Management and Mismanagement of Factionalism in Political Parties in Botswana, 1962-2013

Zibani Maundeni[*] and Batlang Seabo[†]

Abstract

This paper is on the management of political parties. It uses Botswana as a case study to demonstrate the utility of formal and informal arrangements. Its argument is that informal mechanisms work well when they supplement rather than replace or compete with formal arrangements. In this regard, the paper's first argument is that the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) has relied on both formal and informal mechanisms of conflict resolution, and has as a result enjoyed better organizational stability. It also argues that as for the opposition Botswana Peoples Party (BPP) and Botswana National Front (BNF) one has both weak formal and informal mechanisms, and the other has allowed formal and informal mechanisms to work against each other. In both opposition parties, informal mechanisms were not relied upon to resolve internal conflicts, exposing them to political instability.

Introduction

The management of political parties in terms of party finances, internal elections, succession arrangements and factional rivalry is an issue that has not been addressed by researchers. However, how parties manage themselves internally is an important component of research in the area of political parties. Many researchers (Southall 2005:61-82, Riedl 20054:18-21) have written on dominant parties but hardly on the internal management of those parties. Maundeni and Lotshwao Maundeni and Lotshwao (2012:59-60) analyse the formal ways of managing political parties internally, but largely ignored informal mechanisms.

In contrast, this article, discusses both the formal and informal ways of dealing with internal party organisation. Its argument is that parties that rely on both formal and informal mechanisms of conflict resolution are more stable than those that do not. The article is organised in the following manner: The first section reviews literature on factionalism in political parties. The next sections contrast the BDP with cases of the BPP and the BNF to show how formal and informal mechanisms have been employed. In the end, we briefly discuss the implications of the 2011 opposition cooperation talks and the 2013 BDP primary elections fiasco and fall out.

Theoretical Perspectives on Factionalism in Political Parties

The study of factions and management of factionalism in political parties is an area that has received scant attention, 'Yet factions are a prominent feature of the political arena, and their predominance in at least a few national political systems makes development of factions-study a matter of considerable importance' (Belloni and Beller 1976:16). Most of the literature on factionalism focuses on the theoretical interpretation of factionalism, its causes and consequences but not so much on the management of internal conflicts. Boucek (2009:2) observes that 'in political science, the dominant analytical approach to the study of factionalism as an independent variable has centred around typologies of intraparty groups with different attributes, dimensions and categories based on variables such as stability, organization, function and role, and occasionally group size and number'.

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* Zibani Maundeni, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Botswana. Email: maundeni@mopipi.ub.bw

† Batlang Seabo, Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Botswana. Email: Batlang.Seabo@mopipi.ub.bw

Yet others have studied factionalism as a dependent variable from an analytical perspective on the basis of behavioural and rational theories. For instance, scholars such as Mulé (2001:32) have examined the effects of factionalism and intra-party politics on income distribution, and party coalition strategies under minority government. Others, such as Laver and Shepsle (1996:18-23), Boucek (2009:455-485) researched on legislative politics and government formation. In the context of Botswana, factionalism across parties has been catalogued yet no sustained attempt has been done to compare how parties manage intra-party divisions. For instance, in the political opposition in Botswana: the politics of factionalism and fragmentation, Osei-Hwedie (2001:57-77) examines the reasons why the opposition parties have failed to take over power from the BDP let alone pose any significant electoral threat. However, Maundeni and Lotshwao (2011:55-63) have made some effort to compare the levels of formal mechanisms of managing factionalism in Botswana parties. They define formal mechanisms in terms of party constitutionalism, the idea and practice of enacting party rules and a culture of following them.

They note that 'Party constitutionalism is the codifying and legitimising of political processes and actors through constitutional arrangements, rules and prior agreements, that are approved by legitimate structures, and their observance by party structures, leaders and activists' (Maundeni and Lotshwao 2012:1). They also observe that the BDP has a history of codifying rules and of following them, while the BNF has a history of internal conflict and internal repression. In contrast, the current article employs both formal and informal mechanisms of managing factionalism. We define informal mechanisms in terms of the ability of factions to compromise, either to help bring new rules or to suspend existing ones in order to control violent conflict within parties. Where formal rules fail to work and the party fails to move forward by failing to come up with new rules and degenerates into political turmoil, we characterise it as failure of both formal and informal mechanisms. Thus, in terms of informal mechanisms, compromise is our guiding principle to explain political stability within the BDP and the lack of it to explain political instability in the BPP and BNF. Factionalism is emerging within the Botswana Congress Party (BCP), but has not crystallised to the extent that it can be studied.

