

## *Original Paper*

# The Trajectory of Contemporary Governance in Lesotho: A Transition towards Coalition Government

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### ***Abstract***

*This paper examines the success story of the formation of coalition government in Lesotho. Lesotho has since 1970 experienced a chequered history of authoritarian and military rules until 1993 when the country went democratic. Interestingly, within two decades of the country's multi-party democratic experience, it has experimented with multiple governmental systems viz; in 1993-1998, it adopted First-Past the Post or winner-takes-all model, and then in 2001, it adopted Mixed Member Proportion model, which brought some stability within the unitary parliamentary governance. In 2012 the latter model gave impetus to a new model of coalition government. Unfortunately, however, the three-party coalition government was interrupted in 2014 by a military adventurism which gave rise to the 2015 snap elections that led to another seven-party coalition government. Interestingly, another faction occurred from the seven-party coalition and a vote of no-confidence was passed by the opposition against the ruling coalition, which led to the early 2017 elections. The third coalition governance of four parties was established after the elections and took its term of five years before the elections of October 2022 that established a "trinity" of three parties coalition under the leadership of a prominent businessman. This paper posits that although coalition model has been accepted by the Lesotho people, however, it has come with increasing cost on executive expenditure, as it puts great burden on taxpayers. This paper recommends the inclusion in the democratic discourse (conversation), a blend of the western democratic culture with traditional African culture in administering the affairs of the state since the two are not mutually exclusive.*

### ***Keywords***

*Coalition government, Elections, Lesotho, Democratization*

## 1. Introduction

Lesotho is a small country with two unique topographical landscapes. These features do not only consist of beautiful mountainous features but also a landlocked country sharing borders with the Republic of South Africa. It has a total population of not more or less than two million people. Interestingly, three quarters of the entire population live in the rural area, and they really represent the most vulnerable and poor people in the Lesotho (Lim, Van Loggerenberg, & Chater, 2016). Lesotho has until 1966 been practicing monarchical system of government which many scholars have described as very stable and peaceful Kingdom. However, it became a democratic country in 1966 after gaining her independence from British colonial rule.

The country has since 1966 to 2022 been experimenting multi-party democracy in which the first political party that was formed was Basotho National Party (BNP). This was followed later by the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) which won the 1970 elections but was denied power by the then ruling BNP leader, Dr Leabua Jonathan (Makoa, 2014; Kapa, 2013; Khaketla, 1971; Ngozwana, 2014). The BNP leader declared a state of emergency which led to the BCP leader and some supporters fleeing the country to exile while others were arrested and jailed for contesting the powers of the incumbent. Then after, the country began to experience civilian dictatorship under the BNP-led administration as well as military rule for twenty-three years.

However, in 1993, the country re-democratized which paved the way for the opposition BCP leader and supporters to return from exile to Lesotho, contested and won the first ever democratic elections. That notwithstanding, however, the BCP government had to face with some challenges or resistance from both the state security agencies and other important state institutions (Ngozwana, 2014, Makoa, 2014).

This paper therefore discusses challenges in Lesotho's contemporary governance since her re-democratization wave in 1993. It argues that Lesotho's 1993 re-democratization wave has led to the practice of multiple political systems which do not only include party splits and other models such as First Past the Post (FPTP) or Winner-takes-all and Mixed Member Proportion (MMP) of governance in 1970-1986 but also culminating into the formation of coalition governments in 2012, 2015, 2017 and 2022 correspondingly. That notwithstanding, the country has been experiencing intense fighting, high rate of corruption, political instability, and attempted coups, just to mention a few.

The paper employed data gathered through in-depth interviews and, focus group discussions were organized to solicit information from groups of the same peers purposively selected but based on the participants' cognitive level of the political society, culture, values, and attitudes of the Politicians. Then, it broadly, discusses the rationale behind the conception and formation of the coalition government as an antidote to Lesotho's political divide, rising tensions and political instability. And then also, specifically, it explores the historical trajectory of Lesotho's traditional authority, transition phase, Lesotho's Coalition Government, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2022 Politics, Democracy, and the Dawn of Coalitions in Lesotho as well as Lesotho under multi-party politics: 1993 to 2011.

