

Political instability in Lesotho: Causes and possible remedies

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Abstract

Lesotho presents unique political complexities in Southern Africa. The country became independent on 4 October 1966 and since then, it has been characterized by a deep constitutional crisis, lack of popular elected governments, coup d'états, schisms within the political parties, and rejection of the election outcomes. In 2002, the country adopted a Mixed Member Proportion (MMP) model from the First-Past-the-Post. However, the MMP model complicated the situation as it produced hung parliaments, which resulted in coalition governments, snap elections, and the use of the army to cling to power. This paper examines the root causes of instability in Lesotho and in order to find solutions to Lesotho's perpetual political crises. Causes of instability are subdivided into internal causes such as socio-economic, politics and governance, politicization, and polarization of the public service, and regional causes. The paper concludes by suggesting possible remedies to the country's instability.

Key Words: Lesotho, Basotho, instability, SADC, snap elections, coalition government, Lesotho Defence Force (LDF).

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Introduction: Brief profile of Lesotho

The Basotho emerged from the Difaqane wars in the 1820s and are now a relatively homogenous people, sharing a common language, culture, and history. Lesotho, a small country covering just 30,000 square kilometres is home to about 2.26 million people. It was a British colony for 98 years, gaining independence on 4 October 1966. The country is also known as ‘The Kingdom in the Sky’, because of its mountainous terrain. Sometimes the country is referred to as “The Hostage State” due to its dependence on South Africa, which surrounds the small nation. The slogan of the country is *Khotso* (Peace), *Pula* (Rain) and *Nala* (Abundance) (Pherudi: 2019, p.1). The peace slogan has been undermined on countless occasions; as a result, the people of Lesotho know neither joy nor peace.

Key economic activities in the country include construction, exports in textiles and garments, diamonds, water, wool, and mohair. The United States is the main market for Lesotho’s textile exports through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Most households subsist on farming and the multi-million-dollar Lesotho Highlands Project (LHP), which harnesses the country’s most abundant resource, water, to generate hydro power for mines and the industrial complex of Gauteng Province in South Africa, while others sell their labour in South Africa as housekeepers (Pherudi, 2019). Lesotho is a member of Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). It is also one of the 26 countries that participate in the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) between SADC, the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy, ruled by a King as head of state, and governed by a 40-member Senate and a 120-member National Assembly. Since independence more than 50 years ago, the country’s democracy has experienced unstable and turbulent times, with sporadic political violence. Following the post 1998 election crisis, the country undertook a national process envisioning long term peace in the country. To achieve this, it came up with the Lesotho Vision 2020 which outlined the long-term aspirations of the Basotho which was launched in 2003. This Vision statement was endorsed at a well-attended and representative multi-stakeholder national dialogue. In part it states,

By the year 2020, Lesotho shall be a stable democracy, a united and prosperous nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. It shall have a healthy and well-developed human resource base. Its economy will be strong, its environment well managed and its technology well established (Santho, 2017, p.109).

The aim of the vision was to stabilize Lesotho’s fragile democracy and lay a foundation for a united and stable nation in the context of post-conflict peace building (Santho, 2019). However, as the year 2020 approached, Lesotho was not even close to achieving this vision. It is still a quasi-democracy controlled by military backed politicians. It is more divided, poorer and it is cannibalising itself, unable and unwilling to learn from its mistakes. Regional efforts to intervene and bring to peace and stability have not yielded the desired results; as a result, Lesotho has hobbled from one crisis to another. In the last quarter century, Lesotho’s political history has been characterised by instability, *coup d’états* and several other unconstitutional changes of government. Politicians plot, murder and plunder public resources with impunity because they

have the military to protect them. As a result, the country continues to bleed while politicians focus on ways of gaining or maintaining power.

Lesotho held snap elections in June 2017, the third in 5 years. This led to the formation of a four-party coalition government, led by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Thomas Thabane. Prior to the 2017 elections, Lesotho's leadership had committed to engaging in multi-stakeholder consultations to inform inclusive reforms (Kabi, 2017). The reforms were aimed at restoring stability in the country. But the process was delayed as each of the stakeholders wanted to use the reform process to consolidate their power. It was through an ultimatum issued by SADC on 24 April 2018 that some progress was made.