We see factionalism as a natural phenomenon that develops within organisations. Like all organisations, parties exhibit alongside their formal organisational structure informal relational systems, operating procedures, and norms which are institutionalized to different degrees (Köllner 2005:6). Therefore, parties are susceptible to formation of informal groups that emerge either as a result of disgruntlement arising from the distribution of incentives or power struggle over the control of the party. Later these informal groups become institutionalised as factions within a party and seek to exert their influence in order to advance their cause. Factions tend to be pitted against each other in their struggle for incentives in the form of positions within the party and/or government in the case of a ruling party. How parties deal with or manage conflict between rival factions determines the stability and continuity of a party. Informal mechanisms are equally important in managing political parties. 'Without a certain degree of informal institutionalisation of the decision-making process it appears almost impossible to reach a viable political consensus by means of existing liberal democratic rules of law alone and this can easily lead to political sclerosis and social instability' (Keman 1997:5). Keman implies that alongside formal procedures and rules that guide organisations, there should be informal mechanisms of conflict resolution in order to avoid instability. Maundeni and Lotshwao (2012:59-60) have studied this in the case of Botswana.

Factionalism and Better Management in the Dominant BDP

This section looks at the formal and informal management of factionalism in the BDP, noting that it relied heavily on both rules and compromises to achieve internal stability. While Makgala (2003:52) thinks that the dominant BDP benefited from incumbency (rewarding party loyalists through patronage and other mechanisms), and Maundeni and Lotshwao (2012:59) think that constitutionalism played an equally important role in sustaining BDP rule and stability, we add that informal mechanisms were also relied upon to achieve political stability within the BDP.

To begin with, the BDP was formed by activists who opposed pan-Africanism (Lekorwe 2005:124). These non-radicals included prominent (white and black) business people, sympathetic chiefs who feared the abolition of chieftainship, the dominant Tswana groups who feared ethnic equality and the suppression that was likely to accompany it, and the general electorate whose history had not radicalised them through armed struggle (Somolekae 2005:4). Controlled succession, mild change of leadership styles and the controlled entry of new men all helped to reduce factional rivalry in the BDP. As defections have been common and accepted in Botswana politics, they have been used to defuse tensions within the dominant BDP. Such a collection of loose groups called for unceasing compromises. The party used defections to acquire new leading and moderate members from the opposition and to shed off those elements whom it could not accommodate anymore. This also required compromises on whom to attract and to lose.

In addition, the BDP practised controlled succession, a formal way to pick a president by only a few people. For instance, President Seretse Khama died in office in 1980 and was succeeded by Vice President Ketumile Masire. The country's Constitution originally required Parliament to meet within seven days to choose a new president (Nsereko 2004:51). This formal mechanism helped to eliminate the succession struggle. In addition, the fact that the vice president succeeded to the presidency, also minimised policy reversals or policy changes that could have sparked factions to form in defence of the old order. Ketumile Masire had been Seretse's deputy for 14 years and kept more or less the same team that he inherited. Such smooth formal leadership change did not generate destructive factionalism that could split the ruling BDP. In addition, the death of the BDP founding father did not see the party losing its popular support, another factor that minimised factionalism. The party won 29 out of the 34 parliamentary seats that were being contested in 1984.

We acknowledge that destructive factionalism visited the BDP in the 1990s and mid-2000s. Its politics have been dominated by two factions: the Kwelagobe/Kedikilwe faction that emerged after Peter Mmusi (vice president of Botswana and chairman of the BDP) and Daniel Kwelagobe (secretary general of the BDP) were accused of corruption in a presidential commission of inquiry that was improperly conducted as it had collected evidence in camera and not in public as required by law (Mokopakgosi and Molomo 2000:12). Mmusi and Kwelagobe, who had been suspended from their positions in the party, resigned their cabinet positions in order to take the government to court over corruption allegations against them. The cabinet that had formally approved the report of the presidential commission of inquiry consisted of Vice President Festus Mogae as the driver and Lt Gen Merafhe (a retired first commander of the Botswana Defence Force) who became the spokesperson of the anti-corruption movement. Mogae had previously compelled ministers (including President Masire) to pay back huge sums of money they owed to the parastatal, National Development Bank. This made Mogae very unpopular with and a target of the rival faction. Jacob Nkate was among the ministers who approved the report of the presidential commission of inquiry and joined the anti-corruption movement. This group consolidated into the Merafhe/Nkate faction of the BDP and was joined by Vice President Lt Gen Ian Khama in 1998, son of the first president and the then commander of the army. Khama had become the vice president of Botswana in 1998 (President Mogae brought him into the government in order to help him to regain control of the factionalised party). He was very popular with the ordinary supporters of the party.