## 2. Lesotho and Traditional Authority

Historically, Lesotho's political system has gone through checkered period of traditional democratic rule, particular example is the case of Chief Moshoeshe I. Traditionally, the Chiefs exercised great and superior powers than it is observed in the contemporary democratic dispensation in Lesotho. With the superior powers, for example, the Chiefs played several roles which included but not limited to; settling minor disputes among their members (Pule & Thabane, 2000; Ngozwana, 2014). They also promoted consensus building and collective decision-making as well as believed in teamwork and hence the conception and later formation of coalition government became possible.

Pule and Thabane (2000) and Ngozwana (2014) argue that Chief Moshoeshe had an open and democratic disposition character which made him very popular. They argue further that that traditional authority exhibited democratic culture. This assertion was confirmed by Qachas' Nek male politician in an interview when he remarked that "It [democracy] has been there since the chieftom era particularly, the reign of Moshoeshe I." "He called people who would come and participate in the decision-making process." Similarly, in Maseru a male civic educator, in an interview had this to say, "During chieftainship rule what was practiced was an active and direct democracy because a chief had frequent meetings with his followers at the chiefs' courtyard ... that democracy was very direct, constructive and selfless." (Personal interview, Maseru).

Although chiefs were not elected democratically, however, chieftom rule was interpreted by many as a form of democracy in practice. This is attributed to the way citizens directly participated in issues that affected their lives and therefore contributed meaningfully towards the decisions that were made as well as providing practical solutions. Moreover, chieftainship practice promoted inclusive governance where chiefs often involved people directly in discussion of issues that affected the general well-being of the people in a public gathering known as "pitso". Indeed, *pitso* was an institution where people gave their consent and ensure consensus building which clearly, illustrated Basotho's traditional democracy. This reflects deliberative and republican forms of democracy where issues were collectively discussed and consensus reached in a direct public assembly as opined by Pule and Thabane (2002), Machobane (2001), Khaketla (1971) and Ngozwana (2014).

Furthermore, there was a sense that this traditional democracy promoted stability and national integration. For instance, a Mayor in Maseru asserted that "we have been governed by chiefs for a long time and we were a stable nation." "It is a common belief amongst Basotho citizens that chiefs as traditional rulers are regarded as a symbol of nationhood, unity and cultural identity that promote and maintain peace and order within the communities." "Chiefs work for long hours even at night to address and resolve problems as a way of promoting stability because they do not observe the formal working hours as do other public officials" (Personal interview, Maseru).

Unfortunately, however, this paper posits that the replacement of traditional rule by the multi-party democratic culture has indeed, affected the rural context of governance by subjugated the powers of the chiefs, eroded their prestigious honour as well as undermined their role of trusteeship. That

notwithstanding, the democratic governance still had to rely on the traditional leaders for rural development as compared to the urban areas where services are provided by different government officials. Traditional rule has not become obsolete as it has been made to be believed. The best bid of coalition government may thrive proviso; the Basotho's reconsider incorporating elements of chieftainship to democratic culture.

### 3. Transition Phase

The Lesotho's traditional political system or culture transitioned to modern democratic political culture because of her encounter with the Europeans. This led to, as Huntington puts it, "a clash of civilization" where the two cultures the Lesotho and European cultures lived side by side culminated into what Dahl (1965) called "duopoly" or "dual systems" which is characterized by two elements of judiciary- where customary laws are applied side by side with common laws; and two compositions of members of parliament- democratically elected leaders coexist with hereditary traditional chiefs. Some scholars argue that the process of western democratization in Lesotho was not a home-grown initiative emerging from popular struggle. It could be attributed to an imposition from the Europeans or that it came because of negotiations by political elites and the colonialists before Lesotho got her independence (Machobane, 2001; Khaketla, 1971; and Ngozwana, 2014).

Criticisms laid against the chiefs include the dependence of people on their chiefs for every decision which has made the chiefs to become dictators, more powerful who used the power to amass wealth and hence had become wealthiest at the expense of their subjects (Machobane, 2001; Khaketla, 1971; and Ngozwana, 2014) and forcing their subject to grant them obedient and respect and grossly exploit them. As a response to the dictatorship scholars argue, political parties emerged to challenge the way the traditional system operated by developing different policies, thus exercising individualism and freedom of choice (Abdi, 2008; Machobane, 2001; Khaketla, 1971; and Ngozwana, 2014). However, democracy as an imported concept brought ideal moral principles and rectified some traditional inequalities (Abdi, 2008). These transitions between traditional and modern systems have created problems of apathy and confusion about democracy and how it operates amongst both leaders and citizens of Lesotho (Abdi, 2008).

