

9  
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

872



INSTITUTE OF  
- 4 MAY 1983  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
LIBRARY

b/

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

STAFF SEMINAR PAPER

No. 14

CHANGES IN LESOTHO'S POLICY  
TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

David Hirschmann

November 1978

Note: This is an uncorrected proof of an article to be published in African Affairs shortly.

## CHANGES IN LESOTHO'S POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

DAVID HIRSCHMANN

IN THE PERIOD from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, a number of writers argued—generally along similar lines—that Lesotho's comprehensive dependence upon its neighbour would leave the country's political leaders with little, if any, alternative but to forge a policy of friendly and peaceful coexistence with South Africa. Their evaluation of the extremely restrictive milieu in which Lesotho's foreign policy could operate, and their assessment of the direction in which the ruling Basotho National Party (BNP) was in fact moving were both accurate. Although the altered course on which Prime Minister Jonathan's Government embarked towards the end of 1971 certainly upset any prophetic components of their analysis, it could scarcely have been anticipated. This article is therefore not intended as a criticism (with the benefit of hindsight) of these observations. Rather its purpose is threefold: to suggest a possible set of explanations for the change in policy; to engage in a 'stock-taking' exercise on the content of that change; and to place the change in some sort of perspective.

### I

The broad line of reasoning applied by those writing on Lesotho—South Africa relations commenced by listing the severe constraints on the independence of the small kingdom, in particular its almost unique predicament of being surrounded totally by one country; its complete reliance on South Africa for all communication with the outside world whether by rail, road, air or tele-communications; the tight linkages of the Customs Union and the *de facto* monetary union; and, most significantly, the large number of Basotho who depended on the Republic for employment and income. Thus Spence wrote of the 'Politics of Dependence', and Weisfelder of a country 'totally ensnared within the South African sphere of influence', while Halpern and Legum used the 'hostage' state analogy.<sup>1</sup>

From this basic proposition they moved on to assert that Lesotho as a 'client state' was strictly circumscribed in its foreign policy options, in particular in its relations with the Republic.<sup>2</sup> Thus, a South African observer wrote that

1. J. E. Spence, *Lesotho. The Politics of dependence* (London, 1968); R. F. Weisfelder, 'Lesotho and South Africa: diverse linkages', *Africa Today*, 18, 2, 1971, p. 48; J. Halpern, *South Africa's hostages: Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland* (Harmondsworth, 1965); and C. Legum, 'Hazards of a free Basutoland', *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, 9 June 1966, p. 12.

2. G. S. Gilley, *The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Lesotho* (unpublished MA dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1969), p. 5.

Maseru could simply not afford to 'indulge in the luxury of an irrational and emotional policy' towards Pretoria,<sup>3</sup> and Weisfelder concluded that

... any hope that this tiny black enclave will play a significant independent role requires considerable optimism and, possibly, a measure of credulity.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the dependence of the 'country' as such (to which the above writers give attention) one would need to focus on the extent to which the BNP itself and the interests it served were (and saw themselves as) reliant on and vulnerable to the South African Government. And, domestically, in Nolutshungu's terms, the specific 'degree of conservatism' must be seen to reflect 'the social basis' of the BNP's support, principally among the 'traditionalist elements' made up, in his view, of tribal chiefs, the white settlers (mostly traders), the Roman Catholic Church and 'the older generation of semi-literates'.<sup>5</sup>

Such views were verified by the policy statements of the BNP Government itself. The Party's 1965 Manifesto stressed that it was 'in the interests of the people' to cooperate with South Africa, while the 1970 Manifesto stated that five years of experience of power 'confirmed us in our belief' in the soundness of this policy.<sup>6</sup> Jonathan expanded on this to the UN General Assembly in September 1967,<sup>7</sup> and High Commissioner J. R. L. Kotsokoane told an audience in London in April 1969 that his country, having survived for 180 years, had no intention of committing 'national suicide' through bravado:

We believe that economic cooperation and interracial consultation can dispel fear and bring about political détente.<sup>8</sup>

## II

Simply put, the case was argued that a specific economic condition (of extreme dependence) resulted of necessity in a particular foreign policy (of good neighbourliness). In seeking an explanation for Lesotho's modified approach one will not, however, find an answer in any variation in the fundamental economic predicament of the country: dependence on South Africa has not been diminished. In terms of migrant labour, possibly the most crucial indicator, the situation has in fact deteriorated. In the years 1970-75, only 6,000 new jobs were created in Lesotho for a labour force which grew by 50,000 to 60,000, with the majority of the additional unemployed finding work across the border.<sup>9</sup>

3. A. J. van Wyk, *Lesotho: a political study* (Pretoria: The Africa Institute, 1967), p. 48.

4. Weisfelder, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

5. S. C. Nolutshungu, *South Africa and Africa. A study in ideology and foreign policy* (Manchester, 1975), p. 137. J. D. Holm, 'Political stability in Lesotho', *Africa Today*, 19, 4, 1972, pp. 3-16, takes note of the early indications of change in policy.

6. *Manifesto of the Basotho National Party* (Maseru, 1965), p. 3, Foreign Relations para. c (ii) and (iii); and *Basotho National Party Manifesto for the 1970 Elections*, Maseru, p. 4, relations with South Africa, para. b.

7. Gilley, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

8. J. R. L. Kotsokoane, 'Lesotho and her neighbours', *African Affairs*, 68, 271, 1969, p. 138. Also see *Speech by the Hon. the Prime Minister of Lesotho moving the 1969, 70 Development Fund Estimates of revenue and expenditure* (Maseru, 1969), para. 7.

9. Kingdom of Lesotho, *Second five-year development plan*, Volume one, 1975 76-1979/80, Maseru, pp. 13 and 43.

Thus it was estimated in 1975 that about 200,000 Lesotho citizens were working in the Republic, as compared with 27,000 in paid employment inside Lesotho.<sup>10</sup> Thus the principal characteristic of the Lesotho economy as a labour reserve remained unaltered.

The balance of trade—which is predominantly with South Africa—also presents a bleak picture, as the following table shows:

	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Deficit</i> <sup>11</sup>
1966	22.9	4.4	18.5 (Rand, m.)
1971	28.0	3.0	25.0 (Rand, m.)
1974	79.0	9.8	69.3 (Rand, m.)

The rapidly growing import bill included a steady increase in the purchase of staple food requirements. Reliance on South African road, rail and air links continues, although a direct telecommunications connection has been established with Nairobi and an international airport is planned.

