

The consolidation of the Botswana Democratic Party



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Summary

Political parties in Africa are generally seen as devices aimed at the personal empowerment of leaders or the advancement of ethnic interests. These are therefore organizations with a short lifespan. As the multi-party democracy model gains popularity on the continent, new literature is pointing out that consolidated political parties more like those existing in Western countries are beginning to emerge.

The emphasis of this research will be put on the Botswana Democratic Party. Botswana is reputed to be the oldest stable democracy in Africa and the party has been in power since independence through free and fair elections. The main objective here is to situate the BDP in the context of the literature on African political parties.

This MRP will argue that the BDP is a consolidated political party. This argument is developed in three main points. First, the party had solid foundations from its very beginning because of its ability to have a clear legitimation process for its candidates, the anglophilia sentiment of the founding fathers and the help of the British administration. Secondly, although it does not have a precisely defined ideology, it is an organization that has been structured around the same political values and ideas throughout its history. The party was faithful to its proposals regardless of the leader brought to power. It was also a party with the capacity to evolve, adjust by the context and able to go deeper in some of their main policies proposals. Finally, the BDP was able to overcome divisions. The party crossed two splits in 2010 with the Botswana Movement for Democracy and the Botswana Patriotic Front in 2019. These two events were marked by the action of former President Seretse Khama Ian Khama. Despite these partitions, the party was

able to overcome troubled times to be re-elected in 2019. The two splits were therefore not a sign of a weakening but rather a proof of its consolidation process.

List of acronyms

BCP	Botswana Congress Party
BDP	Botswana Democratic Party
BMD	Botswana Movement for Democracy
BNF	Botswana National Front
BPF	Botswana Patriotic Front
BPP	Botswana People's Party
UDC	Umbrella for Democratic Change

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1- Introduction

African political parties have traditionally been seen in academic literature as being different from Western parties (Elischer, 2013, 11). They were not seen as structured organizations around coherent agendas and values, but rather as vehicles used by leaders to take power for personal gain or ethnic interests (Elischer, 2013, 1). More recently, as the multi-partisan model of democracy spreads more and more across the continent, some academics suggest that the model of consolidated political parties is emerging in countries such as Ghana (Bob Milliar, 2014, 107). Botswana has been a democratic country for 53 years. In 2018, The Economist considered the country to be a flawed democracy¹. Elections are held every five years without any irregularities being noted². While opposition parties have never been able to take power mainly due to fratricidal struggles and conflicts of interest, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) reigns. Although historically being the dominant party, its unity has been increasingly challenged. In 2010, the party experienced its first split with the formation of the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). Nine years later, the BDP faces a new split with the creation of the Botswana Patriotic Front (BPF) chaired by former President Ian Khama. The consolidation of the BDP is therefore less certain.

The question that this research will attempt to answer is the following: is the Botswana Democratic Party a political party that can be considered as consolidated? To answer this question, we will begin with an overview of the history of the founding of the party. We will analyze the birth of the BDP as well as its take-over of power. We will also look at the

¹ <https://infographics.economist.com/2019/DemocracyIndex/>

² Opposition parties tend to contest electoral results but there is no case of a no-doubt rigged election.

institutions in Botswana and explain why the BDP was able to remain in power since the independence of the country. In a second step, we will seek to see if the party has a coherent ideology throughout its history. Finally, the analysis will focus more specifically on the two divisions that took place in 2010 and 2019. We will present the political parties that emerged from the BDP as well as the context of their creation.

1.1) Methodology

In this research, we will analyze different electoral manifestos to see if the proposals presented can be linked together, regardless of the president in power. We will focus on the following issues : economy, international relations, democracy, environment protection and gender equity. The propositions in the manifestos will be compared to look if there are similarities or disparities. In order to analyse the two splits, we will conduct semi-directives interviews with people involved in those two splits events and local scholars. Their versions will be compared in order to have a good understanding of what happened in those two political events. We will seek to know what these two political splits can teach us about the consolidation of the BDP.

1.2) Literature review

Political parties in Africa are generally regarded as ‘weak organisations, low levels of institutionalisation, and weak links to the society that they are supposed to represent’ (Van de Walle, 1999, 15). During election periods, they tend not to have a policy platform and if they do,

it has little relevance to what the party does once in office (Randall & Svåsand, 2002, 33). Those parties tend to find the loyalty of their electoral base in personal or ethnic issues rather than ideological (Sandbrook, 1996, 78). That being said, not all of the political parties in Africa are weak. According to Adrienne Le Bas, ‘Strong parties are distinguished by having : a) formal structures that are used to convey across levels of the organization; b) decision-making procedures that manage conflict and create consensus within the party; and c) ties with popular constituencies that are based on common understandings and, to some extent, a shared identity’(Le Bas, 2011, 25). Consolidated parties can also be defined by having a clear ideology. ‘Ideology is like a superstructure upon which every other thing is built on. It consolidates political parties. It precedes party structure, organisation and manifesto. It is a set of ideas, beliefs and representations common to a specific social group. It consists of ethical interpretations and principles that set forth the purposes, organizations and boundaries of political life.’ (Aleyomi, 2013, 289). Without a clear ideology, political parties are more likely to become personal vehicles.

Before going further, we need to clarify the two main concepts used in this research: political parties and the consolidation process. Political parties are essential in a democracy, they are the organisations that can take power and then implement their agenda. In this paper, we will define political parties as ‘any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office’ (Sartori, 1976, 57). As Aleyomi points out, the consolidation process is when a political party is able to build around a precise set of values and keep evolving with them (Aleyomi, 2013, 289). In this research, we will qualify the BDP as a catch-all party. ‘In the African context, neutral/catch-all purposes include promoting democracy,

fighting corruption, and vaguely claiming to create a vibrant economy' (Elischer, 2013, 31). In the case of the BDP, the party is not vaguely claiming to create a vibrant economy because it has a clear plan about what it wants to do in terms of economic diversification. This concept is still the closest that we can find to qualify the party.

2- A party not like the others

Botswana can almost be qualified as unique on the African continent. It was one of the fastest growing countries in the world from its independence until the 90's (Leith, 2005). It is one of the least corrupt³ and most democratic African countries⁴. According to the BDP members, this situation where Botswana is seen as an 'African miracle' (Samatar, 1999) can be explained by the way their party managed the country from independence with a particular attention to democratic ideals. *The BDP is a party that took that country from a very poor situation to what we have now. The BDP has worked tirelessly with consultations with all Botswana people with the principle of agree to disagree. We have put elections every five years in those constituencies to make sure that people who lived their choose their leaders*⁵. Indeed, some economists like S. Beaulier put a lot of importance on the role played by the BDP in the country's success 'The facts that the Botswana Democratic Party offered such a liberal (in the classical sense) platform immediately following colonialism and that 80 percent of voters supported the BDP illustrate that the general mindset of citizens in Botswana favored liberty and constitutional restraints' (Beaulier, 2007, 58).

³ <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>

⁴ <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

⁵ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

It has to be noted that this idea is not shared by everyone. Some scholars, like Professor Mogalakwe, see the BDP as a party that was in power but that was mostly receiving political recommendation from highly qualified public administrators. Most of their political ideas were therefore not coming from the party members but rather from professionals. *Botswana used to have a very professional public service with highly educated people, they were independent bureaucracy. The politicians did their work but most of the work was done by professional public officers. The BDP was there but most of the work was from the bureaucracy and a small section of modernizing people like Masire (Former Vice-President and President of Botswana) per example. I will not attribute everything that happened to Botswana to the BDP*⁶. This analysis is also present in the literature. William Tordoff described the BDP as ‘weakly organised and, except at election time, not particularly effective’ (Tordoff, 1997, 123). According to him, the BDP was therefore a party mostly relying on the bureaucrats. That being said, the Botswana Democratic Party still deserves attention because it is undoubtedly the most important political party in Botswana’s history.

