COALITION POLITICS IN LESOTHO

A Multi-disciplinary
Study of Coalitions and
their Implications for
Governance

Editors

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABC	All Basotho Convention
ACP	Alliance of Congress Parties
AD	Alliance of Democrats
AG	Attorney General
AJA	Administration of the Judiciary Act
AMHC	All Mauritian Hindu Congress
ANC	African National Congress
BAC	Basutoland African Congress
BAP	Basotho Action Party
BBDP	Basotho Batho Democratic Party
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BDNP	Basotho Democratic National Party
BNP	Basotho National Party
CAM	The Comité d'Action Musulman
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CID	Criminal Investigation Division
CMW	Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
CORD	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DC	Democratic Congress
DCEO	Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences
DPL	Democratic Party of Lesotho
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
ECF	Extended Credit Facility

ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
EMB	Election Management Body
FIU	Financial Intelligence Unit
FORD	Forum for Restoration of Democracy
FPTP	First-Past-The-Post
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRC	Human Rights Committee/Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Interim Political Authority
JIMC	Monitoring and Implementation Committee
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KSC	Kenya Social Congress
LCD	Lesotho Congress for Democracy
LCN	Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
LCS	Lesotho Correctional Services
LDF	Lesotho Defence Force
LHWC	Lesotho Highlands Water Commission
LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army
LMPS	Lesotho Mouted Police Service
LP	Labour Party
LPC	Lesotho People's Congress
LPF	Lesotho Para-Military Force
LWP	Lesotho Workers Party
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account

MEC	Movement for Economic Change
MFP	Marematlou Freedom Party
MMM	Mouvement Militant Mauricien
MMP	Mixed Member Proportional
MPs	Members of Parliament
MSM	Mkenya Solidarity Movement
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NASA	National Super Alliance
NDPC	National Dialogue Planning Committee
NEC	National Executive Committee
NIP	National Independence Party
NLF	National Leaders' Forum
NRA	National Reforms Authority
NSS	National Security Services
NUL	National University of Lesotho
NYS	National Youth Service
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFD	Popular Front for Democracy
PM	Prime Minister
PMSD	Parti Mauricien Socialiste Democrate
PMU	Police Mobile Unit
PNU	Party of National Unity
PR	Proportional Representation
PSIC	Public Sector Investment Committee
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
RCL	Reformed Congress of Lesotho
RLDF	Royal Lesotho Defence Force

SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SGR	Standard Gauge Railway
SMM	Single Member Majoritarian
SMMEs	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises
SMP	Single Member Plurality
SOMILES	SADC Observer Mission to the Kingdom of Lesotho
SOU	Special Operations Unit
TNA	The National Alliance
TRC	Transformation Resource Centre
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDF	United Democratic Forum Party
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
URP	United Republican Party
WDM	Wiper Democratic Movement

PARTY COALITIONS AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE SECURITY CRISIS IN LESOTHO

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Tlohang Letsie

1 Introduction

When establishing its different security agencies, Lesotho hoped to build a foundation for a conducive environment within which all would prosper. On the one hand, the police and other agencies such as intelligence and the prison services would focus on public security, which concerns itself with day-to-day law and order. On the other hand, the army would take care of national security concerned with external aggression. However, the army would, as provided for by the Lesotho Defence Force Act 1996, Sect 5 (c), assist (the relevant institutions) in the preservation of life, health and property, and specifically assist in upholding law and order in support of the police as directed by the government. Therefore, the expectation was that the different security agencies would have cordial relationships to ensure the achievement of the objective of their very survival – orderly and peaceful Lesotho.

Contrary to expectations, the greater part of Lesotho's political history is marked by instability and protracted conflicts. At the heart of this political instability and conflict, lie the country's formal security institutions, particularly the army. The security crisis in Lesotho is mainly rooted in the politicisation of the security agencies and has over the years resulted in a chronicle of events ranging from disloyalty of the security forces to the incumbent civilian governments; abduction and assassination of ministers; assassination of army bosses; Prime Minister going into exile and returning to the country under the guard of the South African security personnel – against his forces. The persistent security crisis has mostly diverted the national focus from development to the search for lasting peace

within and among different security agencies. Pherudi (2018:118) observed this and wrote that: “for as long as the armed forces have been politicised, the Lesotho government and civil society have been engaged in debate about how to reconfigure Civil Military Relations (CMR) and professionalise the army”. On many occasions, the crisis has transcended national boundaries. Over the years, Lesotho’s political and security conflicts have attracted foreign countries and organisations’ attention. As Vhumbunu (2015:3) notes: “Lesotho is a prominent conflict agenda item at SADC summits and extraordinary summits, having experienced political disturbances and internal conflicts before in 1974, 1986, 1991, 1994, 1998 and 2007”. The resultant interventions have even rendered questionable the very sovereignty of Lesotho.

In democratic countries, the relationship between the government and security agencies should be guided by the objective/liberal model of CMR. Under this model, “there is a clear division between political and security agencies’ roles and the security agencies are kept out of politics” (Heywood, 2007:408). The security agencies are subordinate to the civilian rulers, who are accountable to the public. Civilian rulers have a responsibility of policy-making – including defence-related policies – and the security agencies’ role is to provide expert advice and implementation of the policy (Ibid.). However, in Lesotho, this has hardly been the case as the security agencies have dabbled in politics from time to time.

Due to politicisation, the security agencies, particularly the army, have at times been at loggerheads with the civilian governments or certain factions of such governments that are perceived to have different political leanings from these security agencies. The former was mostly the case in the immediate years after returning to democratic rule in 1993, while the latter emerged in the era of coalition governments beginning in 2012.