Lesotho has seen two coalition governments since 2012. The first coalition ruled between 2012-2015, and the second from 2015-2017. Neither the first nor the second coalition government finished its five-year term due to various reasons, including internal fights. This worsened instability in the country. For this reason, it is important to interrogate the root causes of political instability, and from that come up with a lasting solution for Lesotho's political problems. The paper therefore seeks to answer the following questions: What are the causes and manifestations of instability in Lesotho? What (f)actors contribute to instability? Finally, what mitigation strategies can be used by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to bring peace and stability to Lesotho? The data were collected from various sources using convenience sampling. The documents consulted include secondary sources such as peer reviewed journal articles, books, research dissertations, while raw data was collected from newspapers and websites using convenience sampling.

Causes of political and security instability in the country

Various causes of instability are identified and discussed in this section, starting with the socio-economic causes.

Socio-economic causes

Poverty and underdevelopment

One of the main causes of instability in Lesotho is its failing economy and lack of development. During the early days of independence, poverty and underdevelopment were identified as key destabilising factors in the country. This phenomenon is captured in Weisfelder (1967) who says,

A highly politicized population exists in an environment of abject poverty... Fully mobilized with no place to go, the Basotho employ energies in political battles (Weisfelder, 1967, p.3).

Poverty resulting from increasing retrenchments of Lesotho migrant workers in South African mines impacted negatively on the stability of the family and of democracy in Lesotho. The country's economy has not grown in any significant way and largely depends on external sources. As poverty became endemic and as economic success is crucial for a successful democracy, it was inevitable that there would be political instability as poor citizens became restless. This is because poverty and social inequality have long been identified as threats to democracy. For example, Tito

Mboweni (2014, p. 4), former Governor of South African Reserve Bank, described the relationship between poverty and the struggle for power in Lesotho aptly:

In this country [Lesotho], poor with a small economy, control of the government is key to the most primitive forms of wealth accumulation. Access to a ministry means an ability (sic) to loot the state resources to enrich oneself. Once someone becomes a minister, their social status changes, their control over tenders and other state resources is enhanced, and ‘a looter continua’! So, the very thought of losing state power drives even the best men and women to go berserk. That is fundamental basis upon which we should understand the continuing instability in Lesotho.

Mboweni suggests that in Lesotho, for one to emerge from poverty, one must get a government job. As a result, the Basotho compete for jobs in government, but they cannot all be absorbed. Therefore, to have access to the meagre resources, and to have control over those resources, those who are not in power often work against the leaders in order to destabilise the country and discredit those leaders. This fuels instability.

Lack of investor confidence in the country’s system of governance

The instability has led to predicable economic consequences, which in turn contribute to further instability. During his budget speech in February 2018, Majoro reported that while in 2017 the four-party coalition government was welcomed by the international community as an important milestone in the restoration of the rule of law in Lesotho following a period of widespread impunity and instability from 2015 to 2017, investors are still undecided, as they are sceptical about the government’s ability to last through the first five-year term. As a result, this has affected the country’s ability to attract new investments. Majoro conceded that investors were well within their right to be cautious, and demand guarantees of stability because it was the duty of any government to demonstrate that it was stable and could guarantee the safety of investments (Majoro, 2018). The holding of three elections within five years was a great concern to the investors, as that posed as a risk to their potential investment. Therefore, they needed assurance that the government would last for its tenure. Majoro could not provide such assurance, and the people of Lesotho remain uncertain about their future.

Lack of educated political leadership

The second cause of political instability in Lesotho is lack of education (in the broad sense of the term) among the political elite. According to Likoti (2017), lack of educated political leadership has resulted in challenges to Lesotho’s political and economic development as well as political stability. He identified three factors that contribute to instability. First, leadership positions are filled by officers with neither requisite skills, nor experience. In some cases, staff do not have appropriate qualifications for the positions they are appointed to. Second, highly demanding professions are given to undeserving political appointees or activists to the extent that some uneducated candidates have developed a sense of entitlement. Third, the politicians have alienated educated people, treating them as enemies of the political system, in order to conceal their political and educational inadequacies or impropriety.

