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The politics of poverty in Botswana

Zibani Maundeni

For many years, Botswana has achieved both a fast growing economy *and* worsening inequalities. 'Botswana's annual growth in real GDP had averaged 10.9 percent in the period 1981-90, faster even than the east Asian Tigers or China' (Good and Hughes, 2002: 41). Subsequently, 'Botswana's economy recorded higher growth rates of 9.1 percent during 2000/2001 compared to 8.1 percent between 1999/2000, which was mainly attributed to the growth in the mining sector' (BIDPA Briefing, 1st Quarter, 2002: 2). GNP per head was some \$3000 in 1995. 'With a total outstanding government external debt of approximately US\$427 million, and a debt service ratio of only 3.9 percent in 1992 compared to an average debt service ratio of 25 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 21 percent in all developing countries, Botswana's debt obligations are easily manageable' (Hope, 1996: 58). Thus, Botswana has a low debt and enjoys a manageable debt service ratio.

But Botswana has not generally performed positively with regard to many social indicators. It has a high unemployment level and there are currently 'not enough jobs for those seeking employment and unemployment has become a serious problem in the country' (Hope, 1997: 198). Furthermore, Botswana suffers from high inequalities and a high proportion of its population have incomes that are inadequate to meet basic needs. The poverty datum line is calculated from government surveys on household income and expenditure. Earlier studies estimated that 55 percent of families lived below the poverty datum line nationally (Jefferis, 1991) and later studies estimate that 43 percent families live under the poverty datum line nationally (UNDP, 1994; Hope, 1996). On a different note, income inequalities are severe in Botswana. 'For the period 1980-1987, Botswana's income inequality index was 23.6. However, for the period 1980-1991, the index rose to 47.4. This has earned Botswana the dubious distinction of having the highest degree of inequality in the distribution of income among all countries in the world for which statistics were available for that period' (Hope, 1996: 62). Thus, Botswana is one country that is failing when it comes to equitable distribution of income.

Unfortunately, Botswana has a high HIV/AIDS incidence and has also achieved the dubious distinction of 'being the country with the highest recorded incidence of HIV infection—but not yet AIDS mortality—in the world' (PULA Editorial, 2001). Indeed, 'using information for 2000 from antenatal clinics, the overall HIV prevalence rate among those aged 15 to 49 was estimated to be 38.5 percent' (BIDPA Briefing, 1st Quarter 2002:1). HIV/AIDS is a serious threat that is likely to reverse Botswana's developmental gains and worsen socioeconomic inequalities. The HIV/AIDS information is not categorized according to social class, but the signs are that the scourge is patterned by the inequalities.

The challenge of this essay is to provide a political explanation to Botswana's socioeconomic inequalities. After reviewing the sociological approaches, the essay goes on to provide a political approach that places the ruling party, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) mostly responsible for socio-economic inequalities in Botswana.

Existing theories

John Holm (1982), and Hope and Edge (1996) advance the 'urban bias' thesis to explain inequalities in Botswana. Michael Lipton pioneered this sociological approach (1968; 1977). He saw the root cause of Third World poverty as lying in the concentration of urban interests and orientation within the political structures of these countries. Lipton saw this concentration and orientation as

producing systematic favouritism towards urban areas as manifested by unusually large shares of public investment for industrialisation and not agricultural development.

John Holm utilised the urban bias thesis and pointed out (in 1982) that 85 per cent of Botswana's population was rural, 'but rural development programme receives minimal financing, shows relatively little concern with the mass of the population, is articulated by national rather than local officials, is heavily foreign funded and controlled, and yields few results which benefit the living conditions of the average voter' (Holm, 1982: 86). Ronald Hope and Wayne Edge add that with a high inequality index of 23.6, 'Botswana's growth with uneven development is most telling in its urban-rural socio-economic disparities. As a result of an urban development bias, the urban population has been the primary beneficiary of the country's impressive economic performance during the past two decades' (Hope and Edge, 1996: 60). Indeed, it is the rural areas that experienced less development. But it is misleading to hold that socio-economic inequalities are largely a rural-urban phenomenon, and therefore only a sociological issue. More importantly, the rural-urban model ignores the question of the state in issues of redistribution.

