

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN BOTSWANA

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ABSTRACT

Botswana has social and physical settings which could make development difficult. Botswana is an ethnically diverse and landlocked country, with much of its landmass desert-menaced and hostile. In spite of these limitations, Botswana is considered one of the world's development successes, and has secured for herself the status of a fast growing economy. The development gains in Botswana are often credited to the availability of minerals, particularly diamond. But mineral deposits may impede development as seen in most African countries where natural resources have caused endless civil conflicts or where large sums of mineral wealth have been squandered. On the other hand, many developed economies are resource endowed. Thus, the abundance of resources may or may not be a curse; and whichever case is true of any country is dependent on more fundamental factor(s) such as the nature and character of politics. From inception, Botswana's governance system has been democratic, and this has impacted significantly on development in the country. Consequently, the study establishes a nexus between democracy and development in Botswana. The theoretical basis is systems theory, while the analytical tool is content analysis. The findings, inter alia, are that Botswana's democracy is participatory, that the culture of corruption is not tolerated, and that the resources of the state are effectively utilized for development.

Key words: Democracy, Development, Minerals, Diamond, Political, Botswana

INTRODUCTION

The political and economic underdevelopment of Africa is highly documented. Independent research findings and analyses show the continent as the least recognized case in terms of political stability and economic growth. The continent is notorious for political corruption, and has the most negative growth in income per capita. Thus, there is universal pessimism concerning Africa's political and economic development (Acemoglu et al, 2001). The state in Africa is totalistic; it presents itself as an apparatus of violence, and there is the tendency to use political power for accumulation (Ake, 1996). Africa's economic performance has not been great. In 2018, for instance, the total share of Africa in world trade of goods and services was only 2.5 percent (Gustafson, 2018). In fact, "Africa is experiencing an unprecedented economic downturn with major adverse impacts on the long-term development of the continent" (United Nations, 2021, p.88). However, in specific terms, Botswana presents interesting political and economic scenarios. Botswana is regarded as one of the best democracies and economies in Africa. She is an intriguing example of a country that was not given any hope at independence, but has progressed to become a well-run democracy with stable politics and economy. Botswana's development is so amazing that it has been termed the "African miracle" (Cook & Sarkin 2010, p.462).

Many scholars have pointed out the importance of mineral deposits, especially diamonds in Botswana's development (Korinek, 2014; Armah, 2015; Maipose, 2008)). But mineral deposits cannot be a sufficient factor for development. In fact, natural resources can be an obstacle to development. This can be seen in Liberia and Sierra Leone where the discovery of minerals has caused civil conflicts (Armah, 2015), and Nigeria, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo that have wasted huge amounts of their natural wealth ((Lewin, n.d). Indeed, the dependence on natural

resource or mineral export reduces a country's development prospects (Sachs & Warner, 1995; Auty, 2001). In some cases, however, abundance of resources may be associated with higher growth (Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2008; Alexeev & Conrad, 2009). Canada, Australia, Norway, the United States are resource endowed and highly developed. Does mineral dependence retard development, or does retarded development create mineral dependence, one may ask? The direction of causality has not received any finality.