Likoti (2017) references the example of the Economic Front Fighters (EFF) leaders in South Africa to illustrate the importance of education and skills development in political leadership. He applauds the political leadership of the EFF for recognising their educational limitations, and then deciding to empower themselves by enrolling for different educational programmes. For example, Mr. Floyd Shivambu attained master's degree, Mr. Julius Malema, leader of EFF attained an Honours Degree and Dr Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, attained D. Phil. Significantly, the 54th African National Congress Elective Conference held in Nasrec, Johannesburg from 16 to 20 December 2017, decided that only skilled and qualified people would be appointed to lead state-owned enterprises. Lesotho needs to learn from its neighbour and grow a new crop of educated and skilled leaders. Lesotho needs leaders who can manage state affairs conscientiously and efficiently. Currently, it lacks qualified and experienced leaders who have requisite skills to run the country's political and economic affairs efficiently. More importantly, educated leaders will be more comfortable to seek advice from experts when it comes to political, developmental, and economic issues.

Politics and governance

Floor crossing

Governance and party-political issues also play a significant role in Lesotho's instability. Floor-crossing has characterised Lesotho politics before the formation of coalition governments. This floor-crossing is responsible for the break-up of parties and the subsequent political dysfunction in Parliament. This dysfunction leads to a crisis of legitimacy for the party in government (Motsamai, 2015). Majoro (2018) opines that the political instability and insecurity that Lesotho has experienced in recent years is due to the loopholes in the country's constitutional and political framework. Majoro (ibid) cautioned that efforts to bring stability would not succeed overnight and the task to unify society will take many years because of the "extreme polarization pursued by Lesotho politicians"(Majoro, 2018, p.21). A fragile government was formed through floor-crossing, and it will take a robust and inclusive reform process for political problems in Lesotho to be resolved.

Coalition politics

A change from First-Past-the Post to Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system in 2002 compounded the country's political problems as it produced hung parliaments with no outright winners. That led to three coalition governments in 2012, 2015 and 2017, with which Basotho were unfamiliar. For some political parties, this was a troubling period since politicians were used to a single dominant party being the one that rules, so sharing power was difficult. As a result, the first coalition government of 2012 saw a standoff between Dr Thabane and Mr. Mothejoa Metsing over the division of the ministerial and ambassadorial portfolios (Motsamai, 2015). The coalition governments could not survive because of the power struggle, which mean that narrow party and/or personal interests were considered at the expense of national interests.

Expressing a view on the coalition government, Likoti (2007, p. 10) said, "Coalition politics are (sic) usually prone to (sic) pernicious combination of ideological incoherence and policy stalemate". The political parties simply established a coalition without first assessing the risk of such a coalition to their respective policy programmes. The 2012 coalition government was

anti-Mosisili, and the 2015 coalition government comprising seven political parties collapsed after a vote of no confidence on Dr Mosisili. The third and current coalition government is beginning to show cracks because of the alleged meddling in government affairs and inter-party conflicts by the First Lady, Maesaiah Thabane.

Lesotho's political system requires political parties to have a threshold of only 500 followers to register a political party and participate in the elections. After the 2015 snap elections, seven political parties formed a coalition, and some political parties which only had a single seat (less than 2000 votes) were given seats in the cabinet (ministerial posts). The problem then was that addressing this loophole would mean removing minority political parties and ensuring that those who had more representation are able to garner sufficient support to allow for a stable government.