On the other hand, Diana Wylie (1984, 1990) and Kenneth Good (1993) advance a 'structural-historical' thesis that sees the relationship between the Basarwa and Tswana cattlemen as primary in explaining social inequalities in Botswana. Diana Wylie holds that the existing social relations in Botswana, rest upon foundations which are now deep in Botswana's history. It is a history in which political power and economic wealth were 'interdependent', illustrated by the usage of the term *kgosi* for both a chief and a rich man (Wylie, 1990:27). 'Soon after Tswana cattlemen appropriated springs in the Kalahari, the Sarwa who had formerly used those scarce water points, found their labour, first as hunters and then as herders, appropriated by the cattlemen as well' (Wylie, 1990: 42). Structural-historical analysis acknowledges that the elites (rural and urban, political and civic) have displaced the San and took over their land and labour, and continued to make policies favourable to themselves. But the approach gives the wrong impression that socio-economic inequalities are so deep in the history of the Tswana society that social engineering by a state that is correctly poised towards redistribution cannot be solved.

Kenneth Good, argues that 'if present inequalities are to be understood, the changing position of those who are now at the bottom of the hierarchy, as well as those who are now near the top, must be taken into account. It is at, as well as in, the links between the extremes that the truth about the social hierarchy lies' (Good, 1993: 205). He concludes that 'the subordination of the San has continued in Botswana's post independence era. Its ideological foundation is in the myth, or more precisely the manufactured tradition, of San aboriginality and hence of their property "lostness". These assertions are related closely to the assumptions that the way the Basarwa have lived in the recent decades is how they have always lived, and orthodox anthropology has given support to such conceptions' (Good, 1993: 210). There is no doubt that the San constitute the poorest in Botswana and that San aboriginality contributes to the ideology of inequality. But by focussing on those at the bottom and near the top of the socio-economic ladder, the approach excludes many of the poor who fall in the middle of the ladder and who are not San. It also excludes the primarily political factors that have little to do with the structure of the society and that could bring social engineering in favour of reducing inequalities. The 'structural historical approach' gives the impression that any other ruling party in Botswana would have similarly failed to redistribute. Yet there is no evidence for this. Apart from the ideology of aboriginality of the San, Good's approach is largely structural and sociological rather than political, and omits the crucial political factors that could account for persistent socio-economic inequalities in Botswana.

The 'organise civil society' sociological thesis is another approach. Its emphasis was on the weakness of the civil society. Patrick Molutsi and John Holm (1990) developed this thesis, characterising Botswana as having corporatist tendencies, in which 'policy initiation takes place within government ministries; persuasion is presented as consultation; limits are placed on participation in politics; government dominates communication processes; and ministries create and control most organised groups' (Molutsi and Holm, 1990:327).

John Holm, Patrick Molutsi and Gloria Somolekae observed that Botswana's civil society remains weak relative to the state, but it has been gaining in strength (1994). Their classic case of 'organised civil group' is Emang Basadi, a women's organisation which organised a wide range of women's groups to write a manifesto for the 1994 elections and which produced a document entitled *Women's Manifesto: A Summary of Botswana Women's Issues and Demands* (Holm, Molutsi and Somolekae, 1994:7). The manifesto challenged all political parties to adopt positions favourable to women on a series of policy questions. The authors positively note that 'the impact of these activities has been significant. The BDP and BNF (the then main political parties in the country) felt compelled to address women's issues for the first time in their own manifestos' (Holm, Molutsi and Somolekae, 1994: 8). They warn, however, that government is more accommodating to organisations with the capacity to undertake research and make convincing proposals (1994: 11). They further warn that government erects legal barriers to group formation, especially for the illiterate and trade unions (Holm, Molutsi and Somolekae, 1994: 12). In a nutshell, organised civil society, according to this thesis, is the key to successful redistribution.

