


**Assessment of Challenges of Governance and Democratic Consolidation in Lesotho, 1993-2022**

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<p>Journal Volume &amp; Issue: Vol. 5, No. 2 (August 2024) pp. 3 – 26</p> <p>Received: 29 October, 2023 Revised: 30 July, 2024 Accepted: 25 August, 2024 Published: 31 August, 2024</p>  <p>Copyright:©2024 by Jimma University, Ethiopia. Under Open Access Journal, the creative common attribute 4.0 international license permits any interested person to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided that the original work and source is appropriately cited.</p>	<p><i>The Kingdom of Lesotho is beset by multiple challenges that hinder a full process of democratic consolidation. Like many other African countries, Lesotho is trapped in a myriad of challenges, including the politicization of independent institutions, such as the judiciary and security institutions, that contribute to perennial political instabilities and rampant corruption. Qualitative research was used to examine the challenges of democratic consolidation in Lesotho from the year 1993 to 2022. This paper, historically, using secondary data, uncovers the factors that continue to impede democratic consolidation in Lesotho from the period of fragile democracy in 1993 to the present unstable coalition governments. The central contention in the paper is that ever since Lesotho was declared a democratic state in 1993, the democratization process has been slow as there have been perpetual instabilities, lack of service delivery such as infrastructure, unemployment, and high rates of nepotism in the public sector that undermine sustainable democracy. Recommendations are that the political rights of citizens should be increased, civil society should be empowered, and the military should be put under civil control.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Governance, Democratic Consolidation, Civil Society, Lesotho, Africa</p>
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### **Introduction**

Diamond (1999) defines democratic consolidation as the process of achieving broad and deep legitimization, such that all significant actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for society. He identified three generic tasks that he believes all new and fragile democracies must handle if they are to become consolidated,

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including deepening democracy, political institutionalization, and regime performance. Schedler (1997) opines that "democratic consolidation" may mean expected regime stability whereby democracy is consolidated as soon as we reach the conclusion that its probability of breakdown is very low or its probability of survival is very high. In other words, democratic consolidation "reaches closure" when all relevant observers – including "major political actors," "the public at large," and the academic experts – "expect the democratic regime to last well into the foreseeable future" (Valenzuela, 1992, p.70). Democratic consolidation has been variedly reviewed based on the language of probability of risks, dangers, chances, and uncertainties. It has been rated with diminishing "risks of an authoritarian regression" (O'Donnell, 1992, p. 17), subsiding "threats of destabilization" (Mainwaring *et al.*, 1992, p. 3), decreasing "success chances of authoritarian involutions" (Kasapović & Nohlen, 1996, p. 219), a rising "likelihood" of military acquiescence (Weiner, 1987, p. 864), a reduced "probability of breakdown" (Waldrauch, 1996, p. 65), and dissolving "uncertainties" about the continuity of the democratic game (Przeworski, 1991; Schmitter 1988, p. 6; Whitehead 1989, p. 79). However, clear probabilistic connotations are visible as well in terms such as "resilience" (Gunther *et al.*, 1995, p. 21), "viability" (Sunkel, 1995), "crisis-resistance" (see Merkel 1996, p. 35), or "sustainability" (Przeworski, 1996) that suggest that a "consolidated" democracy should be able (in all probability) to manage pending challenges, survive erupting crises, and adapt to changing circumstances. This paper explains how Lesotho's democracy has been consolidated based on the evolution of different types of governments in Lesotho and how they have changed from the time the country gained independence from Great Britain up to the period when the country adopted a democratic form of governance.

The agents or actors of democratic consolidation include civil society organizations, the political parties, the media, and so on, and the different structural factors or determinants of democratic consolidation, which include the economic conditions (particularly the level of development and poverty), the political culture and institutions of the new democracies categorize two perspectives in the study of democratic consolidation (Ratsimbaharison, 2016). (Svolik, 2008) argues that the level of economic development, the type of democratic executive, and the type of authoritarian past determine the consolidation of a democracy. The development of any society is dependent on whether its government and/or governance is 'good' or 'democratic', as democratic good governance provides a platform for rapid changes in the socio-economic and political status

of the nations and their citizenry (Oni, 2014). Democratic consolidation is eminent when a transition to democracy has taken place as Linz and Stepan (1996, p.15) define a consolidated democracy as 'a political regime in which democracy, as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives', has become in a phrase, 'the only game in town' (Linz & Stepan, 1996; p.15). This phrase reflects actions consonance with adapting governance to achieve democratic aims behaviourally, attitudinally, and through constitutional dimensions. Linz and Stepan (1996) highlight that a democratic regime is consolidated behaviourally when no significant actor (national, social, political, economic, institutional) will attempt to achieve its objectives either through the creation of a non-democratic regime or attempting to break off from the existing democratic community. Attitudinally, democracy is said to be consolidated when an overwhelming majority of public opinion is consistently supportive of democratic procedures, processes, and institutions, which is the only appropriate method of conducting governance and public affairs. Democratic consolidation involves the diffusion of democratic values, civilian supremacy over the military, stabilization of electoral rules, the decentralization of state power, judicial reform, the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization (Schedler, 1998).