Accordingly, this study solicits perceptions of some individuals in Lesotho about the conflict between traditional culture and democratic culture. Interestingly, findings revealed that democracy was a trade-off for gaining independence from colonial rule orchestrated by international agendas and managed by small political elite. This assertion is corroborated by comments made by an interviewee as follows:

"The politicians copied that rule from other countries where governance issues were run by the public instead of chiefs." "Politicians like Mokhehle and Leabua then came back from Fort Hare [university in South Africa] to negotiate Lesotho's independence with [the] Europeans. ..." "The main pressure came through western influence like UN, AU, SADC and ... political academic

elites united at Fort Hare University where most of them attended school, to map out how they can strive for independence within their African countries ...” “They all succeeded and in Lesotho the first political party was BAC [Basotuland African Congress]. They [politicians] were the radicals who wanted to change the regime completely (Male citizen, Maseru).”

Interestingly, some Basotho citizens believed that the introduction of democracy was poorly understood. They were given independence in 1966 before they could even understand what that means, what democracy is and how to maintain it. A male politician in Maseru revealed that:

“That is why the Basutoland National Party (BNP) refused to accept defeat after the post-independence elections of 1970, where it ruled by force.” “Several killings and torture took place and some political party leaders of the then BNP opposition went to exile.” “That implies that there was political intolerance during those early independence years between the political parties with potentially long-lasting implications among those that were affected. That is why people fought and killed each other [during 1970 by BNP rule] because of lack of understanding.” “There was no reason for people to be killed because of differing opinions and ideas (Male politician, Maseru).”

Meanwhile, a male educator echoed the same sentiments by saying that “political parties also started (were established) because by then people saw chiefs as: firstly, people who were misused by the Europeans over other people, and secondly chiefs were involved in issues of ritual murders. He stated that chiefs were hated by people and then the people joined to fight the chiefs. Furthermore, he indicated that: “There were two political parties that were formed by that time: those that were in favour of chiefs, BNP and mostly composed of chiefs; and those that were against chiefs, BCP.”

Thus, democracy was introduced from ideologies that emerged partly in reaction to colonial abuse and mismanagement of traditional structures and partly as a reaction to concerns about the inadequacies of those same traditional structures (Machobane, 2001). Most BNP political party elites were also chiefs and therefore already rulers and who had more power than their opponents, BCP who are mostly commoners. Chiefs worked hand in hand with the colonists before Lesotho got her independence. Therefore, chiefs were not checked in terms of their abuse of power and oppression of peoples’ human rights (Machobane, 2001). From the responses above, it can be argued that chiefs were not favoured by the commoners. Secondly, the transition phase and preparations for self-governance or independence were inadequate and weak as the first political elites were not well prepared. Lastly, there seemed likelihood that when put in power, political leaders would continue the undemocratic practices that they inherited from the colonial system of ruling, even in a modern democratic society as will be seen in the next administration of multi-party politics.

#### **4. Lesotho under Multi-party Politics: 1993 to 2011**

The BCP won the 1993 elections after gaining momentum from its followers who were tired of both the nationalist and military rules. However, when the BCP took overpower there seemed to be

disagreements that were hidden amongst its leaders, which led to high levels of factionalisms, particularly towards every election (Ntsukunyane, 2016; Matlosa & Sello, 2005). This emanated in an interview with Lesotho Times reporter, former Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) deputy Prime Minister who lamented that the splits within congress parties are basically influenced by squabbles between the leaders from exile, such as internal tensions over who should rule in the congress parties (Ntsukunyane, 2016). Instead of addressing their differences, party leaders resorted to party splitting, forming their own political parties. Subsequently, prior to 1998 elections, there was a split from the BCP where the LCD was formed in 1997 under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle. According to deputy leader of LCD, Pakalitha Mosisili succeeded the former leader who was very old by that time. Lehohla stated that Mosisili's appointment by Ntsu Mokhehle as his deputy in government shocked and shook the foundations of the congress movement (Ntsukunyane, 2016). The LCD went on to win the 1998 elections.