But it could also be interesting to establish why a redistribution-oriented women's movement such as Emang Basadi, did not emerge within the BDP or the BNF. Could it be that both parties were organised in such a way that they excluded women redistribution-oriented elements? A political approach should explain why neither the BDP nor the BNF have never mobilised the poor into an organised force for social change. Thus, questioning the absence of distributive elements from the BDP raises political and organisational issues that expose the defects of the 'organised civil society thesis' that seems to exonerate both the ruling and the main opposition parties, shifting the blame to the weakness of civil society. Both the ruling and opposition parties must be brought to the centre of analysis: their structure and orientation should be examined to explain how the main parties have contributed to the worsening socio-economic inequalities.

Another sociological approach on the market is the 'organise the poor' thesis that is to the effect that the poor stay poor because they are not organised. Once they are organised, the social base of the state will necessarily widen and redistribution reforms will succeed. This thesis found its fullest expression with Francine Frankel (1978) who argued that the narrow base of state power explains why redistribution reforms in favour of the poor have failed. According to this approach, the future solutions to poverty problems are likely to emerge through widening the social base of the state (democratisation of the state). But the 'organise the poor thesis' assumes that the poor need to be organised separately to confront the government. Such a strategy would fail in Botswana where the state eschews militancy and suppresses it very successfully, as evidenced by failing industrial action, which is always illegal according to the lengthy procedures built into the laws of Botswana. A strategy based on separate organisation of the poor also fails to see that in situations in which the state dominates civil society as in Botswana (what others have labelled as a paternalistic democracy), one needs to be within the state and controlling positions of power in order to have an impact that could change things. The relevant question seems to be, how should the poor climb up the ladder to reach positions of power in the BDP and BNF in order to pursue and carry out re-distribution oriented policies? But the more relevant question should be how should the BDP and BNF change their orientation to incorporate re-distribution in their policies?

The above shows that there is need to bring in political factors to the analysis of persistent poverty in Botswana. Persistent poverty is a political problem just as it is an urban-rural, or a civil society or a structural, problem. If some states have scored handsomely in the area of redistribution such as South Korea and Taiwan and others have not, such as Brazil and Botswana, then a primarily political explanation is called for to explain the disparities between these states in questions of redistribution. My thesis is that the successful development that Botswana enjoys and the widening social inequalities that it suffers, are largely functions of conservative developmentally oriented political elements who constitute the BDP. The solution lies with the recruitment of re-distribution oriented elements into the Botswana bureaucracy and into the ruling BDP. To develop this thesis, I will first analyse the social base of the ruling BDP and suggest how it can be reformed to be able to balance economic development with equality.

The structural base of the BDP

The bourgeois social base and orientation of the BDP has been partly responsible for its development successes and for its failure to mount successful redistribution strategies. Only the wealthiest citizens of Bechuanaland stayed with their families when other members of the society became migrant workers to South African mines, industry and farms (the latter provided the leadership for opposition parties such as the Botswana Peoples Party and the Botswana Independence Party). Studies show that the wealthiest members of the Bechuanaland society formed the BDP (Gunderson, 1970; Picard, 1987; Borhaug, 1992). Gunderson describes the BDP leaders as a group of young men, originating from among the wealthy cattle owners (Gunderson, 1970: 335). In addition, the young men who formed the BDP were the most educated and worked at lower levels in the colonial administration (Borhaug, 1992). Studies show that later when formal employment in Botswana became an option, it was the members of the wealthiest households that got these jobs (Borhaug, 1992: 32). These wealthy young men constituted the core of conservative politics of the BDP. Thus, the early leaders of the BDP were characterised by a combination of wealth and hierarchy. These two factors did not favour re-distribution oriented politics.

