

# Botswana and Nation-Building Theory

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**Abstract**—This paper argues nation-building theories that prioritize democratic governance best explain the successful post-independence development of Botswana. Three main competing schools of thought exist regarding the sequencing of policies that should occur to re-build weakened or failed states. The first posits that economic development should receive foremost attention, while democratization and a binding sense of nationalism can wait. A second group of experts identified constructing a sense of nationalism among a populace is necessary first, so that the state receives popular legitimacy and obedience that are prerequisites for development. Botswana, though, transitioned into a multi-party democracy and prosperous open economy due to the utilization of traditional democratic structures, enlightened and accountable leadership, and an educated technocratic civil service. With these political foundations already in place when the discovery of diamonds occurred, the resulting revenues were spent wisely on projects that grew the economy, improved basic living standards, and attracted foreign investment. Thus democratization preceded, and therefore provided an accountable basis for, economic development that might otherwise have been squandered by greedy and isolated elites to the detriment of the greater population. Botswana was one of the poorest nations in the world at the time of its independence in 1966, with little infrastructure, a dependence on apartheid South Africa for trade, and a largely subsistence economy. Over the next thirty years, though, its economy grew the fastest of any nation in the world. The transparent and judicious use of diamond returns is only a partial explanation, as the government also pursued economic diversification, mass education, and rural development in response to public needs.

As nation-building has become a project undertaken by nations and multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Botswana may provide best practices that others should follow in attempting to reconstruct economically and politically unstable states.

**Keywords**—Botswana, democratization, economic development, nation-building.

## I. INTRODUCTION: BOTSWANA'S EVOLUTION

COUNTRIES that nation-building scholars use for case studies are, not surprisingly, some of the poorest nations on earth, and Botswana at the time of its independence in 1966 fit into the bottom of that category. Its colonial British rulers had neglected to build infrastructure, so only four miles of paved roads connected its largely dispersed and illiterate population. Primary schools taught only two-thirds of the eligible population, and the nation's six secondary schools could take in only 1500 students, or 3% of older children. Only thirty college graduates lived in the country alongside 2500 secondary school graduates. One reason for the dearth of graduates was that two out of every three men lived in South Africa at any given time given higher wages in the mining and

farming sectors. The new state was therefore staffed primarily by those of European ancestry, with only one African among senior 32 administrators. In medium-level posts, 143 Africans worked with 400 whites. The economy was in shambles; Botswana's per capita gross national product of \$14 ranked third lowest in the world, and per capita income was only \$100. An early 1960s drought killed one-third of the national cattle herd and forced two-thirds of the population to rely on food aid. Half of the government's revenue came from grants and loans from Great Britain. White enclaves in eastern Botswana favored annexation by apartheid South Africa, whose forces launched cross-border raids seeking the return of refugees. Lacking a military force other than a small police detachment, the nation's new leaders could only look on helplessly [1]-[5]. Paul Collier, in his recent book on the world's poorest billion people, describes four "traps" that hamstring national development. Botswanan leaders faced the possibility of all four occurring: a landlocked country with hostile neighbors, dependence on one resource (cattle) for export, internal conflict caused by low incomes and stagnant growth, and bad governance, especially if European expatriate administrators and ranchers fled or were expelled from the new nation [6], [7].

How did such a poor nation, then, achieve the highest overall per capita growth rate in the world between 1966 and 1999? By 2000, universal free primary education existed, and almost half of the nation's children had at least a secondary school degree. The literacy rate was one of the highest on the continent. Due to the building of hospitals and clinics and the training of health care personnel, life expectancy rose from less than 50 at the time of independence to the upper 70s. Five thousand miles of paved roads and 27 airports connected all of the major cities and towns in the country. Agriculture, which amounted to 40% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1966, fell to 3% by 1989, as minerals, especially diamond mining, as well as industry, replaced ranching as the main economic drivers. Beef comprised 90% of export earnings in the 1960s but only 4% in 1990, as diamonds (77% of export earnings) and other minerals such as copper and nickel replaced it. Between 1965 and 1980, GDP grew at a spectacular annual rate of 14%, and this allowed per capita incomes to rise above \$28,000. By 1996, the state had accumulated \$4.4 billion in foreign exchange, enough to fund two years' worth of imports. This economic growth occurred with a minimum of corruption and political instability. Botswana regularly ranks as the least corrupt nation in Africa according to Transparency International, while the World Economic Forum reported it as one of the two most competitive African economies. Although the Botswana Democratic Party has governed since independence, free and fair multi-party elections have occurred every five years. Its parliamentary system of

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government is marked by an independent judiciary, a president with strong powers but accountable to the legislature and voters, and a history of respect for the rule of law and human rights. The question this paper seeks to answer, then, is which theories of nation-building best explain the rise of Botswana from colonial dependence and poverty to a modern, thriving, multi-party democracy? Are there lessons that political scientists, economists, and public officials can learn from this history [8]-[10]?

