Social Cleavages and Party Alignment in Botswana: Dominant Party System Debate Revisited

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Abstract

This article analyzes the dominant party system in Botswana through a social structural paradigm. Debates surrounding the dominant party system of Botswana typically focus on the relative strength of opposition parties vis-à-vis the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), privileges of incumbency enjoyed by the BDP, the majoritarian electoral system as well as the BDP's association with the hugely popular first President of the country, Sir Seretse Khama. Based on sociological explanations, this paper investigates whether there is social cleavage structure in Botswana's party system and whether the same cleavages can explain the distribution of votes and voting patterns. Taking the cleavage thesis as a point of departure, the paper acknowledges the presence of social cleavages but argues that these social divisions have not been effectively mobilised by opposition parties, and through various tactics the ruling BDP has exploited and pacified them in order to mirror the society. The result has been a predominant party system that has characterised party politics for much of the post-independence era despite the declining popular vote of BDP which has been in power since Botswana attained independence in 1966.

Introduction

From being classified as one of the world's poorest countries at independence in 1966, Botswana recorded the fastest economic growth rates in the world by the 1980s after the discovery of diamonds in the late 1960s. The rapid economic growth rate coupled with relative political stability earned the country the status of an 'African Miracle' (Samatar 1999). Others label Botswana as 'Africa's success story' (Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe 2013) and an exceptional case of 'democratic practice' (Du Toit 1995). James Chipasula and Katabaro Miti (1989) referred to the country as an 'economic miracle'. According to Nicola De Jager and David Sebudubudu (2016) these accolades were fitting for the country in view of the precarious nature of democracy on the rest of the continent. However, others hold opposite views about Botswana as a true reflection of democracy partly because since independence, the country has been under the rule of only one party (BDP) which has dominated other political parties in every election. According to Dithapelo Keorapetse (2013), these accolades emanate from less profound measures of democracy: procedural and institutional democracy of regular free and fairly fair elections. He also observes that Botswana's democracy appears blemished on more profound measures of democracy such as accountability, transparency, and separation of powers, resource distribution, and responsiveness. Other critics of Botswana's democracy such as John Holm (1987) describe the political process within which Botswana's elections are held as 'paternalistic democracy'.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to this debate by focusing more on the social basis of parties. Although there is abundant literature on Botswana's dominant party system, little has been done to analyse the party system by examining the social structural basis of parties. Yet there is research that suggests that there are social divisions in Botswana, some of which parties have campaigned along issues pertaining to them. Beginning with John Wiseman (1977) who acknowledged the presence of conflict cleavages in Botswana, this paper demonstrates that much as the country is relatively ethnically

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homogenous compared to other African countries, there are underlying divisions along ethnicity, class, region/location, secular versus traditional authorities among others (Nyathi-Ramahobo 2008; Makgala 2009; Solway 1994; Holm 1987; Poteete 2012 and Selolwane 2002). Besides, Studies show that there is a declining trend in popular vote for BDP and increasing popularity of opposition parties which could be as a result of shifting alignments.

Table 1: Percentage of popular vote for political parties, Botswana, 1965-2014

	1965	1969	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
BDP	80	63	77	71	68	65	54	52	50	53	47
Opposition	19	32	23	24	31	34	42	41	45.8	45.8	53

(NB: The 53% in 2014 is a combined popular vote for three opposition parties under a coalition form)
Source: Kebonang and Kaboyakgosi (2017)

These trends make a compelling case for investigation into why opposition parties have failed to attain state power despite their rising popularity.

Despite the lack of attention given to cleavage theory to analyse political parties in Botswana, existing literature on parties and claims about existence of cleavages suggest that parties are formed along cleavage lines or represent certain cleavages. Social characteristics such as age, working class, region, ethnicity, and education are associated with political parties (Toka 2008). While political parties strive for nationwide appeal, they have sought to represent some interests which can be associated with specific constituencies within the society.