Indeed, the first central committee of the BDP was composed of cattle barons and traders. Its leader, Seretse Khama was a lawyer, a 'cattle baron' and a deposed chief (Parsons, Tlou and Henderson, 1995: 204;). Its vice-president was Archie Tsoebebe, an administrator and cattle baron. Its treasurer, Benjamin Steinberg, was a white trader and 'cattle baron'. Its secretary, Quett Masire, was a journalist and a 'cattle baron'. The implications of such a concentration of educated cattlemen in the BDP Central Committee was to be very serious for the San, who constituted the majority of the poor in Botswana:

When San acquire waged employment, farm labourer is the job they are most likely to obtain, and various studies have testified to the extremely low wages and poor conditions that they experience. Gary Childers in 1976 found a total of 4512 San living on the Ghanzi freehold farms as squatters and farm labourers mostly in very unsatisfactory conditions. They earned on average P6.13 a month, plus food rations of milk, tea, sugar and tobacco. But a worker might go two or three months before receiving his food rations. While Ghanzi farmers, supported by rising cattle prices, had become noticeably wealthier since the end of the 1960s, the San were becoming even poorer than they were in previous years. They faced oppression and discrimination on a wide and constant basis.

When Mogalakwe visited the district ten years later, he found that 61 percent of the San farm workers he surveyed were receiving wages between P5 and P30 a month. They were often paid irregularly with unwarranted deductions made in some cases from their wages. 65 percent of those sampled were not paid for overtime worked, and 56 percent had never been given annual leave. They had no rest on public holidays, and most of them, he said, worked from, sun rise, to sun set, every single day that passes (Good, 2002: 31).

Thus, the BDP government pursued policies that maintained the poor conditions of the San primarily because it was headed by cattlemen and this suited their purposes. The dominance of educated cattlemen in the BDP prevented the party from coming up with policies that could bring social justice to the San or more broadly, the poor of Botswana. The BDP has pursued policies that resisted minimum wages for farm labourers, expanded cattle production and relocated the San from their ancestral areas. Even the few San who ran away from the dispossessing Tswana cattle economy are now being brought back in through relocation exercises from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. In fact, the greatest danger the San face comes from cattlemen and the lack of protection from the BDP government. This is worsening now that the farm labour market

is more and more penetrated by Zimbabwean immigrants.

The BDP has largely operated as an elitist party, shielding itself from welfare-oriented politics, but sharpening its capitalist developmental outlook. The party's original recruitment policy was elitist and it 'aimed its initial recruitment at key educated and propertied figures in rural communities, such as primary school head teachers and small general traders in the expectation that they would lead the rural mass electorate by example' (Parsons, Tlou and Henderson, 1995: 198). Lately, the party has been recruiting most of its important members from the bureaucracy, officers in the army and the business community (Charlton, 1991; Leftwich, 1995; Maundeni, 2000). Yet these institutionalised social groups have been supervising the capitalist economy that has resisted minimum wages for extended periods of time. In any case, the institutionalised social groups that are working closely with the ruling BDP are already socially advantaged. This points to the fact that the BDP has more connections with the rich and less with the poor classes and is oriented more towards this fraction than towards social welfare. Such a situation poses the likelihood of BDP being a captured party, implying that it merely serves the interests of the rich classes, defined as class power, at the expense of national development, defined as national economic power.