In this section, we present the argument that the BDP was a solid party from its very beginning. There are many reasons why the party was successfully built like the ones in Western democracies. We can point out for example the inclusion of European people (Masire, 2006, 44) which at that time were on average more educated and had good connections with the British government. This inclusion of European also helped the BDP to gain this reputation of a moderate party which was very important for them at a time where South Africa was an apartheid regime with a powerful army and would not have been inclined to accept the establishment of a

⁶ Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-11

revolutionary government at its borders⁷. It was also a very clever way to fight against white suprematism by showing a counter-example as we will see in the section about international relations. The anglophilia of its founding fathers can also be considered an important factor since they did not want to have a conflict with Great Britain and rather have cooperation. There was also the way they managed to create a credible catch-all-party with moderate and pragmatic ideas with a clear legitimation process for representatives. This gave a very strong foundation for the party that was able to build on in the later decades.

2.1) Sir Seretse Khama and Botswana

Sir Seretse Khama is the most important politician in modern Botswana history. He was the grandson of Khama III who was one of the founders of the Bechuanaland protectorate and chief of the Bangwato tribe. We can argue that Sir Seretse Khama was strongly influenced by Great Britain in his political thought. In 1945-46, he went to study law at Oxford. Then, he married an English woman, Ruth Williams. As we will see later, the British administration saw in him an ally of circumstances at the time of independence. That can be partly explained by the social position of Seretse Khama as he was ‘the most influential livestock producer in the country’ (Parsons et al. 1995: 188-89).

At the time of independence, he said in his speech ‘It would be wrong of me, not at the outset to state again, as I have done so frequently before, the great gratitude of my people for the protection and assistance which have been given to Botswana by the United Kingdom during the

⁷ This claim is an assumption but it is a very plausible one since we had the ‘Operation savannah’ in 1975-76 where the South African army intervened in Angola to try to stop marxist forces like the MPLA.

long period of our dependence (...) it should not therefore be thought that past affections and regards have been immediately erased' (Sillery, 1974, 161). This speech was made even if Sir Seretse Khama went into very difficult times after he was forced to leave Great Britain because of his marriage with an English woman, Ruth Williams (Dutfield, 1990). This can show us the kind of loyalty sentiment he had toward the British.

It is important to understand the economic context of Botswana when Sir Seretse Khama was advocating for independence. In the 1960s, the country had a per capita GDP of USD 83.73. Only 5,668 hectares of land, representing less than two percent of arable land, were cultivated. Two-thirds of the population were dependent on food donations (Morton & Ramsay, 1987, 188). Paved roads represented 12 kilometers (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, 409). Only 1.3% of Botswana attended secondary school and 0.1% attended university (Leith, 2005, 14). The country was then seen as a reserve of workers for South Africa while 20% of adult men from Botswana worked in the neighboring country (Munger, 1965, 39). In the last years of the protectorate (1960-1966) growth amounted to around 4% annually. However, the country was experiencing a form of systemic discrimination that could resemble apartheid where blacks were denied employment opportunities in government as well as in agriculture (Selolwane, 2012, 6). Botswana was also a country dependent almost exclusively on its cattle exports (Samatar, 1999, chap. 4). It has all the ingredients for a catastrophe, 'suppose a country starts its independence with the three economic characteristics that globally make a country prone to civil war: low income, slow growth, and dependence upon primary commodity exports' (Collier, 2007, chap 2 p 11). It should also be noted that Botswana has a small population. In 1966, the population of the country was only 571 964 habitants (World Bank data). This situation was helpful for the

BDP since it was easier to control territory and population than in other bigger African countries. We can say as an hypothesis that this situation of a small and more homogenous population⁸ was a factor of stability or at least did not hurt.

2.2) The birth of the BDP and the seizure of power

The founding of the BDP in 1962 went hand in hand with Botswana's independence in 1966. While revolutionary movements ousted Europeans in the early 1960s, a similar movement, the Botswana People's Party, was born in the country in 1960. Claiming pan-africanism and marxism, the BPP advocated in favor of the expulsion of Europeans and the founding of a socialist state (Sillery, 1974, 156). The British administration was worried by the decolonization movements on the continent and especially by the escalating violence in Rhodesia and South Africa (Zaffiro, 1989, 51). It wanted to avoid a conflict and start working on a peaceful transition toward independence. "By introducing self-government and national, democratic elections, the government had placed the future of the territory in the hands of the nationalists. The question of independence was no longer in doubt " (Morton & Ramsay, 1987, 180). It should also be noted that the British decision was not unrelated to their ignorance of Botswana's diamond resources.

To give independence is one thing, but the colonial administration wanted to maintain ties with the former protectorate and protect the properties of Europeans already established in the territory. It was therefore a question of creating a political vehicle which can offer such

⁸ 79% of the population are Tswanas <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bc.html>

protection. The administration founded in Sir Seretse Khama an ally of circumstance (Mokopakgosi, 2001, 59). Although not directly involved in party formation, the administration was not hostile to its creation (Nengwekhulu, 1979, 67). *BDP was formed as a sort of counter-weight to the political parties that were in place at that time which were more to the left. Seretse Khama and Masire created the party to frustrate the effort of the radicals pan-africanists*⁹. In order to succeed, the BDP wanted to be a pragmatic party, not wishing to make "false promises" to the population and able to be consensual. *The BDP used to form a grand coalition that could include almost everyone: chiefs, modernist, black, asians, whites. It was a right-wing party but tolerant and accommodating*¹⁰.

The BDP was founded around four principles: non-racialism, a unified nation, respect for basic human rights and democratic local government¹¹. It was a party aware of the obstacles facing it. Whether external threats like the governments of Rhodesia and South Africa, or internal threats such as the rise of marxism, the party was able to consolidate itself by being able to reach ordinary citizens unwilling to see an ideology imposed. 'We learned from experience and by trial and error as we built the party. No one came with a dogma to be followed. (...) Our experience was that ordinary people wanted to be given reasons. We did our best to show them why we were thinking and acting the way we were.' (Masire, 2006, 49) According to BDP advocates, having a party line that could be interpreted freely, without departing from the founding principles, was a reason for its success in terms of loyalty of its members. Considering that the BDP seems to have a culture of 'agree-to-disagree'¹², this argument seems plausible. The

⁹ Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-11

¹⁰ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

¹¹ This is what we stand for, BDP Manifesto, 1965

¹² Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

recognition of the legitimacy of the elected representatives was also an important factor for the consolidation of the young party. 'The process we adopted for the organization was very close to that followed by the British Labor Party (...) we did adopt some different procedures, such as the method of conducting primary elections (...) People knew things happened because there was a reason. You didn't give people positions in the party because they were your cousins'(Masire, 2006, 53).

As we can see, the foundation of the BDP was directly inspired by European models. We have shown that Europeans were included so that they helped by giving their views about how to form a political party. The founding fathers, like Sir Seretse Khama and Ketumile Masire, were deeply influenced by European culture and were anglophiles. The situation in which Botswana was at that time was so poor that we can hypothesise that pragmatic ideas for development instead of marxism were popular because there were not a lot of things that could be nationalized and/or redistributed. Finally, the BDP was inspired by European political parties in terms of legitimization of representatives. While the opposition split into several parties following internal conflicts, the BDP was able to stand for election with a consensual program among its militant base. This was the main reason why he was then to win 28 of the 31 seats in parliament.

It should also be argued that since the BDP was a pro-market party and that capitalism won against socialism it is much easier for a party like this one to consolidate unlike former marxist-leninist parties with very important bureaucratic structures. It is much easier to bring reform.

2.3) Institutions in Botswana and explaining the BDP predominance

Before getting to the analysis of the consolidation of the BDP, it is important to understand in what kind of system the party evolves and why was he able to keep power for more than 50 years. As Professor Mokhawa points out, *One of the reasons why the BDP stayed in power is because they were in power*¹³. The BDP construction is directly linked with the fact that they've been in power since independence. While this can sound not very democratic, it has to be noted that the BDP can be seen as a 'bridge-building' party (Du Toit, 1999) which means that it is a dominant party that can build bridges toward multi-party democracy. One-party dominance is therefore not by itself contradictory to democratic governance.

