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Political Parties and Political Instability in Lesotho

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Abstract

It is generally agreed that unfettered existence of political parties and their free participation is one of the key tenets for representative democracy. In spite of this, research has shown that public confidence in African political parties to fulfil their mandate has plummeted in recent years, and various explanations have been offered in this regard. This chapter takes stock of the role of political parties in Lesotho's violent politics over the last 50 years of the country's independence. Drawing on the history and contemporary evidence, the chapter argues that political parties in Lesotho have indubitably contributed to the country's instability through their intra- and inter-party behaviour. They have created a milieu of patron-client politics where those who are in power have unconstrained access to public resources for personal gain, nepotism and cronyism. Dissenting voices are usually punished by exclusion, or violence, and, at times, extra-judicial killings. The chapter submits that, previous writings on Lesotho political parties have not adequately interrogated the collaborative aspect of ruling and opposition parties in plundering of state resources. It therefore addresses this gap, and contends that, all organisations which carry the sobriquet of "political party" in Lesotho are either directly or partly to blame for the political instability which is triggered by their leaders' thirst for power and access to state resources. To substantiate

this view the chapter evinces the frailties of Lesotho political parties by looking at their internal functioning, interparty relations, inside and outside of parliament as well as in coalitions.

Introduction

Lesotho celebrated her 50th independence anniversary on 4 October, 2016. It is fitting, therefore, that as the country looks back at its achievements and challenges, we also reflect on the role of one of the key players in the post-colonial Lesotho state namely, political parties. As the country turns fifty years of age, this chapter takes stock of the role of political parties in the country's politics over the years. Drawing on the history and contemporary evidence, it argues that Lesotho missed many opportunities to address its challenges such as combatting disease and other social ills, due to lack of visionary and selfless political leadership.

Political elite and their parties in Lesotho have created a milieu of patron-client politics where those in power have unconstrained access to public resources for personal gain, nepotism and cronyism. Political differences and dissenting voices are sometimes punished by exclusion, or violence, including extra-judicial killings. The deaths of Koenyama Chakela and Victor Moloi, in the 1980s and early 1990s, respectively, as well as those of Selala Sekhonyana and Sello Clement Machakela, in 2003 and 2012, respectively, to mention but a few, are cases in point.

Previous writings on Lesotho political parties have touched on the patron-client nature of Lesotho's politics but never really interrogated the collaborative aspect of ruling and opposition parties' in the plundering of state resources. This chapter therefore addresses this gap, and contends that, all organisations which carry the sobriquet of "political party" in Lesotho are either directly or indirectly to blame for the political instability which is triggered by their leaders' thirst

for power and access to state resources.

In order to support the aforementioned contentions, the chapter begins with a brief conceptual background to political parties. This is followed by a discussion of political parties in Lesotho with the view to assess their character and role in the country's democratisation process. The chapter evinces Lesotho political parties' frailties by looking, specifically, at institutional functioning, party-hopping, financing, and lastly, at the embryonic coalition politics. It ends by explicating the requisite internal and external measures that must be taken by key actors namely, parliament, government and political parties themselves if political parties are to contribute effectively to the democratisation process in Lesotho in the next 50 years.

Political Parties and Peoples' legitimate Expectations

It is generally agreed that unfettered existence of political parties, and their ability to participate freely in a country's political processes, is a key tenet for representative democracy. Heywood (2002:248) provides four characteristics which distinguish political parties from other organisations. Firstly, political parties aim to exercise government power by winning political office (while small political parties may nevertheless use elections, more to gain a platform, and less to win power). Secondly, political parties are organised bodies with a formal card-carrying membership. Thirdly, they typically adopt a broad issue focus, addressing each of the major areas of government policy. Fourthly, and finally, Heywood notes that, to varying degrees, political parties are united by shared political preferences and a general ideological identity.

There is no doubt that, on the African continent and ahead of independence, the formation of political parties ahead of independence had the good intentions of freeing the African countries from colonial shackles and bringing about democratic

and prosperous states. As Mbeki (2011:4) aptly puts it, against the background of colonial disenfranchisement and dispossession, the Africans had high socio-economic aspirations which they verily believed would be met by their joining political parties.

However, there is ample evidence which shows that the expectations of many African citizens were not satisfied by the political parties which brought about independence on the continent. Hence some Africans, such as Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997:9), talk of the “second independence”, which, he posits, is the demand for the fulfilment of the failed expectations of independence. He reminds us that, people fought colonialism hoping that the post-colonial dispensation would bring about freedom and material prosperity. Yet, African leaders have, instead, created states that, besides failing to manage the economy and the natural environment, became the source of divisions and conflicts among them.

