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Editorial

I

This special issue of the *Lesotho Social Science Review* is devoted to issues of democracy with reference to Lesotho's general election of 1998. The themes that various authors grapple with in this issue are not of particular importance to Lesotho only, but to the entire Africa continent in the context of the current political development towards multi-party politics.

The African continent has been undergoing a profound political change since the late 1980s. Driven by both endogenous and exogenous factors this has been marked, in the main, by transformation from authoritarian rule of either civilian or military type to some form of multi-party democracy. Although this process is still in its embryonic stage, hence probably not irreversible, important strides have already been made, viz political liberalisation and institutionalisation of elections as key instruments of choosing and replacing state managers. The importance of this development cannot be overemphasised for during the era of one-party/military dictatorship a decade ago, the centralisation of power asphyxiated political competition and allowed the ruling elite to exercise unfettered hegemony over other actors. Under those conditions, elections occupied an insignificant position in the political calculus of the rulers whose mode of legitimisation was anchored more on the bullet and coercion rather than the ballot and consensus.

The African continent has experienced what amounts to a sea change since the late 1980s. A sea change which is driven by both the domestic resurgence of democratic culture and the twin-process of the demise of the Cold War and globalisation. Lesotho, one of the smallest and landlocked countries in the continent, is not immune from the domino effect of democratisation on a global scale. The country got its political independence in 1966 after a long period of British colonial rule. Independence was preceded by a general election of 1965 which was won marginally by the Basotho National Party (BNP) which formed the first post-colonial government. The country experienced a short-lived, and indeed fragile, multi-party system during the period 1966-70. Lesotho's fledgling multi-party system was stretched beyond its limits during the 1970 election which the BNP annulled upon realising an 'unhappy' prospect of losing state power to the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP).

Since those epochal developments of 1970, governance in Lesotho proceeded through unbridled Machiavellian praetorianism which was marked by outright political repression and accommodation of some opposition elements. In this context, elections did not feature prominently in the rulers' political scheme of things as their legitimization rested more on coercion and **diktat** than persuasion and consensus. Since that time until the 1986 military coup, the BNP could not venture into any general election for fear of losing state power given its severe crisis of legitimacy and credibility. The last straw of this crisis was the 1985 'mock' election which the opposition parties boycotted leaving the BNP candidates to go it alone. Upon their nomination, the BNP candidates were declared elected unopposed.

The political crisis around the 1985 election set the stage for the military coup of 1986. The military ruled the country for about eight years until 1993. It goes without saying that once more Basotho were denied their democratic right to choose their own political leaders for that eight year period. Military governments are not given to democratic practice and culture. They are by their very nature authoritarian. Their rule is founded principally on the bullet and ballot-based rule is a figment of imagination in the military's political scheme of things. It was only with the military's withdrawal from the political sphere in 1993 that Lesotho held its first ever democratic election in its post-independence history.

The 1993 election was important in more ways than one. First, the election was more about righting the historical wrong of 1970 by punishing the BNP and rewarding the BCP. Second, the outcome of the election was both intriguing and interesting. It was intriguing because although most political observers had predicted a BCP victory, the scale of that victory stunned even experts themselves. The election outcome was also interesting because the electoral outcome ensured continuity of Lesotho's age-old tradition of one-party rule, but this time predicated on the ballot not on the bullet. Thirdly, the BCP government had an unenviable task of living up to the heightened expectations of the electorate who generally interpreted the victory as a liberation from decades of oppression and development failures.

The BCP government has had many internal and external problems which have tended to stymie its capability to govern. As a result of these problems, the party experienced faction-fighting which ultimately broke it asunder. This

resulted in the emergence of a new party called the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD)-led by the Prime Minister. This is the presently ruling party after the BCP lost parliamentary majority and was declared an official opposition - the status which the BCP has thus far refused to accept.

II

Although elections are one of the key ingredients of democratic rule, they can also become a path to authoritarian rule. As evidenced in a majority of African countries today ruling elites have used the election in order to entrench authoritarian rule cloaked in democratic posturing and rhetoric. The extent to which elections are free and fair is one yard stick used to gauge how the outcome reflects the popular will. The key objective of this research is, therefore, to establish the congruence or incongruence of the political agendas of the politicians on the one hand and that of the electorate on the other and to assess the prospects for democratic consolidation and development after elections. More often than not electioneering in Lesotho has barely centred on policy issues. Personality differences and inter-party squabbles have overshadowed policy issues of national importance, thus relegating them to a tangential role. This suggests that most of the elections, (if not all) in Lesotho have basically been reduced to inter-elite political competition with the voter playing the role of a pawn.