Botswana has a hybrid system with parliamentary and presidential aspects. For example, the President is elected by the parliament like the prime minister. The parliament can pass a motion of no confidence in the government. On the other hand, the President is the head of State and of the government. Like in other parliamentary democracies, the parliament should be the institution making the laws in theory but in practice the parliament in Botswana is mostly subordinate to the executive power. The role of the parliament is also to approve the budget and to influence the institution of commissions. The judiciary system in Botswana is known to be independent from the government and is ensuring the respect of civil liberties (Sebudubudu, 2017). Overall, we can affirm that Botswana is a democracy because of the separation of powers,

¹³ Gladys Mokhawa, Head of office, political science department, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-12

the respect of the rule of law and its multi-parties elections. With all of its imperfections, it can still be qualified as one of the most stable democracies in Africa¹⁴.

That being said, democracy usually goes with the idea of alternation of power. This is not the case in Botswana since the BDP has been in power since independence. The government has held free elections every five years and was always able to get re-elected. While there are multiple factors to explain the predominance of the Botswana Democratic Party, we will focus on two : non-proportional electoral system and fragmented oppositions. We choose to focus on those two factors because they are linked with the institutions and with our research topic of party consolidation.

Botswana has used the same first-past-the-post electoral system since independence like the British. In this system, the candidate winning the majority of the votes is declared the winner. This system can have the advantage of offering stable governments with a strong majority but can also have perverse effects when it comes to democratic representation. ‘Botswana’s electoral system has over-represented the BDP and under-represented the opposition in Parliament’¹⁵. As an example, in 2014, the BDP won 47% of the popular vote but had 65% of parliamentary seats.

The other and most important factor to explain the predominance of the BDP is the fact that opposition parties seem to be unable to work together from the first election in history until now. To illustrate this claim, we will look at two elections : the first one at independence and the last that was done at the time of writing this paper. As mentioned, the first party in Botswana’s history was the BPP. In 1962, the party had a split with the formation of the Botswana Independence Party. This split was due to leaders, Matante and Mpho, fighting over the

¹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/botswana>

¹⁵ KEBONANG Zein and KABOYAKGOSI Gape, *Botswana’s parliamentary democracy revisited*, p. 69

take-over of the party. ‘While the BPP was tearing itself apart, the BDP was busy consolidating its hold on GammaNgwato¹⁶ and building strong bases of support throughout the territory’¹⁷. We can see here that legitimizing candidates through a clear process has helped the BDP not to go internal wars at its foundation. During the election of 2019, we witnessed a different type of opposition fragmentation. The main challenger of the BDP was the UDC. The UDC of 2019 was a coalition formed by the BNF, the BPP and the BCP. In 2018, the BMD was expelled from UDC. This expulsion led to the creation of another political party : Alliance for Progressives. The leader of AP, Ndaba Gaolathe, was first a member of the BMD when he joined UDC. AP was then formed of former BMD and UDC members.¹⁸ On his side, the BPF was founded by former BDP and UDC members. In the end, the BDP was facing three important opposition parties during the 2019 election. This gives us a picture of what elections in Botswana look like in general : a united BDP with a well organized activist base and opposition parties that send the image to the population that they can’t work together in order to replace the government. This situation gives another important advantage to the BDP, which is to be able to attract high-profile people with easy name recognition. ‘Apart from swelling the ranks of the party, such high-ranking officials bring with them new ideas, resources and organisational skills to improve party administration’¹⁹. Being too fragmented, opposition parties faces difficulties to attract well-known candidates.

¹⁶ The GammaNgwato are one of the eight most important Tswana’s subgroups. They mostly live in Serowe

¹⁷ MORTON Fred & RAMSAY Jeff, *The birth of Botswana*, 1987, p. 179

¹⁸

<https://city-press.news24.com/News/change-is-coming-opposition-parties-are-optimistic-as-botswana-votes-20191023>

¹⁹ KEBONANG Zein and KABOYAKGOSI Gape, *Botswana’s parliamentary democracy revisited*, p. 74

In this chapter, we have seen that the BDP was successfully built on principles that are present in other western political organizations. We have acknowledged that the BDP cannot really be compared with the new wave African parties since it has a very different history with the former colonial administration that doesn't really have an equivalent on the continent. This chapter also pointed out that the party was the beneficiary of the current institutions such as the electoral system. The BDP has always been a consolidated political party unlike its opposition and this greatly explains the success of the party through history.

3- A coherent political program through history

In the literature review, we saw that unconsolidated political parties tend not to have a clear ideology which can lead a party to become a personal vehicle. The argument here is that the BDP did not become a personalistic party because it had a coherent program. It might not have a precise ideology, but it has a coherent program that did not change through time because of a new leader.

3.1) Historical similarities

In this section, we will argue that the BDP is a consolidated party because it has been loyal to his line through history. To demonstrate, we will analyse the party's stances on the economy and international relations.

3.1.a) Economy

As mentioned, the BDP is a party that can be described as pragmatic in terms of its program and actions. In this section, we will analyze the evolution of its economic positions. Although the context is changing, the big economic ideas of the BDP have been the same over time. The central idea of this party is that the main role of the government is to help the growth of the private sector. We find this position in the first program of 1965 ‘To find capital for industries a finance corporation will be created. Moderate taxation will be imposed to stimulate the economy and boost revenue-earning projects while additional revenue sources are explored and developed. Loans for expansion and development will be made more readily available at low rates of interest’²⁰. Whether it is tax credit or deregulation, the BDP wishes to intervene in the economy in order to bring about growth in the private sector. Thus, in 1979, we find these proposals: ‘The BDP government offers tax incentives and other rebates to enterprises offering training to Batswana which may lead to the localization of senior jobs (...) The BDP will also take a thorough look at licensing laws and other trade regulations to examine their effect on the creation of employment and with a view to relaxing provisions which appear to inhibit its development’²¹. The transition of power between Sir Seretse Khama and Quett Masire in no way changes this vision of development. In the 1984 program, the new president followed in the footsteps of his predecessor. ‘A strong and independent private sector has an important role to play in the development of the country. It sustains the economy in difficult times when government

²⁰ This is what we stand for, BDP Manifesto, 1965, p. 8-9

²¹ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1979, p. 18-19

revenues are reduced; it needs relatively little financial support from the government for its growth and development; lastly and more important of all, it has a greater capacity than governmental projects to create employment for work seekers'²². Five years later, Masire did not change his mind. The government must help the development of the private sector. It was now the time to formulate policies to implement this vision. 'The public sector as a whole will have to become more cost effective, more service-oriented assisting the private sector rather than regulating it and slowing it down'²³ The party line does not change regardless of the leader. The 2014 and 2019 elections, however led by two somehow different leaders, still offer the same vision 'The BDP recognizes that the wealth of nations and its inhabitants is predicated and dependent on the vibrancy, productivity and competitiveness of its enterprises. It is therefore critical to create an enabling business and investment environment that supports the growth of a globally competitive private sector that will assist Botswana to maximize the benefits of being integrated into the global economy'²⁴ and similar economic proposals 'Develop the business space for more private sector participation. Government will focus on policy making, regulatory, and oversight functions while the private sector carries out physical infrastructure service'²⁵.

In its business-friendly vision, the BDP recognizes that it does not have all the tools to develop on its own. Historically, it has welcomed foreigners, whether expatriates or investors, while wishing to reduce its dependence on foreigners. In 1969, the BDP appeared as the party wishing to attract foreigners with specific skills 'Botswana survival as an independent African state depends on rapid economic development. To ensure that successful development, Botswana's

²² Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1984, p. 10

²³ BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 6

²⁴ Secure your future, BDP Manifesto, 2014, p. 25

²⁵ Advancing together forward an inclusive economy, BDP Manifesto, 2019, p. 32

administrative machine will for some time to come require the assistance of expatriates with particular skills, doctors, engineers, surveyors, agronomists, managers'²⁶. Five years later, when a certain transition of skills from foreigners to locals took place, the party wishes for greater involvement of the local population in economic development. 'The next BDP government will also greatly reduce the present dependence on expatriates who fill many skilled jobs. Botswana must begin to produce food for itself, sell more goods to other countries and as the needs of the economy and our expanded output of skilled manpower permit localize all jobs in Botswana, not only in the public service but also in the private sector'²⁷. The 1979 program embodies this vision of the economy by hoping for a form of expansion for emerging local businesses while seeking foreign capital. 'The BDP aims at promoting local industry in order to reduce our dependence on imports. With that in view we shall protect our infant industries from the competition offered by imported goods, and will also encourage the public to 'buy Botswana' to provide a market for our products. (...) While there has been a genuine development of the economy, we are still short on capital, therefore the BDP will continue to encourage outside investment (...) supply investors with full information on investment opportunities and on the industrial climate in Botswana'²⁸.