Ruling from the grave

One of the major contributors to political and economic instability in Lesotho is the phenomenon of ruling from the grave. Ruling from the grave is defined as a strategy by an election-losing party to maintain control over the political destination of a country after being rejected by the voters. It may take many forms, but the most common tactic is to ensure that trusted foot soldiers remain in government and then the party leadership uses such people to advance its agenda using different forms of subterfuge. Such foot soldiers include high ranking public servants who are remnants of the outgoing regime. They run errands for their defeated political masters to sabotage the government of the day. They keep their erstwhile 'bosses' updated by providing them with information on the day-to-day operations of the government, and even steal confidential government documents if asked to. Their objective is to ensure that the incumbent government does not function properly. In the cover of darkness, these public officers leak confidential government documents to the opposition. Most civil servants in the government tend to be party loyalists of the previous government. These public servants deliberately drag their feet in offices resulting in poor service delivery which is used by their political masters as the tools to accuse the government of non-performance (Hoeane, 2018). The desire to rule from the grave was evident when Dr Mosisili appointed various officers into different ministries just three days before the 2017 elections. The third coalition government led by Dr Thabane had the challenge of dealing with some of these people, and this often resulted in suspicions, legal battles, political hatred, confusion, and frustration. The third coalition government had to consolidate its power by removing the remnants of the second coalition government.

Politicization and polarization of the public service

Related to the phenomenon of ruling from the grave is that of the politicisation and polarisation of the civil service. Each newly elected government embarks on the politicization and polarization of the public service, including the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) and Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS). The politicization of these institutions often results in the state capture by some of the political elite who are determined to govern in perpetuity for personal gain, and through extreme forms of patronage and militarized repression. The link between the security establishments and political parties has undermined democracy and will continue to do so unless the army could desist from engaging in partisan politics (Zihlangu, 2017). The society also tends to be polarized.

According to Motlatsi (2017), after independence the politicization of various sectors of the public service continued unabated. The practice intensified in 1993, 2015, and 2017. This contributed to political instability in Lesotho in two ways. First, the public service was destabilized each time a different party came into power. Second, appointments were done to serve the ruling party. Finally, public servants appointed by previous ruling parties saw themselves as part of the opposition against the newly elected ruling party, so they participated in political and other activities intended to undermine the newly elected government. Party membership and loyalty, not merit, played a critical role in securing a job in Lesotho.

After winning the 2015 snap elections, Mosisili publicly thanked the military for helping him to gain power and declared that he would not have been in office were it not for the help of the military: “*Hoja e ne e se ka lona, nka be ke se mona*” (Had it not been for you I would not have been here). Mosisili’s expression of gratitude to the military was misplaced as he was voted back into power by Basotho not the LDF. However, its significance is that it bears testimony to the politicization of the Lesotho Defence Force. This led to the LDF acting with impunity resulting in, among other things, the assassination of Lt-Gen. Maaparankoe Mahao in 2015 and Lt-Gen. Khoantle Motšomotošo in 2017. The army became a law unto itself and any threat to the second coalition government was brutally crushed.

The latest episode which forced SADC to establish a Commission of Inquiry under the leadership of Justice Mphathi Phumaphi of Botswana testifies to the recognition of the seriousness of Lesotho’s political instability. The crisis due to the failure of previous SADC interventions to restructure the army, which was the main impediment to Lesotho’s progress for over a quarter of a century, particularly in the periods 1994 – 1995, 1998-1999, 2007 – 2008, and 2014 – 2018 (Sejanamane, 2017). In his testimony to the Phumaphi Commission, Brigadier Bulane Sechele, who was a junior officer at the LDF, told the Commission how the then LDF command dismissed allegations that the then commander of LDF Kamoli was removed and Mahao was appointed as his successor. He also testified that the LDF did not recognize Prime Minister Thabane as legitimate, and that the police were not allowed to interrogate or arrest soldiers (Sejanamane, 2017). The evidence by Sechele demonstrated that the LDF was law unto itself, and it was not even controlled by any civilian authority, including the judiciary. Stability is not possible if impunity by the state and its agents was allowed to continue. This impunity was caused by some Lesotho politicians who always involved the army to solve their political problems or achieve their personal goals. Lesotho, therefore, had army officers who were also politicians, with some politicians hiding behind this unprofessional politicized army.

Sejanamane (2018) observed that almost all politicians were aware that the politicization of the judiciary, public service and the security services is a toxic combination that has inevitably led to the chronic instability in Lesotho. This assertion attests to the politicization of all institutions of the state. The result is that governance, service delivery, and the rule of law are compromised. Politicians were aware of this toxic situation, but very few were prepared to change it because they profited from this situation.

