

## Botswana's "Developmental State" and the Politics of Legitimacy\*

*Ian Taylor*  
*Department of Political and Administrative Studies*  
*University of Botswana*  
*and*  
*Visiting Research Fellow*  
*Department of Political Science*  
*University of Stellenbosch*  
*South Africa*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Starting from a very low base, Botswana has had amongst the most impressive growth figures in the world and has pursued policies that reflect aspects of the developmental state model. Although the country's development trajectory has not been unproblematic and there are major contradictions in the economy, the example of Botswana is an intriguing example of how development was pursued in a country that was given no hope at independence. Of major importance in this story was the construction of a post-colonial historic bloc and a broad hegemonic project underpinning the chosen developmental path which has granted the dominant party an enduring form of legitimacy almost unprecedented in the rest of Africa .*

The dominant discourse surrounding the role of the state in the economy tends to view state involvement in the economy as negative, "market distorting" and to be avoided, except perhaps as a minimalist regulator. Although we can talk about a "post-Washington consensus", the orthodoxy remains largely intact (Fine, 1999; Jayasuriya, 2001). This neo-classical account of the state has, through the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) led to extensive opportunity costs for Africa as it has served to roll back government from a long-term development role, whilst concomitantly directing remaining state capacity in the service of short-term conditionalities (Stein, 2000: 1). This has gone hand-in-hand with an intellectual endeavour to erode the creditability of the "developmental state" as an alternative to neo-classical strictures:

The discrediting of the "developmental state"...of public institutions and endeavours (that are deemed a "bad", and in contrast to the private and hence privatisation which are considered an unmitigated "good"), and of the development record of earlier decades have, together with the delegitimisation, and making into an anathema key aspects of the UN's development work and of the traditional North-South agenda, contributed to and constituted the outcomes of the current intellectual hegemony (Gosovic, 2000: 453).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This endeavour to discursively delegitimise alternative models to Anglo-Saxon hyper-liberalism received a major boost from the "Asian Crisis" of 1997. On this, see Hall, 2001.

Indeed, in Africa the various international financial institutions have argued that African states lack the capacity to pursue developmental state policies, whilst being far too susceptible to vested interests in the political realm. Elites in Africa have frequently taken on board such advice and have come to believe, albeit at times reluctantly and at varying speeds across the continent, that a minimalist role for the state is required. Whilst recognising the problematic nature of a great deal of African state formations and the limited capacity existing in many African polities, across the board liberalisation and state rollback has been similarly dubious (Fine and Stoneman, 1996). It is thus important to interrogate the orthodox thesis that state involvement inexorably leads to economic decline and that developmental states in Africa are an impossibility. Comparative studies from East Asia suggest that there are some lessons to be learnt (Bräutigam, 1994; Stein, 1995). As Kearney (1990: 30) remarks on another African developmental state:

There are numerous examples of failed development, but only a handful of success stories. LDC policymakers can benefit greatly from the study of what has worked...Where the [developmental state] experiences are hopelessly irrelevant or inapplicable, alternative development models must be sought. Unfortunately, such alternatives have not yet come to our attention. For now, the [developmental state] model stands alone.

In this paper, Botswana is provided as an illustration of a state that has pursued certain policies in the construction of what might be regarded as a “developmental state” i.e. a state that pursues policies that co-ordinates investment plans; has a national development vision—implying that the state is an entrepreneurial agent; that engages in institution building to promote growth and development; and that finally, plays a role in domestic conflict management (Chang, 199: 192-199). According to another source, six major components define the developmental state model: a determined developmental elite; relative autonomy; a powerful, competent and insulated bureaucracy; a weak and subordinated civil society; the effective management of non-state economic interests; and legitimacy and performance (Leftwich, 1995: 405). The discussion of Botswana’s political economy below is informed by such considerations.<sup>2</sup>

### **Botswana’s political economy**

Botswana has, since independence in 1966, been governed uninterruptedly by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). This party has pursued capitalist policies, even during the heyday

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that I suggest that there is one developmental state “model” . I share Gills and Philip’s (1996) scepticism. Botswana’s history clearly demonstrates the embeddedness of the state’s trajectory within the history, culture and economic milieu the country found itself in 1966. There *are*, however, certain features that the country’s developmental biography shares with other late developers with equally impressive growth records.

of African experimentations with socialism (Sekgoma, 1990). Both the growth and developmental record of independent Botswana has been impressive and Botswana (along with Malaysia) has, according to the UNDP, made the “most” progress in human development since 1960 (UNDP, 2000). From being one of the poorest countries in the world at independence, Botswana has enjoyed rapid economic growth and is now classified by the World Bank as an Upper Middle Income country, with a per capita GDP of more than \$6000. Yet, when it became independent, Botswana had a per capita income equivalent then to roughly US\$80 today (Republic of Botswana, 2001). Currently, Botswana has reserves of 41.2 billion pula, representing about thirty-nine months cover of imports of goods and services (Republic of Botswana, 2002a: 9). Between 1982 and 1991 the country enjoyed an annual growth rate of 10.8%. As the table below shows, the country’s growth rate has been robust throughout most of the 1990s:

Percentage growth in total GDP at constant prices (Republic of Botswana, 2002b: 34)

90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01
8.8	6.2	-0.2	4.0	3.2	5.5	5.6	8.1	4.1	8.1	9.1

But it is not only the country’s economic growth that is impressive. At the developmental level, Botswana *has* achieved a great deal: income poverty rates fell from 59% in 1986 to 47% in 1994; real per capita income increased about ten-fold between 1966 and 1999; the primary school enrolment rate went from 50% in 1966 to 97% in 1999; adult literacy rates improved from 41% in 1970 to over 79% in 1999; the mortality rate of children under the age of five dropped from 151 per 1,000 live births in 1971 to 56 in 1991; the infant mortality rate fell from 108 deaths per thousand live births in 1966 to 38 in 1999; malnutrition among children under the age of five declined from 25% in 1978 to less than 13% in 1996 (UNDP, 2000). Primary health care is available to 80% of the rural population who are within 15 kilometres radius of a health clinic. Households with access to potable water went from 56% to 83% between 1981 and 1994.

The sources of this have been the exploitation of deposits of diamonds and minerals, a beef export industry that has preferred status with Europe, and a tourism policy that has courted the top-end of the market. But it is diamonds that have been the engine of growth. The domestic cost of production is low compared to their overseas sales value (priced in American dollars) and as a result, diamond sales for Botswana are extremely profitable (Jefferis, 1998). By the early 1980s, diamonds had replaced beef as Botswana’s leading foreign exchange earner: in 1981, diamond exports accounted for 40% of total exports—in the first quarter of 2001 it was 87% (Republic of Botswana, 2002b). Importantly, in 1975 the

state successfully negotiated with De Beers Diamond Company for a 50-50 share ownership in all of the country's diamond mines (compared to the previous 85-15 percent share in favour of De Beers).<sup>3</sup> This more equitable share holding has provided the state with influence over the mines' wage policies as well as the ability to authorise expansion when deemed necessary. The receipts accrued from the mines have allowed the government to invest considerably in a wide variety of development schemes starting with the 1974 Accelerated Rural Development Program, whereby the government committed a considerable amount of money toward building roads, dams, clinics, schools, and water reticulation schemes. Such a broad development project ran alongside financing market-enabling policies traditionally associated with developmental states. This came on the back of the 1969 re-negotiation of the 1910 Southern African Customs Union Agreement which gave Botswana a larger share of the revenue pool than was possible under the old Agreement. This new source of income enabled Botswana to end its dependence on British grants-in-aid as early as 1972/73, now referred to as the "Year of Our Second Independence" (Tsie, 1998: 9).