### **Research Objective**

This paper presents an assessment of the challenges of governance and democratic consolidation in Lesotho from 1993 to 2022 by posing the following question?

- How has governance influenced democratic consolidation in Lesotho from 1993 to 2022?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Review**

The following concepts were reviewed: democracy, governance, democratization, and democratic consolidation.

#### **Democracy**

Welzel *et al.* (2019) define democracy as a type of government by which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them in elections. To assert this, Abraham Lincoln supports the idea that democracy is a government of the people by the people and for the people. According to Doro (1996), democratic consolidation requires decentralization of power, including more civic education and civil society; he further states that there is a need to

strengthen institutions, including building political parties and election systems. Hailu (2017) points out that the democratization process can only happen where there is political liberation because democratic institutions can only flourish in the context of civil liberty. He further notes that democracy thrives when there is an impartial judiciary, electoral institutions, independent media, rule of law, and civil liberties. Schmitter (1992) explains that democracy is when social relations become values, that is when relations in the society are valued and autonomous that they can be able to resist external changes. This is reinforced by Linz (1996), who explains that there are five specific areas that determine the consolidation of democracy. Firstly, development conditions that allow a free and lively society- civil society must be autonomous at all times. Secondly, there must be an autonomous political society; in this case, political actors must compete against each other for power control. Examples of such institutions involve political parties and elections. Thirdly, the government should practice the rule of law in order to protect individual freedoms. The government must be accountable at all times. Fourthly, there must be a state bureaucracy to protect the rights of citizens and to provide service delivery. Fifthly, there must be an institutionalized economic society. Southall (1999) points out that one of the problems of weak democratic consolidation is a weak civil society that makes democracy vulnerable and narrow to the elite circle and reduces its relevance to the wider African population.

### **Governance**

According to Nabueze (2003), governance is a system of values, principles, and institutions in which the society manages its economic and social affairs through the interaction of the state, civil society, and political affairs. Nabueze (2003) iterates that governance is a system of mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests to work together and mediate their differences to exercise their legal rights and obligations with rules and institutions that set their limits and provide incentives for individual organizations and firms. The World Bank (1998) defines governance as a manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social development. Good governance encompasses all the processes wherein public resources and problems are managed effectively, efficiently, and in response to the critical needs of society (Oni, 2014). Adeyemi (2012) supports that good governance ensures that political, social, and priorities are based on a broad social consensus in societies and ensures that the voices of the marginalized in society, such as the poor, are heard in

decision-making. Good governance is characterized by participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity, efficiency, and accountability (UNDP in Odusanya, 2013). Good governance is a prerequisite to attain democratic consolidation for any new democracy. Governance is the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented (UNESCAP). The elements of good governance include accountability, responsiveness, transparency, and equity.

Accountability is the obligation to render an account for conferred responsibility between those trusted with the responsibility and those who have been entrusted with it, as well as those who expect the responsibility to be fulfilled. Further, public accountability requires public officials to respond to all the requirements of citizens without prejudice (African Development Bank, 2006). Effective democratic forms of governance rely on public participation, accountability, and transparency (UNDP, 1997). Oni (2014) adds that the survival of democracy is positively and strongly tied to the strength of the state in coercively manifesting the properties of statehood. Olaitan (1999) reiterates that the state, through governance processes, becomes an umpire, an arbiter setting the standards and rules of the game to ensure social order. He adds that for the state to assume this position, it must be a creation of the society; that is, the state must evolve from the society and hence should serve the interests of the society since it is set up to perform that role (Olaitan, 1997).

### **Democratization**

Ihonvbere (1996) notes that democratization involves the steady and systematic empowerment of the people, their organization, and communities in a direction that empowers them to dictate, influence, and determine the content and context of politics. Democratization allows the people to incorporate their interests into the institutions and structures of the state, and this makes it possible for public policy to reflect the interests and aspirations of the people. Democratization also makes it possible for politics to reflect the issues close to the people: gender equality, human rights, environmental protection, basic needs, participation in decision-making, accountability of the leadership, expansion of democratic spaces, and the non-appropriation of the voices of the people.

The essence is making new democracies secure, expectancy beyond the short-term, protecting them against regression to authoritarian governance, and building dams against eventual "reverse

waves" (Schedler, 1998, p.91). Oni (2014) supports that democratic consolidation begins with the enthronement of democracy after a free and fair election, and spans through the period when its probability of breakdown is very low or on the other way round, when its probability of survival is very high. There must then be the optimism expressed by major political actors, all relevant observers, and the entire citizenry that the democratic regime can last into a foreseeable future, thereby having the capacity to build dams against what Huntington (1991) would describe as a 'reverse wave.' Therefore, democracy is consolidated when it is made stable, vibrant, efficient, and accountable (Mindzie, 2009).