In reviewing the literature this paper makes reference to specific events that could be used as evidence for party support by different social groups. For instance, the split of the BDP in 2010 resulting in the formation of a new party, Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). Adversarial relations between government and public sector unions which culminated into 2011 industrial strike that led to a loose and informal cooperation between Botswana Federation of Public Sector Unions (BOFEPUSU) and a united opposition party –Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC).

This paper is threefold. First, it briefly reviews the literature on the country's dominant party system. The second part examines the concept of cleavage followed by a discussion of social cleavages that emerged in society and their attendant conflicts as well as their relationship to the parties. Finally, the paper makes a case for understanding Botswana's party system on the social basis of parties. We conclude that BDP has pacified these social divisions at the expense of opposition parties that failed to effectively convert social cleavages and their grievances into political issues for electoral fortunes.

Overview of Botswana's Dominant Party System

Although BDP's popular vote has been on a decline since the 1980s, the party has continued to dominate electoral competition and consolidated state power. Arguments about Botswana's party system have ascribed the dominance of BDP to the fragmentation of opposition parties (Osei-Hwedie 2001 and Poteete 2012) failed opposition alliances (Molomo and Molefe 2005), lack of state funding of political parties (Sebudubudu and Molomo 2005; Good 2010) and lack of sound internal organisation among opposition parties (Maundeni and Lotshwao 2012). Sebudubudu and Molomo (2005) contend that BDP's electoral strength is in part explained by the disparities in resources that exist between the ruling party and opposition. While BDP's electoral campaigns are always amply funded thanks to privileges of incumbency, the opposition grapples with very limited resources to reach out to the wider electorate. Kenneth Good (2016) cites patronage, long incumbency and the majoritarian electoral system as among factors that perpetuate BDP dominance.

For many years, the opposition did not present a viable alternative and potential threat to the BDP due to the former's fragmented and disorganised nature. With the exception of the 2014 general election, attempts at opposition unity have not always yielded success (Makgala and Botlhomilwe 2017). Good (2016) posits that 'the long predominance of BDP is facilitated by disunity among opposition party elites'. Christian John Makgala and Ikanyeng Malila (2014) contend that there is a long history of opposition parties' unwillingness to cooperate. Related to the weakness of opposition parties due to fragmentation is the issue of factionalism. Factional divisions have in the past weakened opposition parties and given birth to splinter parties from old opposition parties such as the Botswana People's Party (BPP) and Botswana National Front (BNF) but especially the latter. Though BDP has not been immune from factionalism, Zibani Maundeni and Batlang Seabo (2015) argue that BDP has managed factions better than opposition parties through compromises.

Other studies focus on variables such as Tswana political culture, the economic performance of BDP as well as the influence of BDP and Botswana's founding President, Sir Seretse Khama (Sebudubudu and Botlhomilwe 2013). These authors argue that Batswana's culture of not questioning authority and the fact that Batswana are a risk averse nation explain their reluctance to vote BDP out of office. The legacy of Seretse Khama, whom in addition to being first President of Botswana was also the uncrowned *kgosi* (paramount chief) of the influential Bangwato whose tribal territory is the largest in the country in terms of population size and electoral constituencies. Ian Taylor (2005) claims that Seretse enjoyed legitimacy because of his chiefly background and his charismatic leadership, integrity and prudent governance introduced at independence earned BDP success at the polls.

Other studies on the party system rely much on arguments about the relative strength of opposition parties and the BDP as well as the electoral system that does not favour the opposition. For instance, Mpho Molomo (2000) argues that BDP's dominance has also to do with the majoritarian voting system which disadvantages opposition parties. He also notes that the system obscures opposition strength in that the share of popular vote is not reflected in parliamentary seats won. The electoral system is manifest in the mismatch between popular vote of a party and the number of seats allocated in parliament. For instance, in 2009 elections, the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) had a popular vote of 10,4304 (19%) out of voter turnout of 544,647 but that translated into only four seats in parliament or 7.02% of the total number of parliamentary seats (EISA 2010). However, the case would have been different under proportional representation in which the 19% popular vote would have translated into about 10 seats. In proportional representation seats are allocated to political parties depending on the number of votes share per party. Since independence, the BDP has dominated every national election. The opposition has only come close to threatening its dominance in 1994 and 2014 election when opposition obtained 13 seats in parliament and 20 respectively.