The concept of capture has important negative implications for redistribution. Indeed, a captured state merely mediates class interests and distributes in favour of the rich. Is the BDP state captured by the bourgeois? Or is it autonomous? Some analysts have argued that the BDP is not a captured party, nor a captured government. In support of this view, these analysts argue that the party did not represent any social movement or broad group (Polhemus, 1983; Borhuag, 1992). These analysts argue that the BDP was not a genuine political movement, because it had very few impulses and grievances upon which to form a political and economic project or platform (Polhemus, 1983; Borhuag, 1992). Unfortunately, these authors do not tell us whether the BDP was a bourgeois social movement that transformed itself into a political movement, thus captured by the dominant classes, or whether it was coincidental that BDP's development policies have largely benefited the dominant classes. If the state was merely captured, how was rent seeking avoided? This question indicates that there is more to the state than meets the eye. The characterisation of the BDP as having been formed by wealthy young men implicitly suggests, but does not prove that such a social bourgeois movement existed. The concept of capture becomes of limited value when it seeks to account for successful capitalist development that Botswana experienced over the years and is associated with autonomous states.

Ideology is the next category that determines capture or autonomy. The assumption is that if a political party did not have a clearly defined ideology, it is exposed to capture by social movements. Or, if the state ideology identifies with class interests, this also exposes it to capture by that class. Studies on ideology in Botswana are not very helpful in this regard. It should be noted that bold claims such as BDP did not have an ideology at all (Gunderson, 1970; Borhuag, 1993) not only implies the likelihood of capture, but delayed genuine research along the direction of establishing it. In a BDP Seminar, Herry Nengwekhulu argued that there was lack of ideological clarity in Botswana parties. 'Parties in Botswana tend to be all things at the same time' (1983: 46). The general mistake made by these authors, is that they viewed ideology in terms of the common ideologies of Marxism, Pan-Africanism, African Socialism etc and the absence of these was regarded as absence of ideology. These authors hardly realised that the kind of capitalist developmental politics that BDP has promoted and the consistency of the developmental policies that it has pursued over long periods of time, clearly shows that the party follows an ideology. For instance, while the Pan African BPP sought to give high wages to workers and put an end to racism in employment, BDP sought to provide training and control wages in order to improve the productivity of labour and to make the economy competitive. While the BPP sought to nationalise and localise all central economic institutions and positions, the BDP not only opposed this, it sought to assure and attract foreign investors and expatriates. While the BPP sought to abolish chieftaincy, nationalise all land in the hands of white farmers and give it back to blacks and build

socialist agriculture, BDP sought to democratise land allocations, remove constraints on the business community which needed more land and preserve property rights. If the pursuit of capitalist economic development is considered seriously, then the BDP followed an ideology of 'economic nationalism'.

Ideology and nationalism of the ruling BDP

Economic nationalism is here differentiated from the nationalisation of private and foreign assets that characterised the politics of the rest of independent Africa in the first twenty years. It refers to a situation in which the state or party or movement prioritises economic development of the nation over other important considerations such as individual wealth, redistribution and equality. Economic nationalism has been correctly defined as 'economic activities primarily in order to achieve independence from and leverage over potential adversaries rather than to achieve consumer utility, private wealth, mutually beneficial exchange, or any other objective posited by economic determinants' (Johnson, 1995: 105). Under economic nationalism, the state encourages or sometimes compels all the economic classes of the nation, including the dominant classes like the agrarian bourgeoisie, and others, to view national development as a priority political goal over which all sectarian or class goals are subsumed. But states pursuing economic nationalism can work closely with the bourgeois, or dominant classes, and where there are no such classes, the state nurtures and promotes them through political leadership in the economy and society.

Economic development pitted the BDP against the redistribution elements grouped under the BPP and the BNF, and against the free market model advocated by colonial authorities and ethnic leaders. The BDP offered economic prosperity and socio-economic equality (BDP, 1965). It called for centralised planning national activities in the hands of the state. The BDP established its legitimacy on economic nationalism and ignored socio-economic inequalities without paying the political price of losing elections. This was possible because the extent of socio-economic inequalities at independence was unknown as no studies had been done on it and this blurred the vision of the political and administrative leaders. There was also no movement (political or academic or civic), pressing for redistribution in favour of the poor before or immediately after independence. This meant that there was no significant social pressure for equality. The absence of a social movement demanding equality meant that there was no base for a mass movement in favour of redistribution.