Furthermore, prior to the 2002 elections, some of the leaders from the LCD broke ranks with the party to form the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) under the leadership of Advocate Kelebone Maope who was the Deputy Prime Minister at that time (Matlosa & Sello, 2005). Similarly, it is alleged that the split resulted from leadership tension over succession, thus Maope established another congress political party (Ntsukunyane, 2016). Lehohla stated that during Ntsu Mokhehle's illness, Mosisili and Maope were both invited to Bloemfontein where the former was bed-ridden. It is purported that during that visit, Mokhehle identified one of his visitors to become his successor. Lehohla further stated that there were serious tensions between Mosisili and Maope, which eventually led to the formation of Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) in 2001 by Maope (Ntsukunyane, 2016).

In the same manner the All Basotho Convention (ABC) party under the leadership of Thomas Motsoahae Thabane was formed in 2006 prior to 2007 elections as a break away from the ruling LCD due to internal factions (Matlosa & Sello, 2005). The 2007 snap elections brought a dramatic change in the parliament make-up because the newly formed ABC won the 17 urban constituencies (mostly in the capital city) out of the total 80 constituencies countrywide (Matlosa & Sello, 2005). ABC became the second opposition party while LCD controlled the majority in the National Assembly with 62 seats (Matlosa & Sello, 2005).

However, the 2007 post elections conflicts arose, which led to the political instability in Lesotho. This resulted in the formation of illegal alliances that distorted the mixed member proportion electoral system. The distortion removed the MMP from its image of initial principle of representation of political parties; reconciliation and harmony and compensation for small parties (Elklit, 2008; Matlosa, 2008). Several post-election court cases were lodged by opposition parties, which could not come to an end until the next elections of May 2012. In February 2012, another crack took place within the LCD where the Democratic Congress (DC) broke ties and was established by Pakalitha Mosisili who the Prime Minister at that time was until the 2012 election.

## 5. The Dawn of Coalition Governments in Lesotho

Globally, democracy is a contestable concept. For instance, Dahl cited in Kabemba (2003), defines democracy as a form of rule where countries have civil and political rights along with fair competitive and inclusive elections, thus being liberal in nature. On the contrary, Jarvis (2008), Lindberg (2006) define it as the system of government in which people freely provide consent regarding who to govern and how to govern. This chapter takes issue with these two definitions since the responses of the interviewees corroborated these understanding of democracy. For example, responses of the interviewees regarding their understanding of democracy include,

“Electoralates are contributing to public decision making ... leaders from all corners are just representatives for the people, which is why it is government for the people by the people. It means that the people have a say in government and in issues that affect their lives in a country” (Male politician, Qachas’Nek).

Political parties are crucial element of democracy because the parties usually form government and exercise political power in the governance process. Democracy in the context of this chapter refers to power sharing leading to developing an inclusion society. It also extends to cover the way the ruling party treats the minority and the opposition using dialogue to understand their views and opinions in a larger society. Admittedly, democratic practice involves both competition and cooperation where there is no winner takes all. There is a sense, therefore that people do understand that even though they elect people to make decisions on their behalf, they still have a right to participate in government decision making- not only through the election process but as an on-going interaction with politicians.

Today’s democracy practice articulated here is the type that promotes freedom including the notion that all eligible citizens could vote in elections and choose their representatives through electoral democracy as practiced in Lesotho. This is evidential in the findings. For instance, one educator lamented that:

“Currently people have freedom to say what they want while it was not like that in the past [before democratic rule in 1993].” “Any person is [now] free to complain about others while that was not happening in the past.” “[Even] Chiefs who misused people by sending them somewhere, [now] know that people are free to agree or to refuse.” “In the past we [people] were not aware of our rights and responsibilities ...” “It was authoritarian [rule] in the past during military rule and [even] before it” (IEC educator, Maseru).