III

The authors in this issue have one central concern that forms the undercurrent of the debate: prospects for deepening democracy in Lesotho. To what extent will the 1998 election play that role? Nqosa Mahao looks at the 1993 election and how it contributed to the re-establishment of constitutionalism. An important issue in its own right, indeed, given the constitutional crisis that this country has suffered over the past three decades. What does the 1998 hold in store for Basotho in this respect?

Francis Makoa moves the debate further than concerns with constitutionalism and interrogates the extent to which the electorate will play a critical part in a chess-game whereby they are usually treated as mere pawns. He suggests that the 1998 election is likely to generate less enthusiasm on the part of the voter and is likely to be marked, thus, by voter apathy.

This is linked to Nthakeng Selinyane's extended treatise on civil society and electoral politics. The author proposes that the political potential of civil society in Lesotho has been stunted, over the years, by statist policies and statist intellectual discourse. After providing a critique of the said academic discourse, the paper suggests that there are possibilities of transforming Lesotho's political landscape from below.

Maria Motebang looks at the role of women in politics and proffers some explanations for their minimal participation and under-representation. The article then proposes some possible strategies for increasing women's participation in politics if democracy is to be broadened.

Pontšo Sekatle investigates the political factors and legal arguments for the formation of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD). The paper situates the discussions within the context of a broader debate on parliamentary politics and principles of representation. The author suggests that it is within these broader parameters that the politics of the split of the then ruling Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) can best be fathomed.

Khabele Matlosa sketches out the problematique of political instability and its implications for elections in Africa in general and Lesotho specifically. The conclusion that the author comes to is that, most often than not, the contribution of elections to democracy in African states is hampered by the all-pervasive phenomenon of instability. Will the 1998 election in Lesotho be any different?

Viriri Shava reminds us of the political content and value of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The author ably simulates the nominal election in the Novel and makes interesting inferences for contemporary politics in Africa. The political import of nominal elections in the Novel for contemporary trends towards pluralism is its emphasis on intrigue, manipulation, back-biting, self-aggrandizement and hegemonic politics which stifles democracy.

Khabele Matlosa
Editor-In-Chief

The 1993 Election and the Challenges for the Development of Constitutionalism in Lesotho

Nqosa Mahao*

The 1993 election in Lesotho was a significant step towards the re-establishment of constitutionalism. The election belied a stage-managed surrender of power forced by a series of internal power struggles within the military junta and mounting pressure from social groups. The results of the election, won by BCP, simultaneously reflected the desire of the electorate for change as well as the regime's desire to conserve the essentially authoritarian framework institutionalised for years by previous regimes. The BCP's commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World socio-economic vision not only betrays the electorate's urge for fundamental change but also undermines the prospects for the entrenchment of constitutionalism.

Introduction

Lesotho's much awaited democratic election took place on the 27th March 1993 after twenty four years of authoritarian rule. Robbed of victory in 1970 through a coup detat against the Constitution and the annulment of the election, the Basotholand Congress Party (BCP) re-asserted its dominance over national politics. It romped home with approximately a 75% share of the cast vote and swept all the 65 seats in the National Assembly. Salient questions which we pose in this essay are: what was the significance of these elections in the unfolding democratic life of the country? Did this event open vistas for the resolution of the contradictions inherent in the neo-colonial legacy of Lesotho of which authoritarianism has been a visible part? This essay seeks to raise issues around these matters by reflecting on the trajectory of the path leading to the election, its outcome and significance.

The Context of Change: From Coups to Controlled Change

The election was, in and of itself, a major psychological, political and constitutional breakthrough given the twenty four wasted years in a

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constitutional limbo. In 1970 the defeat of chief Leabua Jonathan's Basotho National Party (BNP) by an apparent landslide in the hands of the BCP (MacCartney, 1973) did not lead to a transfer of power from the vanquished to the triumphant. Instead the BNP government opted for the abrogation of the constitution and instituted various forms of personal and defacto one-party authoritarian rule. Years later in 1985 in response to external and internal pressure, it made a tentative move to resolve the legitimacy crisis that dogged it and called what was supposed to be a general election but turned out to be a farce. Gerrymandering of the electoral law served a hardly veiled objective of intimidating other parties against participation so that the BNP, as indeed happened, would be returned unopposed. But the BNP victory was pyrrhic because it did not reward it with the much yearned for legitimacy. It was also shorted - lived because in January 1986 a military coup detat finally dislodged it from power after sixteen years of mismanagement of national resource, inept and unaccountable rule.