Government revenues have grown markedly, principally in consequence of the combined effects of the operation of the 1969 Customs Union agreement and the raised wages of mine workers. Numerous projects, large and small, governmental and parastatal, agricultural, industrial, educational and infra-structural, have been initiated amidst fast-growing donor interest in Lesotho. While it will take time to assess the overall impact of these undertakings, those trends which are apparent manifest the continuation of all the major elements of a captive economy.

### III

One therefore has to seek further afield for possible explanations for the shift in policy. Eight reasons are suggested here: these are not of course exclusive of one another; they are in the main closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The first source of disaffection arose from the limited benefits realized from the policy of good neighbourliness, particularly in comparison with those anticipated. It had been expected in Maseru that the South African Government, appreciative of Lesotho's steps to facilitate its outward movement into Africa, would provide substantial financial aid by way of return. Jonathan—under severe criticism for his approach both from internal and external sources—needed as a matter of urgency to demonstrate its visible benefits. Unlike Malawi, which received capital aid, Lesotho gained no such favours. Further, the presence of South African seconded technical assistance personnel was

10. *Lesotho papers for central and southern African regional conference on problems of employment creation* (Maseru: Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, November 1975), p. 3.

11. S. Monsti, *Brief review of plan implementation* (Maseru: National Population Symposium, 1974), Table 2; further information provided by Bureau of Statistics; see also *Second Plan, op. cit.*, p. 12. The rapid increase must be attributed however partly to more comprehensive collection of import data; see D. Hirschmann, 'Administration of planning in Lesotho: the second leg', *Development and Change*, forthcoming, 1978.

proving dysfunctional to the BNP Government's interests: while some were useful, many were weak; in general they were insensitive to the psychological and political needs of the leadership of a newly-independent African state; and they were proving something of an embarrassment both internally and externally. Marked disappointment was also registered at Pretoria's eventual refusal to purchase water (at a price satisfactory to Lesotho) from the proposed Oxbow-Malibamatso hydro-electric scheme. Thus the scheme, by far the largest proposal for Lesotho's First Five Year Plan, fell through.

A related area which gave the Lesotho Government cause for reassessment involved certain steps taken by the South African Government and South African interests, which showed either a total lack of concern for, or were in fact inimical to, Masuru's economic development objectives. Late in March 1969, for example, Pretoria announced sweeping changes in tax structure with serious implications for Lesotho's tax policies; in 1971 South Africa tightened import-controls and devalued the Rand—both without consultation with its neighbours. In 1972 intervention by South African interests prevented a number of investments being located in Lesotho;<sup>12</sup> and in 1975, South Africa's Minister of Finance announced a devaluation of the Rand by a substantial 17.9 per cent, again without warning—a step to which Maseru reacted sharply.<sup>13</sup> A final illustration is the South African Government's withdrawal in 1977 of the long-standing maize subsidy which raised prices of this staple commodity for the Basotho.<sup>14</sup> South Africa's concurrence in a new Customs Union agreement in 1969 from which the Lesotho Government was to benefit considerably, as well as an agreement in 1974 to the payment of compensation for currency in circulation inside Lesotho, have not counterbalanced disappointment at the paucity of Pretoria's aid or indignation at the type of economic action mentioned above.

The third explanation arises from the operation of the policy of apartheid itself. The potential for South Africa's domestic policies to serve as a continual source of friction between the two governments may have been underestimated by some of the already mentioned earlier commentaries on Lesotho. For Lesotho does not merely observe from a distance the implications of race discrimination, but large numbers of its people daily experience its impact. While in the Republic, the working and living conditions of the 200,000 or so Basotho migrants are comprehensively controlled by South Africa's all-encompassing social and labour legislation. At a different level there are the numerous examples of unequal treatment of Basotho at the border posts (despite 'white' and 'non-white' signs having been removed, practice continues very much as before) and the barrage of so-called 'petty' humiliations Basotho shoppers or visitors must suffer in neighbouring South African towns. The

12. 'Rift grows between SA and Lesotho', *Sunday Times*, Johannesburg, 1 October 1972, p. 10.

13. *The Star*, Johannesburg, 24 September 1975, p. 11. See also G. M. E. Leistner, 'Devaluation and BLS', *Africa Institute Bulletin*, 13, 9/10, 1975, p. 338.

14. 'SA raises prices unilaterally', *Machochoonono*, Maseru, 8 January 1977, p. 3.

latter level, though more fragmentary and therefore less oppressive, directly impinges on the ruling class and may therefore be the more influential in forging dominant attitudes towards the Republic.

Then there are sporadic incidents which (interspersed with the economic moves noted already) continually aggravate relations: the detention of Basotho at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg; the extension of the 'Bantustan mentality' to delegations from Lesotho by meeting them with officials of the Ministry of Bantu Administration;<sup>15</sup> the kidnapping in 1972 of a South African refugee, Herbert Mbalo, from inside Lesotho (he was returned immediately Lesotho objected);<sup>16</sup> Bureau of State Security activities in Lesotho, the latest allegation of which was made by Lesotho in 1978;<sup>17</sup> the shooting of a young Mosotho by a South African policeman at Qacha's Nek border post in 1973, and a similar incident in 1977;<sup>18</sup> the killing of five Basotho miners at Western Deep Levels Mine in September 1973 (their funerals were attended by Lesotho's Prime Minister and King);<sup>19</sup> the death through alleged carelessness of South African prison officials of a Lesotho citizen, Mr Lawrence Sefatsa in the Rustenburg area, and the detention of another, Miss Limpho Sekamana, both in 1977:<sup>20</sup> to name some of the more significant examples.

Finally, in this regard, the persistence of all the fundamental aspects of apartheid brought home to Lesotho's Prime Minister that his initial hopes for peaceful progress in the Republic were not going to be realized. Thus the whole basis of his case for dialogue, that is, that it would encourage the dismantling of the structures of discrimination, was steadily eroded. The Soweto riots of June 1976 and the ensuing situation inside South Africa—continual disturbances, police brutality, large-scale arrests, numerous unexplained deaths in detention, including that of Steve Biko, and the forging ahead with the Bantustan policy (as witnessed by the Transkei's 'independence')—all seemed to put a final seal on the argument for friendly contact as a mechanism for non-violent change.

The fourth motivating factor for the Government's modification in approach derives from Lesotho's internal political situation, and from Jonathan's struggle for domestic legitimacy. Although his BNP won the 1965 pre-independence

15. 'Rift grows between SA and Lesotho', *op. cit.*

16. 'Probe into "gunpoint" kidnap', *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 November 1972, p. 1; and 'SA hands back refugee to Lesotho', *The Star*, 28 November 1972, p. 1.