Ten years later, President Masire reaffirmed this vision in his message to the nation. It is then a question of explaining that the fact of wanting to attract investors is not caused by a lack of will but by a lucidity vision of the country's economic situation. 'We must face the new economic realities, namely, that continued economic growth and job creation depend on rapid diversification of the economy and new investment in the manufacturing and service sectors. We must accept that, as in the past, we cannot do it by ourselves. Large as our budgetary and foreign

²⁶ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1969, p. 46

²⁷ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1974, p. 13

²⁸ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1979, p. 16

exchange reserves are, we will need foreign investment, aid and technical assistance'²⁹ According to the party, this strategy paid off in the long term.

Since Botswana is a country that is heavily reliant on mineral resources, especially diamonds, a focus must be put on the way the BDP managed the diamond through times and its efforts of diversification. The first thing to note when looking at the programs is that the party wanted a centralized management of diamond production. It was a question of being able to plan the distribution of income across the whole territory in order to avoid widening regional inequalities which could harm the process of national construction. 'If discovered in good quantities and exploited to the full, minerals should ultimately serve to boost up the economy of Bechuanaland and take precedence over all other national products. Consequently leaving mineral rights vested in tribal authorities and private companies must necessarily result in uneven growth of the country's economy, as well as deprive the central government of an important source of revenue for developing the country. With this in view it will be the policy of the BDP government to negotiate with all parties concerned the take over of the country's mineral rights by the Central government, and subsequently expand the present mining operations and step up prospecting activities throughout the territory'³⁰. As the manifestos show, there was an awareness from the start not to put the country at risk by being too dependent on a natural resource. There was a plan for the use of diamond revenues which was to be used to diversify the economy 'The development of these mineral resources in the national interest will, however, demand wise leadership and if their benefits are to be felt throughout Botswana there must be no slackening of national-building effort. At first mining revenues will have to be used to replace British

²⁹ BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 4

³⁰ This is what we stand for, BDP Manifesto, 1965, p. 6

subsidies. It will be some time before the effect of their reinvestment in other productive activity and particularly rural development is felt.’³¹ However, it was not until the 1980s that the BDP began to speak of economic diversification as shown in these two extracts. ‘The BDP has never been happy about the country’s dependence on diamond revenue alone. It has always been the objective of the BDP to diversify the country’s productive activities and thereby strengthen the country’s economy’³². ‘However good Botswana’s long-term prospects for further mining development may be, for the next five years, or perhaps even until the turn of the century, we must accept that economic growth at the exceptionally high rates which have prevailed since the early 1970s will no longer be generated by the mineral sector’³³. Under the leadership of Ian Khama, the BDP will begin to diversify its diamond sector. No longer wishing to limit themselves to the extraction of ore, the party negotiated with De Beers in order to open a diamond cutting center in addition to a point of sale. It is a question of multiplying the facets of the sector rather than simply using the income to invest in different economic sectors. ‘Turning Gaborone into a diamond trading center of the world was the core of the 2011 sale agreement signed between the Government and De Beers (...) for the first time in the history of diamond mining in Botswana, diamonds are now being sold in Botswana’³⁴. In 2019, we come back to the idea that was that of the first programs, namely to use diamonds to go further as a nation. While diamond revenues have been used to finance services such as education, it is now time for Botswana to deploy its assets acquired through these public investments. ‘We have now started to lead Botswana on its second transformation: from an upper-middle income economy to a high

³¹ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1969, p. 35

³² Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1984, p. 10

³³ BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 11

³⁴ Secure your future, BDP Manifesto, 2014, p. 9

income economy, from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, and most importantly, a people centered, inclusive, sustainable economy³⁵.

As we have seen, the BDP had a coherent economic program throughout its history. The impressive growth of Botswana is commonly accepted among economists (Beaulier 2004, Leith 2005, Acemoglu 2013). However, this doesn't mean that the party was able to achieve all of its objectives. Diversification of the economy is still a major challenge for Botswana where, in 2015, diamonds was accountable for 60% of the government's revenue and more than 25% of the national GDP³⁶.

3.1.b) International relations

In terms of international relations, there has been relatively little change in the policies historically proposed by the BDP. The party does not wish to engage in conflicts with its neighbors but does not refrain from speaking in defense of its principles as well as its interests. 'The old image at one time cultivated by Botswana (even as late as 1968) of being willing to act as a bridge-head between South Africa and the rest of Africa was replaced by an image of the small dynamic and plucky state taking its stand on major issues up to the very limits available to it'³⁷. Thus, from its first manifesto, the BDP presented itself as a stakeholder in the non-aligned movement in opposition to the other parties that risked taking a position in favor of the Eastern bloc. 'When we become an independent state we do not propose to align ourselves with any of

³⁵ Advancing together forward an inclusive economy, BDP Manifesto, 2019, p. 13

³⁶ Guest, P. *Inside the World's Richest Diamond Mine*. CNN: Marketplace Africa. 2015 Retrieved from: <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/03/africa/botswana-diamonds-jwaneng/index.html>

³⁷ HENDERSON Willie, *Independent Botswana: A Reappraisal of Foreign Policy Options*, African Affairs Vol. 73, No. 290 (Jan., 1974), p. 42

the existing world political camps. The state of our economy as a country, our geographical position, as well as our size as a nation, calls for a policy of maintaining friendly relations with as many countries of the world as are well-disposed towards us. To our neighbors our policy will be one of good neighborliness except that in all matters be that of placing the interests and welfare of Bechuanaland first³⁸. Diplomatic games quickly became a tool for the economic development of the country. As we will see, this vision of a diplomacy-economy link was at the core of the BDP international policy. ‘We are proud of our membership of the OAU, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. Membership of these international bodies brings us new friends who can help us with aid or with whom we can discuss problems of common concern’³⁹. This did not prevent the BDP from taking to defend its positions of principles such as non-racialism which combined with the defense of its interests made it an organization firmly fighting the regime of Ian Smith in Southern Rhodesia. ‘Above all the BDP government has resolutely opposed Rhodesia’s illegal independence under a minority regime. (...) We are attempting by all means within our power to assist the international pressure on the illegal regime. We prevented Botswana National Airways from flying into Rhodesia. We have prevented the Rhodesians from using their railway to import arms and military supplies. (...) These are not mere gestures based on sentiment, but acts of policy based on careful consideration of our national interest’⁴⁰. Condemnation of Rhodesia is important, but should not be done at the expense of the national interest. Being very attached to territorial sovereignty and its internal peace, the government of Botswana does not wish to become directly implicated in the conflicts. ‘Although the BDP fully understands the decision of the liberation movements to resort to

³⁸ This is what we stand for, BDP Manifesto, 1965, p. 4

³⁹ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1969, p. 7

⁴⁰ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1969, p. 8

violence, we do not permit them to operate from Botswana territory'⁴¹. During those times, some conflicts like the Rhodesian bush war (1964-1979) were spreading in other countries like Mozambique where revolutionary fighters were able to organize and train. Having established diplomatic policies in line with this vision, Botswana experienced certain successes on an international scale per example the attraction of international funds for development. These successes, combined with having avoided conflicts while defending the interests of the country, became an electoral argument. For example, in 1989, the BDP presented itself as the only party capable of maintaining good international relations for Botswana.