According to Mohamed Salih (2007:35), just like their independence peers, the post-third wave parties are faced with the same odds as their predecessors. For instance, they are trapped between

...aspirations generated through democratic resurgence and the African people’s dire need for better standards of living, and the wretched economic and social circumstances that political parties in most cases are ill equipped to resolve.

These parties have also shown similar traits of, and propensity to pursue, personalist politics which, as would be expected, is devoid of intra-party democracy. In his study of political parties in the Southern African Development Community Region (SADC) region, Khabele Motlosa (2005:47) coins the notion of “triple tragedy” when summing up the multivariate challenges besetting political parties. He posits that, parties suffer the triple tragedy of internal functioning centring on: a) autocratic bureaucracy; b) oligarchic personality cult; and c) pork-barrel politics.

The organisational weakness of many political parties is manifested by a palpable manipulation of internal party procedures employed by party leaders. Almond et al. (2008:82) regard these parties as mere vehicles for ambitious politicians to get elected because they are “built around and dominated by their leaders”. A look at many of these parties also shows party central committees (or Executive Committees as the case may be) which have bestowed on themselves veto powers on decisions made by party structures in order to serve their personal interests and those of the party leaders.

Consequently, tensions often arise out of the nomination of candidates and primary elections procedures where the central committees arbitrarily purge their opponents’ names in party candidates lists under the pretext of “screening the party lists”. These committees are often accused of parachuting their preferred candidates against the will of party structures. The imposition of a mayoral candidate by the African National Congress (ANC) National Executive Committee (NEC), in South Africa, which led to the pre-August, 2016, local government elections violent protests in Tshwane, is one of the many recent cases in point.¹ Research has shown that, as a result of these negative factors, and many others, public confidence in African political parties to fulfil their mandate has plummeted in recent years (see Adejumobi, 2007; Chege, 2007; Salih, 2007; Matlosa et al., 2007).

In his 2002 seminal work entitled “*Who killed democracy in Africa? Clues of the past, Concerns of the Future*”, the late Ali Mazrui used a paradox of “western tastes without western skills, western consumption patterns without western production techniques and urbanisation without industrialisation” to highlight the materialistic obsession of the post-colonial African elites’, and the failure of their

¹The ANC’s insistence on having Thoko Didiza as its candidate for the City of Tshwane against a glaring rejection by the party’s rank and file is one of the major reasons which has led to the party being defeated by the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) 0

development policies. Politicians never disappoint in their acrobatic performance (especially during elections) driven by their thirst for power.

I have argued elsewhere (Shale, 2015) that, the political elite are better known for politicking which has less to do with the needs and aspirations of the citizenry but more to do with those of the political elite themselves. It is for this reason that this chapter goes beyond the office-seeking tendencies of political parties and asks a critical question whether they can transcend electioneering (cheap politicking) and, instead, be instruments through which the hope of their nations can be realised and democratic governance fostered. It is to this issue that I now turn, with specific focus on Lesotho.

In fulfilling this objective, I take leaf from a study which I undertook in 2010 jointly with Anthony Motlamelle Kapa, for the Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in which the impact of proliferation of political parties on democracy in Lesotho is assessed. I build on some of the arguments that were made then, while introducing new elements, especially with regards to conflict and political instability.

A Flash-back on the Five decades of Political Parties' splits in Lesotho

It can safely be proclaimed that political parties in Lesotho began as organised formations which advocated for the handover of power to the people of Lesotho through independence. Their history has been authoritatively dealt with in a number of publications (such as Khaketla, 1971; Hamnett, 1975; Breytenbach, 1975; Machobane, 1990; Nyeko, 2002; Mako, 2004 and 2011; Matlosa and Sello, 2005; Rosenberg and Weisfelder, 2013). In almost all accounts, it is agreed that, the Lesotho's political parties are products of deep seated personality differences between party leaders.