The BDP had realised the danger of factionalism and reformed the country's Constitution and entered into numerous compromise deals, and sometimes avoided formal internal elections in order to promote party unity and to reduce rivalry. In the first instance of formal mechanisms, constitutional amendments were initiated, with positive and negative consequences. There were two major constitutional amendments in 1997. Firstly, the Botswana Constitution was amended to allow automatic succession of the vice president to the presidency. This was negative for democracy, but positive for good governance. In addition, compromised factionalism ensured that the BDP Constitution was also amended to allow presidential elections within the party. The democratic value of the amendment has so far failed to materialise as no BDP presidential elections were ever held, but it is an important step forward. In the second instance of informal mechanisms, while it is bad governance to strike deals with people accused of corruption (even though not proven), politically it may be right to do so in order to prevent the party from splitting.

One of the major deals that led to the cancellation of internal elections occurred during Masire's presidency in 1997. 'At the time, the party was polarised between the so-called Kwelagobe and Merafhe factions. It was alleged that the Merafhe camp threatened to boycott the elections ostensibly in protest, because the Kwelagobe camp had reneged on an earlier deal not to challenge Mogae for the chairmanship of the party' (Molomo 2003:306). This was clear evidence that Mogae had close attachments with the Merafhe/Nkate faction. When Kedikilwe refused to compromise in 1997 and stood against Vice President Mogae for party chairmanship, the latter withdrew his candidacy and formal internal party elections were cancelled. It was during that time that President Masire initiated a compromise in which the election was set aside and leaders of the two factions agreed to share the executive positions in the party. This too minimised factional rivalry. It can also be asked whether the BDP was not entrenching corruption in its politics through compromises.

Compromise deals also led to a change of leadership. Under informal pressure from the rival faction, Masire formally stepped down from the presidency of the country and of the party, and this saw the automatic ascendancy of Mogae, who was the Vice President. The announcement that the presidency of the country and party was becoming vacant due to Masire's impending retirement in 1998, did not necessarily heighten factionalism as no presidential elections were impending since the party and national constitutions had been amended to allow automatic succession of the vice president. The result of the constitutional amendment was that factionalism was effectively prevented from playing a meaningful role in filling the position of presidency of the party and country. In addition, compromise deals also enabled Kedikilwe and Kwelagobe to dominate the chairmanship and secretary general-ship of the party without giving it power to veto government policies. As a result compromises led to a win-win situation in which the 'anti-corruption' faction controlled the government and Kedikilwe/Kwelagobe faction controlled the party. Thus, it was not just incumbency but good management as well that held the BDP together despite factionalism that threatened to tear it apart.

2001 saw the factions entering into another big compromise when Vice President Khama was successfully persuaded by party elders not to challenge Kedikilwe for the party chairmanship. The terms of the informal deal was that Kedikilwe would retire from the chairmanship in 2003 so that Khama could become chairman without going through an election. Khama reluctantly agreed to withdraw his candidature at the last minute. But when the 2003 Ghanzi congress approached, Kedikilwe betrayed the terms of the previous compromise deal and announced his readiness to defend his position. Khama also announced his intention to contest and received support from President Mogae who publicly expressed his preferences, sparking strong criticism from the rival faction who wished the president to pretend neutrality. Compromised politics was put aside in 2003 and central committee elections were held in the town of Ghanzi. The disappointing performance of Kedikilwe destroyed his presidential ambitions and restored good governance in the BDP again. Kedikilwe's defeat led to him avoiding active role in future party faction strife (until he was appointed acting-party chairman in 2013 after Guma Moyo resigned).