### **Democratic Consolidation**

Factors that hinder democratic consolidation need to be resorted in order to adapt to democratic principles. Schedler (1998) states that democratic consolidation means the challenges of making democracy secure and making it immune against the threat of authoritarian rule, party building and stabilization of electoral rules, the decentralization of state power, the introduction of the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization. According to Gorokhovskaia (2017), democracy becomes consolidated when political actors accept the legitimacy of democracy and no actor seeks to act outside the democratic institution for both normative and self-interested reasons. Diamond (1999) highlights that consolidation will be impossible if a civil society is not established. This factor, along with other factors, including poor economic conditions and poverty in new democracies, political institutions, and cultures of the new democracies, serve as hindrances to democratic consolidation (Ratsimbaharison, 2016). From his observation, Ihonvbere (1996) noted that though it is true that democracy is spreading like a bushfire throughout Africa, the new pro-democracy movements and political parties have tended to exhibit some common traits: corruption, opportunism, the marginalization of women, concentration in specific regions or urban centers, personalization of politics, confusion, fragmentation, excessive ambition and focus on power, and an unabashed acceptance and consumption of conservative, monetarist programs of IMF and World Bank (Ihonvbere, 1996). He further criticized that the new democracies operate and sound much like the parties of the 1960s as they develop no new arguments and programs beyond a superficial clamor for democracy; they hardly cultivate new constituencies and communities, and without exception, they seek to validate their democratic credentials, not by critically inserting themselves in local

communities and organizations, but by courting foreign foundations, agencies, governments, and donors.

African Voices (1996) report supports factors that challenged democratic consolidation in Africa highlighting challenges such as military opportunism; ethnic conflict; uneven allocation of resources; identification of country resources (political leaders, traditional institutions, economic opportunities with high employment capacity); manipulative uses of political power such as changing the rule of the game to disqualify potential opponents; recognition of the danger of the concept of democracy being devalued by "show democracies" that many African countries are constructing; that is there is a great risks that Africans will come to view democracy as a negative development if their countries do not become true democracies; lack of accountability with a fragile press; political and financial domination by regimes based on historical origins of African state; economic crisis; lack of consensus over a broad outline of economic policy which is further complicated in the context of elections and consequent difficulty of selling economic reform to the public; the persistence of patrimonial rule despite economic and political liberalization; insecurities in the relationship between the elected governments and NGOs (African Voices, 1996).

Arinze (2013) highlights regional cross-border instability stemming from central African region's countries like (Uganda, Sudan, and Central Africa Republic) and the spillover effect on the limited capacity of their governments to effectively control substantial portions of their territory, combined with perennial intrastate conflicts with a large flow of refugees and internal displacement, creating immense challenges for democratic change in the DRC; economic impact; external dimension as official external support for the democratization process in the DRC has waned over the years; a dejected electorate and splintered civil society and corruption as key factors that hamper democratic consolidation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Understanding the challenges faced by new African democracies with similar colonial history, such as Nigeria, accelerates a better appreciation of governance and democratic consolidation in Lesotho. Oni (2014) summarized the challenges of democratic consolidation in Nigeria under six themes including: the 1999 constitution and the legitimacy crisis; electoral process and power transition debacle; rule of law, human rights and constitutionalism; legislative – executive frictions; political parties, internal democracy and leadership selection; economic mismanagement and corruption. Oni and Ozemhoka (2014) lament that the making of the 1999

Nigerian constitution was not people-centered and could be argued that the process was stage-managed as part of the expediency of the time to quickly return power to the civilians. Also, elections were conducted under an unfertile atmosphere because of the absence of enabling conditions for democratic participation, which, of course, is the greatest obstacle to democracy with the government in the Fourth Republic, especially from 1999 to 2007, not based on rules but rather on the whim and caprice of political leaders. The legislature was a premature institution, largely inexperienced at the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999. This was because legislative functions had been scrapped since the military came back in December 1983. Thus, the nation had to wait for another nine years for a new legislative house to be inaugurated. Nigeria's experience with political parties, which dates back to the colonial era, shows that inter and intra-party squabbles are major challenges that are confronting the development of political parties. The long military rule and the attendant poverty, hardship, and unprecedented corruption have brought Nigerians to a hopeless and helpless situation such that the mistakes of the Abdulsalam transition program were never sources of concern. Despite the abundance of human and material deposits in the most populous black nation of the world, the country and its people still wallow in abject poverty, manifesting greatly in high levels of unemployment, falling health and educational standards, and poor economic financing. The lingering poverty problem cannot be dissociated from poor economic management and the absence of transparency and accountability in government. One major challenge that has confronted Nigeria's drive for economic development is the monster called corruption. Government accountability, transparency, and service delivery have been deleteriously affected by corrupt practices, especially among public officeholders.