Table 1: Lesotho political parties' splits since: 1957-2014

Political Party & Leader (L).	Pre-Independence Splinter & L'der (L).	Post-Independence Splinters & Leaders (L)
Basutoland Congress Party. 1952. L: Ntsu Mokhehle. Ruled 1993-1997	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marema-Tlou Party. 1957. L: Seephephe Matete. 2. Basutoland National Party. 1959. L: Leabua Jonathan. 3. Basutoland Freedom Party. 1961. L: B. M. Khaketla. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. United Democratic Party. 1967. L: Charles Mofeli 2. Sefate Democratic Union. 1994. L: Bofihla Nkuebe. 3. Lesotho Congress for Democracy 1997. L: Ntsu Mokhehle 4. Basutoland African Congress. 2002. L: Molapo Qhobela 5. Basotho-Batho Democratic Party. 2006. L: Jeremane Ramathebane
Basutoland National Party. 1959. L: Leabua Jonathan. Ruled 1965-1986.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesotho Unity Party. 1964. L: Leo Matlabe 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Independent Party. 1985. L: Anthony Manyeli. 2. National Progressive Party. 1995. L: Peete Nkuebe Peete. 3. Basotho Democratic National Party. 2006. L: Thabang Nyeoe
Lesotho Congress for Democracy. Founded 1997. Ruled 1997-2012		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesotho People's Congress. 2001. L: Kelebone Maope 2. All Basotho Convention. 2006. L: Thomas Thabane 3. Democratic Congress 2012. L: Pakalitha Mosisili 4. Reformed Congress of Lesotho 2014.
All Basotho Convention		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senkatana Party. 2009 L: Lehlohonolo Tšehlana 2. African Christian Front for Democracy 2009. L: Paul Masiu. 3. Progressive Democrats 2014. L: Mophato Monyake.
Democratic Congress. Founded 2012. Ruled in coalition of 7 parties 2015-		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alliance of Democrats. 2016. L: Monyane Moleleki

Sources: Shale and Matlosa 2008

This trademark was engraved on the parties' DNA since the 1950's when the Basutoland National Party (BNP) was formed in 1959 out of the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) which, until 1959 was called the Basutoland African Congress (BAC). The BAC had been established in 1952 by Ntsu Mokhehle, who was one of the activists in the pre-independence organised formations, the Lekhotla la Bafo (Commoners' League). Based on its popularity, the BCP was very well-poised to lead the country into independence but, alas, Leabua Jonathan's BNP, which enjoyed the support of the South African government at the time (Neocosmos, 1993; Matlosa, and Sello, 2005) was formed.

Not only did the BNP split from the BCP but it also pipped the latter at the pre-independence 1965 polls to claim the country's maiden government of independent Lesotho. Needless to say that, the split from the BCP in the late 1950s, and the ones which happened in recent years, have largely not been about differences in ideological inclinations and or policy differentiation. I come back to this point shortly. For now, it is important to demonstrate, in Table 1, a trend of party splits which have continued since 1959.

Table 1 shows that, the BCP gave birth to eight political parties (three pre-independence and five post-independence) since its formation in in 1952. Its first off-shoot, the BNP, has so far produced 4 political parties, since 1959. The BCP kept its procreation culture in the post-military rule (1986-1993). At the time of writing this chapter, the LCD has split 4 times since its formation in 1997, while its splinter party, the ABC, has already split 3 times, since its formation, in 2006. The LCD biggest splits were in 2006 and in 2012, when the ABC and the DC were formed, respectively.

As indicated above, the umpteenth party splits are largely attributed to personality differences more than to ideology, or policy positions. As Matlosa and Sello (2005:4) aptly note, one of the major weaknesses of political parties in Lesotho is the incessant fragmentation and factionalism manifesting through splits borne out of personality differences and leadership

tussles and scuffles. They posit that:

The net effect of this trend is the existence of institutions that tend to be synonymous with leadership personalities. The leader becomes the party, and conversely the party becomes the political fiefdom of the leader. This explains why Lesotho politics is so strongly imbued with personality cult of prominent leaders...

Perhaps a caveat here should be to acknowledge that, there is a slight difference between the pre-independence parties on the one hand, and the modern post-independence parties, on the other, when it comes to the factors behind the splits. For instance, BNP was formed as a counter to the BCP's militancy, and there are four distinct areas in which it differed with the BCP. These were: a) its strong roots and relations with the chieftaincy institution, b) its friendly relations with the apartheid South Africa which was concerned about the BCP socialist leanings, c) its recruitment and empowerment of women and; d) its strong links with the Roman Catholic Church which had been instrumental in its formation as an ideal vehicle through which to counter communism (Khaketla, 1971). The other splinter parties at the time (the MTP and the BFP) also had strong links with the chieftaincy as well as the institution of Morena-e-Moholo.²

One of the consequences of creation of personality-cults within Lesotho's political parties is that, as soon as the leaders formed new parties, the pre-existing ones quickly lose popular support. The BCP, and now the LCD, are some of the examples. However, confining the problem to personalities is an oversimplification of a bigger problem. The personality differences were, and continue to be, a result of a deeper problem, which is the politics of poverty.