As it has been noted above, Botswana is not without its conflict cleavages, though they tend to overlap, these cleavages have revealed signs of discontent since Botswana attained self-rule and parties have attempted to not only appeal to social cleavages but also package their issues into party manifestos and programmes. Therefore, the question that arises is why the BDP has continued to thrive despite the presence of these conflict cleavages that are seemingly dissatisfied with the way BDP government has handled certain issues affecting them or the country in general. Again the question to ask is why these divisions have not translated into political cleavages, around which political parties mobilise gainful support? More fundamentally, the paper interrogates existing cleavages such as rural-urban, state-traditional authorities, ethno-linguistic cleavage and investigates why opposition parties have not effectively campaigned and mobilised around the material livelihoods of social cleavages. We deal with the theoretical interpretation of the cleavage concept below.

The Concept of Cleavage

The work of Lipset Martin Seymour and Stein Rokkan (1967) on party systems and voter alignments perhaps represents a classical account of how cleavages develop and how they structure party systems in Western Europe. Political sociologists have come to use the concept of cleavage to analyze the social basis of parties particularly in Europe. Salient cleavages that later attended to party formation emerged as a result of historical conflicts such as Industrial Revolution and Reformation (Kriesi 1998). These conflicts gave rise to cleavages based on religion, region, class and rural-urban differences (Bornschier 2009). The underlying assumption in the cleavage theory is that, social groups have differing concerns and interests which then determine support for political parties and party affiliation (Panebianco 1988).

According to Kriesi (1998) European mass politics have been structured by four major social cleavages. The religious cleavage, for example, typically studied by relating denominational affiliations or levels of religiosity to party preferences, has its roots in the conflict between church leadership and head(s) of state(s) over authority and values (Enyedi 2005). On the other hand, the centre-periphery cleavage was triggered by 'the conflict between the central nation-building culture and the increasing resistance of the ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct subject populations in the provinces and the peripheries' (Lipset and Rokkan 1967:101). Peter Mair (1997) writes that the other two cleavages (working class versus bourgeoisie and urban versus rural) were a product of the Industrial Revolution which crystallized oppositions between the old landed interests and the new industrialists on the one hand, and the owners of capital and the new working class on the other. These cleavages became influential in voting behaviour as parties mobilized along social groups.

Simon Bornschier (2009) observes that the mobilization of the four historical cleavages (church versus state, working class versus bourgeoisie, center versus periphery and urban versus rural) gave birth to the modern party systems in Europe. According to Lipset and Rokkan thesis, Europe's party systems were frozen for the most part of the twentieth century and this provided some form of stability to the political landscape. Zsolt Enyedi (2008) observes that cleavages (church versus state, working class versus bourgeoisie, center versus periphery and urban versus rural) were central to party politics as parties and cleavages tend to mutually influence each other. In the same vein, Panebianco (1988:3-4) notes that 'the activities of parties are the product of the "demands" of social groups, and that more generally, parties themselves are nothing more than the manifestations of social divisions in the political arena'.

However, in the 1970s studies began to observe a decline in the influence of groups on political parties due to changes in societies, in what came to be referred to as a dealignment thesis. According to this thesis, sectoral change (tertiarisation), mediatisation, affluence, cognitive mobilisation, individualisation and secularization destroyed the basis for stable and politically homogenous groups (Enyedi 2008). In this way, voters no longer relied on traditional sources of information such as peer groups, churches and parties.