In academic and political circles, it was generally assumed (with hindsight, incorrectly) that there was socio-economic equality. 'Seretse and the BDP shared the assumption, common to all commentators on Bechuanaland at the time and enshrined in colonial government development planning, that virtually every adult male Motswana was a cattle owner' (Parsons, Tlou and Henderson, 1995: 204). On the assumption of initial equality, the BDP sought not to disrupt it by redistributive policies. The BDP, like Pan-African parties, opposed inequalities but unlike Pan-African parties, the conservative BDP opposed redistribution as well.

But for a conservative developmental outlook such as the BDP's to be popular, redistribution oriented Pan-African parties had to be defeated politically, ideologically and academically. Ideologically, this meant that African socialism, nationalisation and a socialist economy had to be discredited. All the promises by Pan African parties had to be shown to be far-fetched and dangerous.

It is credible to argue that the spreading of the Pan African political movement from South Africa into the region, awakened conservative elements in Botswana to defend themselves ideologically and politically. Thus, the initial popularity of redistribution oriented Pan-African parties led to the formation of a conservative developmental BDP opposed to all kinds of redistribution. The BDP was formed to oppose redistribution politics that it regarded as radical and dangerous. It targeted Pan African parties in its attacks for their redistribution orientation, claiming that, '...from the very beginning, BPP had made some grossly irresponsible statements.

It was growing popular on the strength of its irresponsible statements' (Masire, 1979: 68). Thus, it was the BDP's opposition to redistribution elements grouped in the Pan African parties that blinded the party from redistribution as a workable principle. The electoral defeat of the BPP in 1965 (the BDP won 28 of the 31 parliamentary seats in the 1965 election) and the BNF in subsequent elections, meant the ideological and political defeat of redistribution elements and the elevation of conservative developmental principles .

Politically, mass support for the Pan African parties in Botswana was not forthcoming as in other African countries where colonialism had been severe. The majority of ethnic groups in colonial Botswana had abundant land. Botswana was different from continental Africa because the whites owned a mere 5 per cent of the land in the border areas and far away from the tribal capitals (Croston 1993).

The structure and capacity of the BDP state

Laying the base for the future, in 1965, the BDP drew two manifestoes, a national one anchored on the promises of economic prosperity and a district-based manifesto for rural development. This dichotomy meant that redistribution was a function of local government and development a function of central government. The BDP regime focussed on building the powers of the central developmental bureaucracies (the ministries of finance and development planning; commerce and industry; agriculture; works, transport and communication; mineral resources and water affairs; and education). It also focused on re-orienting the central bureaucracy towards developmental and modernisation goals, and away from re-distribution oriented goals. Revealingly, the BDP regime only established a small rural affairs unit in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, thus denying it the centrality that it deserved. By so arranging the bureaucracies, the BDP regime distanced poverty issues from the central government and marginalised poverty from the development plans.

Another important factor explaining the predominance of economic nationalism and the marginalisation of redistribution was the structure of the state that is institutionally dominated by economic institutions. The economic institutions at the centre of state power were insulated from social classes. To ensure that Britain did not have undue influence over economic policy of an elected Botswana government, the Khama regime initially separated the ministries of finance and development. While the new state controlled development planning, the funds were controlled by the Ministry of Finance whose permanent secretary was a British official. To counter the power of the Ministry of Finance, the Seretse regime placed the Ministry of Development under the vice president and secretary general of the BDP, Quett Masire. When the ministries merged in 1970, it became a very powerful ministry that dominated others. Vice President and Minister of Finance and Development, Quett Masire, was determined to raise local revenue to free the state from British hegemony, and espoused a philosophy of centralisation and government intervention while remaining friendly to the private sector.