Thomson (2004), Tar (2010), Ihonvbere (1996), and Ratsimbaharison (2016) cited a lack of credible opposition, weak civil society, weak economies, no separation between state and ruling party, ethnicity, religion, and nepotism, the potential of military intervention, weak democratic political culture, decentralization and devolving power to local governments, lack of regime change (incumbency continuum), putting military under civilian control, regime performance, increasing political rights and civil liberties, strengthening the bureaucracy and institutions of government (political parties, legislatures and electoral system) as challenges to effective democratic consolidation.

## **Materials and Methods**



This study aims to unpack the challenges facing governance and democracy in the Kingdom of Lesotho. The study made use of the qualitative approach using the historical design by studying secondary data collected from previous literature, documents, country status reports, multiple internet resources, the constitution, and newspapers. The historical design was appropriate as it facilitated the collection and evaluation of past occurrences on Lesotho's governance from 1993 to 2022 by reviewing past documentation. Hence, the researchers could not create data but limited to already available data to describe the situation (Amin, 2005).

### **Findings**

The end of the Cold War resulted in an era of political and social change for most African countries as they diverted from military rule to democracy. In this case, Lesotho is not an exception, as the authoritarian rule finally dissolved following the advent of democracy. (Matlosa,1998). Several factors led to the decline of the authoritarian rule in Lesotho and eventually led to the multiparty system. The findings of this paper reveal that despite adopting the political system of democracy, Lesotho has not been an exception to the various challenges of democratic consolidation, as highlighted by new African democracies in the literature. Prior to colonization in Africa, African societies lived through the governance of Kings and chiefdoms that subjugated serfs, who were mostly farmers and peasants. Some authors like Achebe (2002), Tyson (2006), and Ismail (2023) argue that the introduction of colonialism destroyed indigenous democratic values and institutions without building stable replacements. Some argue that colonialism disrupted traditional African practices, such as African family lives that were based on equality, freedom, and unity, by introducing the authoritarian and centralized nature of colonialism in Africa.

The democratization process in Africa started in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bates (2010) contends that the following political independence in Africa, the period of democratization in Africa was signified by open political competitions, political expressions, and public assembly; governments sought to mobilize political power to promote economic development. However, scholars have put forth arguments about the feasibility of democracy in Africa. Some critics, such as Claude Ake, in his book titled “The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, argue that democracy in Africa is not really democratic in Africa because it only gives power to the few while the masses remain alienated from politics and power. He further contends

that democracy is a product of history that is promoted by the West in Africa and is not suitable for the socio-economic realities of Africa (Mawere & Mwanaka, 2015).

Lesotho was formally a British protectorate but gained independence from Britain in October 1966. According to (Matlosa,1998), between 1966 and 1970, Lesotho experienced brief political stability, with the ruling party co-existing with other parties. However, from 1970 to 1986, an era of authoritarian rule was ushered in as the ruling party, the Basotho National Party(BNP), took the reins. Matlosa (1998) further expounds that the constitution was suspended and only one party existed. Between 1986 and 1993, the country was firmly under the military rule. The military later retired to the barracks in 1993, and the general elections were held in the same year.

Matlosa (1998) attests that the fragile democracy period started in 1993, with Lesotho holding the general elections that resulted in the victory of the Basotho Congress Party (BCP). 1993 was the dawn of democracy, as a multiparty system was introduced and elections were held. Shale and Matlosa (2008) state that the outcome of the 1993 elections revealed that the Basotho Congress Party was victorious in the elections, with a landslide victory in 65 constituencies.

Although Lesotho managed to return to democratic rule, many challenges were still confronted during the full democratization process. Politically, the period of fragile democracy in Lesotho was seen to be faced with a myriad of governance challenges. Chelete (2005) opines that the period of the fragile democracy in Lesotho was faced with conflicts and political instabilities as the police, the military, and the monarchy clashed. Furthermore, there were internal conflicts within the ruling party of the Basotho Congress Party. The military was also dabbling in politics during this time, which resulted in the King dissolving the elected government with the assistance of the army. Southall (1999) added that there were three main challenges in Basotho Congress Party (BCP) rule: the Basotho National Party (BNP), the military, and the monarchy, which ultimately led the King to depose the government in 1994.

Lesotho falls in the category of countries with the lowest human development indices; it has an undeveloped and weak economy with a paltry resource endowment. In addition, poverty and unemployment are high. Lesotho depends on external factors such as foreign aid, revenue from the South African Customs Union, and remittances of migrant labor, which have been steadily declining over the years (Matlosa, 2017). Prasad (2014) states that democracy encompasses

competitive elections and multiparty systems. Progressive democracies depend on the effectiveness of political parties and progressive policies that meet the needs of the voters. Active opposition parties are needed, and independent institutions such as the judiciary and an effective parliament allow the participation of citizens where freedom of speech is allowed, as this will bring accountability from the government. According to Lincoln (1863), democracy refers to the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. However, contemporary scholars argue that democracy should be defined in terms of the procedures that constitute a government and its sources of authority. Additionally, Schmitter (1992) states that most political scientists describe democracy as simply a political system that holds free and fair contested elections on a regular basis with universal and non-universal adult suffrage.

