Why Lesotho and Swaziland should merge with SA

Vikas Kumar
Opinion

Xenophobia has no place in civilised society

Xenophobia is described by various sources as: “The hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers or of their politics or culture. It can manifest itself in many ways involving the relations and perceptions of an in-group towards an out-group, including a fear of losing identity, suspicion of its activities, aggression, and desire to eliminate its presence to secure a presumed purity. Xenophobia can also be exhibited in the form of an uncritical exaltation of another culture in which a culture is ascribed ‘an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality.’

In this issue, we carry an angry interview given by a leader of one of the country’s many political parties, which fits the abovementioned definition to the letter. Mr Moeketsi Malebo, the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters, is a member of Parliament and a senior citizen who commands a measure of respect in his community, if not throughout the country.

So why is he so angry? He is taken seriously by those who look up to him and expect him to provide the necessary guidance in both their political and social lives.

That is why we believe Mr Malebo’s sentiments condemn the presence of foreign companies in this country, have come as a bit of a surprise and are very unfortunate. The veteran politician makes sweeping comments about the alleged oppression of Basotho workers by foreign firms operating in Lesotho, in addition to condemning a piece of legislation passed by a parliament of which he is a part.

Mr Malebo is a politician and has every right to campaign for votes in any way he sees fit. This is a freedom he is guaranteed in the country’s constitution, but freedom of speech also comes with responsibility, as reckless utterances have been known to trigger unfortunate events and tragedies.

The essence of what Mr Malebo is complaining about is not the major concern here, but what could result from such hate speech, which comes at a time when the world has become that much smaller as communities establish ties that are making us all realise that indeed, we belong to one race – the human race.

The Second Coming

Frank Talk

With Thabang Leake

MASERU – The campaign to announce Lesotho’s return to international club football has begun.

Sunday’s clash between local champions Matlama and South Africa’s SuperSport in the Confederation of African Football Champions League will not only mark the end of Lesotho’s two-year, self-imposed exile from the tournament, but also give the club a chance to end local teams’ poor run in the lucrative competition.

The fixture, whose first leg takes place at the Peter Mokaba Stadium on January 20, is a Second Coming for our football; giving local teams the chance to tell all and sundry that we are no longer the dusting dominoes that the international community had since labelled us.

Local teams have never gone beyond the first round of Africa’s most prestigious club tournament since its rebirthing in 1997.

And Matlama, who carry the hopes of the nation this time around in a bid to erase the worst record in this competition, with South Africa’s Orlando Pirates humiliating them 7-0 on aggregate in 2004, to send the Pirates packing in the preliminaries.

It was a sound thrashing and humiliation, whichever way one looks at it.

Yet the Pirates also hold the best record for Lesotho teams in international club football. In 1979, it will be recalled, the Masersa giants became the first local side to reach the quarter-finals of the then African Cup of Club Champions – the forerunner of the current Champions League.

However, the team had automatically qualified for the Last Eight after their second round opponents, who had to be either Kenya Breweries or Sudalier Al-Merikhi, had withdrawn from the tournament.

The Matlama Class of 1979 were then hammered 5-0 on aggregate by Union Doxal of Cameroon in the quarters, to end their fairytale run in the competition.

Arsenal (now in the A Division) were the only other Lesotho side to, at least, make it to the second round of the old tournament in 1980. Other big clubs such as LEF, have never impressed on the international stage.

Going into the weekend fixture, it is interesting to note that no local side has ever beaten South African opposition in this competition.

One has to conclude this is a mission impossible. The Sea Point outfit has, in the past few months, been in turmoil due to squabbling among officials and players, alike.

The power struggle has never given the team the chance to concentrate on its development policies. As a result, Matlama – who won the MSO 0900 Vodacom Soccer Spectacular tournament in the 2000/2001 season – failed to defend their title this season.

The move by seven key players to boycott the team’s training and league matches early this season over allowances, brought disquiet at a time the club needed to be pulling in the same direction to ensure unity that has always been the foundation for success at any club.

And the inconsistent performance of the team lately shows some players are still struggling with fitness following that much-publicised spat.

We have also seen the team’s new coach, Malo Bombo Malete, struggling to strike the right combination out of his players, due to this disruption in the team’s training.

The coach, it goes without saying, had to field fringe players during this upheaval – most of who will not be seen much action in this international tournament.