Freedom of speech is contrasted with the past during BNP rule after 1970 elections when its leader refused to cede power and ruled by force. People could not discuss their opinions freely against that government because if they did so they were kidnapped, sent to exile, or heavily punished. That situation of suppressing the views and opinions of people extended to the era of military rule where political parties were banned. The latter ruled by giving orders that were followed without questioning or acting against them. That situation of oppression is not easily forgotten because that period lasted a long time from the post-independence rule by BNP until it was further extended by military rule before

1993. The past is regarded as including the era of traditional rule (rule by chiefs) until 1993 when Lesotho returned to democratic rule. The modern democracy also has an element of abuse of governance as illustrated by other citizens regarding the decision-making process of laws that are passed in parliament:

“Our parliament is not democratic because members of parliament were supposed to get the mandate from the people on any matter before they make decisions, in terms of theoretical understanding of democracy. But practically they implement decisions that come from them [Members of parliament].” “The laws that are passed by the parliamentarians are not addressing the needs and interests of people. They only pass the laws that address their personal needs only.” “I have never seen MP [Member of Parliament] in my community coming to us at the community with the purpose of getting the mandate from us, it has not happened.” “Even the decisions made are not communicated to us as citizens.” (Male citizen, Maseru).

Emphasis was placed on the absence of a public participation act where a Development for Peace Education (DPE) educator highlighted that section 20 (1) of the constitution that gives every citizen of Lesotho the right to participate in government is not happening as it should. He pointed out that bills are made laws without people being given chance to approve or disapprove such acts. When referring to the codification of the law that talked about abortion, which was controversial he said:

People did not approve the passing of that bill but it was made law without considering whether people liked it or not. If there was public participation act in place, people would use it to oppose that law at the judiciary level. Government or the executive branch is now governing as per their own interest and [government] disregards the people’s interests because there is no room for public opinion (DPE educator, Maseru).

His concerns were echoed by others in Qacha’s Nek, where a male educator compared the current unfavourable regime with the more consultative process of traditional chieftainship:

“In the public gatherings the citizens are currently provided with the decisions made but during chiefdom system, decisions were taken from the citizens” (Male educator, Qachas’Nek).

And, in Maseru where an educator bemoaned the fact that politicians did not even follow their own constitution:

According to the constitution the upper house must verify the laws that are made by the lower house before they become acts ... But practically that does not happen because even the laws that they [upper house] feel unhappy about are still passed as bills and ultimately acts of law (LCN educator, Maseru).

From the participants’ responses it can be observed that democratically elected leaders are expected to function within the confines of law, which is the constitution. However, it is further realized that citizens do not have the power or are not able to question the derailments done by the leaders who are not following the constitution. This indicates that government policies are embarked on with little or no regard to citizens, who resent being ignored and that the policies do not address the greatest needs of the people but favour a few political elites. Although there is an increasing awareness by the citizenry



that genuine democracy is embedded in the rule of law, it requires the will and commitment of the moral values from all people more especially the elected leaders. The situation is even critical during the contemporary governance where multiple parties join to form coalition governments.

## **6. Lesotho's Coalition Government: 2012**

A Coalition government is a cabinet of a parliamentary system of government consisting of several political parties in parliament which cooperates to form a government to reduce the dominance of any one party within that coalition (Wikipedia, 2017). Similarly, Collins English Dictionary explains coalition government to mean a government containing members of two or more political parties. The usual reason given for this arrangement is that party on its own can achieve a majority in the parliament. Additionally, Coalitions in theory promotes the inclusiveness of two or more political parties which govern the country, thus building unity and stability.

However, some people do not see the events as reflecting democracy but instead they see the power struggle amongst politicians. As one of the educators in Maseru expressed her views as follows:

“The current politics are mainly for power hunger. They have divided us as Basotho. Now is the rule of the jungle where people do evil things for them to reach the golden box in parliament ... I don't see democratic practice in Lesotho; I only see coalition government that is divided into three different political parties that are tirelessly working hard by holding political rallies every weekend” (Civic educator, Maseru).

Furthermore, a coalition involves willingness and compromise by political parties who enter it, as all are taken as winners. The members of coalition must prepare their members and followers about coalition importance while still maintaining their own political identity (Doherty, 2004). It is essential to observe the importance of close collaboration and consultations where discussions over priorities are done through negotiations that may often be time- consuming. Moreover, the author suggests that teamwork of all members in a coalition is a good facilitator of all what happens (Doherty, 2004).

The Constitution of Lesotho requires that a party that forms government must have garnered more than half of the total seats in parliament (in this case it is 61 out of 120 seats). After the 2012 elections, the contesting parties were forced to form alliances with others to garner enough support to form a government as it was evident that there was no outright winner among the 19 political parties that had contested the election. This gave impetus to the conception and formation of coalition governments in Lesotho.