17. 'Relations with Lesotho near breaking point. Maseru complains about BOSS and other activities', *Sunday Times*, 17 June 1973, p. 3; Editorial, *Lesotho Weekly*, Maseru, 3 September 1977, p. 1; and 'Lesotho deports "BOSS agents"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 17 March 1978, p. 2.

18. C. Legum, *Africa contemporary record. Annual survey and documents, 1973-74* (London, 1974), p. B380; Lesotho Interim National Assembly, *Hansard*, Second Meeting First Session, 2/10/73-17/10/73, pp. 201-2; and *Lesotho Weekly*, 16 April 1977, p. 3. Jonathan told the Interim Assembly this was 'not only an act of aggression against the sovereign state of Lesotho but a virtual declaration of war'.

19. 'Botswana and Lesotho start mine enquiry', *The Star*, 13 September 1973, p. 1; also see R. Leys, 'South African gold mining in 1974: the gold of migrant labour', *African Affairs*, 74, 295, 1975, pp. 196-208, particularly p. 203.

20. 'Repeated protests to South Africa', *Lesotho Weekly*, 17 September 1977, p. 7.

election taking thirty-one of the sixty seats, the opposition parties had received the majority of votes. He found his Party opposed by more than half the voting population, by the more politicized and influential lowland and urban communities, by the King and by the senior echelons of the civil service (in anticipation of a BCP victory, BCP members had been groomed for the higher public service posts). It would appear that the large majority of Basotho mine workers were opposed to his party as well.<sup>21</sup> Confronted with this situation, in circumstances in which his capacity to improve the lot of the Basotho was strictly limited, Jonathan faced an uphill battle for popular acceptance. This task was not eased by the BCP's exploitation of every opportunity, whether in local or foreign affairs, to weaken him whether in the form of hindering or damaging development projects or of regular condemnation of his ties with Pretoria.

In 1965 the BNP had stressed the vital importance of amiable working relations with the Republic, and the Party's success was attributed partly to a fear among the Basotho (particularly the women) that a BCP victory would result in suffering through loss of employment opportunities in South Africa. His decision to persist with the apparently effective strategy of using Pretoria as a prop to popularity proved to be an error. Lack of 'tangible payoffs'<sup>22</sup> weakened his position, while an underestimation of the people's hostility to apartheid enabled the BCP to monopolize the anti-South African cause; and he suffered politically in consequence. The Party's defeat in the 1970 elections, and Jonathan's refusal to accept the results took a further heavy toll on his standing with the Basotho. Thus, as the BNP leadership recommenced its drive for acceptance in the early 1970s it concluded that a more overtly hostile approach towards the Republic would be helpful. It would broaden the social basis of its support, and dilute the BCP's hold on this particular issue, so wooing voters to its side.

In addition to the problems of gaining domestic legitimacy, Lesotho's Prime Minister had to strive for international—particularly African—acceptance. Before independence senior BCP officers, notably Ntso Mokhehle, had travelled in Africa and won support from African leaders, while the OAU Liberation Committee clearly indicated its preference for the BCP. Jonathan's international position was rendered the more problematic by an active BCP campaign in African and European capitals, aimed at undermining his credibility. He did not assist his cause by going further than necessary in explaining Lesotho's predicament—periodically he would cajole African rulers for their lack of realism towards South Africa.<sup>23</sup>

As Lesotho's leaders' contacts with Africa grew (and as their perspectives on

21. See for example *The perceptions and behaviour patterns of black mineworkers on a group gold mine*, Issued by the Industrial Relations Department, Manpower Research Division, Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, Johannesburg, November 1976, p. 29.

22. Weisfelder, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

23. See K. W. Grundy, *Confrontation and accommodation in Southern Africa* (U. of California P., 1973), pp. 118-124 and 133-6.

international relations were broadened), they came to appreciate that the OAU and its member countries were prepared to recognize the BNP and to acknowledge the country's limited room for manoeuvre, but in return—the message was clear—the Jonathan Government should cease to embrace Pretoria quite as willingly as before. Accordingly, as it began to distance itself more openly from Vorster's Government, so it received greater endorsement from Africa, with a resultant steady erosion of the impact of the BCP campaign. For example, Lesotho was chosen to serve on the 1973 Ethiopia–Somalia dispute commission and the 1975 Angola commission; and 1975 saw the first visit by an OAU Secretary General to Lesotho.

In addition to increasing exposure to the thinking of African and Third World leaders, the influence of numerous visiting missions concerned with political, economic and aid issues, and of technical assistance personnel working in the country, has made some impact. Thus in contrast with the unchanged structural dependence on the Republic, there has been a variation in the operating environment in which the ruling political-administrative class functions. In this rather rarified atmosphere, South Africa's predominant presence has been diminished, and replaced by personnel from UNDP, Scandinavia, Africa, the United States, Canada, etc., providing a clear sense of relief and release for the privileged who work within it.

The objective of securing a broader field of donor interest in Lesotho provides the next explanation for the departure from the early policy on South Africa. Immediately after independence Lesotho was almost totally dependent on Britain for capital aid, technical assistance personnel and fellowships. Assisted by a Central Planning Office (established in 1967) and later armed with its first five-year Development Plan (published in 1970), Lesotho set out to attract donor interest. In the ensuing negotiations and contacts the country's representatives came to see that their initiatives would be helped by a more openly anti-South African stance. Jonathan's call for aid to reduce dependence on the Republic during his 1972 visit to Denmark (where he secured a R2 million loan) indicated his growing appreciation of the link between foreign aid and relations with Pretoria.<sup>24</sup>

For instance, it has been argued, citing Botswana's experience as an example, that the Scandinavian countries are readier to assist a 'more independently' aligned Lesotho. Lesotho has also received favourable treatment from the UNDP as one of the twenty-five least developed countries, and one of the six hard-core cases singled out for special attention; and its position has been strengthened by its more critical attitude towards apartheid. The African Development Bank specifically includes as one of its four criteria in selection of projects for assistance, the reduction of dependence on South Africa,<sup>25</sup> a criterion

24. 'Lesotho sees freedom in aid', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 July 1972, p. 3.