Nevertheless, cleavages remain important in explaining party systems, especially in societies where salient cleavages that form along ethnic lines and rural-urban tend to influence voting behaviour. Therefore, 'region and ethnicity define the identities of more parties today than in the classical era of cleavage politics' (Enyedi 2008:291). Perhaps, even more telling is the fact that social factors including education, gender, sectoral employment have become important building blocks of political identities and political behaviour relatively recently, typically after the 1970s (Enyedi 2008). Africa is no exception to this trend, as political identities have to a certain degree been defined by ethnicity, religion and region, though not in a stricter sense. In their comparative study of selected African countries, Pippa Norris and Robert Mattes (2003) conclude that structural theories of voting behaviour can provide insights into traditional agrarian societies. They also established that ethnicity is a significant predictor for party support. The cases of Kenya and Zimbabwe are illustrative in this regard where presidential candidates and parties were

supported largely based on ethnic identification (Cheeseman *et al*. 2010)

But just like other Social Science concepts, the meaning as well as the usage of the term 'cleavage' is contested. For instance, Enyedi (2008:288) writes that 'still much ongoing research relies on this concept but the uncertainties that surround its meaning and operationalization indicate an acute lack of academic consensus'. Robert Dahl (1967) has referred cleavages as political divisions denoting political attitudes and behaviour, but do not differentiate them from political opposition or political division. Enyedi (2005) defines cleavages as a pattern of political competition embedded in the cognitive, emotive or social structures of the citizenry as opposed to one determined by day-to-day issues, evaluations of government performance or personalities.

Contributing to the problem with the interpretation and application of the concept is mainly the intermediary location of the concept between the two approaches of political sociology, that of the impact of social divisions on political behaviour on the one hand, and political institutions and their impact on social structure on the other hand (Bartolini and Mair 2008). The authors argue that cleavage is often reduced to social cleavage or raised up to that of political cleavage because it is difficult to use the two approaches both theoretically and analytically. Furthermore, the literature on social cleavages assumes that particular cleavages would always constantly align with particular parties. This is questionable due to electoral volatility and issue voting. Therefore, there is little to suggest that the fraction of voting support going to a party should be constant.

This article adopts Bartolini and Mair's definition of cleavages as 'conflicts between organized socio-structural units that have a set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and which reflects the self-consciousness of the social groups involved' (1990:215). The definition presupposes the existence of conflict over some shared values for a cleavage to form. According to Martin Elff (2007) cleavages exist when members of groups delimited by a social division share characteristics that may become politically relevant. Bartolini and Mair suggest that the term should have an autonomous definition that links social structure to political order which would then not restrict its usage to identification of a particular reality. In this way, the concept would consist of the empirical element, which can be defined in social-structural terms, a normative element which involves the values and believes that provide a sense of identity of the social groups, and an organisational element. Henspeter Kriesi (1998) writes that a cleavage must be expressed in organisational terms. 'In other words, a structural division is transformed into a cleavage, if a political actor gives coherence and organised political expression to what otherwise are inchoate and fragmentary beliefs, values and experiences among members of some social group' (Kriesi 1998:167). The organisational element of a cleavage refers to 'a set of individual interactions, institutions, and organisations, such as political parties, which develop as part of the cleavage' (Bartolini and Mair 2008).

In the same vein, Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield (1993) write that mezzo structures (trade unions, the church, local community and parties) develop and consolidate cleavages. Therefore, the three elements of a cleavage are inextricably linked and the concept should be used to indicate a dividing line in a polity. For this reason, Bartolini and Mair (2008:201) posit that 'cleavages can only be considered as only one particular kind of division rather than as a concept that exhausts the realm of all possible divisions'. Nevertheless, as noted before, cleavage literature remains relevant in understanding the dynamics of party systems despite the decline in cleavages and theoretical problems associated with the concept. So, treating cleavages as groups that share similar social characteristics which may translate their discontent into political mobilization and linkages with parties, we use identifiable cleavages to map party support by social groups. We conceptualize cleavages in a less restrictive way, to mean any structural factors that could result in divisions in the polity and influence electorate choices and party support choices.

