation in that area is the

most abnormal one along the borders of the two countries. The DLCs have turned around the relations between the border communities from hostile and untrusting to friendly and mutual trust. Even the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC, with all its problems, have achieved a certain degree of success as indicated earlier. There is still a lot of work to be done, especially in the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area.

If the DLCs could succeed in convincing the South African government that Lesotho must be treated as a special case when issuing influx control regulations, it could be a major boost to the morale of the DLC members. As it is, the DLCs have already done a good job of promoting good relations between Lesotho and South Africa at grassroots level. They remained focussed on maintaining these good relations between the border communities. The members of the DLCs take their job seriously and are prepared to make their efforts worthwhile.

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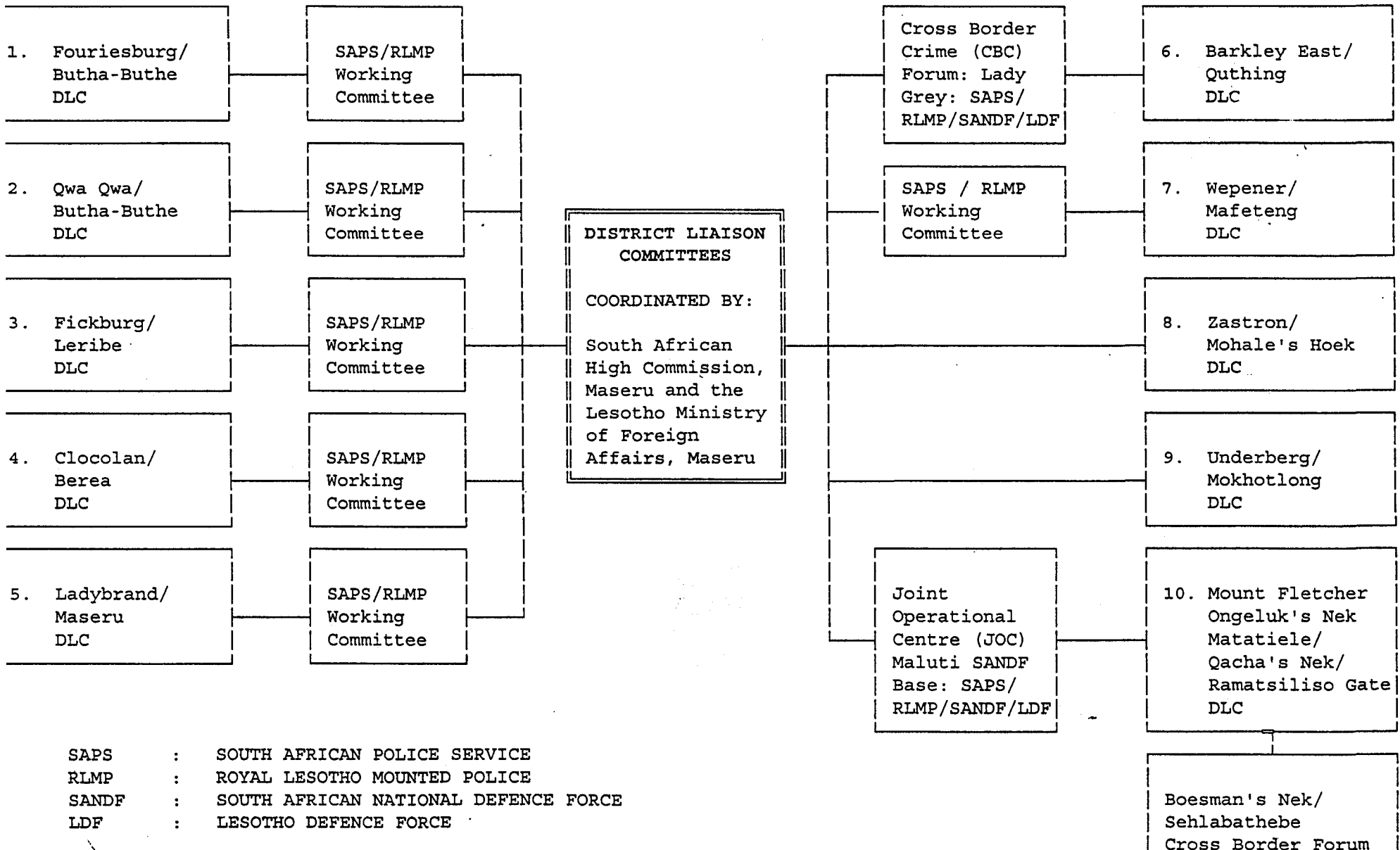
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DISTRICT LIAISON COMMITTEES BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO (DLC)
AND CROSS-BORDER LIAISON BETWEEN THE SECURITY FORCES