What is certain is that Botswana has avoided the curse syndrome associated with mineral resources and has made giant strides in her development efforts. What then is responsible for the development of Botswana? Could it be her practice of democracy? But there is no consensus that democracy certainly leads to development. None of the East Asian economies or Latin America's high performer (Chile) was democratic during the first years of rapid development. Also, many democracies (such as Nigeria) have not been fantastic in terms of development. In the case of Botswana, democracy may be an important catalyst for her development. Botswana's political and economic developments are by no means miracles, but commitments to the democratic culture. Unlike many mineral-rich countries in Africa, Botswana has been democratically and productively governed. It will then be difficult to ignore the contributions of democracy to Botswana's remarkable growth and development. Consequently, the thesis of this study is that development in Botswana is a product of her democratic system of government which is participatory, intolerant to corruption, and by which the administrative and political resources of the state are tied to the task of development.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research method. This means that it makes use of already existing data which come in recorded form from such documents as text books, journals, official releases, websites and similar sources of information. The tool of analysis is content analysis which enables the investigation of recorded human activities explicitly and implicitly. Thus, data are in some cases stated as they are, and at some other times require some interpretation. This further means that analysis is both conceptual and relational. Conceptual content analysis focuses on the number of times a concept occurs in a set of texts or records, and relies heavily on explicit data which requires no interpretation. In this way, one can easily see that democracy and development are the central themes of the study. On the other hand, relational content analysis takes a more holistic view by focusing more on implicit data in terms of context, surrounding words and relationships. Relational content analysis has a different focus than conceptual content analysis. Through it, the relationship between democracy and development in Botswana, that is, how they are connected, and the context in which they occur are painstakingly explored.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is rooted in systems theory which attempts to explain a phenomenon from its whole extent. It places premium on the linkages between and among various parts of a scheme or system and their outcomes. The systems theory is said to have been pioneered in the 1940s by a biologist named Ludwig Von Bertalanffy. However, its adaptation for research in political science is credited to David Easton. Generally, every system operates within an environment with which it maintains a complex network of interactions or relationships. Thus, the political system functions in a social environment. It will, therefore, not give adequate result to analyze political events in isolation of other aspects of the society. In this case, the systems theory explains the relationship between political life and other aspects of human existence. The objectives would include the study of the system and the ways in which it is maintained under the impact of environmental disturbances (Kaplan in Charlesworth, 1967). These disturbances can be in form of demands and supports which constitute what can be called inputs. These inputs are turned into "outputs" (i.e. policies, decisions or laws) through the conversion process. These outputs affect the environment

as outcomes, and in turn give rise to fresh demands which flow back into the political system through the feedback mechanism.

Ntete-Nna (2004) agrees that a political system is prone to influences from its environment and in turn influences events within the environment. In other words, the political system receives inputs from the environment and responds to such in the form of outputs. The political system can be democratic, while the social environment may encompass various aspects of the economy from which development can be understood. In this case, analysis will include the establishment of the nexus between democracy and development. Hence, Kaplan (in Charlesworth, 1967) explains that systems theory emphasizes the articulation of the system and of its components and the behaviors by means of which it maintains itself. Thus, the interactions between the parts themselves and the results they produce become very important, with the result that a system's elements and their relationships extensively influence the content and performance of the system and its component parts. For instance, the effects that democracy could have on development may be determined by the character of the political class, particularly the governing elites and the institutions they represent.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Concept of Democracy

Democracy seems to be acquiring a global acceptance as a good system of government. This is evident in the increasing number of states that lay claim to democracy. The word, democracy is derived from two Greek words *demos* (people/citizens) and *kratos* (rule/governance) which when combined, therefore, means the people's rule. In its earliest practice, the people were said to have governed themselves by themselves. In Athens, for instance, it was customary for all the citizens to gather in one place for the purpose of policy formulation. This means that the people ruled themselves directly without intermediaries, hence, the name direct or classical democracy.

However, since the period of the Enlightenment, society has become more complex, thus necessitating representative democracy. Representation is necessary because it is difficult for all the people to directly make and execute laws. Again, the act of governance has become so specialized that professional administrators are needed to perform the duties of government. Thus, the people select, choose or elect some individuals that rule on behalf of the people. In other words, the people exercise power indirectly through their representatives. This is a feature of what is called Liberal Democracy which assumes that the people are the source of political power, but held in trust by government officials (Onyeukwu & Oriji, 2019). Perhaps, Rousseau assumes that representative democracy limits people's involvement in the political process; hence his theory of participatory democracy. Participation for Rousseau is not just an activity which occurs when elections are conducted, but one of continuous involvement in the decision making institutions of the state. Rousseau's ideal appears to have created a huge challenge for the Liberal world, which is, finding a way to take power from elected officials back to the citizens. Various solutions are canvassed which include broadening the franchise and obtaining for leadership people who possess the virtue to pursue the common good (Madison et al, 1987)