With the coup det'at, civilian dictatorship was replaced by military dictatorship with a distinctly strong traditionalist predilection especially during the first four years. The monarchy, long a subject of intense controversy, and for a long time sidelined by the Independence Constitution and the BNP government, was drawn into the arena of politics to provide legitimacy for the military seizure of power. The arrangement stipulated that the King would exercise executive and legislative authority on the advice of the Military Council. The high political profile of the King in the decision-making process coupled with a politically motivated, if not legal, interpretation of this arrangement created an ambiguity as to whether real power rested with the King or the Military Council headed by Major General Metsing Lekhanya. Needless to say that as a direct result of this ambiguity, power struggle, and not harmonisation of roles, ensued between elements aligned to either the King or General Lekhanya. Another coup detat occurred in February 1990 as a logical sequel to this power struggle. The new coup not only dislodged and led to the prosecution of the King's confidant, Colonel Sekhobe Letsie, and others for the murder of two of Chief Jonathan's former ministers, but also set in motion the forced exile of King Moshoeshoe II and eventually to his dethronement.

The latter change of power was significant as a turning point, albeit not yet a decisive one, towards the re-introduction of constitutional rule. Authoritarianism had played all the cards which could render it a certain

degree of legitimacy while the people played no role in the political life of the country. In order to sell his new coup, General Lekhanya was obliged to make a tentative gesture to the nation by offering to reinstate a democratically elected civilian rule within a period of two years. A Constituent Assembly consisting of nominees of the military junta among whom were politicians, senior chiefs, soldiers and policemen and a sprinkle of indirectly elected Development Council members was instituted in June 1990 to deliberate and recommend a draft constitution for the consideration of the Military Council.

It became apparent though that the process was essentially one of the managed retreat in which the Military, and Lekhanya in particular had no desire to hand over all the reigns of power to a would-be elected government. The terms under which some form of continued military rule would be retained were thrown into sharp relief in a clause intended for inclusion in the proposed constitution entailing that "the commander of the defence force... shall be Minister *ex officio*" (Messrs V. Palmer and Fifoot, 1992). This clause was approved by the Constituent Assembly nominees after persuasion and cajoling by representatives of the government. Needless to say that it had become apparent in the cause of debates that the intention of the government was to ensure that the proposed *ex officio* minister would have powers of veto over policies of the elected government which were not to the liking of the military. Indeed, according to Palmer and Fifoot, the minister would neither be subject to ministerial collective responsibility nor to the authority of the elected prime minister.

The social and economic setting in which the proposed political and constitutional changes were shaping was one of deepening chaos. Since 1986 the thaw in relations between the governments of Lesotho and South Africa, and especially the former's persecution of South African Liberation Movements personnel at the behest of the latter had led many donor countries and agencies to reconsider their aid disbursements to Lesotho. This fact alone had a serious impact on the government's ability to finance some of its obligations. The world recession and mismanagement of state resources were other factors that created a very precipitate situation for many Basotho at the fringes of the economic pool. To aggravate pressure, Basotho miners expelled or retrenched since 1987 miners strike in South Africa swelled the growing numbers of the army of the unemployed.

Against this background stultified progress towards genuine change at the political-constitutional plane manifested by the continued ban on open political activity in terms of the notorious Suppression of Political Activities Order (No. 4), coupled with the subdued social and economic situation generated a mood of potentially explosive empathy towards the regime. Clearly from 1987 a defiant mood in certain sectors of society such as the youth, workers, teachers, etc., to which the government's response was more repression, was gathering momentum. Intensified repression, such as orchestrated against activists campaigning against the recruitment of scab labour during the miners' strike in 1987, the teachers' nation-wide strike in 1990, confrontations with students and the faculty of the National University of Lesotho in the late 80's and early 90's, with the construction workers, etc. only served to generate a coalition of forces publicly defying military rule and articulately linking the depressed social and economic conditions with the need for a decisive political change. When General Lekhanya appointed a Constituent Assembly of nominees, which was empowered with no more than a deliberative role and which he seemed to control, it was principally this coalition of forces which stood vehemently opposed to the scheme. Still later it would gain the high moral ground when it opposed the entrenchment of military rule by stealth in the form of the controversial aforementioned clause envisaged to form part of the Constitution. As confrontation heightened, the legitimacy crisis deepened thus creating an environment for another military uprising on the 30th April, 1991 in which General Lekhanya was himself overthrown.