25. Another criterion from which Lesotho benefits is its 'landlockedness'. See *Lesotho Donor Conference*, Eleventh session: External resources, Maseru, April 1975, p. 3.



which would lose much of its meaning if Lesotho appeared to concur in its dependence. Furthermore, by distancing itself from South Africa, Lesotho makes itself a more attractive aid target for those Western countries wishing to make a gesture to counter the adverse impression of continuing close economic ties with South Africa. Finally, an important justification built into many a project request involves the urgent need to reduce dependence on South Africa. The following is an extract from such a project memorandum:

... because of South Africa's political stance vis-à-vis African peoples, and as a necessary means to internal development, it is essential for Lesotho to lower its dependence through economic development within the nation, and to develop additional bonds with other African nations. To accomplish these ends, strict economic criteria cannot be decisive as such goals generally require some level of economic subsidy...<sup>26</sup>

While the request that less than economic criteria be applied is important, the seriousness of the desire for reduced dependence should not be underestimated; and the impact of the argument would be seriously undermined by Lesotho maintaining over-friendly ties with the Republic.

Finally, with time, Lesotho's leaders learnt that in their original evaluation they had underestimated their own room for manoeuvre, and exaggerated their vulnerability: they had open to them just a few more options, and Pretoria rather fewer than they had initially appreciated. In a sense the country's extreme weakness provided a modicum of protection: Maseru found itself with an unexpected though limited amount of leverage deriving from South Africa's wish to break out of isolation and establish contacts with Black Africa. Any intervention of an overly crude nature would serve to hinder these efforts: Lesotho therefore constituted something of a test case for South Africa's projected image of a non-interfering, helpful neighbour. Thus possibilities such as invasion or blockade or cutting electrical power were excluded, while the chance of Pretoria initiating large-scale cuts in the employment of Basotho seemed to recede steadily. The inevitably grave consequences of such a move—including possible mass starvation and violence—would not serve any South African foreign policy objective. Moreover, with Malawi's decision in 1974 to withdraw its 118,000 miners from South Africa (recruitment is recommencing, however), growing uncertainty over the future supply of labour from Mozambique (already reduced) and Zimbabwe (after independence)<sup>27</sup> the need for workers from Lesotho seemed to be growing.

Lesotho's leaders also learnt to distinguish the interests of the Anglo-American Corporation from those of Vorster's Government, and to realize that

26. Kingdom of Lesotho, *Preparatory memorandum on a programme for development of Lesotho air transport* (Maseru: Central Planning and Development Office, January 1974), pp. 1 and 3.

27. See, for a discussion on the short and long term demands for labour from Lesotho, C. Perrings, *Gold and migrancy in the South African political economy*, National University of Lesotho, Faculty of Social Sciences Staff Seminar, Paper No. 7, October 1977.

the latter would have to overcome the opposition of the former to any steps damaging to mine production. De Beers' investment of over R30 million in the Letseng-la-Terai diamond mine (the largest capital investment in the country's history) juxtaposed with Pretoria's refusal to become involved in the Malibamatso scheme, and the presence of an Anglo-American official representative in Maseru, as compared to the lack of a South African Government delegation of any kind, seem illustrative of this point. All this is not to suggest that Lesotho's security in regard to labour is permanently assured, and in the second half of 1977 South African officials began indeed to murmur threats on this subject.

Jonathan was encouraged in this new assesment by the example of Botswana which had clearly and consistently distanced itself from the South African Government (but not from its private sector). In consequence it had won African acceptance, without suffering any damaging repercussions. Thus Lesotho's Prime Minister began to test the ground, little by little, finding that the occasional chastisements which were Vorster's main response did him no harm; on the contrary, they generally assisted his ends. Already underway, this trend was reinforced by the events of April 1974 which saw the regional balance of power tilt markedly against the white régimes, and by those of June 1976 inside South Africa itself.

#### IV

Having suggested reasons for Lesotho's altered standpoint, it is necessary to move on to the second principal purpose of this article: namely, an analysis of the content of the change. This will be done by isolating the distinguishable (though closely interrelated) components of the modification of policy.

As will emerge from the discussion which follows, much of the content of the change is confined to the verbal rather than the concrete; nevertheless, the rhetoric of Lesotho's spokesmen is in itself deserving of comment. From the quiet, formal, even somewhat reluctant expressions of opposition to South Africa, usually attached as an adjunct to the principal point on maintaining close ties with the Republic, one observes, from late 1970 onwards, a steady increase in hostile comment. Having tested itself with early attacks on the Smith régime and Portuguese colonialism, Maseru began to issue warnings on alternatives to peaceful change in South Africa in direr terms, introducing into its vocabulary previously absent words like 'violence', 'force' or 'chaos'. The only alternative, Jonathan said in August 1972, would be 'serious confrontation' and violence;<sup>28</sup> while at the UN in 1973 Foreign Minister Peete Peete spoke of racial violence, giving notice that soon 'only resort to force would be left'.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, reference to the practices and implications of apartheid became harsher. In 1972, for example, Lesotho's delegate to the UN General Assembly's Legal Committee spoke of the political demands of black people in South Africa

28. 'Revive dialogue, warns Jonathan. "Only alternative is serious confrontation"' (Interview with Stanley Uys), *Sunday Times*, 20 August 1972, p. 6.

29. 'Lesotho presses its attack on apartheid', *The Star*, 3 October 1973, p. 27.

being suppressed by state authorities using violence, intimidation and 'utmost brutality to terrorize' them.<sup>30</sup> A high point of invective was reached in Foreign Minister Kotsokoane's speech to the UN in 1974 (in which he described South Africa as the sort of country where whites killed blacks by forcing methylated spirits down their throats)—the tone of which was reported as having caused a stir even among African delegates.<sup>31</sup> A final example is provided by Foreign Minister C. D. Molapo's description of apartheid before the Security Council in December 1976:

The system enslaves, degrades, debases and dehumanizes the black man . . . a system which, in desperation, unleashes its most sophisticated guns and weapons and brutally murders innocent defenceless schoolchildren in cold blood . . .<sup>32</sup>

A second indicator of change may be discerned in Lesotho's voting in the UN General Assembly. Until the 1972 session Lesotho had generally remained absent from, or abstained on, voting on the most strongly anti-South African resolutions. From 1972 onward, however, this was no longer true. For example, in 1971 the Lesotho delegation absented itself during voting on the eight-part resolution (2775 A-H) covering topics such as an arms embargo on South Africa, apartheid in sport, establishment of Bantustans, etc., while in 1972 it voted in favour of five out of six parts of a roughly equivalent resolution (2923 A-F). By assigning different values to each of the four voting alternatives (for, against, abstention, absence); totalling the values on all resolutions on which voting was recorded; and then transferring the totals into percentages, it is possible to establish an indicative measurement of hostility towards the white régimes as reflected in voting patterns. The results of such an exercise for Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and Lesotho are as follows:

	<i>Zambia</i>	<i>Botswana</i>	<i>Malawi</i>	<i>Lesotho</i>
1971	100%	89·22%	40·95%	65·22%
1972	100%	95·59%	41·18%	95·59%

Whereas the others' levels of hostility remained fairly constant, Lesotho's showed a very marked swing upwards, reaching the level of Botswana and approaching that of Zambia.<sup>33</sup>

The third area of significant change concerned 'dialogue' and 'détente'. Jonathan was one of the first African Heads of Government to speak in favour

30. 'Lesotho: freedom men not terrorists', *The Star*, 23 November 1972, p. 27.