In order to contextualise the above point, it is well documented that Lesotho is one of the poorest countries in the

²Titles of 'Motlotlehi' and 'king' took place of 'Morena-e-Moholo' in Lesotho's 1966 *Constitution* of in 1966.

world, with unemployment being one of the highest on the continent. Despite having housed the garment industry for more than 25 years, the country is yet to have firms owned by its citizens (APRM 2010). More than half of the country's budget comes from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) remittances (APRM 2010). As Makoa (2011:52) rightly suggests, under the conditions of poverty, the political party in power is the sole beneficiary of SACU revenues because it has the mandate to manage state funds. He attributes the ability of a ruling party's leader to fund his party's campaign to having access to these funds. It is to be expected, therefore, that in the same logic, the ruling party is better placed than any other party to dish out patronage. After all, as Makoa aptly puts it,

...by and large, progressively poor, food insecure and hungry Basotho cannot easily survive without a fair amount of financial assistance and state patronage.

Above said, in Sesotho they say *lela le lapileng ha le na tsebe*, which directly translates to "an empty intestine has no ear". This means that, a hungry man knows no reason because his logic is overwhelmed by the urge to eat. This saying is instructive in the context of political parties in Lesotho which have, over the five decades, been avenues to wealth accumulation. Hungry politicians, especially those in government and in the National Assembly, are generously taken care-of through public funds. Therefore, the mantra that Lesotho politics are based on personality-cult only demonstrates the bondage which holds the members of various political parties to the party leaders who are, themselves, seeking to benefit from the state resources via the parties precisely because *lela le lapileng ha le na tsebe*.

In order to substantiate the view above, Lesotho experienced interparty conflicts prior to 2002 because the first-past-the post electoral system (FPTP) because politicians deemed it exclusivist. Both in 1993 and 1998 elections, the system excluded smaller parties from parliament and, therefore,

those outside parliament treated the party which won the elections as the enemy. On the face of it, one could be fooled to believe that there was a valid point in the argument that parliament had to be representative, which is to say that more than one party had to be in parliament to represent the people. However, as Van De Walle (2003), quoted in Osei (2015:127), posits, the use of “representation” in this context is not necessarily about the people but about the patron-client relationship.

It becomes clear that, in the case of Lesotho, since 1993, leaders of political parties have been trying to get into parliament not to be the representative of the people but to be in a position of power from which to channel patronage to the constituents. Those who are in power have been seen as rewarding themselves financially. Stories of BCP back-benchers pilfering food-for-work (known derogatively in Sesotho as *fato-fato*) development funds with impunity were common in the mid to late 1990's.

In one instance, an MP for the Mashai Constituency, Monya Zuma, claimed that, on his way to the constituency to pay people who were constructing village roads among other things, he stopped somewhere to relieve himself in a donga, and that he had left a briefcase full of money on top of the donga only to find it gone when he was done answering the call of nature. The money was never recovered. There was, equally, an absurd story, in Motimposo Constituency, where the MP, 'Mamoshebi Kabi, claimed that the cheques which were to be cashed for similar food-for-work wages were eaten by rodents. These and other cases, where the senior BCP leaders were not held to account, created an impression that being in government was a license to self-enrichment.

The inter-party conflicts reduced significantly following the adoption of the mixed member electoral system (MMP) in 2002. A lot of ink and chapter have been used on the benefits of the post-1998 electoral reforms (see Elklit, 2002; Elklit, 2008; Matlosa, 2003; Matlosa, 2004). Here, one can only underscore the fact that when the MMP was adopted, a *central* objective of

its introduction was to make it difficult for any one party to form government alone, and this brought about political stability.

One of the outcomes of the stability is that, between 2002 and 2008, for example, the government got a 70% rating based on people's perception of its responsiveness and performance on issues such as education (Gyimah-Boadi et al., 2015:116). Political stability was, however, short-lived because, soon after the first MMP run elections in 2002, the ruling party discovered that it was not benefitting from the MMP system by virtue of the high number of votes that it had received. Acting against objectives of the MMP, both dominant parties—LCD and ABC—formed alliances with smaller parties with the intention to circumvent the MMP system and gain more seats in parliament.

The ruling LCD entered into a memorandum of understanding with a faction of the National Independent Party (NIP). The agreement was that the NIP would draw PR lists which were to include the LCD candidates in exchange for LCD members voting NIP on the PR ballot. As a result, the LCD leaders, including ministers who had obviously lost support in the constituencies, were returned to parliament and cabinet after the 2007 general election.