But although Lekhanya was routed, the programme of state-managed reform was not stopped. Forced to advance further along the path of change the new junta, nominally headed by Major General Phisoana Ramaema, immediately lifted the hated Suspension of Political Activities Order and quietly dropped the controversial clause entrenching military presence in the cabinet from the draft constitution, but relentlessly denied the nation the right to play a more meaningful role in the process of change. Without doubt the revocation of Order No.4 was important because it unlocked the voice of the nation. But one other consequence which is not always recognised is that this act had the effect of consolidating the top-down reform model. While the traditional political parties had done very little to apply pressure on the junta to reform, and indeed their leaders participated in the truncated Constituent Assembly, the unbanning of political activities introduced critical realignments in the balance of forces. Virtually all these parties put their full weight behind the top-down

state-managed process which excluded the masses of the people from participation.

Of all the parties the BCP and BNP were particularly uncritical of this model of change. At his first legal public meeting, Mr. Ntsu Mokhehle, the then leader of the BCP went as far as to appeal to his supporters "to accept the proposed constitution even though it has (sic) some four sections that are very bad including making the Commander of the army a member of the civilian cabinet..." while also expressing a hope that these sections will be removed (Mirror, 1991). Subsequently a National Conference convened by the Heads of Churches dedicated to injecting more popular participation and transparency in the transition programme was sullied by leading figures in the BCP leadership. Some of them went so far as to call for the pre-emptive detention of the organisers who were also branded foreign sponsored insurrectionists (Mirror, 1991). After several hiccups the election was finally held on the 27th March, 1993, but not before another controversial clause creating a Defence Commission intended to place the affairs of the Security Forces almost beyond the purview of a civilian government had been inserted into the Constitution (Constitution of Lesotho, 1993).

The Election: An Analysis of Winners and Losers

In all twelve parties registered candidates to run in the electoral race. But there were only three parties which had fielded enough candidates to capture the race; namely the BCP, BNP and the royalist Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP). These three parties respectively fielded 65, 65 and 51 candidates thus making it possible for a government to be formed by one of them alone or in coalition with others. If the capacity to field a reasonable slate of candidates signified national profile, then the other parties failed to prove themselves as national forces even before the election. An analysis of the winners and losers therefore makes sense if it is focused on these three parties. Historically also, these were the better known traditional adversaries in all the three previous straightforward elections held in 1960, 1965 and 1970.

Official returns of the polls show the following distribution:

Table No.1

Party	No. of seats in the National Assembly	Percentage of the poll
BCP	65	75%
BNP	0	23%
MFP	0	1%
Others	0	1%
TOTAL	65	100%

A cursory glance at this table immediately falls upon the absurdity of the backward first-past-the-post electoral model to which Lesotho is still clinging inspite of being rejected by many jurisdictions turning towards democratic rule. Were a simple form of proportional representation such as the one adopted in Namibia three years earlier employed, a fairer representation reflective of the percentage each party polled would have produced something like this:

Table No.2

Party	No. of seats in the National Assembly
BCP	48
BNP	15
MFP	1
Others	1
TOTAL	65

The irony however is that all the major parties were not keen to advocate the change of the electoral model. The reason is that this model tends to favour established parties and to marginalise unestablished ones. Often supporters of

small parties tend to be forced to cast their votes for either of the bigger parties in order to ensure that their votes would have an impact on the outcome. That the model is unfair did not deter the BCP and the BNP from supporting it because it would lock the contest essentially between the two of them and thus give them the advantage of the votes of those who would otherwise vote for other parties. In so far as they threw light on shifts in the electorate's allegiances, the returns were particularly interesting if they are compared and contrasted with those of two previous elections held in 1965 and 1970 (McCartney, 1973).

Table No.3

Party	Year	Seats	Percentage
BCP	1965	25	40%
	1970	36	50%
	1993	65	75%
BNP	1965	31	42%
	1970	23	42%
	1993	0	23%
MFP	1965	4	17%
	1970	1	7%
	1993	0	1%

If the absurdity of representation is ignored and attention is focused on the percentages of the polls, the figures bear witness to a clear ascendancy of the BCP manifested by its increased share of the votes in each of the three elections. In contrast the MFP is a party on a steady decline. With a national poll of 7,650 in 1993 it polled roughly equivalent to single constituent polls of the BCP in a couple of constituencies. This poor performance, at the time when the party placed itself on an apparent moral advantage by climbing on the emotional issue of the dethronement of King Moshoeshoe II as its campaign platform can only express far-reaching changes in the major concerns of the electorate. It may well mean that socio-economic concerns have taken primacy over traditionalist-cultural issues, and perhaps rightly so.