It could be unrealistic, therefore, to expect the senior players who have just come back into the team, to carry the side through to the next round of the competition, given Matlama have not played that much competitive football of late due to the involvement of their players – Motladi Mokola, Libeke Marabe, Nkau Letsokhi, Tleane Koele and Moho Khali – with the junior national teams.

That means the coach has not had the month of time he would have wanted to have with the team, to further make this international assignment an unwinnable one.

Yet these boys’ international exposure could save Matlama, who are in SuperSport – one of the most solid sides in South African football, with a wily coach in Gavin Hunt.

But again, one should never forget these boys were mostly playing against fellow amateurs, and they would be facing professionals this time around. Try, Matlama have good players in Pali Tsilong and Lebogeng Lebetsa, but unfortunately, these have not had a chance to play for our national teams, so they have no idea what international football is all about.

Despite struggling with their game of late, SuperSport United are still one of the most formidable teams in South African football.

And like us here, the team has always struggled internationally, which sort of even the playing field when they battle Matlama.

However, the fact that they won the M10 million South African Premiership for the past three years, shows how professional and strong they could be.

It would, therefore, be suicidal for Matlama to reach out to SuperSport’s recent poor run of form. Matsatsantsa showed how much of a force they could be by beating Pretoria rivals last Saturday.
Why Lesotho and Swaziland should merge with SA

By Vikas Kumar

In the late 19th Century, the British divided southern Africa into different territories to contain the native African states and the white settlers. In South Africa, the rich and the poor have always lived a life of luxury and comfort, but for the native African states, it was a different story. The native African states were carved out to fulfil the racist agenda of the white settlers. In South Africa, the native African states were not allowed to have any say in the matter, but when they did, they faced harsh consequences.

The landlocked High Commission Territories of Basutoland (Lesotho) and Swaziland were carved out to fulfill the aforesaid objectives ignoring the fact that in both cases, the new boundaries artificially divided co-ethnic communities. When the borders were drawn, the residents of these territories were not consulted. The national governments of these territories were not allowed to have any say in the matter, but when they did, they faced harsh consequences.

The borders of South Africa were drawn to benefit the white settlers. The borders were drawn to create a buffer between South Africa and Mozambique, which was at that time, one of the most powerful states in the world. The borders were drawn to create a buffer between South Africa and Mozambique, which was at that time, one of the most powerful states in the world.

But now, it is time to reconsider the colonial era boundaries, which artificially divide the people of Lesotho and Swaziland from South Africa. The contrast between these two countries and South Africa is stark. South Africa has transformed into a vibrant, multi-cultural, multi-party democracy and is emerging as an economic power, whereas Lesotho and Swaziland remain a monarchy.

The labour force of these countries is unemployed and more than half of the population falls below the poverty line. Like most non-European micro-states, Lesotho and Swaziland have relatively remained undeveloped due to a shortage of skilled workers, inefficient infrastructure, and unfavourable location. The small size of these countries means that they lack the economic power, which is the state, which is unable to take care of its citizens. The legitimacy of the state is further compromised because of lack of democracy. Lesotho and Swaziland continue to be a monarchy, whereas the constitutional monarchy in Lesotho is threatened by military rule and within Swaziland, the sovereignty of this country is essentially undermined by a benign international system and foreign aid. The borders of South Africa were drawn to benefit the white settlers. The borders were drawn to create a buffer between South Africa and Mozambique, which was at that time, one of the most powerful states in the world.

But why should South Africa agree? First, even if South Africa does not agree, it has to anyway intervene when things go out of hand as happened in 1998 in Lesotho. In fact, in a case of major political crisis in Lesotho, South Africa would also have to intervene to prevent humanitarian crisis. In Lesotho, the Swazi royalty still entertains irredentists plans with respect to South Africa. Merger would conclusively eliminate such irritants.

Third, the borders of South Africa and its neighbours represent an artificial process of decolonisation of southern Africa and the African National Congress would not allow the process to go to its logical conclusion.

Two issues remain to be addressed, namely, the feasibility of the proposed merger and managing the centres of resistance to the merger. Let us first tackle the economic feasibility. South Africa is the most important trade partner of these countries, whose currencies are pegged to the Rand. A merger will reduce costs of doing business, as it will also provide new opportunities in the interests of the people of Lesotho and Swaziland.