In addition, the ruling BDP saw decentralised mineral rights in the hands of chiefs and private companies as impediments to the country's economic development (Masire, 1970). Thus, contrary to the urban bias thesis, the initial Botswana local government became rich and powerful because it controlled mineral rights. But there was bound to be a power struggle between the central and local government. The Seretse regime sought to centralise mineral rights in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and to be deeply involved in the exploitation of minerals. At the end, mineral rights were placed in the hands of the central government and their exploitation was conducted through Debswana – a partnership between central government and De Beers. By centralising mineral rights in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and partnering with the De Beers, the central government gained autonomy from private businesses and from local government. In addition, President Khama surrounded himself with bureaucratic experts and this insulated him from social movements. President Khama has been described as 'an astute

politician, who never acts without the most careful consideration, and after the most thorough search for the best advice'. The bureaucracy provided the advice.

What needs to be explained, however, is the orientation of the Botswana bureaucracy. Borhaug (1992) suggests that the expatriate bureaucrats were already developmentally oriented and supported the BDP because it protected their careers in the administration by making localisation a long- and not a short- term policy. But this characterisation of BDP-expatriates relations is simplistic and misleading. The relationship was not merely cordial as Borhaug suggests. In what indicated deep-seated problems, President Khama reported to Parliament that he was disturbed by the 'discourteous' behaviour of expatriate staff to his black ministers. Indeed, his black ministers complained of expatriate bureaucrats who absented themselves from their stations on hearing that a minister was paying them a visit. Khama initiated institutional reforms, requiring that the Public Service Commission that was dominated by expatriates should cease from appointing all senior officers. At the same time, he protected the expatriate bureaucrats by transferring the functions of appointing, not to his bitter ministers, but to himself. By personally assuming appointment powers of senior officers, president Khama prevented his ministers from interfering in administration. Utilising the concept of efficiency (a cover word for expatriate staff), he cautioned his ministers. "We must make every effort to recruit the best available personnel where we are convinced that it is necessary to continue to call on expatriates skills" (Seretse Khama, 1970: 3).

On the other hand, the African bureaucrats were oriented in favour of themselves and demanded the expatriate positions and wages. This is what happened in other former colonial countries. Local African bureaucrats complained about the high pay of expatriates and demanded it for themselves through rapid localisation. Their demands were supported by opposition parties such as the BPP and the BNF. To counter the political arguments of these parties, and welfare demands from local bureaucrats, President Khama appealed to conservative utilitarian arguments: 'while a handful of civil servants may be prepared to press for even rapid localisation, I know that the workers and farmers of Botswana are concerned with rapid and equitable development and judge a public servant on the service he provides to the people and not on his colour or national origin' (Seretse Khama, 1971: 8). But of course President Khama had not sought the opinion of those workers and peasants who would have themselves demanded more welfare. But President Khama did more than just suppressing the African bureaucrats.

By actual training and advancement of locals in the bureaucracy, Khama was able to silence them, or rather make them co-operative for the purpose of achieving state goals. While the local bureaucrats were training in overseas institutions, the expatriate bureaucrats stayed in their posts for extended periods of times, and this promoted the capacity of the state and enhanced economic development. The result was gradual and strictly controlled localisation. Consequently, BDP politics gave precedence to maintaining an efficient bureaucracy, less ministerial or party interference in administration and unity of purpose among the BDP politicians, local bureaucrats and expatriates. But it also gave priority to training and the promotion of local staff in sensitive posts.