Social Cleavages and Parties in Botswana

Although Botswana has achieved relative homogeneity through imposition of Tswana culture, there are identifiable cleavages albeit overlapping along ethnic, language and between state and traditional authorities. Thus, writing in 1977 John Wiseman observes that Botswana is not without its conflict cleavages. Guided by the Lipset and Rokkan (1967) social cleavage model, this paper argues that, to a certain degree the party system in Botswana reflect the social divisions of a structural nature. Suffice it to say that social divisions in Botswana are not as deeply polarised as in other African countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan to mention but a few. Many of the African countries have experienced protracted conflict and violence because of their deeply polarised cleavages and party systems. For instance, ethnic tensions between the Luo and the Kikuyu in Kenya plunged the country into violent conflict in the post 2007 elections. The politics of north-south regional presidential voting in Nigeria continue to be a source of instability since the country returned to democratic rule in the late 1990s. David Mandiyanike and Batlang Seabo (2015) write that the volatility of Nigeria's elections also had much to do with the internal politics of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which upon re-introduction of democratic rule resolved that the presidency should alternate between the country's northern and the southern regions.

Unlike other African countries with protracted conflict, Botswana has remained free from instability resulting from cleavage tensions. But this does not in any way suggest that there are no social structural divisions in the polity. This has led Wiseman (1977) to ask why these cleavages have not led to the sort of serious political instability which has endangered the multi-party system in so many other African cases. Wiseman (1997) attributes this to the crisscrossing nature of the cleavages which have worked to produce political stability in Botswana, which in turn has enabled the multi-party system to survive.

Below we briefly examine identifiable social cleavages and show their linkage to the political parties in Botswana.

State-traditional authority cleavage

Conflict between the state and traditional authorities in Botswana has parallels with church-state conflict of pre-eminence and contest for political authority in Europe. The state-traditional authority conflict dates as far back as the independence period and its manifestation ought to be understood within the context of the process of nation-building. Wiseman (1977) observes that 'at the national level, this is to be seen in the clash between the chiefs and the central government; at the local level, it can be seen in conflict between village headman and local party agent or government officer. State-traditional authorities' conflict emerged when the government of Botswana stripped the chiefs of some of their main responsibilities and powers. For instance, Holm (1987:2) observes that 'The [at independence] councils were given many of the powers formerly exercised by tribal chiefs, including responsibility for constructing and operating primary schools, maintaining public water supplies, building and repairing rural roads, licensing private businesses, and supporting such development projects as they deem necessary'.

Moreover, in 1969 the government introduced a law that established district land boards which took over the chiefs' land allocation function. These changes left the chiefs with basically ceremonial duties of representing the tribes and control over traditional courts (Holm 1987). This created discontent between traditional authorities and the post-independence government. Perhaps, more fundamentally the conflict between traditional authorities and the state came to the fore when political parties capitalized on it. At independence, the state embarked on a robust state modernization agenda which involved stripping of the traditional authorities their power. As a result of the weakening of chiefs, some of them decided to join politics on the opposition side (Molutsi 2004).

For instance, the BNF became more popular in the southern part of the country particularly

Ngwaketse constituencies due to the influence of Kgosi Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse after quitting chieftaincy in 1969 and joined BNF (Barei 2000). This move was supposedly meant to neutralise Seretse Khama's solid traditional appeal (Somolekae 2005). The Ngwaketse constituencies are some of the BNF's traditional strongholds despite the fact that Ngwaketse chiefs no longer actively participate in politics or informally endorse any political candidates. The influence of government-chiefs axis was also prominent in the Kgatleng District in the early years of independence. There Kgosi Linchwe II's discontent with limited chiefly powers resulted in him informally backing opposition parties. In particular, the BPP's 1965 and 1969 success in Kgatleng is attributed to Linchwe's support (Barei 2000).

Although thorough research ought to be conducted it could be argued that during the 2014 general election, a coalition of opposition parties, the UDC, won constituencies in the Kgatleng area partly as a result of the tension between Bakgatla and the state over the criminal charges against their self-exiled Kgosi Kgafela II (now in South Africa). In a bid to reverse its unpopularity in Kgatleng BDP recruited Kgafela's younger brother to their fold in order to field him in Kgatleng East constituency for the 2019 general election. This development clearly demonstrates that even the ruling party is aware of the need to draw closer to traditional authorities.