## II. THREE SCHOOLS OF NATION-BUILDING

The concept of nation-building as an organic, purposeful, and evolutionary process dates from after World War II, when the victorious Allied powers rebuilt Europe and Asia. The focus was mostly on the developed world, with the United States emphasizing democratic governance, free trade, and open markets in Western Europe and Japan. Concurrently, the Soviet Union prioritized the creation of command economies under the dictatorship of communist party elites in Eastern Europe. As decolonization proceeded in the 1950s, the two Cold War adversaries sought to validate their respective models in Africa and Asia, which for the United States meant the application of modernization theory. With the failure of the United States to win the Vietnam War, and thereby prove that economic aid, counter-insurgency tactics, and attempts at democratization could successfully create a new and sustainable nation, studies on nation-building diminished as the term fell into disrepute. Its resurrection came with the end of the Cold War and the consequent political instability that wracked Central America, Africa, the Balkans, and South Asia [11]. The post-September 2011 American occupation of Afghanistan and invasion of Iraq also rejuvenated interest in the subject. This paper will survey three major schools of thought identified by the author and advanced by nation-building scholars since World War II and conclude with a summary of deficiencies that future research can remedy. The categories are based upon the policies that scholars believe that nation-builders should emphasize from the start: growing a sense of nationalism, economic development, or political reform.

Creating and fostering a sense of nationalism is the chief concern of a first school of scholars that sees the prevalence of strong sub-national identities as the cause of fractured African states. Western historians and political scientists have downplayed the role of nationalism as a positive social and political "glue" due to its catalytic role in two world wars. Yet as British historian Hugh Seton-Watson reminds us,

All I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one. It is not necessary that the whole population should so feel, or behave, and it is not possible to lay down dogmatically a minimum percentage of a population which must be so affected. When a significant group holds this belief, it possesses 'national consciousness' [12].

The argument of these writers is that sub-national groups can act along a continuum from denying membership in a state, refusing to obey its laws, and making war, to providing active support and even assimilating by shedding their traditional marker and accepting a national identity [13]. For such groups to move toward the latter stages, a national government must "sell" them on the benefits and advantages of nationalism and nationhood. Claudia Derichs uses insights from sociology to argue that the message must come from a government that occupies a central position among subnational groups through its provision of education and other services, and that those groups have a generally positive attitude toward the center as a result. The message itself must be clothed in a familiar cultural narrative that emphasizes both group autonomy and national unity and that connects with the experiences and needs of the target groups. If a population has experienced past marginalization, a government might acknowledge past wrongs and articulate a new process of inclusion and equality. Governments can use the media and public schools to inculcate a unifying sense of nationhood based on insights from psychology, sociology, and history that promote a proud and positive past and a shared future. Jochen Hippler emphasizes the importance of an "integrative ideology." This set of ideas mobilizes a total society behind a "functional state apparatus," and administrative, fiscal, legal, and security-focused state-building processes. [14], [15]

A second collection of scholars argues that nation-building must start with meeting the socio-economic needs of the population, lest poverty-bred rebellion undermine a nascent political framework for governance. This is the oldest school, having its roots in American-led post-World War II programs such as the Marshall Plan and Point Four initiative. In the 1950s, led by Walt W. Rostow, "modernization theory" became the dominant paradigm in envisioning the development of the so-called "Third World." According to Rostow's meta-narrative, all nations developed along a path marked by five stages: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of mass consumption. The application of new technology to generate more efficient means of per capita output is the key catalyst for economic growth and subsequent political reform. In traditional societies, such as those existing in pre-1600s Europe and the 20<sup>th</sup> century developing world, production was limited by knowledge of only subsistence agriculture, with surpluses allocated to non-growth generating purposes such as warfare, luxuries for elites, and monuments. The Enlightenment in Western Europe sparked trade, specialized production, financial institutions, and market incentives for further discoveries. Farmers now turned to more intensive agriculture, nation-states subsidized exploration while keeping the domestic peace, and a new class of entrepreneurs operated more freely. Rostow defined the take-off stage as "the achievement of rapid growth in a limited number of sectors, where modern industrial techniques are applied." If nations continued to develop technology, more efficient and creative production techniques, and ways to increase capital investment, they would start the drive to maturity, "the period

when a society has effectively applied the range of (then) modern technology to the bulk of its resources." The final age of mass consumption would be marked by the emergence of the nation as a world power, the creation of a welfare state, and what economist John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958 termed "affluence." In more recent times, advocates of structural adjustment policies similarly call for open markets, reduced regulation and social welfare spending, balanced budgets, and growth-oriented policies as pathways to economic development and a strong, stable state [16]-[19].

