

WILL CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO END POLITICAL CRISIS?

By Alexander Noyes

On February 28, 2015, the small southern African country of Lesotho held early polls in an effort to resolve political instability stretching back to June 2014. Despite [fears](#) of electoral violence and possible military intervention, the election was peaceful. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) observer mission [declared](#) the poll as “transparent, credible, free and fair, thus reflecting the will of the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho.” No party won an outright majority, but seven parties, led by Pakalitha Mosisili’s Democratic Congress (DC), formed a coalition. Mosisili, who previously held the post of prime minister from 1998 through 2012, will lead the coalition government. Will a free and fair election and a new coalition government resolve Lesotho’s political crisis? [more...](#)

Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.



Pakalitha Mosisili, Prime Minister of Lesotho.
(Source: AP photo/KEYSTONE/Salvatore Di Nolfi.)

OPTING OUT: TANZANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM BOYCOTT

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

Tanzania’s draft constitution, scheduled for referendum vote on April 30, 2015, has experienced yet another obstacle on its [long journey toward approval](#). The opposition, once a strong proponent of constitutional reform, is now calling on its supporters to [boycott](#) the referendum, arguing that the new draft constitution does not represent the will of the people. What does the opposition hope to gain by opting out of the upcoming constitutional vote? [more...](#)



Sign directing voters to polling place in 2010 election in Tanzania (Source: AP Photo/Khalfan Said.)

Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard is a Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

About IDA

The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

WILL CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN LESOTHO END POLITICAL CRISIS?

By Alexander Noyes

On February 28, 2015, the small southern African country of Lesotho held early polls in an effort to resolve political instability stretching back to June 2014. Despite [fears](#) of electoral violence and possible military intervention, the election was peaceful. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) observer mission [declared](#) the poll as “transparent, credible, free and fair, thus reflecting the will of the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho.” No party won an outright majority, but seven parties, led by Pakalitha Mosisili’s Democratic Congress (DC), formed a coalition. Mosisili, who previously held the post of prime minister from 1998 through 2012, will lead the coalition government. Will a free and fair election and a new coalition government resolve Lesotho’s political crisis?

Election Results

None of the over 20 political parties participating in the February 28 election garnered the necessary 61 (out of 120) seats to form a majority government. Prime Minister Thomas Thabane’s All Basotho Convention (ABC) [won](#) 46 seats. Mosisili’s DC just edged out the ABC, winning 47. The Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), led by Mothetjoa Metsing, [won](#) 12 seats. Metsing served as deputy prime minister in the previous coalition, but fell out of favor with Thabane after being charged with [corruption](#). After Metsing pledged his allegiance to Mosisili in the new coalition government, it was decided that Metsing will maintain his old post. Together, Mosisili’s coalition government will have a slim [five-seat](#) majority, providing potential leverage for Metsing and the smaller parties. Announcing the coalition, Mosisili [said](#) the parties “have joined forces to form a government that will serve Basotho [the term for citizens of Lesotho].” He asserted that the new “government’s first assignment is to bring normalcy” to Lesotho.

Previous Political Instability

As highlighted in the February 12 [edition](#) of *Africa Watch*, in the run-up to the election a [shootout](#) took place between bodyguards of Thabane and the military, leaving one dead and three wounded. This incident, combined with other outbreaks of political violence over the previous six months—including a number of [skirmishes](#) between Lesotho’s military and police, as well as an alleged coup attempt in August 2014—fed fears of a violent vote. In this tense environment, it was reported that Lesotho’s military planned to set up roadblocks during the election. SADC—which brokered an agreement in October 2014 that led to early elections—again [intervened](#), warning the military to stay confined to its barracks during the poll and deploying 475 police from member countries to provide security during the vote.

Interneine fighting between the country’s security services stemmed from the rivalry between Thabane and Metsing. Top echelons of the military are [viewed](#) as loyal to Metsing [and Mosisili](#), while Thabane commands support from the police. In an effort to resolve these tensions, SADC, led by South Africa’s Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, brokered a second October 2014 [deal](#), forcing a “leave of absence” on the three top security officials—Lieutenant-General Tlali Kamoli, the former head of the military; Khothatso Tsooana, the former police commissioner; and Maaparankoe Mahao, whom Thabane appointed to replace Kamoli—in which the officials were required to leave the country before the election.



Pakalitha Mosisili, Prime Minister of Lesotho.
(Source: AP photo/KEYSTONE/Salvatore Di Nolfi.)

Conclusion: Volatile Security Situation Likely to Persist

After the new coalition government was announced, Mosisili quickly and combatively [proclaimed](#) that Kamoli would return to head the military, and some [reports](#) suggest that Kamoli is already back in Lesotho from his leave of absence in South Africa. Mosisili also blamed Thabane for the country's previous political instability and divided security services, arguing, "There is no security problem in Lesotho, the problem was Prime Minister Thabane." These statements suggest that Mosisili is intent on taking a hard-line stance on the security situation, rewarding his supporters even if doing so increases the risk of continuing politically motivated violence. The rapid election and a change of government in Lesotho, although fortunately peaceful and fair, seem unlikely to resolve the volatile security situation.