31. C. Legum, *Africa contemporary record. Annual survey and documents, 1974-1975* (London, 1975), p. B377.

32. 'Lesotho case at the Security Council', Statement by Hon. C. D. Molapo, Minister of Foreign Affairs—21st December 1976, in *Lesotho's case and U.N.O. decision on the closed border posts by the Republic of South Africa* (Maseru: Department of Information and Broadcasting, 1976), p. 6. Also J. R. L. Kotsokoane's speech on the death of Steve Biko, 'The torch of freedom', Maseru, September 1977.

33. D. Hirschmann, *Southern African voting patterns in the United Nations General Assembly, 1971 and 1972*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, August 1973.

of contact and peaceful coexistence, and he was the first to visit South Africa, meeting both Verwoerd and Vorster. Between 1965 and 1971 he expended considerable political energy in fostering this cause. At the OAU summit in July 1971 Lesotho was one of the few countries to argue and vote in favour of dialogue. Its delegate commented:

To say that South Africa must first have dialogue with Africans in their own country is to argue in circles. Our aim is to promote just such a dialogue.<sup>34</sup>

The final major initiative was the convening of the so-called 'dialogue club' in Maseru in October that year (during the sixth independence celebrations) which gave the South African Minister of Education an opportunity to meet representatives of pro-dialogue African Governments. October 1971 was also the time of Jonathan's first strong public attack on apartheid and appears to mark the commencement of his growing disillusionment with dialogue as a means of encouraging change.

In March 1972 the Lesotho Government appealed to African countries considering closer contact with Pretoria, particularly the Ivory Coast, to await a joint OAU approach on the matter.<sup>35</sup> In August the same year Jonathan stated that Pretoria was using dialogue merely to maintain contact with black Africa;<sup>36</sup> and in October (at the seventh independence celebrations) he blamed South Africa's continuing policy of discrimination for the collapse of dialogue.<sup>37</sup>

The extent of the reversal on this issue manifested itself in early 1975 (during the period referred to by the South African authorities and press as 'détente'). Whereas Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana, all regarded as far more antagonistic than Lesotho towards the South African Government, supported a strategy of negotiation with Vorster, Lesotho opposed it (making it the only one in southern Africa and one of the few in Africa to do so). In comparison with the 1971 statement on internal dialogue (quoted above) Foreign Minister Kotsokoane strongly urged Africa to avoid all contact with Vorster's Government until the South African authorities began talk with the liberation movements inside South Africa.<sup>38</sup>

In line with its changing attitude to dialogue, the Lesotho Government's view of the role of liberation movements in southern Africa has also been modified. In the early years of independence, Jonathan was, for a number of reasons, reluctant to indicate any support at all for violence or for the movements concerned. The OAU Liberation Committee had previously alienated him by expressing its preference for the BCP; South African refugees in Lesotho were

34. C. Legum, *Africa contemporary record. Annual survey and documents, 1971-1972* (London, 1972), p. A76.

35. 'Lesotho stopped dialogue', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 March 1972, p. 1 and 'No Lesotho "sabotage" on dialogue', *The Star*, 6 March 1972, p. 11.

36. 'Revive dialogue, warns Jonathan . . .', *op. cit.*

37. 'Jonathan slays discrimination', *The Star*, 4 October 1972, p. 1.

38. D. Hirschmann, 'Southern Africa: détente?', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14, 1, 1976, p. 119.

in closer contact with, and more supportive of, the BCP and he was therefore wary of any move which might extend their influence; he assessed the chances of a violent overthrow of the South African régime as nil; and finally, he understood that one action which would definitely elicit a harsh response from Pretoria would be to let guerrilla forces operate from his country. Thus he used to argue that non-violent measures alone could bring about constructive change, and that military strategies were doomed to failure in view of the Republic's military strength.

However, as his hopes for peaceful change dimmed, so his views on the liberation movements altered. When asked, in 1972, about his attitude to 'guerrilla groups' he responded:

In my mind a guerrilla is someone who seeks by unconstitutional means to topple a government when the constitutional means are in existence. In the case of white ruled Southern Africa these would not be guerrilla groups but liberation movements frustrated by the absence of constitutional machinery into resorting to violence.<sup>39</sup>

He went on to express clear support for them, as did Lesotho's representative, later that year, to the UN General Assembly's Legal Committee.<sup>40</sup> Further evidence of Lesotho's changed approach came, also in 1972, when the country's Ambassador backed the decision of the General Assembly's Trusteeship Committee to admit African liberation movements as observers,<sup>41</sup> much to Pretoria's chagrin. In April 1973, Jonathan told the newly established Interim National Assembly that Lesotho would not cease to give moral or any other possible support 'to our fellow men in the liberation movements.'<sup>42</sup> Finally, in 1977, Foreign Minister C. D. Molapo appeared to go further than any previous spokesman in terms of an acceptance of violent change: the effects, he said, would be devastating, but a 'better South Africa would emerge from the embers'.<sup>43</sup>

A closely related shift can be discerned on the question of arms sales to the Republic. At the OAU summit in Addis Ababa in September 1970 Lesotho and Malawi were the only countries to abstain on a resolution condemning arms sales to South Africa; and in January 1971, at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in Singapore Jonathan concurred in Britain's right to sell arms to Pretoria. However, as his disillusionment with Vorster and his sympathy for liberation movements grew, he recast his views on arms sales. In the speech to the Interim National Assembly (mentioned above) he hit out at the

39. 'Revive dialogue, warns Jonathan...', *op. cit.* Also 'Lesotho steun terroriste openlik', *Die Vaderland*, Johannesburg, 9 September 1972, p. 1.

40. 'Lesotho: freedom men not terrorists', *op. cit.*

41. 'Lesotho reasons for UN move', *The Star*, 13 October 1972, p. 1; and 'Terrorists: UN decision pleases Lesotho', *The Star*, 13 October 1972, p. 25.

42. 'Jonathan hits at white south arms sales', *The Star*, 30 April 1973, p. 1, and, 'Jonathan backs "liberation movements"', *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 May 1973.