However, as is obvious, an abundance of natural resources such as diamonds or cattle is no guarantee of success and does not explain Botswana's developmental record. It is the utilisation of these resources and the way in which the state has managed such receipts *and why* that needs explaining. In part this may be accounted for by the powerful sway of rural exporters, strategically situated at the highest levels of the state and bureaucracy, who have influenced economic policy. This has had the effect of avoiding the common "African bias" against rural operations in favour of the urban areas (Bates, 1981). In fact, the more rural-linked ruling class from which many of the early post-independence elites sprang from, represented a formative national bourgeoisie that stands in contrast to many other African states.

### **"Development" in Botswana and the "developmental state"**

There is of course a major problem in defining a developmental state simply from its economic performance: not all countries with good growth rates are developmental states. 'The definition of the "developmental state" runs the risk of being tautological since evidence that the state is developmental is often drawn deductively from the performance of the economy. This produces a definition of a state as developmental if the economy is

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<sup>3</sup> Also crucial was the fact that the state had secured mineral rights for the central government after Khama had persuaded his Bangwato tribe to relinquish their communal mineral rights over the newly discovered diamond reserves at Orapa and the copper/nickel location at Selebi-Phikwe, both in the former Bangwato Reserve (renamed "Central District"). Once the Bangwato agreed, all other tribes followed suit—thus the newly discovered minerals went to the national treasury, rather than being captured by local ethnic interests.

developing, and equates economic success to state strength while measuring the latter by the presumed outcomes of its policies' (Mkandawire, 1998: 2). Referring to Africa specifically, Mkandawire goes on to add that the definition of a developmental state is one whose 'ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development' (ibid.).

These ideological underpinnings are required in order to give the developmental project a "hegemonic" aspect to it, in the sense that the project gains consensus and attracts broad sections of the populace (see below). In Botswana this might be said to go back to the first presidency of Sir Seretse Khama who was conscious of developing what had been hitherto a relative backwater of the British Empire (Parsons et al., 1995). Woo-Cumings (1999: 8) has argued that nationalism and a national vision lies at the heart of a developmental state. The slogan *ditiro tsa ditlhabololo* ('work for development') underpinned the trajectory post-1966 under Khama with a strong sense of nationalism. Indeed, Seretse Khama asserted:

When we attained independence in 1966 we had no economic base from which to proceed with the development of our country. Our chances of survival as a viable country were almost nil but we were not discouraged nor could we ever willingly return to the old days of colonial neglect. Having accepted the challenges of independence we had no other alternative but to get down to work to make our independence a meaningful one (Khama, 1980: 323).

The very process of nation-building post-independence took on a nature that was inspired by the fundamental task of development. This developmental ethos was accepted and advanced by the political and bureaucratic elites and, concomitantly, this project gained widespread acceptance amongst the populace. Attempting to account for how and why a disciplined and competent state apparatus emerged post-independence and how this developed into a hegemonic project is then crucial in accounting for Botswana's "developmental state". Obviously, any developmental strategy cannot be—and is not—neutral: all developmental strategies are intimately linked to accumulation systems at the same time. In Botswana, 'the members of the BDP and the political elite that emerged after 1966 had important interests in the cattle industry, the main productive sector of the economy. This meant that it was in the interests of the elite to build infrastructure and generally develop institutions...which promoted not only national development, but also their own economic interests' (Acemoglu et al., 2001: 44). It is axiomatic that class relations within Botswana lies at the heart of any explanation of the country's trajectory.

## **Explaining class dynamics in Botswana**

Touching on one of the main factors in accounting for Botswana's post-independence history, it has been said that 'a key force that distinguishes successful from failed states is the social chemistry of the dominant class and the discipline of its leadership' (Samatar, 1999: 6). According to this argument, Botswana's status as a developmental state is located in a professional Weberian-style bureaucracy that has conducted and implemented policy-making efficiently, made possible by an essential alliance amongst elites. Molutsi (1989a: 105) has identified five fractions of the ruling elite in Botswana: elected representatives; traditional rulers; the higher echelons of the bureaucracy; the business elite; and leading cattle-ranchers. Much of these actors can be located in two or more of these ranks. Here, the idea of a post-colonial historic bloc, borrowed from Gramsci but applied to the African situation by Bayart (1993) is most useful.<sup>4</sup> Bayart argues that the elites holding power within the African context cannot be reduced *à la* classical Marxism to one class, namely the bourgeoisie. Nor can the ruling elite simply be passed off as an alliance of social forces. Rather, the historic bloc represents a dialectical unity between the base and superstructure, between the intellectuals and masses and between the articulation of theory and practice—in this case, between the state's developmental ideology and its implementation. This historical bloc seeks to "capture" and maintain the levers of state power in its quest to build a hegemonic project and reflects 'the necessary reciprocity between structure and superstructure' (Gramsci, 1971: 366). This relationship is actualised via intellectual, moral and political modes that transcend confined notions of economic-corporate interests and instead reflect freer "ethico-political" ones. This ethico-political aspect serves to assist in building both economic configurations but also supplies a justifying and legitimising aspect. Pempel argues that such a project reflects 'broad and coherent thrusts or biases in the behaviour of nation-states':

Implicit in this notion of regime is the expectation that specific components of state and societal power will be mutually reinforcing (though not necessarily without challenge) and that public actions will reflect this interaction. In short, the character of a regime is determined by the societal coalitional base on which a state rests, the power of that stage...and the institutionalisation and bias of the public policies that result (1999: 158).

In most African countries this has been a fragmentary and incomplete process, but such a historic bloc has been remarkably stable in Botswana, with the ruling coalition of elites co-opting or integrating the leaders of the most important social factions within Botswana society, what we might refer to as the "assimilation of elites", as well articulating the

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<sup>4</sup> In Gramscian terms, a historic bloc represents an amalgamation of economic, political and cultural elements of society into a broad political alliance of coalitions that combines coercion and consent.

relationship between intellectuals and the masses through prolonged control of most levers of the media (Bayart, 1993: 150-179).