Dahl (1982) highlights that for a country to be classified as democratic, it must meet at least the following conditions: firstly, the constitution has to vest elected officials with the powers to have control over the government's decisions on a policy. Secondly, there has to be free and fair elections to elect officials, the right to run for electives should be reserved for all adults, and there has to be freedom of speech and association, as well as the right to alternative sources of information. Other scholars like Przeworski (1999) describe democracy as the type of regime in which the governors are elected by citizens through meaningful elections. Bozonelos *et al.* (2022) also define democracy as the government system in which the supreme power of government is vested in the people. Malephane (2015) notes that between 2000 and 2012, citizen demand for democracy and the perceived supply of democracy increased in Lesotho. This increase is paralleled by increased levels of trust in important governance institutions. Despite steps toward the consolidation of democracy in Lesotho, demand for democracy is still relatively low, with a sizeable proportion of the population still not rejecting a one-party state or still saying that, in some instances, non-democratic forms of government may be preferable. Higher levels of trust in institutions (prime minister, courts, police, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and parliament), demand for democracy, and perceived supply of democracy seem to follow elections with greater credibility and less turmoil over results, whereas highly disputed elections (as in 2007) appeared to lower trust, demand, and perceived supply.

### **Unstable Coalition Governments from (2012-2022)**

Democracy in Lesotho experienced a major change in 2012 when the general election results remained inconclusive, with no single political party coming out victorious in the elections; this,

as a result, ushered in a new era of coalition governments in Lesotho (Nyane, 2017). Since the restoration of democracy in 1993, Lesotho has experienced persistent political instabilities and a series of coalition governments that collapsed before the constitutional terms of 5 years. The first coalition government in Lesotho was led by the former Prime Minister, Thomas Thabane. It comprised three political parties: the All Basotho Convention(ABC), the Lesotho Congress for Democracy(LCD), and the Basotho National Party(BNP). The second coalition government was led by Pakalitha Mosisili in 2015-2017, and it compromised seven political parties. The third coalition government was from 2017-2020. The fourth coalition government lasted for only two years, from 2020 to 2022 (Pherudi, 2022).

According to Nyane (2017), the era of coalition governments in Lesotho faced major constitutional crises that led to their early collapse, and these major challenges were identified in three major areas of the process of formation of the government, sustenance of a coalition, and the executive powers of the office of the Prime Minister. Another pertinent reason identified by Nyane (2017) is that the country transitioned into the era of coalition politics with the same constitutional and legal framework as the single-party majority government, which resulted in more problems that could not sustain the coalition governments. Pherudi (2022) supports the argument that coalition governments all collapsed before their term of 5 years owing to various factors such as political party internal squabbles, lack of discipline, and the meddling of the military in politics. For instance, there was a power struggle between the Prime Minister, Tom Thabane, and the then Army Commander, General Tlali Kamoli, which resulted in political tensions in 2014. All this resulted in a cycle of unfinished ruling terms and snap elections (Pherudi, 2022).

The rule of law is one of the prerequisites of democracy. In any democratic society, citizens must be allowed freedom to express themselves, political parties must compete with each other peacefully, and people must be treated equally before the law (Gay & Mattes, 2003). The constitution of Lesotho guarantees basic civil liberties to its citizens. However, there are many instances where citizen rights and freedoms continue to be oppressed. Notably, women, as the most marginalized group, are still subject to limited freedom, gays and lesbians continue to fight for their rights, there are high incidences of police brutality, and prison conditions remain harsh (Lesotho Country Report, 2014). Kali (2022) established in his study that unions in Lesotho play a significant role in consolidating democracy through diverse activities such as advocacy,

aggregation of interests, and checks and balances. However, their civility and cooperative habits are undermined by Lesotho's irresponsible government. Hence, they resort to social protests in most cases to get the government to respond. Though protests seem effective when offsetting the injustices and violation of people's rights, they open up a Pandora's Box since they lead to loss of life in Lesotho. The security forces in the country often unleash disproportionate force and kill some protesters. They violate civil and political rights on an unprecedented scale. Hence, efforts to consolidate democracy are largely undermined by police and army brutality.

In addition, Ramjathan-Keogh (2015) observed that despite the changing governments, Lesotho continuously faces an array of political crises and lawlessness over many years; the primary indicators include coup d'états, assassinations, and the relentless meddling of the military in politics, which deeply undermines democracy and good governance in Lesotho. Despite the changing governments in the multiparty system, Lesotho is still faced with high poverty rates due to low wages and the government's insufficient financial capacity; people in the rural areas are the most disadvantaged as they are faced with a lack of access to basic services and infrastructure compared to people living in the urban areas. Furthermore, the rising poverty rates and unemployment lead to a massive brain drain as most people leave the country for greener pastures (Lesotho Country Report, 2014).