43. *Lesotho Weekly*, 16 April 1977, p. 1.

Western powers for selling weapons to the white minority régimes which served only 'to perpetuate racial oppression and retard political progress of the Black majorities'.<sup>44</sup>

A reversal of policy may be observed in the area of official Governmental contact, specifically at three levels: high-key, high-level political contact; exchange of diplomats; and seconded technical assistance personnel. Jonathan's early meetings with Verwoerd and Vorster seemed to prestage regular visits of this nature. These did not eventuate, and it was not until 1974 (this particular meeting having been postponed for about two years)<sup>45</sup> that a somewhat low-key one-day meeting took place between Jonathan and Vorster. That it took place at all appears to have been a result of the Lesotho Prime Minister's need to raise a few pressing issues: for example, oil supplies, disturbances among mine workers and, possibly, South Africa's alleged assistance to BCP refugees who fled after an unsuccessful series of attacks on police stations in the north of Lesotho. Despite a relatively warm communiqué, Maseru intended the occasion to be an isolated occurrence, not a signal for improved relations. At the Ministerial level too, visits came to a virtual halt. After Lesotho's Prime Minister had attacked apartheid at the 1972 independence celebrations (the second year running in which he had done so) South Africa ceased attending the celebrations.<sup>46</sup>

The question of diplomatic exchange is also illustrative. Initially Lesotho agreed in principle (and it was said that South African officials had been to Maseru to choose a site for an embassy) but then, step by step, the Lesotho Government edged away from such a move. First, it indicated its reluctance by expressing concern about possible humiliation of Lesotho diplomats in South Africa. By the time Malawi's experience proved these fears to be exaggerated—if not unfounded—Lesotho had raised 'a far more fundamental objection', demanding that relations should be as between any other two states. 'What they mean', observed the South African journalist, Hennie Serfontein, 'is that they are not interested in their diplomatic representatives being given special facilities while a couple of hundred thousand Lesotho citizens are exposed to apartheid'.<sup>47</sup> When in September 1973 (shortly after the Carletonville mine shootings) a member of a small opposition party moved that Lesotho should establish diplomatic ties with South Africa, almost every Member of Parliament walked out in protest,<sup>48</sup> and the issue has not been raised seriously since.

44. 'Jonathan hits at white south arms sales', *op. cit.*

45. See for example 'No date for SA Lesotho meeting', *The Star*, 16 November 1972, p. 27.

46. In 1975 South African Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller paid an official visit to Lesotho. His successor, R. F. Botha, visited Lesotho soon after his appointment, at his own request, and again in 1978 to secure the release of two South Africans alleged to be BOSS agents.

47. 'SA relations with Lesotho near breaking point...', *op. cit.*; also 'Treat us properly—Jonathan', *The Star*, 21 May 1973, p. 25.

48. 'Lesotho snubs SA over diplomatic ties', *Rand Daily Mail*, 22 September 1973, p. 4.

On the third level, Lesotho revoked its policy of willing acceptance of seconded South African personnel. After independence the Lesotho Government welcomed large numbers of South Africans to bolster the country's civil service, placing some in positions of great sensitivity; for example, Chief Justice, Electoral Officer and Head of Information.<sup>49</sup> By the early 1970s this flow was being reversed and the positions vacated were being filled principally, but not only, by advisers attached to UN agencies. The departure of the last group (those in the legal field) was significant since the two countries share the Roman Dutch law system. Lesotho thus indicated that even in an area in which South African advisers would be more knowledgeable than those from other countries, their assistance would not be sought.

Noting all this, it should be stressed that the course of reducing contact has been limited to the three levels mentioned. For example, Lesotho has a labour representative in South Africa in accordance with a 1973 labour agreement, participates in Customs Union meetings, mounts missions to the Republic on matters of importance and at the private level encourages interest in Lesotho among South Africans in every way possible, be they potential investors, tourists or consultants.

A further example is provided by the more strident demands for the return of the 'conquered territory'. Both major political parties have consistently included the return of the land in their platforms, but in the early years of independence the BNP was very restrained about its claims. Later, however, Maseru decided to intensify its demands, by challenging Pretoria more determinedly, and to internationalize the issue by raising it at the UN, and elsewhere. In June 1973 Lesotho requested a UN legal adviser to help prepare for negotiations, which, according to Foreign Minister Molapo, South Africa 'unilaterally terminated',<sup>50</sup> while in January 1975 Jonathan declared his intention to press his claim at the UN and, if he made no progress there, to take the issue to the International Court of Justice.

The exact area which the Lesotho Government has in mind is not clear. The land most consistently referred to as the 'conquered territory' consists of that taken from the Basotho following the 1866 Seqiti War which ended in the Peace of the Sorghum and ultimately in the Convention of Aliwal North of 12 February 1869. It includes the present Orange Free State towns of Fouriesburg, Ficksburg, Clocolan, Ladybrand, Hobhouse and Wepener, in a belt running from north to south approximately thirty kilometres west of Lesotho's present western boundary, coinciding roughly with the land east of the Caledon River watershed.

Before this, however, there had been a long period of uncertainty and conflict concerning division of land involving claims and counterclaims, the movement

49. Weisfelder, *op. cit.*, p. 51. He gives a number of 67 South Africans serving under this programme in 1969.

50. 'Lesotho's case at the Security Council', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

of peoples in and out of the area, differing (and differing versions of) chiefs' allegiances to Moshoeshoe, diverging interpretations of 'sales' of land, raids and counterraids and on occasion the outbreak of war. The period was interspersed with arbitrations and disputed demarcations such as the Grey Line (1858, following Senekal's war of 1856); the Warden Line (1849); the Southey Line, which was not implemented (1848); the Maitland Line (1845); and the earliest, the Napier Line (1843) which constituted a Treaty between Moshoeshoe and the Cape Government.<sup>51</sup>

It would appear now that the Lesotho Government is expanding its claims beyond the 1869 line to the Napier Line, and further to areas long inhabited by Basotho. In February 1977, for example, Jonathan extended his demands to include most of the Orange Free State as well as other land 'fraudulently taken during the wars'.<sup>52</sup>