However, it should be acknowledged that BDP factions do not always reach compromises and do not always promote good management. For instance, between November 2004 and May 2005 the BDP was working on a compromise deal whose intention was to set central committee elections aside. The compromise deal collapsed. Heightened factionalism came to the fore when the BDP held its elective congress in 2009. The Kwelagobe faction vanquished its rival and was in a good position to formally control the party. However, in a move that was intended to regain control by the Merafhe/Nkate faction, President Khama appointed into other central committee positions members who predominantly belonged to one faction which had lost. Factional feuds worsened as some members of the Kwelagobe camp decried bad leadership of Khama whom they perceived to be intolerant of divergent views. Following a sustained period of acrimony characterised by suspensions of key members of the Kwelagobe faction, Khama's BDP experienced a split which saw some members defecting to form a new party in 2010, Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD). The BDP's unprecedented split is indicative of the fact that the party turned against its culture of compromise at the peak of factionalism and failed to manage intra-party conflict through formal rules. By 2013, there were allegations Guma Moyo (BDP chairman at the time) and the faction aligned to him had staged 'systematic rigging' aimed at ensuring electoral loss of candidates from whom the president was likely to pick a vice president, and to ensure victory for members of his own faction. He was accused of having manipulated the BDP electoral register (leaving out names of members who he thought were likely to vote for President Khama's closest allies), not distributing membership cards to them (piles of BDP cards were allegedly found in several locations after the BDP primaries), and of collaborating with Zimbabwean ministers to derail President Khama's succession plan. Moyo resigned from the BDP chairmanship towards end of 2013 and was replaced by Vice President Kedikilwe who was appointed to the position. The BDP also withdrew the parliamentary candidature of Chris Nthuba who was accused of involvement in systematic rigging in his constituency of Gaborone West South. Out of 108 primary election related complaints involving parliamentary and council candidates within the BDP, only 3 parliamentary re-runs and six council re-runs were ordered. By the time of this write up in February 2014, about six constituencies (Kweneng South East, Gaborone West South, Mahalapye East, Nata-Gweta, Maun East and Kweneng East) faced the prospect either of court cases or of independent candidates standing against the BDP in the October 2014 general elections. This breakdown of internal mechanisms of resolving party conflicts was unprecedented in the history of the BDP.

Mismanagement in the BPP: No Reliance on Informal Mechanisms

Our argument is that the BPP lacked formal and informal mechanisms to manage internal conflicts. In the case of the BPP, poor financial management sparked confusion that saw the party splitting three times. The BPP had informally received £5000 from Ghana in 1961that was deposited in the party vice president's account by virtue of the fact that he had attended a conference in Ghana on behalf of his party (Ramsay and Parsons 1998:136). He allegedly used the money without formal party authorisation to buy vehicles from an unknown car dealer in South Africa, he failed to produce receipts of purchase and he failed to account for the remainder of the money (Edge 1996:91). Motsamai Mpho, the BPP secretary general has been quoted saying: 'We wanted something verifiable, but what Matante had provided to the treasurer, Mr Jackson Lesetedi, were not even photocopies of the originals. There were no signatures from the company which had sold him the vehicles. That was the reason why we suspected that forgery had been committed, and believed the actual cost of the land rovers might have been much less' (Edge, 1996:92). In 1962 when the BPP central committee was still seized with this administrative matter, Vice President Matante acted quickly by firing eight of its members, thus immediately turning the issue into a political matter, thus, plunging the party into a political crisis (Maundeni, 1998:384). This way, he divided the party into his supporters and into supporters of the expelled members. Thus, by the time of elections in 1965, BPP existed as two rival parties.

In the case of the BPP, administrative issues were conjoined with political ones. It had been formed as a radical pan-African party by elements aligned with the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa (Edge 1996; Maundeni, 2001:21; Makgala 2006). The two components of the BPP were held together not by ideological principles or clear principles of equal power sharing, but by their common opposition to white racism in Botswana, by the need to end British colonial rule, by their opposition to chieftainship which they associated with ethnic inequalities, and by their desire to overturn dominance of whites in the public service and in the economy (Maundeni, 2001:21). In short, consisting of elements aligned with the ANC and PAC that followed two different ideologies in South Africa, administrative issues in the BPP easily became politicised and factionalised. The party should have devised elaborate principles of power sharing between the two elements, and should have developed elaborate formal and informal ways to handle internal conflicts. However, such elaborate systems take time to take shape and to develop into institutionalised culture, and the split party lost the chance to reach any such point.