Alavi (1979: 41) has commented that in general, post-colonial formations inherited a weak local bourgeoisie and as a result, were historically interventionist. In the case of Botswana there is truth in this: the country at independence was incredibly underdeveloped:

Despite more than eighty years of British rule, Botswana inherited very little in 1966: very little infrastructure and very few people with education, training, or experience except that provided by traditional activities and low level work in South African mines and farms...until independence...the country had no capital city, nor even the benefits of the small spending power of the colonial administration (Harvey and Lewis, 1990: 15).<sup>5</sup>

Having a shared desire to consolidate their hold on the post-independent state as a means to accumulate and gain influence, the elites that emerged at and after independence joined to form a nascent bloc. As the construction of hegemony cannot be separated from the concept of a bloc, neither can the notion of reciprocity: the development plans advanced by the ruling party which have benefited a broad section of the country might be seen in this light. This created a “virtuous circle” of support where there existed the usage of state machinery to reward supporters and at the same time generated further support, predicated on policies that broadly benefited the long-term interests of the nation’s economy (Pempel, 1990: 16). At the same time, as Miliband (1994: 11) remarked, the hegemony constructed also reflected the capacity of the ruling classes to persuade subordinate ones that, whatever they may think of the social order being built, there was “no alternative” to it. In Botswana, there is evidence that both (consent and resignation) operated in tandem. This was facilitated by early pronouncements by Khama regarding Botswana’s position in the regional and global economy and repeated exhortations to the citizenry to make sacrifices for the “greater good” of the nation (see many of the speeches in Khama, 1980, for a flavour of this). Representative of this message was the persistent call for Botswana to exercise “responsibility” and accept their condition lest the country become destabilised. This was often couched in paternalistic rhetoric, for instance, telling trade unionists that:

[Y]ou do not live in isolation from the rest of the country and its economic realities...[A]s I told you in 1971, you are first and foremost Botswana and your first responsibility is to assist in the development of the country. If you exercise your freedom to bargain for higher wages without restraint, you will be deliberately avoiding this responsibility...Until we achieve greater self-sufficiency and cut down on our imports from other countries, we are going to be faced with rising prices over which we have no control (Khama, 1980: 327, 328).

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<sup>5</sup> It should here be added that observers have remarked that the state of underdevelopment, particularly post-World War One onwards, was a by-product of a form of “connivance” between the colonial administration and the tribal chiefs, who saw development as the corollary of White settler land alienation. See Parsons, 1985.

Such appeals to national solidarity, combined with the active provision of services, helped craft and consolidate the legitimacy of the bloc in the eyes of the ruled: satisfying the criteria that a developmental state must have legitimacy and be able to demonstrate performance. In short, the beneficial spin-offs from Gaborone's developmental strategy were the consensual elements found in Gramsci's classical definition of hegemony as being consent plus coercion. The 'dominant relations of production set up by the cattle petty bourgeoisie...the removal of discriminatory legislation in commerce, provision of credit and extension services to local businessmen and farmers, and the encouragement of foreign capital' further served to solidify this consensual support (Tsie, 1995: 66). This hegemony contained psychological aspects to it 'involving some kind of acceptance—not necessarily explicit—of the socio-political order or of certain vital aspects of that order' (Femia, 1981: 37). In Botswana this took on both class and ethnic characteristics, where Tswana dominance, until very recently (see below) was broadly accepted: 'What is remarkable in Botswana is how much, up till now, the legitimacy of Tswana-dom has been accepted and even supported by non-Tswana groups' (Parsons, 1985: 28).

Crucially, at independence the first president, Seretse Khama, enjoyed a legitimacy, drawn from his position as (former) chief of the dominant Tswana tribe (the Bangwato) that was unrivalled. Khama's charismatic style of leadership and his integrity, combined with the aforementioned natural authority undoubtedly helped secure the BDP and, shaped the system of governance erected post-1966 (Nordås et al., 1998: 53). This, coupled with the legacy of neglect left by the British meant that there was no real organised opposition to Khama's agenda. Indeed, negotiations for the transfer of power by London were conducted almost exclusively between local elites and the colonial administration, and did not encompass the ordinary rank and file. This led to a situation where, during Seretse Khama's tenure at least, the electorate of Botswana was steeped in a traditionalist culture of respect for authority which hindered any disputing of the post-colonial dispensation and overlooked questions of class. This granted space to Khama and his BDP to begin the task of establishing a hegemonic position within post-independence Botswana, something that his royal status had importantly prepared the ground for. As Gramsci (1971: 57-58) wrote, 'the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership"...A social group can, and indeed must already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power)'.

At the same time, the emergent national elite 'became conscious of the fact that its interests would be better served by private capitalist accumulation rather than state



capitalism, because...the state itself was in dire financial problems at independence and could not therefore be the sole means of accumulation. Consequently, this class did not necessarily see the state as a source of self-enrichment' (Tsie, 1998: 13). Instead, constructing an interventionist state to facilitate development and hence the accumulation of capital, was the main vehicle advancing the nascent bourgeois' interests. We might even say that the state took on the role to promote this bourgeoisie and stimulate the development of this class.

The vacuum at independence was a double-edged sword, for whilst it meant a state lacking in indigenous capacity, it also gave Khama and his circle the space to strip possible alternative centres of influence, in particular the chiefs, of their political power, whilst they sought to construct the BDP's position. Any chiefly threat to the new state's legitimacy was nipped in the bud: the Chieftainship Act of 1965 meant that power was granted to the president to recognise, or not recognise, a traditional ruler, making all chiefs subordinate to the central government. In addition, a House of Chiefs was established, but with no legislative powers (Somolekae and Lekorwe, 1998). Essentially, the new state established new bodies (parliament, land boards, town and district councils, village development committees etc.) that replaced the traditional leaders and transferred authority from the traditional to the modern state. Though the chiefs became *ex-officio* members of local institutions because of their chiefly status, their positions were dependent on recognition by the state—something that could be (and was) withdrawn.

This incongruous position was compounded by their role as pre-modern chairs of thoroughly modernising institutions. Whilst traditional elites thus were seemingly incorporated into state structures in independent Botswana, the potency of their new found roles was profoundly circumscribed. This at one blow meant that potential opposition to the new government was dissolved and a potential site of alternative power removed. Instead, traditional rulers, dependant on the state for official recognition, served as facilitators for the implementation of policy, particularly in the rural areas. Whilst accorded respect and status, their role within Botswana was re-invented and chiefs became agents of the government at the grass-roots level, communicating at the *kgotla* (village assembly) information from the state for developmental purposes—in many respects acting as intellectuals in participating in a particular conception of what was going on in Botswana and contributing to that conception by communicating this to their tribesmen.

The relative autonomy of the political leadership in Botswana developed from such enduring linkages between Batswana traditional authority and its subjects, which the British protectorate did nothing to erode. At independence, the new leadership enjoyed "old" legitimacy but were also relatively autonomous from the dominant chiefly groups, as well as

the broader population (Samatar, 1999: 27-28). In addition, the absence of any coherent challenge from the opposition granted a great deal of space for the new government (and has continued to do so). The BDP were thus able to implement policies with both legitimacy and a lack of opposition able to overturn decisions: ‘the strength and cohesion of the ruling party in the National Assembly...made it possible for those in power to implement their market-oriented development strategy rather undiluted’ (Danevad, 1995: 395).