In addition, the UDC represented by paramount chief of the Barolong tribe triumphed in the Goodhope-Mabule by-election in 2015. The BDP was desperate to retain the constituency which had been its traditional stronghold since 1966 but lost it with a very small margin in 2014. Support for the chief was strongly echoed during campaign rallies. The electoral success of chiefs in Botswana demonstrate that despite the loss of most of their traditional powers they are still highly respected and followed by most of their subjects. Therefore, the state-traditional authority cleavage has political or electoral implications in Botswana.

Ethno-linguistic cleavage

During the colonial period, ethnic conflict and violence did take place in Botswana but this was not witnessed in the post-colony despite the marginalization of the so-called minority languages (Jeff Ramsay 1987). However, Onalenna Selolwane (2004) states that ethnic under-currents have been an ongoing subtext in Botswana's state building and modernisation programme throughout the post-independence era. Traditionally, Tswana polities have been noted for their capacity to absorb foreigners without compromising the integrity of their own institutions (Solway 1994). The dominant Tswana saw themselves as legitimate heirs of the polity created by the British colonial system (Selolwane 2004). According to Isaac Mazonde (2002) the post-colonial government marginalised the languages of ethnic minorities by removing them from the school system and subordinating them to Setswana as the national language in what was claimed to be a nation-building exercise. (It should be noted that some of the so-called ethnic minorities are numerically superior to their Tswana overlords in some tribal territories).

Tarcisius Mudongo (1989) writes that President Sir Ketumile Masire (1980-1998) warned 'ethnic minority rights' activists 'not to spoil the prevailing peace and unity in the country by fighting for ethnic language groupings to take precedence over Setswana, and that tribes insisting that their languages become medium of instruction within their respective areas would break up the nation'.

For Amelia Cook and Jeremy Sarkin (2010), this Tswana dominance has led to the continued marginalisation of minority groups to the extent that they have slim chances of making their presence felt in social and political spheres. This development was resented by the elite of the marginalised tribes, and in numerous instances it was used for political mobilisation by individual politicians across the political divide in a bid to outflank opponents during elections but not always successful (Makgala and Botlhomilwe 2017).

However, Botswana has escaped the repercussions of ethnic polarisation and its associated tensions

that continue to be a source of violence in many African states. Solway (1994) states that Botswana is often singled out as an African country free of the divisive struggles that surround ethnically based politics. Two fundamental reasons explain why ethnic and linguistic divisions have not been violently divisive in Botswana. This is because the Botswana government has managed to forge a strong national identity built around Tswana values and practices, which was popularly expressed through the dictum 'One Nation One Consensus –We are all Batswana' (Werbner 2004:39). In addition, ethnic background has been a major determinant in distribution of public good in Botswana, the government has maintained an ethnically blind development policy, in which no reference was made to ethnic backgrounds in development programmes and, therefore, ensuring all the groups could benefit from policies –at least in theory (Gulbrandsen 2012).

Lydia Nyati-Ramahobo's (2008) work on the marginalisation of 'minority languages' in Botswana gives more insights in the dynamics of ethno-linguistic conflicts. She observes that about 37 non-Tswana speaking tribes exist in Botswana but the state does not recognise them (Nyati-Ramahobo 2008). Scholars have estimated the total population of non-Tswana tribes at about 60% (RETENG 2005). Therefore, the ethnic and linguistic minorities are the numerical majority. 'The Tswana elite have dealt with the issue of non-Tswana ethnic identity by framing it in negative terms' (Nyati-Ramahobo 2008:3). She also claims that 'those who raise these issues are perceived as fomenting "tribalism" and traditionally viewed as divisive by Botswana's presidents'. President Festus Mogae (1998-2008) is reported to have said that all people living in the Central District should consider themselves Bangwato (Mohwasa 2009). The President's utterances clearly sought to impose Ngwato hegemony over tribes such as Basarwa, Bakalanga, Babirwa, Batswapong and others in the various sub-regions of the Central District (RETENG 2007).