So, financial mismanagement combined with ideological incoherence and with lack of constitutionalism, to create a destructive situation that split the party. 18 months after formation, the BPP split twice. Its Secretary General Motsamai Mpho was expelled together with his supporters who later formed the Botswana Independence Party (BIP). BPP Vice President Philip Matante later expelled President Kgalemang Motsete who left without supporters and contested the first national elections as an independent. Informally, Philip Matante remained with his pan-Africanist supporters in the BPP which became stable but never fully recovered from the split. The party has remained one of the smallest parties in the country (and still suffers from factionalism). The BPP split has been regarded as a struggle for power by its senior members.

Factionalism, Mismanagement and Arrested Growth – the BNF

Formal and informal mechanisms were working at cross-roads in the BNF. Factionalism first became a serious issue in the BNF when a retiring tribal chief of the Bangwaketse, Bathoen II joined it and became its president in 1970. He soon went on to suppress leftists in the party, compelling most of them to either quit or accept marginalisation. This was despite the fact that BNF had no formal policy to expel leftists. The presence of Bathoen in the BNF became a source of factionalism in the party (Maundeni 1998:381; Makgala 2005:76). Bathoen believed in ethnic inequalities and in Tswana dominance over non-Tswana groups (Maundeni 1998:381). He also believed in chieftainship and autocratic rule and worked to suppress internal party democracy. His entry into the BNF led to the mismanagement of primary elections and to heated internal rivalry. For instance, 'while initially the BNF's 1970 Congress was expected to be held in Mahalapye…the venue was changed to Kanye (Bathoen's capital) without consulting some party functionaries. This, plus other grievances, led to four delegates from Gaborone resigning from the BNF just before the congress' (Makgala 2006:130). Bathoen stood for the presidency of the BNF at that congress and won, triggering mass defections. Thus poor management of congresses (not just the struggle for power) significantly contributed to heightened factionalism in the BNF.

The opposition BNF has never seemed fully prepared for its formal primary elections. It developed a bad and un-transparent habit of completing its electoral register on the eve of primary elections or worse, on the morning of the polls. Late completion of voters-roll has resulted in the disfranchisement of voters whose names did not appear [This has afflicted the BDP as recent as 2013 as shown above]. Other names would appear twice and others would appear under the wrong wards. In the BNF, it is difficult to differentiate between administrative incompetence and 'systematic rigging' of primary elections which losers always allege. Alternatively it is not clear whether 'systematic rigging' of primary elections is disguised as administrative incompetence. Here is a scenario observed by the Democracy Research Project from the 2003 BNF primary elections in Gaborone:

Tlogatloga Ward was originally meant to have two polling stations at Pidipidi Day Care and at Block 5 Primary School where no arrangements had been made for polling to take place. There was no classroom open for polling purposes at Block 5 Primary School and the BNF party advised the Democracy Research Project (DRP) of the University of Botswana which was conducting the elections) to move all polling to Pidipidi Day Care Centre. Candidates were expected to transport their own voters from Block 5. On arrival at Pidipidi Day Care polling station, the Returning Officer encountered complaints raised by parliament candidate that 85 names that had been submitted to the party headquarters, were missing from the electoral register. This was a serious matter on which the Returning Officer immediately phoned the party which allowed polling to proceed while the issue was being handled. The BNF alerted the Returning Officer that the concerned names were submitted late but could be included on the electoral register if all the candidates, particularly the council candidates, agreed to include such names. They agreed and the missing names were added on the register.

At Bonnington Community Secondary School and Bosele Primary School, there were also problems related to the electoral register. A council candidate complained that a dozen people whose names he submitted to the party office did not appear on it. Consultations with the polling agents resolved that all those not listed on the electoral register should not vote as per the party regulations. Fortunately, the candidate who initially complained won and cancelled his complaint. But this is an issue that needed re-visiting by the party for future primary elections.