With the field of nation-building dominated by political scientists, it is no surprise that the third approach of "state-building" is the primary focus of much of the literature. Due to space, I will only mention academics who believe that political reform means democratization. John Forje, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Kidane Mengisteab, Larry Diamond, Seymour Lipset, and Juan Linz recommend different policies, though, depending on the barriers they fault for having impeded the democratization of sub-Saharan Africa in particular. An unequal distribution of wealth as a legacy of colonialism, a short political transition period to independence, flawed leadership of one-party states, a centralized economic system, and Cold War-influenced human rights violations are reasons cited by John Forje for the lack of political pluralism and individual freedom. Given that multiple tribes traditionally led by unelected chiefs now lived within the same state, opportunistic post-independence leaders transposed that governance model and argued that political centralization was needed to forestall ethnic conflict. In practice such leaders often wanted and used their authoritarian power to repress dissent and accumulate private wealth. Forje concludes, "Generally, it can be acclaimed that the governance system in Africa failed due to the absence of accommodative policies and non-reconciliatory approaches; the power brokers closed the doors for any form of consensus and participatory politics. Rather, it was the game of exclusion-of faked victories and of divide rule [20]." He posits three solutions: eliminating the disproportionate power of some ethnic groups in favor of legal and political equality for all, creating processes for popular participation in governance, and forming an impartial and insulated civil service and judiciary.

A second group of scholars embracing democratization builds on Forje's condemnation of ethnic divide and rule tactics to advocate for wholesale changes in government structure to ensure equal access to public goods. Mengisteab identifies three models of democracy as liberal, social, and consensus, and in ethnically divided societies he advocates the latter. Devolved from village-level historical practice across the African continent, consensus democracy sets policy by institutional mechanisms requiring compromise and unanimous approval. Such a decision-making process might be unworkable and harden rather than weaken ethnic divisions, but he argues it is the option most likely to check the maldistribution of wealth and tendency toward authoritarian rule that exist on the continent today. Pfaff-Czarnecka, though, partially rejects a consensus model as harmfully accentuating ethnicity in favor of what she terms

"pluricultural integration." While accepting the toleration of differences and an equal distribution of political and economic power between ethnic groups as goals, she warns against the use of explicit ethnically-based mechanisms to achieve them. Such processes that, in her opinion, can recognize without fuelling intra-state divisions include a decentralized federalist government, cultural autonomy, and a legislature or executive branch cabinet with seats apportioned by ethnic group quotas [21], [22].

A final important addition to the democratic state building literature comes from Larry Diamond, Seymour Lipset, and Juan Linz, who asked colleagues to report on the recent histories of 26 developing nations. Their purpose was not to propose a theoretical model, but to see why democracy (using Robert Dahl's polyarchy [23]) emerged in some nations and not in others. They concluded,

Democracy is more likely--in particular, more likely to survive--where poverty and inequality are limited and levels of education and income are generally high; where cultural norms value democracy, tolerance, bargaining, and accommodation, and efficacious citizens join together in a wide range of civil society organizations; where ethnic pluralism is limited, or different ethnic and nationality groups form coalitions and feel secure with one another; where military prerogatives and roles are limited, and a country's valued regional and international ties depend on its being or becoming democratic [24].

State-building via the quick drafting and implementation of a constitution during times of transition is paramount. According to them, the critical tasks of establishing civilian control of government, stabilizing the economy, providing security, and overcoming ethnic polarization all require a democratic state that has the best chance of acquiring legitimacy and inspiring loyalty from its people. The literature on constitutions, electoral systems, and governmental structure is vast and impossible to summarize in a paper this size, but it is clear that any democratic reforms must be case-specific, internally coherent, and involve popular participation in order to gain legitimacy.

### III. A CLUE: BOTSWANA'S POLITICAL CULTURE

Understanding Botswana's political culture, which balances authoritarian rule with popular mechanisms of democratic accountability, goes a long way to explaining the nation's development since independence. Descriptors have included "paternalistic democracy" and "authoritarian liberalism." The roots of this dynamic lie in the pre-colonial history of the Tswana (or Setswana) who make up four-fifths of the nation's current population. As part of the Sotho-Tswana migration southward from the Great Lakes region in successive waves, they arrived in southern Africa between 500 AD and the millennium following. Within the rough borders of today's Botswana, there emerged five lineages through mergers with non-Tswana and a process called "fissioning." The latter refers to the splitting off and formation of a different lineage due to chiefly succession disputes, dissent by a sizeable number of

subjects, overpopulation, lack of arable land, and drought. Small but densely populated kingdoms emerged from this process. Following the early 1800s upheaval of the Mfecane, which created the Zulu empire under Shaka and consequent refugee flows northward, the Bamangwato became the dominant tribe of the Tswana. The future rulers of Botswana are largely drawn from this group. Each of the eight tribes or lineages formed by the early 1800s was governed by a hereditary chief (kgosi) whose decision-making was final but whose power was checked in two main ways. The first was the danger of secession by a dissenting group of tribes people, and the second was the existence of the kgotla, or advisory body consisting of all adult men (and women after independence). Meetings were held weekly near the chief's house, and anyone could bring a concern or grievance for discussion before the chief decided on a course of action. Kgotlas were also convened by elders or appointed headmen who led the lower governing units of hierarchal Tswana society: the family, ward, village, and section. This mechanism checked the power of rulers and allowed citizens to learn and practice direct democracy. Even today in rural areas of Botswana, local elected officials and chiefs consult citizens using the kgotla. As Malcolm Odell, Jr. concluded, "there are more *Kgotlas* than all other local government institutions combined, that more people attend and participate in *Kgotla* meetings than are involved in all more 'modern' institutions and that more people understand *Kgotla* proceedings and voice their aspirations, grievances, and support for the government of the day in *Kgotla* than through all other forums put together [25]-[28]."