Certainly, the civil service tended to dictate policymaking (Somolekae, 1993: 116). Leading elements of the bureaucracy were assimilated into the broad historic bloc, creating a dynamic interaction between the various (cross-cutting) groups that stimulated policies favourable to the elites themselves but had the important knock-on effect of stimulating structural development as part of a “national” project. What occurred in Botswana was a “typical” developmental state situation where the bureaucracy and the ruling party meshed. This “social group” viz. the historic bloc was evidenced by the commonness of the recruitment of senior civil servants directly not just into the ruling party politics but into senior state positions (Charlton, 1991: 283). The classic example being, of course, current president Festus Mogae, who was variously been Planning Officer, Director of Economic Affairs, Alternate Governor for Botswana at the IMF, Governor of the Bank of Botswana, Permanent Secretary to the President, Secretary to the Cabinet, Minister of Finance and Development Planning and finally vice-president in 1992 before taking over the presidential reins in 1998.

Some claims have been made that the state overly favoured an elite fraction of cattle farmers (Picard, 1980; Parson, 1981). However, this presupposes a high degree of influence over policy by interest groups. Yet, the determining debates on a particular policy took place within the government, not in parliament or in public discussion. In short, it is dominant ministries, specifically the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), which shape policy outcomes. Molutsi (1989b: 126) has in fact asserted that:

Without denying that important government policies benefit the rich and influential sections of society...the state is not *sui generis* an instrument of local shopkeepers and cattle owners. Instead it is capable because of its relative autonomy from the major classes in society of concurrently advancing accumulation programmes in favour of the propertied classes on the one hand and welfare programmes for the poor masses on the other. The latter especially is important if the state is to establish itself as legitimate for the entire population.

Indeed, allegations regarding the capture of the state by a specific class fraction cannot explain the BDP’s hegemony since 1966: coercion and the partisan allocation of resources to some supposed cattle aristocracy would have undermined any claim by the historic bloc to legitimacy. In short, the commitment by the post-independent elite to “development” and a

policy of diversification ‘went beyond the interests of a particular fraction of the ruling petty bourgeoisie to embrace broad capitalist interests’ (Tsie, 1995: 66). It can be argued that the autonomy of the bureaucracy and diverse ministries cushioned policy from special-interest lobbying, though perhaps at a cost of the democratic accountability of the bureaucracy which in turn granted space for the historic bloc to supply resources that developed consent to their rule within the electorate (Molomo, 1989). Indeed:

[R]ather than responding to interest group pressure, the government in Botswana tended to make its own analyses and then build support for shifts in a long-term strategy geared toward maintaining its generally impressive economic performance. Interaction with the public was intended more to *inform, instruct and persuade* (Brautigam 2000: 22, emphasis added).

Having said that, a note of clarification vis-à-vis the notion of autonomy needs to be sounded. Clearly, it is vital to distinguish whether the autonomy deliberated upon was autonomy of the state pertaining to any particular class (possible), or autonomy concerning the capital accumulation process, which is not possible. Social relations of production have a determining effects in the first instance, rather than the last and the state is not a direct expression of narrow class interest, retaining a degree of autonomy through the constructed separation within social reality of “economics” from “politics”. According to Rupert:

This historic condition enables the differentiation of a sphere of private, economic activities from one of public, political action...To the extent that this condition—i.e. formal separation of the economic and the political—is reproduced in capitalist state-societies, it distances state managers (i.e. executive officers, bureaucrats and administrators) from the immediate imperatives of market competition which confront individuals (both capitalists and workers) in the capitalist economy. It thus creates the possibility of a state apparatus which acts in ways autonomous from the narrow economic interests of particular members of the dominant class [and] which represents itself in terms of the universal interests of the political community (Rupert, 1995: 40).

In Botswana, it is only relatively recently that an essentially benign paternalism vis-à-vis its citizens by the BDP government has consented to a more public and integrated agenda formulation with elements from outside the government. Representative of this might be seen in the High Level Consultative Committee, chaired by the President, which has opened up some space for a limited role by the organised private sector in commenting on economic policy before its formulation. This came after pressure from the capitalist class that their interests were being ignored by the state and might be seen as a device by government to shore up support from an increasingly influential bourgeoisie.

According to Gramsci, ‘every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and

hence to the interests of the ruling classes' (1971: 258). Importantly, regarding our consideration of hegemony, a moment exists when the ruling group 'becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too' (Gramsci, 1971: 181). The Batswana elite at independence may be said to have reflected Gramsci's proposition: aware that they were inheriting a profoundly underdeveloped political economy but (obviously) keen to advance their own class interests, the new state pursued a general developmental project that transcended narrow class interests—thus "capturing" the subordinate classes within the hegemonic discourse of "development"—whilst assiduously reproducing and developing capitalist relations of production.

Importantly, in the context of Botswana, the discovery of diamonds meant that a developmental project could be pursued on the one hand benefiting the nascent bourgeoisie through programmes geared towards infrastructure, cattle and commercial development and on the other hand, through the provision of basic services and a relative qualitative upliftment in the lives of the peasantry: granting the project a "national" rather than simply a class appearance. Thus even though inequality within the social formation increased, the lack of taxation from the central state (due to the in-flow of diamond receipts) and the empirical manifestation of service provision by the same state (totally absent prior to independence) granted a cloak of legitimacy to the post-1966 project: 'the peasantry did not see the growth of the economy's other sectors coming at their expense' (Samatar, 1999: 72).

### **The absence of counter-hegemonic projects in Botswana**

Like in other developmental states, social engineering is integral to the project. Similarly, as in other developmental states, groups in Botswana outside the state administration ("civil society" in traditional parlance) have been poorly developed and disorganised and democratic input weak (Molutsi and Holm, 1990). Opposition parties have been generally weak due to interminable intra-party faction fighting, internal splits, an unfavourable electoral system (i.e. "first past the post"), feeble organisational structures and poor capacity to promote alternative policies. The failure of opposition parties to unite and the propensity of opposition leaders to put their egos before everything has meant that Botswana is, and has been since 1966, a de facto predominant party system where the incumbent BDP has won each and every election by a landslide victory.

#### Number of seats won in Botswana's general elections

Party	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
BDP	28	24	27	29	28	31	31	33
BNF	-	3	2	2	5	3	13	6
BPP	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	-
BIP/IFP	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	-
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
TOTAL	31	31	32	32	34	34	40	40

#### Percent of popular vote won by party in Botswana's general elections

Party	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
BDP	80	68	77	75	68	65	55	54
BNF	-	14	12	13	20	27	37	25
BPP	14	12	6	8	7	4	4	-
BIP/IFP	5	6	4	4	3	2	4	-
BCP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
BAM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Other	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	0
Rejected	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5

The fragmented opposition in particular has meant that the BDP has enjoyed hegemonic—if not wholly unchallenged—status at the national level since independence (Mokopakgosi and Molomo, 2000; and Osei-Hwedie, 2001). As Chabal has noted, ‘the success of the state’s hegemonic drive in post-colonial Africa [has] depended not so much on the exercise of what appeared to be its power as a state but rather its ability to minimise the threat of counter-hegemonic politics’ (1994: 226). What has occurred in Botswana has been two-pronged vis-à-vis this point: the potentiality of the traditional leaders as a counter-hegemonic site was destroyed early on in the post-colonial dispensation and, perhaps just as importantly, the opposition’s ineptitude and factionalism has resulted in the emasculation of credible alternatives to the BDP—helping to sustain one-party domination in Botswana (Selolwane, 2001).