These tribes face discrimination and have as a result suffered the erosion of their culture and invisibility as citizens. Karin Alexander and Gape Kaboyakgosi (2012) observe that in recent years, some groups in Botswana have contested nationhood. For example, in the alternative report to the Human Rights Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, RETENG (the Multicultural Coalition of Botswana) argues that whereas all ethnic groups of citizens are identified as Batswana, not all of them –particularly not non-Tswana speakers –feel that their culture, customs and traditions, and therefore their identities, are recognized by the national territorial and legal state. The report claims that even simply referring to citizens of Botswana as 'Batswana' implies that non-Tswana are not recognised and are expected to assimilate themselves into 'Tswanadom', ultimately leading to the disappearance of their ethnic identities, culture and languages (RETENG 2007).

Similarly, sections 77, 78 and 79 of the Botswana Constitution were contested for establishing some tribal hierarchies by mentioning only eight principal tribes at the exclusion of other tribal groups that make up the Botswana nation. The excluded tribes argue that, by identifying only eight tribes and allocating them permanent seats (*ex officio*) in the *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* (formerly House of Chiefs), the Constitution was discriminatory against them. It also denied them equal representation with Tswana groups. To address these concerns, the government set up a commission of enquiry to investigate the contested sections. The commission acknowledged the discriminatory nature of the constitutional clauses. It also recommended amendement of the discriminatory clauses and proposed to make *Ntlo ya Dikgosi* more representative by replacing tribal representation with territorial representation, where all members would be elected. These recommendations were strongly opposed by the Tswana groups (Nyamnjoh 2007). The debate revealed strong determination amongst the majority tribes to retain their hegemonic status, and privileged position in the Botswana society. The final amendment, by and large retained the status quo, and offered no substantive recourse to the concerns raised by the minorities (Werbner 2004).

Lack of recognition is also revealed in no attempts made to recognise and include other tribal languages as national languages in the republican Constitution. Despite the existence of several groups which speak various language, the government of Botswana only recognises two languages, Setswana and

English as the national and official language respectively (Nyathi- Ramahobo 2004).

Against this backdrop, a number of ethnically based organisations were formed and in 2002 they coalesced into an umbrella body called RETENG: The Multi-cultural Coalition of Botswana. Nyati-Ramahobo (2008:7) concludes that 'in the period between 1995 and 2008, their activities as individual associations and as a collective, raised the voice for the recognition of non-Tswana tribes, promoted multilingualism and called for a shift towards unity in diversity'. It should be noted that the non-Tswana speakers never agitated for their languages to take precedence over any language, but rather, for more languages to be used in the education system and the public media. The government position is a reflection of the 'one-language one-nation' myth, or the orientation to view language diversity as a problem and not a resource (Nyati-Ramahobo 1998).

The observation made above can provide insights into a search or existence of ethno-linguistic cleavage. This is true when taking into account Bartolini and Mair's (1990) assertion that ethno-linguistic cleavages emerge out of the long process of linguistic differentiation, migration, and state-boundary creation and specific cleavages of an ethno-linguistic nature only develop in response to modern nation-builders' attempts to effect cultural and linguistic standardisation, and when the opportunities to express dissent and to organise opposition become available. Nevertheless, as Onalenna Selolwane (2002) observes, in the case of Botswana, the BDP has provided material benefits across ethno-linguistic cleavages and as a result the party has been voted into office in every election. In this way, the BDP has pacified the cultural grievances of recognition by attending to the material well-being of Batswana without showing partiality.

Urban-rural and class cleavage

Social class is one of the primary cleavages around which parties form and mobilize for support. Given the decline of agriculture and the growth of urban centers, rural-urban migration in search of employment and tertiary education have created social classes based on employment and age, from which parties have mobilized support. Recent observation is that the socio-economic dynamics including rural-urban migration have reduced the influence of traditional leaders in determining vote choice and have created openings for the opposition (Poteete 2009).