This chapter is mainly historical and descriptive. It discusses Lesotho’s different security crisis patterns after the return to democratic rule in 1993 and after the emergence of coalition governments in 2012. It shows that the changing patterns of the security crisis were attributable to the politicisation of the security agencies. A combination of books, academic journals, policy documents and other documented sources provided the secondary data, while interviews with selected individuals provided the primary data. The chapter is divided into five main sections, including the conceptualisation of the central concepts; examination of the primary security institutions in Lesotho; the emergence of party coalitions in Lesotho politics; historical overview of Lesotho’s security crisis and conclusion.

2 Conceptualising security and security sector

This section introduces two central concepts to this chapter. These are the security and security sector.

2.1 *Security*

The term “security” is broad, and its meaning has varied according to contexts as determined by different eras. For instance, the meaning of security in the post-Cold War period differs substantially from during the era of the “war”. During the Cold War, security was mainly defined in terms of states, while the Post-Cold War saw the emergence of individual-centred human security (UNDP Human Development Report, 1994:22). For this chapter’s purpose, the focus is mainly on the traditional understanding of security, which sees armed forces as central to protecting states from external aggression and the prevalence of law and order in any country.

Traditionally, security was understood in terms of the classical approaches, which defined it more in terms of the nation-states than people. This approach was based on Thomas Hobbes’ view of individuals as selfish and having self-preservation as the main motive. The same view was later applied in the analysis of the behaviour of states. For this classical approach, security was limited to each country and implied the protection of a country from external aggression. This view regarded any co-existence between states as conflict-ridden and dangerous, hence requiring states to rely on their military capabilities for security (Pisani, 2007:15). With this traditional approach, security provision is categorised into three: national, public, and citizen security.

Kincaid (2001:40-41) differentiates between these three types and defines national security as safeguarding the state sovereignty over the territory and the population within its borders. This, according to him, implies policies to confront any threat to that sovereignty. He takes public security to imply the maintenance of civil order necessary for the execution of the basic societal functions and the upholding of the rule of law. Lastly, he defines citizen security as the capacity of individuals and organisations to enjoy or exercise the political, economic, and civil rights that correspond to a citizen’s status in society.

Of the three, national security is the prime consideration, and it is the responsibility of national armies. On the other hand, the police and the judicial systems have to take care of matters relating to public security. Citizen security is mainly the responsibility of civilian politicians who make relevant laws and policies and exercise relevant control over all institutions – including the armed forces – that otherwise pose a threat to this security.

The three dimensions of security are highly interrelated and cannot be easily divorced from one another. For instance, it can be argued that public security is a prerequisite of citizen security. This is so because people cannot enjoy their rights within a disorderly environment. Similarly, there is a need for monitoring and striking a balance between individual rights, which are elements of citizen security and public order. Excessive and unregulated individual rights can compromise public security. The three security dimensions are also interrelated when it comes to the functions of their members. For

instance, despite having external aggression as their traditional concern, armies worldwide get involved in public security and support the police. This normally happens when police are overwhelmed during attempts to maintain or prevent the collapse of public order or during times of natural disasters or mass riots.

2.2 Security sector

Each nation has unique components of the security sector. However, countries at the same level of development generally have almost similar components. The following is a summary of general components of the security sector in the African context:

- (i) *Primary Security Institutions*: such as the armed forces, the police, gendarmerie and other law enforcement agencies, presidential guards, anti-terrorist units, border management, customs and immigration authorities, Office/Directorate of the State Department, as well as any other services set up by a Member State;
- (ii) *Specialized Intelligence and Security Institutions*: such as those in charge of finding and using intelligence to preserve state sovereignty and security and defend vital national interests. These may be involved in security activities such as counter-espionage, counter-terrorism and the fight against all forms of organised crime;
- (iii) *Public Oversight and Management Bodies*: such as the executive, the justice ministries, the legislature, national security advisory bodies, parliamentary sub-committees, anti-corruption bodies, customary authorities, the Pan African Parliament, and regional parliamentary bodies;
- (iv) *Justice and Rule of Law Institutions*: such as the judiciary, prisons and other correctional facilities, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Public Prosecutor, ombudspersons, traditional and transitional justice systems, human rights commissions, tribunals and courts;
- (v) *Civil Emergency Units*: such as search and rescue services, fire fighting, riot control, natural disaster management and natural resource protection units; and
- (vi) *Non-state Security Bodies*: such as private security companies, informal, traditional and customary authorities and others, as may be decided by each member state (African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reforms, 2014:4-5).

A closer look at the above-listed security components reflects that Lesotho is no different from other African countries when it comes to the nature of the security sector. However, the main focus of this chapter is on Lesotho's primary security institutions and specialised intelligence and security institutions, as defined in (i) and (ii) above.

3 Primary security institutions in Lesotho

Lesotho maintains its security through a number of agencies. Collectively these agencies are known as armed forces. These include the Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS), the National Security Services (NSS), Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) and Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS). A brief discussion of each follows.

3.1 *Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS)*

At independence in 1966, Lesotho did not have an army (Makoa, 1998:17). As a result, security was solely the responsibility of the colonial police – the Basutoland Mounted Police (BMP). The police were renamed the Lesotho Mounted Police (LMP) when the country changed its name to Lesotho upon independence. The military government changed the name to Royal Lesotho Mounted Police in 1986 to symbolise its collaboration with the monarchy (Ibid.). The name was later returned to the Lesotho Mounted Police following the return to democratic rule in 1993. Later, the service element was added to the name, and now the institution is known as the Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS). The police service is concerned with public security and as such, tasked with the daily maintenance of law and order. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS) consists of various units, including regular police, traffic police, Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and the Special Operations Unit [SOU].

3.2 *National Security Services (NSS)*

Established through the National Security Services (NSS) Act of 1997, the NSS is an intelligence agency whose function is the protection of national security (National Security Services (NSS) Act of 1997:Section 5(1)). A detailed description of the functions of NSS shows that:

Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) the service shall

- (a) Protect the state against threats of espionage, terrorism or sabotage which may infringe on national security; and
- (b) Protect the state from activities of agents of foreign powers and from actions of persons intended to overthrow or undermine democracy by political, industrial or violent means (Ibid.:Section 5 [2]).