'Under the wise leadership of the BDP government, Botswana has won international respect for its contribution to the preservation of peace, freedom and human dignity in the region, and for continuing to play a positive role in the search for peaceful and honourable solutions to regional problems, despite extreme provocations from a powerful and hostile neighbour. Botswana has been an important stabilising influence in Southern Africa. By demonstrating that non-racial, multi-party democracy can succeed without group domination by maintaining correct relations with all its neighbours and refusing to allow itself to be used as a springboard for attacks against its neighbours, and by working hard with other governments to resolve regional conflicts. The BDP government has established an excellent network of relationships with other states and international organizations. Botswana now has many friends. Could any other party maintain such a network ?'⁴².

The pursuit of policies aimed at preserving Botswana sovereignty as well as promoting its principles on the international stage leads to the logical consequence where the country becomes

⁴¹ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1974, p. 58

⁴² BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 25

attractive for the holding of international summits. In its 2014 manifesto, the BDP highlights these events as proof of the success of its policies. ‘Botswana has hosted major international conferences aimed towards the promotion of sustainable development, democracy, good governance and promotion and protection of human rights. These include : the Sustainability Summit in June 2012 (...) and the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) Summit in 2013’⁴³. As we have seen, the ideas of the BDP in international relations have never really changed since Botswana’s independence. While one might have thought that the first positions were largely explained by the situation of a precarious Botswana surrounded by regimes being not very sympathetic to its existence, the test of history shows us the opposite. The decolonization of Angola and Mozambique, the takeover by Mugabe in Zimbabwe or the fall of apartheid in South Africa have not changed the party program. It is therefore proof that we are in the presence of a political organization with a historically coherent and structured vision of international relations.

3.2) Evolution of ideas and issues

As mentioned in the introduction, the BDP is a party that has been able to evolve and deepen its vision on certain issues. While the background remains the same, new facets are opening up to modernize positions. It’s the other facet of a consolidated party to be able to evolve while staying loyal to its values and ideas. First, we will analyze the vision of democracy and see how this concept was detailed with the evolution of the party. Thereafter, we will take environmental

⁴³ Secure your future, BDP Manifesto, 2014, p. 30

issues as well as gender equality, two issues absent from the party's first programs, and we will see how the BDP was able to integrate them into its program.

3.2.a) Democracy

Democracy is an interesting case study of the evolution of the BDP's vision. As we will see, the party always promoted multi-party democracy and was able to detail its vision as the country progressed.

When its first manifesto was published in 1965, the BDP declared itself in favor of the principle of "one man one vote" while protecting the individual freedoms enshrined in the constitution. The party guarantees the possibility for an opposition to express itself but is firm as to the framework for doing so. It was a time of potentially violent political era and the desire to draw a line was clear. 'Under its regime all elections to local councils and to the National Assembly will be carried out on a one-man-one-vote basis, and the making of all laws and the amending of such laws shall be carried out by popular will in the Legislative Assembly. Further the party pledges itself to safeguard the liberty of the individual citizen the basic rights of man defined in the Constitution. (...) The Bechuanaland Democratic Party believes in a multi-party state with a responsible parliamentary opposition that will operate within the framework of the Constitution, and within that framework only'⁴⁴. In 1969, democracy became a tool to fight against the power of the chiefs. Parliamentary democracy was also shown to be a more effective decision-making tool than pre-colonial structures, notably the kgotla which is a public place open to all citizens in order to have meetings for deliberation about local issues. Being central in decision-making

⁴⁴ This is what we stand for, BDP Manifesto, 1965, p. 2-4

before the country's independence, it then becomes a tool that only serves to respond to local issues. 'Already this reformed district administration has gone a long way to replacing the traditional functions of the old tribal administration. The kgotla still has a function - it is an ideal occasion for direct communication between the President and his Ministers and the people of the villages. But the kgotla cannot be expected to function effectively as an instrument of local government facing the challenging complexities of development. For too long the kgotla has been used as a sounding board by chiefs before they made pronouncement on policy'⁴⁵. As mentioned earlier, the founding fathers of Botswana were hostile to the power of the chiefs as well as to tribalism. Parliamentary democracy therefore became a nation-building tool.

Five years later, the BDP explained that it hoped that democracy would take a greater part in the organization of society. In addition to being a way of choosing a government, it must have a role in the economy. Democracy then becomes a tool in order to achieve social justice goals which are in the party platform. 'Thus under the BDP, the national principles of democracy and development are inseparable. The people are not just consulted at election times, but are continuously involved in planning the changes that are taking place and hence controlling these changes. (...) It is easy to plan development so that a few people become rich but to make development that benefits the whole nation means making deliberate decisions, planning ahead, and involving the people directly in these plans.'⁴⁶

In 1979, democracy was seen as a system promoting the expression of the identity of the country's minority communities. 'The Botswana Democratic Party believes that our democracy in Botswana is enriched by diversity, and since we were elected we have encouraged the

⁴⁵ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1969, p. 12

⁴⁶ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1974, p. 13

establishment of a wide variety of organizations and institutions. The result is that a growing voluntary movement has come into existence since independence and is contributing to making our society more dynamic⁴⁷. The nation-building process through democracy therefore continues with the idea that it should not allow any group to be marginalized but rather to include as many people as possible in the process of building national democracy.

As this democratic consolidation continued, it became a mark of pride. Surrounded by dictatorial regimes either Marxist-Leninist or Suprematist type, being a democratic country became a mark of distinction. Botswana was then defined by its adherence to democracy in a world that was seen hostile to it. During the elections of 1984, the BDP called for safeguarding democracy by recalling its important attributes for the country. 'Botswana enjoys the distinction of having no political prisoners and no political refugees. This is an attribute not enjoyed by many countries in the world today'⁴⁸. In 1989, the BDP wanted to launch a new message. The democracy it claims was not just a British import. It then wished to articulate its own vision of democracy to root it in the unique national framework of Botswana. 'If ever, God forbid, the BDP fails to win a majority of the seats in the National Assembly, it will accept the verdict of the voters and become the loyal opposition. That is what parliamentary democracy means. But our concept of democracy extends beyond the Westminster model. (...) That is why the BDP Government has encouraged the creation of many councils and committees through which representatives of many different interest groups can express their views and present their problems.'⁴⁹ Ten years later, we find again this idea of wanting to go beyond the British model. The BDP then appealed to the ancestral roots of the Botswana culture that carries democracy. 'Botswana is a relatively young

⁴⁷ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1979, p. 38

⁴⁸ Building Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1984, p. 7

⁴⁹ BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 7-8

democracy. Though we inherited British Constitutional practices, there aspects such as freedom of speech, respect for the individual and tolerance, which have always been part of our culture⁵⁰.

In both cases, the party wished to disconnect the link between democracy and European influence. He wanted to reclaim the term to make it something purely Botswanaese.

That established, this speech disappeared in the manifestos which followed. In 2009, the BDP claimed that democracy is part of the Botswana mores and began to emphasize on journalistic freedom. ‘The BDP believes in and shall hold democracy steadfastly, not just as a method of electing the government but as a way of life. We shall therefore (...) iv) promote a free and responsible media v) allow and promote open debate’⁵¹.

3.2.b) Environment and gender equity

The environmental issue was and is still a secondary issue in the eyes of the BDP. The first proposal, which may seem a little environmentalist was in an economic interest perspective. That being said, it would be unfair to affirm that environmental protection (when profit is not involved) is not important for the people of Botswana. This vision of conservation going hand in hand with profitability is found in a proposal from the 1979 program. ‘The BDP considers the preservation of our wildlife to be a sacred trust and will make all efforts to ensure that it is not depleted. Our objectives for the use of wildlife are therefore to ensure preservation, especially rare species and to suggest forms of use that will bring about the best economic benefits’⁵². In order to achieve this double objective, the BDP will advocate luxury tourism. ‘In the latter

⁵⁰ A millenium for opportunities, BDP Manifesto, 1999, p. 19

⁵¹ There is still no alternative, BDP Manifesto, 2009, p. 16

⁵² Build Botswana, BDP Manifesto, 1979, p. 19

connection, it is clear that Botswana must promote low-volume high-cost tourism. Not only would large numbers of low-budget tourists contribute little to the economy, but they can do serious ecological and social damage as many countries have experienced⁵³. It was not until 2014 that the BDP decided to take a more significant turn in favor of environmental protection policy. This new line is that of Ian Khama known for being an ardent defender of the environmental cause. As we can see, although certain lines of the BDP cross the long time, the various leaders can also bring nuances starting from their particular sensitivities. However, the idea of protecting the environment remains linked to economic considerations. Before it was a question of attracting tourists, therefore it was a question of helping to the objectives of the fight against poverty. ‘BDP continues to promote sustainable management of the environment to stem the tide against global warming and its consequences. The effects of climate change are increasingly becoming visible and it’s important to manage the risks associated with the phenomenon. Rainfall patterns are becoming more variable creating uncertainty, posing a threat to economic growth and the well-being of Botswana. Poor rainfall due to climate change is likely to result in poor crop yields, resulting in significant macroeconomic consequences, particularly with respect to poverty eradication’⁵⁴. The point here: the party can incorporate new themes, without losing its ideological coherence.