In a clear act of patronage, Motikoe whose party had 21 compensatory (PR) seats, was rewarded by the LCD with a *de-jure* Leader of Opposition status despite that the ABC leader, Thomas Thabane, clearly commanded the second largest group of constituency-based on the number of MPs in the National Assembly.

Similarly, the ABC had also entered into an agreement with the Lesotho Workers Party (LWP). The ABC-LWP agreement stated that for the 2007 elections, the ABC would field candidates in the 79 out of the 80 constituencies while the LWP would prepare a party list. The agreement made provision for the LWP leader, Billy Macaefa, to contest one remaining constituency, in Matelile, while six of his party leaders would be part of the 40 names in the LWP party list (article 4.5 of the

ABC-LWP February 2007 MoU).

Although the national cake had been expanded with the introduction of the MMP electoral system, it was the political elites, and not the voting public, that had access to it.

Election-related conflict has not completely gone away but has continued in a different form. It is no longer about the exclusion of one party by another, as was the case under the FPTP electoral system. It is now about the exclusion of individuals by their parties. The party list system has brought with it increased competitiveness during intra-party candidate nominations. Consequently, candidate nomination processes including primary elections across parties has become more complex. The parties' leadership powers in candidate nominations, which have hitherto not been challenged, are now questioned, amidst high demands, from parties' rank-and-file, for inclusion in the PR lists.

A plausible case can be made that, the increase in intra-party conflict is the unintended consequence of the MMP system. In their search for the social and economic dividends, which come with being in parliament as well as in the cabinet, members of parties have increased their demands on party central committees to be more open and transparent in the management of the candidate nomination processes and procedures. This has often led to confrontation between the party leaders and their structures, resulting in factionalism and splits.

A common trend since the country's return to multiparty democracy in 1993 has been that the ruling parties (BCP, LCD and ABC) are the ones which have suffered the most splits ahead of the elections, despite having triumphed in the previous elections as shown in Table 2.

What is peculiar to Lesotho political parties is that they are almost all led by leaders who have recycled themselves to remain at the top of the food chain. I prefer to categorise these leaders as "political re-treads" because they do not offer quality leadership and are incapable of lasting the distance on the journey of political ideas and transformative politics. Members

of Parliament and other senior party leaders who face competition in their constituencies, or feel that they are being pushed to the periphery by the party leaders, have been seen defecting to other parties with the same goal in mind, access to wealth. This paper refers to this group of politicians as “Party hoppers”.

Table 2: Ruling Party Splits since 1993

Ruling Party	Election Year	No. of Seats Obtained	No. of Total National Assembly Seats	Year of Split
BCP	1993	65	65	1997
LCD	1998	79	80	2001
LCD	2002	79	120	2006
LCD	2007	61	120	2012

The BCP has produced the most party hoppers, and it has never recovered from its first split of 1997. It was toppled in parliament by its own leader, Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle. Under pressure from a dominant group within the party’s Executive Committee (known then as the Pressure Group) to relinquish power Mokhehle formed the LCD and immediately claimed that he was still Prime Minister because he had a largest (41) number of MPs who crossed the floor with him, compared to the BCP’s 21 MPs. As evidence of its support, the LCD won all but one of the 80 constituencies on offer.

Following the death of Ntsu Mokhehle, in January, 1999, jostling for the control of the party and strategic positions ensued, and, in no time, the centre could no longer hold in the LCD. Factionalism, which had never really ended, reared its ugly head between the two factions led by Mokhehle’s successor, Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, and his Deputy Kelebone Maope. A cabinet reshuffle by Mosisili saw the younger brother of Mokhehle, Shakhane Mokhehle, being

dropped from the LCD Cabinet and subsequently quitting the LCD with 25 other MPs to form the LPC with Kelebone Maope.

Divisions within the ruling LCD continued even after the 2001 split and notwithstanding the adoption of the MMP electoral system which, it was hoped, would bring about stability. In 2006, the Minister of Science and Technology, Thomas Thabane resigned to form the ABC taking with him 18 MPs. The ABC's support base was mainly in the urban areas, including the capital city of Maseru. It won 17 out of the 80 constituencies in its first election contest in 2007. Its support consolidated in 2012 elections where it won 26 constituency seats and obtained 4 compensatory PR seats. It also gained more seats in the 2015 elections where it won 40 out of the 80 constituency seats and obtained 6 compensatory PR seats. In the 2015 elections, the ABC became the largest party in terms of constituency support eclipsing its mother party, the LCD.