It is difficult to say which was the worst loser between the MFP and the BNP and the social sectors they represent. Two scenarios would have been in the BNP's mind on the eve of the elections. The first and best scenario, which to many observers was remote, was one of the BNP winning the elections. An important linchpin in this calculation was the first-past-the-post electoral system. At best this system could deliver a majority of constituents to the BNP, even if not a majority share of the overall vote, as had happened in 1965. The alternative scenario, but one which would still serve the BNP leadership well, would have been an outcome in which the party lost the elections, but was returned as the Official Opposition on the second biggest vote. This outcome would perpetuate the perception in the public mind that there are only two serious parties in Lesotho and also place the BNP on a pedestal of the government-in-waiting.

However, the result of elections failed to produce any of the scenarios contemplated by the BNP leadership. Although the party did poll the second largest support, the effect of the first-past-the-post was to obliterate it completely as a parliamentary party. History had indeed moved in dramatic leaps for the BNP from being a dominant party in Parliament before the 1970 elections to a total non-presence in 1993. It was thus evaded by the very symbolic status of Official Opposition and the limelight of being in Parliament. Such a resounding rout is unprecedented and it clearly was not anticipated by the party leadership. It probably explains, more than any other factor, why Chief Sekhonyana baulked at the outcome of the elections certified free and fair by international and local teams of observers. In assuming the posture of rejecting the elections the BNP was not the first opposition party in Africa to do so since the back-to-democracy boon started in the 1990s. In Angola and Ghana losing parties had also refused to recognise the outcome of the elections in 1992 (Jeffries and Thomas, 1993:331).

The BCP victory and what it meant

There were sufficient explanations for BCP's stunning victory. Always a strong party since its formation in 1952, it will be remembered that it apparently secured a landslide in the 1970 having narrowly lost the 1965 election. While its arch rival, the BNP, was perceived by the bulk of the voters as the author of the socio-economic and constitutional crisis that dogged the country's recent past, the BCP had a different record in their perceptions.

It was a party associated with initiating and heading the anti-colonial struggle and in subsequent years its name became synonymous with resistance to BNP dictatorship. Organisationally also the BCP's bottom-up model evinced its superiority and allowed for more activists to be drawn into the campaign machinery of the party. There is also no doubt that its veteran leader, Ntsu Mokhehle, still enjoyed the unqualified trust and adulation of the party supporters. He was the BCP's critical asset in the election and this fact gave the party a milestone against the BNP whose leadership by the enigmatic Chief Retselisitsoe Sekhonyana was a cause for concern even for many of its supporters. From the time Chief Sekhonyana was elected as President of the BNP in December 1991, serious acrimonies ensued in the party central to which was his suitability for the position.

The precipitate social and economic conditions hitting across all urban and rural classes in the 1990's, without exaggeration, placed the imperatives of change high in the perception of the bulk of the voters. This situation logically favoured a party which had never been in government. More than any other, the BCP was able to project itself in a favourable light as such a party, and successfully coaxed the electorate to entrust solely to itself the challenging task of bringing about positive change to the country's social and political ills. On the occasion of his acceptance speech after he was re-elected as the Party President at the 1992 Conference Mokhehle boosted this perception by claiming that all other parties had had their chance to rule while the BCP had not. In this regard its long history in oppositional politics and the nationalistic rhetoric of the 1960s which most of its rank and file could still be heard to mouth, despite being disavowed by the leadership, stood it in good stead and cast it in the image of a radical party.

And yet the resounding victory scored by the BCP at the polls did not tell us much about this party's competence to govern, let alone to transform the structural legacy of neo-colonialism which had emersed Lesotho in socio-economic crisis and engendered state authoritarianism. In this regard the voters in Lesotho may yet experience the disappointment Zambians are experiencing with the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government, another recent example of a party which swept to power on the wave of voters' disenchantment with the status quo. In assessing the prospective directions of BCP rule, the party's support for the top-down authoritarian reform programme of the military junta and its own internal

authoritarian history are good pointers for wary. Even more important is the fact that although the BCP postured as a party of change, the thrusts of that platform of change were at best vaguely articulated. Indeed the manifesto issued at the end of January 1993 had an insignificant impact, if any, on the outcome of the election. It was unveiled exactly two months after the election originally scheduled for the 28th November, 1992 had been postponed, and barely two months before the election eventually took place.