CHAPTER 6

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to show the importance of grassroots diplomacy in the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa. The study looked into the role of the DLCs as instruments used by Lesotho and South Africa to promote grassroots diplomacy between the border communities. The objective of this research was to argue the case of grassroots diplomacy as an alternative to orthodox diplomacy. This has been achieved by critically evaluating the role of the DLCs in the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa and to assess their successes and whether their role has changed over the years.

The study has established that cross-border conflicts are not unique to Lesotho and South Africa only. Many other countries in the world have been/are involved in conflict with their neighbours. The most common cause of conflict between neighbouring countries seems to be the issue of boundaries. The colonial boundaries in the African continent are a major source of border disputes. The arbitrariness with which African boundaries were drawn has caused many problems for the present African states. The boundaries have divided closely related peoples. For example, the Maasai were divided between Kenya and Tanzania. The Basotho have been divided between Lesotho and South Africa. This division has caused strained relations between states over the control of the people and the territory.

The study has identified two conventional diplomatic methods of dealing with cross-border conflicts. The first one is the OAU's Committee for Arbitration, Mediation and Conciliation. Among other things, the OAU was set up to settle border disputes amongst African states. The OAU did not achieve much in this respect. It was more concerned with protecting the colonial boundaries than dealing with the root cause of border disputes in Africa. It lacked the power to institute mandatory sanctions. As a result, member states were not motivated to take their disputes to the commission. They saw the OAU as a toothless tiger.

The second method of dealing with cross-border conflict is presidential mediation. Most countries opted for presidential mediation to the first method. It has the higher chances of success than the first one. In this case, African leaders offer their diplomatic services to the countries involved in a conflict. Presidential mediation does not have a hundred percent success rate. In most cases, it has succeeded in bringing short term solutions to the problems.

The study has established that there is general failure of top-bottom conventional diplomacy in dealing with cross-border conflicts. In most of the cases, not all the parties affected by the conflict are involved in the negotiation process. As a result, it is detached from the realities on the ground. Roodt (1996 : 314) argues that the top-bottom strategies do not enjoy much popular support from the people at grassroots levels. It has been confirmed that most countries do not involve the people at grassroots level in the conducting of diplomacy with their neighbour. Therefore, this inspired me to consider grassroots diplomacy as an alternative method to conventional diplomacy in dealing with border conflicts. The case of grassroots diplomacy was an attempt to see how the border relations are conducted when the people at grassroots level are involved and if the involvement of the grassroots make any difference in the way those communities relate to one another. The DLCs have an advantage of having a working relationship with formal government structures. According to Roodt (1996 : 322), the advantage of such a relationship between organs of civil society and the formal government structures is that 'they move beyond the mere demands of protest politics and begin to play both a watchdog role and a developmental one, especially in terms of genuinely representing people's needs and wants.'

To give the background to the practice of grassroots diplomacy by the Lesotho and the South African governments, the paper evaluated the historical background to the border relations between the two countries. The paper argues that the current border problems between Lesotho and South Africa, the main one being stock theft, have their origins in the way Lesotho came into being as a nation state. Over the years, the Basotho were slowly pushed from the land they occupied on the flat plains between the Orange River and the Caledon River and squeezed into the present Lesotho,

which mainly consists of mountains, by the Afrikaner farmers upon their arrival in the Free State. Lesotho lost a big part of its population to South Africa to the effect that today, there are more Basotho in South Africa than in Lesotho itself. The Basotho lost a large part of their arable land to these new arrivals. This had a devastating effect on the Basotho who are an agricultural society and as the population grew, the situation got worse. The demand for land for both residential and agricultural purposes increased. This has had a negative impact on food security. Lesotho, which was once the grain basket of South Africa, is now dependent on South Africa for the supply of its staple food. The historical dispossession of the Basotho left the door open for perpetual conflict between Lesotho and South Africa. The tension created by this loss of land is greatly felt by the border communities who feel the constant pressure to expand into the neighbouring country and who are obliged to see what could have been theirs on a daily basis.