Just like Ntsu Mokhehle, who formed the LCD in 1997 after the challenges directed at his leadership by the members of the National Executive Committee, Pakalitha Mosisili, who was one of the engineers of the BCP split in 1997, also faced serious challenges from the Executive Committee, in 2012. This resulted in him and 43 other MPs leaving the LCD and forming the DC. The DC went on to win the largest number of constituencies in the 2012 elections, making it the biggest party in terms of constituency support. It won 41 out of the 80 constituencies and was compensated with 7 PR seats. It was poised to form the government, had it not been for the coalescing of the opposition parties led by the ABC. Although the DC regained power in 2015 through a coalition with smaller parties, it recently experienced factionalism, which led to yet another split. The faction that was led by the DC Deputy leader, Monyane Moleleki, has since formed a new political party, the Alliance of Democrats (AD).

From Party-hopping to Coalition-hopping: "A luta continua, vitória é certa"

Besides party-hopping by individuals as already described, there is another type of hopping namely from one coalition to the other. Under similar motives which have given birth to party hopping, coalition-hopping is 'the new game in town' since the advent of coalition politics in Lesotho. When the objectives cannot be achieved within one coalition, then coalition-hoppers move on to the next one. For instance, in a twist of ironies, the LCD and the DC which were sworn enemies following the DC's usurpation of power from the LCD in an ugly split in 2012, joined forces together and engineered the fall of the ABC led coalition government. The LCD's decision to partner with the DC cost it dearly as some of its MPs split to form a new party, the Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL), in 2014, in protest.

Besides the LCD having hopped from a coalition government led by the ABC to the one led by DC, smaller parties have also devised a way to hunt with the hunters and run with the hares. In the previous coalition government, the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), BCP, Basotho-Batho Democratic Party (BBDP), Lesotho People's Party (LPC), Basotho Democratic National Party (BDNP), National Independence Party (NIP) and Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) formed a loose alliance, called the bloc. The bloc decided to support the ABC led coalition government from the outside by only voting with it in parliament against the DC which had been isolated as a punishment for its power grab in 2012, after splitting from the LCD.

When the ABC-led coalition government collapsed, five of these parties hopped to the new coalition government after they each secured one PR seat in parliament. However, they opted to be part of the cabinet, this time, and share the spoils in the allocation of Senatorial, Ambassadorial and other senior government positions under the *Khokanyan'a Phiri* coalition

government, as the coalition refers to itself.

One consequence of the MMP system is that because it compensates smaller parties which without it would be wiped off the political landscape, it virtually makes these parties win elections by losing them. Small parties—such as the ones which initially formed the bloc, and now form part of the *Khokanyan'a Phiri* coalition—have been turned into king-makers in Lesotho politics, despite the fact that they enjoy very little popular support. They make, or break, coalitions, as we saw in the ABC-led coalition and, now, with the DC-led one.

The foregoing sections show not only the fluidity of political parties in Lesotho but also how lightly politicians regard the needs and aspirations of the people. As indicated earlier, none of the splits was a result of politicians battling over ideas on how to develop the country. The 2015 election campaigns which are, in actual fact, mere politicking events for the parties devoid of clear development goals, are a case in point.

Ruling and Opposition parties in Concert to Plunder State Resources

Lesotho provides public funds to political parties for campaigning purposes. The campaign funding is provided to parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties alike, albeit on set distribution criteria. Proportionality to the number of votes obtained in previous elections is used for parliamentary parties while equal distribution is used for non-parliamentary parties. A limitation of the party funding law is that its disclosure requirement does not go beyond election time. This means that parties and individuals can amass illicit funds during the period in-between elections.

The legal provision of party and campaign finance is one of the important aspects for which Lesotho has to be given credit. However, the campaign component of the provision has proven to be problematic. Firstly, it is an incentive for proliferation of parties because party hoppers know that when they break

away from their parties, they will have some funds (no matter how meagre) from the state towards the campaign activities of their new parties. This is different from South Africa, for instance, where parties have to prove their worth through the ballot box first before they can access the public funds. It has also been one of the sources of intra-party conflicts because although the law requires parties to account for the funds, adherence to this requirement by both the ruling and opposition parties is very low. The abuse of funds by party leaders coupled with the lack of financial accountability within these parties has often triggered tensions.

Both ruling and opposition parties' leaders have been accused of misuse of state resources for personal gain. In a clear political motive, the DC led coalition used public funds to pay off M500 000 personal loans of all MPs of the 8th Parliament. These MPs claimed that they did not foresee that the 8th Parliament would not last its full term and therefore this meant that they were no longer going to be earning an income to repay the loans. Opposition MPs never raised an objection to the government's placing the burden of loan repayments on the tax payers. They, instead, feigned innocence claiming that they have not asked for their loans to be written off. Many of these MPs were re-elected back to parliament after the February, 2015, elections and as things stand, they are now entitled to take new loans as members of the 9th Parliament.