At Moselewapula Primary School, one of the council candidates did not appear on the electoral register, an apparent sign that the roll had not been updated to the satisfaction of both contestants and voters. Since two or three other ordinary voters had been turned away under similar circumstances earlier, the candidates agreed amongst themselves not to allow the candidate whose name did not appear to vote (Democracy Research Project 2003:3).

All these were issues with the potential to create doubts of the fairness of the BNF primary elections. They also had the potential to heighten factionalism which was already troubling the party. However, the formal involvement of the University of Botswana-based DRP in 2003 helped to ease the pressure on the party and for the first time, it went to the 2004 general elections more united than before. This suggests that contracting-out the preparation of voters-roll to private companies and the conduct of primary elections to independent organizations could help to ease factional rivalry. However, the use of NGOs to run opposition primary elections was a one-off event in the BNF. The 2008 primary elections reverted to the old habits of complaints, suspensions and expulsions. Three BNF parliamentary candidates were suspended and expelled. Some group memberships were suspended. Two group members (United Socialist Party - PUSO and the Socialist International), and a number of leading individuals (including the former foreign affairs secretary and education secretary) were also suspended and expelled.

In addition, formal attempts aimed at bringing opposition parties into some kind of coalition have commonly heightened informal opposition within the BNF. Attempts at forming coalitions with other opposition parties have always been opposed by one faction or another within the BNF, and this has caused serious faction related problems for it. For instance, in October 1991, an umbrella organisation - the People's Progressive Front (PPF) was formally launched, consisting of three opposition parties - the BNF, BPP, and the Botswana Progressive Union (BPU). The main objective of the PPF was to contest the 1994 elections as a single entity to avoid vote splitting. But the PPF collapsed before the 1994 general election which it had been aimed at. What is evident is that the PPF did not enjoy support

from a group of BNF factionalists, some of which split away with few supporters from the party. A faction of the BNF calling itself the Botswana Workers Front (BWF) led by Shawn Nthaile broke away in May 1993 at a time when the BNF was already part of an umbrella party, the PPF. Nthaile's reasons were that the BNF discriminated against him by virtue of his being Mokgalagadi. It was followed by PUSO and its leader Nehemiah Modubule in April 1994. Another group calling itself the Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Mareledi Giddie (former secretary general of the BNF) broke away in July 1994. Just like BWF, PUSO and SDP were formed after defections. Thus, the collapse of the PPF was accompanied by heightened factionalism in the BNF and splits. The general point is that negotiations aimed at forming coalitions between opposition parties could also heighten factionalism and splits as they create imbalance within the main opposition party. The splits negatively affected BNF's viability as the leading opposition party.

Splits in the volatile BNF have also rendered coalitions between parties to become temporary measures. The biggest split of the BNF in 1998 led to a breakaway party that named itself the Botswana Congress Party (BCP). Michael Dingake, who had been the vice president of the BNF, was BCP's founding leader. He argues in his book that the then BNF leader Dr Kenneth Koma had engineered a split whose potential damage he thought could be reduced through a merger with smaller opposition parties. Dingake quotes Koma saying that 'Following problems which have arisen in the BNF, and the fact that some Members of Parliament representing the wishes of the middle class in Botswana society have constituted themselves into a Parliamentary Caucus which seemingly wants to establish the hegemony of a middle class, we believe you have no doubt become aware that class differentiation in Botswana have reached a stage where it is no longer possible for the different classes to work effectively in a mass political organization (Dingake 2004:115).

The wider picture, however, is that the BNF Members of Parliament (MPs) were not properly accommodated within the structures of the party that tried to regulate and restrict their autonomy, and regarded them with disdain. The background is that the BNF had won its largest number of parliamentary seats, 13 out of the total 44 contested in the 1994 general election. These BNF MPs then constituted themselves into a formal parliamentary caucus as provided for in the Standing Orders of Parliament. They used the caucus to make decisions that guided their contribution in parliamentary debates, such as agreeing to occupy parliamentary houses. However, their decisions had not been approved by the party outside parliament. In short, the party caucus in Parliament and the party outside were engaged in competition and rivalry that ended up breaking the party. This resulted in a major split in which 11 of the 13 BNF parliamentarians, close to a hundred councillors and thousands supporters all over the country, broke away and formed a splinter party – the BCP. The point is that mismanagement meant that BNF's gains (in terms of winning more seats), was also its downfall as it failed to manage it properly.