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PASSPORT APPLICATION FEE HIKE UNJUST

How unfortunate that our dear government decides to increase the passport application fee.

I have been waiting for my passport since August 2000; have been to every officer, and I have followed every procedure. To top it all, I have been ridiculed by immigration staff on several occasions, but I still persist because I need a passport, and you, the officer, have no idea. I wonder why Nata Sello and his colleagues think this country of theirs will develop.

They try to prevent everything aimed at developed countries, forgetting that their country is at the bottom of the list of World countries. I sincerely hope that they are aware that without a passport and the ability to travel, our young people won't be able to get work. - Nata Sello

Dictators beware

The decision by the French court is highly commendable given the high levels of African leaders looting from the national coffers and depositing such funds in foreign countries at rates they are not faced with such poverty and misery.

This is, indeed, a good example at the humanitarian intervention against these well-off Southern African nations. But this noble initiative should not stop there. It should be the beginning of a concerted effort at breaking the European "cronyism" circle, which similarly stand to benefit from this widespread looting from the national treasuries for self-enrichment, at the expense of the suffering African masses-BKC

How can the neighbours sleep with such piercing sound? Pious? Complete peaceful sleep in such a situation is impossible, especially for adults who need to rest overnight and wake up early in the morning to go to work. Students are also unable to do their assignments amidst blaring sound and drunken people enjoying music and dancing. - Sekounten Sergale

PUBLIC EYE

Opinion

I am willing to go to the Constitutional Court to defend the revolutionary struggle songs which belong to the nation, these songs will never be banned. Again, the Dubul' igumolweni this song doesn't belong to me, to the ANC, it's part of our culture and heritage.

There are Afrikaners in the ANC who sing it themselves. Why would they sing 'kill me'? The song is about destroying a system: Apartheid, a system which was imposed upon others and where the minority owned everything." -ANC Youth League president Julius Malema speaking in Boksburg on Sunday about AfriForum's anti-Malema campaign and their looming court battle with him. The organisation obtained a temporary interdict against Malema last year, which forbade him from singing a song called the word 'Dubul' igumolweni' ("Shoot the Boer!)."

"Graeme Smith is a great captain and we are getting disturbed when players are drawn into wrangling and squabbles, within the top management and the board." - Sports Minister Fikile Mbalula warning cricketer captain Graeme Smith not to take sides in a South African cricket power-struggle ahead of a series-deciding ODI against India on Sunday.

"The actions carried out by Israel on May 13 2010, to enforce the embargo on the Gaza Strip had the regrettable consequences of the loss of human life and physical injuries. Nonetheless... the actions undertaken were to be brought into line with the rules of international law." - A report released by Israel on Sunday, ruling on the May 13 2010 raid on a flotilla of Gaza-bound aid ships, which killed nine people and earned the Israeli state international censure.

"I don't think questions about President Barack Obama's citizenship should play a role in the discussion of policy matters. I believe Obama is a citizen and that most Americans are beyond that question. I also believe that Obama wants what's best for this country and for the American people." - House Majority leader Eric Cantor speaking on NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday. Two years in office, so-called birthers continue to argue that Obama--born in Honolulu, Hawaii to a Kenyan father and American mother--isn't a natural born citizen and that he hasn't proved his constitutionally qualified to be president.

"Lestanom is in a dangerous situation. Sunni Muslims have rights in Lebanon which they must protect." - Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Abul Gheit speaking on Sunday and warning Lebanon was in a "dangerous situation" as fears of violence rise in the crisis-hit country.

"Isolation cannot work. Those who think the isolation of South Africa is the answer to the problem think that we have no choice but to operate with them. The Ivory Coast will find ways to withstand the economic sanctions and all these threats of global military intervention against Laurent Gbagbo are mere bluff. Our new partners in Asia, Latin America and Africa will certainly help us find alternative ways of dealing with them," South Africa's Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said.

"Government spokesman Ahoza Don Mello, speaking on Sunday after West African leaders moved to seize Gbagbo's funds from the regional central bank, as well as threatening him with military action. Gbagbo is locked in a power struggle with rival Alasane Ouattara, who was declared winner of a November 28 election by United Nations-certified results before they were overturned by the pro-Gbagbo legal body, which alleged fraud.