When it comes to gender issues, the question will come much later. This will be recognized in the 1999 program. ‘The BDP recognizes the crucial role that women have played and continue to play in the development of Botswana. Their roles have changed considerably, from passive spectators to active and vocal participants in the management of the affairs of this country. This

⁵³ BDP Manifesto, 1989, p. 15

⁵⁴ Secure your future, BDP Manifesto, 2009, p. 34

is a welcome development that BDP will strive to advance⁵⁵. In order to make up for not having addressed these issues before, the party will propose a series of measures to improve the condition of women in Botswana. It will first organize consultations to eliminate laws deemed to be discriminatory against women. Once this was done, the BDP did not want to stop there and began to advance other measures to address specific issues. ‘All forms of discrimination against women have been eliminated by amending laws such as the marital power in common law marriages in order to achieve gender equity. Women have since been admitted into the ranks of the Botswana Defence Force. The BPD continues to promote the entry into high positions in the public and private sector by women. Empowerment for the girl child through continued education and mentoring programmes has raised the girl child attendance in school and had a positive impact on reducing teenage pregnancy⁵⁶. Another example is found in the 2019 program where the BDP then presents itself as a party capable of combating violence against women. ‘Gender Based Violence is ravaging our country. Botswana has high level of rape and other types of sexual violence. The BDP led government believes that GBV must be prevented before it happens, and where unfortunately happens, strict punitive penalties must ensue⁵⁷. Having always presented itself as the party of order, the party therefore manages to include this new issue in its historic speech.

3.3) The need to clarify its ideology

⁵⁵ A millennium of opportunities, BDP Manifesto, 1999, p. 14-15

⁵⁶ BDP Manifesto, 2009, p. 9

⁵⁷ Advancing together towards a more inclusive economy, BDP Manifesto, 2019, p. 43

As we have demonstrated, the BDP has historically been able to maintain a coherent political program with proposals in line with its values. However, it is difficult to affirm that the BDP has a precise ideology. When questioned to this effect, the protagonists of the BDP mainly present themselves as good managers. *The BDP runs itself as a business, everything is precise, it's done accordingly to what we have*⁵⁸. While the speech may seem more conservative economically, the BDP has also implemented many social programs including health and universal education. *The BDP does not have any strong ideological position. It is more of a sort of centrist. In the last 10-15-20 years we started to see this neo-liberal talk coming up more often. But it's not coming from the party, it's coming from the rulers like the president. They don't discuss that during their congress. It is definitely a center-right party but they also implemented a lot of welfare which was probably just done for posturing and attracting votes*⁵⁹.

This lack of definition of itself poses certain problems in terms of its consolidation since it attracts people from various horizons whose values can be antagonistic. If it has a clear ideology, it would probably mostly attract the people who tend to agree with the party line. This doesn't seem to be the case since the BDP can be classified as a catch-all party (Elischer, 2013, 198). *There is now a clash of values between those who founded the BDP and those who recently joined. It looks like the new group is coming with a new set of values. The old folks were all for to serve the country but the new folks are joining politics not to serve but to receive some benefits*⁶⁰. According to Professor Sebudubudu, this lack of clarification would go beyond the question of the party and could be explained by the culture of the country. *We don't have*

⁵⁸ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

⁵⁹ Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-11

⁶⁰ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

*issues-based politics and it's just leaders following*⁶¹. It's therefore not only the problem of the BDP but generalized in the Botswana society not to have clear ideological debates. It's then difficult to organize a party around a precise ideology.

4) The two splits

As mentioned, the BDP had two splits during the last decade. In this section, we will present the two parties that were created from those events. We will explain after what was the context of each split. At the end of this chapter, we will ask ourselves what those two splits tell us about the consolidation of the BDP.

4.1) Botswana Movement for Democracy

4.1.a) Party presentation

Founded in 2010 by Gomolemo Motswaledi, the BMD is a liberal party but also emphasizing the reduction of significant social inequalities in Botswana. It is an ideologically close party to the BDP, believing that the latter would have not developed well. In a way, the BMD is loyal to the original version of the BDP. *We think that the BDP under Seretse Khama was a very good party which was people-centered dedicated to improving the life of all the people*⁶². According to the BMD, the BDP has become an elitist party. The disconnection between the government elites

⁶¹ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

⁶² Sidney Pilane, BMD president. Interview : 2019-10-19

and the population would have led to a gradual deterioration of public services. Considering that the BDP is no longer a political party ready to listen to criticism, the BMD wants to be a watchdog that can bring pressure from the outside. *The BMD still exists because we believe in people-centered policies and because the BDP needs to be checked. We want to try to form a coalition with the BDP and AP to force them to change their policies*⁶³. It is therefore a political party operating in the form of a pressure group that does not aspire to power.

4.1.b) Split context

As we will see, the story of the creation of the BMD is relatively consensual between the actors involved. It is generally accepted that the creation of the party was the result of suspensions of certain BDP elites by former President Ian Khama. First, the analysis of university professors will be presented. It will be followed by the testimony of people belonging to the BMD and the BDP and will end with the version offered by Ian Khama.

According to academics, the founding of the BMD is mainly due to the rise of intolerance on the part of certain BDP elites, in particular former president Ian Khama. *From 2008 we began to see a party that became intolerant and it led to the split in 2010 with BMD. It was formed out of intolerance especially from Ian Khama. He was never contested, he was just brought in from the army to be in a senior position*⁶⁴. In addition to having an authoritarian leadership style, the former president is said to have used his powers to place people serving his interests in high-ranking party officials. *The first split was due to the management style of president Khama.*

⁶³ Sidney Pilane, BMD president. Interview : 2019-10-19

⁶⁴ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

*People said he was an autocrat doing things without consultation. When the BDP came into congress in Kanye, Khama addressed people he wanted to be high in the party but all of those people were defeated so he created a parallel committee. That is why the BMD was formed*⁶⁵.

This vision of Ian Khama as an autocratic leader is shared by numerous academics. Per example, Ian Taylor noted ‘There was a widespread sentiment, not without foundation, that General Ian Khama possessed decidedly authoritarian tendencies, valued allegiance over merit, and was politically inexperienced to boot’⁶⁶. This version of the story is widely taken up by BMD supporters. *We left because we used to be able to criticize and advocate for reforms. Ian Khama started suspending us. When we left, the country already saw what Ian Khama was all about. (...) Our creation was the beginning of hope for opposition politics*⁶⁷.