National Security Services work hand in hand with other security agencies and share any information of interest with the relevant institutions for appropriate action.

3.3 *Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS)*

A strange observation during this chapter's research stage was the scarcity of documented information relating to the history of the Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS). This necessitated an interview with some of the senior officials to complement the few sources obtained. The following is a summary of the history of LCS. The summary is a combination of primary data obtained during the interviews, as well as secondary data obtained from a few documented sources.

The now LCS is part of colonial history and was then known as Prisons Service (Basutoland Prison Proclamation, 1957:1). Until 1957 the Prisons Service was a department of the police service. Interesting to note is that the recruits who were to become prison officers underwent the normal police training and would only be deployed to the prison service on the day of pass-out. Through the Basutoland Prison Proclamation, 1957, the prisons and other institutions for offenders and related matters came to be independently regulated (Ibid.). Together with other members of the country's armed forces, the prison's personnel came to be regulated through the Public Service Order. This remained the case until 1995, when the Public Service Order was repealed and replaced by the current Public Service Act that separated members of the armed forces from the public service in terms of Section 137 of the Lesotho Constitution. In 2004 Section 149 of the Constitution of Lesotho was amended to provide for the change of name from Lesotho Prisons Service to Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) (Fifth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2004). With this amendment also the head of the Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) ceased to be called Director of Prison. It was now to be referred to as the Commissioner of Correctional Services (Ibid.).

3.4 Lesotho Defence Force (LDF)

Lesotho only came to establish an army in 1979 – 13 years after independence. Providing a brief background of the army in Lesotho, Makoa (1998:17) writes that:

the Lesotho Mounted Police (LMP) performed a dual role, acting as a law enforcement organ and a military unit until 1979 when the Prime Minister at the time, Leabua Jonathan, forged the Lesotho Para-Military Force (LPF) out of what was the LMP's riot squad, the Police Mobile Unit (PMU), in response to attacks by the South African-backed Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) formed by the exiles of the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP).

The LPF became the Royal Lesotho Defence Force (RLDF) after the overthrow of Jonathan in January 1986. The inclusion of "Royal" in the name of the army symbolised the collaboration of the army and the monarchy in the few years of the military junta. The army was further renamed the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) after returning to democratic rule following the 1993 elections.

The primary role of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) is to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lesotho and uphold the Constitution of Lesotho. The secondary roles include:

- Assistance in the preservation of life, health and property;
- Provision and maintenance of essential services;
- Upholding law and order in support of the police as directed by Government;
- Support to State Departments as directed by Government;
- Compliance with international obligations like peacekeeping support operations and regional military cooperation (Ministry of Defence and National Security, 2015; see also the LDF Act 1996).

4 Emergence of party coalitions in Lesotho politics

Party coalitions normally occur when different political parties join together to form a government. This mostly happens when there is no single party with enough seats, as stipulated by constitutions, to form a government. The rationale for the formation of party coalitions can, according to Kadima (2006:5), be understood in terms of office-driven and policy-oriented theories. On the one hand, the “office-driven theories are based on the assumption that the main goal of the political parties is to access power. On the other hand, the assumption on which the policy-oriented theories are based is that party coalitions are justified by policy goals” (Kadima, 2006:5-6).

The emergence of party coalitions in Lesotho is quite a recent phenomenon that came into place in 2007. The 2007 coalitions were, however, different from those that followed in that the former were pre-election in nature while the latter were formed after the announcement of election results. Both sets, however, fitted the classification of the office-driven theories of coalition formation as given by Kadima (2006) above. In an effort to increase their chances of winning the February 2007 polls the two largest contenders, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and the All Basotho Convention (ABC), formed electoral alliances with the smaller National Independent Party (NIP) and Lesotho Workers Party (LWP) respectively. The alliances were designed to allow the bigger partners access to the Proportional Representation (PR) compensatory seats that, in terms of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), are rarely available to parties that win constituencies (Letsie, 2013:77). Eventually, the coalition helped the LCD/NIP coalition to win 82 seats and subsequently the state power in the country's 120-member National Assembly.

4.1 May 2012 elections

Post-election coalitions came to be seen in Lesotho for the first time following the results of the May 2012 elections. For the first time in its electoral history, Lesotho had produced a hung parliament where no single party had garnered the minimum 61 seats – as stipulated by the country's Constitution – to form a government. The two largest contenders, the Democratic Congress (DC) and ABC, had won 48 and 30 seats, respectively (IEC, 2012). The ABC successfully persuaded the LCD – with 26 seats, and the Basotho National Party – with five seats – to join it in a three-party coalition government with a total of 61 seats. Considering the earlier relations between the ABC and LCD leaders, this has frequently been referred to as an “uneasy coalition” (Vhumbunu, 2015:6).

4.2 February 2015 snap elections

The February 2015 snap elections gave birth to the second coalition government in Lesotho. The elections came two years earlier than scheduled in accordance with the national Constitution. The elections were a result of the premature dissolution of the

Eighth Parliament. The early dissolution resulted from the falling-out between the three-parties' leaders that formed a coalition government after the May 2012 elections. The main issue leading to the collapse of the three-party government was Deputy Prime Minister Mothejoa Metsing's accusation that Prime Minister Thabane was running the tripartite coalition like a "one-man show" and making crucial decisions without consulting other partners (Letsie, 2015:88). As will be seen later in the chapter, some of the alleged unilateral decisions concerned the security sector and contributed to the security crisis that this chapter is about.