The central bureaucracy played a pivotal role in shaping the developmental ideology of the government. The Khama regime created, a powerful, insulated and authorised bureaucracy under a powerful presidency. One commentator has argued that it was left to the administrative leadership not only to design specific policy means, but also to develop a modernisation strategy and the policy objectives to fulfil this overall strategy (Borhaug, 1992: 39). Other commentators add that 'the founding BDP politicians began a tradition of allowing the bureaucracy to make most of the important policy decisions on technical and bureaucratic grounds. As the new Tswana civil service leaders arrived in the 1970s they militantly guarded this tradition' (Holm and Molutsi, 1992:81). In addition, the executive in the name of the President acquired the power (amidst tough bureaucratic opposition) to hire and fire all senior civil servants (Hansard, 1972). This meant that President Seretse Khama had direct control over screening bureaucrats who participated in the policy-making positions. This executive control over the recruitment exercise prompted some observers to note that 'at one level the BDP leadership's control, through its recruitment and human resource

management policies over civil service personnel in policy-relevant posts, clearly offered the prospects of a Japanese-style ruling party colonisation of crucial posts of the bureaucracy' (Charlton, 1991: 272). Through recruitment controls, the BDP regime was able to recruit officers (expatriates and locals) who were sensitive to its ideology of economic nationalism and put them in sensitive positions for long periods of time. It also promoted them through the state bureaucracy, and finally recruited them into the ruling party itself. 'One later development which confirms that this indeed occurred has been the commonness of the recruitment of senior civil servants directly not just into the ruling party politics but into senior government posts' (Charlton, 1991: 272). Thus, if the BDP seeks to change its orientation in favour of re-distribution, the state president will have to recruit re-distribution oriented elements into the central bureaucracy in large numbers and allow them to retire into the BDP and make them cabinet ministers. In that way, the BDP would be able to diversify its ideology and develop the capacity to tackle persistent socio-economic inequalities.

Conclusion: political and theoretical implications

Both the Khama and Masire regimes had the orientation and capacity to implement institutional and developmental policy reforms in favour of economic development. But both did not have the orientation and capacity to pursue reforms in favour of redistribution. Nor did they reform the state structurally to meet redistribution needs. Part of the reason was political, ideological and institutional. Ideologically, BDP pursued economic nationalism, and suppressed redistribution oriented politics within the state and opposed the parties that advanced it.

Politically, the BDP posed as an electoral winning machine that kept political organisations and elements disposed to re-distribution towards the poor out of political power for a very long time. Institutionally, the BDP built a state in which the bureaucracy and the ruling party colonised one another and placed the latter at the centre of state power. Many top bureaucrats from the developmental ministries have retired into BDP ranks as cabinet members. For this reason, bureaucrats in the powerful ministries regard the BDP regime's institutions as its constituency. And because the BDP regime established its legitimacy on economic development, the bureaucrats in the powerful ministries aim to achieve this goal and redistribution in favour of the poor is largely defined to fall outside the development ideology. For instance, National Development Plan 1985-91 noted that those with no cattle are also those who produce the smallest amounts of crops (MFDP, 1985: 170), yet 'this fact is not described in the plan as something to change, and consequently, the project review of the plan does not present any such project. On the contrary, far from being a major problem, the existence of large cattle holdings making good profits is seen as a major achievement. They are viable, self-sufficient producers, able to make substantial profits and contribute to the national economy. In fact, the group of large cattle owners represent one of the Ministry of Agriculture's successes, and the ministry is not willing to do anything that would reverse what has been achieved here' (Borhaug, 1992: 55).

Bureaucrats at the Ministry of Agriculture, and of the Finance and Development Planning understood 'social justice' to mean that 'all should have the opportunity to increase their standard of living. It was not understood as an ideal of equality in income, or that people's living standard should be roughly equal, but that all should have an equal opportunity to improve their situation. But given differences at the outset, to give everybody the same chance to improve their position will not change the relative poverty. Rather, it implies accepting differences while trying to reduce absolute poverty levels' (Borhaug, 1992: 55). Thus, Botswana needs to incorporate socio-economic inequalities centrally in its development plans and redistribution-oriented elements need to be brought at the heart of state power. These can be accomplished either by giving prominence to those institutions that are focussed on poverty, such as local government, and placing them at the centre of state power, or by recruiting redistribution oriented elements into the central bureaucracy and into the BDP.

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