The dispute is becoming further complicated by the involvement (or potential involvement) of three of South Africa's Bantustans in these claims. Lesotho's expanded claims would include Thaba Nchu, a small island of land in the Orange Free State which constitutes a part of distant Bophuthatswana. The validity of the claim has long been disputed, and depends largely on the extent to which Chief Moroka of the Rolong, who arrived in the area in 1833, became and remained a vassal of Moshoeshoe.<sup>53</sup> Lesotho has no clear claim to Qwaqwa (a minute Bantustan for Sotho, situated on its north-eastern border), but there are two points of possible conflict. An unclearly defined section of the border has recently become of more importance since Qwaqwa commenced investing large amounts of capital in a ski resort situated in what was previously a relatively inaccessible and economically insignificant area. Further, Qwaqwa lays claim to the same 'conquered territory' as does Lesotho (as also to additional districts around Harrismith and Bethlehem, and in the Transkei).<sup>54</sup> Finally, Lesotho has laid claim to two (of the eleven) districts of the Transkei, namely North Maluti (formerly Matatiele) and South Maluti (formerly Mount Fletcher). Basotho have occupied these areas (once known as Nomansland) for over a hundred years, their numbers having been boosted in the 1880s when, following the Gun War, certain 'loyal' chiefs (notably George Tlali Moshoeshoe) and their followers were placed there by the Cape Government.<sup>55</sup>

Thus Foreign Minister Kotsokoane warned the UN in November 1975 of a confrontation between South Africa and Lesotho over the border issue, and

51. I am indebted to David Ambrose of the National University of Lesotho for discussing this period of Lesotho's history. See also P. Sanders, *Moshoeshoe. Chief of the Sotho* (London, 1975), particularly maps on pages 238 and 242.

52. 'Jonathan claims OFS', *The Star*, 7 February 1977, p. 5.

53. Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 52, and 63-5.

54. See M. F. Ntja, 'The Basotho outside our borders—ways of incorporating them in the development of Qwaqwa' (this is a translation of the Sesotho title), *Maru*, No. 3, August 1974, p. 10.

55. These claims have aggravated the already strained relations between Lesotho and the Transkei, and elicited angry responses from Matanzima; see 'Kaiser hits at Leabua', *Eastern Province Herald*, Port Elizabeth, 17 October 1977.



added that the interposition of the Bantustan borders would aggravate the dispute further and could lead to a racial holocaust;<sup>56</sup> and in December 1976, Foreign Minister Molapo, in putting his case on the Transkei to the Security Council, noted that South Africa's cession of large tracts of this disputed land to the Bantustans 'complicated the already difficult border problems'.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, note should be taken of a redirection of policy which has most recently reached a climax and attracted international attention. The Lesotho Government has always indicated some opposition to apartheid, and to the Bantustan aspect of the system (although, as has been a central theme of this article, the intensity of the hostility has markedly increased). Nevertheless, an assessment of some of the personalities serving as Chief Ministers in the early 1970s, particularly Buthelezi, led Jonathan in a 1972 interview to remark that in his view they would yet play a positive role in the struggle against discrimination. 'I am inclined to think', he said, 'that they can do something within the separate development system, which is now the only area in which they have some freedom to express themselves'.<sup>58</sup>

As this optimism about peaceful change and the potentially positive role of the Bantustan leaders both faded, and as Africa began to forge a common approach in preparation for the Transkei's 'independence', so Lesotho's opposition to the Bantustans became unequivocal. In an interview early in 1976, Foreign Minister Molapo stated the principal issue involved in Lesotho's intended refusal to recognize the Transkei's independence: his Government was opposed to apartheid, and the granting of 'independence' to the Bantustans was an essential part of that policy.<sup>59</sup>

There was little hint then of the pitch of animosity that would be reached between Pretoria and Maseru over this issue. Immediately after Transkei's 'independence' Lesotho's representative at the UN accused South Africa of closing the three border posts—Ramatseliso's Gate, Qacha's Nek and Tele Bridge—connecting Lesotho and the Transkei, in breach of a 1973 agreement between the two countries. He asserted that, in consequence, Basotho living in certain mountain areas would suffer considerably and the country's earnings from customs revenue would be reduced. The African Group at the UN wrote to the Secretary General backing Lesotho's case, while the South African Foreign Minister wrote denying it.<sup>60</sup> On 21 December Lesotho's Foreign Minister made a full statement to the Security Council. He undertook, despite

56. *Africa Research Bulletin*, 12, 10, 1975, p. 3783 C.

57. 'Lesotho's case at the Security Council', *op. cit.*, p. 7.

58. 'Revive dialogue, warns Jonathan . . .', *op. cit.*

59. R. J. Southall, 'Lesotho/Transkei: what kind of relationship?', *Africa Report*, 21, 5, 1976, pp. 41-2. See also R. J. Southall, *Commentary: Transkei, Africa and apartheid—the implications of international recognition* (Umtata: Paper to Conference of South African Institute of International Affairs, 1976), particularly pp. 16-18.

60. See letter dated 12 November 1976 to UN Secretary General from the Chairman of the African Group and Permanent Representative of Libya; letter dated 16 November 1976 to the UN Secretary General from the South African Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr the Hon. Hilgard Muller.

the 'dire and profound consequences' of South Africa's action to his country's political and economic life, that Lesotho would 'not be cowed' into recognising the Transkei; and requested about \$80 million in assistance to strengthen its capacity to resist.<sup>61</sup> The Council adopted a resolution commending this stand, condemning South Africa's action and calling on all states and UN agencies to provide material and other aid to Lesotho.<sup>62</sup>

Colin Legum visited the border and claimed on the basis of his observation that Lesotho had hoaxed the UN, for he saw no obstacle whatever to the free flow of goods and persons.<sup>63</sup> As Lesotho's Solicitor General and Minister of Information and Broadcasting, amongst others, have pointed out, Legum's conclusions are too simple because a number of very serious inconveniences have indeed resulted.<sup>64</sup> Yet it is clear that the impression of something akin to blockade created by certain of Lesotho's claims was exaggerated.

The exact accuracy of the claims is, however, not of central concern here. What is relevant is the manner in which Lesotho handled the issue, and the lengths to which it was willing to go to demonstrate to the world its antipathy to apartheid and the Bantustans. In so doing, Lesotho was able—if only temporarily—to re-establish its position nearer the centre stage of southern African affairs (from which it has been steadily removed over the past few years, in particular by its exclusion from meetings of the five front-line states), with Minister Molapo arguing that the border closure had turned Lesotho into a 'confrontation state'. Further, taking advantage of worldwide rejection of Transkei 'independence', it was able to draw international attention to its open antagonism to Vorster's Government, to its own vulnerability, and to its courage in the circumstances ('we shall not be cowed . . . and shall never succumb to blackmail and distortion').<sup>65</sup> Finally, by pointing out the substantial cost of carrying out UN resolutions on the Transkei, it was able effectively to turn the issue into an urgent plea for large-scale international aid.