#### **Pilots for development: NDPs and the MFDP**

The crystallisation of the state’s development efforts have been the National Development Plans (NDPs). The NDPs have the advantage of granting policy implementers a great degree of space between them and the politicians. By this it is meant that a technical document,

drafted by experts and then approved by elected representatives, serves as the blueprint for government policy. 'Once the new plan is approved, politicians' proposals not in the plan are turned aside on the grounds that only emergency measures can be adopted until the next plan is formulated' (Molutsi, 1989a: 112). Botswana then echoed the developmental state of Johnson where 'the politicians reign and the state bureaucrats rule' (1981: 12). Crucially, the class interests of particular projects are obscured by the over-weening ideology affixed to the notion of "development". One of the successful aspects of the BDP's hegemonic project has been the ability to cast development as a class-neutral technocratic process whereby the state is cast as a benevolent provider of resources and services, irrespective of status. That this is of course not true is, at one level, beside the point: the BDP has successfully managed to portray this as common sense. As Mogalakwe remarks, 'for the most part of the post-colonial period the labour movement in Botswana has been reminded time and time again of its responsibility to the nation. The petty bourgeoisie state elite...have on various occasions stressed the need for "wages restraint", "industrial peace" and "political stability" in order to achieve "national development"' (1997: 74).

Indeed, the BDP 'has succeeded through its technocratic priorities of growth and stability (at the expense of participation and equity), in establishing a solvent enough state which is able to deliver public goods (roads, schools, watering facilities, clinics etc) on a non-tribal, non-regional basis, so as to ensure that the minimum requirements of jointness of supply and non-excludability are met. Ensuring that the state is seen as neutral, not as an ethnic body...contributes to its legitimacy and that of the regime' (Du Toit, 1995: 121). This emphasis on "national development" as a guiding ideological constructs has been absolutely crucial. According to Mkandawire, 'it is [the] ideology-structure nexus that distinguishes developmental states from other forms of states. In terms of ideology, such a state is essentially one whose ideological underpinning is "developmentalist" in that it conceives its "mission" as that of ensuring economic development' (1998: 2). In a conscious imitation of another developmental state's Vision 2020 (i.e. Malaysia), a Presidential Task Group produced a document entitled "A Framework for a Long Term Vision for Botswana". The "Vision 2016" is supposed to be a national manifesto to guide future NDPs as well as broad government policy and is a statement of long term goals with proposals for a set of strategies to meet these (Republic of Botswana, 1997). Vision 2016 and the various NDPs are an indication of the developmentalist orientation of the historic bloc as 'by planning within the context of a market economy, government policy has tended to influence the direction of government expenditure during the planning period while providing an environment in which private sector activity can thrive' (Mkandawire, 1998: 334).

But, the state elite's commitment to "development" alone obviously does not explain

Botswana's experience. This commitment needed to be co-ordinated with institutional capacity for to create a developmental state the whole government machinery must be subordinated to the leadership of an economic agency of the state (Maudeni, 2001: 18). Yet, at the same time, this institution building was not simply a bureaucratic procedure or the result of technocratic excellence, but sprang from political determinations, and 'if the politics do not give rise to the kind of state which can generate, sustain and protect an effective and independent capacity for governance, then there will be no positive developmental consequences' (Leftwich, 1993: 619-620). In Botswana the political milieu that developed post-1966 saw to it that an economic agency that spearheaded developmental policies was located in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, which was situated in the Vice-President's office. In fact, it is pertinent to point out that prior to becoming president after Seretse Khama's death, Quett Masire was Minister of Finance and Development Planning and had been Vice-President for fourteen years. Similarly, prior to assuming the presidency in 1998, current president Festus Mogae had been Masire's Vice-President for five years as well as being Minister of Finance and Development Planning. In addition, Peter Mmusi, who resigned as Vice-President in 1993, had also been Minister of Finance and Development Planning. Such a Ministry and its close links to the Executive has secured a balance between development planning and budgeting, as well as strengthening the capacity to implement national goals and demonstrating a commitment to economic development.

Such a commitment came about after a struggle within the Ministry of Finance in the immediate post-independence period. Essentially two factions fought over the new country's future economic policy. On the one hand, the Permanent Secretary Alfred Beeby, insisted on the need to "balance the books" and 'refused to entertain any ideas about economic development until moneys were in hand' (Morton and Ramsay, 1994: 63). Opposed to this conservative stance were a group of young economists such as Pierre Landell-Mills and Quill Hermans who favoured an 'aggressive planning for economic growth, identification of potential projects, and then finally lobbying internationally for potential sources of aid or loans to finance the projects. Moreover, they even promoted the idea of borrowing money to finance development' (ibid.). The latter fraction had the ear of Quett Masire, then vice-president. Beeby had Landell-Mills thrown out of the civil service for "insubordination", which for a period of six weeks (November-December 1966) caused a rift between Masire and President Khama. The matter was finally resolved after a commission of enquiry that eventually saw the creation of the Ministry of Development Planning (MDP) with Hermans as permanent secretary and Landell-Mills as senior government economist. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the foundations for the Botswana developmental state were laid during the "Landell-Mills affair" in the sense that afterwards the key Ministry of

Development Planning was developmentally-driven whilst the objectives of the bureaucrats were politically-driven and supported by both Seretse Khama and Quett Masire.

The MDP became, in 1970, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. According to one account (Parsons et al., 1995: 275), the 'MFDP in some respects challenged the Office of the President as the premier ministry in Gaborone—dominating the “line ministries” that dealt with sectors of the political economy such as agriculture, education, health, water development, roads and so on’. The MFDP played an extremely important role, particularly in the early days of independence, in identifying suitable development projects via detailed developmental planning and the successful solicitation of external funding at a time when local capital was scarce. Because of the high degree of professionalism within the bureaucracy and the scope granted to the MFDP in advocating projects, the state was highly successful in securing donor funding. With the discovery of diamonds at Orapa in 1970, the MFDP under Masire then decided to embark on a project to borrow capital with the knowledge that these loans could be paid off. Capital was then diverted for ‘roads, schools, hospitals, parastatal Botswana Development Corporation investments and civil service expansion. As a result the economy expanded at an accelerated rate and manufacturing and commercial activity took off in the urban areas’ (ibid.). By 1980 the receipts from diamonds allowed Gaborone to pay off all its debts and the MFDP then returned to its former position of not incurring debts in excess of projected state earnings, a policy it largely adheres to today.