Weak governance and oversight institutions

Majoro (2017) identified weak governance institutions as well as the absence of checks and balances in the exercise of political power as some of the sources of instability in the country. The central issue was lack of adequate oversight institutions and the fact that where they exist, they are weak. What institutions exist are vulnerable to manipulation by those in power. This situation is exacerbated by the tendency to appoint party loyalists who lost elections in their own constituencies and reward them with ministerial positions. This has the effect of undermining democracy and disenfranchising the voters, who may in turn go on protests to challenge these practices.

Splits within political parties

Political parties in Lesotho barely differ in terms of ideology, policies and ethnic composition. This was confirmed by Monyane (2009, p. 4) when he said:

Parties only differ in names and colour.... Party manifestos are the same... the difference is only in language used in writing manifestos and leadership. Parties have no activities between elections.

Despite lack of differences in the country's political parties, the political elite have, since independence, campaigned to destabilize their rivals. Political intolerance has led to splits in political parties. Work for Justice (1990, p. 2) highlighted that, "Old parties have only sparked confusion, hatred, inter-party fights, killings, and non-cooperation..." During the 2017 elections, Dr Mosisili accused the nationalist parties of having been bought by Britain in 1966 as they did not want Britain to grant Lesotho's independence immediately because they wanted power to be handed on a platter, a view rejected by the nationalist parties.

The splits within Basotho Congress Party (BCP) were described thus:

'Qhoebeshano ea ho tseka matla a puso ke lefu ka hare ho BCP, ke lefu la khale, le sa foleng - The struggle for power within BCP is an old and incurable pandemic).
(Pherudi, 2004, p. 23).

In 1996, there was a power struggle between the two factions within the BCP, namely: *Maporesha* (Pressure Group) and *Majelathoko* (Conservatives). The Pressure Group led by Mr. Molapo Qhobela challenged the leadership of Mokhehle. After many failed attempts to resolve the internal differences, in 1997, Mokhehle and his supporters broke away from BCP and formed Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). Later, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) also experienced several splits. For example, in 2002, Messrs. Kelebone Maope and Shakhane Mokhehle broke away from the LCD and formed the Lesotho People's Congress (LPC). In the same year, Dr. Khauhelo Ralitapole, the then Minister of Health in the BCP government, broke away from the BCP with Qhobela to form Basutoland African Congress (BAC). In 2006, Qhobela broke away from BAC and formed New Basutoland African Congress (NBAC) (Monyane, 2009). In 2006, Thabane broke away from LCD and formed All Basotho Convention (ABC). Thabane adopted 'convention' and wanted to break the nationalist – congress dichotomy by creating something entirely new, untainted by old rivalries. But the ABC's attempt to bridge the ideological divide was often branded as 'nationalist' by 'congress' parties despite having drawn its

membership from LCD and BNP (Motsamai, 2015). The internal conflicts continued within the LCD as the two factions, *Lija-Mollo* (Fire Eaters) and *Litima- Mollo* (Fire-Extinguishers) supporting Mosisili, and Metsing, respectively. They fought to capture the party and when Mosisili realized that he would not win, he broke away from the LCD and formed the Democratic Congress (DC) (Mothibe, 2017). Indeed, infighting within various political parties was endemic, showing a lack of capacity to resolve conflict. The split was also an indication of ‘personality cultism’ and patronage by which leaders treat political parties like their ‘own property’, and when they are challenged, they either expel the opponents or they form new political parties.

Since June 2016, the DC became a battlefield between *Lirurubele* (butterflies) linked to Moleleki and *Lithope* (girlfriends) aligned to Mosisili. The feud was over the leadership of the party. *Lirurubele* wanted to topple Mosisili and take over the leadership of the party. On the other hand, Mosisili staged a fierce fight to retain power within the DC by replacing Moleleki, and the latter subsequently formed a new party called Alliance of Democrats (AD) (Ntaote, 2016). LCD continued to suffer more splits as leaders were competing for power. On 4 February 2017, Selibe Mochoboroane, split from LCD and announced the formation of his new party called Movement for Economic Change (MEC). The fallout between the party leader Messrs Metsing and Mochoboroane was due to irreconcilable differences which resulted in Mochoboroane being suspended from LCD. He was accused of systematically sabotaging the party for his own ends. Ms Keketso Rantšo also broke away from the LCD and formed Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL). Other parties such as All Basotho Convention (ABC) also had their own share of splits, and True Reconciliation Unit (TRU) was formed by Mr. Tlali Khasu as a result. Most splits were a result of the power struggle among leaders, not of differences over party policy. None of the leaders was prepared to compromise. As a result, political schisms developed and led to the splitting of the votes and hung parliaments.