#### IV. COLONIALIST ACCOMMODATION

British colonialism hardly impacted this governing structure except to create trans-lineage structures that allowed for a smooth transition to independence. In order to check the northward expansion of Boer farmers from South Africa and the eastward settlement of Germans in Namibia, Tswana chiefs petitioned London for protection. Fortunately for future nation-building efforts, the Bechuanaland Protectorate, created in 1885, had borders that roughly corresponded to a chain of existing Tswana kingdoms. The British Parliament created a colonial structure led by a Residential Commissioner in Mafikeng, just across the border in South Africa. British rule was light and indirect, though, as residential commissioners preferred working with the kgosi and intervened in the internal affairs of tribes only to quell unrest. The chiefs were required to collect a hut tax, of which they kept 10% as a salary, raise labor for public projects and military service for both world wars, and follow advice and decrees from British officials, such as those abolishing slavery and polygamy. These duties would, at times, place chiefs in awkward positions relative to their subjects in kgotlas and relative to white missionaries and traders who fell under European, not tribal, laws and traditions. Most notably in 1934, the British attempted to create tribal councils to check the chief's powers and make the kgosi paid bureaucratic functionaries of the Resident

Commissioner. Both attempts failed, and the kgosi continued to act independently. Historian Bryant Shaw characterized the chiefs as being at the "'fulcrum' of power, now tilting in the direction of the British, now in the direction of their states, as their own national (or personal) interested dictated." He concludes, "The British-Tswana relationship was one that was mutually beneficial for both parties and perceived by the Africans in their own terms, not those of the Europeans [29]-[32]."

Within their own spheres, some "modernist" and British-educated kgosi began the process of nation-building by putting their few resources towards the creation of infrastructure and agitating for independence from South African and British influence. Seepapitso II, who ruled as king of the Ngwaketse from 1910-1916, recorded all kgotla decisions to establish binding precedents. He professionalized the tax collection system and raised levies for the building of dams, unpaved roads, and primary schools. A regent who followed Seepapitso a decade later, Ntebogang focused on digging wells for cattle and used her Seventh Day Adventist connections to have missionaries build medical clinics and a hospital. She was the first woman to sit on the Native Advisory Council. She objected to using South Africans to assist with an anti-locust campaign, fearing that they would use the pretext to annex the protectorate. Pretoria had already taken over the southern half of the protectorate in 1895, making it the Cape Colony. Also worried about increased encroachment by South Africa was Isang Pilane of the Bakgatla Kgafela, who banned luxury imports from Pretoria and refused to export grain to South African traders. He also built the Mochudi National School, whose nine rooms made it the largest single structure on Bechuanaland at the time. His goal was to educate all of the children in his kingdom so that they could take jobs at home rather than in South African mines. The most jealous and vocal defender of tribal sovereignty was Tshekedi Khama of the Ngwato in the 1920s and 1930s. A staunch defender of kgosi sovereignty, he traveled to London and appealed to the British Parliament and newspapers in order to stop a 1929 mining concession approved by local British officials. When Resident Commissioner Charles Rey issued edicts to create kgosi advisory councils and formal tribunals instead of kgotla while reserving to himself the right to appoint and depose chiefs, Khama again protested vehemently to British officials at home, in the native Advisory Council, and to Rey himself. When that brought no relief, he refused to see Rey and sued him for violating an 1895 treaty. Although he lost the lawsuit, his dilatory tactics won when Rey's successor sought compromise rather than continued confrontation. Wary of South African annexation once the 1930s depression meant that Britain could fund little development in the Protectorate, Khama forced the creation of a Commission of Inquiry to assess indigenous opinion. The results came back overwhelmingly negative. Khama also strongly opposed the South African annexation of South West Africa (Namibia), fearing it would set a precedent. Historian Michael Crowder called Khama's resulting petition to the League of Nations, which other major kgosi signed, the first inter-tribal political

movement in Bechuanaland. Through their internal development and external resistance, these leaders maintained a sense of nationalism and independence from Great Britain that would soon lead to establishment of the Botswanan state [33]-[35].