### **The Botswana state as an entrepreneurial agent**

The rhetorical commitment to development may well be seen as the articulation of a realisation of a life in common which might be seen to underpin the developmental state. The role of the state as a facilitator (or “entrepreneurial agent”) and the early sea-change in philosophy from Beeby’s fiscal conservatism to Landell-Mills et al’s more development-oriented policies was crucial, with the state not shying away from an active involvement in the market. Pilot institutions were built to stimulate growth in the private sector—the Botswana Development Corporation (BDC) being a prime example. The BDC was established in 1970 as Botswana’s main agency for commercial and industrial development and is the premier development finance institution in the country. All its ordinary shares are owned by the government of Botswana. The BDC’s primary objective is to assist in the establishment and development of businesses in Botswana. Its roles include the provision of financial assistance to investors with commercially viable projects, building partnerships with investors and supporting projects that generate employment for Botswana (Kaunda, 1999). An important aim of the BDC is to encourage citizen participation in business ventures (see



Botswana Development Corporation, 1985; 1995; and 2000). This sprang from a recognition by the state elites that any reproduction of capitalist society in Botswana can best be secured through the creation of employment, especially in the non-mining sectors, and that with the relatively weak state of the local bourgeoisie, state promotion of industrial development, rather leaving things to “the market” alone, was required.

Similarly, the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority, set up by the government in November 1997, seeks to promote investment into Botswana with special emphasis on export oriented manufacture, the identification of market outlets for products manufactured in Botswana and the construction of factory buildings. Reflecting the close links between the public and private sector, the board of directors of BEDIA is made up of private sector representatives as well as representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

The Financial Assistance Programme (FAP) was another example of the state as an entrepreneurial agent.<sup>6</sup> Established in 1982 and revised in 1989 and 1995, FAP was created to assist businesses which produce or process goods for import substitution or for export. Large-scale mining and the cattle industry were excluded from FAP. Eligible activities for assistance included manufacturing, small and medium scale mining, agriculture other than cattle, selected “linking” service industries and tourism. However, despite good intentions, FAP became seen as a non-sustainable project. Most investors only came to Botswana due to the strong incentives offered through FAP, such as tax-free grants and fixed capital assistance. The effective result was that many “investors” paid little or nothing in making their investments and there was widespread abuse of the programme (Good and Hughes, 2002). FAP failed in generating any meaningful indigenous class of entrepreneurs.

The problem for Botswana was—and remains—that there is actually little reason for investing in manufacturing in the country. Firstly, the import burden from the strong exchange rate of the pula vis-à-vis other regional currencies is very high (the pula is approximately 30% stronger than the South African rand). The very limited domestic market and the lack of locational advantage against other competition from within SACU also weigh against Botswana. These factors, combined with the strong domestic belief that FAP was a scheme that mostly “fly-by-night” foreigners could scam the country meant that FAP became seen as not only a non-sustainable development option for Botswana but also one that was acting *against* citizen empowerment (ibid.).

Despite the failure of FAP, the scheme has not been abolished. Instead, the government recently established the Citizen Entrepreneurial Development Agency (CEDA),

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<sup>6</sup> For a critical discussion of FAP, see Kaplinksy, 1991.

to manage existing and new programmes for the development of citizen-owned businesses. This will be facilitated through the development of and access to entrepreneurial and management skills training, monitoring and mentoring, as well as through the provision of finance and sharing of risks. The financial assistance provided is in the form of loans at subsidised interest rates, as opposed to outright grants, as was the case with FAP. The interest rates charged on small and medium scale CEDA loans are highly subsidised and the repayment periods are generous. These loans are available both for the setting up of new businesses and expansion of existing ones (Mogae, 2001). CEDA also provides venture capital funding where CEDA expects market-related payoffs. However, the record of parastatal financial institutions lending to citizen-opened businesses in Botswana is generally weak. Whilst clearly the state wishes to retain its role as an entrepreneurial agent, it has found it difficult to face up to the failure of its indigenous petty bourgeoisie to play any meaningful role in the economy (Kaunda and Miti, 1995). Despite decades of rapid GDP growth and export (i.e. minerals and beef) success, the economy has failed to diversify and remains under-developed.

Diversification is usually stimulated from two sources: foreign direct investment (FDI) and domestic investment (as the local bourgeoisie appear and engage in non-traditional economic operations). Botswana however has not managed to attract meaningful FDI. This has much to do with the fact that 'the global economy has, for the most part, no desire to deal with a small, landlocked political economy located far from major global markets' (Swatuk, 1997: 91). FDI has in the main been rather sporadic and linked to unique mega-projects such as the now-defunct Hyundai motor assembly plant in Gaborone. The FAP has, it must be said, failed to provide impetus to any role for FDI in the country's diversification. At the same time, the domestic bourgeoisie has been highly conservative, restricting their activities in the main to the traditional sectors such as cattle farming. One of the failings of the developmental state in Botswana is the lack of promotion for a national industrial bourgeoisie. What monetary liquidity that has existed has been ploughed into unsustainable consumption-oriented credit, with only small amounts being put into service-related business ventures.

### **Weaknesses in the economy**

Although the state has sought to diversify the economy away from its traditional export base of minerals and towards manufacturing, the government has found this to be problematic. Botswana has been unable to emulate the developmental states in Asia such as South Korea or Taiwan in building up a large-scale competitive manufacturing base. The fact that manufacturing has remained at around 5% of GDP over the last five years compared to

mining's 30-40% is often held up as a major failing of the country's development experience (Mhone, 1996). The table below seems to concur with this assessment:

Percentage of GDP by selected industrial sectors, 1989-2000 (Republic of Botswana, 2002b: 33)

	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95
Agriculture	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.9	5.1	3.9
Mining	44.7	41.1	37.7	33.8	43.4	33.8
Manufacturing	4.9	4.7	5.0	4.8	4.7	5.0
Construction	7.1	7.2	7.5	6.5	7.8	6.3
Trade, hotels & restaurants	7.0	6.8	5.5	5.3	9.7	9.6
Fin. Services	7.1	7.7	8.1	9.7	12.5	11.0
Government	12.3	13.9	14.2	15.7	15.5	15.4

	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01
Agriculture	4.1	3.4	3.4	3.0	2.6	2.5
Mining	33.8	38.9	38.0	31.1	33.1	36.6
Manufacturing	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.2	4.9	4.7
Construction	6.2	5.7	5.7	6.3	5.6	5.4
Trade, hotels & restaurants	10.1	10.1	10.0	10.9	10.8	9.5
Fin. Services	11.4	10.0	10.3	11.2	10.9	10.9
Government	14.9	14.0	14.5	17.4	16.2	16.1

However, whilst it is true that the state's attempts to diversify how the economy is shared out by sector has not seen significant fruition, a cautionary note should be sounded over concentrating on the shares of GDP—particularly within the context of an economy dominated by an extremely high value industry such as diamond mining. In simplistic terms, increased revenues from mining or the discovery of one diamond mine may obliterate any gains in share of GDP by all other industrial sectors.<sup>7</sup> But, this does not mean that growth in these other sectors has not occurred. In fact, a look at the figures indicates that relatively healthy growth in other sectors of the economy has occurred, even whilst mining continues to rise:

<sup>7</sup> Likely to get worse now that Botswana opened the new Damtshaa diamond mine at the end of May, 2002, that is expected to yield approximately five million carats of diamonds in its 30 year life span.