Lesotho's first Coalition Government was formed in 2012 with three political parties of All Basotho Convention (ABC), Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and Basotho National Party (BNP). However, in February 2012 prior to general elections in May 2012, internal feuds resulting from political tug of-war and intra-party factions within the ruling party resulted in the split of the LCD party and the formation of the Democratic Congress (DC) with a breakaway majority of 45 seats (Motsamai, 2012). At this time the Speaker of Parliament pronounced the DC as the ruling party, however, the 2012

general elections results placed the DC rather as the main opposition party with 48 seats out of 120 in Parliament. LCD got 26 seats, while the ABC party got 30 and BNP got 5 seats respectively.

These three parties therefore formed a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Tom Motsoahae Thabane, leader of the ABC. The election result was viewed as remarkable as that was historic for the country since independence as it bore no outright winner among all political parties that had contested the 2012 election.

As it is to be expected, the Constitution of Lesotho requires that a party that forms government must have gathered more than half of the total seats in parliament (in this case it is 61 out of 120 seats). DC won 48 seats which made the party becoming the majority, followed by ABC, with 30 seats, LCD 26 while Basotho National Party had 5 seats. Popular Front for Democracy had 3 seats. The rest of the parties had one seat each. Immediately, after release of the elections result by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), parties frantically tried to lure others to join forces with them to form a government. It was only a few hours after the announcement of the election result that ABC, LCD and BNP convened a press conference to announce their intent to forge a coalition, which allowed them to reach the 61 bare minimum required by the constitution (Ngozwana, 2014).

The formation of a coalition government was therefore intended to be more inclusive and to reduce violence. However, it contributed to further instability and lack of political unity within the coalition parties resulting in ministerial reshuffling, outbreaks of violence towards government appointed post holders and change of policies without engaging the public.

In March 2014 there was an attempted vote of no confidence to the coalition government leader, which was placed in the National Assembly by opposition party members. That unprecedented activity failed due to improperly followed procedures (Zihlangu, 2014). Following that, in May 2014 two of the ABC members from a ruling coalition government changed “complexion”, by crossing the floor in parliament and joined the opposition, Democratic Congress (DC) floor (Ngozwana, 2014). The deputy Prime Minister and leader of LCD held a press conference briefing in June 2014 where he officially announced that the LCD was pulling out of the coalition government, but he and other LCD Ministers would remain as cabinet ministers in the Executive Branch. The deputy Prime Minister expressed that they were having communication breakdown with the Prime Minister, the ABC leader who seemed to be making decisions and other changes without involving the other leaders of coalition. Therefore, the LCD leader announced that they would approach other parties with the intention of collaborating (Zihlangu, 2014).

On a similar note, The Prime Minister and Leader of coalition government held a press conference where he clarified that he wrote a letter to The King in early June 2014, asking him to prorogue Parliament for nine months, meaning that it would resume in 2015. He stated the reason for such a prorogue time as to enable the three leaders of coalition government to resolve their conflict of interest in issues of governance (Ngozwana, 2014).

However, in August (2014) there was an attempted coup whereby some soldiers raided the police

stations in the capital city of Lesotho, Maseru, as well as the state house where the Prime Minister resided. All the radio stations transmitters were closed, except for the government radio station, Radio Lesotho (Zihlangu, 2014). The Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) spokesperson thereafter stated that the army was affecting an operation within those raided police stations (Ngozwana, 2014).

Subsequently, the Prime Minister, ABC leader and the other coalition leader of BNP went into exile together with the other police officers including the Commissioner of Police. All these incidents took place a day after the LDF Commander was issued with a letter that terminated his employment. It is assumed that the latter was in support of the opposition political party, DC and the leader of LCD in the coalition government.

Accordingly, Lesotho coalition government collapsed for about a week. The police services were unavailable countrywide and consequently the correctional services and the judiciary, also linked to the police services in their daily operations, also stopped working (Ngozwana, 2014).