The liberal regime has been heavily criticized, particularly by Marx and Engels. Liberalism along with its corollary capitalism is accused of orchestrating the poor conditions of the working class. Socialist democracy is seen as an alternative, and has increasingly gained currency. A basic assumption of socialist democratic theory is that democracy will become more real and relevant if access to power is made more equitable. Interestingly, socialist principles have become more and more entrenched, even in societies that have strong liberal foundation. Thus, there is an increasing combination of liberal and socialist norms in contemporary times leading to the emergence of two tendencies we may call Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism. Social democracy is a capitalist free-enterprise economy which has been modified considerably to

incorporate state intervention, while democratic socialism is a socialist initiative which tries to transform a command economy to allow for more entrepreneurial and market ethos (Onyeukwu & Oriji, 2019). Social democratic systems set out to produce governments that protect the citizens from rapacious regimes and make democracy more inclusive through devices such as the ballot, frequent elections, press freedom, primaries, recalls, referendums and public hearings (Macpherson, 1977). On the other hand, democratic socialist order tries to maintain active, accountable state with increased individual freedom, initiative, movement and organization.

The Concept of Development

The term development has been analyzed in various ways thus leading to different theories and definitions. In broad terms, the two major theories of development are modernization and dependency theories. To modernize is to make better through a planned process in order to realize certain values. Basically, "modernization posits an original state of underdevelopment characterized by, among other things, a low rate of economic growth... This original state of backwardness is initially universal...but the industrialized countries have managed to overcome it... All other countries could conceivably overcome backwardness too if they adopt appropriate strategies" (Ake, 1996, p.10). Some of the strategies for development going by Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth* may include social structures that encourage mobility, the application of science to agriculture and industrial production, savings and their mobilization for profitable investments, the emergence and expansion of new industries, increased workforce and re-investment of profit in new plants and other sectors, sustained economic growth and expansion through modern technology (Rostow, 1960). From a non-linear stand point, Organski (1965) recommends for development the creation of national unity, capital accumulation due to reduction in mass consumption, protection of the people from the hardships of industrialization and making the economy politically responsible.

However, modernization theory is criticized by dependency theorists for being Eurocentric (Ake, 1988; Hein, 1992). One major assumption of dependency theory is that the backwardness of the underdeveloped (developing) world is as a result of its peripheral status vis-à-vis the developed world occasioned by their unequal relationship. Another argument is that the social structures and institutions of peripheral societies may not be amenable to the modernization thesis of growth. Rather, less-developed countries should adopt strategies such as delinking and import substitution industrialization. In brief, delinking suggests the submission by underdeveloped countries of their external economic relations to the logic of domestic development priorities, while import substitution industrialization is the gradual replacement of foreign goods and services with domestic production. In spite of these approaches, the economies of most developing countries remain weak and vulnerable. Thus, Onyeukwu (2020, 2019, p.207) insists that "development is beyond mere protestations"; development "requires planning, hard work and the mobilization of the energies of the people".

Development is a desired change broadly planned and administered to improve the general wellbeing of the people; it is a participatory process of directed change intended to bring about social and economic advancement, increased skill, greater freedom, fairness and other valued qualities necessary to improve the welfare of the people (Bellu, 2011). Development is largely man-centered since any aspect of society, whether material and non-material is considered developmental if it contributes positively to the living conditions of the people (Onyeukwu & Chujor, 2019). It is in this sense that Amartya Sen developed what is generally known as the "capability approach," which sees development as a tool that enables people to reach the highest levels of their abilities, by giving them freedom of action the most crucial of which is "freedom to participate in critical evaluation and process of value formation" (Sen, 2000, p.287). Capability is "a person's ability to do valuable acts or to reach valuable states of being"; it "represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be" (Sen, 1993, p.28). Thus,