Twenty-three political parties contested the February 2015 elections (IEC, 2015). The results saw 105 out of 120 seats distributed between three parties, the DC, ABC, and LCD, at the rate of 47, 46 and 12, respectively (Ibid.). Since none of the two largest scorers could form a government on its own, there began horse-trading for the formation of yet another coalition government. Subsequently the new government resulted from a seven-party coalition consisting of "DC [47 seats], LCD [12 seats], Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) [2 seats], Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP) [1 seat], Lesotho People's Congress (LPC) [1 seat], Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) [1 seat], and the National Independent Party (NIP) [1 seat]" (IEC, 2015). Thus the total number of the coalition seats became 65, enough to form a government. The new government was to be led by Pakalitha Mosisili of DC with Mothejoa Metsing of the LCD as his deputy.

4.3 June 2017 elections

The seven-party coalition government did not last long, and the new elections held in June 2017 gave birth to yet another coalition government. When final results were announced it emerged that the ABC and DC had once again dominated with 48 and 30 seats, respectively (IEC, 2017). Even the ABC, with its highest score, had not met the constitutional requirement for forming a government, hence a need for the two parties to seek coalition partners. On 6 June, the ABC announced that it would form a coalition government with the newly-formed Alliance of Democrats (AD), BNP and Reformed Congress of Lesotho (RCL). ABC's Tom Thabane was to be a prime minister while Monyane Moleleki of AD was to be his deputy (EISA, 2017). Together the four political parties had 63 seats in the National Assembly, two more than the 61 required to form a government. Later, two members of parliament defected from DC to AD and increased the ruling coalition seats in the process.

4.4 Coalition government without elections

Like those that came before it, the four-party coalition government did not last and finally collapsed due to the fallout between the two largest parties – ABC and AD – and internal instability within the ABC. In April 2020, the ABC and DC national executive committees announced a coalition that would see the DC replace AD as the second-largest party in

government. Combined, the two parties had 80 seats in parliament, far more than the 61 needed as the minimum for government formation. Despite their large number of seats, both parties roped in their smaller allies, giving the coalition an unassailable advantage. Under the new coalition, former Finance Minister Moeketsi Majoro replaced Thabane as the new Prime Minister. Thabane's ouster was a result of the factional fighting within his party as well as a condition by the DC for the establishment of the new coalition.

In this new arrangement, DC leader Mathibeli Mokhothi was to be Deputy Prime Minister. Notable about this shift is that it happened without the need for fresh elections after the parliament voted to strip an incumbent prime minister's power to advise the King to call elections in the event of a loss of a vote of no-confidence. Had it not been for this constitutional amendment, Thabane would have probably resorted to the dissolution of parliament considering the unceremonious way through which he was ousted from power.

5 Lesotho's security crisis: Historical overview

To fully appreciate the danger of having a security crisis, one must understand the functions of the state, to which security is integral. This is captured below:

The essence of the state is the promotion of good life and the creation of political conditions that would enhance the welfare of the citizenry. The state cannot perform the first primary purpose of the state unless maintenance of law and order is achieved. Therefore, internal security is quite an important aspect of national security/development. It was for lack of security that the Hobesian state of nature rendered life brutish, nasty and short (Egbefo & Audu, 2014:179).

The above explanation will be vital in appreciating how a lack of stability in the security sector can hinder the efficient functioning of any state.

Noteworthy about this section is that most of the discussions revolve around the LDF while other security agencies appear sporadically. The LDF has been part of the security crisis since its establishment, while other agencies only came to be involved in recent years. Therefore, the dominance of the LDF in this paper should not be interpreted as a lack of relevance for the other security bodies. The chapter takes a brief overview of the series of events of the security crisis in which security agencies' members got involved. A timeline is drawn from 1993, when Lesotho returned to democracy after 23 years of authoritarian rules until the current year, 2021.

5.1 *Security crisis in the new democratic dispensation*

Despite the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) relinquishing power to the civilian rulers in 1993, the security crisis posed by the army's interference in politics was not dead and buried. After the country's return to civilian rule, the army engaged in various acts, some of which

undermined the democratically elected government of the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). In January 1994, there was a serious security crisis when the country experienced a fifteen-day armed confrontation between two LDF factions. Five soldiers lost their lives in this confrontation (Makoa, 1998:16).

Following a 100% pay rise to the members of parliament LDF members demanded an equal pay hike (Mothibe, 2017:65). The demand did not get overall support in the army and resulted in two factions within the LDF members who ultimately engaged in fierce exchanges of mortar and gunfire. It is easy to infer that the BCP government had used patronage to divide the army. Read in part, the report compiled by Presidents Mugabe and Masire on this crisis shows that the Commander of the Royal Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) “felt that certain Cabinet Ministers had contributed to the current crisis by trying to solicit support from the army” (Mugabe & Masire, 1994:11).

According to Barry (1994), the larger LDF group appeared to owe their allegiance to the opposition Basotho National Party. While the main source seemed to be the demand for the pay rise, some diplomats said the wage demands were a smokescreen for a political power struggle that held the threat of a coup d'état (Ibid.). Matlosa and Pule (2002:52, cited in Mothibe, 2017:63) corroborate this and observe that: “the faction fighting was also about the disagreement within the armed forces as to whether to accept or undermine the authority of the BCP” (see also Pherudi, 2018:120). The warring factions finally agreed to a cease-fire following international mediation. In response, the BCP government awarded the LDF a pay rise of 66% and improved allowances (Mothibe, 2017:65).

In April 1994, a group of soldiers took hostage four government ministers – including Mosisili, who was later to become a long time prime minister – and in one of the skirmishes, the Deputy Prime Minister, Selometsi Baholo was killed. Later in August 1994, the soldiers guarding the Royal Palace reacted heavy-handedly to a demonstration of the BCP sympathisers who had marched to the palace to air their disapproval of King Letsie III's dissolution of the BCP government. The soldiers opened fire on the demonstrators and killed three people in the process (Sejanamane, 1996:66).