## V

Reassembling these components, it remains necessary to place the overall policy modification in some perspective. Whatever approach is adopted in this regard, certain observations should be generally acknowledged.

First, it is clear that over the last six or seven years Lesotho's policy makers have learnt much about the practices and realities of diplomacy. They have

61. 'Lesotho's case at the Security Council', *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 8 and 10.

62. Resolution 402 (1976), adopted by Security Council at its 1982nd meeting on 22 December 1976.

63. C. Legum, 'Proof of Lesotho's UN hoax', *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 January 1977, p. 9.

64. 'A statement by the Honourable Minister of Information and Broadcasting Morena Makhoala Lerotholi on the attempted falsification of the closure of the South Eastern border of Lesotho by the Government of the Republic of South Africa', in *Lesotho's case and U.N.O. decision . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-22 (subtitled 'Colin Legum's futile drive to protect apartheid'); and Solicitor-General of Lesotho. *Fifth quarterly progress report* (Australian Development Assistance Agency), Maseru, 3 January 1977, Chapter 3.

65. 'Lesotho's case at the Security Council . . .', *op. cit.*, pp. 8 and 9.

developed a shrewd assessment of costs and benefits of alternative moves and of what they can and cannot get away with. They have also come to appreciate that interstate relations are multidimensional and require no strict consistency: they can be carried out at many, varied, often contradictory and changing levels.

A second area of broad agreement would be that Chief Jonathan has employed his foreign policy—particularly the recasting of it—to the advantage of himself, his Party and the ruling political-administrative-business class. Externally, he has improved his own and his Government's image, and domestically he has wrested from the BCP its monopoly on anti-apartheid pronouncements. The change in policy has proved an effective buttress to Maseru's aid objectives; and while the overall impact of aid has not been measured, it does bolster the BNP's efforts to win acceptance. Augmented Government revenues (discussed above) have allowed for both a steady growth in the number of civil service jobs and an across-the-board raise in civil service salaries; and the small professional and commercial segments of this class have benefited from the greater amounts of money available inside Lesotho.

A third point—more contestable than the previous one—is that in achieving the above advantages for those around him, Jonathan has at the very least not sacrificed the interests of the migrant workers and, therefore, directly and indirectly, those of the large majority of Lesotho's non-privileged classes. While improvements are not attributable to any measures of the Lesotho Government, it can claim to have overseen a period in which the number of Basotho able to find work in the Republic has grown steadily, and their salaries have risen markedly. Deepening dependence on foreign interests, particularly those in the Republic of South Africa, provides no cause for acclaim. Yet, until Maseru conceives a strategy able to offer domestic employment and sustenance inside the country, the only foreign policy option appears to be the most advantageous use of that dependence.

Fourthly, it will be widely acknowledged that there is very little likelihood of Lesotho significantly influencing developments in southern Africa. Its size (it is small by any measure), geographical predicament, economic fragility and dependence preclude it from playing a major role: as its economy is peripheral, so too is its influence. Thus one is observing a Government operating from a very weak base, within tight constraints and with minimal potential impact on the subcontinent.

Nevertheless—and this would be the fifth point—because of its location in southern Africa, any evaluation of Lesotho's foreign policy will include a test of its influence beyond the country's borders. Elsewhere, the foreign policy of most governments in similar economic and political circumstances would not be seriously subjected to such a test. In this region, however, the criterion of external impact—specifically on white minority rule—will inevitably be included in the assessment.

On this particular question—namely the effects of Lesotho's change in policy

on South Africa—it is not suggested that there will be any consensus. In fact one could conceive of a debate on at least two levels.

The first would proceed on the basis of an assumption that in South Africa capitalism and apartheid are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The impact of any policy emanating from Maseru would be judged in terms of its effects on the operation and strength of private enterprise as well as on government policies. Proponents of this view would be likely to dismiss entirely the pronouncements of the Lesotho Government as aimed at nothing more than legitimizing the BNP and the interests it serves inside Lesotho. They would argue that the total effect of its overall policy measures (both domestic and foreign) has been to raise substantially the number of workers flowing to the mines, industries and farms of the Republic, so reinforcing the migrant labour system and bolstering capitalism and in turn the position of the South African National Party.

A second level of debate would be concerned with apartheid as a relatively distinct phenomenon, and would revolve around the question of whether Jonathan's Government has done anything to influence or weaken the position of Vorster's Government. Here a principal argument would be that, when all is said and done, Lesotho's leaders have not ventured beyond rhetoric into any substantive action.

Against these views, one could start by reiterating the Lesotho Government's predicament, arguing that in the circumstances, attention should be focused on what has rather than what has not been achieved. Lesotho's change of policy in the early 1970s surprised many observers—and Vorster's Government—and the extent to which it was prepared to go to demonstrate its hostility to Pretoria elicited further surprise (some of it in Maseru itself), for example, in expressing public support for liberation movements and opposition to the Transkei's 'independence'.

Further, the implied equating of rhetoric with ineffectiveness is not completely valid. Obviously, many of the statements from Maseru make little impression in South Africa: in many cases that is not their intended target. Yet, Lesotho has played a role in internationalizing aspects of Pretoria's rule, forcing the world community to take note of events which might otherwise have been overlooked. Insofar as Lesotho provides a 'test case' for Pretoria's intentions in Africa, Jonathan's handling of relations with the Republic since 1971 have provided a setback to the energetic and expensive efforts by South Africa's Foreign and Information Ministries to project an image of a helpful and non-interfering neighbour. Judging from Vorster's anger, the Lesotho delegate to the OAU did indeed contribute to the case against his 1974-5 détente offensive. Furthermore, Lesotho spokesmen have demonstrated, through reference to specific incidents, the consequences of South African policies on non-South African citizens, particularly those of Lesotho and neighbouring states; they have clamoured for the return of the conquered territory; they have charged

Pretoria with closure of an international border in breach of an agreement; and they have warned of a racial holocaust encompassing the whole region. In so doing, they have helped detract from Pretoria's (already widely discounted) legal argument that apartheid presents no threat to international peace and is therefore a domestic matter not falling under the jurisdiction of the UN. Finally, Lesotho has played a part in damaging, it seems irreparably, South Africa's Transkei stratagem.

In pointing out these examples, one has to be wary of overstating the case; and obviously a discussion on the lines suggested above only makes sense if seen as part of a build-up of international pressure on the Republic. On the other hand, observing the very limited impact of far larger powers on developments in the region, Lesotho's modest contribution is worth a mention.



This work is licensed under a  
Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>