To channel and manage this dissent, British officials created advisory mechanisms that soon evolved into platforms for managing the transition to self-rule. In 1919, the Native (later African) Advisory Council formed as a way for the kgosi to interface regularly with the Resident Commissioner. Europeans living Bechuanaland gained representation a year later with the European Advisory Council. In 1950, representatives of both bodies met together in the Joint Advisory Council (JAC). Though the NAC met only annually, it provided a forum for tribal representatives to agitate for development projects in education, irrigation, and medical care while providing a forum to express resistance to South African influence. For some kgosi, led by Bathoen II, both the NAC and the JAC were insufficiently weak, as they had no law-making authority and could only advise the Resident Commissioner. Believing that the time had come by the early 1950s for indigenous peoples to possess law-making powers, he proposed the creation of a Legislative Council. The British reluctantly acceded to the request and in 1960 established the Bechuanaland Protectorate Legislative Council with up to 35 members. Its members were chosen by the African Advisory Council, the European population, and the Resident Commissioner, but in a way that allowed natives to choose only 1/3 of the voting members despite being 98% of the population. Moreover, the council could not discuss any fiscal matters, and any bills passed faced a possible veto by the Resident Commissioner. Yet the council was nonetheless important for three reasons. It allowed for tribal elites to meet and discuss common areas of concern, laid the basis for the post-independence legislature of Botswana, and spurred the creation of the urban-based Botswana People's Party (BPP). BPP leaders, upset with the limited scope of the Legislative Council, inspired by protests for self-determination by the African National Congress in South Africa, and unconnected with kgosi who had sympathized with European colonizers, demanded independence from Britain and the Africanization of the civil service. The BPP's strident rhetoric and nationalist positions brought the British and kgosi closer together, as they now worked to devise a way for a more gradual and less revolutionary transition to independence [36]-[38].

Concurrent with the formation of the Legislative Council was an expansion of grassroots democracy via local councils. British officials worked with the kgosi to create an acceptable mechanism that allowed for political representation without sacrificing traditional authority. Under the Local Councils Proclamation of 1957, as approved by the African Advisory Council, bodies were created for tribes (tribal councils) and for regions (area councils). The chiefs picked a quarter of the former's members with the rest elected by kgotlas. Voters chose all of the representatives in area councils every three years. Women could sit on both bodies, which met at least twice a year. These institutions of local government sat for

eight years before the Local Government Act consolidated the tribal councils into nine district councils. This measure was part of the process for replacing chiefly authority with modern state institutions during the transition to Botswanan independence [39], [40].

#### V. POLITICAL PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENCE

As a result of these reforms, colonial Bechuanaland began to develop into the independent state of Botswana. As the British and kgosi negotiated the transition, another key component appeared: political parties led by urban modernizers unaffiliated formally with the kgosi or their subjects living in rural areas. The BPP was not the first of its kind in the protectorate, as the Federal Party (FP) had preceded it by two years. Formed in 1958 and led by Leetile Disang Raditladi, an aristocratic member of Ngwato royal family, the small group formed initially to lobby for greater influence of non-chiefs in the Legislative Council. Raditladi campaigned for independence and a modern parliamentary system with a chamber of chiefs. The latter would be advisory only, but a federal system of government would prevent too much concentration of power in the capital. The party was soon absorbed into the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which remains today the only party that has governed Botswana. The key event that tipped power away from the chiefs and toward modern nation-builders actually occurred a decade before the FP's creation and involved the BDP's founder. Seretse Khama was once the heir to the Ngwato, the most powerful and largest of the Tswana tribes. While studying in London, he fell in love and married Ruth Williams, a white woman. This union set off the Ngwato crisis of 1948, which had far-reaching ramifications inside and outside of his tribal reserve. Tshekedi Khama, Seretse's uncle and tribal regent, objected on the grounds that Williams was not an Ngwato, and because he had already chosen a wife for his nephew. Tempers flared between the two Khamas and their allies in the tribe. Over a period of several days, a majority of Ngwato in the kgotla backed Seretse taking power immediately from the regent, perhaps less due to who he was than due to his uncle's allegedly oppressive rule. Yet upon becoming kgosi, the ruling Nationalist Party in apartheid South Africa vehemently opposed the succession on mixed race grounds. Worried that Pretoria might use the marriage as a pretext for invading and annexing Bechuanaland, British officials tried to ban him from returning home and offered him a job in Jamaica. Seretse fought against both, and Great Britain cut him a deal: He could return home if he gave up his chieftom, which he did, but he soon formed the BDP to press for self-determination. The crisis politicized the Ngwato, raised Khama's profile with the British as a pragmatic figure, and made his name popular throughout Bechuanaland. When negotiations over independence began in the early 1960s, it was no surprise that the BDP became British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's favored bargaining power over the more radical and populist BPP. The latter was popular in urban areas and had engineered strikes and protests against

colonialism and racial discrimination in cities, but the BDP drew from the rural majority and the kgosi who preferred cooperation with the British on a stable and more gradual transition to self-rule [41]-[44].