Internal rivalry also negatively affected attempts at forming formal coalitions. For instance, immediately after the 1998 split, the BNF initiated coalition talks with parties that had previously broken away from it- the Botswana Labour Party (BLP), PUSO, BWF, and other small independent parties such as the BPP, Independence Freedom Party (BIP), BPU, and United Action Party (UAP). In January 1999, an umbrella body called Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM) was launched, after which the cooperating parties issued the following communiqué:

> We the opposition parties of Botswana have after sober and deep reflection on the current political situation in Botswana resolved to co-operate in order to take over political power and transform our society for the better….The arrogance and intolerance and insensitivity of the ruling party and its manifest unwillingness and / or inability to seriously address the socio-economic problems which beset our society such as mass poverty and unemployment necessitate an urgent change of government of this country (*Mmegi* 29 January-4 February 1999).

The alliance had excluded the new but larger splinter party –the BCP which had decimated BNF's leadership. It later proved that either the cooperating partners had not been all sober enough to create a permanent cooperation or that rivalry within the BNF spilled into the coalition. Here the point is that a badly managed (both formal and informal) main opposition party could not successfully enter into a stable coalition with other opposition parties. For instance, some BNF factionalists opposed the alliance until the party unceremoniously pulled out. The rest of the small partners proceeded with the alliance, contested the 1999 elections, and failed to win a single parliamentary seat. They then split and started fighting between themselves over party colours and the matter ended in court. The end result was that what had started as an umbrella BAM, ended up being another small party without mass following. Thus, the BNF mismanagement ensured that coalition politics proved to be a source of factionalism for the coalition, making the party extremely hesitant to enter into any more coalitions and hindering its future growth.

The BNF finally pushed out Dr Kenneth Koma–its founder and long standing leader who promoted mismanagement. He was finally suspended after the 2001 party congress and left to form a splinter party – the New Democratic Front (NDF) in 2003 (he took a portion of the BNF leadership, but with little support). The NDF participated in the 2004 general election but failed to win a single parliamentary seat or council ward. In contrast, the post-Koma BNF has attempted and failed to use coalition politics for its own growth.

However, this has not stopped the party from engaging in coalition negotiations and risk splits. For instance, after the 2004 general election, the post-Koma BNF entered into an election pact with BAM, BPP and BCP over by-elections. The parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in early 2005, specifying that only one party should field a candidate in parliamentary and council by-elections, that the parties should assist each other in campaigns, and that the parties should explore more cooperation in preparation for the 2009 election. The formal MoU for by-elections was initially followed with relative ease, helping the incumbent BNF leader, Otsweletse Moupo to win a parliamentary by-election in Gaborone, and the BCP to win several council by-elections.

Unfortunately, the BNF initiated competing major projects at the same time and failed to realise that failure in one would affect related projects. In early 2006, the BNF, BCP, BPP and BAM started negotiating a comprehensive formal pact in preparation for the 2009 general election, parallel to the MoU which had just kicked off beautifully. The negotiating teams drafted a 'Peoples Unity Charter' whose signing was abruptly postponed because the BNF was not happy with its wording and not ready to sign. Informally, members of the BCP and the BNF started criticising each other in newspapers, and offered contradictory analyses on the value of the negotiations. When the planned formal signing of the Peoples Unity Charter was near, an influential member of the BNF central committee, Dr Monageng Mogalakwe, informally published a long article alleging misplaced focus on negotiations and propounding re-focusing on electoral reforms. Part of his article read as follows:

> To me it is rather unfortunate that some people have unfairly blamed the opposition parties for the so called vote splitting, without ever raising any questions about the fairness or lack of it of the FPTP [First Past the Post] system, or indeed the 2000 All Party Conference resolution. In my view, the challenge facing the opposition parties and indeed the [Committee for Strengthening of Democracy that was managing the negotiations] is Botswana's current electoral system, and not the so called vote splitting, which is merely an outcome of the discredited FPTP system (Mogalakwe 5 March 2006).

The Committee for Strengthening Democracy is a formal civil society association that mediated the negotiations of the opposition parties. One of the implications of Mogalakwe's informal article (not sanctioned by the party) is that some influential BNF central committee members were opposed

to the coalition negotiations and did not see the value it added in preparation for the 2009 general elections. The other implication is that other opposition leaders, including the former president of the BCP (Michael Dingake) and other commentators (such as the deputy editor of the Sunday Standard, Spencer Mogapi) interpreted Mogalakwe's informal article as sabotaging the Peoples Unity Charter, and concluded that the BNF had no interest in the negotiations and was trying to opt out (Dingake 12 March 2006 and Mogapi 12 March 2006).