### **Challenges of Governance and Democratic Consolidation in Lesotho since 1993**

Lesotho is faced with a number of challenges that hinder the full process of democratization. The African Development Bank (2006) indicates that even though Lesotho is committed to strengthening the principles of good governance, democratic consolidation is still confronted with challenges as there are still shortcomings and indicators such as corruption, politicized bureaucracy, military intervention in politics, weak civil society participation and inequalities, poverty and instability of coalition government that can lead the democracy to backslide. Therefore, as a new democracy, Lesotho needs to work hard towards democratic consolidation.

### **Corruption**

Corruption is a challenge facing most countries of the world. It has an avalanche of drastic consequences that devastate a country's development and can lead to economic regression. Corrupt practices may manifest themselves in various forms, such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, fraud, extortion, and favoritism (Akinrinmade *et al.*, 2013). Corruption is notably one

of the causes of underdevelopment as political elites work towards enriching themselves at the expense of the masses who elected them into power (Monyake, 2019).

In Lesotho, corruption sows the seeds of destruction as it damages development progress. Monyake (2020) states that the increased corruption in Lesotho causes a premature collapse of the coalition governments in Lesotho. Some party loyalists believe that it is unfair that jobs are awarded to other parties while they are left excluded, which causes squabbles in the parties. Corruption remains a seed of destruction in Lesotho. According to Mothibe (1998), corruption in Lesotho is experienced in various sectors, including tender awards, public service delivery, allocation of land, and granting of business licenses. Also, corruption is committed by police officers who take bribes. Rakolobe (2019) stipulates that corruption is not just regressive for the economy, but it endangers the process of democratization.

Based on the report by UNODC (2012), Lesotho has legal and institutional frameworks against corruption, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which was signed on 16 September 2005. Other legal frameworks in the constitution include the Prevention of Corruption and Economic Offences Act of 1999. Lesotho has institutions relevant to the fight against corruption, such as the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO), the Lesotho Mounted Police Service, the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Central Bank, and other relevant stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector, and media. However, there are challenges in uprooting corruption as it remains rampant. Some of the challenges include a lack of digital systems to store information, as information is still stored manually. Also, there are no readily available statistics (UNODC, 2012).

### **Politicized bureaucracy**

Lesotho is still faced with problems of politicized public service and nepotism. Rakolobe (2019) supports this by stating that Lesotho adopted the Westminster model of public administration. The Lesotho political system is modeled on Westminster, which was adopted from Great Britain, where the executive authority lies in the King and is exercised by him through the officers or authorities of the government (Lesotho National Assembly, 2015). The king is the constitutional monarch and Head of State who serves a ceremonial role in which recruitment to the public service is supposed to be merit-based. However, this system of recruitment is not followed as the

recruitment of top officers such as principal secretaries is politically motivated and, as a result, breeds politicized public service.

According to Thabane (2017), one of the functions of professionals appointed in public institutions is to provide public services and to offer interventions objectively where necessary. However, if such public servants are politically affiliated, it becomes difficult for those receiving services to believe that their interventions are apolitical. This may result in a revolt that may disturb social order for those who feel they were not fairly treated. Furthermore, when a culture of appointing public servants from a political party, the allegiance entrenches itself, and it may lead to the continuous change of public service personnel as those who come into power may want to fill the positions on their own.

The government of Lesotho embarked on a journey of national reforms from 2019 to 2021 in the domain of security services, parliament, judiciary, media, civil service, constitution, and the economy. The reforms were part of an effort to strengthen the institutions by ensuring separation of powers, promotion of meritocracy, appointment of public officials, and transparency within the public service (BTI Report, 2022). The report further reveals that between 2017 and 2020, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane was exposed for awarding a Chinese man, his adviser Yan Xie, lucrative tenders from the government through corrupt means. Despite efforts to unravel corruption in public service, there are still challenges. Rakolobe (2019) laments that aside from awarding tenders through corrupt means, the police also commit petty corruption, such as taking bribes from taxi drivers.

Another challenge facing the justice system is political influence in the judiciary. According to the BTI Report (2022), some of the challenges include poor salaries paid to judges and lawyers, which make them vulnerable to agreeing to bribes. Secondly, there is a shortage of skills and labor as most lawyers opt to leave for greener pastures in neighboring South Africa or other countries that offer better pay.

### **Military Intervention in Politics**

One of the indicators that the military is interfering in politics is the rampant military coup d'états and conflicts. Cervenka (1987) asserts that the term military rule is a style of governance imposed on people without their consent, and it can be identified by the overthrowing of governments by the military, armed conflicts, and the importation of arms. Mothibe (2017)

laments that the persistent dabbling of the Lesotho military in politics engineers military coups and the toppling of governments. According to Pherudi (2022), Lesotho is still a quasi-democracy in which the military supports some politicians. Hence, regional efforts to quell the conflicts are not very effective. Lesotho continues to have an image of coup d'états and unconstitutional changes of government.