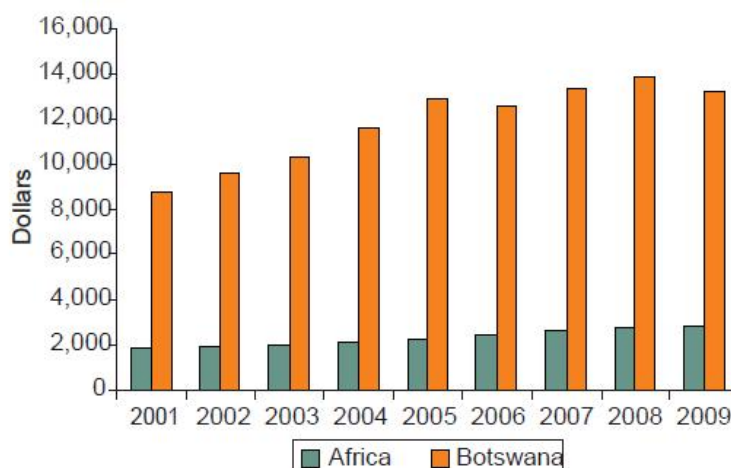
development will include not only income, utilities, resources and wealth, but also the things that they allow people to do.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Botswana is a Southern African country which shares boundary with Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia and Zambia (Parson 1984: p.4). The country named after its dominant ethnic group, the Tswana was before independence in 1966 a British protectorate known as Bechuanaland. The geographical and political conditions of Botswana are not among the most promising in the world. Botswana is landlocked; much of its land is not habitable, with the Kalahari Desert accounting for roughly 84 percent of the landmass; as a result, 80 percent of the population lives along the fertile eastern border of the country (United States Central Intelligence Agency, 2014; Parson, 1984). Again, the United States Central Intelligence Agency reveals that Botswana is an ethnically diverse country with a population distribution of Tswana 79%, Kalanga 11%, Basarwa 3% and other, including Kgalagadi and white 7%. Furthermore, the pre-colonial as well as colonial economy of Botswana was agrarian and mostly characterized by cattle keeping which was not viable because apart from being subsistent, cattle were often given out in battle, as gifts or as royalties to the local chief (Good, 1992). Such "an economy, which existed on tribute collection and cattle production, was bound to fail at the very least" (Armah, 2015, p.12). Thus, the nature of her pre-independence political economy could make anybody to write-off the state building project in Botswana as a failure. In fact, Botswana was one of the world's poorest countries at independence; however, she has become one of the world's development successes (World Bank, 2021). The country has risen in international stature as a peaceful and increasingly prosperous democratic state; she is considered one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and is now classified by the World Bank as a Middle Income Country (United Nations Development Programme, 2000).

Indeed, Botswana's economic account has been impressive with an average growth rate of 9% per year from 1967 to 2006, and a per capita GDP of \$7,343 in 2008 (United States Department of State, 2014). The growth was so rapid that by the year 2001 Botswana's per capita gross domestic product of \$7,820 was twice the average per capita income of the Asian tigers (\$3,854) and four times the average per capita income of \$1,826 of the sub-Saharan African region (Beaulier, 2004). By 2007, Botswana had per capita income of about \$6,100 (\$12,000 at purchasing power parity), making Botswana an upper- middle-income country.

Figure 1: Average per Capita Income in Africa and Botswana, 2001–09 (purchasing power parity at current dollar prices).



Botswana's successes are also evident in other aspects of human development. At independence, life expectancy at birth was 37 years. By 1990 it was 60, 10 years above the African average. Under-five mortality had fallen to about 45 per 1,000 live births in 1990, compared with 180 for Africa as a whole. Life expectancy at birth rose from 55 years in 1971 to 67 in 1997 (Greener et al, 2000). In education, school enrolment rates rose, as did literacy rates, due to rapid investment in that sector. The basic adult illiteracy rate fell from 66 per cent in 1971 to 24 per cent in 2000. The country had an average primary school enrolment rate of 99.89 percent between 1970 and 2015 (Botswana: Primary School Enrollment, 2021). As part of the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE), transition to junior secondary level is 100%. With 0.735 score in the Human Development Index (HDI), Botswana placed 100th out of 189 countries making her a high human development nation in 2019 (United Nations Development Programme, 2020).

Many researchers conclude that Botswana's mineral resources, particularly diamonds is central to her development. According to Maipose (2008), the rapid economic growth and general development in Botswana have been driven by the mining sector, particularly the diamond industry. For Armah (2015) the discovery kick started and continues to fuel Botswana's economic success story, while Korinek (2014) insists that minerals sector in Botswana has been the engine of her development strategy. While the importance of natural endowment cannot be overlooked, it does not completely explain the development of Botswana. Mineral deposits may even encumber development. For instance, "the discovery of such mineral deposits in other parts of the continent like Liberia and Sierra Leone culminated in a resource curse and decades of endless civil conflict" (Armah, 2015, p.12). Again, "many countries in Africa, including Zambia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, have squandered vast amounts of their natural wealth" (Lewin, n.d, p.82).