Thus, there were early signs that the negotiations would be difficult. Dingake informally questioned the timing of Mogalakwe's newspaper article, particularly its coincidence with the aborted signing of the People Unity Charter. He dismissed its core argument that negotiations were misplaced (Dingake 12 March 2006). Dingake's view was that focusing primarily on electoral reforms was itself misguided as it could not produce instant reforms that could benefit the opposition in 2009. 'Let us be honest about the opposition capacity to successfully stage pressure that can induce instant positive reaction from the BDP. In the eyes of the BDP, the "first past the post" (FPTP) electoral system is their best line for staying in power. They see it as their rear-guard fortress, not to be surrendered lightly' (Dingake 12 March 2006).

The point is that Mogalakwe and Dingake informally represented two parties that formally cooperated in the MoU and that were involved in tricky negotiations over a Peoples Unity Charter. Their informal heated exchange in the media reflected the tension that existed between the formal negotiating partners, and the fact that a faction within the BNF opposed it. Success in the People's Unity Charter depended on formal negotiations, and on restraint by all informal BNF factions. It was obvious that informal difficulties with the People's Unity Charter were most likely to affect the formal MoU which also collapsed thereafter.

Around 2011, opposition parties BNF and BPP entered into another round of negotiations, courting the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) – formed in 2010 as a splinter party from the BDP. The negotiations coincided with a public sector strike which temporarily brought the opposition parties in an ad hoc alliance with the public sector trade unions (Rasina 2012) It also coincided with a new round of tensions within the ruling BDP that resulted in the resignation of its Secretary General, Kentse Rammidi who joined the BNF and later crossed to the BCP! When the first round of the negotiations collapsed in December 2012, the BCP opted out, while the rest of the opposition parties entered into second round of negotiations. "After consultations, we decided we will not participate in the umbrella party talks," Saleshando told the *Africa Review (Dube 26 March 2012)*.

This led to the establishment of the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), an opposition alliance consisting of the BNF, BPP and BMD. However, informal groups within the BNF, such as the one calling itself 'Temporary Platform', started challenging the UDC electoral symbol on the basis that it threatened to destroy the soul of the BNF by leaving out its colours (Modise 23 January 2014). By end of 2013, Temporary Platform was holding un-authorised meetings around Gaborone, sending out its champions to address meetings across constituencies in Botswana, and sought audience with the BNF central committee to present a petition. Thus, the signs were not good, giving the impression that the UDC could unravel from within. This presented yet another litmus test for opposition parties in managing internal rivalry moving forward.

The BDP also faced a tough test in managing its internal affairs, particularly the 2013 primary elections which were mired in irregularities and much controversy. As things stood, there were looming independent candidates from the party, who out of disgruntlement with the manner in which their primary elections had been conducted, sought to stand as independents (Baaitse 15-21 February 2014).

Conclusion
The paper has argued that formal (constitutional arrangements and administrative structures and rules) and informal mechanisms (compromises that allow the introduction of new rules or the suspension

of existing ones in order to keep internal peace, and factions) contributed to the better management and to the dominance of the BDP that enjoyed more political stability. It has shown that the BDP used formal and informal mechanisms to complement each other in achieving internal stability. However, we acknowledge that the BDP under Ian Khama shows signs of abandoning the use of informal mechanisms and we make the point that such have exposed the party to future internal instability. In contrast, the paper showed that opposition parties (BPP and BNF) failed to use both formal and informal mechanisms in a supplementary way that could enable them to achieve internal political stability. Instead, formal and informal mechanisms worked at variance and in opposition to each other, thus creating internal crises that generated political instability. We have also shown that negotiated alliances between opposition parties have always met opposition from informal groups within some of the parties, threatening the viability and durability of such negotiated partnerships among opposition parties. Notwithstanding the fact that the BDP has embraced formal and informal mechanisms to ensure internal stability, it is worthy to note that it is not invincible owing to the controversy surrounding its 2013 primary elections.

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