Enticed by the LDF fortunes, the Lesotho Mounted Police went on a strike for three weeks in May 1994 demanding a 60% pay increase and, in the process, abducted the acting Minister of Finance. Below is a summary of the reaction of the BCP government to the police strike and its implications.

As the country seemed set to slide into chaos, the government ordered the LDF to quell the mutiny and to arrest all the mutineers. The LDF did as ordered: they stormed the Police Headquarters and Maseru Central Police Station and disarmed all the RLMP members who

were occupying the buildings, barring the two supposed ringleaders, Second Lieutenant Molise and Sergeant Makateng who fled to South Africa. The LDF ended the mutiny, killing two policemen (Makoa, 2010:15).

Later, the government caved in and awarded the LMP a pay rise of 42% and improved allowances (Makoa 1997, cited in Mothibe, 2017:65).

Back to the BCP government/LDF relations, the crisis emanating from the two institutions can be explained mainly in terms of ensuring self-preservation and protection of self-interests by the latter. The protection of institutional interest (financial) can also be used to explain the police strike. When it came to power following its landslide win in 1993 elections, the BCP demonstrated a hostile attitude to the army it perceived as an instrument of its rival and predecessor in government, BNP. This attitude existed despite the fact that the same army had earlier overthrown the BNP and later orchestrated the efforts of bringing the BCP exiles home before the 1993 elections. Senior BCP figures, including Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle consistently made anti-army statements, with Mokhehle saying among the five enemies of democracy in Lesotho was the army (Mothibe, 1999:48). The attitude of the BCP government towards the army created an atmosphere filled with suspicions. The “dominant suspicion was that the army was going to be disbanded and replaced by the Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) at worst or be neutralised at best” (Ibid.:49).

The lack of support of the incumbent civilian government by the army once again became evident during the political crisis that followed the highly disputed 1998 elections. As the opposition alliance challenging Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD)’s electoral victory staged protests outside the Royal Palace urging King Letsie III to dissolve the LCD government, the army did very little to help the police bring the situation under control. LCD was a breakaway party from the BCP and was formed by the very members who displayed hostility towards the LDF, including Mokhehle himself. Army’s failure to assist the police is noted by Mothibe (1999:57) when he writes that:

during the unfolding of this political saga, members of the military were visible in and around Maseru presumably with the purpose of keeping law and order. As things turned violent as a result of forced stay-aways and clashes between the protesters and supporters of the government, members of the military hardly ever intervened.

The army’s sympathy for the protestors against the LCD government was not only limited to failure to assist the police to disperse them. In some instances, the army obstructed the police’s efforts to disperse what had now become illegal protests and gatherings. In one of such cases on the 3rd September (1998), when the police attempted to disperse the opposition members camped at the Palace gates, automatic gunfire was exchanged with members of the LDF on duty at the Palace (Ibid., 1999:59). This clearly signalled an inter-agency security crisis. The protestors were finally dispersed when the South African

National Defence Force (SANDF) entered Lesotho on the dawn of the 22nd September to “prevent anarchy and restore order” (Vhumbunu, 2015:5). The very first casualties of the SANDF intervention were the 16 LDF members guarding the Lesotho Highlands Water Development Authority’s (LHWDA) Katse Dam (Makoa, 1999:84). Further chaos and destruction that followed this military intervention is well documented in Lesotho’s political literature. Without a doubt the events of 1998 reflected the greatest security crisis in Lesotho’s history.

As briefly highlighted above, incidents of security crisis discussed above can mostly be explained in terms of institutional interests. Through their demands, the soldiers and police officers were fighting for financial gains. But most importantly, the LDF was fighting for a continued survival amid the threat posed by the hostile governments of BCP and its successor, LCD. The hostility between the BCP government and the army derived from the latter’s politicisation during the BNP rule. Matlosa and Pule (2001:65) take note of this fact when they write that: “as an institution of state, the Lesotho military has always been marred by controversy and steeped in intrigue. Its controversy spans from its politicisation and use by incumbent leaders as an instrument not only to ward off external threat, but also to emasculate internal opposition”. The internal opposition, in this case, being the BCP itself.

5.2 Security crisis in the era of political party coalitions

As noted earlier in this chapter, the first decade of the 21st century saw the end of Lesotho’s single-party rule. However, this shift did not bring any positive results as far as the security situation was concerned. Lesotho continued to go from one security crisis to another. The persistent security crisis mainly derived from the security agencies’ continued politicisation, as partly discussed in the previous paragraph. To reiterate, much as the effects of this politicisation contributed to the security crisis after 2012, the actual politicisation gained momentum earlier. Therefore, it is befitting to discuss how this phenomenon manifested before we see its contribution to the political crisis in the current era of political party coalitions.

5.2.1 Appointment of heads of security sector agencies by the Prime Minister

The politicisation of the state institutions that had started during the BNP era took a ‘turn for the worse’ when the parliament passed legislations that gave political control of the security sector institutions (’Nyane, 2017:94). With these legislations, the incumbent prime minister got the powers to appoint and remove heads of the security agencies from office. This marked a departure from the earlier practice where such appointments and removals were the Defence Commission’s responsibility as stipulated in the Constitution

of Lesotho. The Defence Commission consisted of (a) the Prime Minister as Chairman; (b) the Commander of the Defence Force; (c) the Commissioner of Police; (d) the Director of the National Security Service; (e) the Assistant Commissioner of Police; (f) the Deputy Director of the National Security Service; and (g) the Deputy Commander of the Defence Force” (Constitution of Lesotho, Section 145 [1]). In relation to the appointment or removal of the heads of the security agencies, or any member of the Commission other than the Prime Minister, Section 145[3] of the Constitution directed that the member concerned would not take part in the respective deliberations of the Defence Commission.