The 2014 political instability in Lesotho led to SADC intervention which later facilitated a snap election held in February 2015. SADC made this recommendation to resolve the instability and political challenges in Lesotho. South Africa was mandated to mediate between the warring politicians and the security services. In the meantime, the Prime Minister Tomas Thabane was provided with the South African Police Service for his personal safety. The 2015 elections brought the DC party that is led by Pakalitha Mosisili which had won 47 seats, while ABC gained 46 seats still led by Tomas Thabane. During that time, the opposition leaders of ABC, BNP and RCL fled from Lesotho to South Africa in May 2015, claiming, for fear of their lives (Mokhethi, 2016).

## 7. Lesotho's Coalition Government: 2015

Following the National Assembly Snap Elections of February 2015, ten political parties represented the ninth Parliament of Lesotho. The seven-party coalition government under Pakalitha Mosisili was established, which was based on the guide by the Coalition Agreement, which is the key instrument of the coalition government that is formed in accordance with section 87 (2) of the Constitution of Lesotho (Ntsukunyane, 2016).

The second coalition government agreement was signed between the leaders of DC, LCD, MFP, NIP, BCP, LPC and PDF to have 61 seats that allowed for the government formation. Lesotho uses the mixed-member proportional representation, which attracts more political parties in the formation of Parliament. The new Prime Minister and leader of DC, Pakalitha Mosisili became the head of second coalition government of seven political parties after governing Lesotho for the past 15 years and this was his fourth term (Ntsukunyane, 2016).

Consequently, there were factional battles for control of the DC party that led to a split into the *Lithope* (translated as girlfriends) and *Lirurubele* (translated as butterflies) factions with the former having more weight behind DC leader, Pakalitha Mosisili while the latter has crystallised around deputy leader Monyane Moleleki.

The *Lithope* faction enjoys more support from the women's league executive committee, while *Lirurubele* faction enjoys greater support in the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the youth league executive committee. The seven-party coalition government separating has been triggered by a split in the main coalition partner, DC while the former deputy leader Monyane Moleleki formed the Alliance of Democrats (AD) in December 2016. This came after the announcement by the Speaker of National Assembly for indefinite closure of Parliament on the 22 November 2016 (Ntsukunyane, 2016). Thereafter, Lesotho prepared for the early elections of 2017 after this former opposition pact oust the seven-party coalition leader in the motion of vote of no confidence in parliament.

### 8. Lesotho's Coalition Government 2017

A cursory observation of these consistent splitting of congress parties, it is argued that the leaders are not taking full responsibility of addressing the internal disputes that emanates from within their political movements. Instead, they resort to the formation of their own political parties and fulfilling their individual personality's motives.

Thereafter, the National Assembly Clerk announced the reconvening of the august house in February 2017. The speculations revealed that the seven-party coalition had the minority of 47 followers from the seven political parties. It was further alleged that Mosisili had vowed to dissolve parliament and call for early elections should the envisaged no-confidence motion by the opposition parties succeed (Mohloboli, 2017). Furthermore, the Deputy Prime Minister Monyane Moleleki was moved from the police ministry. Then the move backfired because Moleleki seemed ready to quit from the ruling coalition. Moleleki and Mosisili, both leader and deputy leader from the DC started to tear at each other with infighting that crippled the National Assembly and affected the service delivery (Ntaote, 2016). Following that, the DC's National Executive Committee announced the pull-out from coalition government.

Similarly, DC leader, Mosisili announced the suspension of the alienated NEC colleagues and the intention to discipline them while reaffirming his control of the DC party and government. According to DCYL President, Thuso Litjobo the leader, Pakalitha Mosisili is the problem of splitting as he mentioned that he incited factions in the party where there have been four splits resulting in the emerging of more political parties during his leadership (Ntaote 2016).

The vote of no confidence by the opposition against Mosisili became successful in March 2017 and the early elections were called to be held in June 2017, putting the country in the third elections in five years. The election results confirmed victory for the ABC winning 48 seats against 30 seats for Mosisili's DC. The newly Alliance of Democrats under the leadership of Monyane Moleleki got 9 seats. The BNP got 5 seats while RCL got 1 seat. The coalition of four parties emanated; ABC, AD, BNP and RCL which puts ABC leader, Tom Thabane as a Prime Minister, while AD leader Monyane Moleleki became the Deputy Prime Minister. DC becomes an opposition in parliament with 30 seats obtained during 2017 elections. This third coalition government was able to rule for five-year term up until the recent elections of October 2022.