At the time the manifesto was issued, it had become apparent to all and sundry that the electorate had already made a choice on whom they would vote and that the BCP would be returned with a landslide. On the one hand the vague electoral platform helped the BCP to rise above the controversies usually attendant to a spelt-out policy and gave it a new lease of life to hold together the various interests which hitherto constituted its loose social base. On the negative side this method of attracting votes yields short-lived victory. It fails to take the electorate into confidence and to prepare it for the way ahead. In the end it generates disillusionment with the democratic process when voters become aware that they were taken for a ride by political posturing and demagoguery.

For its part the BCP manifesto threw into sharp relief that the party's concept of change was cast in the conventional neo-liberal mould. It committed the BCP government to "ensure that Lesotho remained faithfully committed to the principles and purposes of inter alia ... International Monetary Fund, W.B. and ADB" (BCP, 1993). The first two international institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) are responsible for the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) implemented by the Lesotho Government since 1988. Ostensibly dictated by the need to rectify economic dislocation, it is common cause that the IMF-WB driven SAPs are premised on the philosophy of rolling back the state with the objective of giving the "market forces" a sway to assert themselves unencumbered by the interventions of the state. Such a hegemony of the market forces is also seen by its protagonists as a precondition for flourishing democracy.

In point of fact, however, the offensive of market forces unleashed by the IMF-WB SAPs and the financial tentacles the recipient countries find themselves bonded to can only increase the integration of the poor countries into the world economy dominated by the rich countries of the North and their

Transnational Co-operations. Internally these programmes have the natural tendency to deepen the gulf between the rich and the poor. Instead of confronting the legacy of neo-colonialism manifested by lopsided production, distribution and exchange patterns, they re-invigorate this relationship and hasten, as some have argued, the full economic re-colonialisation of African countries.

Can the WB-IMP SAPs generate the material basis for the development of democracy? It seems not. Invariably they are not endeavours generated by consensus, but are imposed from above, and perhaps still better to say from outside. By definition they negate democracy. They drift from the material basis of democracy because they deny other social sectors a stake in the economy. This point is made more apparent by WB adviser, Serge Michailog, in a recent interview. He argues:

Africa needs countries that are capable of imposing unpopular reforms. The transition from stagnation to development isn't a natural one. It entails a major drop in income for some social groups (Weekly Mail and Guardian, 1993:29).

Naturally the marginalised social groups are obliged to defend their interests and this invariably leads to confrontation with the state. Thus it is as Beckman has correctly observed that "World Bank and IMF sponsored "Structural Adjustment" programmes go hand in hand with intensified state repression against popular and democratic organisations (Beckman, 1992:141)." It is clear that political parties and governments which embrace uncritically the IMF-WB SAPs, whether democratically elected or not, find themselves also obliged to embrace authoritarian methods as a necessary corollary of these programmes. We could hardly expect the least from the BCP government.

Conclusion

The Lesotho general election of 1993 was a culmination of contradictory developments. It was necessitated by the imperatives of change in the methods of governing the country. While the people yearned for the election as a means of regaining their role in defining the destiny of the country, the military also saw it as a means of easing itself out of the mire of perpetual coups, legitimacy crisis and domestic and external pressures. In the process leading to this event

initiatives shifted from a participatory and empowering people-based change to one controlled from above seeking to entrench as much the legacy of the past as it was possible as it re-arranged the facade.

The very idea that election did take place was a significant breakthrough though. But it is unlikely that given the context in which this breakthrough was achieved, the authoritarian culture rooted in the behaviour of the state and itself a legacy of many years of the colonial and neo-colonial edifice can be obliterated through this simple event. For the latter process to unfold in a manner that would yield a sustainable democratic development, a programme which envisaged, *inter alia*, the re-organisation of the state, the involvement and empowerment of civil society would have been the best way to proceed. Democracy must also ultimately be rooted in the re-organisation of productive and distributive processes because as Bangura correctly argues:

Although democracy is concerned with the rules and institutions that allow for open competition and participation in government, it embodies also social and economic characteristics that are crucial in determining its capacity to survive (Bangura, 1992).

It is when social and economic processes are arranged to favour the broad spectrum of national interests and their hegemony assumes a political character, that democracy and constitutional government would have a chance to take root. As it is, the BCP has betrayed its massive mandate to embark on real re-organisation of society by committing itself to the IMF-WB SAP which can only perpetuate conditions that militate against the rule of law and the transparency and accountability of state institutions.

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