These Acts giving incumbent prime ministers extra powers include the Lesotho Defence Force Act, 1996; Police Service Act, 1998; National Security Act, 1998; Lesotho Correctional Services Act, 2016. Focusing specifically on the army and commenting on the impact of the new powers to prime ministers 'Nyane (2017:94) observes that: “the new regime of the civilian-military relations enhanced the civilian control of the army and forthrightly designated the Prime Minister as the commander-in-chief of the army”.

The exercise of powers of appointment and removal of heads of the security agencies (by the incumbent prime minister) has proved to be the main catalyst for the contemporary security crisis. All the heads of the security agencies who different prime ministers appointed have in one way or another, rightly or wrongly, been associated with various political parties, something highly detrimental to democratic rule. For instance, former LDF commanders Tlali Kamoli and Maaparankoe Mahao have been viewed by many people as associated with the DC/LCD and ABC, respectively. Both were appointed under somewhat controversial circumstances. On the one hand, Kamoli was appointed and promoted from the rank of Major General to Lieutenant-General by DC leader Mosisili in 2012, just three months before the national elections. The political strangeness of this appointment is that Mosisili's LCD was perfectly aware that an election was looming; the appointment should have, at least, waited until a new government was installed after elections (Matlosa, 2017:142).

On the other hand, Mahao was hurriedly appointed and promoted from Brigadier to Lieutenant-General by Thabane of the ABC in August 2014. This followed the firing of Kamoli, whose relations with Thabane had soured. Explaining the interplay of party politics in the appointments of the army commanders, Southhall (2017:3) writes that:

Mosisili had sought to shore up his increasingly fragile political position through the support of the army. Thabane had sought to counter this by replacing Mosisili's appointment of Lieutenant-General Tlali Kamoli as Commander by Lieutenant-General Maaparankoe Mahao.

Upon returning to office following the 2015 elections, Mosisili terminated Mahao's appointment as the Commander of LDF and demoted him to Brigadier. He then re-appointed Kamoli, Commander of the LDF and backdated his appointment to the day

he was dismissed. According to Pherudi (2018:123), Mosisili's re-appointment of Kamoli intensified a CMR regime characterised by the politicisation of the military and the militarisation of politics.

Similarly, Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS) former and current commissioners have also been seen to be affiliated to certain political parties. Former Commissioner Khothatso Tsooana was always seen as being the "ABC commissioner" after being appointed by Thabane in 2012. Tsooana was fired by Mosisili upon the latter's return to government in 2015. He was replaced by Molahlehi Letsoepa who, like all his predecessors, carried a political tag as he was perceived as a DC man. Similarly, the incumbent Commissioner, Holomo Molibeli, has also been labelled an ABC man. Thabane also appointed him upon return to State House in 2017.

National Security Services have also not been spared this controversy. Opposition parties have, on a number of occasions, complained about its incumbent Director Pheello Ralenkoane's suitability for the post arguing he is an active member of the BNP (*The Post*, 2021). The party has since 2012 been a reliable coalition partner of ABC. Ralenkoane was appointed for the first time by Thabane in July 2017, and his contract was renewed for a further three years in January 2021. His predecessor Tumo Lekhooa – an army colonel – had been appointed by Mosisili and seconded from the army to the NSS in what many saw as Mosisili's attempt to have complete control over the security establishments. Lekhooa was a close ally of LDF's Kamoli.

The Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) has seen a similar trend of politically motivated appointments and removals. Former Commissioner 'Matefo Makhalemele, who was seen as pro-LCD, was in June 2017 fired by Thabane when the LCD and its 2015 government coalition partners made way for the new ABC-led coalition government. Thabang Mothepu replaced her under circumstances that could only be described as odd and controversial. Mothepu "was not the most senior officer. He leapfrogged two ranks into commissioner's office; ...was on special leave (a punishment) for the alleged release of some prisoners" (*The Post*, 2020). Mothepu was highly associated with the leader of the Alliance of Democrats (AD), Monyane Moleleki. The two originate from Machache. AD was the second-largest party in the new coalition government. Mothepu has since been fired a few weeks after DC replaced the AD in yet another ABC-led coalition government.

5.2.2 Politically motivated recruitment spreads to the lower ranks

With party politics having influence in the heads of the security forces' appointment, there was no doubt the same influence would trickle down to the lower echelons. Politically motivated recruitment of security personnel eventually trickled to the lower divisions of the agencies. In recent years there have been reports of corruption where recruitment into

the security agencies is based on political party affiliations. This points to a recipe for a disaster as security personnel need to be politically impartial. The following are just three examples of such numerous cases of corruption. Upon breaking away from DC and forming his party in 2017, AD leader Moleleki admitted to having been part of the corrupt act of enlisting 250 police recruits from the seven parties (in the DC-led coalition government) for employment into the police service. He pleaded:

I am one of the people within government that made 22 000 young men and women of this country to wait for long hours in the sun with hope they would get jobs when we knew we already had our people listed somewhere for the police jobs.... but, we together with Ntate Mosisili had already divided the vacancies among ourselves to say DC was going to get 181, LCD 45, and so on ... (Ntsukunyane, 2017).

Moleleki further stated that there were 100 vacancies at the Lesotho Correctional Services (LSC) and those too were divided among the parties in government (Ibid.). In 2018 77 officers hired during the Mosisili-led seven-party coalition government were dismissed from the NSS because their hiring was “irregular” (Tefo, 2018). Opposition parties are crying foul that the current group of police recruits have been enlisted on the basis of their affiliation to the ABC. For instance, AD alleges that from the 25 recruits from Thaba-Tseka district, 19 are from Minister Senauoane’s Thaba-tseka number 74 constituency while the other six come from the district’s remaining four constituencies. Senauoane is the Minister of Police and ABC MP for Thaba-tseka number 74 Constituency.