The loss of such a big portion of their land was very much resented by the Basotho. They continued to disregard the drawn boundaries and to cross the borders to steal stock from their neighbours who had deprived them of their land. Ever since that time, there has been a feeling amongst some Basotho that taking livestock from the neighbouring white farms was not stealing, but simply taking what rightfully belongs to them. So, stock theft still constitutes the major problem for communities living along the borders.

The issue of the conquered territory has been of great concern throughout the history of the relations between Lesotho and South Africa. It has caused a lot of tension between the two governments in the past. During British rule in Lesotho, no specific policy was followed to deal with this boundary issue. At some stage, the British government attempted to disarm the Basotho but they were embarrassingly defeated and the whole issue of trying to disarm the Basotho was abandoned. Later, it was assumed that Lesotho would join the Union of South Africa, but Lesotho never joined the Union because of the traditional hostility of the South African government. The British government decided to give all its Protectorates independence instead. Throughout the British rule, there were these tendencies by the British government to favour the Afrikaners in their clashes with Basotho. It

could be observed that the British annexation of Lesotho was more to protect its economic interest than to protect the Basotho.

In the recent years, poverty in Lesotho has also aggravated the border problems between Lesotho and South Africa. In the 1930s, the total agricultural output of Lesotho started deteriorating due to the pressures put on the British colonial government of Lesotho by the South African government. But, the deteriorating agricultural output was supplemented by the wages of the migrant labourers for many Basotho families. The recession in the price of gold in the world market has had a negative impact on Lesotho in particular, because of its dependence on the employment of its people in the South African mines. A large number of Basotho miners have already been retrenched. This means that poverty in Lesotho is on the increase. The increasing poverty has resulted in the rise of cross-border crimes.

Just before independence (1966), the issue of the conquered territory was taken up by the leading political parties in Lesotho and they approached the United Nations about it. They used it to gain national support and international sympathy. After independence, the BNP government of Lesotho took it up with the South African government. This issue has never been pursued to the fullest by the Lesotho government.

In the post-1970 period, the border problems between the two countries were further exacerbated by the hostile relations which existed between the two governments. In the circumstances of the rising hostility between the two governments, the politicians in Lesotho politicised the border issue. They used it to rally the internal and external support, and to divert the attention of the people from their own political problems. The Prime Minister of Lesotho used to talk about this issue of the conquered territory when addressing the *pitsos*. Such talks rekindled the anger the Basotho felt for the loss of their territory and inspired some of the cattle rustlers to be more determined to steal stock as a way of redressing the wrongs of the past.

The two governments were constantly confronting each other at every available opportunity. The relations between the two countries deteriorated very fast. The Lesotho government's support of the ANC refugees made the relations between the two governments to be strained further. The South African government retaliated by establishing LLA and using it to destabilise Lesotho. The Lesotho government used the LLA activities to embarrass the South African government internationally. They raised this issue of the LLA activities and the involvement of the South African government in the General Assembly and this used to embarrass the South African government. The South African businessmen and farmers were also putting a lot of pressure on their government to iron out things with the Lesotho government because the hostilities had a negative impact on their businesses. This pressure is what finally led to a movement towards grassroots diplomacy.

By 1980, relations had deteriorated to the extent that the head of neither government was willing to meet his counterpart in his country. But the pressure on the South African government to work things out with Lesotho was too much and could not be ignored any longer. Finally, the two heads of government agreed to meet at Peka Bridge on the 20th August 1980, to try and defuse the hostility which existed between the two countries. Among the things which were discussed at this meeting was the situation which prevailed in the border areas. One good thing which came out of this meeting was the decision to set up a Lesotho/South Africa Liaison Committee which was to look at ways to defuse tension between the two countries and recommend areas of cooperation. Although the meeting was not a complete success, it was a milestone in relations between these two countries in that it marked the beginning of grassroots diplomacy between the two.

The IGLC was established in 1980. The members of the IGLC, who were mostly senior government officials of both countries, were happy with the achievements of the IGLC but still they felt that it was necessary that their efforts should be followed up at grassroots levels by the border communities in order to try and establish good relations between themselves and their counterparts on the other side of the border. They, therefore, decided to establish the DLCs. The DLCs were established to deal

with border difficulties between border communities on both sides of the border and to harmonise relations between the two countries at the borders.