With democratic institutions created at the local and national levels and political parties formed, the British organized the first parliamentary elections in 1965. The blueprint for political independence had been drawn up by Resident Commissioner Peter Fawcus and delegates from the BDP, BPP, the Legislative Council, and from the European and Asian communities. During the fall of 1963, they agreed to replace the council with a Legislative Assembly of 31 elected members. The executive branch would consist of a prime minister elected from the Parliament's ruling party, who would form a Cabinet of five ministers. A year earlier, Fawcus had started to pair BDP leaders with British officials as ministers in training. To prevent a rejection by the kgosi, a House of Chiefs with eight members would advise the government on traditional matters of law and policy. Three political parties contested the 31 open seats, the BDP, BPP, and the Botswana Independence Party, the latter arising from the losing faction in a BPP leadership struggle. The BDP under Khama won 80% of the votes and 28 seats in a landslide. Under the parliamentary system bequeathed by the colonizers, Seretse Khama stood poised to become Botswana's first president and prime minister. Ground was broken on a capital city, as Mafikeng, South Africa was the home of Bechuanaland's colonial rulers. Gaborone was still unfinished when the new flag of Botswana replaced the British flag on September 30, 1966. Khama took office in a smooth transfer of power, though his nation was one of the poorest in the world with an untested government and civil service consisting largely of Brits now charged with economic development as the first priority [45]-[48].

## VI. DEMOCRATIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The diamond-led growth of Botswana that has raised general living standards would not have been possible without this democratic structure and history in place. What kind of democracy Botswana has created, though, deserves careful study. The BDP has governed the nation since independence, and there have been only four presidents since 1966, with the current occupant of the office being Seretse Khama's son Ian. Elections have been held every five years as the constitution requires, but only twice have opposition parties gained more than ten seats *combined* in Parliament. The President and Cabinet govern the country on a day-to-day basis, and with the latter now comprising twenty ministers, its capacity to set and implement policy makes the legislature weak, reactive, and not very influential. The civil service has been gradually indigenized and staffed with party members, while the majority of local district councils have functioned as BDP extensions. This is not to say that the BDP has been autocratic or overtly stifled dissent, but in any one-party state, the lines between the state and the party become blurred after five decades. A few allegations of corruption involving cabinet

members and BDP officials have occurred in the National Development Bank, with sweetheart land deals in Gaborone, and through the subsidized buying of automobiles. Civil society remains a weak check on governmental authority as organizations suffer from a lack of funds, small memberships, and co-option by government ministries. What has emerged since independence is a strong centralized state with a technocratic and developmental ethos that has largely prevented the emergence of large-scale crime, human rights abuses by security forces, corruption, and revolt. On the negative side, there are few external checks on the executive branch, and the general structure seems to reflect the top-down decision-making process writ large that was a mark of Tswana pre-colonial chiefdoms [49]-[53].

State consolidation proceeded in Botswana due to two concurrent processes: the submission of chiefs to the new bureaucratic order, and the penetration of the state into rural areas. The former began prior to independence, when the British began to work with the BDP rather than kgosi on the Legislative Council. The House of Chiefs, under the Botswanan constitution, can only offer recommendations. While chiefs do officiate at kgotla meetings, they are confined to civil matters only. Their pre-independence powers to collect taxes and organize local labor for community projects now belong to locally elected District Councils. District Land Boards now allocate land that once was the chief's to hand out as desired. The Land Boards consist of the local chief and one of his nominees, two members chosen by District Council and two chosen by Ministry of Local Government and Lands. While there is disagreement over whether these twin local bodies are controlled more from the center or by local elites, it is clear that the central government has the statutory power and administrative capacity to set local policy priorities. The executive can even remove chiefs from power, and they have become more akin to public servants who receive pensions and free medical care from the state. Pierre DuToit has also identified several "rules" that have created an autonomous and strong state. European expats in the civil service, whom Seretse Khama kept in positions of power, trained the next generation of indigenous civil servants to embrace an ethos based on elitism, pragmatism, and loyalty to the state above ethnic or kinship ties. To ensure the latter, public sector bureaucrats rotated around the country, promotions were unconnected with ancestry, and secondary schools students, who might aspire to enter the civil service, attended schools outside of their home regions. These steps were designed to break down local ties and to cement loyalties between the central government and its employees scattered around the nation [54]-[58].

The Botswana Democratic Party has used its institutional reach, strong authority, and technocratic ethos to bring economic development to rural areas in particular. Given the poverty and lack of infrastructure that existed in 1966, Seretse Khama knew that building schools, clinics, sanitation facilities, and roads for the masses would be good for the party's future as well. Using foreign aid, his government made major strides in improving health, literacy, and transportation.

The clearest example of the tie between politics and development was the 1973-1975 Accelerated Development Program (ADP). The 1969 elections saw a decrease in BDP support, as its share of the popular vote nation-wide fell to 68% from 80% in the 1965 inaugural elections. The BPP and an offshoot, the Botswana National Front, had captured six Parliamentary seats total and stood poised to gain more by the mid-1970s. As the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and the 1974 elections approached, the government used aid from Germany, Norway, and Sweden to do projects in all ten districts, including in all 27 towns and 195 villages. Drought relief had always been an issue in the majority-desert country, and to assist farmers on marginal land, the Khama administration set up the Botswana Drought Early Warning System and Post-Drought Recovery Program. Three parastatals, the Botswana Housing Corporation, Botswana Power Corporation, and the Water Utilities Corporation, formed to meet the utility needs of urban residents. The electoral results demonstrated the ADP's electoral significance: the BDP gained three seats in Assembly and increased its popular vote by 17%. Locally, the party increased its representatives on district councils from 113 in 1969 to 149 in 1974, and only one district had a majority non-BDP councilors. Using the district councils to do voter registration and recruiting chiefs into the BDP fold such as the influential Linchwe II of the Kgatla expanded the BDP's subsequent hold on rural areas [59]-[61].