Military coups and attempted coups

Military coups or attempted coups have also made Lesotho politically unstable. Since independence, the country has experienced four coups, three attempted coups and one undeclared coup. In 1970 when Dr. Leabua Jonathan, the then Prime Minister of Lesotho, realised that he was losing the elections, he annulled the election results, declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution, put the king under house-arrest and arrested the opposition leaders. A violent repression followed. Leabua ruled by decree from 1970 to 1986. This was the first coup in the history of Lesotho (Pherudi & Barnard, 2001). The country experienced a second coup staged by the military in 1986, which ushered in Major-Gen. Metsing Lekhanya as the Chairperson of the Military Council. Immediately Lekhanya passed Order 4 of 1986, which banned all political activity in the country (Sekatle, 1994).

The third coup, termed ‘Palace Coup’ was staged on 17 August 1994, because of the differences between the BCP government and Letsie III on the return of Moshoeshe II from exile. Instead of the BCP government facilitating the return of Moshoeshe II from exile, it launched a commission of inquiry into why and how Moshoeshe II went into exile. That did not please Letsie III and he staged a coup through the help of the army (Mothibe, 2017). The political instability also manifested in 2009, when there was an attempt on the life of the former Prime Minister Mosisili by the insurgents allegedly hired by Mr. Jessie Ramakatane. The insurgents attacked the State House and the Makoanyane barracks where they took arms and vehicles. Their coup mission

was foiled by the LDF (Pherudi, 2016). Since the army tasted power in 1986, they have never really left politics to politicians. For example, in 1994, they helped Letsie III to stage a coup, openly and publicly disregarding the constitution.

In 1998, the country was paralyzed by the opposition when it rejected the outcome of the 1998 elections. For two months, the opposition groups camped at the Letsie III’s residential gate, disarmed the police, closed government offices, shutting down government business, and intimidated the workers and business owners. Maseru came to a standstill and the government was on the verge of collapse. Mosisili asked for SADC support, citing the eminent coup and SADC saved the day through the deployment of Operation Boleas, comprising South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and Botswana Defence Force (BDF) in September 1998 and law and order was restored (Mothibe, 2017).

In August 2014, the country experienced an attempted coup by LDF leading to the flight of Prime Minister Thabane, and other key security personnel to South Africa. On his return, Thabane was escorted by South African Police Services (SAPS) (Pherudi, 2016). Various governments in Lesotho used the army to achieve their political objectives. As a result, some leaders within the LDF conspired with the politicians, and plunged the country into a political crisis. Table 1 below summarises coups that took place in Lesotho since independence as well as the coup plotters.

Table 1: Type of coups d’tat in Lesotho

| Successful coups | Attempted coups | Undeclared coup |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 30 January 1970 <i>BNP coup</i> | January 1974 <i>BCP attempt</i> | September 1998 <i>Opposition groups</i> |
| 20 January 1986 <i>Military coup</i> | May 1991 <i>Military attempt</i> | |
| 30 April 1991 <i>Military coup</i> | February 1996 <i>Three army personnel</i> | |
| 17 August 1994 <i>Royal coup</i> | April 2009 <i>Insurgents allegedly recruited by Mr Jessie Ramakatane</i> | |
| | 30 August 2014 <i>Allegedly by LDF members under the command of former Lt-Gen Tlali Kamoli</i> | |

The meddling of the Lesotho’s First Lady in the country’s politics

Lesotho’s First Lady, Maesaiah Thabane, was accused of having captured the government. Subsequently, in May 2018 the chairperson of the ruling ABC Mr. Motlohi Maliehe, launched an unprecedented attack on First Lady, accusing her of interfering in the operations of the party and of government through “constant meddling” in the work of ministers and government officials. Some members of the party also complained that Thabane had allowed the First Lady to run the government through what they termed a “bedroom coup” (Mohloboli, 2018, p. 2). Many in the ABC and government were complaining about what they perceived as the negative role of the First Lady in the party and the government. ABC Members of Parliament, ministers and government

officials were unhappy with First Lady over the way the First Lady conducted herself. However, they could not say anything to her because they were afraid of losing their positions. However, the anger built up and Maliehe's public outburst was the culmination of that built-up anger.