Regarding the members of the BDP questioned on this subject, the version offered is not radically different. The BMD would be a creation following suspensions ordered by Ian Khama. There is, however, a nuance between those who put more blame on the shoulders of the former president and those arguing that the founders of the BMD had a divisive attitude. For example, Kagiso Mmusi targets Ian Khama in terms of responsibility for the creation of the BMD. *Under Ian Khama, we saw a different leadership that was not on the BDP caliber. Decisions were taken by a group of people. They were not taken by the entire people. They were taken by preferences, not quality. Implementation process was made for the few but not the whole country. That is why we had the formation of the BMD. I was part of the Kagole team, we won. After the election, the central committee could not meet. The president made it very difficult for them to meet at a point*

⁶⁵ Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-11

⁶⁶ TAYLOR Ian, *Growing authoritarianism in the ‘African miracle’ – should Botswana be a cause for concern ?*, DIIS Working Paper no 2005/24, p. 14

⁶⁷ Sidney Pilane, BMD president. Interview : 2019-10-19

where people were suspended from the party. That's when they decided to form the BMD. I was part of the team but I did not think it was a good idea to form the BMD because I thought we were elected by the people and had a mandate. I felt we should remain and continuously fight. I still believe if we all had stayed and fought our causes, things would not have been the way they were in 2014. We would have come to terms with the president and he would have understood that the BDP was not only about him but us⁶⁸. On the other hand, the BDP's executive secretary, Ame Makoba, places more emphasis on the factious attitude of BMD supporters. The creation of the party is explained more by personal political ambitions or economic interests than by a real desire to form a government. We had an elected secretary general Gomolemo who had a disciplinary case against him and was recognized guilty. He and people sympathetic to him decided to leave the BDP to form a new party to not getting away from politics⁶⁹.

It is interesting to compare these versions of the story with that of Ian Khama and realize that they are not very different. The difference is not in the facts but rather in their justification. Having these referrals was a matter of survival for the BDP. Without them, the party would have potentially exploded and such a division would have caused the first electoral defeat. *When I was brought in the BDP, they were two factions splitting the party with their leaders looking for dominance within the BDP. I took a stand against that in the congress of Kanye. The one faction came out having won most of the positions in the central committee. They were trying to set their agenda to perpetuate their dominance in the party. I just said no to those factions and it got worse and worse. I needed to put a foot down and say I'm not going to tolerate it because it will break down the party. One of the members in the central committee was suspended because of*

⁶⁸ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

⁶⁹ Ame Makoba, BDP's executive secretary. Interview : 2019-11-05

*his factional attitude and those in the central committee decided to quit with him. That's when they formed their own party, the BMD. I'm happy to say that at the time I left office, those factions did not exist anymore*⁷⁰.

4.2) Botswana Patriotic Front

4.2.a) Party presentation

The BPF is the youngest party in the country. Founded in 2019 with Pastor Biggie Butale as leader, it is a party advocating for "compassionate conservatism"⁷¹. This concept is defined as "respect for individual responsibilities and rights, respect for the rights and freedoms of religious groups to worship as they deem fit, ideals of family, respect for traditional forms of authority such as dikgosi⁷² and one in which the poor members of society are not seen as objects for oppression, but citizens in need of a helping hand"⁷³. While presenting itself as conservative, the BPF also proposes progressive measures such as 50% women representation in parliament, legalization of marijuana and the integration of the teaching of minority languages in the school curriculum. Unlike the BMD, the BPF wants the end of the BDP's reign. The party wanted to form a coalition with the UDC in order to moderate their positions considered too socialist.

It should be noted that the BPF is often accused by its adversaries of being only a vehicle serving the personal interests of the former president. These attacks keep coming back whether it's from

⁷⁰ Seretse Khama Ian Khama, Botswana President 2008-2018 and patron of the BPF. Interview : 2019-10-15

⁷¹ Ke nako!, BPF Manifesto, p. 6

⁷² Dikgosi means 'chief' in Setswana

⁷³ Ke nako!, BPF Manifesto, p. 6

BMD: *The only reason the BPF was created is because Khama can't do what he wants. They are now building a cult around him*⁷⁴ or from the BDP: *It's just an individualistic desire. When an individual takes a road, it's difficult to change it*⁷⁵. Questioned to this effect, the party spokesman said that his opponents do not understand the nature of BPF and that the presence of Ian Khama in their ranks is mainly due to personal ideological preferences. *We're adults. We have our own minds and tough. I'm not in a cult. If Khama agrees with me that there should be a direct election of the president, then I'll respect him. If he thinks there should be real independence of institutions, I'll respect him. He did not agree with that when he was in the BDP but now he agrees with those ideas. Obviously to some extent there might be some personal issues. We want to move beyond personality. Khama has listen to our issues and policies and he's now going all over the country selling our issues and policies*⁷⁶.

Whether it is a vehicle serving the personal interests of Ian Khama or not, this new party leaves many people undecided as to the relevance of its creation. *We don't really understand the existence of the BPF. They say they were formed in order to prevent the BDP from returning to power. Why didn't they join other parties that were already existing?*⁷⁷. Thus, the BPF is a party that can hardly be assigned to a political current. Whether it is the economic or social axis as well as the question particularly of the presence of Ian Khama, this political organization is marked with a question mark. This is probably due to the fact that it is a very young party. For now, it looks like a personalistic party since Ian Khama is playing such an important role in the marketing of the organization. When a party doesn't have a clear ideology, it can turn to a more

⁷⁴ Sidney Pilane, BMD president. Interview : 2019-10-19

⁷⁵ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

⁷⁶ Justice Motlhabani, BPF spokesman. Interview : 2019-10-15

⁷⁷ Ame Makoba, BDP's executive secretary. Interview : 2019-11-05

personalistic one. This is a hypothesis, the next few years will probably be revealing in terms of the development of BPF. Was it the party of an election or a political movement capable of mobilizing more broadly than the base of staunch supporters of Ian Khama? Only time will tell.

4.2.b) Split context

Unlike the story of the creation of the BMD, that of the BPF is more controversial. Depending on the interlocutor, it may be the result of the intolerance of the new president Mokgweetsi Masisi, or an attempt to safeguard democracy, or a pure pursuit of personal financial interests. In this section, we will use the same structure as that used to analyze the BMD.

An element often recurring among the professors interviewed is that the creation of the party was not due to an ideological conflict. *The 2019 split is not ideological. It is about Khama issues with Masisi. Apparently, he believe Masisi to go a particular way and Masisi went the other way*⁷⁸. Once again, it can be explained by a lack of tolerance on the part of the BDP elites. This intolerance is mostly due to the advantage that people who are in power can benefit. *The BPF was formed out of the intolerance of the current president. He was not prepared to listen to those who were contesting their losses. They found an opportunity to try to capitalise on the fight between Masisi and Khama. The formation could have been avoided if there was more tolerance from the current establishment (...) I think it is all about the control of the party and the access to state resources. In this fight between the two leaders that lead to a split (BPF), there are no*

⁷⁸ Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-11

*major differences in terms of values. There might be a slight difference because of their background but the real issue behind that is access to state resources*⁷⁹.

Not surprisingly, the idea that the BPF was created in response to an increase in intolerance by President Masisi is also offered by the party spokesperson. *If Masisi wanted to avoid the formation of the BPF, he should have been more consultative. He should have been more open to dissent and have embraced democracy. The minister that tried to challenge him, he said that she was not a true motswana. He makes pressure to impeach Duma Boko to fly all over the country. Khama in history will be seen as a man that fought for democracy by helping the opposition*⁸⁰. However, it is rejected by supporters of the BDP, seeing in Ian Khama a man incapable of compromising. While Ian Khama justified having dismissed the people in the central committee during his presidency for wanting to impose their agenda, it is now up to some supporters of the BDP to justify their attitude towards the former president. *BPF is a certain group of people led by the former president because the current president has denied them expectations that they had. We must not see ourselves as I but as We. It's the only way a nation can grow. People need to accept their defeat and carry on*⁸¹. Other party officials I've met argued that the creation of the BPF is actually linked to the pursuit of the former president's economic interests. Having financial interests in tourism, Ian Khama is said to have left the BDP to assist in the rise of the opposition party in order to have someone in power who could be controlled and able to overturn some of President Masisi's decisions about elephant management.

In his version, former president Ian Khama says that he first left the BDP because of the rise of authoritarianism exerted by the current president. *I came to a stage where I said 'no, this is not the*

⁷⁹ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

⁸⁰ Justice Motlhabani, BPF spokesman. Interview : 2019-10-15

⁸¹ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

*party I've been belonging to, they're violating our principles*⁸². Although he claims to have been crossed by the feeling that he had some responsibility in the situation for having placed Masisi (and therefore a role to play to get him out of power), he rejects the idea that his return to politics may have any connection with personal ambitions as well as financial interests. *I thought I should leave the BDP and not go again in politics but then there were a lot of people in the BDP who were very unhappy about what was going on and they wanted a home. Some of them came out with this idea to form the BPF and I then decided to go on with them*⁸³.