In another case of the plunder of state resources, in 2006 the Executive took the decision to allow its members and other senior officials holding statutory positions to buy government vehicles under the Government of Lesotho Vehicle Scheme (Shale 2008:182). The government sold three-year-old luxury vehicles for only 1% of their original value to the Executive and senior officials. Ministers bought C-Class Mercedes-Benzes for as little as M3 000. Holders of statutory positions bought Toyota luxury cars for M1 700. Although, to their credit, opposition MPs voted against this move in parliament at the time, under the politics of poverty, Parliament is very weak while the Executive is too strong. This fact is also noted in the

2010 APRM Country Report which states that the institutions that are supposed to exercise public financial accountability are dysfunctional. It adds that:

Accountability in the use of public fiancé, auditing, and reporting is grossly inadequate. In addition, although parliament officially allocates budgets and authorises expenditures, it is unable to oversee the expenditure of the executive and other arms of government (p. 231).

Members of Parliament are basically torn between competing principals, the party, on the one hand, and Parliament, on the other. The Executive in Lesotho has prevailed not once but many times over Parliament because of the patron-client relationship. The latter is made up of people who owe their political existence to the former. Therefore, decisions by the executive to dish out patronage using state resources, without accounting to anyone, is a classical case in point.

In fact, one of the major problems facing Lesotho is too much concentration of power in the Prime Minister. Reflecting on the same problem in Britain, Graham Allen MP from Nottingham North, states that in the Westminster system:

...the prime ministership over many decades has evolved into an accidental presidency. The result is a dysfunctional democracy, in which power is over-concentrated, over-centralized and under-controlled. Our democracy is out of balance and dangerously short on popular consent and participation....

The *Constitution of Lesotho* clearly gives a lot of power to the Prime Minister, including the power to take any action without the consent of the King—which action will be deemed to have been taken by the King himself.³ Admittedly, the *Constitution* also provides for the removal of the Prime Minister, through a motion of vote-of-no-confidence. But in a system where the

³ Section 91 (3) of *Lesotho Constitution*.

Prime Minister is the most influential political figure over any given legislator, it is not easy for this to happen.

The over-concentration of power in the Prime Minister has definitely proven poisonous for Lesotho over the 50 years because the political elite have been engaged in a cut-throat contest to have such power. They have not been shy to use it albeit not for the benefit of the country. The current Prime Minister, Mosisili, has now been in power for 17 years, just 4 years shy of Leabua Jonathan's record of 21 years. Excessive power, combined with overstay in political office, have proven to be costly to Lesotho, as has been witnessed during the Leabua Jonathan (1965-1986) and now Pakalitha Mosisili (1999-date) eras.

Effect of Internal Functioning of Parties on Political Stability

Although regular multi-party elections have become a norm in Lesotho, the dearth of a normative framework for the internal functioning of parties has led to lack of intra-party democracy resulting in weak political parties. As Veen (2007:12-13) reminds us, preponderance of weaker parties leads to a weaker party system. Conversely, a strong party system is an outcome of high quality, stable and proper functioning political parties. Such quality is determined by a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the make-up of the parties; the strength of their internal cohesion and programmatic profile; the structure and efficiency of the organisation; the identification by all members with the party; their democratic structure from bottom to top, and from local to state level; and, their internal and external (the media and the public) communication skills.

Political parties in Lesotho are nowhere near this quality hence the political instability which has characterised the country since independence. In conformity with Motlosa's notion of "triple tragedy" of autocratic bureaucracy, oligarchic personality cult, and pork barrel politics, both the ruling and

opposition party leaders are averse to intra-party democracy, including leadership alternation. If they cannot hold on to power in their parties, they jump ship and form new parties. The following three incidents demonstrate further how the parties' failure to master proper internal functioning has plunged the country into a political morass.

Firstly, the BNP split from the BCP in 1959 and its subsequent capture of power in 1970 led to serious tensions which have sadly defined the trajectory of inter-party relations for the past 50 years. It is important to underscore that right from the beginning at independence, the governing party violently dealt with the opposition thus establishing the aggressor-defender syndrome in Lesotho's inter-party relations. Makoia (2011:50) reminds us that, the armed forces remained loyal to the BNP even during the early years of the BCP rule after restoration of democracy, in 1993. He cites a number of peace-threatening episodes, during that period such as the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) in-fighting in 1994 and the subsequent murder of the Deputy Prime Minister Selometsi Baholo by LDF.

