

Lesotho

Rice

Lesotho is coded as a democracy from independence in 1966 until 1970. There is no Cheibub et al. (2010) coding on democratic regime type for Lesotho; however, the country followed their former British colonizers by adopting a parliamentary system (U.S. Department of State 2010) that would be the model for all future democratic governments in Lesotho (see below and Hassan 2012; International Business Publications 2009; Nijzink et al. 2013).

Lesotho gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966. Joseph Leabua Jonathan, the leader of the Basotho National Party (BNP) was elected Prime Minister. In 1970, the first set of post-independence general elections was held. When the BNP appeared to lose, Jonathan annulled the election and refused to cede power to the opposition Basotho Congress Party (BCP). At this point, Geddes codes Lesotho as a single-party state. Jonathan ruled by decree until he was ousted from office in a military coup in 1986. This is a SOLS change.

The military established a Military Council to govern the nation, and made Major General Justin Metsing Lekhanya (the leader of the coup) the Chairman. However, at the same time, they also granted executive power to King Moshoeshoe, who was previously a ceremonial monarch. The military was the power behind the government, however. This is shown by the fact that King Moshoeshoe was forced into exile in 1990 following a falling-out with the military (United States Department of State, 2010). His son, Letsie III, was then installed as King.

In 1991, Lekhanya was ousted from his position as chairman, and replaced by Major General Elias Phisoana Ramaema. This is not a SOLS change. Ramaema began the process of transition to a democratic government. Two years later, in 1993, he handed over power to a BCP government led by Ntsu Mokhehle. This is a SOLS change. At this point, Geddes no longer codes Lesotho as a military government. In August 1994, King Letsie III, with military backing, staged a coup and deposed the BCP government. Hae Phoofolo, a military leader, was installed as Prime Minister, but is listed as "interim". Letsie III's government was in power for less than one month, until September 1994, and was not recognized by the international community at large (United States Department of State, 2010). Thus, I code both Letsie's entrance into power and exit from power as SOLSchange30 (see page 14 of coding rules). Letsie III wanted Moshoeshoe II to be reinstated as the monarch, with executive power. The BCP government agreed to this after negotiations, and Mokhehle resumed office as Prime Minister on 14 September. Letsie III abdicated in favor of his father in 1995, however, one year later, King Moshoeshoe II was killed in a car accident and Letsie III returned to the throne. He remains the monarch in the present day. Notably, POLITY codes Lesotho as democratic throughout the 1993-97 period.

In 1997, following intra-party conflict in the BCP, Mokhehle and 37 BCP legislators defected from the BCP and started a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD - Muller 2011). According to the Commonwealth Observer Group (1999; also Rosenberg et al. 2004 164-5) Mokhehle took approximately two thirds of the BCP with him to the LCP. The idea that a viable BCP remained as-is is further supported by the fact that the BCP was one of three major parties in the 1998 elections (i.e. LCD,

BCP, and BNP). As per our parliamentary system coding rules we code a minor SOLS change: when the new splinter governs (rather than the old party with the loss of a splinter group) we code a minor solschange in a parliamentary system

In 1998, he retired and was replaced as party leader by Bethuel Pakalitha Mosisili (no SOLS change). These elections were deemed free and fair by international observers, but the opposition parties rejected the LCD victory. This led to widespread protests and a mutiny by junior officers in the armed forces. Troops from the South African Development Community were called in to quell the violence. After these troops withdrew, the electoral structure of Lesotho was changed to allow for some seats in the legislature to be filled by proportional representation. The 1997-2002 period is not coded as democratic by POLITY, but is also not coded as autocratic by Geddes.

In 2002, elections under the new system were held, and the LCD won (though opposition parties also won some seats, thanks to the proportional representation rules), allowing for Mosisili to continue as Prime Minister (United States Department of State, 2010). POLITY again considers Lesotho a democracy. The LCD again won the majority of seats in the 2007 elections. Mosisili remains Prime Minister in the present day.

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