The DLCs have seen changes in regimes in both countries. In Lesotho they have seen the BNP government, the military government, the BCP government and the present LCD (Lesotho Congress for Democracy) government. In South Africa, they have seen the apartheid government and the Government of National Unity led by the ANC government. The changes in regimes have not had an impact on the functioning of the DLCs. All these subsequent governments have embraced this idea of the DLCs. The DLCs continued to promote the interests of the border communities and to deal with problems which threaten peace between the two countries. Throughout these years, the DLCs have stayed out of party politics. As a result, the DLCs have remained focused on their objectives. They have never lost touch with the needs of the border communities despite what was happening at the top. The DLCs have never been dragged into the political fights between the politicians. They act as watchdogs and representative of people's needs and wants.

The DLCs have generally performed well. They have promoted better understanding and cooperation between their respective communities. In many instances, common problems have been resolved at grassroots level. These forums have provided an opportunity for these communities to gain an insight of the concerns and problems of their neighbours. The DLCs have promoted good relations based on mutual trust and friendship between their communities. Over the years, the DLCs have been able to expand their activities based on this mutual trust and friendship. They have been able to shift their focus from dealing with border problems to encouraging more development cooperation between the border communities in a fight against poverty.

In conclusion, the DLCs have played a very important role in the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa. They have succeeded where conventional diplomacy has failed. They have created good relations between the two countries at grassroots level. The good relations at grassroots level have made work easier for the governments. Some of the responsibilities of the governments have been

taken over by the DLCs and this have made their work-load lighter. The DLCs have resolved many problems of a bilateral nature between the two countries at grassroots levels. There is no doubt that grassroots diplomacy is working for Lesotho and South Africa. The two governments have come to appreciate the practicality of involving grassroots people in the issues which affect them directly and this has paid off. I believe that the relationship between Lesotho and South Africa would not have been this good had it not been for the practice of grassroots diplomacy. The practice of grassroots diplomacy has saved the two countries from tense relations at the borders, which could easily have led to war or the severing of diplomatic relations. Grassroots diplomacy in the case of Lesotho and South Africa has complimented orthodox diplomacy very well. Because of the relationship between the DLCs and the governments of the two countries, the DLCs have acted as the voice of the people in the governmental structures. The issues affecting people at grassroots levels have been brought to the attention of the two governments by the DLCs. This way, the two governments have stayed in touch with the realities on the grounds. It has stood the test of time because even during the time when the relations between the two governments at the top were at their lowest ebb, the practice of grassroots diplomacy continued.

The example of Lesotho and South Africa could therefore, be copied by other countries, especially African countries which need one another for their survival but lack the practical realism to see this. The politicians are too involved in their own little struggles to realise the needs of the people at grassroots level and the implications of full cooperation with neighbours. They therefore, lose the opportunity for cooperation. For example, in the case of the Senegal-Mauritania conflict on the issue of agricultural land in 1989, a committee consisting of representatives of the border communities of both countries was appointed to evaluate the problems in the area and advice both governments accordingly. The committee agreed on the number of measures including the return of the Senegalese farmers who have been expelled from their fields in the border area . But the Mauritanian government did not support the recommendations of that committee and the whole situation turned into a disaster whereby the nationals of one country were being chased out of the other country (Parker, 1991 : 159). The two countries, therefore, missed the opportunity of utilising grassroots diplomacy because

the politicians blocked the way. The economies of both these countries were badly affected by this conflict.

The fact that the DLCs were never under the influence of party politics has a lot to do with their success. It has saved the DLCs from the political squabbles at the top. Governments have come and gone, but the DLCs have not undergone major transformations. All the successive governments have embraced the DLC concept. Perhaps, the history between the two countries has taught them that grassroots diplomacy is important. Through the practice of grassroots diplomacy, a clear boundary has been drawn between the problems which affect the day-to-day lives of people at grassroots levels and the problems at governmental level. The practice of grassroots diplomacy shows that sometimes, these two kinds of problems need to be treated separately to avoid the sufferings of people at grassroots levels unnecessarily. The DLCs have tried to ensure that the interests of the people at grassroots levels are not sidelined during political squabbles. The DLCs have no problem adapting to their changed political environment because they are not directly affected by the changes.

The only DLC which has been having some problems at the present moment is the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele DLC. The reason for this is that the criminal activities of violent stock thieves in the area are hindering the work of the DLC and it is also the newest of all the DLCs. The Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area has special problems which need special attention from both governments and not only from the DLC. Kynoch and Ulicki (1999 : 6) are of the view that the two governments are neglecting this areas because it is too remote from the centers of power in both countries. The problem of the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area is a very urgent matter which needs immediate attention. Since the DLC members in this area have been given a mandate to monitor the situation and advice both governments accordingly, they have a duty to bring the attention of both governments to this matter immediately and make them realise that it might escalate into war if security measures are not stepped up in the area.