## 9. Lesothos' Coalition Government 2022

Lesotho has formed another coalition government after the recent national assembly elections of October 2022. The coalition government is made up of Revolutionary for Prosperity (RFP), the Alliance of Democrats (AD) and the Movement for Economic Change (MEC). The government is under the leadership of the wealthiest businessman, Sam Matekane and leader of RFP that was recently established seven months before the national elections. It is alleged that RFP gained most of its support from young voters who seemed eager for change in Lesotho. Throughout the campaign, Matekane emphasized the need for his party to govern alone to fully implement its development agenda to lift Lesotho out of endemic poverty, high unemployment, and rampant crime. However, Matekane could not achieve his goal of winning an outright majority and he had to find a coalition partner as his party was missing five seats to get a 61-seat majority. Therefore, RFP with its 56-seats had to merge and form coalition with MEC that won 4 seats and further with AD that also had 4 seats respectively. The total seats for the “trinity” coalition government made 64 seats out of 120 seats, making it the majority rule of government in Lesotho.

The 2022 national assembly election went ahead despite the unresolved constitutional reforms that were meant to be enacted ahead of the vote to bring order to Lesotho's fractious politics. The reforms were meant to amend the role of political parties, rules over floor-crossing in parliament, to the appointment of senior officials and the Prime Minister's role.

It can be seen from this catalogue of events that Lesotho is a small country, with a fragile political party system that is marked by faction fighting and characterized by multiple party splits. Moreover, Lesotho has seen four military coups since its independence from Britain in 1966. This shows the weakness of opposition parties, all struggling for power, which is more frequent just before holding the national assembly elections. One wonders about the extent to which members of parliament are accountable to the electorates.

From the political history of Lesotho, democracy is a fragile vulnerable process, it changes from time to time, and it requires active civil society with informed citizens that can be able to critically analyse the situation around them and make informed political decision and choices, especially during general elections when the citizens are required to take part in their political life and effect changes. One even wonders about the implication of political migration (splitting of parties) towards democracy, looking at how and where it is done; leaving markers of unfairness and betrayal to the voters, hence there is declining public trust in political activities or constituency members and their parties.

## 10. Discussion and Conclusion

So far, the findings have shown the evolution of democracy from how it was traditionally practiced to its transition to modern democracy. Findings revealed that after 1993 first democratic elections, representative leaders were elected to power to make decisions on behalf of the citizens, while the citizens started to enjoy certain rights and freedoms including freedom of speech. This tallied with

electoral democracy as practiced in Lesotho and discussed by Kabemba (2004).

Kabemba (2004) notes that in these electoral democracy countries like Lesotho manage to hold competitive elections but which have not successfully been able to provide the material benefits of democracy to its people. This is because of citizens' lack of capacity to influence government through participation in public decision making; hence they remain silent and inactive because of oppression. The data clearly confirmed that citizens are incapable to hold government accountable.

Subsequently, the findings demonstrated how coalition government was coined as a solution to political indifferences amongst different political parties. Coalition government resulted from the requirement by the Constitution of Lesotho that a party that forms government must have gathered more than half of the total seats in parliament, which is 61 out of 120 parliament seats. Lesotho experienced the first historic coalition government of three political parties in 2012.

Additionally, Lesotho further established a consolidated coalition government of seven political parties after the 2015 snap elections. However, a faction occurred, which brought another pact of four-party coalition after the early election of June 2017. The formation of coalition governments brings about negative economic implications on the country at the expenses of taxpayers and the electorates. The coalition government further results in large cabinets by expanding ministers and their deputies to satisfy parties that have entered into an agreement. Moreover, the data revealed that Lesotho has experienced several challenges regarding the contemporary governance that culminated in the formation of coalition governments in 2012, 2015 and 2017 respectively within the period of five years. The recent 2022 "trinity" coalition government is yet to reveal its status quo. In conclusion, it is evidential therefore that Lesotho is far from developing with continuously growing cabinets because of coalition of parties forming the government, let alone the money that is used for holding the two-period elections. Nevertheless, the third coalition government took its term of five years until this year (2022) when Lesotho went for their general national assembly elections.

It is therefore recommended that as conversations about democratization continue, efforts to promote good and effective governance in African countries particularly Lesotho, would have to look for a synergy between the modern notions of democratic governance and traditional African forms of political and social organization. These systems are not mutually exclusive.

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