Annual growth in percentage of GDP by selected industrial sectors, 1989-2000 (Republic of Botswana, 2002b: 33)

	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
Agriculture	8.0	10.4	21.3	5.1	3.5	21.6
Mining	6.5	1.5	-2.5	28.4	4.8	15.8
Manufacturing	11.3	17.1	5.6	-1.7	43.1	17.9
Construction	17.2	15.6	-6.5	20.5	9.2	14.1
Trade, Hotels & restaurants	11.2	-10.6	5.2	83.6	33.5	21.8
Financial Services	24.3	17.5	30.1	29.0	17.5	20.1
General govt.	31.2	13.0	20.5	19.2	10.3	12.6

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01
Agriculture	2.3	14.5	-5.1	1.7	7.6
Mining	43.9	11.0	-12.7	25.3	22.6
Manufacturing	21.5	14.6	11.5	10.0	10.3
Construction	15.0	13.4	17.9	4.7	9.8
Trade, Hotels & restaurants	24.4	13.1	15.9	16.9	-0.1
Financial Services	9.9	17.1	15.9	14.6	14.4
General govt.	16.8	17.8	28.5	9.4	13.4

Thus whilst superficial readings of the economy may focus in on the dominance of one sector (mining) and lament the failure to diversify per GDP percentage share, actual figures reveal that all other sectors in the economy have grown quite healthily: between 1989 and 2000, manufacturing grew on average 14.8% per year; construction by 15.5%; trade, hotels and restaurants by 24.4%; and financial services (banking and insurance) by 20.0%. Mining in contrast grew by 10.8%.

Having said this, a major problem is that the high rate of GDP growth *has* been ineffectual in broadening and diversifying the economy, particularly vis-à-vis capturing the bulk of Botswana's labour force and creating productive employment and safeguarding a sustainable increase in employment opportunities. The fact is that paid employment in the formal sector remains elusive for most: unemployment officially is 21% but unofficial estimates place it closer to 40% (*Botswana Guardian* (Gaborone) February 22, 2002). In addition, with few exceptions (education and central government), there has been negligible

growth in the number of people employed within each sector. This can be seen as contradictions stemming from Botswana's choice of a capitalist development policy.

Despite the strong growth record of Botswana over twenty years, the country suffers from persistent and increasing unemployment and under-employment. This is due to not only the poor state of the agricultural sector but also to the insufficient employment provided by non-agricultural sectors. In fact, a notable part of the country's inhabitants are engaged, if at all, in low-productivity activities either in the informal sector such as hawking or in the traditional agricultural sector. This poor employment situation in the formal economy and continuing high levels of income inequality and poverty relate to the failure to restructure the economy, although as has been mentioned, other sectors of the economy *are* growing at healthy rates. But, unemployment and inequality are, it should be also pointed out, in part a result of Botswana's limited absorptive capacity and the amount and geographical distribution of the population. At only 1.7 million, Botswana's population simply do not have the sufficient absorptive capacity for domestic production. Certainly, in many rural settlements, the population is much too small to support businesses on a scale that could make an impact on unemployment and poverty. That is why most rural settlements consist of a shop, a bottle store and perhaps a garage at most.

A major contradiction of the economy though is the fact that the country's diamond dependence has meant that there has been a lack of urgency to try and change. The income from diamonds is a cushion that tempts many in the country to ignore the negative structural features of the economy and, obfuscates growing class contradictions. Whilst the going is good (and this has been largely the case ever since independence), the historic bloc has been able to construct a hegemonic mode of rule by prioritising development issues alongside capitalist accumulation. But, whether the BDP would be able (or willing) to continue this if there ever was a period of economic crisis remains to be seen: no doubt, the economy would become the decisive issue in any struggles for a reconstituted hegemony. State strategies to avoid this scenario (economic crisis) have not been overly successful and the receipts from diamonds, although increasing savings rates, boosting consumption and providing massive revenue for the state have, in effect, intensified the reality of Botswana being heavily dependent upon diamonds and consequently, living on borrowed time. This essential point leads to discussing other contradictions in the developmental state that may, if not adequately addressed in the future, undermine the historic bloc's hegemonic rule.

### **The under-side to Gaborone's story**

Although Botswana has performed relatively better than other African economies, it faces major problems that if not resolved may lead to the deconstruction of the BDP's hegemonic

position. In particular, the country faces serious problems related to equity within society (Good, 1993; Hope, 1996; Nteta, et al., 1997; and Jefferis and Kelly, 1999). It is a moot point that not everyone has benefited meaningfully from raised incomes or higher standards of living—although the extensive provision of health and education facilities as well as access to water and a decent transport infrastructure tends to muddle this.

Botswana currently ranks the thirteenth African country on the UNDP's Human Development Index of 2001, ranked at 114 behind Libya (59), Mauritius (63), Tunisia (89), Cape Verde (91), South Africa (94), Algeria (100), Egypt (105), Gabon (109), Equatorial Guinea (110), Namibia (111), Morocco (112) and Swaziland (113) (UNDP, 2001). It should however be pointed out that high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates and the concomitant increase in mortality rates is the main cause for Botswana to slip 51 places down the HDI rankings from an impressive 71 in 1996 to 122 in 1999 and 2000 and now 114 (UNDP, 2001). Yet, four out of five rural households survive on income of a family member in town or abroad. 'That still leaves a significant number of rural households, usually female-headed, with no source of income known to statisticians' (Parsons, 2000). The creation of a more equitable society and the fairer distribution of resources is now Botswana's greatest developmental challenge and on which will define the success or otherwise of the post-independence project.

Although some of the inequality in the country is due to specific policy choices, it is also true that 'some of the contradictions of Botswana's development policy are rooted in the capitalist system that the country has followed...Here one has in mind the tendency of capitalist economies to generate severe income inequalities in the early stages of their development' (Tsie, 1998: 15). This is not absolving the BDP of its neglect in poverty-reduction, for this is a reality in the country. But, it is true that some scholars have asserted that income inequality of Botswana citizens is declining. Studies in fact point to a decline in households falling below the poverty line from 58 per cent in 1985/86 to 46 per cent in 1993/94, although it must be pointed out that nearly half of Botswana's households remain in poverty. But there has been some "trickle down" from Botswana's growth. After allowing for inflation, households at the lowest income percentile saw an increase in their monthly income rise by 37% in real terms (Jefferis and Kelly, 1999: 218).