In 2012, when Lesotho was heading towards the general elections, Prime Minister Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili appointed a new Army Chief who was supposedly paying allegiance to him as a leader. This installation of the Army Chief bore much suspicion as the Army Chief was supposed to be elected after the appointment of a new government. Mosisili eventually lost the elections to Dr. Motsoahae Thabane, who, on many occasions, clashed with the army commander previously appointed by Mosisili. By August 2014, the differences between Kamoli and Thabane were irreconcilable (Pherudi, 2018).

Thabane decided to fire Kamoli and replace him with Lt. Gen Mahao as the new army commander. However, Kamoli refused to vacate office, and instead, the Lesotho Defence Force staged a military coup d'états on 30 August 2014. Through the intervention of SADC, Lesotho was opted to hold snap elections in 2015 (Pherudi, 2018). Kamoli finally succumbed to local and international pressure to resign from office in 2016 and was replaced by Lt. General Khaontle Mots'omots'o. Unlike his predecessor, the new army commander set out to place the military under civilian rule by implementing, among others, the recommendations of SADC, which included arresting soldiers who were accused of political crimes in the year 2014. However, his efforts were met with open resistance and tension by his subordinates, who felt betrayed. In September 2017, two soldiers assassinated the army commander in his office, accusing him of handing them over to the police instead of protecting them. A shootout ensued between the two soldiers and the bodyguards, resulting in their deaths (Pherudi, 2018). This indicates that, in recent years, the military has continued to dabble in politics.

### **Weak Civil Society Participation and Inequalities**

One of the tenets of democracy in any society is political participation. Both women and men are to participate in the democratic processes of the country. Oche (2003) points out that civil society makes the government accountable to its citizens. Dahl (2005) adds that freedom of expression is required for citizens in order to participate effectively in politics. Democracy Works Foundation



(2016) reports that there has been a lack of youth participation and women involvement for decades, which can help influence economic policy decisions. Lesotho still faces the challenge of inequality and underrepresentation of women. This is asserted by Olaleye (2004), who states that traditional and patriarchal cultures often lead to women being sidelined in the decision-making processes due to social bias and gender roles.

Another prominent challenge is that youth do not participate in the political affairs of the country. With a population of about 40% youth, young people in Lesotho face various challenges, such as unemployment and poverty. Bhila *et al.* (2022) revealed that many young people are disgruntled and lack faith and trust in the government due to many political parties and their leaders not fulfilling their promises. Additionally, it has been observed that the interests of the youth are led and determined by leaders who are pensioners. Furthermore, the views of the youth are never taken into account as platforms or bodies that deal with youth challenges; for instance, there is no youth parliament for the young people in Lesotho, which poses a major challenge.

The constitution of Lesotho guarantees freedom of expression. However, according to the BTI Report (2022), protests and strikes were completely banned during the COVID lockdowns. In November 2020, young people organized a protest against the reign of debilitating conditions and unemployment. However, they met resistance from police who used rubber bullets and tear gas. As a result, 11 young people were apprehended by the police at the time, sending shockwaves through the country as there was no intervention from the government.

On 16 June 2022, police unlawfully opened fire at students at the National University of Lesotho who were protesting against their living allowances. Despite the fact that students were unarmed and harmless, police opened fire on them and shot death, one student, Kopano Francis Makoa, while others were injured (Amnesty International, 2022).

Women and other marginalized groups of people, such as gays and lesbians, remain on the sidelines as they face discrimination and other inequalities. Lesotho is still a very patriarchal society where women are subjected to discrimination while gays and lesbians are sometimes expelled from their homes for revealing their sexual identity (BTI Report, 2022).

To this day, the government of Lesotho still faces the challenge of protecting fundamental human rights. Many people who are suspects in crime brutally die at the hands of police, and no

action is taken against such police officers. In some instances, the justice system fails due to judges paying allegiance to political leaders (BTI Report, 2022). A report by Amnesty International (2022) states that on 19 May 2022, 35 people, including women and children, were tortured by police and members of the Lesotho Defence Force for protesting against a power cut in the District of Thaba Tseka. The victims were made to roll on muddy ground as this was a punishment for disturbing the peace.

## **Poverty**

Literature reveals an existing connection between democracy and development. Huntington (1996) argues that there is a positive correlation between a country's wealth and democracy. Przeworski *et al.* (1996) confirm that if economic growth and wealth are effectively distributed across society, this could accelerate democratic consolidation. As a small and landlocked developing country in Africa, Lesotho is faced with a number of human development challenges, including poverty. Lesotho relies heavily on its neighbor, South Africa, for imports of both goods and services.