To help ease tensions, international actors could pressure South Africa and SADC to continue engaging Lesotho, especially on the security front. Although prosecutions of the alleged August coup plotters most likely are now politically unrealistic, Ramaphosa would be wise to urge Mosisili against the reappointment of Kamoli, which, if it occurs, will surely deepen divides in the security sector. In the longer term, broader institutional and security sector reform programs are needed to move Lesotho down a sustainable path to peace.

Alexander Noyes is an Adjunct Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

OPTING OUT: TANZANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM BOYCOTT

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

Tanzania's draft constitution, scheduled for referendum vote on April 30, 2015, has experienced yet another obstacle on its [long journey toward approval](#). The opposition, once a strong proponent of constitutional reform, is now calling on its supporters to [boycott](#) the referendum, arguing that the new draft constitution does not represent the will of the people. What does the opposition hope to gain by opting out of the upcoming constitutional vote?

Background

The April referendum on Tanzania's draft constitution is the culmination of years of pressure by civil society and many opposition political parties on the government to adopt a new, more liberal constitution. From the time of the country's transition from single-party rule to multiparty elections in 1992, the opposition and civil society groups have been demanding constitutional reform. In 2010, the current government announced that it would begin consultations to assist in drafting a new constitution.

It is ironic that the opposition, which for so long worked hard to achieve constitutional reform, is now campaigning against constitutional change. The impasse began in 2014, when a heated disagreement broke out over the fundamental structure of the government. Two previous drafts had recommended a federal system of government, but the ruling party had been steadfast in its preference for a unitary system of government. The issue of government structure has long been a flashpoint for controversy between those on the islands of [Zanzibar who want more autonomy](#) and those from the mainland who prefer the status quo.

Over the objections of the opposition, the ruling party substantially revised the third draft of the constitution to reflect its preference for a unified political system. In February 2014, during the final deliberations phase of the constitutional review process, the opposition chose to walk away from the discussions. Calling themselves Ukawa (short for "[Umoja wa Katiba ya Wanachi](#)," Swahili for "defenders of the people's constitution"), the opposition has not been involved since. On its own, the ruling party passed the draft constitution that will be presented to voters next month.

Ukawa is now attempting to organize a boycott of the April vote. The opposition claims that the draft to be presented to the voters completely disregards the will of the people. Some of the members of the initial constitutional review committee, including influential judge Joseph Warioba, have announced their support for [the boycott](#). Ukawa also asserts that because of its walkout during proceedings, the draft constitution that was eventually approved was [passed without a proper quorum](#). Ukawa is asking the High Court to intercede.

The political climate in Tanzania is tense, with the opposition making multiple accusations of increased repression by the government. In January, 33 members of opposition party the Civic United Front (CUF), including their leader, Ibrahim Lipumba, were arrested for [unlawful gathering](#). CUF members were marching to commemorate the anniversary of the deaths of 30 of their supporters in violence following the 2000 election. Their case has been [adjourned](#) until March 23. The other main opposition party, CHADEMA, has claimed that its leader, Wilibrod Slaa, is the target of an [assassination plot](#) orchestrated by state security forces.



Sign directing voters to polling place in 2010 election in Tanzania (Source: AP Photo/Khalifan Said.)

Why Boycott?

Boycotting is one of the few tools that opposition parties have at their disposal to influence an election, especially when they believe they have no chance of winning. Instead of participating and losing, parties call on their supporters to abstain from voting. A boycott is meant to highlight problems in the process (i.e., unfairness, manipulation, fraud) and to deprive the ultimate victor of some of his or her legitimacy.

Approximately [14 percent of elections held worldwide from 1990 to 2002](#) experienced some form of opposition boycott. Recent examples from Africa include elections held in [Senegal](#) in 2007, [Burundi](#) in 2010, and [Liberia](#) in 2011. The opposition in Togo is currently [threatening a boycott](#) ahead of the April elections unless the government implements certain reforms, including reinstating executive term limits that would prevent incumbent president Faure Gnassingbe from running for a third term as president. The [opposition in Sudan](#) is also organizing a boycott of upcoming 2015 elections.

Although some smaller or weaker parties use boycotts for media exposure or attention in elections they have no realistic shot of winning, most boycotts are organized by [relatively strong opposition](#) parties or movements. Boycotts are more common in new and fragile democracies. Most boycotts take place during local, parliamentary, or executive elections. Boycotts of constitutional referendums are rare but have taken place, such as in Egypt in [2012](#) and [2014](#).

Conclusions

Boycotts can be a foreboding sign. [Recent research](#) has found that electoral boycotts are associated with regime change—not during the election being boycotted but in subsequent elections. Boycotts are also associated with an increased likelihood of extra-constitutional regime change, such as a coup d'état, in the near future. Tanzania has been a stabilizing force in East Africa since independence from British colonial rule in 1961, but the current political situation suggests that there are serious political conflicts taking place. The decision by the opposition to boycott the constitutional referendum is a significant setback for democratic development in the country.

Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard is a Research Staff Member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.