6 Implications on the security situation

There is a chronicle of security instability incidents that are directly linked to the competition over the security agencies by political parties, particularly those who have at one time or another been in coalition governments. Thus, the use of security agencies in Lesotho goes beyond what Thomas and Mazrui (1992:160) have called the repression of the “enemy within”. In this context, the state controls the security agencies and uses them to repress other institutions it competes with. On the contrary, in the Lesotho context, the state itself is divided between various coalescing parties that all compete over security agencies that they use to repress one another. Thus the enemy is not only within the country but within the government itself. The following examples illustrate this point.

When cracks began to widen between the post-2012 election’s coalition government partners ABC and LCD, Prime Minister Thabane used his constitutional powers in October 2014 and dismissed Selibe Mochoboroane of LCD from his position as the Minister of Communications, Science and Technology. Mochoboroane’s leader Mothejoa Metsing rejected the dismissal on the grounds that he was not consulted. Enjoying the support of his leader, Mochoboroane refused to vacate his office. Under normal circumstances, the army

was supposed to have withdrawn Mochoboroane's security personnel immediately after his dismissal was announced. However, this was not the case as its Commander Kamoli had fallen out of favour with Thabane and was enjoying a cordial relationship with Metsing.

With the army on his side, Mochoboroane defied Thabane and the latter remained helpless. Thabane's conundrum can also be explained in terms of the ministerial allocations in his cabinet. The Minister of Defence was Metsing's deputy in the LCD Tseliso Mokhosi. The hostility between Thabane and LCD leadership implied that despite him being "commander-in-chief" ('Nyane, 2017:94) Thabane competed for the control of the army with Mokhosi. Section 12 of the Defence Force Act of 1996 rendered the Commander of the army answerable to the minister on all matters under his charge in the day-to-day discharge of his duties (Ibid.:95).

The show-down between Prime Minister Thabane and Kamoli reached a climax when on 29 August 2014 Kamoli was fired by the King through the Legal Notice No. 64 of 2014, on the advice of the Prime Minister as the Lesotho Constitution stipulates. With the same legal notice, Brigadier Maaparankoe Mahao was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General and appointed the new Commander of the LDF. However, Kamoli resisted dismissal and forcefully remained in office. Despite his appointment, Mahao never physically occupied the office. Mosisili and Metsing publicly denounced the dismissal of Kamoli and "supported his unconstitutional refusal to leave office" (Sejanamene, 2016:1). Noteworthy about the duo's denouncement of Kamoli's dismissal is that Metsing was part of the government, yet he publicly denounced his leader's action. The undue support of Kamoli by Mosisili and Metsing gave credence to Pherudi's (2018:123) assertion that in Lesotho, "the politicians and army officers supported and protected each other to entrench their stay in power".

Deputy Prime Minister Metsing's support for Kamoli's unconstitutional act was a clear ingredient of further conflict in the already divided army. One faction, including the Special Forces and Military Intelligence, supported Kamoli, and another in support of Mahao (Matlosa, 2017:148). Refusal by Kamoli to leave office had implications beyond the security crisis. Kamoli had effectively defied a civilian order, which is one of the cardinal principles of the civilian-military relations in a democratic setting marked by constitutionalism and the rule of law (Matlosa, 2017:144).

On 30 August 2014, the army stormed Prime Minister Thabane's official residence in what many local commentators and the international community almost unanimously labelled an attempted coup. Numerous international organisations and the international community expressed concern and distaste over this coup. Notable among them were the United States of America, the United Nations and the Commonwealth that all called for the respect of the rule of law and upholding of democracy (Vhumbunu, 2015:7). However, on the night of the State House's attack, the soldiers found that Thabane had been tipped off of their plans

beforehand and had subsequently fled to South Africa. Thabane came back to Lesotho days later under the guard of the South African security personnel and remained under their guard – against his country's armed forces – until he vacated office following the 2015 snap elections. This was not only absurd but also a mockery of the very premiership of Thabane.

On the same night of the State House attacks, the army launched a midnight operation on three main police stations in the capital Maseru. The army and the police were politicised, and the factions had emerged, with Thabane backed by the police and his rival Metsing having the support of the army (Vhumbunu, 2015:3). The army operations on the police stations resulted in a shootout between the army and police and left one police officer dead and several injured. The army claimed their raiding of the police stations was meant “to confiscate firearms the police were about to give to ABC youths, which (sic) go by the name Under The Tree Army” (Mohloboli, 2014). This marked a clear link of the security crisis to political parties in the coalition government. The link is also marked by Former LMPS Commissioner Khothatso Tsooana's allegation that members of the LDF who raided three Maseru police stations were looking for the dockets relating to the corruption trial of the then Deputy Prime Mothejoa Metsing (Mohloboli, 2014).

Metsing's address to his supporters after the announcement of the 2017 elections result also gave credence to the claims of a dangerous relationship between the army and the LCD. He claimed they had to protect the members of the army from Thabane's arrest. He told his followers they had ‘been in government because of the soldiers who had put their “necks on the block” for them. The events of 30 August 2014 were followed by a litany of confrontations between the army and the police. Apart from the State House and the police stations, the army attacked the home of the newly-appointed Commander Lieutenant-General Mahao. Although Mahao survived what was clearly an assassination attempt, considerable damage was done to his property by army's bullets.

As seen in previous sections, Mosisili reinstated Kamoli as LDF Commander upon returning to power in 2015. Thabane, together with his partners in the previous coalition government, namely Maseribane (BNP) and Rant'so (RCL), subsequently fled the country fearing for their lives because they believed Kamoli would be vengeful for his earlier dismissal. This goes to reflect the deep intertwine between party politics and the conflict within the security sector. With the coming back of Kamoli, Mahao's August 2014 survival proved to be temporary as his subordinates finally assassinated him on 25 June 2015. The LDF claimed the intention was to arrest him for his alleged involvement in a mutiny plot within the army (SADC Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Brigadier Maaparankoe in Mahao, 2015:6). It is well documented how Mahao's assassination attracted reaction from the international community, particularly SADC.