The consolidation of democratic rule and the reach of state authority served as a catalyst for the economic development of the 1970s that catapulted Botswana into the ranks of middle income nations. In 1966, the only known minerals were manganese, some gold, and asbestos, none of which generated much foreign exchange. This is why foreign aid financed the ADP. The first diamond mines date from the 1970s, and in 1975 the government and DeBeers formed Debswana to exploit the rock-embedded deposits. Each owns a 50% equity stake. According to economics professor J.ClarkLeith, the Khama administration made three critical policy decisions to ensure the sustainable, transparent, and equitable distribution of diamond profits. The first was to have the state, and not individual tribes, own the mines so that their profits could be used to benefit all Botswanans. The second was to bypass levying a fixed royalty rate (since the deposit's value was uncertain) in favor of a profit-sharing agreement. Third, the joint ownership of Debswana gave the state a say in the sale and marketing of the diamonds, which allowed for their stockpile and gradual release on the world market to avoid oversupply and decreased prices. This dependence on a single export to generate more than 50% of export earnings has its drawbacks; a world recession in the 1980s led to a drop in government revenues and renewed attempts to diversify the economy through industry. Nevertheless, these steps avoided what Paul Collier termed the "natural resource trap." In non-democratic nations, reliance on the export of a raw material can lead to inflation, price volatility and difficult budget planning, rising debt, corruption among ruling elites, and the reliance on patronage to stay in power rather than elections.

Economic dysfunction can cause political instability by disaffected masses, leading to the use of security forces to blunt protest and the disappearance of democratic processes. Botswana avoided these consequences due to careful and proactive economic planning by an elite responsive to popular demands for development [62]-[64].

In addition to managing income from minerals well, fiscal and industrial policies also explain the economic growth of Botswana. In 1910, land-locked Bechuanaland joined its southern neighbor in the South African Customs Union. By giving up its right to set tariffs rates, the territory received little in customs revenue, a practice that continued after independence. South Africa refused to set share a greater percentage of tariff revenue in part to keep the protectorate underdeveloped and ripe for annexation and, after independence, to oppose the trend toward majority rule. In 1969, Pretoria agreed to grant Botswana a greater percentage, though overall rates remained low. According to Leith, this benefitted Botswana's overall economy, as it disallowed the central government from enacting protectionist tariffs that would have stifled growth and bred inefficient industries. State-owned and subsidized enterprises, therefore, comprised a small segment of the economy. The nation did declare its monetary independence from South Africa in 1976 by replacing the rand with the pula and starting a central bank insulated from politics to manage fiscal policy. The bank's supervisory role over private banks has encouraged sound investment policies, and there have been no domestic bank failures. While there have been bouts of inflation due to the rapid increase in minerals revenues, they have been less frequent and sharp due to governmental policy of accepting deposits from Debswana and commercial banks to absorb excess liquidity. Leith, who has served in the Bank of Botswana and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, concluded, "Minerals policy, itself the product of Botswana's fledgling technocracy working within the consultative tradition, generated the rents that initiated growth. Government's long-term development planning was crucial in channeling funds into investments that promoted both growth and human development, and in maintaining a modicum of fiscal discipline. Given this fiscal discipline, it was possible for the central bank, a post-Independence institution, to accumulate and manage substantial foreign exchange reserves, and to pursue a disciplined monetary policy [65]-[67]."

## VII. CHALLENGES

Economic growth and political stability would have been much more difficult had Botswana faced interventionist neighbors. In 1966, the nation was almost surrounded by states based on white supremacy. Rhodesia had unilaterally declared independence from Great Britain a year earlier rather than share power with the indigenous majority. South West Africa, or Namibia, remained under apartheid South African domination in violation of United Nations resolutions. A successful black-ruled nation posed not only a symbolic threat to white supremacy but it could be a safe haven for guerillas

seeking to overthrow their regimes. Moreover, Botswana was too poor to afford an army to protect its borders. To prevent a pretext for invasion and to keep essential trade links open for imports and exports, Seretse Khama made it clear that while he supported struggles for self-determination, no armed forces were to use Botswanan territory. The African National Congress and the Zimbabwe African National Union mostly respected this demand, though South African and Rhodesian forces did cross into Botswana with impunity in the 1970s. A 1978 raid by Rhodesian special forces that killed fifteen policemen led to Parliament creating the Botswana Defence Force. By the end of the 1980s, it consisted of 6000 soldiers in two brigades and a small air force with weapons from the United States, Great Britain, and Spain. The military was only partially successful in deterring foreign attacks; a particularly bold raid by South African commandoes in Gaborone in July 1985 killed twelve (only five of whom were ANC members) without any losses for Pretoria. The ascent of majority rule in Zimbabwe in 1980, the independence of Namibia in 1990, and the subsequent dismantling of apartheid created a more peaceful region in southern Africa. The military then shifted to face the internal threat posed by well-armed and trained elephant and rhinoceros poachers. It is important to note that as the military grew in size, it remained a professional force under civilian control and outside of politics [68]-[72].