Even though party support tends to cut across urban and rural areas, it is widely accepted that a significant number of rural constituencies remain BDP strongholds while the opposition tends to have support from urban areas. However, over the years the opposition parties have also made significant inroads into a good number of these rural constituencies.

An alternative perspective to this, although not necessarily opposing view, draws on voting behaviour literature which explains the urban-rural divide in terms of the demographics of the two regions. The voting behaviour theorists claim that voting patterns rest on the assumptions that older, rural poor and less educated voters can be explained by party identification model, while the urban areas, where the population is younger, better educated cohere with rational choice model (Dalton 1984). For instance, although support for political parties cut across the different age groups and all political parties have youth leagues, the issue of age became salient especially for opposition parties when in the 1990s BNF called for amendment of the Electoral Act to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. The party claimed to have strong support among the youth whom it felt were being marginalised. According to Somolekae (2005), BNF believed at the time that its support base was among young urban residents, including tertiary education students.

Osei-Hwedie (2001) notes that the BNF's vision of an egalitarian society has helped the party maintain the support of the working class and the underprivileged, which accounts for its popularity in urban areas. Osei-Hwedie also noted the performance of opposition parties in local government, with BNF

in control of urban areas including Gaborone City Council where it won 24 of the 25 seats, 10 out of 11 seats in Lobatse, all 13 seats in Selibe-Phikwe, and all 7 seats in Jwaneng in the 1994 elections. On the other hand, Wiseman (1997) observes that since its inception BDP has always been the wealthiest of the political parties in Botswana, gaining support from the more affluent sections of society, and partly due to incumbency, able to attract more financial contributions from the business sector.

In terms of the working-class cleavage, opposition parties have presented policy programmes that speak to the plight of the workers. In fact, in the build-up to the 2014 general election BOFEPUSU openly endorsed and campaigned for the UDC which they saw as a party which best represented the interests of the workers.

Conclusion

This paper explored social cleavages and party alignment in Botswana from the perspective of cleavage theory as propounded by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). It is evident from the above discussion that social cleavages have characterized the politics of Botswana, albeit less overtly as in other deeply polarized societies. Whereas other factors cannot be discounted it seems lack of cooperation been main opposition parties has worked against their electoral success in terms of exploiting the country's social divisions to effect change of government. For instance, it has been argued that had the BCP been part of the UDC in the 2014 general election, Botswana might have witnessed change of government for the first time since 1966. BCP itself realised their mistake and joined the UDC after the election. However, the BMD split in 2017 gave birth to a rival party called Alliance of Progressive (AP) which showed little interest in being a member of UDC. This development was seen as likely to work against the opposition in the next general election in 2019.

One would expect the non-Tswana ethnic groups and their pressure groups to forge strong cooperation with the opposition parties in order to change the system and be recognised. This shows the extent to which the BDP is embedded within the broader society notwithstanding the conflicts that are discernible among the non-Tswana ethnic group (Wiseman 1977). In fact, while criticized for ethnically blind and assimilationist policies, the BDP government has ensured that all Batswana benefit from government policies and programmes regardless of their ethnic origin (Gulbrandsen 2012). Therefore, opposition parties have not been able to effectively mobilise along ethnic lines because government resources and services have not been distributed along ethnic lines.

The opposition has made some strides in urban centres where the workers and young people including tertiary education students vote for opposition parties. Nevertheless, the BDP has managed to appease the young voters despite being a conservative party. The party has managed to appeal to the young generation through policies designed for the unemployed youth such as Young Farmers Fund and out of school youth grant even though the youth are not wholly satisfied.

In terms of the state-traditional authority cleavage the BDP appealed to Batswana in part because of presence of the Khamas who are the royalty of the largest tribal territory group. The BNF also tried the same strategy when it roped Kgosi Bathoen II of Bangwaketse into its ranks and recently Kgosi Letlaamoreng of Barolong for the Goodhope-Mabule constituency by-election.

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