In yet another occasion that marked its seemingly endless intervention in Lesotho SADC established a Commission of inquiry whose mandate was to investigate the circumstances surrounding the assassination of Brigadier (sic) Mahao. Among others, this Commission found that Lesotho's security sector was heavily politicised with LMPS being largely ABC supporters while the army leadership was also heavily active in politics with Kamoli having participated in meetings at Mosisili's residence in Roma (SADC Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Brigadier Maaparankoe in Mahao, 2015:Section 126). Similar observations pertaining to the politicisation of the security agencies had previously been made by various commissions and missions. For instance, earlier in 2015, the AU Election Observation Mission, headed by former Kenyan prime minister Raila Odinga, noted that: "the two security agencies [the Lesotho army and the police] are reported to be politicised and were caught up in tensions between coalition government partners" (Vhumbunu, 2015:10)

Despite Mosisili's resistance, Kamoli was ultimately fired in 2017 following pressure from the international community. He was replaced by Lieutenant-General Khoantle Motsomotso, who also came to be cold-bloodedly killed by the pro-Kamoli faction of the LDF. Ironically, his assailants, Colonel Tefo Hashatsi of the Special Forces and Brigadier Bulane Sechele, who led the operation in which Mahao was killed, were also killed shortly after murdering Motsomotso. The duo accused Motsomotso of "selling them out" by agreeing to hand the army suspects to the police. Lieutenant-General Motsomotso's murder once again exposed Lesotho to external supervision when SADC deployed a standby force to "quell any possible coup attempt by disgruntled soldiers and provide security during the implementation of SADC-mandated multi-sectoral reforms which encompass the military" (Staff Reporters, 2017).

In a manner that showed the seriousness of the hostility between the army and the police, Kamoli had, during his last days in office, consistently refused to hand soldiers suspected of criminal acts to the police as is the normal practice. Interestingly, once out of office, Kamoli himself complied with the summoning and handed himself over to the same police he earlier refused to hand suspects over to. He was subsequently arrested and had a litany of cases opened against him. He remains in custody, awaiting the finalisation of his cases. Kamoli faces a treason charge in connection with 30 August 2014 coup attempt against the first government of Thabane. Notable about this case is that two former LCD leaders, Metsing and Mochoboroane, are tried alongside Kamoli and other soldiers. This also shows the dangerous level at which the politicians had infiltrated the security agencies, especially the army.

The international community's intervention appears to have paid some dividends as there is currently relative stability and a sense of professionalism in the army. However, the entrenched politicisation is yet to be eradicated. In February 2021, the incumbent

Commander Lieutenant-General Mojalefa Letsoela warned the army parade “the army command will not hesitate to discipline errant soldiers who dabble in politics and undermine civilian authority” (Kabi, 2021:5). There remain sporadic incidents of instability in other security agencies, particularly police. These are, however, not that serious and do not pose as serious a crisis as those within the army. There is some hope that the on-going multi-sectoral reforms, including security reforms, will find a lasting solution and end the detrimental security crisis that has been synonymous with the country’s history.

7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the security agencies’ involvement in the incidents of instability that translated into a security crisis in Lesotho. The discussions have covered the period starting from 1993 when Lesotho returned to a democratic rule, to February 2021. The focus has been on the four components of the security sector: the Lesotho Mounted Police, Lesotho Defence Force (LDF), National Security Services, and the Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS). While all the security agencies have got involved in the crisis at one point, the army appears consistently at the centre of the crisis. The main explanation for the security agencies’ unenviable involvement in the security crisis is the politicisation of these agencies. While the security agencies’ politicisation started during the BNP era, it worsened in the post-1993 era when parliament passed legislation that gave control of the security agencies to incumbent prime ministers.

The persistent security crisis in Lesotho has manifested itself in inter-agency and intra-agency confrontations, sometimes armed, and between the security agencies and incumbent civilian governments. From time to time, the resultant crisis attracted the attention of the international community, particularly SADC, and ultimately rendered Lesotho the “bad boy” of this organisation as Lesotho is usually a prominent conflict agenda item at SADC summits and extraordinary summits. Contrary to the conventional role of the armed forces, protecting their states, the Lesotho army has at various times had confrontation with the very government it is meant to protect. In the immediate post-1993 era, the IDF’s confrontation with the government was an attempt to protect institutional interests, particularly self-preservation. The army’s survival was threatened by the hostile BCP government that harboured ambitions to dissolve the army, or at least neutralise it by incorporating members of its erstwhile military wing into the army. The BCP had always viewed the LDF as the “BNP army” as opposed to the state army.

The passing of the legislation that gave the incumbent prime ministers powers to appoint and dismiss heads of the security agencies allowed for the politicisation of other security agencies. The emergence of coalition governments starting from 2012 somehow changed the nature of the security crisis. While inter- and intra-agencies confrontations remain

almost the same, the confrontation between the security agencies and the civilian rulers took another turn. This is mainly because what appeared to be a threat of dissolution or at least neutralisation of the army by the BCP and LCD administrations, no longer exists. The parties in coalition governments compete over the security agencies and render them part of their conflicts. As a result, the security agencies are at one point or another in bed with certain parties in government, or those that have earlier been. In the process, they have confrontations with the rival parties. With the new developments, security agencies cease to be used to suppress the “enemy within” the country (opposition parties) – as is the case in most African countries – but now suppress the enemy “within” the government itself. The country remains hopeful that the on-going multi-sectoral reforms will dawn a new era and solve the persistent security crisis.

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