One of the challenges facing Lesotho is the problem of pervasive poverty. Pherudi (2022) states that in Lesotho, poverty is endemic and is a threat to democracy as poverty and inequality are threats to democracy. Mboweni (2014) in Pherudi (2022) states that Basotho competes for jobs in government, which means Basotho sees the government as the only way out of poverty. According to a report by (the World Bank, 2021), between the period of 2002 to 2017, only 47,000 out of the total population were lifted out of poverty, confirming that Lesotho is still struggling with pervasive poverty, especially in the rural areas where there is limited access to basic services, opportunities, and infrastructure compared to the urban areas. Therefore, Lesotho remains trapped in poverty due to other additional factors such as a high rate of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and lack of investment in infrastructure, among others (World Bank, 2023).

Lesotho is characterized by a weak private sector, with the public sector as a major employer. The country is faced with chronic unemployment as many young people graduate from institutions of higher learning to struggle to find jobs (Rakolobe, 2019). The country is faced with a high rate of unemployment, which leads to a host of negative outcomes, such as high rates of gender-based violence that hinders the achievement of sustainable development goals. Recent reports on the rates of poverty in Lesotho reveal that poverty is still very pervasive. As per the

reports of the World Bank (2021), Lesotho remains trapped in poverty due to other additional factors such as a high rate of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and lack of investment in infrastructure, among others (World Bank, 2023). Due to the effects of environmental problems such as El Nino, agriculture declined, as well as the reduction of the remittances from the South African Mineworkers; there was a sharp increase in poverty, especially in the rural areas (World Bank, 2021).

### **The Instability of Coalition Governments in Lesotho**

Both internal and external factors cause the instability of coalition governments in Lesotho. Several explanations have been put forward for justifications for the failing coalition governments. Pherudi (2022) observes that since Lesotho gained independence in 1966, it continues to face constitutional crises, coup d'états, and conflict within political parties. Lesotho has perpetually continued to face instability challenges in the era of coalition governments since 2012, which directly impacts democracy. All the coalition governments collapsed before their tenure of 5 years owing to political party internal squabbles, lack of discipline, and the meddling of the military in politics (Pherudi, 2022).

In June 2017, Lesotho held snap elections, which led to the formation of a coalition government, which was the third in just five years (Pherudi, 2022). This is a reflection of unstable democracy and instability. Pherudi further asserts this argument by stating that following the 2015 and 2017 snap elections, the country's general elections were held, however, the elections still did not bring a permanent solution to Lesotho's deepening political problems.

In addition, Monyake (2020) explains the formation of coalition governments in Lesotho has led to more government expenditure owing to the high rates of corruption and increased sizes of the cabinet in addition to political deployments that cause the country to lose a lot of money. Monyake (2020) highlights that another factor that contributes to corruption is the collapse of coalition governments in Lesotho, which leads to greed among the ruling elite who work to enrich themselves as quickly as possible before the new government replaces them at the expense of voters and masses that continue to face extreme poverty.

### **Conclusion**

Since the transformation of Lesotho's governance system from authoritarian rule after independence to democracy, there have been major changes and evolutions in governance.

Democratic consolidation requires efforts to resolve obstacles to good governance and democratic principles. These obstacles, as identified in Lesotho's fragile democracy as well as other new African democracies, including poverty, corruption, unconstitutional change of regimes, military intervention in politics, weak civil society participation and inequalities, and violation of human rights, are a cankerworm that impedes accountability, public participation, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in governance with due consequence on democratic practices that favor consolidation. Notwithstanding, the cumulative effects of democratic practices over the years, though slowly embraced in Lesotho, are reflected in the multiparty system in place: the formation of an independent electoral body, the ombudsman office, as well as the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO). It is, therefore, incumbent on the Lesotho government and governments of other African countries as a whole to create an enabling environment for the respect of civil liberties, democratic policies, and laws in order to enhance the economic, cultural, and socio-political life of the people of Africa.

### **Recommendations**

Increasing citizens' political rights is one of the major steps in consolidating democracy. Men, women, and youth should be empowered to participate in decision-making processes through information dissemination through the media. The media in Lesotho should be accessible to all people living in urban and rural areas equally, as this enhances inclusive democracy.

For democracy to be fully consolidated, civil liberties should be increased. According to Freedom House (2009), civil liberties include freedom of expression, belief, association, organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state. In Lesotho, it is imperative that the government, through its constitutional amendments, offer its citizens civil liberties, especially the perpetually marginalized groups like women as well as youths, for effective democratization.

Democratic consolidation could also be attained if the military is put under civilian control. The intervention of the military in politics in Lesotho is one of the factors that has continued to undermine democracy. The military's focus should be on external security. Politics of greed should also be discouraged to adopt politics for the public good.

Democracy can also be made sustainable by involving other political actors, such as civil society. In Lesotho, civil society remains relatively weak and informal, as most of it advocates for

HIV/AIDS. Formal civil society organizations that advocate for good governance are small and under-financed (Lesotho Country Report BTI, 2014). The government should empower civil society to ensure that it participates in promoting good governance.

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