Despite all the problems of the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area, the DLC has achieved a certain level of success. It has provided a forum whereby representatives of both communities could discuss their problems in a much more constructive and meaningful way. The situation in this area has reached a point where it cannot be left in the hands of the DLC to work out the problem. It is going to take more than grassroots diplomacy to overcome this problem. The DLC is going to need a lot of assistance from the central governments.

A number of measures which could make the work of the DLCs easier and which could be implemented by both governments have been suggested by Mjikeliso (1999). The governments should look into the question of equal distribution and decentralisation of resources. For example, more resources should be directed into the Qacha's Nek/Matatiele area to upgrade the infrastructure and to improve the policing in that area. Both governments should also seek to put in place projects which employ people in order to fight poverty which is the main source of crime. These projects should be given autonomy and the community should become involved. People should not be made to feel that the projects are being imposed on them because they will not be as committed as they would be if they felt that it was their project. Governments should only become involved when there is corruption. For example, there is a case in the district of Mafeteng, Lesotho, where the South African High Commission donated a hammer-mill to a cooperative in this district. It does not seem to be clear who is benefitting from that hammer-mill and who the members of that cooperative are. Therefore, there is a need for both governments to devise some control measures which will ensure that the money and the equipment they invest in community based projects do not end up in the wrong hands. The people have to be taught that such projects are for them as a group and not for certain individuals. People should be assisted with training and 'Skills for Africa' is a positive step in that direction. The DLCs should remain outside party politics. These measures would definitely improve the work of the DLCs.

In my opinion, the practice of grassroots diplomacy cannot bring a permanent solution to the border problems between Lesotho and South Africa, but, it surely has contributed in a positive way towards

improving the relations of the border communities of these two countries. The issue of the lost land by the Basotho has not been addressed sufficiently by both governments of Lesotho and South Africa. The research has demonstrated that the issue had been raised a couple of times during the BNP regime in Lesotho, and even before Lesotho's independence by the political parties. But the governments of the two countries have never really sat down to try and conclude this issue of 'conquered territory'. It is therefore, my view that, despite all the efforts of the DLCs to maintain good relations at the borders, the border conflicts will still arise from time to time until a final settlement on this issue is reached.

The two governments of Lesotho and South Africa could try and work out the issue of the conquered territory on their own, or they could involve the international community. Two options could be considered when settling this land issue between Lesotho and South Africa. Firstly, South Africa could consider returning the 'conquered territory' to its rightful owners, namely, the Basotho. The South African government has already done it in the case of Namibia by handing over Walvis Bay and the twelve associated Guano islands to the later on the 28th February 1994 (Simon, 1994: 127). Secondly, the two countries could consider the incorporation of Lesotho into South Africa so that all the people could have equal access to the limited land resources. The governments of Lesotho and South Africa have to take into consideration, the warning of Falola (1996: 10) that as long as different countries pursue policies that disregard the fact that the people who have been divided by the colonial borders were previously members of the same nation, then frontier tensions will continue. Therefore, these two countries have to bear this warning in mind when making policies. This are just some suggestions and they are not necessarily, the solution to the border problems. As suggested by Mukisa (1997) and the others, the colonisation of the African continent brought all these border problems for the post-colonial African states. Therefore, I feel that the ex-colonial masters should contribute financially towards solving the border clashes in the African continent.

The study of grassroots diplomacy between Lesotho and South Africa was just a tip of an iceberg. As stated in the beginning of this paper, this is the area of diplomacy which have not yet received much scholarly attention. Border conflicts are endemic in the African continent. In most cases the circumstances surrounding the border conflicts are similar to those of Lesotho and South Africa,

namely, the drawing of the colonial map. So, for further research, a study could be carried out to see how applicable the concept of grassroots diplomacy could be in the rest of the African continent. This could answer the question of whether grassroots diplomacy could be a sustainable solution to the border conflicts in the continent, or whether more needs to be done.

Another study could be carried out to determine the extent to which the DLCs actually represented the interest of the people. The reason for suggesting this is that, in most countries, the attempt to encourage genuine participation of the public in civil society has been undermined by the local elites who monopolise power and who do not encourage widespread participation (Roodt, 1996: 323). Therefore, it could be interesting to find out whether the DLCs represent the interests of the whole border communities or just a small group of elites in those areas.

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