Secondly, when the LCD split from the BCP in 1997, the country saw unprecedented protests which reached the climax after the LCD won the 1998 elections. Convinced that the LCD had usurped power from the BCP illegally, the BCP and other opposition parties violently protested against the LCD victory and in no time the country was on the brink of a civil war had it not been for the SADC military intervention. Thirdly, the 2006 ABC split shook the country's stability yet again. The electoral gains by the newly formed ABC in the 2007 elections threatened the LCD, which in typical fashion of African ruling parties, unleashed the security agencies on the ABC and other opposition parties. Curfews, enforced by the LDF, became the order of the day and democratic space for citizen participation was constricted and infringement on human rights became common in post 2007, as was the case after the aborted 1970 elections.

Thirdly, the advent of coalition politics has ushered in a

myriad of challenges which have created political instability. As political elites compete for state power through coalitions, Lesotho has witnessed inter-party relations deteriorating to the lowest ebb; and relations between the security agencies, especially the army and the police, being defined along partisan lines and the respect of the rule of law being eroded at an alarming rate, thereby destabilising the political system.

Throughout Lesotho's 50-year unstable political history, the youth and women have been on the receiving end, both in terms of political violence as well as lack of opportunities for employment, access to health and education. Both the youth and women have been manipulated by the political elite for selfish interests and they are made to toe the party line with the false or real hope that the party leaders will remember them once they capture power. Sadly and despite promises by parties since independence, the women are still side-lined just as they were under colonialism (Scully 2009:29).

This situation leads to the emergence of inequalities in society and, in most cases, women are the most affected. The APRM Report (2010:32) notes that despite an attempt by the Lesotho Government to improve on the position of women by revising the laws and developing policies geared towards addressing gender equality, things remain the same largely because of patriarchal cultural practices which government is incapable of dealing with.

The continent's return to multi-party political dispensation in the late 1980s and early 1990s came with a renewed promise that political parties would carry out democratic reforms which had hitherto been suppressed by single party regimes. However, it has now come to pass that instead of becoming the harbinger of democratic ideals and pushing the envelope in search for the solutions to the challenges that face women and young people, political leaders in Africa, including in Lesotho, have not genuinely taken measures to empower men and women. Without contradicting myself, it is important to state that Lesotho has in recent years has been praised for the inclusion of women in Parliament, cabinet and local councils.

Yet, a closer look at the number of women who get into parliament through the FPTP is very low compared to those who come through a PR list.

At the local level, Lesotho has been rated higher in terms of women inclusion after it attained a 30 % threshold on inclusion of women. In 2005, it had reserved one out of three polling divisions throughout the country for females, translating into 385 out of the 1272 electoral divisions (Shale 2005:11). Political parties have, without fail, established women and youth leagues in their parties over the years but the lack of appropriate format for women and youth empowerment at all levels by the parties has only led to token inclusion in some decision making structures. Young people, glorified as youth leaders from across different political parties, engage on radio stations in Lesotho, spewing political cacophony and character assassinating leaders of other parties instead of focussing on issues which affect young people and policies which they would like to see enacted for the empowerment of the youth.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that political parties in Lesotho have indubitably contributed to the country's instability through their intra and inter party conflict and it makes the following conclusions. Firstly, that one of the major problems facing Lesotho is a lack of quality political leadership. It invokes the notion of recycled leaders to illustrate this Achilles heel. The chapter takes the diagnosis of the problem beyond the issue of personality cult politics and argues that, actually, the Lesotho problem has to be called what it is: politics of poverty. The litany of party splits is a result of the politics of poverty as the political elites search for greener pastures, thereby causing a serious harm to the country more than they would care to admit.

Secondly, it is concluded that the advent of coalition politics has transformed the bi-polar conflict setting, between parties to

a multi-polar and multi-layered conflict within individual parties and between coalition partners. As a result of the elitist, opportunistic and avaricious tendencies, there are no sufficient mechanisms being put in place to deal with this type of conflict and to ensure normalisation of the party and political systems.

Thirdly, the chapter bemoans the fact that there is no meaningful empowerment of youth and women. It observes that the political elites' agenda has simply been one of exploitation of the vulnerabilities of young people and women, 'finish and klaar' (period). The country can never be prosperous when the majority of its population, women and youth, experience violence and strategic political repression at the hands of political leaders.

Fourthly, and finally, it can safely be argued that Lesotho and Basotho have little to celebrate for the country's attainment of a Golden Jubilee because the socio-economic challenges which faced the country 50 years ago continue unabated. The political elite have only succeeded to divide the people instead of binding them together and creating jobs and decent living conditions.