Regional causes

The inability of SADC Observer Mission to Lesotho to diagnose causes of instability in Lesotho

The deployment of the SADC Observer Mission to Lesotho (SOMILES) and the appointment of Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa former Deputy President of South Africa, as SADC Facilitator in 2014 was hailed as a positive step towards finding a lasting solution to Lesotho's political instability. Instead of addressing the real cause of insecurity within the LDF, SADC facilitated snap elections in 2015 and ignored the deep-rooted structural and institutional factors that fed the crisis in the first place. The SADC strategy of using elections to solve Lesotho's political crisis merely addressed the symptoms and not the cause of the problem (Matlosa, 2017). It was not surprising that the security challenges continued to trouble the country after the 2015 and 2017 snap elections. The country held three elections in five years, and it became evident that elections could not provide a lasting solution to the challenges facing Lesotho.

The perception which people like Ramaphosa held that Lesotho's problems were largely political was fundamentally flawed. It was important to fully understand that the major issue facing Lesotho was complex and included among others economic decline and (lack of) security (Sejanamane, 2018). The holding of elections in 2015, was an oversight on the part of SADC. Thabane and his ABC party blamed Ramaphosa, accusing him of costing them elections but failing to address the security problems within the LDF.

Conclusion: Way forward for Lesotho

The causes of instability in Lesotho are complex; however, the few identified have above were pervasive throughout post-independence Lesotho. Therefore, the following are solutions are proposed for the country to have lasting peace. First, the country needs to undertake inclusive reforms. This should entail prioritizing the Constitutional and Security Sector Reforms to curb floor-crossing, coalition politics and eliminate overlapping responsibilities between Lesotho Defence Force and Lesotho Mounted Police Service.

More groundwork needs to be done to understand the principles of coalition governance by all parties before they enter into coalition agreements to form a coalition government. If coalitions are neither thought through nor aligned to the constitution, they will continue to pose a threat to in the country. Secondly, Lesotho needs to de-politicise the civil service, including the armed forces, and turn them into professional institutions that will protect the constitution and be answerable to whoever wins elections in a democratic process. Political patronage should be abolished and the LDF be banned through a provision in the constitution, from taking part in partisan politics as this would continue to put the nation's peace and stability at risk. Thirdly, while it is important to engage the regional body in finding solutions to Lesotho's political challenges, it is also critical to recognise that lasting solutions should be home-grown. There is need for an earnest dialogue, which should draw from Basotho's traditions and values.

Also, without downplaying the role that a First Lady can play in providing counsel to the Prime Minister on how to run the country effectively, the influence of the First Lady on the Prime Minister should serve the interests of the people of Lesotho, and her role should be defined within the limits of the law. All First Ladies across the world have a duty to support their spouses, but such work should be conducted in a self-less service to the people. In that spirit, Lesotho's First Lady (and all subsequent spouses of presidents) should leave the ministers and MPs to perform their duties without interference, and trust that they are competent and professional enough to do their jobs. She should also live according to the values of respect and charity that the Basotho hold dear. In short, the First Lady should live by example and inspire others to be respectable and respectful.

Finally, the country needs peace for development. As Santho (2017, p. 128), argues, "Lesotho needs peace, security, good governance and stability in order to realize inclusive growth and development...". Santho's assertion should be supported through an inclusive, sincere, non-partisan dialogue characterised by respect for each other, and a sense of common purpose. It is evident that the path to peace and stability in Lesotho is a difficult one, but it is not insurmountable.

Notes

¹ <http://www.lestimes.com/understading-politcal-instability-in-lesotho>, 2018.

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