4.3) What are those two splits telling us ?

As we have seen, the BDP has gone through two splits that are directly linked to the actions of the former president. The party was still able to win the 2019 election with a better performance than in 2014. However, electoral results cannot be used as the only indicator for political parties consolidation since there are a lot of factors that can influence the turn-out of an election. Weakly organized parties are able to win elections in Africa (Le Bas, 2011, 27). That being said, it is possible to withdraw two major interpretations of these events. As we will see, the first is rather supported by supporters of the BDP and the second by their opponents as well as certain university professors.

4.3.1) A still solid BDP

⁸² Seretse Khama Ian Khama, Botswana President 2008-2018 and patron of the BPF. Interview : 2019-10-15

⁸³ Seretse Khama Ian Khama, Botswana President 2008-2018 and patron of the BPF. Interview : 2019-10-15

The first thing to say is that the BDP still exists. Many political parties in African and extra-African history were never able to maintain a large enough base of members and activists for their mere survival after comparables events. In the case of the BDP, the question is how much these divisions may have weakened it. For that matter, the Executive Secretary of the party invites us to view the situation in a nuanced way. *It goes two ways. No political parties want to lose members and result in the loss of vote. We're not happy to lose members. In that regard, we may be weaker. You may also look at it in another way and say that the party is now more united than ever and everyone who is in the party now in putting together on the leadership of the party under Masisi unlike if those who were disgruntled stayed and cause internal fights and instability in the party*⁸⁴. Beyond the ideological differences, the BDP would also be more united with regard to respect for procedures. This would be one of the main reasons for the splits, the people involved in the situations would not have followed the way of partying. Since these people are no longer in the party, the BDP could be viewed as a party less likely to experience similar situations in the future. *When you have differences, you can still work together in a political party. We just need to respect the process. We have to respect and follow the leader at a point of time. If you don't agree, you take a step back, you don't fight with it. He's not there permanently. You can fight for the next leader to be what you desire*⁸⁵.

I would argue that those two splits were a sign of a consolidated party. As our definition tells us, a consolidated party is one that cannot be turned into a special group interest party without experiencing a shock. In the first case, the BMD was formed either because a particular group of people wanted to take over the party or in reaction to Ian Khama's authoritarian attitude. In both

⁸⁴ Ame Makoba, BDP's executive secretary. Interview : 2019-11-05

⁸⁵ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

scenarios, we can see that there was this idea that the BDP should not be a party of special interest but rather be democratic. This provoked a split. The second split is kind of the same situation. It was either caused by a rebellion against Masisi's undemocratic attitude or because Masisi refused to let Ian Khama do what he wanted with the party. Whatever the splits, the reasons invoked are the same. It's the idea that the BDP should not become a party to serve particular interest but rather the majority of the population in Botswana. As we have seen, this idea was very present in the BDP manifestos since the foundation of the party. This can be interpreted in a way to say that the party couldn't become a personalistic party rather than a catch-all party without generating dissidence. If the BDP was an unconsolidated party, either Ian Khama or Mokgweetsi Masisi could have turned the party to become their own special-interest organization without having resistance.

4.3.2) Potential effects of an electoral defeat

A strong political party is also one that can survive an electoral defeat. It should be noted that this idea of the possibility of an electoral defeat does not seem to be present among the members of the BDP interviewed. *We will continue like we did in the last 15 months and we will have a chance to stay in power for the next 20 years. It's all about consultation and free and fair elections within the party. As long as the BDP members accept that it is party first, the rest is history*⁸⁶. That being said, opponents of the BDP say that an electoral defeat could be the ultimate blow to the organization. The reasons given differ. On one hand, some point to the difficulty of

⁸⁶ Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

finding new talent. *If the BDP was to lose the election, it would disintegrate. They would not have leadership. Masisi said he would stand out if they lost. I don't see nobody that can replace him*⁸⁷. On the other hand, other opponents expect that the BDP would face major financial difficulties that could hurt them deeply. *They won't have that money given by their donors anymore. They might not return to government for a long time*⁸⁸.

The university professors interviewed generally agree. The BDP is a party defined by power. By losing power, he would then lose his *raison d'être* being able to unify the different trends crossing it. *The factions were united in power. So a defeat would bring deep divisions. We probably would have seen more splits as well*⁸⁹. *If they were to lose, it would decay. What is holding people to the BDP is access to office and nothing else*⁹⁰. The fact remains that this scenario is still fictitious. Regardless of the arguments raised, we are here in pure speculation. We can still notice that nobody talks about the possibility that the party decides to hang on to power which shows us how democracy is permeated in the culture of Botswana.

5- Conclusion

As part of this research, we looked at whether it was possible to qualify the Botswana Democratic Party as a consolidated political party. First, we demonstrated that its history was almost unique on the continent. Although African political parties may have experienced phases of collaboration with foreign administrations, the BDP is unique in the sense that it was a

⁸⁷ Sidney Pilane, BMD president. Interview : 2019-10-19

⁸⁸ Justice Motlhabani, BPF spokesman. Interview : 2019-10-15

⁸⁹ Gladys Mokhawa, Head of office, political science department, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-12

⁹⁰ David Sebudubudu, Political sciences professor, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-10-04

creation born of a tacit understanding in which people involved in the former European administration could participate. We have subsequently shown that the BDP has had a coherent political program throughout its history. Regarding economic and international relations issues, the party was loyal to its principles. Having certainly adapted to new realities such as the need to diversify its economy or the fall of apartheid, the BDP never departed from its founding ideas. We also showed how the party was able to better define its vision of democracy during its evolution and thus contributing to the process of national construction. Environmental and gender equality issues then allowed us to show that the BDP had been able to integrate new issues into its program, be it for economic reasons or for questions of principle. While the party does not have a very precise ideology, which can cause problems, the BDP remains after all a party in which people sharing ideas revolving around liberalism, social democracy or moderate conservatism can recognize themselves. Subsequently, we conducted an analysis of the two splits that took place in 2010 and 2019 by mobilizing interviews with people highly involved in these parties as well as the analysis of university professors. We found that these separations had very little influence on the ideas or the values proposed in the BDP manifestos. We also found that the BDP was a party capable of carrying out successful electoral campaigns in spite of these events. However, we noted that these divisions could be indicative of more serious problems for the future of the party in the event of an electoral defeat.

These elements lead to the conclusions that the Botswana Democratic Party is a consolidated political party. By having a historically consistent guideline, by being able to retain most of its activists base despite the divisions, the party is thus able to regenerate itself. *We see more and more younger people identifying with the BDP, which is something we did not expect. The*

*members of parliament are such younger. That clearly demonstrated that there has been a shift*⁹¹.

As the BDP was going through its worst transfer of power crisis as well as facing the most organized opposition in Botswana history, it was able to seek an even greater victory than that of 2014. President Masisi was able to reverse the trend which logically would have wanted his party not to enjoy a clear majority or even to be defeated. A charismatic leader is essential in politics, but a victory of this size would not have been possible without a solid organization behind him. This shows us that the BDP was able to remain largely united despite the divisions because of its credible positions in the eyes of its militants. It is therefore a consolidated political party like it was for decades.

⁹¹ Gladys Mokhawa, Head of office, political science department, University of Botswana. Interview : 2019-11-12

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APPENDIX

People interviewed for the research :

Seretse Khama Ian Khama, Botswana President 2008-2018 and patron of the BPF. Interview :
2019-10-15

Ame Makoba, BDP's executive secretary. Interview : 2019-11-05

Thomas Kagiso Mmusi, Businessman and member of parliament (BDP). Interview : 2019-10-08

Monageng Mogalakwe, Sociology professor at the University of Botswana. Interview :
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Gladys Mokhawa, Head of office, political science department, University of Botswana.
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