In the case of Botswana, she has contained the natural resource disasters common in Africa. The central government holds mineral rights in the country which was achieved through negotiation with tribal authorities (Leith, 2000; Maundeni & Mookodi, 2004). The avoidance of unilateral central resource control has helped to build mutual trust, strengthen national unity and cohesion. Ancestral rights over minerals are respected, and investment in public infrastructure and productive assets are made top priorities. In Botswana the resources of the state are deployed to the task of development, which makes her a developmental state. Governance for development has been the case since the first presidency of Sir Seretse Khama of the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) who was conscious of developing what had been hitherto a relative back water of the British Empire (Parsons et al, 1995). Hence, the slogan *ditiro tsa itlhabololo* (work for development) underpins the trajectory of post-independence Botswana with a strong sense of nationalism (Taylor, 2002). This point is stated by Khama (1980, p.323) this way:

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

Botswana practices parliamentary democracy which is modeled on European examples and adapted to local Tswana tradition (Seidler, 2011). Her democracy is a Westminster Parliamentary model with sound political structures based on British common law and local customary law (Cook & Sarkin, 2010). The legal system adopts the received European precedent-based legal code and incorporates tried and tested traditional African customary practices by basing civil laws on customs and traditional systems (Beaulier, 2004). The president as the commander in chief of the

army appoints all ministers (Parsons, 1984) and is chosen by election for no more than two five year terms (Badawy, 2015). Franchise is universal, and the constitution provides for multi-party system, although the Botswana Democratic Party has controlled the Presidency as well as the National Assembly since independence. Significant also is that Botswana has held successive national elections since 1966, and this has ensured hitch free transfer of power and stable polity.

Essentially, Botswana's democratic system is participatory. Inbuilt are political structures which encourage citizens' participation in decision making. One of such structures is the *kgotla* (village assembly) which allows for public discussions and generation of views on matters affecting communities. The *kgotla* and the *Freedom Square* have been used extensively to get inputs from the locals and communicate new policies to them. Harvey and Lewis (1990) argue that the tribal *kgotla* system provides a forum where the chiefs listen to the people, and where everyone has a voice. Besides, local councilors and members of parliament give regular feedback and explain government programs in the *kgotla*. Again, corruption is not tolerated in Botswana. The "culture of intolerance discourages a corrupt leader from seeking power and quickly eliminates a leader that becomes corrupt" (Badawy, 2015, p.31). In 2018, for instance, Botswana scored 63/100 in the Corruption Perception Index, while Nigeria scored 27/100 (Transparency International, 2018).

The civil service in Botswana is very professional and implements governmental policies efficiently (Somolekae, 1993). The bureaucratic model in Botswana is a characteristic of a developmental state in which there is a blend of the bureaucracy and the ruling party. The result is the "commonness of the recruitment of senior civil servants directly not just into the ruling party politics but also into senior state positions" (Charlton, 1991, p.283). A classic example is Festus Mogae who was variously Planning Officer, Director of Economic Affairs, Alternate Governor of Botswana in IMF, Governor of the Bank of Botswana, Permanent Secretary to the President, Secretary to the Cabinet, Minister of Finance and Development Planning, and Vice President in 1992 before taking over the presidential reins in 1998 as the third President of Botswana (Parsons, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Botswana has maintained a parliamentary democracy since independence. She adopts the Westminster governance model which incorporates traditional structures that encourage popular participation. There is a culture of intolerance to corruption, and the government is responsive to the socio-economic needs of the people. Botswana is a developmental democratic state – her administrative and political resources are significantly deployed to the task of development. Thus, the country has grown into a peaceful and prosperous state. The development of Botswana has been so remarkable that it has been dubbed the "African miracle" (Cook & Sarkin 2010, p.462). Democracy in Botswana may not be perfect, but it is good. Botswana has been largely free of kleptocracy and civil conflicts; she has maintained a transparent, people oriented government and has done much to harness mineral earnings and prevent the instability that characterizes many resource-based economies. However, Botswana's political and economic systems are still evolving. There is, therefore, the need to guard against policies which could roll back the gains made over the course of her existence. Instead, the state should endeavor to implement well thought out policies that stand the test of time and yet are amenable to changing trends – policies that will make her economy globally more competitive.

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