### **Declining hegemony of the BDP(?)**

The government does seem to recognise that a more pro-active stance on inequality should be put in place (see Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis, 1996). Failure to do so may very well lead to the strengthening of the opposition and an increasing challenge to the BDP. This of course is "normal" politics, as hegemony is essentially unstable and no interest can secure the lasting and unchanging consent of all other groups. Hegemony is constantly

renegotiated—the failure to address the issue of inequality as well as other issues in Botswana will probably see a challenge to the current order (albeit not teleological given the wretched state of Botswana’s opposition parties). A failure to seriously address such pressing concerns would however stimulate such contradictions, or at least generate space to do so.

Already there are signs that the hegemony of the BDP’s non-racial, development-oriented vision is under attack. Ethnic rivalries, always hidden, have now begun to emerge, particularly rotating around the role that the eight constitutionally-recognised tribes play in the country and the space that other tribes should (or should not) occupy.<sup>8</sup> Unprecedented public criticism by the “lesser” tribes has been a recurrent feature of intellectual discourse of late. Previously “quiet” tribes such as the Wayeyi and the Bakalanga have openly questioned why Setswana is the only African official language in the country (English is the other official tongue) and there have even been letters in the newspaper demanding that Botswana change its name from the allegedly tribally chauvinist “Botswana” to something neutral (*Botswana Gazette* (Gaborone) February 25, 2002). So too has the emergence of ethnically specific organisation fighting for “their” corner. Kalanga activists have established the Society for the Promotion of Ikalanga Language (SPIL), whilst Pitso ya Batswana, a Batswana cultural group, was established to oppose “minor” tribes. Such ethnic activism, largely unheard of under Khama, has begun to divide the elites, with ‘many BDP members of parliament and senior civil servants...align[ing] themselves with either of the two’ (*Botswana Gazette*, (Gaborone) October 17, 2001).

In addition, open racism and xenophobia has emerged, something which had previously been taboo. The speaker of the House of Chiefs, Chief Tawana Moremi, has expressed openly racist rhetoric in public on a great number of occasions, once actually saying he ‘hate[s] foreigners, especially Whites’ (*Midweek Sun* (Gaborone) June 6, 2001). Importantly, his comments were not met with howls of protest by the general public or media—indicating, perhaps, a tacit approval of such sentiments.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, given the specifically class-based nature of the developmental state, class is virtually never mentioned in public discourse and certainly is *not* a mobilising tool for any counter-hegemonic project against the BDP. Whilst the tensions over tribalism and race may seem aberrations to some, the point is that such outbursts and agitation reveal a growing discontent with the current order. Perhaps such impulses reflect Gramsci’s contention that as hegemony breaks down, ‘the great masses...become detached from their traditional ideologies and no longer believe

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<sup>8</sup> Under the definition of “tribe” in the Chieftainship Act only the Bakgatla, Bakwena, Balete, Bangwato, Bangwaketse, Barolong, Batawana, and Batloka are named as tribes, and their chiefs are ex-officio members of the House of Chiefs. All other ethnic groups (such as the Wayeyi and the Basarwa) are excluded.

<sup>9</sup> On the growing racism and xenophobia in Botswana, see Nyamnjoh, 2001.

what they used to believe previously etc...the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear' in (1971: 276).

There is increasingly a palpable feeling among ordinary Batswana that the developmental record post-1966, whilst the benefits have been spread around to be sure, has disproportionately advantaged only a small section of the populace. It seems apparent that the citizenry are no longer prepared to grant their consent to the "nation-building" project and "sacrifice" themselves in the service of "the nation" as before. Touch paper issues such as "citizen empowerment" and a readiness to blame foreigners for most of the country's ills, as well as the emergence of tribal chauvinism, reflects these as yet inchoate but very real sentiments. Because the opposition is so inept, such tensions have not been politically organised as yet. But the ammunition for any populist leader to exploit and thereby start to deconstruct the BDP's hegemonic position is surely there.

Thus far this has not occurred, in part because people feel that, for all its faults, the BDP *has* delivered to a meaningful degree, despite the contradictions that have been highlighted. Certainly, there has not been what Chabal has depicted elsewhere on the continent a situation where 'the state's hegemonic drive...often resulted in the wholesale plunder of existing resources and in a consequent reduction in state revenues' (Chabal, 1994: 223). The benefits that the state has been able to distribute (albeit unevenly) has been a major contribution to the BDP's ability to establish a hegemonic position within Botswana, obfuscating as it does the class-biased nature of much of the state's policies.

Having said that, despite the criticism of inequality within the country, the developmental state *has* achieved respectable accomplishments and it can be argued that Botswana's strategy has shown that 'a disciplined activist African state that governs the market is essential for industrial development and recovery' (Owusu and Samatar, 1997: 270). We might concur with the assessment that 'Botswana [has] defied the thrust of prevailing development orthodoxy, which claims that African states cannot enhance industrial development through interventionist strategy. Botswana's state-governed industrial strategy supports aspects of recent research on the "East Asian miracle", which underscores the fundamental importance of state intervention in industrial transformation' (ibid.: 289). Equally, the 'primacy of politics' in the complex process of development has been fundamental and decisive, inferring that it is not *how much* state intervention should take place, but rather *what kind and why* (Leftwich, 2000).

Contra the neo-liberals, as Crawford Young wrote, 'there is no conceivable alternative to the state as prime organiser of change. Escape from poverty is impossible without collective societal intervention through the state' (1982: 19). This is not to be naïve and ignore the fact that the elite secured their predominance over nearly forty years through a



comprehensive and basically authoritarian (i.e. statist) conception of development which was allowed to mature in a climate where opposition was muted and/or impotent, even if there was a formal competitive framework.<sup>10</sup> The reproduction of the BDP's domination was based on the success of their economic project to "develop" Botswana through the construction of a developmental state. Springing from this, it is important to recognise:

[T]he appreciation by Botswana's leaders that the nurturing of the collective project of the elite need not completely deprive others of some of the benefits of good management and economic growth. The cognition of the partial "mutuality" of the interests of the dominant and the dominated classes enabled Botswana to adopt a more liberal democratic system rather than the usual one-party dictatorship that has characterised other states in the continent. Hence the possible confluence of a capitalist economic development programme and an "open" political process (Samatar and Oldfield, 1995: 668).

In short, the promotion of a nascent capitalist class whilst concomitantly advancing broad structural change within the country has been intrinsic in explaining the successful construction of the BDP's hegemony and granting a form of legitimacy to the country's "developmental state". This hegemony has meant that capital has been able to reproduce and reassert itself within the political economy, despite its inherent contradictions. The relative stability that Botswana has enjoyed post-1966 and the domination and seeming unassailable position by the BDP, despite the identifiable problems outlined above, spring from the successful hegemonic project embodied in the notion of a developmental state. How long this will last into the Twenty-first Century remains a moot point and debates over this and whether Botswana is entering an interregnum will stake out discussions of Botswana's political economy for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>10</sup> Having said that, caution should be made in making parallels to the authoritarian developmental states in East Asia—see Good, 1992.

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