The steady economic development of Botswana that followed democratization has not come without problems, though. While GDP growth has raised living standards nationwide, Botswana remains one of the most stratified nations in the world. A Gini coefficient above .5 suggests a high maldistribution of wealth; Botswana's was .556 in 1986 and .537 in 1994. Only Brazil had a higher figure. Half of households were classified as poor in 1986 (and 1/3 very poor), though those figures fell to 33% and 23% by the mid-1990s. Leith notes, though, that any measurement that relies on income misrepresents actual living standards since education and health care are provided by the state. Moreover, wealth inequality was a feature of the pre-colonial state, both due to the customary hierarchy of chiefly societies aggravated by class-based access to water for cattle herds. Individuals could become wealthy by finding water or drilling boreholes, which gave them possession of the resource and the opportunity to acquire more cattle. By the early 1970s, the top 20% of farmers grew 60% of the nation's crops while the wealthiest 15% of ranchers owned three-quarters of the cattle herds. There have been allegations that the Tswana-led government has focused on developing the southern half of the nation at the expense of the San and Yeyi peoples of the Kalahari Desert. The Tswana do dominate the political life of the country at the national and district levels, opening the door to charges of discrimination against non-Tswana peoples. For example, the state has attempted to re-locate the San to make way for tourist infrastructure, a policy justified by officials as trying to improve their subsistence and drought-prone way of life. The nation's modern health infrastructure has nonetheless been sorely tested by the HIV/AIDS epidemic that has

infected up to 40% of adults, one of the highest rates in the world [72]-[77].

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper argues for the centrality of democratization as a priority of nation-builders. Botswana has shown that accountable governance is one way of assuring that economic development emphasizes infrastructure, responsible resource extraction, and sustainable fiscal policies. This finding supports the first theory of nation-building outlined above. The other two schools of thought do not explain Botswana's successful development well. Both before and during the time of political consolidation, from 1955 to 1975, Botswana remained one of the poorest regions of the world. Therefore, economic development succeeded democratization and could not have caused the latter to occur. A sense of nationalism developed only gradually out of the separate Tswana lineages through the post-independence subordination of the kgosi to state institutions and the physical and symbolic trappings of statehood, such as a new capital, flag, national anthem, and identity. The name of the nation symbolizes this coming together, as it combines the Sotho prefix "bo," which denotes a collective human group, with the Tswana people.

The extent to which the lessons of Botswana can and do apply to other areas of the world is a question for future research, as a comparison with neighboring Zimbabwe, a weak if not failing state, could be instructive. Both broke away from British rule in the mid-1960s. Both contained a small but disproportionately wealthy white population and a numerically superior but poorer indigenous population. They inherited British governing institutions, a liberal code of laws, and a capitalistic economy. Both landlocked and predominantly agricultural, their survival depended on the transshipment of goods through apartheid South Africa, including for vital imports of manufactured goods and fuel. There were severe doubts about the long-term viability of both governments. Botswana was one of the poorest nations in the world with little infrastructure, a population dependent on subsistence farming, and a low level of formal education. Rhodesia, though it possessed a cash crop in tobacco, developed infrastructure, and urban centers that contained manufacturing, was governed by a cadre of reactionary racist whites who adopted a cruel apartheid-like system of segregation and disenfranchisement. It was uncertain whether the Botswana could achieve economic growth and how long the Rhodesian government would survive internal resistance to white supremacy, international sanctions, and diplomatic ostracism. Botswana did enjoy some advantages that other lesser developed nations did not possess: a bloodless transition to independence, a history of general peace between its ethnic components, a very light colonial presence, and admirable leaders who governed with the greater good in mind. Yet the country also had to overcome severe challenges too, from a lack of known resources, systemic poverty, geographical isolation, interfering neighbors, and an almost total lack of infrastructure, including having to build a capital city. These



problems are not unique to Botswana, though, and so the question remains on why it is a nation-building success as judged by its democratic institutions, economic growth, and history of social stability. More work in primary sources remains to be done in the National Archives in Gabarone on the causes of these outcomes before more definitive conclusions can be drawn. Then comparative work with other countries' nation-building policies can continue and build on the scholarship outlined in the first half of this paper. Then scholars can answer the question that African Studies scholar Godfrey Mwakikagile asked in the conclusion of his work on modern Botswana, "If Botswana can do it, why not the rest [78]?"

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